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## **NGO as a support for democratization in Poland and Ukraine**

At the beginning of our paper, we should define the meaning of some words which are very important in further part of our speech. First of them is “democratization.”

Democratization is the process of transition to democracy. Most often the process of democratization means leaving the authoritarian or semi-authoritarian systems. Democratization is a group of actions; main objective of these actions is to enforce the attributes of democracy, such as universal suffrage, regular elections, civil society, the rule of law and independent judiciary into the systems of government in the state.

Democratization is very often connected to the process of the liberalization. In many cases, liberalization is a foregoing process of democratization and it is associated to many aspects of life.

The effect of democratization is democracy.

**Democracy** “is a form of government, a way of life, a goal or ideal, and a political philosophy. The term also refers to a country that has a democratic form of government. The word *democracy* means *rule by the people*. United States President Abraham Lincoln described such self-government as „government of the people, by the people, for the people.”

Citizens in democratic systems take part in government ei-

ther directly or indirectly. In a *direct democracy*, also called *pure democracy*, people meet in one place to make the laws for their community. Such democracy was implemented in the ancient Greek city-state of Athens and exists today in the New England town meeting.

The most modern democracy is indirect democracy, which is also known as *representative democracy*. In large communities-cities, states, provinces, or countries it is impossible for all the people to meet as a group. Instead, they elect a certain number of their fellow citizens to represent them in making decisions about laws and other matters. An assembly of representatives may be called a council, a legislature, a parliament, or a congress.”.

After reading these definitions, at the first sight it could be said that democracy in a modern world means only choosing representatives to the parliament, electing a president or making social initiative such a project of the law. However, this is not true. In democratic states there is a concept such as NGO (non-governmental organizations). These organizations are established by citizens, without interference of the state. They are practically independent from governments of the states. NGO are not established to make money, but to conduct particular activity, for example charity actions. The world’s biggest non-governmental organization is International Red Cross and Red Crescent movement that was founded in 1863. It was one of the first organization that could be called a NGO.

Though voluntary associations of citizens had existed throughout the history, NGOs in a modern sense, especially on the international level, have developed over last two centuries. The

phrase “non-governmental organization” came into use with the establishment of the United Nations in 1945 – it was constituted by provisions of Article 71 of Chapter 10 of the United Nations Charter for a consultative role for organizations that are neither governments nor member states. The definition of “international NGO” (INGO) was firstly given in the resolution 288 (X) of The Economical and Social Council on February 27, 1950: it was defined as “any international organisation that is not founded by an international treaty”. The vital role of NGOs and other „major groups” in sustainable development was recognized in Chapter 27 of Agenda 21, leading to revised arrangements for consultative relationship between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations.

Globalization in the 20th century gave rise to the importance of NGOs. Many problems could not be solved by a state. International treaties and international organizations such as World Trade Organization were perceived as being too concentrated on the interests of capitalist enterprises.<sup>1</sup> In order to counterbalance this trend, NGOs have been emphasizing on humanitarian issues, developmental aid and sustainable development. A prominent example of this is the World Social Forum which is a rival convention to the World Economic Forum held annually in January in Davos, Switzerland. The fifth World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in January 2005 was attended by representatives from more than 1,000 NGOs<sup>2</sup>.

“NGOs exist for a variety of purposes, usually to further the

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.aolsvc.worldbook.aol.com/wb/Article?id=ar153840>

political or social goals of their members. Examples include improving the state of the natural environment, encouraging the observance of human rights, improving the welfare of the disadvantaged, or representing a corporate agenda. However, there are a huge number of such organizations and their goals cover a broad range of political and philosophical positions. This can also easily be applied to private schools and athletic organizations.

NGOs vary in their methods. Some act primarily as lobbyists, while others conduct programs and activities primarily. For instance, such an NGO as Oxfam, concerned with poverty alleviation, might provide needy people with the equipment and skills they need to find food and clean drinking water.

Another example of a NGO is Amnesty International. They are the largest human rights organization in the world. It forms a global community of human rights defenders with more than 1.5 million members, supporters and subscribers in over 150 countries and territories.”<sup>3</sup>.

After discussing general definitions connected to NGO, we would like to show what the situation of non governmental organisations in Ukraine and Poland looks like. In the beginning we should mark that the development of the NGO was very difficult in those states. The reason of that was a former membership in the Soviet bloc. As we know in the communist states every social initiative, which were inconsistent with directions of the government,

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<sup>2</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-governmental\\_organization](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-governmental_organization)

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*

could not be implemented freely. It resulted in the fact that in those countries the involvement in NGOs is much less than in the Western States where organisation had been developing without barriers. The reason for a minor participation in non-governmental organisations could be seen in the mentality of the both nations. We do not want to refer to the stereotypes, however there could be seen a certain rule that both Polish and Ukrainians unite themselves only when they have a common enemy. After a prevention of the danger, quarells and arguments return. A hot example here may be a situation that occurred after the Orange Revolution in Ukraine. Former allies have suddenly become fierce enemies and they couldn't take advantage of the previous social trust. It is not an isolated event, but the whole process that has been repeated notoriously in Poland and in Ukraine.

Now we want to describe the development of Polish NGOs.

The history of a NGO in Poland has been quite long, because the first mark of philanthropy in Poland dates back to the 12th century. However, civic associations, using professional methods of social welfare, appeared at the end of 19th century. "The Polish Constitution of 1921 contained a wide range of citizens' rights, including the right to associate and the Law on Associations of 1932 were the legal basis for establishing associations before the Second World War.

**Basic characteristics of the associations' position in the years 1918-1939:** at that time organizations were registered by the governmental administration – Ministry of Interior Affairs (there were approximately 10,000 associations and 3,000 foundations operating at that time), some of them had a special status of a Supreme

Public Utility Association given by the Ministry of Interior Affairs.

**Communist period from 1945 to 1989:** during the communist period (i.e., between 1945-1989), even though the legal regulations had not been drastically changed and the 1952 Constitution still allowed the citizens to form associations, the practice was somewhat different – the existence of associations and other civil organizations was not possible (that included the existence of independent workers unions like Solidarity).

(...) After the „Round Table Talks”, that set out the hand over of power from the Communists Parliament passed the Act on Associations. This Act, jointly with the 1984 Act on Foundations became the basis for the development of non-governmental organizations in Poland.”<sup>4</sup>.

The institutional and legal framework for voluntary sector was initially set out in the early 90s and has developed since then. The latest law (the Act on public benefit organizations and volunteering) allows organizations – once they have passed a special registration procedure – to receive 1% of an individuals’ income tax. In May 2004 Poland became a member of the European Union. As a result, the Polish voluntary sector has access to new sources of funding. New challenges for non-profits appeared at the same time, among them the management of the European structural funds and the social economy.

Nowadays in Poland over 50,000 registered organizations (including organizations of public benefit) work. Most of active

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<sup>4</sup> <http://english.ngo.pl/x/100986;jsessionid=31962235FE20FF731CFF1847BCED9EDA>

organizations operate in the field of sport, social care, health protection, culture, education and community development. In Poland 8 millions citizens are members of these organizations (18% of Poles are involved in voluntary activities), 1/3 of the organizations employ permanent staff.

The undoubted fact is that during the transformation of the state NGOs have contributed to the positive development of democratization process in Poland. However, we would like to show actions of NGO that help developing democratization of Ukraine.

Turning point in Ukraine that began the process of democratization was the Orange Revolution. Many organizations have worked to reach the objective of democratization. One of these NGO is for sure International Renaissance Foundation (IRF).

“In 2004 the International Renaissance Foundation (IRF) centered much of its attention on support of public initiatives and on operation of own projects pursued to guarantee fair and free election process in Ukraine. For these purposes IRF funded projects in the following avenues:

- Support of monitoring NGO coalitions;
- Monitoring of election campaigns coverage in mass media;
- Information and awareness campaigns;
- Exit poll empowerment;
- Support of civil initiatives aimed at voters' rights protection;
- Voter mobilization;
- Support of public councils and civic boards activities.

Over the period from the autumn 2003 to December 2004 IRF allocated to the non-government organizations of Ukraine lots of funds for implementation of elections-related projects. The funded projects did not aim at empowering specific political forces but pointed toward the creation of an environment conducive to compliance with the Ukrainian electoral legislation standards, respect of the voters' rights and freedoms as well as the spread of information for the free choice of every citizen.”

“The IRF has supported and promoted the civil coalition “New Choice – 2004”

Civil coalition “New Choice – 2004” is a voluntary association of Ukrainian NGOs involved in projects that seek to secure fair, free and democratic 2004 election of the President of Ukraine.

The mission of the Coalition was to ensure fair, transparent and democratic election of the President of Ukraine in 2004, to consolidate civil society organizations in promoting the informed choice of the electorate, and to promote respect of the voters' rights and of the equality of the election process participants.”

In the course of their activities coalition members had a number of working meetings with the representatives of different branches of power, Ukrainian NGOs, and the international community. This year such meetings, specifically, were held with Valeriy Mishura (Jan 23, 2004), Madeleine Albright (Feb 21, Serhiy Kivalov (June 9). The Coalition nominated its representatives at the Central Electoral Commission. Concurrently, the coalition members addressed Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovych with a letter as to the discussion of possible cooperation between the Government and the



NGO community, in order to lay the grounds for a fair presidential race.”

The Coalition prepared and conducted a string of regional events, including press conferences, press centers and round table sessions. Their intention was to present the goals and tasks of the Coalition, to involve NGOs from the regions and to sign the Fair Elections

Charter launched by the coalition member organizations. These meetings amassed an attendance in excess of 300 persons representing regional civil organizations, outlets of political parties, the authorities, local self-government bodies, and the mass media. Another accomplishment of the Coalition was its drafting and communication to the Verkhovna Rada of proposed legislative amendments envisaging equal opportunities for all presidential challengers in the candidates’ debates on the national television channels. The Coalition actively worked to consolidate the efforts of the Ukrainian civil society aiming at free and fair elections in Ukraine.

The New Choice Coalition was applying its every effort to inform the media and the Central Election Commission of Ukraine on the findings of the NGO election monitoring.”<sup>5</sup>.

As we can see the operations of the IRF has had a great influence on the presidential election in 2004. They tried to prepare Ukrainians to the democratic elections.

Another good example of organization that has had a great influence on the process of democratization in Ukraine is PAUCI

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<sup>5</sup> [www.irf.kiev.ua/files/eng/news\\_381\\_en\\_pdf.pdf](http://www.irf.kiev.ua/files/eng/news_381_en_pdf.pdf)

“The Polish-Ukrainian Cooperation Foundation – PAUCI was established in April 2005 as a legacy organization to the Poland-America-Ukraine Cooperation Initiative. Since 1999, this initiative served as a unique tri-lateral program aimed at sharing best practices of Poland’s successful transition from a centrally planned economy to a liberal, market-oriented democracy. The mission of the PAUCI Foundation is to build the capacity of Ukraine to integrate more closely with the European Union and NATO through the application of Polish and European experience and to facilitate extensive cross-border dissemination of knowledge and experience in key areas that impact human capital and civil society., PAUCI Key Focus Areas: Advocacy for closer integration with Euro-Atlantic structures, Administrative and local government reform, International and EU business standards, Ethical standards in public life, Youth empowerment.

PAUCI achieves its aims through a combination of grant-making programs for Polish and Ukrainian NGOs and its own implementation activities. To date, PAUCI has funded over 185 partnership grants to more than 424 organizations throughout Ukraine and Poland totaling nearly four million US dollars. In addition to financial support, Pause’s Expert Exchange program (EEP) attracts highly qualified Polish and Ukrainian experts to transfer practical know-how between Poland and Ukraine to produce tangible results. The program works bi-laterally by placing Polish experts in Ukrainian NGOs and local government and providing internships for Ukrainian experts in Poland. PAUCI also conducts “Euroatlantic Meetings” for students and various professionals in the cities of

Ukraine to build a deeper understanding of the pros and cons of Ukraine's perspective membership in the EU and NATO. PAUCI Club meetings aim to inform Polish media, experts and NGOs about developments in Ukraine and promote Ukraine's movement towards the EU."<sup>6</sup>.

Polish NGOs have helped in a Ukrainian democratization process as well. One of them is Stefan Batory Foundation. "Civic Initiatives in Belarus and Ukraine" is the program that supports that democratization process.

"The Program planned for 2003-2009, aims to support democratic changes and the development of civil society in Belarus and Ukraine. Stefan Batory Foundation cooperate with non-governmental organizations from Belarus and Ukraine that support grass-root initiatives, engage in building partnership between non-governmental organizations and public administration sectors and in civic education activities.

The Program is carried out in the framework of three basic schemes Local initiatives and regional partners Advocacy Civic education that involve grantmaking to Belarusian and Ukrainian non-governmental organizations, selected on the basis of open competitions or individually invited to apply for grants. Their grantees are invited also to take part in study visits, meetings and training organized in Belarus and Ukraine as well as in Poland and other countries."<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.pauci.org/en/about/about>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.batory.org.pl/english/byukr/index.htm>

Our last example of the organization supporting the democratization process is The Eurasia Foundation. “It is a privately managed non-profit organization supported by the United States Agency for International Development and other public and private donors. Since 1992, the Eurasia Foundation has invested nearly \$335 million through more than 7,700 grants and operating programs in the countries of the former Soviet Union.

“Vox Populi” is the program launched by The Eurasia Foundation. The Vox Populi initiative seeks to introduce innovative ways to incorporate input from citizens and independent experts into the process of administrative reforms in Ukraine. That project is supported by Westminster Foundation for Democracy. WFD's contribution will fund public hearings and roundtables in the Ukrainian oblasts of Volyn, Mykolaiv, Dnipopetrovsk, Chernivtsi and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. WFD accounts to the British Parliament and funds projects around the world which are aimed at building and strengthening pluralist democracies.”<sup>8</sup>

Organizations that were created by social imitative and that help to improve democratization process are efficient tools, not only in Poland and Ukraine, but also in the whole world.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.eurasia.org>