

Black Sea NGO Network

Mission and purposes

The Black Sea NGO Network (BSNN), established in 1998 and registered in 1999, is a regional association of NGOs from all Black Sea countries. The BSNN members, currently over 60, are brought together by the common concern for the decreasing environmental quality of the Black Sea and the need for the adoption of democratic values and practices in the Black Sea countries that follow the ideals of sustainability.

BSNN is an independent, non-political, non-governmental, non-profit voluntary association of NGOs from the six Black Sea countries: Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine, the goal of which is the facilitation of the free flow and exchange of information, resources and experience for the accomplishment of its

Mission that is:

to contribute to the protection and rehabilitation of the Black Sea, including the Azov Sea, and to the sustainable development of the Black Sea countries through increased participation of NGOs, governments, businesses and other institutions, as well as the general public.

The objectives of the association are as follows:

- to develop a relevant structure, mechanisms and practice for advocacy and lobbying local, national and international authorities, businesses and other institutions involved in the decision-making process concerning the Black Sea and the sustainable development of the Black Sea region;
- to identify and address priority Black Sea environmental issues;
- to raise environmental and civic public awareness, and to increase public participation in the decision-making processes concerning the Black Sea at all levels;
- to build the association members' capacity for the accomplishment of its mission and to defend its members' interests.

The association achieves its objectives through:

- informing the public in the six Black Sea countries about Black Sea issues by all possible means;
- organising seminars, workshops, public hearings, conferences on Black Sea issues and the sustainable development of the Black Sea countries;
- promoting activities for solving Black Sea acute environmental problems and specific environmental issues, such as: public awareness campaigns, environmental education, environmental survey activities and lobbying and advocacy at national, regional and international level;
- developing and implementing projects on priority issues of the Black Sea region, including the Azov Sea;
- maintaining active contacts with similar international organisations and participating in programmes on the Black Sea/Azov Sea issues.

History and projects

The BSNN came into existence in as a result of the development and maturation of the NGO community in the countries surrounding the Black Sea in the mid 1990-s. The first regional meeting of the network was held in Varna in September 1998. National Meetings of the Black Sea NGOs were organized later in each of the countries in the autumn of 1998. To carry the

process further, in 1999 a BSNN general assembly took place and the association was formally registered in the Varna Court of Law under the Bulgarian law. The BSNN board consists of six persons, one from each of the Black Sea countries. Information and contacts of the BSNN board are available on the institutional website.

The BSNN is an independent, non-political, non-profit voluntary association of NGOs working for the public benefit. The number of officially registered members is 64; many more are associates or in process of becoming registered members. The organization has a regional plan and established communication tools – newsletter, topical news editions and institutional website currently located at www.bsnn.org In recognition of its role as an institution of civil society in the region the BSNN was granted the status of permanent observer at the Black Sea Commission (BSC) in 2001. The BSNN maintains close contacts with the Danube Environmental Forum (DEF) and other NGO networks such as PAN- Germany, Seas at Risk (SAR), Coalition Clean Baltic (CCB) and the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE) etc.

The BSNN has been implementing activities related to national, regional and EU policies on the Black Sea and water management, environmental policies and issues including ICZM, public awareness, campaigning, information dissemination, stakeholder involvement, promotion of good environmental practices and good governance, data collection and dissemination, data management, development of capacity for lobbying and advocacy, involvement of youth in the decision making process on national regional and EU level.

2008—2009 — Initiative for Effective Citizens' Control on Governments: Practical Aspects of Transparency, Accountability and Efficiency, Bulgaria Fund of BTD/USAID
2007—2008 — Better Knowledge about Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) in Bulgaria: the Unknown Threat National Campaign — the GEF Small Grants Programme
2007 — Capacity Building Initiative for the Bulgarian Black Sea NGOs and National Campaign for Black Sea Action Day 2007 — GEF-UNDP BSERP
2006—2007 — Enhancing the Capacity of NGOs and Local Authorities in NE Bulgaria for Advocacy and Networking on EU Environmental and Agricultural Issues — Phare BG Programme
2006—2008 — PlanCoast –Spatial Planning in ICZM, Interreg IIIB Cades, partner consortium project
2005—2008 — The Black Sea SCENE , 6th FP RICA , partner consortium project
2006 — “Best agricultural practices in my farm” the Danube Regional Grants Programme GEF-UNDP involved networking and exchange of best practices between Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova
2004— 2005 — Project “Supporting Rural Development on the Way to EU Accession” supported by Europe 2003 Phare Programme
2004—2005 —Project “Environmental Accent — Agriculture in Dobrudja and the Influence of Agriculture on Water Quality” supported by the GEF-UNDP Danube Programme
2004—2005 — Project “Support to Capacity Building in Rural Municipalities in North-Eastern Bulgaria for Work on Environment and Agrarian Issues Related to Transposed EU Legislation” supported by DEFRA, UK
2004—2005 — Project “Problems of the Coastal Environment and the Community: Getting Youth Involved” supported by the US Peace Corps
2004 — Establishment of Black Sea Legal Advocacy and Advisory Center and creation of model for replication in the littoral countries, supported by volunteer experts in association with Black Sea Centre for Environmental Information and Education

2004 — International Black Sea Day October 31: Second Regional Media Competition “Black Sea Shared”, Second Eco-Art Forum “Sea, Environment, Process” supported by the Black Sea Basin Directorate and NGO partners in collaboration with Radio Varna and other media

2003—2004 — Project “Support to the Project Implementation Unit of the Black Sea Ecosystem Recovery Project” supported by GEF-UNDP in Relation to the Nitrates directive” 91/676/EEC supported by volunteer experts in association with the Bulgarian agrarian ministry

2003 — First Round of Regional Media Competition “Black Sea Shared” in collaboration with media and NGO partners

2003 – Eco-Art Forum “Sea, Environment, Process” — adding an artistic dimension to the celebration of International Black Sea Day — October 31, supported by the Varna Municipality

2003 — Project “For the Black Sea in a Popular Way” supported by the Varna Municipality

2003 — Project “Black Sea NGO Networking toward Recovery of the Black Sea Ecosystem” supported by the UNDP-GEF BSERP

2002 — Project “Fostering the Cooperation between Decision-makers and the NGO community in the Black Sea Region” supported by the East-East Programme of the Open Society Institute, Budapest

2001—2002 — Project “Water Management as Shared Responsibility” supported by Phare-Access Programme, EU

2001 — Project “Review of International Basin Management Practices”

2000—2001 — Project “Public Advocacy Initiative for a Responsible Bulgarian Coastal Zone Development Policy’ supported by Open Society Club, Varna

2000—2001 — Project “Community Efforts for the Restoration of the Black Sea Model in Varna” supported by the US Peace Corps and the Ministry of Environment and Waters of the Republic of Bulgaria

2000—2001 — Project “BSNN Programme I and II” supported by the Netherlands Organisation for International Development Cooperation /Novib/

2000—Project “Anti-trawl Campaign” supported by the Ministry of Environment and Waters of the Republic of Bulgaria

Regional events:

The Black Sea NGO Network has been organizing various regional events and cross-border projects. These include the following events. Meetings and planning activities for the establishment of the association with representatives of the six Black Sea coastal countries were held in the period 1998 – 2000. In June 2000 a seminar entitled ‘Sustainable Development Principles’ for NGO representatives from the six coastal countries was held. In October 2002 the BSNN organized with support from East-East Programme of OSI regional NGO meeting with representatives from the six Black Sea countries dedicated to the revision of the Black Sea Strategic Action plan and enhancing cooperation with authorities on decision-making on Black Sea issues. In 2003 the BSNN organized a regional meeting dedicated to the assessment of the Black Sea Ecosystem Recovery Project Phase 1. In 2004 the BSNN organized 3 cross-border capacity building NGO seminars with participation of neighbouring countries in Bulgaria, Ukraine and Turkey. The Best Agricultural Practice in My Farm project, supported by the Danube Regional Grants Programme GEF-UNDP involved networking and exchange of best practices between Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova. The three-year Black Sea SCENE project currently under way involves networking between NGOs and scientific institutes from the Black Sea countries and the EU. In 2006 the

Network held the Black Sea Youth Leaders Conference to stimulate the involvement of youth from the six littoral countries and Moldova into the public policy implementation process. In 2006 and 2007 the Black Sea NGO Network was involved in training and capacity building seminars for Black Sea environmental NGOs from the six littoral countries within the Black Sea Ecosystem Recovery Project of GEF-UNDP Phase 2. The Black Sea NGO Network actively facilitates national and regional International Black Sea Day celebrations.

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