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## **International POPs Elimination Project**

*Fostering Active and Efficient Civil Society Participation in  
Preparation for Implementation of the Stockholm Convention*

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# **NGO Capacity Building in CEE Region with Focus on International Co-operation Regarding POPs and Stockholm Convention issues**

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## **About the International POPs Elimination Project**

On May 1, 2004, the International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN <http://www.ipen.org>) began a global NGO project called the International POPs Elimination Project (IPEP) in partnership with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). The Global Environment Facility (GEF) provided core funding for the project.

IPEP has three principal objectives:

- Encourage and enable NGOs in 40 developing and transitional countries to engage in activities that provide concrete and immediate contributions to country efforts in preparing for the implementation of the Stockholm Convention;
- Enhance the skills and knowledge of NGOs to help build their capacity as effective stakeholders in the Convention implementation process;
- Help establish regional and national NGO coordination and capacity in all regions of the world in support of longer term efforts to achieve chemical safety.

IPEP will support preparation of reports on country situation, hotspots, policy briefs, and regional activities. Three principal types of activities will be supported by IPEP: participation in the National Implementation Plan, training and awareness workshops, and public information and awareness campaigns.

For more information, please see <http://ipen.ecn.cz>

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The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and not necessarily the views of the institutions providing management and/or financial support.

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## **I. Introduction**

In 2004, Arnika Association became a regional hub of IPEN to coordinate activities and projects in Central and Eastern Europe region (CEE). Because of very few contacts to national NGOs in all involved countries, Arnika decided to organize an outreach to find out some possible new partners and also discuss POPs issues and activities more deeply with NGOs that were already involved. Wider contacts in the region could positively contribute to the global effort of IPEN and give us a chance to work more effectively on particular activities.

It was decided to visit Belarus, Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey and to present the issue of POPs, Stockholm Convention, IPEN mission and its current activities.

The chosen countries are not EU members and thus it makes these countries different from Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and Czech Republic which have become the EU members.

There are two important reasons why Arnika visited Belarus, Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey:

- **“Green Legislation”** – The EU has developed and is still developing “green legislation” focused on toxic chemicals (e.g. heavy metals, POPs, etc.) to protect human health and the environment. Such “green legislation” does not exist in or is being developed in Belarus, Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey these days and NGOs can play a very important role during the development of such legislation.
- **The economic situation** - The environmental issues (such as the protection of nature and human health, toxic chemicals, etc.) are not high on the priority lists of the local citizens in the visited countries. This situation is caused by poor or no environmental education, monitoring of the environment and humans. This results in people not being informed about the dangerous influence of POPs or other toxic chemicals (as for e.g. heavy metals).

Arnika would like to continue to visit the countries in the CEE region and to meet our partners to develop better cooperation and exchange information.

## **II. Visited countries in Central and Eastern Europe region (CEE region)**

### **1. Belarus**

Belarus was visited in July 2006, on the occasion of a coordination meeting of GAIA-Europe; a new NGO network in the process of establishing itself. At the meeting, IPEN's activities were discussed along with their interactions with the objectives of GAIA-Europe, including possible joint projects in the future.

During the second part of the visit, individual meetings with the national NGOs, based in Minsk - the capital, were organized to present IPEN and discuss the activities of particular public organizations. Because of the political situation in Belarus and the difficult position of non-governmental organizations, the possibilities of international support for national groups were also discussed.

Because the POPs issue is very new in Belarus, only one NGO (Foundation for Realization of the Ideas / FRI) is a suitable partner for IPEN at the present time. FRI established an informal network of interested national NGOs to inform the wider public about issues related to POPs and educate and train possible new members of international networks.

The main outcome of the Belarus visit is a general picture of the environmental NGO scene in the country, personal contacts with the most reliable organizations and improved knowledge of the situation in the county and its biggest problems concerning POPs.

## **2. Bulgaria**

### **2.1 Conference in Varna**

Ecoglasnost, Bulgarian environmental NGO (representative Friends of the Earth) organized the conference “Pesticide Impacts in the Danube and Black Sea Region” from May 13-15, 2005, in Golden Sands – Varna, Bulgaria. For more information about this conference, please see a report about this conference at:

<http://www.oztoxics.org/ipepweb/library/reports/Pesticides%20Danube%20Black%20Sea.pdf>

Conference was supported both financially and ideologically by Pesticides Action Network – Germany and IPEN through the IPEP Hub CEE / Arnika.

Our objectives for participation in the conference were to meet potential new partners from CEE region and to present IPEN and its activities to the participating NGOs and see our partner NGO’s work in reality.

### **2.2 Sofia City Hall Meeting**

On May 17, 2005, we took part in the session of Commission for the Environment of Sofia City Hall in Bulgaria. The main topic of the session was future waste management in the city. Since the current landfill for municipal waste has reached its capacity, city hall needs to urgently find a new solution for waste disposal. Initially, Sofia City Hall planned to open a new landfill, but the people started to campaign strongly against such a project in both selected localities near the city. Then, various western companies (especially from Germany) started to lobby for their technologies – incinerators.

Although city hall deputies were not very keen to listen to the NGOs, the presence of IPEN representatives and especially of Ralph Ryder, Communities Against Toxics, UK, created some space for presenting the alternatives to incineration and also the negative aspects of burning the waste.

Our objective was to support grassroots NGOs not only by printed materials but also with experts from another country (e.g. here by Ralph Ryder - Communities Against Toxics, UK).

## **3. Romania**

The situation in Romania is difficult as in other Balkan countries – poor economic performance decreases public interest in environmental issues. Anyway, good-working NGOs in the regions have significant support and sympathies of the population.

If IPEN wants to start activities on POPs on national level, we should think about bigger grants for partner NGO / NGOs to give them a chance to build up necessary capacities.

## **4. Turkey**

### **4.1 January 2005**

The trip to Turkey was organized with the support of Greenpeace Mediterranean which was the only one national NGO participating in IPEN projects. Because of the large size of the country, it was decided to organize one meeting in Istanbul and a second one in Ankara.

In general, NGOs in Turkey have no chance to fundraise for money from national sources, which makes them dependent on Western-European and US foundations and donors. Financial troubles are one of the main obstacles in the activities of Turkish NGOs. It is also necessary to say that just very few of several thousand NGOs in the country are focused on POPs, waste and toxics issues.

The biggest success of Arnika's visit was that the new NGO called Bumerang was established. Bumerang was formed by Greenpeace volunteers who have been actively working on toxics issues for a long time. They immediately started actively cooperating with Arnika on several projects focused on POPs and Stockholm Convention issues such as Global Day of Actions, public awareness project, hot-spot reports preparation, etc. For more detailed information regarding the co-operation between Bumerang and Arnika, please, see the IPEP website: <http://www.oztoxics.org/ipepweb/>.

### **4.2 December 2005**

#### **POPs and Health Symposium, Istanbul – Turkey**

The symposium was organized by Bumerang and Association of Physicians for the Environment of Turkey. The symposium was divided into several sections – 1. POPs (what they are and how they can harm people and the environment), 2. Stockholm Convention and related issues (Alternative technologies for POPs disposal as non-combustion technologies, issues related to the Basel Convention), 3. Presentations of Ministries and NGOs from Turkey working on POPs + presentation about IPEN and its work.

The detailed report about this symposium will be prepared by the Turkish NGO, Bumerang. This report will be available at the IPEP website: <http://www.oztoxics.org/ipepweb/>.

Our main objectives were to support grassroots NGOs not only by printed materials but also by new information related to the Stockholm Convention (COPI, BAT/BEP Expert Group, POP Review Committee, Dioxin Toolkit,...) and Basel Convention (low POPs content, technical drafts), SAICM (Strategic Approach to Chemical Management Safety), European Union activities focused on POPs.

## **III. Conclusions**

It was quite important to see our partners from our CEE region countries face to face and dedicate more time to discussions on IPEN projects and visions of different NGOs and activists about what is suitable and useful to do in a way to decrease the level of POPs contamination in respective countries. We were also able to identify more concretely the

needs of particular NGOs (what they will expect from us and how we can support them best) as well as possibilities of cooperation between Arnika and NGOs in visited CEE countries.

As an important outcome of Arnika's activities based on communication with our partner NGOs we see the personal visit in the countries and participation in different meetings or workshops.

#### **IV. Annexes**

- Presentations (<http://english.arnika.org/ipep/documents.shtml>)
  - What are POPs - <http://english.arnika.org/ipep/docs/POPs.pdf>
  - Stockholm Convention - [http://english.arnika.org/ipep/docs/Stockholm\\_Convention.pdf](http://english.arnika.org/ipep/docs/Stockholm_Convention.pdf)
  - IPEN and its activities - [http://english.arnika.org/ipep/docs/IPEN\\_and\\_its\\_work.pdf](http://english.arnika.org/ipep/docs/IPEN_and_its_work.pdf)
  - The Stockholm Convention and POPs Destruction Technologies - [http://english.arnika.org/ipep/docs/POPs\\_destruction.pdf](http://english.arnika.org/ipep/docs/POPs_destruction.pdf)
  - Case study / Spolana Neratovice, Czech Republic - [http://english.arnika.org/ipep/docs/Arnika\\_experiences.pdf](http://english.arnika.org/ipep/docs/Arnika_experiences.pdf)
  - Presentation of Communities Against Toxics for Pesticides Conference (Varna, Bulgaria)
- Leaflet – Low POP content issue
- Press release about the POPs and Health Symposium, Istanbul – Turkey – Press release is publicly available at: <http://english.arnika.org/pressreleases.shtml?x=1232459>

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