

Minutes of the Workshop on NGO Participation in Decision-making on Tourism Development: Advocacy and Campaigning of the CEEWEB Sustainable Tourism Working Group



Dobarsko & Govedartsi | Rila National Park | Bulgaria

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CEEWEB Sustainable Tourism Working Group 2007

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Day 1

Meeting of the CEEWEB Sustainable Tourism Working Group (STWG)

- Opening of the meeting
- Goals and proceedings of the workshop
- Short introduction of the CEEWEB Sustainable Tourism Working Group
- Introduction of the participants

Discussion: Tourism and nature protection – What is sustainable tourism?

Start of the workshop

- Planning and implementing a successful campaign – an introduction
- Case study. Sustainable tourism development as alternative to mining – the campaign against mining in Rosia Montana, Romania. *Sorana Olaru Zainescu, Alburnus Maior*
- Case study: Preventing Dracula Theme Park development in a nature reserve next to Sighisoara, Romania. *Alexandru Gota, Eco-Breite NGO*

Meeting of the CEEWEB Sustainable Tourism Working Group (STWG)

Opening of the Meeting / Goals and Procedure of the Workshop (Kristina Vilimaite)

Kristina Vilimaite gave the introduction and presented the plan and goals of the workshop, i.e. learning about sustainable tourism, increasing knowledge and skills about successful advocacy and campaigning, sharing experiences, building a network for future cooperation, developing a campaign for Rila NP on the last day.

Introduction of the STWG (Kristina Vilimaite)

Kristina shortly presented CEEWEB, the Sustainable Tourism Working Group and its “Joining the dots (JtD)” project (introducing the project ideas: joining work of NGOs and other stakeholders to learn from each other, planning of a manual for NGOs/municipalities on CBD guidelines implementation). The participants were encouraged to join CEEWEB, the mentioned JtD project as observers and were invited to participate in the next STWG workshop in December.

Introductory round of participants

Representatives of NGOs from Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, Croatia and Slovakia working in the areas of tourism and/or campaigning, presented their organisations and own work, as well as their interest in the workshop. The participants came mostly from environmental NGOs, worked on sustainable development, tourism, education and agriculture. Their expectations connected to the workshop concentrated on sharing experiences from various countries, networking and learning how to prepare and maintain environmental campaigns.

Discussion: the possibility of creating a network cooperating on sustainable tourism and the question of how to achieve its effective implementation and operation was discussed.

Discussion: Tourism and Nature protection – What is sustainable tourism? (Katrin Gebhard)

In order to elaborate the connection between nature protection and the sound use of natural and cultural values, e.g. through sustainable tourism, the following questions were discussed at the beginning:

- What is heritage and why should we protect it?
- Why is it important to protect natural and cultural heritage?
- How can natural and cultural heritage be valorised for sustainable tourism purposes?

In the discussion, the following ideas were mentioned: heritage is the root of society (changing meanwhile); one needs to know the regions background and tradition.

Katrin summed up stating that nature and culture are connected to past, forming the region's intrinsic and valuable heritage. For sustainable tourism it is important to know about this heritage as it represents one of the main attractions for alternative tourism. You need something unique to offer – i.e. local nature and culture.

The next question was raised for the discussion:

- What is sustainable tourism?

The discussion came to the point that it means to develop tourism from local values within the local capacity. Confusion was created, when talking about mass tourism and the question if it can be as well sustainable. Katrin explained that mass tourism can be sustainable as well.

When talking about sustainable tourism one needs to consider the extent of tourism, include accommodation, board, transport, and various resources needed. Further it should be considered to work with local people, businesses and tourists, i.e. to educate them about right behaviour and use of resources. Management and education of both tourists and local inhabitants may be the solution – showing sustainability as the aim (not really possible to be achieved but necessary to go for). Necessary is the diversity of approaches and methods of work.

Start of the workshop

Planning and implementing a successful campaign – an introduction (Polina Kireva)

The group was asked to work out a definition of advocacy through gathering associations with the word (e.g. cooperation, empowering, 'envoicing', speaking on behalf of somebody etc.) and various existing definitions – the results were: "to do something to somebody so that something is done", "targeted actions to achieve something".

Discussion on differences between PR, advocacy and information & education campaigns – the difference of tools, goals and target groups between them, e.g. in the advocacy campaign for Rila the target group should be local authorities, government and international officials.

Polina introduced a scheme of campaign preparation (the two last items in the list below came up during the discussion on media):

- issue
- goal – long term vision
- short term objectives
- target group – mission & actions
- message – adequate to objectives, time, situation & target group, diversified
- channel
- tool

Successful/unsuccessful campaigns

The participants were asked to work in small groups, identifying examples of successful and unsuccessful campaigns and the reasons of their successes/failures.

The results of the group work were presented in plenary and discussed:

- a campaign in Pirin mountains against the development of ski resort Bansko and the world-wide campaigning “save the rainforest” were chosen as unsuccessful examples
- campaigns: “Stop uranu” against uranium mining in east Slovakia (www.stopuranu.sk, www.priateliazeme.sk/spz), against the regulation of Drava river in Croatia (<http://www.zelena-akcija.hr/ZANoviWeb/content/blogcategory/71/310/lang.en/>), “SOS for Adriatic” against oil pipeline from Russia to Croatian coast (<http://www.zelena-akcija.hr>) and against Styrofoam packages usage (http://www.mcspotlight.org/campaigns/countries/usa/usa_toxics.html) were chosen as successful examples.

(the table includes also the outcomes of the discussion on presentations in the following part)

Successful campaigns	Unsuccessful campaigns
strong public support, media support, NGO support, finding the weakest link of the investor, strong network of NGOs on international level, positive tactics (“save something that you can be proud of”), breaking the law, independent media channels, public boycott, feasible alternative (attempt to create positive behaviour instead of just trying to stop the negative), influential message, EIA (refusals); allies built at places we wouldn’t expect them, legal actions (lawsuit), continuity, celebrities’ support, humour & creativity, adequate message, semi-legal actions, collaboration, strategy-action harmony, horizontal doing, everybody participate, online/independent/alternative media usage.	strong opposition from locals, no strong network of NGOs, censorship, economic interest, inactive society, lack of information on impacts, breaking the law (no implementation), not actionable (not saying “how to do it”); fake NGOs, attempts to “buy” NGOs.

Case study: Rosia Montana, Romania (Sorana Olaru Zainescu)

Sorana Olaru Zainescu, Alburnus Maior Association, Romania, presented a case study from Rosia Montana "Sustainable tourism development as alternative to mining".

Main points of the presentation:

- Background of the campaign: plans of starting open-pit exploitation of gold in the area (1997) of Rosia Montana, by using cyanide in the mining process (open pit) and the therewith connected plan to relocate some 1000 households caused opposition from part of local people
- The local inhabitants' opposition to the project was unsuccessful and thus they asked for NGOs' help
- in 2002 the campaign to support the locals was started – legal, illegal and semi-legal ways of protest were used:
 - o the Solidarity March – aiming to raise awareness in media, inform population and raise signatures for referendum – by 2003 the media and public awareness was achieved
 - o legal issues – suing ministries and company (trial on-going in the Supreme Court of Romania) – project postponed
 - o sustainable development campaign – help locals to develop an alternative to mining, create jobs for themselves, through a project called "the golden way" (interesting and well-marketed trail, seminars on sustainable development for locals) – success
 - o festival "FanFest" Rosia Montana: thought as a meeting and party for the campaigners and a way of promoting the campaign – wide support of artists and media, presentation of the area, gathering of Romanian environmental NGOs, workshops – at some point the idea was lost, people came only due to music and fashion; after a change of approach really became a campaigners' meeting for fun and music
 - o "cyanide campaign" against the usage of cyanide, aiming to change the law in order to forbid it – politicians involved, website, stencil usage, posters, coordinated huge group of volunteers, negative campaign

Case study: Sighisoara, Romania (Alexandru Gota)

Alexandru Gota, Eco-Breite NGO, Romania, presented a case study from Sighisoara "Preventing Dracula Theme Park development in a nature reserve next to Sighisoara".

Main points of the presentation:

- spring 2001 – idea of building the park on Breite Plateau near Sighisoara, in a protected area
- public protests in Romania and abroad, involvement of orthodox and catholic church
- protest letters to European Parliament, officials and international NGOs, action of sending postcards to officials
- involvement of Prince Charles & UNESCO officials – the site presented to wide public as a place of exceptional values
- autumn 2002 – fall of the project after UNESCO's suggestions and PWC audit – a victory of civic society.

Day 2

Continuation of the workshop

- Case studies. Street protests and meetings in the ministries: recent campaigns in Bulgaria, *Jordanka Dineva, Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation, Cveta Hristova, Za Zemiata Association, Pavel Antonov, Bluelink*
 - Advocacy and campaigning: skills training, *Pavel Antonov*
 - Case study. Illegal investments on the boundary of Rila NP, *Jordanka Dineva, Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation, Cveta Hristova, Za Zemiata Association*
 - Introduction of Rila National Park, *Stefan Kirilov, Rila NP*
 - Discussion on the current situation and possible solutions
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Case studies: Street protests and meetings in the ministries: recent campaigns in Bulgaria. (Jordanka Dineva, Pavel Antonov, Cveta Hristova)

Jordanka Dineva, Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation, Pavel Antonov, Bluelink, and Cveta Hristova, Za Zemiata, introduced the situation in Bulgaria. In particular it was explained how the movement and campaigns of individual NGOs and concerned civil organisation lead to a change in the broad public. For the first time in Bulgaria the civil society participated in street demonstrations, i.e. the public showed a reaction on the threats posed towards Bulgaria's environment, voiced its opinion and tried to influence the decision makers even without any help from NGOs. Their presentation was supported by a discussion on the development of civic society and other campaigns in Bulgaria.

Campaigns against mining (Cveta Hristova)

Cveta presented campaigns against mining projects in Bulgaria, characterised by very good communication with locals, in three places that were known for having gold deposits:

- In Krumovgrad there were individual campaigners in particular villages, talking to people, and the local Muslim party opposed the project on the public hearing and prevented it.
- In Chelopech the project passed the public hearing, but the development is held due to the lack of a decision from Ministry of Environment (in charge of the mentioned Muslim party).
- In Popintsi local people prevented the geological research by blocking the site for 35 days, showing belief they can stop the planned cyanide gold mine investment.

Bansko ski resort development in Pirin NP

Bansko ski resort has been developed from one ski zone built in the 1960s. The recent development within the boundaries of the Pirin NP started in 2000, including new ski slopes, cable ways, buildings etc., the majority of the infrastructure being built without any environmental permission.

There was an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report of the project, accepted by the Ministry of Environment and Water (in spite of its incompetence and the location of some facilities within the boundaries of the National Park), but even the given permissions were violated after starting the construction in 2001. In 2005, further extension of the resort was allowed, despite transgressing the recently approved Pirin National Park Management Plan and some of Bulgarian environmental legal acts. Local people believed the investor and allowed the resort to expand, due to the promises of area's economic development, "European standard" facilities and general well being, but nowadays they find it

the reason of pollution and bad state of public infrastructure (water and sewage system), and they don't see the economic advantages they expected.

NGOs' campaign against the ski resort's expansion was unsuccessful, probably due to the lack of understanding among the locals and conflicts with them, caused by campaigners' improper approach, an insufficient explanation of threats and the locals' belief in the investor's promises.

Irakli as an icon of overconstruction (Pavel Antonov, Jordanka Dineva)

Pavel and Jordanka raised the case of Irakli, a popular place for wild camping on the seaside, threatened by over-construction. NGOs played a big role in the campaign, but it was generally carried out by "normal" people, not connected to environmental movement, that couldn't be marginalised by media like eco-NGOs. NGOs acted rather as experts stating what can be done, a group of people established a website and disseminated information and campaign's simple, emotional message, understandable to everybody. Irakli became an icon of over-construction threat, and fostered the development of a civic society in Bulgaria.

The following discussion:

- raised the issue of the involvement of famous people and PR specialists in the campaign,
- introduced Irakli as an icon of the signatures raising action for whole Bulgarian seaside,
- pointed out the need of including this and other sites into Natura2000 network, mentioning that the plan of Natura2000 sites developed by NGOs was opposed both, by investors and municipalities,
- mentioned various results of campaigns (popularity of sites, conflicts with locals),
- stressed the need of an early start of the promotion of sustainable tourism development, supported by locals' education and awareness rising.

Strandja Nature Park (Pavel Antonov, Jordanka Dineva)

Pavel and Jordanka presented the case of Strandja Nature Park as the issue that showed the change in peoples' attitude and the development of civil activism. The illegal construction of a hotel complex within the nature park's territory led to a law suit between park administration, investors and the local authorities, which in the end threatened the protected status of Strandja Nature Park and led to severe discussions even on the national level. Connected protest actions involved the general public to a so far unknown extent. The big opposition of the Bulgarian public resulted in the involvement of the Supreme Court, which - due to public pressure - gave the nature park its protection status back. Meanwhile the people protesting in the streets of Sofia pinpointed the existence of a draft legal act forbidding removing the protected status - and as a result the mentioned act was proposed in the Parliament and voted for immediately.

Advocacy and campaigning: skills training (Pavel Antonov)

The training and discussion concentrated on mass media as one of the channels of communication.

Pavel introduced the media knowledge matrix (organisational division of media due to theme, ownership, territorial coverage, technology, political profile, topics) and led a discussion on the topic.

Pavel raised the issue of the importance of personal side of media contacts with journalists and editors. He mentioned the theoretical objectivity and separation between information and comments that is hard to avoid in practice, and the ability of good journalists to manipulate the information without giving own opinion, that can be useful for campaigns.

Pavel stated the necessity of preparing a good media events strategy. He suggested being careful with organising press conferences, having press releases on all the activities prepared in advance and in a proper way, as well as a good, understandable message prepared in advance and spread among all the participants (so that everybody is able to answer basic journalists' questions).

Pavel presented the model of a press release:

- answers to WH questions
- information in order of importance (quotes included)
- background info on the situation.

Further information can be found in training materials provided by Pavel.

Case study – Illegal investments on the boundary of Rila National Park (Jordanka Dineva, Cveta Hristova)

Jordanka and Cveta gave introductory information on Rila National Park, which surroundings have recently become a venue of ski resorts expansion. They shown, on the map of the region, five ski resorts development projects around the Park, three of them already on-going, and later concentrated on the illegal construction of a road and ski lift on the northern boundary of the Park.

The chosen constructions have started the planned development of Panichishte ski resort by “Rila Sport”, a joint-stock company owned in 99% by Realstone Trade Business Corporation (registered on the Virgin Islands, UK). The infrastructure is to be placed in the locality of the Seven Rila Lakes, including more than 21 ski slopes and facilities on a total area of 240 hectares, two-thirds (160 hectares) of which lie within the National Park's boundaries.

As the constructions in the National Park are prohibited and the investor doesn't have proper permits for the ones outside, the project is illegal, but nevertheless is kindly supported by the mayor and administration of Sapareva Banya municipality, that has already started their part of the investment with illegal expansion of the road to Panichishte and upwards to Pionerska Chalet. Despite the obvious law violation, as well as a fine issued to the municipality due to the road construction, the responsible institutions haven't ordered blocking the illegitimate construction. This is what the citizens insist on: the illegal constructions to be stopped and the people who broke the law to be judged.

Introduction of Rila National Park (Stefan Kirilov)

Stefan Kirilov from the Park Directorate gave a presentation on Rila National Park, providing general information on the Park – its territory, fauna & flora, natural reserves, tourism (reference: www.rilanationalpark.org).

The presentation was followed by a discussion on the current situation of the park and the role of the Park Directorate in solving the stated problems (illegal constructions in Panichishte):

- The National Park's management plan for the years 2000–2010 doesn't include the construction. Any construction inside the Park would be illegal. The constructions started without the Environmental Impact Assessment and other documentation. As the territory of the NP belongs to the state, the investor may be given a concession, as in Bansko, and be allowed to build on the boundary of the park, providing it's given the relevant permissions.

- The Park Directorate had given an official statement against the project to the Ministry of Environment, saying that the on-going construction doesn't correspond with any standards and the Management Plan, and it could only be included into the new plan (starting from 2011).
- Stefan Kirilov explained that the new plan should be finished by the end of 2010 (probably it will be only slightly changed) as if it's not finished and there's no plan for a while, everything can be done, what means a major threat to the park.
- The Park Directorate has no other possibility to react in spite of the statement, it cannot sue the project (can only participate in a lawsuit started by e.g. some NGO) nor influence it (all the investments are discussed on a higher level).
- The Park Directorate has called the police to the construction site, and as a result a fine, quite symbolic, was issued to the municipality for the illegal construction on the border of the park (road widening).
- All the possible help from NGOs will be welcomed by the Park Directorate, including statements and expertises – all possible tools should be used. PAN Parks has started to work on the issue as well, as Rila NP is a part of the PANPark network.
- The issue of gaining money for the Park through visitors' fees was mentioned – Stefan Kirilov explained that it's impossible due to Bulgarian law.

Day 3

Site visits

- Good practice example – sustainable tourism development at the horsefarm, Bachevo village
 - Construction site in Panichishte
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Visit of a horse farm in Bachevo village.

The farm is one of the examples of good practice and an alternative to the mass tourism development in the area, certified by PAN parks.

The participants had the possibility of horse riding and seeing a well developed sustainable tourism site, as well as talking with its owner about him establishing the farm and managing it, together with his family, and other sustainable developments in the area, like a small fish farm (some of the participants visited it) and micro water power plants on the stream.

Visit of the illegal construction site in Panichishte

Road and ski lift constructions.

Day 4

Learning by doing

- Planning a campaign for stopping the construction of the ski resort Panichishte in Rila NP

Closing of the workshop

Planning a campaign for stopping the construction of the ski resort Panichishte in Rila National Park – a plenary session and group work (Iren Stephanova).

The participants worked in plenary and small groups towards a campaign development. Iren led the work through stakeholders' identification and analysis, further analysis of the problems and objectives of the planned campaign (using problem tree methodology) and finally the development of strategy.

Stakeholders' analysis

Methodology:

- list the stakeholders,
- determine their current attitude towards the project/problem,
- decide on desired attitude,
- decide on actions/activities towards stakeholders in order to change the attitude.

The group pointed out stakeholders in plenary:

- Ministry of Environment and Waters,
- mayors,
- investors,
- local people,
- visitors,
- media,
- Ministry of Regional Development,
- Agency of Tourism,
- State Forest Agency,
- Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Waters,
- NP Rila Directorate,
- regional governments,
- NGOs,
- country population,
- EU institutions,
- hunters' lobby,
- woodcutters & timber producers,
- "White Brotherhood" society,
- international partners/community,
- politicians (parties and leaders).

Then the participants were asked to divide into three groups and choose three of the stakeholders they found important and to analyse their attitude and possible actions. Not all of the stakeholders could be analysed due to the lack of time.

The results of the group work were presented in plenary and shortly discussed:

Stakeholder	Current attitude	Desired attitude	Actions
Ministry of Environment and Waters	official position: support for the mass development projects, ignorant towards environment issues	should take care for environment, stop the constructions	legal/public/international pressure (campaign, signals on international level, getting support)
mayors	positive towards mass development projects (not stated publicly)	clarify their position (preferably against the projects)	rise journalists' interest (make some research for the press, send info, have the locals explain the situation to the media) in order to influence the mayors
investors	we cannot change their attitude		stop them: legal actions (against the illegal constructions) – but never sue the investors directly, inform the public about the illegal constructions, rise awareness of locals
local people	entrepreneurs understanding the threat of the investments	active within the community, leading	partnership with NGOs, leadership training, community meetings
	happy with the investments, selling their land to make fast money, willing to work there, with short term attitude	not to sell land, understanding the value of land, thinking about long term impacts, starting own businesses	provide info on land price & perspectives, info on support programs for SMEs (e.g. EU), start-up business education (external resources needed)
visitors	happy with mass tourism development	realising threats for the nature	info campaign
	realising the threat for the nature	active	activating training
media	supporting investors	neutral, giving clear info, interested in the topic	NGOs–media cooperation
	neutral		
	negative towards investments, supporting campaign against them		use them
Ministry of Regional Development	pro-investment	negative & respecting the law	legal warning (prove the constructions are illegal), later lawsuit

Agency of Tourism	confusing: pro-investment but pro-sustainability as well	negative	if the MofRD is sued, they wouldn't like to be associated and change their attitude
State Forest Agency	sold the land for the investment	negative & respecting the law	warnings together with MofRD, hopefully they reverse their attitude then (knowing the constructions are illegal), possible lawsuit when we control the situation

The group working on the last three of the analysed stakeholders commented that “of course” it’s the best not to sue anybody at all, unless it’s the only possibility; Kristina mentioned the necessity of the legal analysis and clarification of the situation.

Suggestions made by Iren on the stakeholders’ analysis:

- list all possible stakeholders, diversify as much as possible,
- find out as much as possible on them,
- plan applicable activities (in your capacity or plan asking for outside help) and choose who to work with,
- collect others’ opinions, try to have an overall picture.

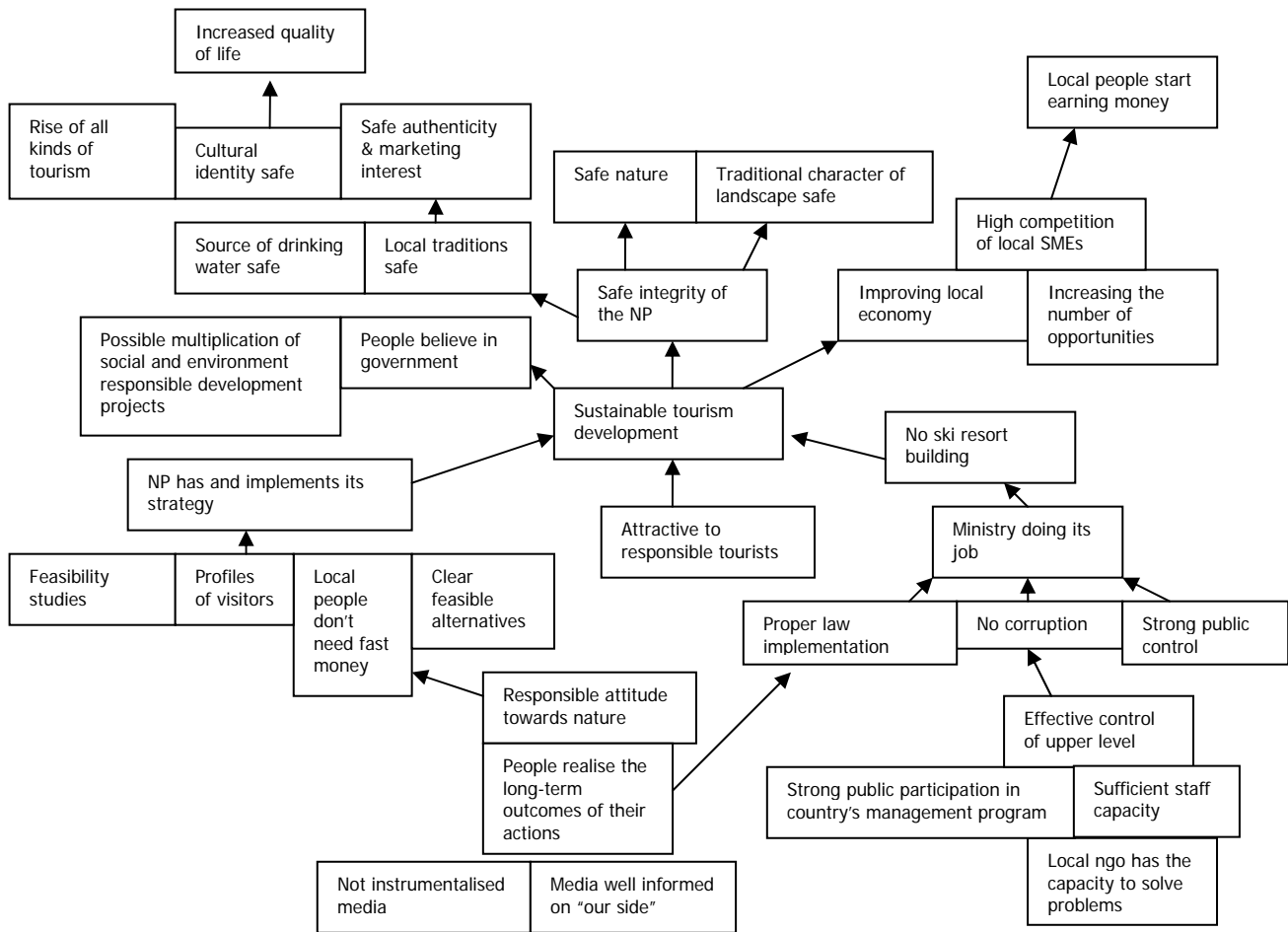
Iren suggested that the group should choose concrete people to continue the work on the analysis and compile the work to use it later.

Problems analysis

The **problem tree** methodology:

- Clarifying the situation: asking questions “**why?**” and “**so what?**” to find and name problems
- Building a **problem tree** out of causes/effects relations in order to find the **core problem** (complete list of causes & effects is needed, to avoid the risk of replacing the level of reasons)
- Preparation of an **objectives tree**: transforming problems into objectives in the way of opposing the problems.
- Choosing the **overall objective** (general), **specific objective** (what we want to achieve with our campaign), **possible results & activities** (including duration, responsible side, indicators), as well as **strategic criteria** (capacity and environment).

Further, they built the objectives tree:



After analysing both trees, the group found it necessary to develop two campaigns: short- and long-term, with different objectives and actions required. Participants separated into two groups according to personal interest and worked on the strategies. The results were presented and discussed in plenary:

Short-term strategy:

- Stop works in Panishishte
- Increase awareness within the country and Europe
- Precise legal statement, clear message
- Interesting actions – critical mass
- Cooperate with others, contact & send statement to EU Commission
- Use EU institutions to influence the Bulgarian ones
- Scientific statement on Sofia problem with water supply in case of realisation of projects
- Disseminate info on Business & Biodiversity meeting in November

The following discussion suggested that legal analysis, expertises and outside (other NGOs and international) support was needed.

Long-term strategy:

- Overall goal: to promote sustainable development & protect the integrity on Rila NP
- Specific goals: to generate sustainable & diversified income for locals, gain strong public participation, increase NGOs capacity, increase trust in legal system/state, improve attitude towards nature and raise awareness
- Results: locals utilise sustainable options, court cases won, legislation enforced/improved, better informed citizens

Activities	Time	Responsible side	Indicators
critical mass, demonstrations	on demand	local citizens & NGOs	wide participation, news coverage
court cases	on-going	NGOs, lawyers	cases won
sustainable business education		NGOs, universities, schools, media	businesses created, local GDP rise
social/environmental responsibility & info campaign		NGOs, schools, universities, media	meetings, releases, leaflets, public survey
media campaign		NGOs, schools, youth clubs	green schools etc.
create cross-sectoral forums		NGOs, companies, government	meetings (no. of participants), transparency
lobbying		special NGOs, lawyers, celebrities	

The discussion shown the necessity of involving foreign partners (NGOs e.g. in Brussels), fundraising (some funding sources were proposed); Kristina and Katrin offered CEEWEB's help in these areas.

Appendix – List of participants

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