

The international Forum «Civic-media NGO and mass media cooperation for Civil Society development» took place on 20-21 of November, 2009 in St. Petersburg. It was supported by the Nordic Council of Ministers, the K. Adenauer Foundation in St-Petersburg and the "Finland-Russia" Society.

The Forum was planned to be organized as an arena for open discussion between representatives from NGOs and mass media about the perspectives and opportunities of strategic cooperation, information and experience exchange. It was the event in the framework of the project “NGO and Mass Media for civil society development”, supported by the Nordic Council of Ministers.

More than 140 participants including of 3rd sector, mass media and government representatives and experts from the North-West of Russia (St. Petersburg, Murmansk, Arkhangelsk, Kaliningrad, Petrozavodsk, Novgorod, Viborg), Finland, Sweden, Germany and Baltic countries.

The participants discussed the key topics regarding civil society development, ways of NGO and mass media interaction and overcoming barriers in communication, freedom of speech and journalists’ ethics, using informational and expert potential of NGO. The Forum gave Russian participants the unique opportunity to acquaint themselves with the positive experience of civil society establishment in Nordic and Baltic countries and strengthen international partnership with their abroad colleagues.

The topics/discussion during/ of the plenary session stirred up a dispute. Not all the experts from Europe have the same points of view on the freedom of speech question. The journalist of «Dagens Nyheter» newspaper (Sweden) I. Neveus paying attention to the Forum title said: “Each newspaper wants to have exclusive news. However, a journalist should cooperate with neither officials nor political parties nor NGOs. Any interference in work of journalist or attempt to influence on him is a hostile act. Only co-existence is possible between mass media and NGO, not cooperation”. This opinion about 3rd and mass media interaction is conditioned by history of Sweden, where democracy and freedom of speech have long traditions. In spite of the dispute all the speakers from Nordic countries recognized that NGO is the great information and expert resource.

Speeches of J. Dzialoshinski (Professor of the High School of Economic State University), A. Sharogradskaya (director of Regional Press Institute) and A. Vorobev (vice-chairman of the Press and Interaction with Mass Media Committee of St-Petersburg) aroused much interest of the audience.

A former head of the NDR Television and Broadcasting Company Professor P. Shiwy (Germany) gave a talk on experience of freedom of speech establishment in European countries. V. Monakhov (professor of the Moscow State University of Linguistics and of the UNESCO department of the copyright and other types of the intellectual property rights at the State University “Higher School of Economics”) made a speech about protection of business reputation and stressed importance of NGO in “competing democracy” and promotion of civil society development.

After the plenary session participants of the Forum took a part in three round tables and discussions on the key topics (“Interaction between NGOs and Mass Media”, “Journalists’ professional ethics and freedom of speech ” and “International experience and cooperation”) were continued.

Researcher of the Aleksanteri Institute J. Pietilainen (Finland) made a speech about participation of mass media and NGO in civil society development. He said that non government

organizations were reliable sources of information and usually cooperated with journalists as distinct from officials.

A. Ignatyev, programme development director of the «Regional Economic Development Agency» (Kaliningrad), addressed the meeting on «Forming common information space in the Baltic Sea region: roles of mass-media and NGO's». He said there was not common information space in countries of Baltic Sea. It is his opinion that this space will have to be create as the multilanguage area.

Some speakers touched upon a subject of modernization of NGO's working methods. Chairman of the Murmansk branch of the "Friends of Finland" organization Gr. Lukovitsky presented a report on topic "Internet is NGO's the only chance". He stressed that wide using of web technologies (Internet blogs, web PR, est.) is necessary for development of information interaction between NGO and mass media.

During the discussions participants of the round tables drew a conclusion that 3rd sector is a huge but not using resource, which can provide information and expertise regarding different spheres of social life. There is not regular and strategic cooperation between NGO and mass media despite some examples of effective interaction.

Presentation of web site www.civic-media.org was a significant event of the Forum. It should be a common on-line space for developing of close partnership building between NGOs and mass media from different countries of Baltic Sea. Participants of the Forum noted usefulness and opportuneness of this information platform.

Master classes with practical trainings were carried out on the second day of the Forum. The chief-editor of "Moy rayon" ("My district") newspaper D. Kachalova told NGO's representatives about mass media and specific methods of effective cooperation with it. Consultant on communications K. Sholmov carried out master class for journalists about 3rd sector and NGOs. Participants of the master class discussed how the experience and expertise from NGO's experts can be used by journalists.

Question of necessary of international NGOs' activity developing was brought up at the third master class. A. Ignatyev (programme development director of the «Regional Economic Development Agency», Kaliningrad), D. Akhutina (director general of «Norden» Association, St-Petersburg), Margareta Hammerman («Norden», Sweden) and Helmut Halemaa (NGO's roundtable, Estonia) were trainers and moderators and tell participants how to enter into international cooperation with abroad colleagues and discussed commonly encountered problems which NGOs meet in the process of search abroad partners for common projects. It is the experts' opinion that network interaction would help to solve many NGO's problems; on-line resources (for example, site Baltic Sea NGO Forum) is cheap in using but these information platforms gives enormous opportunities in searching of potential partners and for research priority areas of donors' activities. During the discussion it was stressed that international cooperation for any non government organization is the resource which helps NGO to make their activities in 3rd sector more visible and informational attractive to mass media.

Sum up, it may be said that the Forum reached the main goal; it became a common platform for representatives form NGOs and mass media for information and experience exchange. This open discussion helped the organizers to find the future lines of discourse development and to shape course of future activities in the framework of the project "NGO and Mass Media for civil society development".

Association for Cooperation with Nordic Countries “Norden” thanks all the partners, speakers, experts and participants of the Forum.