



TERMS OF REFERENCE (ToRs):

NGOs ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE FORUM



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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.1 Beneficiary Countries

Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo*¹, Serbia and Turkey.

1.2 Contracting Authority

European Union, represented by the European Commission on behalf of the beneficiary countries.

1.3 Relevant background

Access to environmental and climate information, public participation and access to justice are embedded in environment and climate legislation and are important elements in the alignment process. Civil society is a key player in the implementation of the environmental and climate *acquis* and civil society initiatives in the region to strengthen democratic practices have emerged over the past 15 years. The role of NGOs in the environment and climate sectors is accepted by the policy makers (often due to legal obligations), however the opinions and/or proposals expressed during the public consultations are in most cases neglected or not acknowledged.

In order to further develop the practices of good public consultation in the enlargement countries, it is important to support the development and strengthening of the NGOs sector and their active involvement in the approximation process. NGOs involvement in the policy formulation and decision making provides civil society in the region with the possibility of contributing to legislative and policy developments in their respective countries. It also offers the European Commission the possibility of receiving information on implementation of the environment and climate *acquis* at ground level.

The European Commission attaches a lot of importance to the public consultation process and the involvement of the NGOs community in the decision-making process. The NGOs Dialogue established in 1999 with the Commission's support has enabled over the last years the creation of a network of selected NGOs from the enlargement countries and established an annual dialogue with the European Commission. It also enabled NGOs in the enlargement countries to become an active and constructive partner for national and European administrations. The main focus of the meetings held under the Environment Forum framework was to consult the NGOs on new EU environmental policy developments and their implications in their countries. The dialogue also focused on assisting the NGOs in formulating their policies and in giving them a stronger voice in the environment and climate action debate with the national governments.

The NGOs Dialogue was followed by the NGOs Forum between 2004 - 2008 and the NGOs Environment Forum between 2009 - 2012.

From October 2013, the **NGOs Environment and Climate Forum** will be incorporated under the Environment and Climate Regional Accession Network project, as a horizontal element, covering environment and climate components.

1.4 Current state of affairs in the relevant sectors

In spite of progress made in recent years, the position of environmental NGOs in the beneficiary countries is still far from ideal. NGOs not only face external challenges in terms of involvement in policy formulation and

¹ *This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence*



decision-making, and a high degree of dispersion (difficult to create a common platform), but also have internal difficulties, such as limited financial resources and high training needs.

There are significant differences among beneficiary countries and individual administrations in terms of involvement and cooperation practices with local NGOs. Considerable efforts should be pursued to improve and develop the NGOs professional capacity and expert knowledge on environment and climate legislation in order to enhance their participation in policy making.

1.5 Related programmes and other donor activities

NGOs Environment and Climate Forum and ECRAN project

Under the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, the environment ministers from the enlargement countries met in Skopje in January 2000 and endorsed the 'Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme for South Eastern Europe' (REReP). REReP has led to an improvement in the approximation to EU standards in the Balkans by actively promoting the exchange of information, best practices and institution building.

REReP was followed by the 'Regional Environmental Network for Accession' (RENA) implemented between March 2010 – March 2013. RENA focused on the exchange of information and experiences related to the preparation for accession in priority areas such as: legislative approximation, horizontal legislation, nature protection, water management, inspection and enforcement and climate change. NGOs Environment Forum members were invited to join all RENA activities, thus leading to an improvement in capacity building and creating opportunities to communicate and cooperate with the relevant experts from the public administration bodies.

In order to continue and further develop what was achieved in RENA in terms of building and consolidating regional cooperation and the progress made in the approximation of EU environment and climate legislation, the European Commission decided to continue the technical and financial assistance in the form of a new program, the Environment and Climate Regional Accession Network (ECRAN). This new program will build on the results of RENA and will complement all other national initiatives in the field of environment and climate change. The overall objective is to continue strengthening regional cooperation between the EU candidate countries and potential candidates in the fields of environment and climate action and to assist them on their way towards the transposition and implementation of the EU environment and climate policies and instruments, a precondition for EU accessions.

The link between the NGOs Environment Forum and the Regional Environmental Network for Accession (RENA) has been beneficial, both for the participating NGOs and the civil servants. In order to enhance cooperation between civil society and the public representatives, it was decided to strengthen the public participation component of the ECRAN project by integrating the NGOs Environment and Climate Forum into the ECRAN project.

2. OBJECTIVE, PURPOSE & EXPECTED RESULTS

2.1 Overall objective

The overall objective is to strengthen the role, participation, technical expertise and knowledge of civil society organizations in the approximation and accession process.

2.2 Purpose

The purpose is to provide support for the civil society to develop their capacity in the environment and climate sectors and to create opportunities for improving the dialogue between the civil society organisations and



public sector bodies.

2.3 Results to be achieved

Selection of minimum 1 and maximum 3 NGOs per country to be represented in the Environment and Climate Forum. Criteria should be based on the number and quality of the applications received, geographic scope and thematic focus.

- Selected NGOs will act as national contact points and will cooperate with the government, other organizations and stakeholders at the country and regional level;
- Selected NGOs will act as co-organizers of the in-country preparatory meetings (backed by the project team);
- Selected NGOs will actively participate in the preparation and implementation of annual meetings;
- Selected NGOs will actively participate in the design and delivery of tailor made capacity building programmes;
- The NGOs will actively contribute to the dialogue at the national and regional level and will foster closer cooperation between the NGOs community and the national environment and climate authorities;
- The NGOs will use the technical expertise and knowledge gained during ECRAN activities for a more constructive and knowledge based dialogue with the national authorities thereby promoting the NGOs participation in environment and climate action decision-making and policy formulation.

3. ASSUMPTIONS AND RISKS

3.1 Assumptions

- Selected NGOs willing to cooperate at national, regional and internationally level;
- Selected NGOs willing to act as a hub for information sharing at the national level;
- Selected NGOs will have the capacity and knowledge on specific thematic areas covered by ECRAN activities;
- A high level of involvement, commitment, cooperation and participation of all stakeholders targeted by the proposed activities.

3.2 Risks

- Selected NGOs lack commitment;
- Selected NGOs have weak expertise and capacity;
- Lack of effective coordination and interaction with other NGOs at national and regional level related to the subject matter.



4. SCOPE OF THE WORK

4.1 General

4.1.1 Description

In close cooperation with the Commission services and the project team, the following activities will be implemented:

- Selection of minimum 1 and maximum 3 NGOs per country;
- Preparation and implementation of up to two preliminary meetings per country;
- Preparation and implementation of up to three regional meetings;
- Preparation and implementation of up to three annual meetings with the European Commission;
- Preparation and implementation of a capacity building programme, including regional and in-country trainings.

4.1.2 Geographical area to be covered

Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Serbia and Turkey.

4.1.3 Target groups

Non-profit and non-commercial organizations officially registered as a group of citizens, or other public associations, based and registered in one of the beneficiary countries with activities that are related to the protection and conservation of the environment, mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, or sustainability within the context of the EU accession process. Target organizations should be non-profit, and not act as an official governmental body, nor should they be legally affiliated with government at the national, regional or local level. It should represent local environment and/or climate action movement with proven record of relevant activities and projects.

4.2 Specific activities

Environment and Climate Regional Accession Network (ECRAN) and the NGOs Environment and Climate Forum (ECF) component will provide wide ranging opportunities for civil society and their active involvement in the approximation process, assist in the capacity development of the NGOs sector and provide opportunities for improving the stakeholder dialogue. While many of the planned activities are (to various degrees) open to civil society, in order to coordinate the process and enable activities at the international/regional/national level, the ECF will set up a regional network of selected NGOs representing civil society from their country. The NGOs in ECF will act as national contact points and cooperate with other organizations, governments and stakeholders at the country and regional level. Participation in the ECF provides the NGOs with many opportunities, but it also entails certain obligations.

Specific activities and expected results are provided below:

4.2.1 Preparatory meetings including wider consultations

The Environment and Climate Forum is envisaged to strengthen the public participation component of the ECRAN project. It aims to allow for closer cooperation and communication between the NGOs representatives and representatives from national authorities.



The national preparatory meetings will allow for wider consultation and the exchange of information with as many relevant NGOs as possible in each of the beneficiary country. The intention is to involve in these meetings not only the representatives of civil society, but also the representatives of relevant national authorities and other stakeholders (e.g. business, academia).

The national preparatory meetings will provide inputs to the Annual Meetings in Brussels between ECF and the European Commission. Taking into account the timeframe for implementation of the project and the time needed for organisation and implementation of national preparatory meetings as a basis for organisation of the Annual Meetings, there are two rounds of national preparatory meetings envisaged during the project implementation phase.

The ECF NGOs are expected to act as organizers of the in-country preparatory meetings (with the support of the project team). The foreseen tasks include at minimum the following:

- The project team will prepare in close collaboration with the NGOs short discussion papers (5 pages max.) highlighting possible issues for discussion;
- Agenda development (reflecting the most relevant issues and challenges in the EU accession process for the country);
- Organization of the event (½ to 1 day event is expected in the capital city);
- Involvement of key stakeholders (besides NGOs, other stakeholders will be targeted such as governmental agencies, business, academia and others);
- Process the meeting outcomes and provide information for the ECF web page;
- Outline, discuss and summarize the main points for the Annual Meeting.

The project team will also work together with the ECRAN national Focal Points appointed by the Ministries of Environment to prepare the invitations for the relevant national authorities to attend the preparatory meetings.

The Discussion Papers for the national preparatory meetings will consist of issues related to the approximation process within the thematic areas. They will contain background information on the identified issues as well as a series of questions for discussion at the meeting. Each paper will be specific to the country in question according to their political, structural and environmental situation.

The national preparatory meetings will also be an opportunity for the NGOs to provide input to the preparation of the European Commission's annual Progress Reports for the candidate countries and potential candidates. At the end of each meeting the outcome will be summarized in a closing session with the participants and a record of the meeting will be posted on the ECF website.

4.2.2 Regional meetings

The Regional meetings will allow for discussions and preparation of the Annual Meetings and of the capacity building work plan. On the Annual Meeting, the participants will decide on the thematic areas, will work on the thematic papers, will prepare the draft agenda and any other documents relevant for the meeting. The participants will also discuss and adopt the capacity building work plan for the coming period.

4.2.3 Annual Meetings

The Annual Meetings build on the outcomes of the other activities (national preparatory meeting and the



regional meetings) and represent an opportunity for civil society organisations to continue the dialogue with the European Commission. The agenda for the Annual Meetings will be prepared in cooperation with the NGOs, as well as in consultation with the EC. The project team will facilitate the preparation of the agenda by proposing a framework for the meetings and making suggestions for discussion topics (reflecting the outcomes of the preparatory in-country meetings and regional meetings).

Taking into account the timeframe for implementation of the project, the time needed for the organisation and implementation of preparatory meetings and of the regional meeting as a basis for the organisation of the Annual Meetings, three Annual Meetings are planned to take place.

Following the preparatory steps at the country and regional level, the organisation of the Annual Meetings will include at least the following involvement and actions from the NGOs:

- Active contribution to the agenda development - building on the outcomes of the preparatory national and regional meetings;
- Cooperation in preparation of the meetings materials (*e.g.* presentations, points for the discussion with DG Environment and DG Climate Action Commissioners, case studies to be presented, other NGO related issues);
- Participation in preparation of discussions (*e.g.* debrief the project team and other NGOs on the preparatory meetings and the Annual Meeting outcomes);
- Allocation of time and human resources for the Annual Meetings (approx. 2 to 3 days meetings are planned, travel and stay will be fully reimbursed by the project);
- Participate in managing the meeting (representatives of the NGOs may be asked to chair, or facilitate panels, or discussion sessions);
- Disseminate information from the Annual Meetings to the broad NGOs community and other relevant stakeholders.

During each of the Annual Meetings, there will be separate sessions between the NGOs and the project team (prior or during the meeting). The aim is to get feedback on the project management and agree on a work plan for the upcoming period (*e.g.* website, preparatory meetings, training programme, selection process for ECRAN activities and other technical and management issues).

4.2.4. The capacity building programme

a) The task will continue the good practice established under RENA where representatives from the NGOs sector were invited to attend all the RENA activities.

The ECF representatives will be invited to join all the planned ECRAN activities under the ECRAN Working Groups. The ECF NGOs will actively follow the ECRAN activities and together with the project team will identify and suggest NGO experts for the ECRAN Working Groups events. Participation at these events will be open also to other NGOs and the candidates will be selected based on their relevant expertise on the topic.

b) Depending on the priorities identified together with the selected NGOs, the project team will also develop a capacity building programme for NGOs representatives.

This twofold type capacity building programme will allow not only for more interaction and closer NGO involvement with the national environmental and climate authorities, but will also increase the level of NGO technical expertise allowing the establishment of a more constructive and fact based dialogue with the national



authorities and the involvement of the NGOs in policy formulation and environmental decision-making.

The project team will work closely with the ECF NGOs in designing and implementing the capacity building program. A list of up to 10 priority areas and topics relevant for the NGOs in the region will be identified. Based on the list, the ECF will prepare a Training Needs Assessment (TNA) questionnaire and subsequently will make an in depth assessment of the training needs. After that, the NGOs Specific Regional Training Plan will be prepared and will contain up to two regional trainings per year (in total up to 6 thematic regional trainings).

4.2.5. Outreach and Information Dissemination

One of the key roles and responsibilities of the ECF NGOs is to actively disseminate information and engage other organizations and stakeholders in the accession process. This may be done through various channels and the project team will, together with the NGOs, draft a simple communication plan at the start of the project. (Based on country specific situation and possible interlinks with ongoing NGOs activities). This may include:

- Dialogue about environmental and climate action agenda in the EU accession process at the national level and support the process by linking the debate with ECRAN/ECF activities and outputs;
- The ECRAN project webpage is the main place for finding up-to-date information on the project progress, EU accession process and region related information. The NGOs are expected to contribute to the ECF section of the page and actively promote information from the web using their communication channels (*e.g.* linking the web with their web pages, sending notifications to other NGOs, or to the national email lists);
- There will be a main ECF emailing list serving as the communication channel and tool for management of the network. The ECF NGOs should create (or if there already is one, than use) a national emailing list;
- NGOs will actively (using own channels and networks) disseminate information to national stakeholders, other NGOs, media, etc.

4.3 Management

The ECRAN Secretariat will appoint an expert to lead the planned activities and manage the delivery of results. The selected NGOs will appoint one representative to serve as the national focal point for overall communication and coordination.

5. DURATION²

Phase	Period
Call for application	January 2014
Evaluation and selection	January 2014
Publication of results	January 2014 – February 2014

² Provisional planning of activities that could suffer modifications throughout the project life time.



1st Annual Meeting	March – April 2014
1st regional meeting	September 2014
1st Round of National Meetings	March – May 2015
2nd regional meeting	June 2015
2nd Annual meeting	September 2015
2nd Round of National Meetings	January – February 2016
Final regional Meeting	June 2016
Design and delivery of the capacity building program	February 2014 – September 2016

6. REQUIREMENTS

All NGOs that are applying for participation in the ECF should meet the following criteria:

- The organisation must be officially registered as a group of citizens, or other public associations;
- The organisation must be based and registered in one of the following countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Serbia and Turkey;
- The organization's purpose and activities should be related to the protection and conservation of the environment, mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, and sustainability within the context of the EU accession process;
- The organization is defined as non-profit and non-commercial organization;
- The organisation does not act as an official governmental body, nor it is legally affiliated with government at national, regional or local level;
- The organisation has experience with international collaboration and can communicate clearly in English;
- The organisation has a proven presence in public life for at least the last 3 years, expressing the interests and values of their members or others, based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, or philanthropic considerations through various platforms (like media, conferences, actions, workshops, etc.);
- The organization is not a branch of trade union or political party, faith based group, business associations, or academic institution.



7. REPORTS

7.1 Reporting requirements

- Preparation of meeting reports and related materials from the preparatory national and regional meetings;
- Regular update on in-country progress and implemented activities;
- Preparation of Annual Meeting reports and related materials;
- Preparation of reports following the capacity building activities.

7.2 Submission and approval of reports

8. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring and evaluation will be done at two levels: regional and national. The project team will evaluate the work and performance of the NGOs in the regional activities, preparation of TNA, participation in training activities and ECRAN events, inputs to the Annual Meeting preparation and organization as well as the ability of the selected NGOs to bring issues and points from their country to the agenda and discussions during the Annual Meetings. The evaluation of the work will be done annually and will be part of the Annual Meetings, or regional meetings (one special session is foreseen for this in the program).

To allow continuous improvement of the project, NGOs will also have the opportunity to evaluate independently the work of the project team and the NGOs involvement in the ECRAN activities (evaluation form and follow up discussion of its results will be conducted).

Work and progress in the in-country activities will be monitored and regularly evaluated by the ECRAN team. This involves participation of at least one ECRAN expert at each of the in-country preparatory meetings. In case of poor performance, failure to participate in the Annual Meetings, inability to cooperate with other NGOs and/or stakeholders, or inability to organize preparatory meetings, the project team may suggest the replacement of an NGO by another NGO candidate from the same country.

