

## MEMORANDUM OF COOPERATION

### *"ECMI NGO Network for the Improvement of Interethnic Relations in the Republic of Macedonia"*

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#### **I. Aim**

This Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) is the result of a joint initiative between the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI), in Flensburg, Germany, and the members of the *ECMI-NGO Network for the Improvement of Interethnic Relations in the Republic of Macedonia* [hereinafter "Network"]. The MoC describes the agreement of the undersigned parties for implementation and management of the Network.

This Network will enhance the cooperation of the member NGOs towards the development and improvement of interethnic tolerance, respect for differences and dialogue among all those living in the Republic of Macedonia. In particular, this NGO Network aims to strengthen the capacities of the participating NGOs to generate joint projects and other initiatives with a strong interethnic dimension and to implement such initiatives. These activities shall be carried out with a strong emphasis on local cooperation, making full use of ECMI Regional NGO Centres (hereafter "Regional Centres"). Through these Regional Centres, interethnic projects of direct relevance to local communities can be fostered according to the priorities established by them.

The representatives of the NGOs signatories to this MoC pledge their cooperation in its full implementation in accordance with the principles of tolerance, interethnic cooperation, transparency and accountability. ECMI which has initiated the creation of this Network will facilitate its operation, as detailed in the Section III, subject to Section VIII. ECMI will not in general be able to fund projects developed by the members of the Network but can make available support for attempts to raise funds for projects and other initiatives developed within the Network, subject to Annex 3.

#### **II. Field of Work**

Through the means of this Network, the capacity of participating NGOs to devise and implement interethnic projects will be enhanced. This includes training and other capacity enhancing measures. In addition, the credibility of participating NGOs will be strengthened by following the criteria for admission to membership (Annex 1) and a common Code of Conduct contained in Annex 2. Moreover, the Network will support the development of joint interethnic projects, their presentation to funders and their implementation in strict accordance with these criteria.

The Network will be supported by a web-based information resource. That resource will provide an opportunity for participating NGOs to exhibit their profile and detail their activities. In addition, the resource will contain vital information of relevance to member NGOs in terms of project drafting, funding opportunities and good practices in the delivery of projects.

The Network will also provide a means through which the strong contribution that NGOs can make to the development of civil society in the Republic of Macedonia can be highlighted. This includes joint lobbying for an environment in which NGOs dedicated to the principles of this Network can flourish and effectively deliver their mandates.

### **III. General Action**

The non-governmental organizations which are members of the Network will engage in joint projects and other initiatives upon which they will agree in accordance with the common standards of transparency and quality of accomplishment adopted by the Network (Annex 2). The overall aim of such projects is to provide benefits to all citizens on a sustainable basis.

Initial activities at the national level (on local action, see Annex 3) will include:

1. Identification of further NGO members.
2. Establishment of a Coordinating Body.
3. Determination of criteria for sustainability and improved functioning of the Network.
4. Joint action to support initiatives of member NGOs
5. Discussions on concrete measures that can be taken to enhance a climate of cooperation, coexistence and tolerance in the NGO sector.
6. Holding of meetings for the elaboration of joint interethnic initiatives.
7. Facilitation of joint project proposals by groups of NGOs - members of the Network.
8. Joint presentation of the Network before potential international donors.
9. Joint electronic resources on the activities of the Network and the non-governmental organizations that are its members, best practices in project proposal drafting, project implementation as well as funding opportunities.
10. Training for NGO representatives on project development, project management and other topics of interest.

### **IV. Structure of the Network**

The Network is a voluntary initiative of NGOs that have decided to collaborate according to common standards of quality towards the aims outlined above. As an informal initiative, the Network does not have legal personality, although this may be reviewed over time.

To sustain the activities of the Network, the following mechanisms will be put into place:

### ***The Assembly***

The Assembly of the Network consists of all signatories to the Network.

The Assembly admits new members of the Network in accordance with the criteria presented in Annex 1.

The Assembly of the Network holds a full network meeting at least once a year. At these meetings, the Coordinating Body is elected.

### ***The Coordinating Body***

The Assembly, from within its members, elects a Coordinating Body. The Coordinating Body is composed of twelve representatives of NGOs and one representative of ECMI.

When electing the members of the Coordinating Body, every effort should be made to reflect the multiethnic composition of the Network, and representation of the regions in which a Regional Centre is based.

The Coordinating Body elects its Chair.

The Coordinating Body is convened upon the request of the Chair or of at least 1/3 of the members of the Coordinating Body.

- ✓ The mandate of the coordinating body shall be for one year with the right to re-election.
- ✓ The Coordinating Body may appoint a deputy Chairperson to assist the Chairperson when necessary or in case of absence.
- ✓ To hold the meetings of the coordinative body at least every three months.
- ✓ Participation in the decision making process (with the possibility of making decisions) based upon ECMI's criteria for project approval.
- ✓ To give precedence to projects on a national level that have an impact on and deal with the institutional spheres (lobbying, changes in the legislature, etc.)
- ✓ The rights and responsibilities of the members of the coordinating body.
  1. To attend meetings.
  2. To contribute to the work of the coordinating body.
  3. To participate in the decision making process, as independent representatives of the CB of the Network.
  4. To participate and contribute to the work of the committees.

### ***Tasks and Responsibilities of the Coordinating Body***

The Coordinating Body takes on the principal responsibility for the implementation of the action plan of the Network. To this end it is responsible for:

- **Convening the Coordinating Body**, including scheduling meetings, regular contacts and education of the members of the Coordinating Body, distribution of the agenda, provision of materials and other additional tasks in accordance with the needs.

- **Convening the members of the Network**, including the selection and invitation of facilitators and participants, distribution of the agenda, accompanying materials and other additional tasks in accordance with the needs.
- **Devising a sustainability strategy for the Network.**
- **Joint lobbying for the benefit of the Network**
  - **External lobbying plan:** presentation of the Network before various structures, lobbying and advocacy.
  - **Internal lobbying plan:** includes promoting this initiative and developing association and collaboration, organizing discussions between internal members and assigning activities to all parties concerned.
  - **Maintaining regular contacts**, at least through one annual formal joint meeting, with the Executive Committees of the Regional Centres.
  - The Network is going to hold press conferences every three months in order to present its activities, the problems that it is facing, as well as future plans.
  - The coordinating body is going to elect sector committees and other types of committees necessary for the success of the Network, based upon the initiative of the RC or the number of members that meets the criteria for making independent decisions in accordance with the annex 3 of the MoC

To review the annual reports of the Regional Centres two weeks prior to the General Assembly and submit them to the Coordinating Body

## **V. Monitoring the Results of the Initiative**

The progress of network activity will be monitored by the Coordinating Body, the Assembly and the signatories, through the development and upgrading of the joint website and other informational materials related to this initiative and the Network. The Assembly will review the annual reports of the Regional Centres and an annual report presented by the Coordinating Body on national activities.

Will fulfil the dispute settlement section provided in article VII. The assembly will review the annual report of the Regional Centres and of the Coordinating Body. The Coordinating Body will present views on the work of the Regional Centres.

## **VI. Decision-Making Process**

The Network or the Regional Centres do not direct the activities of member NGOs conducted outside of the authority of the Network. Instead, decisions obtaining from the bodies herein established relate to the functioning and activities of the Network, the Regional Centres and projects conducted under their aegis.

Decisions by the Assembly are made by simple majority of all members. A decision on the exclusion of a member accepted by the Assembly into membership is made by a two-thirds majority of all members on grounds of having manifestly failed to comply with the Code of Conduct for Member NGOs contained in Annex 2. In relation to a member that was admitted by a Regional Centre that has manifestly failed to comply with the Code of Conduct contained in Annex 2, exclusion may be decided by a two-thirds majority of all members of the Regional Centre concerned.

That decision will take effect upon endorsement by the Coordinating Body by a two-thirds majority.

The Coordinating Body takes decisions by a majority of its members.

Decisions affecting funding issues and the role and functions of ECMI can only be effective with the consent of ECMI.

This paragraph is subject to Section VII.

## **VII. Conflict Resolution**

Disputes relating to the operation of the Network shall be resolved through consultation in the Coordinating Body. If a recommendation of the Coordinating Body as to how to resolve a dispute is not accepted by one or more of the relevant parties, or if no recommendation can be agreed by simple majority vote, then a conciliation body composed of one member of the Coordinating Body, one member of ECMI and a third member nominated by those two jointly shall be made. The organization which does not follow the recommendation of the conciliation body shall be excluded from the Network by a simple majority vote of the Coordinating Body.

Disputes relating to joint projects conducted under the aegis of the Network or of the Regional Centres that cannot be resolved through consultation among the project partners, if necessary with the involvement of the ECMI Regional Representative, within a period of two months of notification of the dispute by either party to the Coordinating Body will also be resolved through the above mechanism.

The CB shall hear appeals regarding admission of members to a Regional Centre if such an appeal is made by at least two members of that Regional Centre. The CB may accept the member as an associate member pending a decision of the General Assembly in the matter.

## **VIII. Financing of the Network**

For 2001, ECMI has obtained funding to facilitate the establishment and initial operation of the Network. The generous support of the Ministries for Foreign Affairs of Denmark and Norway is noted with appreciation in this context. It is expected that similar and possibly additional funding can be obtained to support Network activities for 2002. Planning in 2002 will be directed towards making the Network sustainable in the longer term. The Coordinating Body, in consultation with ECMI, will decide on a long-term strategy for sustainability.

The Network itself will generally not be able to fund joint projects, subject to Annex 3. However, the Network will assist in the presentation of joint projects to potential funders. These include local missions of donor countries, international organizations and foundations and the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe. ECMI as part of the Network will be available to assist in the monitoring of project implementation in

relation to projects where funding was obtained as a result of such an effort conducted under the umbrella of the Network.

Through its Regional Centres, the Network may also be able to provide some direct funding for project initiatives that promise rapid and visible results for all communities in a given locality, as is outlined in Annex 3.

## **IX. Concluding Provisions**

1. This Memorandum of Cooperation will be in force for two years and will be extended for periods of a further two years without the need for further action unless decided otherwise. ECMI's continued participation will require annual confirmation, however.
2. The terms of this Memorandum of Cooperation may be amended or augmented by a two-thirds majority of the full membership meeting, provided at least half attend. However, changes affecting the role or responsibility of ECMI shall only be effectuated with the approval of ECMI.
3. Any Member NGO of the Network can, at its own decision, resign from the Network. It shall communicate this decision in writing to the Coordinating Body and the decision shall become effective one month after receipt of the notice. If a Member NGO wishing to resign is engaged in a joint project that has been generated through the regional or national structures of the Network, it shall only be able to resign effective at the time of conclusion of the project, as stipulated in the project proposal. However, if all other Project Partners agree, the NGO wishing to leave can be released as stipulated in the first sentence of this paragraph.

## ANNEX 1

### **CRITERIA FOR ADMISSION AND PARTICIPATION IN THE "ECMI NGO NETWORK FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF INTERETHNIC RELATIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA"**

1. Membership of the Network shall be broadly reflective of the ethnic composition of the Republic of Macedonia.
2. Member NGOs shall promote and initiate activities in areas of interest to all communities.
3. Member NGOs shall promote ideas for cooperation with different ethnic groups and communities and shall jointly engage in and contribute to the implementation of these ideas.
4. Member NGOs shall be open for cooperation with institutions that are interested in the promotion and improvement of the interethnic cooperation.
5. Member NGOs shall support the Network's lobbying efforts in order to achieve mutually agreed aims.
6. The Network will not be open to NGOs that have a political party background and goals.
7. Member NGOs shall be transparent in their work and accountable to their members and to donors.
8. Member NGOs shall be bound to the contents of the Memorandum of Cooperation.
9. New members shall be proposed by one NGO Member and seconded by another in the Regional Centre. Subject to article VII of the MoC.
10. By signing of the Memorandum of Cooperation, an NGO formally becomes a member of the Network upon the decision of the Assembly/Regional Centre.
11. In case of non-compliance with the aforementioned criteria, the Network reserves the right to exclude the member after having conducted a full investigation.
12. All members have the obligation to act according to the decisions of the bodies of the Network.

**ANNEX 2**  
**CODE OF CONDUCT**  
**FOR MEMBER NGOS OF THE “ECMI NGO NETWORK FOR THE**  
**IMPROVEMENT OF INTERETHNIC RELATIONS**  
**IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA”**

**A. Values**

As diverse as our activities are, we have common value systems. Based on the desire to advance and improve people’s lives, combat poverty and inequality; on the commitment to enhance cooperation between member NGOs towards the development and improvement of interethnic relations among all those living in the Republic of Macedonia; and on the resolve to strengthen the capacities of the participating NGOs to generate joint projects and other initiatives with a strong interethnic dimension and to implement such initiatives, we are committed to the following fundamental values that underpin the mission and objectives of the MoC signatories. We therefore commit ourselves to:

- Being guided in our work by the general principles of tolerance, respect for differences and dialogue.
- Being responsive to the needs and welfare of the people of the Republic of Macedonia.
- Accountability and transparency.
- Participatory democracy.
- People-centred development.
- Respecting the rights, culture and dignity of all people.
- Ensuring the organization remains true to its mission and objectives.
- Promoting voluntarism and active volunteer involvement at all levels.
- Mutual cooperation, collaboration and networking with other agencies around issues of mutual concern.
- Striving for excellence, including efficient and effective service provision at all levels.

**B. Governance**

The effectiveness of our work depends on each organization’s governance structures. As professional organizations, we recognize the importance of establishing and maintaining able bodies that will govern the internal functioning of our individual organizations. Committed, experienced and responsible individuals are a critical ingredient for this. To this end we will:

- Ensure the organization has a clear vision, mission, objectives and policies, and adheres to them.
- Specify the frequency of governance structure meetings, quorums, and the role and powers of the governance structure.

- Develop a policy that prohibits direct or indirect conflict of interest by members of the governance structure, members, employees and volunteers. Ensure that members of the governance structure and staff excuse themselves from decisions where they have, or are perceived to have, a vested interest.
- In the case of an independent Board or Trust, adopt a policy that discourages members from submitting tenders to the organization or applying for staffing positions within the organization. This policy must stipulate that if they desire to do either, they must resign from the governance structure.
- Ensure that governance structure understands and is responsible for overall policy-making and accepts ultimate responsibility for governance of all aspects of the organization.
- Within financial constraints, ensure that the governance structure reflects the ethnic composition of Macedonian society and the various target constituencies that the NGO works with, with regard to both their composition and their geographic spread, and that both genders are equally represented.
- Ensure that a needs assessment is performed through direct contact with a representative number of beneficiaries prior to the project proposal development. Members will ensure that the entire process of project design and implementation is guided by the needs of the beneficiaries.

## **C. Standards of Cooperation between Member NGOs**

### ***General Standards***

- Member NGOs will be open to cooperation with other NGOs in addressing the needs and desires of the community/beneficiaries being served by the NGO.
- Member NGOs will encourage and support the development of the NGO sector at their regional level as well as at the national level.
- Member NGOs will be open to transferring information and know-how on NGO sector functioning to new and up coming NGOs.
- Member NGOs will actively seek exchange of information with other NGOs in order to facilitate joint action and avoid duplication of efforts.
- Member NGOs will encourage the local NGO community to jointly pursue contacts and cooperation with the local government, the private sector and the media in order to further the effectiveness of the sector.

### ***Standards of Cooperation between Member NGOs within a Regional Centre and within the national Network***

- Member NGOs will work in the spirit of collaboration, mutual trust, tolerance and respect for differences.
- Member NGOs will ensure that there is regular exchange of information between them about their activities and initiatives.

- Member NGOs will ensure that their respective beneficiaries and network of associates are aware about the activities of the Regional Centres/National Network.
- Member NGOs will find ways of sharing and disseminating the knowledge acquired through the different training programs in which they have been participating.
- Member NGOs will seek to find ways of resolving misunderstandings and conflicts between them through constructive discussion and problem analysis.
- In case of an inability to resolve a conflict between Member NGOs as outlined above, the procedure prescribed by the Memorandum of Cooperation will be followed.
- Member NGOs will seek to coordinate through the Regional Centres their efforts in lobbying for the cause of the beneficiaries with the local government and the private sector.
- Member NGOs will seek to coordinate through the national Network their efforts in lobbying for the cause of the beneficiaries with the national government and the private sector.

***Standards of Cooperation between Joint Project Partners***

- In forming project alliances, Member NGOs will be guided by the desire, ability and capacity of partners and not exclusively by the need to have an ethnically diverse team.
- Project alliances between Member NGOs will be made after discussing elaborately the aims, rationale and beneficiaries of the proposed project.
- The NGO proposing the project will be the lead NGO and be the focal point with the donor, local agencies and the media for that particular project.
- Upon agreeing to the aim and rationale of a project, the Project Partners will participate in the process of project design and in defining the role of their respective organizations. This will include duties and responsibilities of the respective Partners in design and implementation, as well as the financial implications of participation.
- When presenting a joint project proposal to funding agencies, the name of the lead NGO and its Project Partners will be visibly and clearly presented.
- In the project implementation phase the lead NGO will be accountable for the project.

- In the project implementation phase the more experienced NGOs within the respective project alliance will share and transfer know-how to the less experienced members, thus contributing to the overall NGO capacity enhancement strategy of the Network.
- In all information dissemination campaigns related to joint project names of all Project Partners will be mentioned.
- Member NGOs will make every effort to ensure that any misunderstanding or conflicts arising within a project alliance will be settled internally through constructive discussion and dialogue. In case of failure to do so, the procedure outlined in the Memorandum of Cooperation will be followed.
- Members NGOs will promote the idea of interethnic collaborative work by setting positive examples through the successful implementation of joint interethnic projects.
- Member NGOs will seek to draw the lessons from the implementation of a joint project by identifying problems and how they can be overcome as well as best practice. This information will be shared with Network members through the Network Website with the aim of making it a valuable resource for the entire NGO community.

#### **D. Accountability**

Our commitment to promote democracy is enshrined in a culture of participation and complete accountability within our organizations. Transparency in all the work we do is key. To this end we will:

- Develop mechanisms to enable all our stakeholders to be involved in planning programs that directly affect them.
- Provide opportunities for regular evaluations and updating of programs that include stakeholder and community input.
- Hold an Annual General Meeting with full, open and accurate disclosure of relevant information concerning goals, programs, finances and governance. This will ensure accountability towards the beneficiaries and donors.
- Hold regular strategic planning sessions to which relevant stakeholders are invited to contribute.

#### **E. Management and Human Resources**

Human capacity and skilled leadership is a critical component of the effectiveness of our work. We shall endeavour to follow the best management practices appropriate to the organizations mission, operations and governance structure. To this end we will:

- Periodically reassess the organization's mission, objectives and operations, in the light of changing contexts and constituents' needs.

- Critically analyze our own practices and our organizational culture and implement those changes necessary to build a culture that encourages creativity, diversity, responsibility and respect that will recognize all cultural groups as equal partners in developing the organization.
- Develop clear, well-defined written policies and procedures to be followed, which relate to all employees, members and volunteers.
- Establish and maintain disciplinary and grievance procedures with clear lines of authority and accountability.
- Have clear and transparent procedures for employing new staff, and disengaging existing staff.
- Have clear staff development policies that seek to empower all staff and volunteers to increase their skills in order to enable them to move to greater levels of responsibility.
- Develop adequate and acceptable systems of assessing skills, experience and qualifications, levels of responsibility and performance, and remunerate on this basis.
- Encourage management to adopt interactive leadership styles and an “open door” policy to facilitate good communication between staff and themselves.

NGOs need to prioritize the development and maintenance of proper financial management strategies. Our finances shall be managed as to ensure appropriate use of funds and accountability to members and donors. To this end we will:

- Comply with generally accepted business accounting and auditing practices.
- Set up appropriate financial systems and ensure that we employ qualified persons to administer and manage these systems.
- Conduct annual audits for income and expenditure.
- Have clear policies on loans and staff advances.
- Set up mechanisms to ensure that our procedures for purchasing goods and services are free from vested interests of individuals in our organization and that they are cost effective.
- Prepare realistic project or organizational budgets, then monitor and adhere to them. In instances where it becomes necessary make changes, the appropriate consultations should be undertaken and any amendments recorded.
- Formally and publicly charge members for any attempt at fraud, theft or misappropriation.
- Wherever possible, ensure that the funding base of the organization is diversified.
- Keep fund-raising and administration costs to a minimum to ensure that maximum possible resources reach the beneficiaries.

- Ensure that funds provided are only used for the intended purpose and that the donor is consulted regarding the need for any changes in the activity plan and budget.
- Ensure that tenders and contracts called for encourage the participation of small and emerging businesses, in particular those owned by previously disadvantaged sectors of our society.
- Provide clear and transparent accounting to the broader membership and/or constituency of the organization.

## **F. Resources**

We need systems to manage organizational assets in a sustainable and cost-effective manner. This is a vital tool towards the sector maintaining its original values of being effective and efficient in our work. To this end we will:

- Develop internal procedures and control mechanisms and implement these to ensure the proper use of the assets of the organization and to clearly separate organizational use from private use.
- Develop and implement mechanisms to monitor the use of staff time.
- Conduct periodic cost-benefit analyses of projects and review resource allocations in light of these.

## ANNEX 3

### ECMI REGIONAL NGO CENTRES

#### **A. Aims**

Within the context of the *ECMI NGO Network for the Improvement of Interethnic Relations in the Republic of Macedonia*, there shall be established a number of *ECMI Regional NGO Centres* [hereinafter "Regional Centres"]. These Regional Centres shall serve the aim of improving interethnic tolerance, respect for differences and dialogue among all communities in the Republic of Macedonia. To this end they shall enhance the capacity of member NGOs subscribing to these aims, facilitate the development of joint interethnic projects on the basis of locally established priorities and support the implementation of such projects.

#### **B. Membership and Access**

The Regional Centres will serve the local NGO community dedicated to the above aims. The Regional Centres will also provide a forum for dialogue between the local citizens and local government with the member NGOs.

NGO membership in the Regional Centres shall be broadly reflective of the ethnic composition of the local community. While the number of members will vary from Centre to Centre, an average number of fifteen is expected to develop.

Membership in a Regional Centre implies membership in the national *ECMI NGO Network for the Improvement of Interethnic Relations in the Republic of Macedonia* [hereinafter "Network"]. Criteria for Membership have been established by the Network in Annex 1 of the Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC). Until a Regional Centre has obtained a membership in excess of ten NGOs, including full representation of all ethnic communities in that region, decisions on membership in that Regional Centre shall be taken at the level of the Network after having heard the advice of the Regional Centre. Once a Regional Centre achieves a membership in excess of 10, and once the Network has confirmed that this membership is sufficiently representative, it shall itself decide on the admission of new members according to the criteria set out in Annex 1.

A decision to remove a member admitted by a Regional Centre shall be made by that Regional Centre according to a decision making process set out above according to criteria established in Annex 1, para 11, subject to confirmation by the Network according to its procedures established for this purpose.

#### **C. Links with Local Communities and Local Authorities**

The NGOs cooperating through the *ECMI Regional NGO Centres* shall be responsive to the needs of the local communities. When the Regional Centres determine the priority areas for project development, they shall consult with community

representatives about local needs and the best ways of meeting them. There shall be periodic consultations of this kind.

The Regional Centres shall seek cooperation of local administration, while maintaining full independence in the design and execution of their projects. To this end, there shall also be regular consultations.

## **D. Programmes and Activities**

In addition to delivering projects that will provide direct benefits to local communities as a result of interethnic NGO cooperation, the Regional Centres will:

- Assist member NGOs in enhancing their capacity through training.
- Provide facilities for interethnic NGO cooperation.
- Assist in the development of joint projects and endorse them in relation to donors.
- Assist in raising funding for projects.
- Support the delivery of projects.
- Ensure viability, transparency and accountability of projects and evaluate outcomes.
- Raise the profile of NGO cooperation of this kind in the localities and at the national level.
- Represent interests common to all NGOs and essential to their successful functioning at the local level.
- Ensure that the Project Proposal Development cycle is followed.
- Monthly reporting for the expenses of the RC (to the members of the RC).
- The members of the Regional Centre will elect a Coordinator and an Assistant Coordinator who will be responsible for the following:
  1. To set up meetings;
  2. To represent the RC to the public;
  3. To lobby;
  4. To implement the Action Plan;
  5. To represent the RC in the coordinating body as a member;
  6. To stimulate the NGOs in the Network to work towards achieving the action plan;

## **E. Functioning of the Regional Centres**

All members conduct all of their activities in accordance with the standards of the national Network. The Regional Centres can take decisions pertinent to the above activities. Principal decisions relating to the activities of the Regional Centre shall be taken by a majority of all members in the Regional Centre, subject to the authority exercised by the Network.

Once a year, the Regional Centre will establish priorities for local NGO project development, after having consulted with local citizens' representatives and local authorities and in view of the success of the previous project cycle. The Regional Centres will accelerate support for projects corresponding to these priorities, although this does not preclude the endorsement of other projects.

In deciding to support the development and funding of projects, the Regional Centres will be guided by the following considerations:

- Capacity of the proposing NGOs and interethnic nature of the alliance of NGOs proposing the project.
- Viability and sustainability of the project.
- Correspondence of the project with the priority needs identified by the Regional Centre.
- Provisions for transparency and accountability in project delivery.

The Regional Centres will develop annual action plans in line with the priorities that have been determined, and will present an annual report on activities conducted by NGOs under its aegis.

The Regional Centres can recommend small projects for direct funding through ECMI. The Regional Centres can also recommend that ECMI make available seed funding for the full development of larger promising project proposals. The Regional Centres might also recommend partial funding from ECMI as a means of attracting more funding. Finally, the Regional Centre can recommend that the project be taken up by the Network infrastructure for lobbying for donor support.

The Regional Centres will also agree with the Network training priorities and a training programme.

The members of a Regional Centre will themselves establish how they will run that Centre. The Regional Centres will establish an Executive Committee responsible for maintaining the arrangements for their routine operations at the direction of the full membership of the Regional Centre. The Executive Committee will also represent the Regional Centre in contacts with the national Network and in contacts with other Regional Centres.

#### ***F. Criteria for the continual functioning of the RC***

- Regular meetings of the NGO members of the RC according to an agreed quorum (minimum of two times per month)
- Mandatory organization of citizen forums in accordance with the annual action plan of the RC. In case a forum is not organized at the planned time, to make up for that during the following period.
- To generate project proposals from the forums held a minimum of one proposal every three months.
- All centers will have the responsibility to implement a minimum of one joint interethnic project during a six-month period, or 2 projects in a year.

- The projects implemented in the RC are to be fully presented to the National Network, with a possibility to implement them on a national level.
- Centres which fail to function according to the criteria outlined above are subject to having their funding withheld and to closure.

### **G. Termination of the work of a RC**

The decision to terminate the work of a RC can be made by two-thirds of the vote of its members of that Centre. The Network acting through the Assembly and provisionally through the Coordinating Body also maintains the right to make this decision, in accordance with the MoC mechanisms, in case the RC does not follow the criteria for continuity from item VI in annex 3.

In the case of closure of a RC, the whole technical and material equipment will be returned to the Network, together with the remaining financial funds of the RC in question. The advise of the Coordinating Body the ECMI will further decide where to reallocate these funds.

In the case of closure of the Regional Centre, ECMI reserves the right to re-open the same Regional Centre with a new set of members. ECMI may withhold the funding for a Regional Centre which manifestly fails to achieve the aim of a Regional Centre.

### **H. Infrastructure**

The Regional Centres are associations of participating NGOs cooperating through an infrastructure provided by ECMI and with ECMI facilitation of their activities. ECMI will establish a small office for the Regional Centres; provide basic computing and communication facilities, etc. The daily operations of the Regional Centres will lie with the local NGOs. ECMI will support these activities as outlined above, including training, through its Skopje office.

### **I. Relations with the National Network and Cooperation among Regional Centres**

The Regional Centres will function within the overall context of the *ECMI NGO Network for the Improvement of Interethnic Relations in the Republic of Macedonia*. The Network will establish overall principles of operation and guidance that will also apply to the Regional Centres. The Network will coordinate training offerings, it will maintain a national web resource as a platform for participating NGOs to display their profile and activities and also to provide information on funding and other matters to participating NGOs, and it will assist in presenting project proposals emanating from the Regional Centres or the Network to funders.

The Regional Centres will also seek to coordinate their activities through direct contacts amongst themselves, and by supporting the work of specialized subject committees across the regional Centers and the Coordinating Body.

It is recommend that the Regional centers have a full-time technical assistant at all in order to provide for the continuous functioning of the Center.

### ***ASSOCIATIVE MEMBERSHIP***

- Maintaining the multiethnic character of the Regional Centre accepting new associate members.
- It is recommended maximum sectoral representation while accepting associate members thus increasing the overall capacity of the Regional Centre to address a wide range of sectors.
- The regional branches of member NGOs may apply to be a member of a Regional Centre and gain the status of associate members without voting rights in the General Assembly or in the Regional Centres