

REPORT
“On business association needs’ assessment”

During the period from 01/11/2001 till 01/19/2001 meetings with business associations in Kremenchuk, Lviv and Odessa were conducted. The purposes of the meetings were:

1. Collect information of “new” regional business associations and additional information about “old” business associations;
2. Determine critical business associations` needs in information and training;
3. Develop programs for such organizations within the framework of BIZPRO, taking their needs into account.

For these purpose we created a questionnaire with the specific questions about business association critical problems, their training and informational needs, personnel category the training should be addressed to, issues of critical interest in association management and advocacy, the optimal duration of training courses and expected results, to name a few. Please, find the questionnaire attached.

Associations in Poltava, Lviv, Odessa, Donetsk, Nikolaev, Rovno, Ivano-Frankovsk, Ternopol oblasts were polled. In addition to business associations other public membership-based organizations (funds, trusts of foundations, and business support centers) were polled. The total number of organizations polled is 35. The list of the organizations is attached. Among the total number of polled organizations 20 organizations are “new” for the project database.

The breakdown of organizations by the year of registration is as follows: 26% organizations were registered in 2000/2001 years, 14% organizations were registered in 1996 year, 11% organizations were registered in 1997 and 1999 years, and 6% organizations were registered in 1989 year. The survey provided the opportunity to compare training and informational needs of recently created associations and associations existing for 2 and more years. The rest of organizations (29%) were registered in 1998, 1995, and 1994 years.

Among associations’ problems the following were listed most frequently: financial (37%), lacking equipment (40%), lacking information (14%), lacking publications (11%), lacking advocacy and business association management skills (11%), necessity of branch offices (11%). Among other problems are the following: lacking legal awareness, lacking consistent legislation for business associations, lacking support from local authorities, lacking qualified personnel, lacking trainers in BA management. Of associations created in 2000/2001 44% face the financial problem; 22% of organizations – lacking equipment, legal awareness, publications, association management and advocacy skills. Only 11% of new associations indicated lacking of information as their prime problem.

Advocacy training of association personnel was mentioned by 57% associations as the most beneficial. It is explicable because advocacy is the form of activity that most Ukrainian business associations see as their primary objective. 46% mentioned association management course as a very important one for the chief associations managers; 34% would like to have training on informational technologies (IT). Among other training courses the following were mentioned: SME management, communication skills, legal issues, business planning, learning foreign experience, strategic planning, partnerships with local authorities, self-bankruptcy techniques, fundraising, international accountant standards, public relations, leadership, business associations marketing, personnel development, exchange of experience with other similar organizations.

During the training course on association management the following issues should be highlighted: a) legal aspects of business associations activity and creation, association financial management, how to increase influence of the organization, fundraising, membership development, designing and promoting new services, business associations marketing, creation of business association effective structure, dues calculation, using Internet for designing new services, business association personnel development, business associations networking, business association sustainability, public relations, work with volunteers, BA strategy development, negotiation skills.

During the training course on advocacy the most would like to be trained in advocacy mechanisms and strategy, establishing partnerships with local authorities, learning experience of other associations, foreign advocacy experience, social partnership, coalition building, influence on government authorities, negotiation with local authorities.

As for results, the associations are most of all interested in gaining practical skills, learning other associations experience in advocacy and business associations management, lessons learned from similar organizations in Ukraine and in other countries as well.

The optimal duration of the training courses, in associations' opinion, is from several hours to two weeks. The average can be estimated as 3 days for each course (business association management and advocacy). It is the most realistic time, so that the leaders of business associations can participate in training.

Business associations, in regions especially, are lacking information. They would like to receive it in any form (publications, CD-ROMs, e-mail messages, Internet, etc.). Most of all they are interested in legal information in the form of Liga database. Other information business associations are eager to get is: foreign experience in SME development, micro-finance resources, Food/trade internet magazines, donor/international organizations, upcoming events, experience of similar organizations, potential partners, networking opportunities, teachers, economy statistics, foreign associations, investors, international standards, new technologies, training courses available, personnel management, new technologies, business association activity analysis, business association management.

Results of the survey demonstrated that there is no literature on either management of business associations or advocacy. Only one association has handbook "Art of Lobbying", published by Gemini project in Poland. Another associations try to pick up some information from the newsletter articles, international seminars and study tours.

For the associations it was very hard to estimate their expenditures on staff training. Usually they participated in training courses conducted free of charge or with discounts. 27% of associations don't have payroll personnel at all. Average number of payroll personnel is 2 persons: president or executive director and bookkeeper. One association has 7 payroll personnel and another association –12.

Polled associations have different experience, skills and "age". Using a 5-point scale, 40% of associations is between 2 and 3 in association management and advocacy, 49% is 4. I think that the programs for the groups with different scores should be different, may be the basic program should be adapted for the level of the trainees.