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**Enhancing the Capacity of NGOs in the Black Sea Region for
Advocacy and Networking on Environmental and
Water Management Issues**

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Management Issues**

*A guide on public involvement in the process of public policy and
decision making*

Varna 2015

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Involving the public in environmental decision making

Water management is a complex issue of essential significance for the well being of both man and society. The use of water as a resource also poses a lot of problems. It is essential that people should have access to sufficient quantity of clean water for drinking and sanitation purposes and also for use in industry, agriculture and numerous other activities. Water is also a commodity for which we pay a certain price and expect to receive a certain quality. Because of the value of the resource it should be protected and managed in a sustainable manner. The history of water use and the necessity to share water resources among numerous stakeholders has led to the understanding that that all those who have been involved in the use of the resource should decide on its use and its distribution together. Moreover the process of decision making should ensure equitable distribution of the resource. This is strongly desirable but the powerful of the day, the administrations and big businesses tend to neglect the opinion and demands of the large numbers of small water users. The mechanisms of management and involvement in decision making on public policy issues need to be further developed and improved with stronger participation from the concerned public. This guide provides an overview of the well established techniques and methods to influence the process of decision making, including that on environmental and water issues.

Many residents of the Black Sea region are becoming increasingly aware of the deterioration in the quality of their environment and waters in particular. There is still much misunderstanding of the problems and their causes but information campaigns in media and in schools can gradually spread the knowledge gathered by scientists to the general public. This is only the start however. What can the public do with the information? The important message is that something can be done to solve the problems and those actions taken by individual people and local communities can really make a difference.

Most people seem to think that solving environmental problems and protecting nature is somebody else's responsibility. There is often a sense of hopelessness, "if we complain, nobody will listen to us and our time will be wasted". For many families, it is already difficult to cope with the burdens of earning enough money to live reasonably and to solve the many issues, often bureaucratic, of day-to-day life. However there are some things, which we can all do in our daily lives that really make a difference to the environment and to general prosperity. We can and should influence the governments and decision makers, the administrations and those responsible for solving our water related problems.

Certainly, solving some environmental problems is the job of government employees. They too sometimes have to cope with low salaries and many outside pressures. Though we should expect them to carry out their work in an efficient manner, we should also understand their limitations. For this reason, it is even more important to develop policies and regulations that are uncomplicated, not shrouded in a mist of bureaucracy, and with clearly defined responsibilities.

There are many committed people who are convinced that rivers in the region and the Black Sea itself can be saved and the situation can improve. Most specialists would agree but are quick to point out that the river basin management plans and the strategies for the marine environment should be in place and need to be not only written and produced but properly implemented. The pressure on the financial resources of governments in the Black Sea region is enormous and often the economic is difficult. How can you ensure that the plans and strategies are implemented?

The first step is to think carefully about the things that you can do yourself within your own circle of family and friends. There are some simple things like saving water and keeping the beach clean that will cost relatively little time and money but really make a difference to the environment.

The next step is to exercise your democratic rights to investigate what your own community, local and regional authority and government is doing to implement the plans and strategies. Most towns and cities have environmental officers or pollution inspectorates. They are often very helpful and knowledgeable. If you are not satisfied with this information or with the actions being taken, you can write to your environment minister or - in the case of all Black Sea countries - to your Black Sea Commissioner, the person responsible for implementing the Bucharest Convention and the plans and other documents related to the Black Sea environment. The latter are normally senior officials of the Ministry of Environment or equivalent body. The Bucharest Convention was ratified by all the parliaments of the Black Sea countries and is part of the law in each of them. Government policy is partly determined by your elected representatives. You may wish to contact them if you consider that more attention should be dedicated to protecting the environment. You may also wish to express your feelings if you do not like the way the environment is treated in the place where you live.

There are many other ways in which you can help to protect the rivers of the region and the Black Sea. You may wish to join an NGO, participate in a public hearing or just to pick up a few pieces of litter next time you go to the beach (even if it is someone else's litter). Sharing the information on the traditional ways to influence decision making with your friends or local schools would also help. Next time you see a glorious morning on the Danube or a sunrise the Black Sea coast you will feel a much happier person if you have done something to protect them.

We believe that ordinary citizens can influence the process of political decision-making. No matter whether you are a non-governmental activist or just someone who wants to do something on an issue - we hope that this guide will be useful. The tips and ideas that we have prepared will help you be more effective in calling politicians and administrators, writing letters to the editors of local newspapers, in organizing meetings with Members of Parliament and campaigns.

Communication with decision makers

These actions are designed to help you talk openly with the decision makers where and when it matters. Depending on the problem, those can be MPs, heads of municipal departments or business owners. Writing letters and making phone calls are easy and effective ways to induce change in policy.

Decision makers pay attention and can change their minds or their vote when even a small number of voters turn to them with a topical issue. It is important to take action in time. Here is the list of some tips offered in the guide, which will ensure that your actions will have a greater effect:

- Writing letters to your Member of Parliament (MP)
- Telephone calls to an MP
- Meetings with your Member of Parliament
- Attracting media attention

- Organization of media event
 - Writing a media release and media statement
 - Writing effective letters to the editor
 - Writing and publishing comments
 - Telephone calls in a talk show on TV or on the radio
- Organizing campaigns
 - Organization of demonstrations

Writing letters

The more personal your letter, the greater will be its effect. Write what you think and feel. You don't have to be an expert - you are a concerned citizen. Describe briefly how this policy affects you and your community.

- **Write your letter by hand** if your handwriting is legible. In that way the recipient can verify that you are a real person. If you have it printed, add a handwritten note.
- **Be concise, clear and specific.** Write a letter no longer than one page, if possible, and keep to the point.
- **Insist on a written reply** by the decision maker expressing his or her position on the specific question you have raised. Do not let them get away with platitudes!
- **Be polite with the people you come into contact, even if you disagree with them.**
- **Include your address in the letter. The envelope may be lost.**

With regard to **emails and faxes** the same rule applies: the more personal the communication, the better. While some officials give the same weight on electronic messages and faxes as they do on letters, and reply to them formally, others just ignore them and do not attach the same meaning to them as to "real mail". Emails and scanned letters with signatures are getting increasingly popular even in formal communication. Every MP has got an official email address which is part of the official contact information.

Telephone calls

If you are calling a member of parliament, ask to speak to the assistant, who is assigned to deal with the specific issue. If that person is gone, leave a clear message with name, address and mobile or telephone number. Tell the assistant why you are calling and what you want the Member of Parliament to do. You can request a written response to your message.

Additional tips

- Add an article that has a connection with this policy.
- Remind the politician that you have a personal relationship with him - you're a voter.
- Use letterhead, if possible.

- Write or call a second time to give thanks for the help or put pressure if the answers are unsatisfactory.

Meeting with your Member of Parliament

The most effective way to influence policy is to meet one of your elected representatives in parliament, your member of parliament (MP). Depending on the system, your district can be represented by one or several members of parliament. Our elected representatives and their teams constantly meet with voters to hear their views on various issues.

You can go to the office of an MP alone, with friends or with members of other groups who share your views on the issue. You can arrange a meeting in the reception office of the MP in the voting district or in their office in parliament in the capital. Remember that your MP is there to represent the interests of the people, and anyone can request a meeting!

Before the meeting:

Make an appointment for the meeting. Just call in the office of the Member of Parliament and tell his or her team that you are a voter and you would like to meet with your representative in parliament. If this is not possible, ask for a meeting with one of his team, which works in the respective field. Do not take "no" for an answer.

Bring a delegation. Your representative may be more inclined to hold a meeting if you go with a delegation of several taxpayers or environmental activists, religious and business leaders. You will be more convincing if you demonstrate that your cause is supported by a larger number of the population.

Preparation for the meeting:

Make your program and set goals. Decide what commitment you want your MP to take (e.g. a vote "for" or "against" a certain bill or ratification of a contract).

Check the position of your Member of Parliament on the specific issue. Call his or her office or do research.

Choose someone for the role of group leader and make a list of key points to be raised and questions that must be asked by each one. If you have time, rehearse.

Prepare materials. For greater effect bring an information package of materials to the meeting such as: data from different organizations, benevolent editorial comments and letters to the editor or news that supports your request. Write your name and phone number so that if need your representative can contact you.

During the meeting:

Be brief and diplomatic. Your presentation should be short and to the point, as you will be given only a few minutes. State clearly what actions you expect your MP to take. It is important to listen to him or her, even if his or her views differ from yours. Do not be contradictory or offensive.

Put local and personal focus on the issue. Emphasize why the issue affects you and others. Be specific. Quote local statistics give examples of communities that will be most affected by this issue, or mention anyone that supports you locally.

Insist on engagement. Do not leave your MP to evade the issue or to change the subject. Ask specifically for his or her position. If they agree with you, ask them to raise the issue for discussion at a plenary session or ask them to sign a letter on the subject addressed to other parliamentarians - it can help in influencing other members of parliament.

Do not be confused. If you are asked a question that you do not know the answer, just say you do not know, but you will find out. Take the email, phone number and contact address and provide all necessary information as soon as possible.

After the meeting:

Thank your Member of Parliament and/or his team for their time, summarize the main points that you made during the meeting and mention the information you promised to provide.

Provide the necessary information. If your Member of Parliament has asked questions or has shown particular interest in any aspect of the issue, take the opportunity and write him or her a letter, to send data, to talk on the phone or to request a second meeting. The people elected by us will behave better if they see that we provide information that they need, rather than putting pressure on them only for our own problems.

Share your experiences. Tell other people and organizations what you learned about the position of your Member of Parliament.

Create a connection. The first visit should never be the end of the contact. Make sure you or someone in your group keeps in touch with the team assigned to the issue.

How to use the media to convey your message

Like it or not, the mainstream media have an enormous impact on public opinion and policy. That is why we must work with them to be able to convey messages and values that are important to us. If you want to communicate with people who are not familiar with your problem, and to include them in the struggle to achieve social justice or human rights, media coverage is required.

Telling a story or putting across a point of view to journalists and editors is a special art. You must be clear and concise and at the same time consider what you say. You need to know some tricks of the trade to make your case look unique among the thousands of other interesting things happening in the world.

How to use the internet and social media?

The same rules apply to the popular and professional internet editions and websites. You will have no limitation of space but you need to compete for the attention of the internet audience. Having a successful blogger on your side can be a great asset.

Media event

Holding a media event is an activity that aims to produce news. It may take the form of a press conference, meeting/rally, direct action, highlight of the day and others. Most people think of "news" as something that happens "out there" in the world. The mainstream media in general believe that they participate in a one-way process - information flows from the experts and the knowledgeable to the passive spectators sitting in their living room and watching TV. The organizing and holding of a media event returns the creation of news back to the people. As they say: "If you do not like the news go and make your own!"

Tips

- Make sure your news is worth reporting. The more of these characteristics it has, the more likely it is to be reported:
 - novelty
 - conflict
 - new data, setting a trend
 - simplicity
 - humor
 - participation of celebrity
 - action
 - vivid images
 - local impact
 - festivals, anniversaries.
- Choose the place of the media event, guests, visual materials etc. according to your message and motto.
- Make it fun. If you do not want to be there, why should the press want to be?
- Note timings. Does your event coincide with others at the same time? If you want reporters to come, it is best to plan the event from Monday to Thursday between 10 am and 2 pm.
- Find a suitable place. Keep in mind the following considerations when choosing the location:
 1. Is the place convenient? Reporters are busy people and will not travel far for a single event.
 2. Is the place commonly used for media events? Try to find a unique place, if possible.
 3. If your event is outdoors do you have a backup location? Some rain or a spell of bad weather will not necessarily ruin the event but if the climate is severe it will happen for sure. Also note that it is possible to postpone the event if the weather is very bad.
- Provide photographers for the event.
- Place a large banner or sign with the logo of your organization.
- The event should be from 15 to 45 minutes.
- Disseminate information about the problem and your organization at the event.

- Do not forget the technical equipment. Do you need a microphone, platform, etc.?
- Keep handy some speakers who are ready for an interview.
- See which reporters have visited the event by asking them to fill in a list of participants. Send to those who did not come an email with the press release.

Telling your story

- **Phone calls are the most effective way to communicate with reporters.** Telephone calls are an effective media strategy. Reporters are overwhelmed with emails and paper; they may have never seen your press release.
- **Plan which reporters you are going to contact.** Contact reporters who cover your issue, and reporters with whom you keep in touch. If you need to make a call blindly, ask for the editor responsible for general topics.
- **Find a "hook" in your story.** Show reporter why your story is important, dramatic, timely, controversial or has an impact on many readers.
- **Always tell the story first** and then ask if they have received your message. Catch the attention of the reporter immediately, he will not wait for you to get to the point.
- **Make the story short and strong.** Reporters do not have time for long conversations, so you reach the most interesting and important information in the first 90 seconds. Remember to include the main points: "who", "what", "where", "when" and "why".
- **Be enthusiastic and helpful.** If you are not excited by the story, how will you excite the reporter?
- **Never lie to the reporter.** He may not like what you say, but he has to respect you.
- **Respect deadlines.** Phone calls should better be made between 9.30 and 13.00. If you feel that it is fast or impatient, ask the reporter if he has to meet a deadline and offer to call again later.
- **Use only one reporter.** If you talk to more than one person (which is sometimes necessary), make sure that the other reporter knows you have been talking with a colleague.
- **Finish.** Ask the reporter whether he is interested or whether he will come to the event. Most will not promise over the phone, but will think.
- **Offer to send information** if they cannot attend the event. (Remember to send the information immediately.)
- **Do not be upset.** These calls can be disappointing when reporters are not interested. But remember that every phone call placed puts your issues and your organization in the spotlight and is an important step towards the development of lasting professional relationships with reporters.

Interviews

- Prepare two or three statements suitable for quotations or sound bites. Sound bites are short, meaningful statements that convey your message and sound authentic in electronic media. They are also the perfect quote of one or two sentences that you would like to see in tomorrow's article in the newspaper. Write them.
- Always try to direct the questions to your message. Use "links" to connect the questions to the more important issue that is being debated.
- Try to overtake the questions - think well how you formulate your answers.
- Get to know the arguments of your opponents and prepare to respond to them.
- Rehearse - even people who speak every day to reporters rehearse their speeches.
- An interview is never over, even when the recording device has been stopped. Everything you say to the journalist is recorded.
- Do not worry about difficult questions - stick to your message.
- If you make a mistake, do not worry. Just ask the reporter to start over (unless the broadcast is live).
- If you need more time to think, ask the reporter to repeat or clarify the question - or just pause and think before answering.
- If you do not know the answer to the question, do not worry. Try to return to your message. If this is an interview for a print media, tell the reporter that you will seek the answer and will call him later.
- Tell the reporter that you have more information if he or she has missed something that you consider important.

Writing an invitation to the media and a press release

What is the difference between an invitation to the media and a press release?

While the invitation to the media must catch the attention of journalists and make them attend the upcoming event, the statement in the press release must contain all the information that a reporter needs to write his or her material. If you give a reporter a press release instead of an invitation, he/she will have all the necessary information and will not come to the event at all!

Websites have changed the way press releases are submitted. Commercial, fee-based press release distribution services, such as news wire services, or free website services co-exist, making news distribution more affordable and leveling the playing field for smaller players. Such websites hold a repository of press releases and claim to make a company's news more prominent on the web and searchable via major search engines.

Invitation to the media:

- Provides some basic information: who, what, where, when and why.
- It has to be sent a few days before the event, so that the reporter could plan the visit.

Components

- Title. It will make or break the invitation - include the most important information in the title and make it strong. The title can be up to four lines; include a subtitle if necessary but be brief (and remember that you must use capital letters - they catch the eye!).
- Brief description of the event and the issue. Display it visually ("Citizens will carry large posters and life size dummies to the National Assembly to protest against the recent budget cuts for education.")

- Make a list of the speakers at your event.
- Include a quote from someone in your organization who works on the problem. This quote should be the main message you are trying to convey to the press and public. It should therefore be clear, well thought out and strategic.
- Contact information. In the upper right corner of the message write the names and mobile/phone numbers of two people for feedback. Make sure that these people could easily be found on the phone. Include their personal phone number if necessary.
- Include a short presentation of your organization in the last paragraph.

Structure / form

- Write "Invitation to the media" in the upper left corner,
- Write the date under it.
- Put "****" at the end of your message. This is the way journalists mark the end of the material.
- Write "Continue" at the end of p. 1, if the message is two pages and leave a contact mobile/phone number and a short title in the upper right corner on the next page.
- Use the letterhead of your organization when writing an invitation to the media.

How to disseminate it

The invitation to the media must be put on the news from three to five days before the event. Email or fax the message to the appropriate reporter, editor or producer of each news team on your media list.

- Always call on the phone on the day before the event and keep a copy of the message handy to dispatch immediately if necessary.

Press release:

- It informs reporters about your event, report or issue.
- It is more detailed than the invitation in the preliminary message - it has to provide all the information needed by a reporter to write a material.
- Think about and then write the media statement or press release as news that you would want to see written.
- Send it in the morning or on the day before the event.

Components

- Title. It will make or break your statement - include the most important information in the title and make it strong. The title can be up to four lines; include a subtitle if necessary but be brief (and remember that you must use capital letters - they catch the eye!).
- The important information must "attack" the reader from the first page - most reporters will look at the statement for just 30 seconds.
- Spend 75% of the time in writing the title and the first paragraph.
- Use the inverted pyramid style of writing news. Write the main points first and add details later in the statement.
- Write short sentences and paragraphs. Do not include more than three sentences in a paragraph.
- Include a colorful quote of a famous speaker in the second or third paragraph.
- Include a short presentation of your organization in the last paragraph.

Structure/form

- Write "For immediate release" in the upper left corner.

- Write the date under "For immediate release".
- Contact information. In the upper right corner of the message write the names and mobile/phone numbers of two people for feedback. Make sure that these people could easily be found on the phone. Include their personal phone number if necessary.
- Put "****" at the end of your message. This is the way journalists mark the end of the material.
- Write "Continue" at the end of p. 1, if the message is two pages and leave a contact mobile/phone number and a short title in the upper right corner on the next page.
- Use the letterhead of your organization when writing an invitation to the media.

How to disseminate it

The statement must be sent in the morning of the event or on the day before the event. In some cases, you may want to send an advance copy to the selected reporters with reference that the information is confidential until the date you specify.

- Always call reporters on the phone after you have sent a statement. If your statement is to announce of an event, always call on the morning before the event.
- Keep a copy of the statement at handy to send immediately or refer to while making a call.

What is a letter to the editor?

- A letter to the editor most often discusses a current event/problem reflected in a publication, radio or television program.
- It is your chance to tell the community about issues in the news. The letters are very popular - so make sure to include them in your media strategy.

Elements/advice

- It is much easier to publish a letter to the editor than an article written by a reporter.
- Your letter has the best chance of being published if it is a reaction to an article published in the newspaper. Respond as quickly as possible.
- Read the page with letters - you will learn how to write effective letters and you will be able to check whether someone wrote on your issue.
- Write a short and concise letter - about half a page. The newspaper will take the initiative to shorten your letter, to meet the requirements of the page; the more there is to cut, the less control you have over what is published. Start with the most important information.
- Pay attention to only one of the important points and make attractive case. Be "witty" without slipping into sarcasm or use of clichés.
- Write short paragraphs with no more than three sentences in a paragraph.
- Do not write too often. Once every three months is exactly as it should be.
- Avoid personal attacks.
- Write your full name, address and telephone number at the top and sign it at the end. Your mobile/phone must be in the letter so that you could be contacted for verification.
- Check that the letter has been received.

Writing a comment

Comments are very popular in the swiftly developing world of electronic media. They are mostly anonymous and consequently the language and messages are often neither presentable nor precise. They intend to sway public opinion one way or the other immediately. They can be malicious or slanderous as well. Most politicians and media

nowadays have social network profiles and blogs. The latter are most convenient for comments. Traditional print media still devote some space to comments which we describe below.

Comments are written by citizens, experts, leaders of organizations or people like you. If you want to publish a comment, you must know that comments have a big impact and are an effective way to inform a large number of readers on an issue and influence decision makers. The advice on writing letters refers to comments as well. In addition one can emphasize on the following:

- **The topical character of your comment** is the most important factor that the newspaper should consider when deciding whether to publish it or not. What is this issue already reported in the news? Will there be a vote on the issue in Parliament? Is there an appropriate anniversary or holiday with which you can connect your material or has there been an article or an editorial comment in the near past, which you can answer? Remember that the review by the newspaper can take up to a week, but it's good to check whether your material is intended for publication.
- **The bearer of the message and the message itself** are important. If you find a celebrity to sign the letter, it will have a greater impact on the newspaper.
- **Learn the rules of the newspaper.** The text should not exceed half page or one page. You have to introduce yourself and offer a title. Many newspapers want copyright, which means that you cannot submit the comment to another journal at the same time. Check how the paper deals with materials - increasingly editors want to have the material by email.
- **Find the biggest newspaper** in your area to get maximum coverage.
- **Call after sending comments.** Ask if the paper will publish your material. Even if it does not publish your material this time, it is a good opportunity to educate the editor on the issue. Building relationships with editors and reporters may prove useful in the future.
- **Consider the creation of a blog** of your organization for sharing views, issues and comments. If topical and interesting, the traditional and electronic editions will be sure to find and disseminate them.

Calling in television or radio talk show

To provide a message on a local or national talk show is an excellent way to inform the public on an issue that it is not aware of, to provoke stereotypes or to mobilize for action.

How to start

Watch the show or listen to it before you decide to call to get the idea of it and the guests who are typically invited. If you are well known in your community or if you are an expert, you can even get a seat as a guest.

Advice on persuasive talking

- **Talk simple.** Use language that everyone can understand, and do not use jargon. Prepare to state your ideas quickly and briefly. It is good to make notes before calling.

- Use names. Give an example referring to the position of decision-makers. Compromise their position or greet them on the correct position.
- Remember your audience. Observe your tone and language. Compassion, reason and understanding will help your message be well received.
- Challenge your listeners. Ask them to act by contacting the decision maker, and talk to friends and colleagues on this issue. Give them the necessary information.

Making the call

When you call, be ready to wait as the contact phone numbers are often busy. For large programs one may start to telephone 10-15 minutes before the scheduled start time to be able to connect. When you contact them, please explain the main idea and say your name. Start with the most interesting facts or statistics and then explain why listeners will be interested. Repeat the phrase or idea, to which you react, so that the people, who had just turned on could find out what you mean. Also try to connect with guest comments and the program. Give contact information.

Some tips:

- Keep a glass of water handy.
- Turn down the volume of the TV or radio, once you start talking so that no sound feedback occurs.
- Breathe and try to talk normally - not too fast or too slow.

Your behavior is just as important as your message.

"Yes":

- Proceed immediately to the topic.
- Speak slowly and concisely.
- Be yourself and show concern.
- Refer to the person you are calling by name and thanked him.

"No":

- Do not be aggressive.
- Do not defend yourself.
- Do not use too many statistics or abbreviations.
- Answer, if you are asked a provocative question.

Organizing a campaign

Often campaign activists put the cart before the horse, as they plan the holding of a demonstration or another event before having decided what their purpose is and without having developed a comprehensive plan how to achieve it.

Imagine the stage where you are, as point A and the one that you want to reach, or your goal, as point Z. Your strategy is the road that you have to walk from point A to Z, and your tactics are the individual steps you need to take on this road. Never place the tactics before goals and strategy, otherwise it will turn out that you move in a direction that does not lead you to the goal.

Use the following table when planning a new campaign or starting a new phase in an existing campaign.

Column 1. Objectives:

- Write long-term goals of your campaign
- List the intermediate objectives of the campaign. What will be a victory?
- How the campaign:
 1. will make people's lives better?
 2. will give people a sense of control over the processes in power?
 3. will change power relations?
- What short-term or partial victories can be achieved as a step towards achieving your long-term goal?

Column 2. Organizational factors:

- List the resources that your organization puts in the campaign. Include money, staffing, equipment, reputation and more.
- What is the budget, including voluntary donations for this campaign?
- List the specific ways in which you would like your organization to gain prominence through this campaign, e.g. fundraising, new members, develop leadership potential.
- List the internal problems that need to be considered if the campaign fails.

Column 3. Supporters, allies and opponents

- Who is interested in this issue, in order to join or to help in the organization?
 - Who are those who think that the problem is theirs?
 - What do they gain if they win?
 - What risks do they take?
 - What impact do they have on the goal?
 - In what groups are they organized?
- Who are your opponents?
 - What will your victory cost to them?
 - What do they do/invest to oppose you?
 - How strong are they?

Column 4. Object:

- Primary objects (always a person, not an institution):
 - Who has the power to give you what you want?
- What influence do you have on the object?
- Secondary objects:
 - Who has an impact on the people with influence, to give you what you want?
- What influence do you have on the object?

Column 5. Tactics:

- For each objective list the tactics that each group supporters can use to influence. Tactics must be related to the context of the campaign, to be flexible and original, aimed at a specific object, to make sense for your members, to be supported by a specific form

of government. Tactics include: media events, public hearings, strikes, non-violent civil disobedience, taking an issue to court, negotiations, elections etc.

Holding a campaign

I. Choice of type of campaign

The success of your campaign depends on a proper choice of the type of campaign and the hard work and commitment of its participants. The following features are necessary so that a campaign can be described as good:

- **Clear goals.** As already mentioned, be aware of exactly what you want. Purpose as "to get the municipality to consume less paper" is not so clear, such as "to reduce paper consumption by 10%."
- **Accessible object.** It is of particular importance is to be able to communicate with the object you selected (the man who has the influence to grant your request). This sometimes requires a lot of work (especially if your object is mayor or minister), You should note the difficulty before you start the campaign.
- **Politically executable.** Are you able to call more people to support you in this campaign? Your campaign's power comes from its ability to mobilize supporters.
- **Possible to win.** Think seriously about whether you can succeed. We do not mean that you should not make an effort but rather that you should not to waste time and resources on a campaign that is doomed to failure. As a group, try to identify possible obstacles in the way to your success. If you think that you have even a small chance to win, start the campaign!
- **Enthusiasm among the group.** If your group members are not enthusiastic about the outcome of the campaign, it will not succeed.

II. Before the campaign

Sometimes you may be tempted to start the campaign immediately but note that it is advisable to prepare well before the start. These are the things you should do before you start the campaign:

- **Alignment of goals.** Make sure that your understanding of the changes that you offer is clear and complete. Everyone should agree with the specifics of your goals and be aware of what would constitute victory. All your strategic and tactical decisions must be connected to these goals.
- **Find and prepare materials.** Make sure that you are prepared to defend your position. If you appear to be not well prepared and informed at the beginning of the campaign, no one will take you seriously; make sure that you understand the problems you want to solve, before submitting the proposal so that you should be perceived as informed and responsible.
- **Identify your object.** This can often be the hardest part of a campaign if we are dealing with a large bureaucracy. But before you start the campaign, you should investigate who actually has the power to grant your proposal. Your strategy and tactics should be directed towards convincing and pressing this person or object.
- **Meet with the responsible administrative entities.** Send some of the well-known representatives of your group to meet with your object. Present your proposal in a friendly

way and see what happens. If your request is not granted, ask for specific barriers for the implementation of your proposal. Listen carefully and note them in developing your strategy and tactics (e.g. If they say that you do not have the support of enough people make a petition to prove them wrong).

- Develop a strategy and schedule. After meeting with the administrative entities you will get an idea of how resistant to attack they are and what you have to do to achieve your goals. As a group, work together to create a preliminary strategy and schedule (they may change over time), which will guide you from the beginning of the campaign.

III. Low level tactics

This is the level of starting your campaign. This tactic is low-risk, low visibility and requires some specific skills and less experience in comparison with the tactics used in the second and third phase. It is best to start the campaign with this tactic for it can prove to be all you need. It is also important to secure the support of other players before you get to the next stage, so that any violation of the rules and the law could be justified by the immorally uncompromising stand of the administration.

- *Petitions.* This is a good way to prove that you have support, and this is a great mechanism for promoting your campaign. A petition provides an opportunity to talk to people in person for your campaign. It can also be a good way to recruit new members - when someone is really interested in the issues you are working on, take his contact information and invite him to your meetings. The text of the petition must be short (a few sentences and a few points, if necessary), so that people who are not familiar with these issues do not get lost in the details.
- *Subscriptions.* Write a letter explaining your problems and demands, and get people to sign up to it. This is a good way to show that different groups support what you are doing, and have more weight than one petition; administrations often regard these people as more ready to participate in your campaign and more competent than random citizens who have signed a petition. This is also a good way to find allies from which you may need support later in your campaign.
- *Web pages.* If your group has a web page, make sure that your information campaign has been published on it. If possible, make a page entirely dedicated to an individual campaign; it shows that you are organized and you are taking the campaign seriously.
- *Discussion.* Discussions are a good way to draw attention to your demands and to attract people who may be interested in working for your campaign. Ask people to fill in a list of participants in the discussion and invite anyone who have registered to your next meeting. Also make sure that your message is clear from the leaflets (you should have enough of them!) that advertise your discussions so that even people who have come should be familiar with the matter.
- *Table.* Place an information table in a busy part of town where you can distribute materials, talking to people and make them sign your petition. Since each can stand on the table, it is a suitable task for new members to make them feel active participants, although at any time there must be at least one person with good knowledge of the problems. It also creates visibility for your campaign and is a good way to recruit new members.
- *Newspaper.* Invite newspapers to write materials for your campaign, writing letters to the editor, even buy a place for ads if necessary and if it is not expensive. This gives you

something concrete to show the administration to prove that there is concern about your issue.

- *Build coalitions.* If you think it is useful to involve other groups to address the issue, you have to attract them in the early phase of the campaign. Before you contact them, form a clear idea of what exactly their role is and how the coalition can be structured. Remember that no one will want to join a coalition in which to receive orders from your group, so form or join coalitions only if from the very start you wish to work with other groups and are ready to reach a compromise with them on strategy and tactics.
- *Meetings with the administration.* While you take all of the above actions you must be in constant contact with the administration, with which you work. Present your petition to them, tell them how you create coalitions and how successful your debates have been. Exaggerate success when possible. This may be enough to convince them to satisfy your demands. If this does not happen, warn them that you will continue the campaign until they fulfill your demands. Give them some time and be ready to get to the middle level tactics after the deadline.
- *Make some noise.* Make your campaign an exciting event which will be talked about. It should be reflected in posters, newspapers and events. If you make a campaign exciting and attractive, people will be interested in information on the issue and options on how they can support the campaign.

IV. Medium Level Tactics

This tactic is a little more confrontational and should complement, but not replace low-level tactics. You can use it without breaking the law, but first make sure that your actions will not have any disciplinary consequences. This tactic is a good way to boost the image of the campaign and highlight the urgency of your demand:

- *Banners.* Carefully choose the time and place where as many people as possible can see your banner. The message of the banner should be clear and easy to understand, even for people who are not familiar with your campaign. It would be nice to have people on the spot who can distribute materials and promote the campaign. Take pictures and post them.
- *Rallies, speeches.* Do not organize such events, until you have the support of a sufficient number of people. There is nothing more convincing than a large mass of people shouting, demonstrating public support for your cause, but there is nothing more ridiculous than two or three people with banners standing at an administrative building and blowing whistles. Also make sure to schedule those events well: prepare slogans in advance and assign people to lead the column of campaigners; prepare posters. Advertise as much as possible and most importantly, choose the time and place that will make you most visible and is most convenient for meetings.
- *Be a thorn in the side of your object.* Any time when he or she appears in public, be there with leaflets and posters, informing people about your demands and the persistent refusal of the object to fulfill them.
- *Meet with your object again.* Before you get to the next level, give an overview of your actions, repeat your demands and give a new deadline, after which you can take more extreme measures.

V. High Level Tactics

This tactic is quite extreme, it requires more knowledge and is more risky than the tactics of a lower level. Make sure everyone in the group are aware of the disciplinary consequences of these actions. No one who is not prepared to accept them, should not participate. Also plan people's behavior if police is called. Make sure you have broad support for the campaign, before you do anything that will stick the label of an extremist group to you. Before you begin these actions think about how it will be perceived by the public and especially by your object. You should look dedicated to your work so that your actions can be justified and present a threat to the object's reputation.

- *Disrupting important events.* A sure way to get attention is to make noise at any 'important' event. Some people do not like to take such action as they think they are disrespectful, others - that this is an inappropriate way to create a buzz around your issue. Make sure that you have the consent of all members of the group before you do something like that. It is important that your plans are not public, because the police will be in place before you have started. Make sure that you surround the place, distribute the roles and organize as well as possible before the event.

- *Disruption of sessions or meetings.* If your object is on a municipal council or a similar institution, this is an appropriate way to influence them. Interruption of the meeting or session can really infuriate them. You can take pictures or make a short clip and publish it on the internet or in a paper. CAUTION: Do not take any such action without having asked to attend the hearing or meeting first. The last thing you would want to see in a newspaper is that you stormed a meeting to make your voice heard, when you only had to ask politely and you were going to be invited.

- *Taking an office or another official site.* Make a clear plan how long you intend to stay there - you can tell the administration that you will not leave until they have granted your demands, but in reality you need to define the time when you leave the office. Otherwise you will have to negotiate openly during the occupation of the building; moreover everyone should know in advance what commitment he or she has undertaken. As always, get ready: select the location, choose the right time, distribute the roles of each and make sure that newspapers will report on it.

- *Hacking.* If your group has people working well with high technology, who are not afraid, 'hacking' may be an appropriate way. If someone can hack a web page (which is extremely difficult), this could be a really good way to attract the attention of the persons concerned. Keep in mind that the consequences of these actions are severe.

VI. Victory!

Congratulations - your demands are met! Now is the time to finish your campaign appropriately:

- *Be generous winner.* Publicly thank the official for his/her forward thinking and social responsibility. This will create a more favorable image for you in the future.

- *Tell the media.* Contact the media and send media reports to local newspapers, cable operators and national media.

- *Continuation.* Ensure that the administration does everything promised. Do not be afraid to threaten to resume the campaign if they do not fulfill their commitments.
- *Thank the people.* Notify all who helped or were supporters of your cause about your success and thank them for the help. This is not only a good way to build alliances, but a polite gesture!
- *Celebrate your victory!*
- *Use the momentum.* Upon a successful campaign your group already has established a name in the community. Discover new issues around which to mobilize people.
- *Spread the campaign.* If you can achieve this victory in your area, then others can do it elsewhere! Find ways to share your campaign and connect with other groups and work with regional and national networks to develop contacts with other groups.

Organizing a demonstration

The right of peaceful assembly is one of the basic human rights and freedoms guaranteed in the constitutions of all countries in the region. The same is true about the freedom of speech and freedom of association, basic freedoms for a functioning democracy. Without those rights we lose some of the major instruments for showing the people's point of view to the governments. Demonstrations, rallies and protests - these are some of the most effective ways to show support for a cause, to attract new people to it and to draw the attention of those in power.

Marches and demonstrations have an important place in the history of social movements all over the world. Movements for the empowerment of women, labor movements, the movement of Gandhi against imperialism and the human rights movements have all used widely forms such as demonstrations and marches. Today this tradition continues to live.

Organizing a demonstration may seem a difficult task, but it is not. Gather together twenty or thirty of your friends and colleagues, make posters and you are ready to coordinate a protest against the infamous deeds of a local business or municipality.

All you have to do is go out on the streets!

Some types of demonstrations:

- **Vigil.** Vigils are a well known way to remember the loss of life or to note other victims. Vigils are usually solemn and call for reflection and are used as a way to honor a person or group of people. Good examples are the vigils to mark September 11.
- **Strike cordon.** This type of demonstration consists mostly of a group of people holding placards and going round a building or an office. If you've seen workers on strike, you have probably seen a strike cordon.
- **March.** The march is like a cordon - people carry placards and chant but the group starts from a certain assembly point and continues along an agreed route. Marches are definitely

a good idea when you expect a large mass of people or when you want to convey a message.

- **Non-violent civil disobedience.** When injustice becomes so great that people can no longer put up with it non-violent civil disobedience may be regarded as justified tactic. Made popular by Gandhi and Martin Luther King non-violent civil disobedience provides a way to take action directly, without resorting to force.

Perhaps the most famous kind of civil disobedience is a sitting strike or sit-in. Usually the protesters occupy an area of the decision maker - a businessman or MP - and refuse to leave until their demands are granted.

In recent years, civil disobedience has become more inventive. Sometimes protesters get shackled together to block a crossing, or get locked in the entrance area of a building. Sometimes protesters climb buildings to put large banners on the facade.

Note: Civil disobedience by definition is illegal. If you intend to organize a sit-in or a similar demonstration our advice is to consult with a lawyer in advance.

Steps in organizing the demonstration:

- **Find supporters / Make a coalition:** When organizing any event - be it a discussion or protest - it is important to gather a core group of people who are dedicated to the idea. It is also useful to find other groups and to check whether they want to participate in the demonstration. Campaigns work successfully when executed by a coalition of groups and individuals. Who else could be interested in planning the demonstration? What are your natural allies in your community? Try to find coalition partners as early as possible. Coalitions work best when everyone is involved in the process from the outset.

- **Manage tasks and define roles:** You must get everyone to fulfill the assigned tasks. When organizing a demonstration, you will probably need a speaker of the protest; and another man to provide the required permits and, if necessary, contact the politicians; one person has to be responsible for relations with the media and one has to be in charge of the posters, slogans and chants. Each of you must spread the news about the event to the public.

- **Select the location / Permits and officials:** Hold you demonstration in an area where there is a lot of traffic of cars or pedestrians. To convey a message to as many people as possible you need visibility. A badly selected site may ruin even the best organized demonstration.

It is important to know your rights regarding the use of space, no matter whether you are organizing a demonstration at you place of work or in the street. Normally a permit is required for demonstrations. Permits are required for marches as well, because they may interfere with the street traffic.

If there is a risk to be arrested, you have to take additional measures. A good idea is to train legal observers to take notes and document the event.

- **Dissemination of information:** Attendance is important. If you manage to ensure the presence of many people at your protests, it means that you have broad public support. Both the media and those in power whom you are trying to influence, will monitor the

number of people at your protests to see if you have the support of the community. Develop a specific strategy for promoting and publicizing the event and set a specific goal about the number of people you want to attend your demonstration. Then make a plan to attract 10 to 100 times more people than you think you can attract. Note that only part of the people whom you contact will attend.

Printed materials such as flyers, invitations and announcements for the event are fundamental for a successful promotion strategy. Distribute leaflets as widely as possible among friends and colleagues and in public places - cafes, cinemas, libraries, schools, universities and others.

You can also use the press as a means of disseminating information. Write a media message and send it to the local media to cover the event. Send a leaflet or a message to radio stations. Use social networks as widely as possible. The sooner you prepare materials the better, especially in the media and social media.

- **Speakers and program:** When conducting a vigil or a march, you need to have speakers. Gather a group of people representing a wide range of society - young, old, workers, and experts. Not only does the large number of people illustrate the support for your cause, but also the diverse range of speakers. Plan the order in which your speakers will come out to the audience. Give each speaker two or three minutes and ask him or her to be brief. Remember: this is a demonstration, not a lecture.

Also provide for an announcer, who will be responsible for the order of speakers. His or her duty is to provide a microphone or a loud speaker and monitor the progress of the program of the event.

- **Posters and chanting:** Do not leave the inventing chants to the protests themselves. This will not happen, so be prepared in advance.

A few days before the demonstration take some time to brainstorm slogans that can be learned quickly from the crowd. Be as creative as possible. Even if the problem you are working on a very serious issue, it is always better to invent a slogan that will make people smile. Note that bystanders are people whom you want to educate, not to repel. Make photocopies of slogans, to distribute to the people at the demonstration. Put someone in charge of coordination of people who would be chanting.

- **Captions and other materials:** Color signs are important for attracting people's attention. Make signs with bold and clear messages - the fewer words the better. You can paint your color captions by hand or print pictures that illustrate your issue. Make sure one can read the inscriptions from a distance. As for chants, the use of witticism or play of words are good ways of communicating your messages.

- **Literature and brochures:** bright, colorful signs may attract attention, but what happens next? Most people will not have time to stop and talk to you about your issue. It is therefore important to bring materials to inform about it - cards, data sheets or leaflets that tell about your issue.

- **Dummies and other materials:** Using life size dummies is a fantastic way to make drama from your issue. Other materials, such as large banners can also enliven your demonstration. Make art part of your protest, you can attract more attention. Art also will make your demonstration more fun for those who participate.

- **Creative sketches, parodies and songs:** it is always nice to think on a new way to express your viewpoint. You would not want to protest simply by chanting and shouting. Maybe you want something more original.

Parodies are an excellent way to attract attention. Write and perform a short sketch that presents your issue. A song or a dance can be a lot of fun and a way to attract people's attention.

- **Media and social networks / Packages for the media:** A well-organized demonstration on the corner of a busy street can attract the attention of hundreds of people. But if the media cover your demonstration, it can attract 1,000 times more people. Appoint someone to deal with the media contacts and with the social networks. On the very day of the demonstration, make sure that you have enough information packages and posts on the internet. Information packages should include complete information you will need reporters to cover your story. Turn to the traditional media with a release about the event (which must explain why you protest) and also provide data or other campaign materials you have. You have to assign at least one person to distributing information packages and collecting media contact information. You can achieve a lot summoning people by means of social networks. Social network are a popular way to organized demonstrations and attract support.



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Project “Clean Rivers – Clean Sea! NGO actions for environmental protection within Black Sea area”

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