

Building Coalitions for Rivers

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TRANSITION
Transition Promotion Program

What coalitions can be good for

To coordinate activities and strengthen communication between NGOs (or other subjects) concerning bigger issues (covering big territory, issues important for many different NGOs, demanding diverse and extensive expert knowledge etc.)

Create a relevant partner for negotiations with authorities on higher levels (national, cross-border, EU)

Demonstrate unity and/or multisectoral support for important issues.

Basic types of coalitions

Informal coalitions:

- Membership is not formalised
- They are usually temporary
- They need strong motivation and clear purpose

Formal coalitions:

- Formalised membership, sometimes membership fees
- Usually have legal subjectivity
- Can last longer
- Typical risk: they transform to just another organization, losing „umbrella“ capacity

Example 1 – Coalition of NGOs for Natura 2000

Informal coalition, established in 2001. Its main purpose was to negotiate proposal (list) of Natura 2000 sites.

Established in 2001, still exists, but most active it was in 2001-2012 period.

It has about 14 members – all nature conservation NGOs (including one scientific society – Botanical society).

Example 1 – Coalition of NGOs for Natura 2000

Activities:

- To lobby for good transposition of EU directives into national laws
- To collect scientific data for alternative proposal of the list of Natura 2000 sites (“shadow list”).
- To deliver shadow list to European commission and represent NGOs in biogeographical seminars
- To communicate with national authorities about improving of official list of Natura 2000 sites
- Managing and coordinating preparation of complaints to European Commission about transgressions of EU directives.
- Educate NGOs and other stakeholders about basic principles of Natura 2000 network implementation.

Natura 2000 principles

Important principles usefull from NGO point of view:

- Proposition of pSCI sites should be based purely on scientific criteria (social, economical and cultural criteria shall be applied later, within management of the sites)
- Priority – non-priorit species and habitats, coverage reauired 60-100% / 20-60%; evaluated on bogeographical seminars (sufficient, minor/moderate/major insufficient, more data needed). Argumentation should target always the coherence of Natura 2000 network as a whole, not individual localities.
- Article 6: all plans and projects with potentially negative impact on Natura 2000 network has to be assessed using strictly defined procedure. If negative impact is found, they can be approved only in special cases and with specific conditions.

Implementation of Natura 2000 in CZ

- Extensive field works (over 300 experts mapping the whole territory of Czech Republic)
- Not all data sheets for pSCIs ready on time
- Some localities excluded for non-scientific reasons
- Official list sent in 2004 (accession) incomplete
- Communications with governmental institutions and NGOs

Successes of NGO coalition

- Legislation improved (forest management plans assessment)
- Shadow list developed, presented and mostly enforced
- Standpoint of NGOs advocated on biogeographical seminars, European Commission final decision accepted most of the NGO demands
- About 500 pSCI sites (more than one third of overall number) were added to official list, most of them because of NGO activities in 2009
- Still some sites excluded from political reasons
- After EC-CZ negotiations, 30 new sites added in 2015
- The list is still not complete, EC has started an infringement procedure with Czech Republic (because of complaints made by NGOs)
- Two new sites added in 2016, but still not correctly represented

Natura 2000 – never ending story



Since 2010, the focus was directed more to educate officials especially on regional level and to coordinate discussion about next steps in Natura 2000 implementation.

Currently, the activities of Natura 2000 Coalition are less intense, and focused more on management issues. Last involvement of Czech NGOs in Natura 2000 problems related to so called “fitness check” of EU directives, was mostly coordinated by more general umbrella organisation and campaigning organisation outside Coalition.

Example 2: Coalition for Rivers

Coalition for Rivers was established in 2010.

Its members are about 30 individuals and 19 organisation.

Its purpose is to coordinate effort of different NGOs and experts, who want to improve significantly ecological status of Czech water courses and river landscape. It is formal coalition with legal subjectivity.

Coalition for Rivers

Activities:

- Encouraging discussion and two-way exchange of information between scientific community and field experts, water management institutions, NGOs and other relevant stakeholders.
- Influence the policies on national level on relevant issues (flood prevention, climate change, agriculture, forestry etc.).
- Support river restoration projects in all stages (concept, project, permit procedure, construction, management of restored areas), thus collect experience and use them to negotiate better conditions for river restoration projects with authorities.

Coalition for Rivers

Lessons learned:

Good thing: not only environmentalists included (hydro-technicians, foresters, fishermen)

Definition of roles: „good cops, bad cops“ – Coalition – good guys, campaigns against environmentally dangerous projects led by other organizations

Unique expert knowledge











