

NGO Networks in Europe and Armenia

Structure, Activities, and Finances

A Quick Comparative Overview

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Yerevan, April 2012
Republic of Armenia



Title: NGO Networks in Europe and Armenia – Structures, Activities and Finances; A Quick Comparative Overview

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Place of Publication: Yerevan, Armenia, 2012

Supporting Organizations: Public Network and CIM

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Introduction:

This study was ordered by Public Network and conducted by Lennart Lehmann, Integrated Expert of the German Center for International Migration and Development (CIM) at the Armenian NGO-National Assembly Cooperation Public Network in the frame of a long-term consultancy cooperation between CIM and Public Network.

The aim of this study was to provide Public Network with information on how similar NGO networks function in Europe in order to develop guidelines and recommendations for improving Public Network's internal and external effectiveness.

Information was gathered through interviews, internet-research, and study of annual reports of relevant organizations. The author thanks the following persons for having generously provided information for this study: Martin Schuster (APRODEV), Matthias Körting (VENRO), Urmo Kübar (NENO/EMSL), Marek Zoltowski (OFOP), Tamara Abrahamyan (Public Network)

NGO Federations Presented in this Study:

From Europe: **APRODEV**. APRODEV is the Association of World Council of Churches related Development Organizations in Europe. The main objective of APRODEV is to influence decision-making processes in the European Union institutions. APRODEV was founded in 1990. At present, 16 organizations, with offices in 15 European countries, cooperate through APRODEV.

From Europe: **Social Platform NGO**. The Social Platform was established in 1995 and brings together more than forty European non-governmental organizations, federations and networks which are working to build an inclusive society.

From Germany: **VENRO**. VENRO is the umbrella organization of development non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Germany. The organization was founded in 1995 and consists of around 120 organizations.

From Poland: **OFOP** (Ogólnopolska Federacja Organizacji Pozarządowych, National Federation of Polish NGOs). OFOP grew out of a conference which was organized in Warsaw in 2002 on the theme of building a representation of the third sector, and the first General Assembly of the federation was convened on 6 December 2003.

From Armenia: **Public Network**. Public Network is a non-formal NGO network representing about 150 NGOs in Armenia. It is working on increasing civil society's participation in public democratic decision making processes and institutionalizing participation of CSOs in public decision making. The network is represented formally by a leading NGO, and 12 other NGO representatives, which all together represent the Coordinating Council of the network. The network was established in 2007, the first General Assembly of the network was convened in 2008.

From Estonia: **NENO/ESML**. Network of Estonian Non-profit Organizations, NENO (or EMSL in Estonian) is the single and largest Estonian organization uniting public benefit non-profit organizations. There are currently 111 members. Established in 1991 as the Estonian Foundation Center, it opened its membership to associations in 1994 and has since transformed from a mere service provider into one of Estonia's largest civic initiative organizations.

From Slovenia: **SLOGA**. Slovenian Global Action. SLOGA is a platform for non-governmental, non-profit organizations that are active in the field of development cooperation, global learning and humanitarian aid. The aim of the platform is to join forces and strengthen the partnership between Slovene non-governmental and non-profit organizations (NGOs) that are active in developing countries and raise awareness to the Slovene and European general public as regards the unequal division of wealth and the global solidarity and the co-dependence related to it.

1. Activities

Examples of activities of the surveyed NGO umbrella organizations, associations, and federations:

- Campaigns
 - o running public campaigns and events to promote raising awareness
 - o media and public relations activities to raise public awareness
- Advocacy coalitions
 - o setting up working groups dealing with relevant topics both at national and international level
- Silent lobbying (e.g. monitoring, where money is going and making suggestions to relevant bodies)
- Organizing congresses on education
- Organizing training for member organizations
- Representing the commonly defined interests and positions of the non-profit Association members
- Facilitating institutional dialogue
- Facilitating access to governmental bodies
- Representation in the political organs
- Defining principals of cooperation between civil society and the state.
- Capacity Building (connecting members with relevant important institutions and persons)
- Media and organizational support for events in the realm of informing the public
- Help with preparation of projects for open calls
- Shadow reports
- Legal consultation services for members
- Legislative initiatives in order to achieve legislative changes
- Civil society representation/platforms on the internet
- Mapping of NGOs
- Providing focal point of communication to state bodies for interaction with civil society
- Assisting state to improve political product (e.g. legislative work)
- Organizing possibilities for coming together of CS organizations in order to organize joint activities.

2. Legal Status

APRODEV

(Working on European level): NGO under Belgian law

VENRO

(Working on national level): NGO under German law

OFOP

(Working on national level): Union of Associations under Polish law

Public Network

(Working on national level): Not registered, informal network

NENO/EMSL

(Working on national level): registered as non-profit organization under Estonian law

3. How They Finance Themselves:

APRODEV:

- Members cover costs of Secretariat office and 4-5 staffers
- Members cover costs of “Special Programs“ (Budget: 120,000-180,000 Euro)
- Working Group specialists are financed by their home-organization
- General Assembly is financed by members. One organization hosts. Transport and accommodation is covered individually by member organizations (Some representatives reside in 5 star hotels, others sleep in tents).

VENRO:

- **Membership fees** (from 320 EURO to 41,000 EURO)
- Secretariat (office and staff) is **financed by members**
- Membership in European networks (CONCORD) is financed by members
- Projects are **financed by funds**
- All members work voluntarily in the working groups. Experts are **financed by the members**
- General Assembly, main office, work of working groups (material, stationery, rooms) is all **financed by membership fees.**
- Treasurer does finance planning: yearly economy plan and 5 years prognosis. General Assembly approves the plan. **Grants are difficult to calculate** and the planing is adjusted on a yearly basis

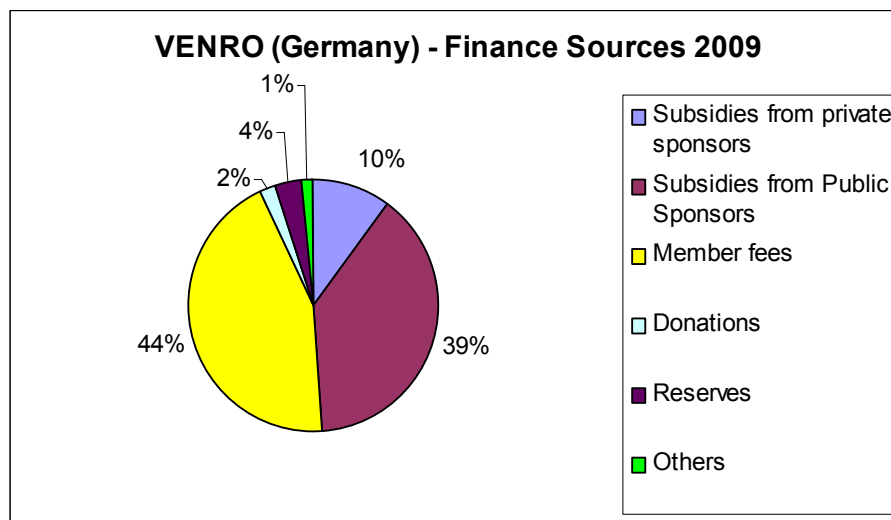


Chart: Lehmann

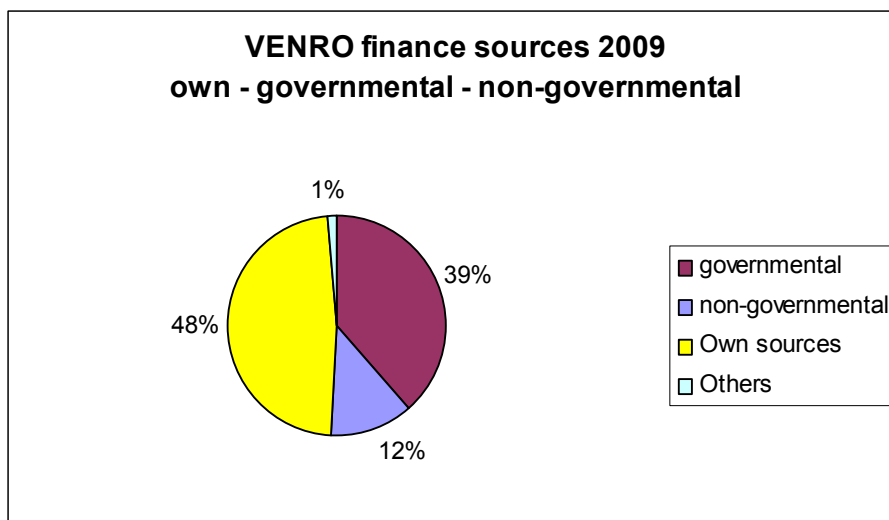


Chart: Lehmann

OFOF:

- OFOP organizes financial resources from very diversified sources:
 - o International non-governmental donors (foundations)
 - o National non-governmental donors (foundations)
 - o International governmental donors (government bodies, European Union)
 - o National government programs
 - o Membership fees

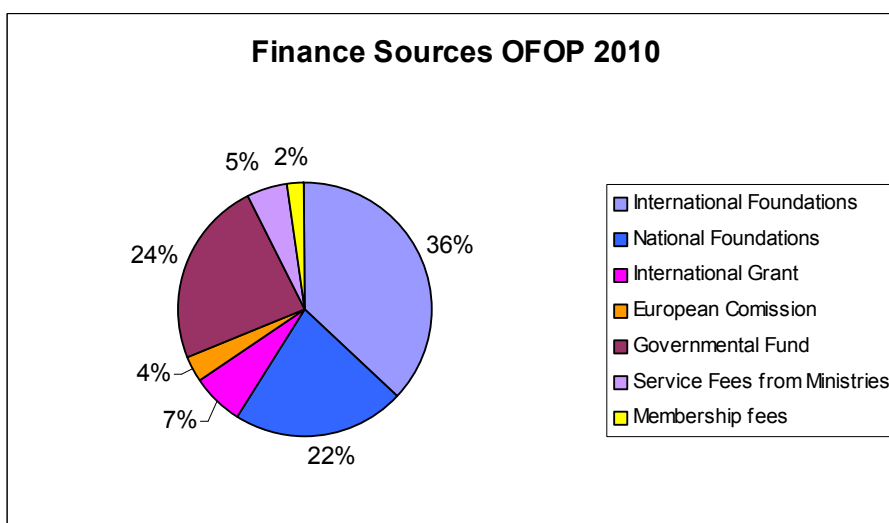


Chart: Lehmann

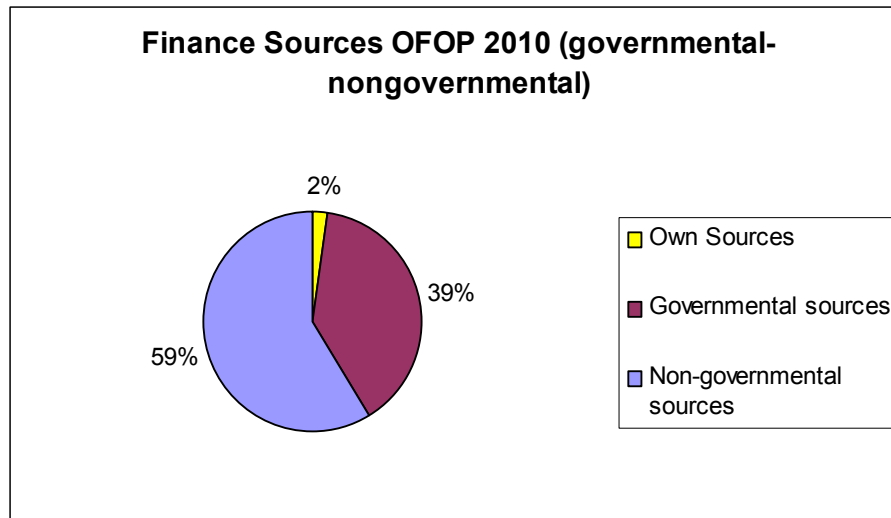


Chart: Lehmann

- working groups activities are financed by grants
- General Assembly
 - o Only part of the funds for organizing General Assembly comes from members fees
 - o The main source of financing for the General Assembly comes from a special strategic grant: OFOP applies to CIVIC INITIATIVES FUND at the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare.
 - o OFOP combines the annual General Assembly with programs that are sponsored by grants, which allows OFOP to cover travel costs of the participants.

Public Network:

- All finances come from international aid
- Secretariat (leading NGO) has to seek out its own financial resources.
- Members support Public Network sporadically in kind or spontaneously (in order to repair computers, print publications, etc.)
- Secretariat involves volunteer supporters for different works (project planning, translations, PR, analysis of political documents, professional analysis of law-drafts, development of law drafts, etc.)
- International organizations provide Public Network with technical support.
- General Assembly
 - o Materials and catering for participants depend on support of international donors
 - o Transport and lodging are covered by the participants

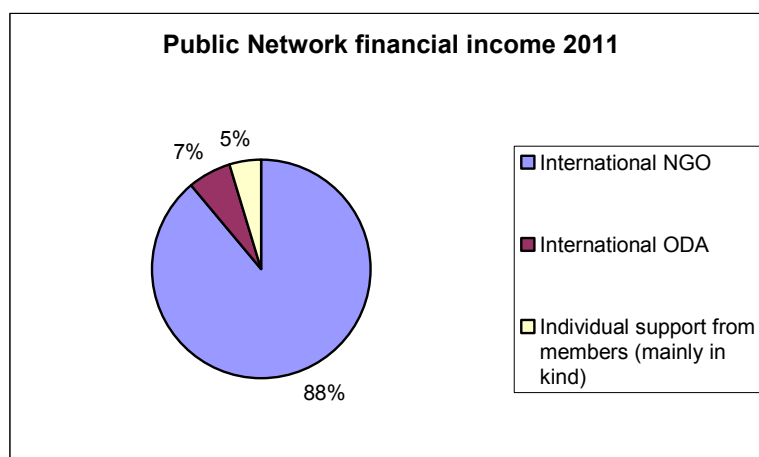


Chart: Lehmann

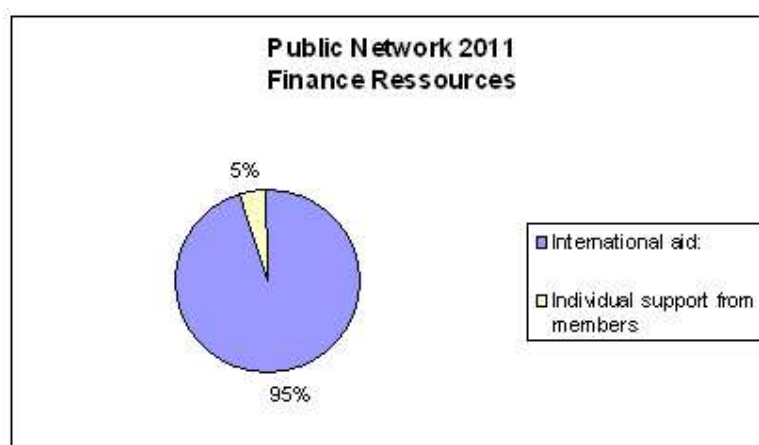


Chart: Lehmann

NENO/EMSL:

NENO's annual membership fees since 2006 range between EUR 23.33 (365 Estonian Crowns per year i.e. 1 EEK per day), and EUR 97.00. The recommended payment is connected with the membership organization's income from the previous year.

Activities and administration are partly financed from external funding sources.

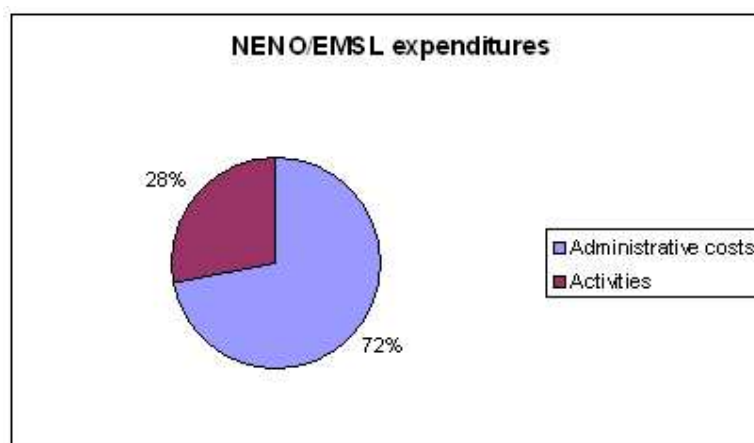


Chart: Lehmann

NENO/EMSL finances itself almost equally from governmental and non-governmental sources. The total annual budget of NENO is about 225,000 EURO.

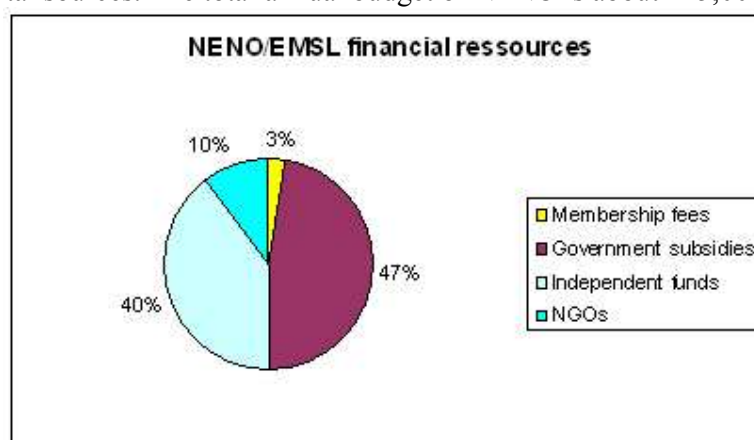


Chart: Lehmann

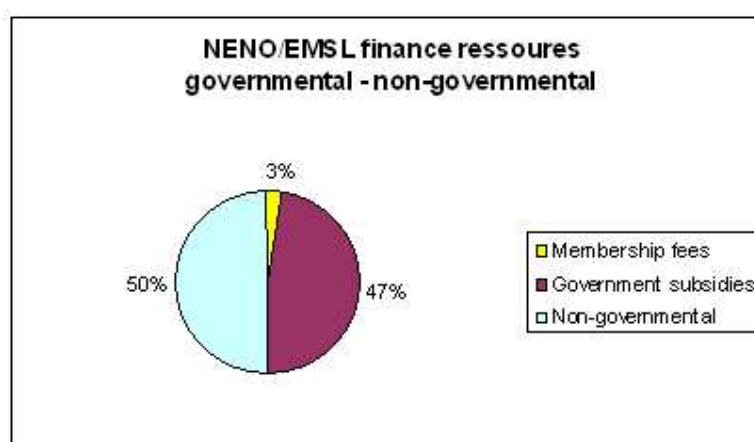


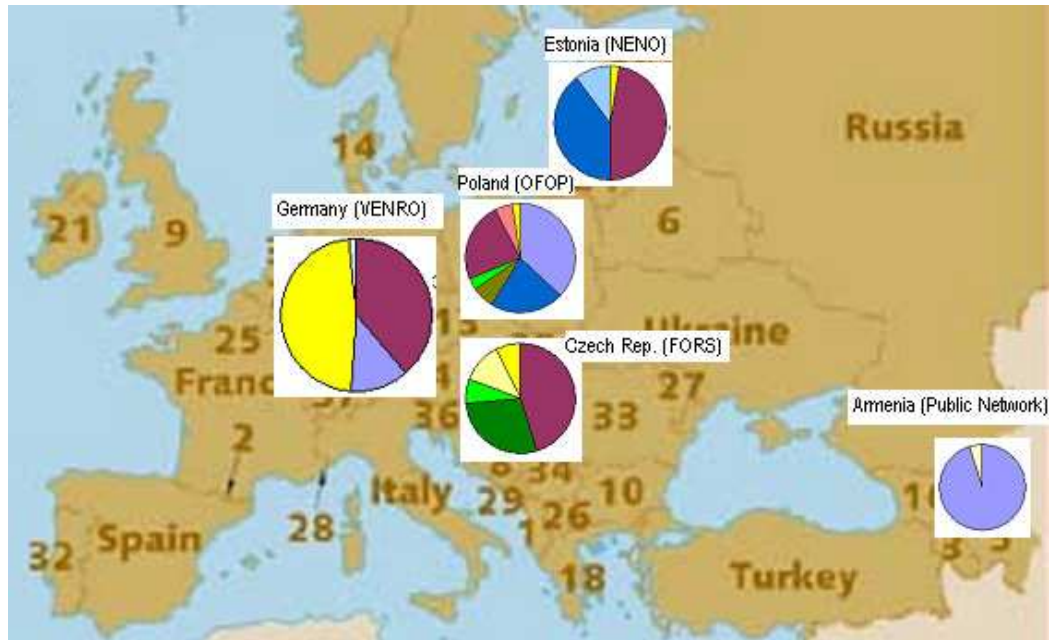
Chart: Lehmann

Overview of Diversity of Finances of NGO Associations:

The map shows examples in Germany, Poland, Czech Republic, Estonia and Armenia.

Legend:

Yellow-white: Own resources
Blue: Private and international subsidies
Violet-red: National governmental subsidies
Green: EU subsidies



Map source: lonelyplanet.com

4. How They Are Structured:

APRODEV:

General Assembly

Board

Policy Advisory Group

Working Groups

Secretariat (General Secretary + Staff)

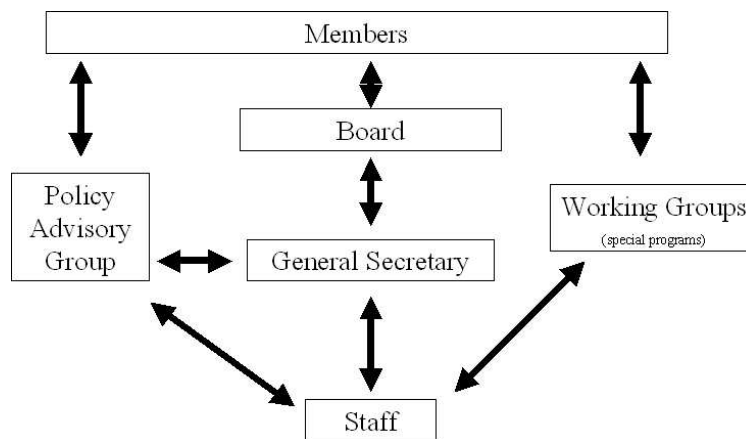


Chart: Lehmann

VENRO:

General Assembly

Board

Working Groups

Mandate carriers

Secretariat (Head Office)

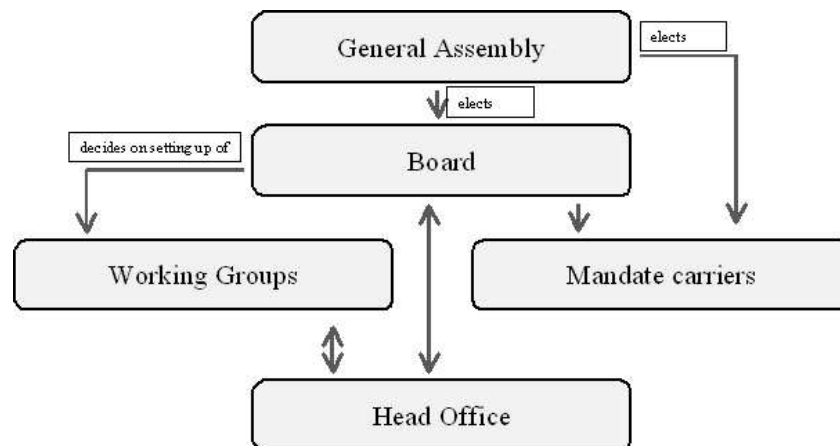


Chart: Lehmann

OFOF:

- General Assembly
- Board of Directors
- Audit Committee
- Office Director + Coordinators
- Working Groups
- Representatives in external bodies

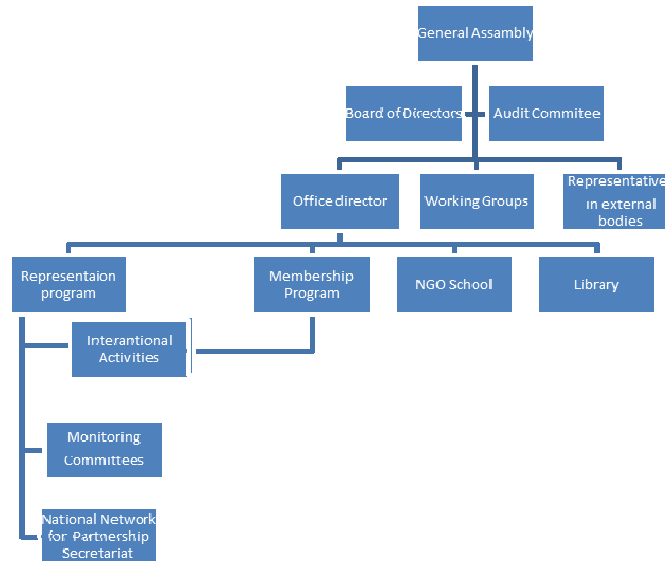


Chart provided by OFOF

Social Platform:

- General Assembly
- Steering Group
- Management Committee
- Membership Accreditation Committee
- Secretariat

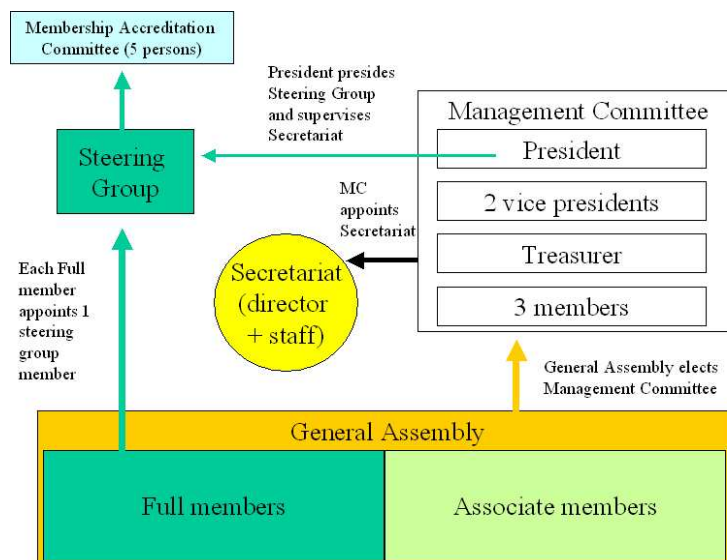


Chart: Lehmann

Public Network:

- General Assembly
- Coordinating Council (Board)
- 12 Commissions (resembling commissions of the National Assembly of the Republic Of Armenia)
- Secretariat (represented by the leading NGO)

Table 1

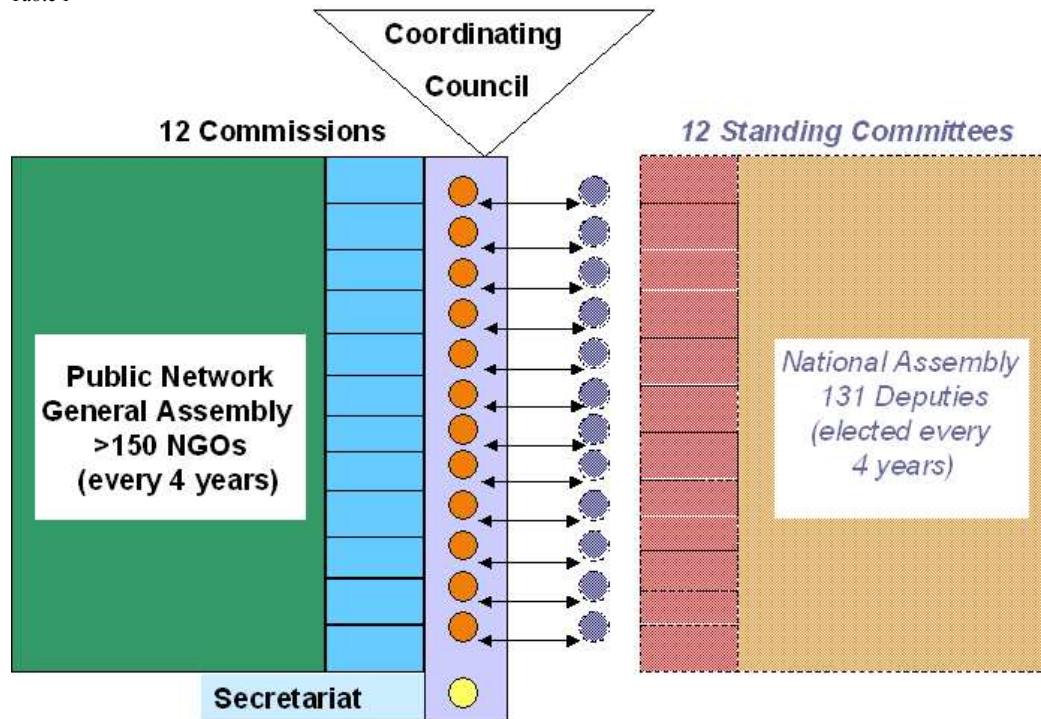


Chart: Lehmann

Table 2

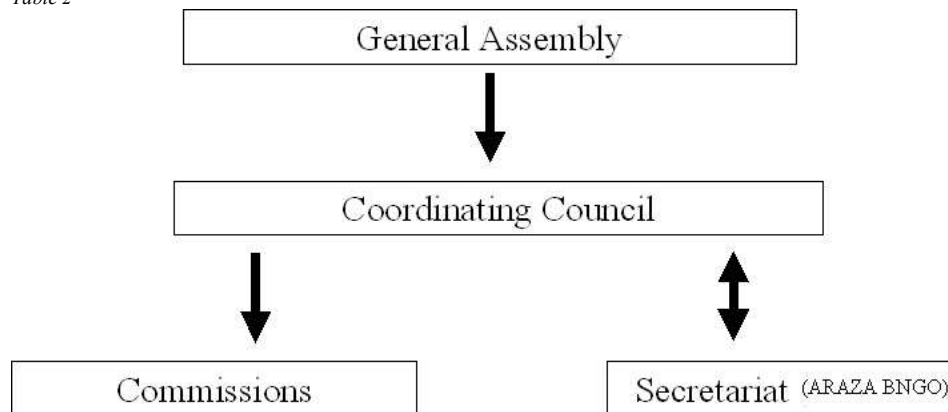


Chart: Lehmann

NENO/EMSL:

- General Assembly
- Supervisory Board (Board of Directors)
- Managing Board (Secretariat)

General meeting (General Assembly):

The highest body of NENO/EMSL is the general meeting. It is in charge of making changes to the statute and the prime directives, choosing new board members, approving financial statements etc. The general meeting is called once a year by the managing board.

Supervisory board (Board of Directors):

The supervisory board is engaged in long-term planning of NENO/EMSL, guiding the managing board and dealing with non-regular questions. The supervisory board meets four times a year.

Managing board (Secretariat, executive director):

The managing board (currently composed of one member Executive Director) represents NENO/EMSL in legal matters and regulates everyday activities of the managing board.

Main office:

The main office carries through programs chosen according to the mission statement.

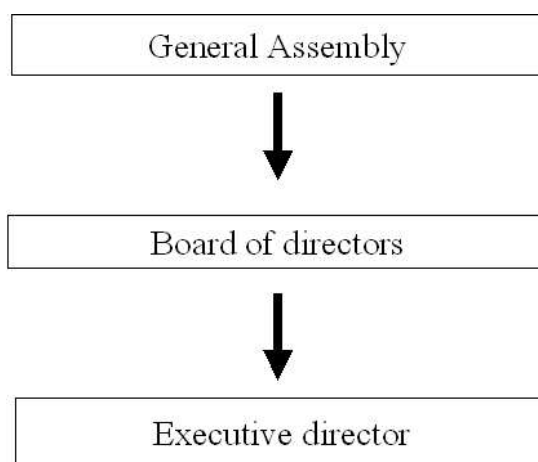


Chart: Lehmann

5. How They Plan Activities and Projects

APRODEV:

- Annual planning: Secretariat staff
- Special programs planning: Working groups (composed of members)
- Special programs are financed 100% by member organizations (sharing resources)
- Members of working groups take strategy as guideline, but in principle they can organize any project they want.
- Secretariat organizes its own projects

VENRO:

- Secretariat develops annual plan together with Working Groups (including financial plan) → General Assembly approves plan and budget
- Working Groups give ideas for projects → Secretariat and Working Groups together organize and implement projects

OFOP:

- Head Office (Secretariat) is responsible for organization of activities
 - o Coordinators are responsible for planning activities related to the program they are running.
 - o Plans are discussed during meetings with other coordinators once a month
 - o Plans are presented to the Board of Directors for approval.

Public Network:

- Board and secretariat develop annual plan
- Secretariat plans and organizes activities and projects
- Members of the Public Network Committees can accept the network's strategy as guidelines for own projects. However they are free to develop projects also on their own behalf:
 - o For example the Leading NGO in the Sekretariat's role develops and implements on one hand projects on behalf of Public Network, on the other it develops and implements projects which are just in line with it's own mandate and mission.
- If one NGO plans and realizes a project in the name of the network, it should be approved by the board and communicated to the members.

NENO/EMSL:

- Executive director and main office plan activities and projects

6. How They Plan Their Strategy

APRODEV:

- Secretariat drafts strategy → Secretariat consults Policy Advisory Group (PAG) → General Secretary finalizes strategy → Board and PAG approve → Members are informed

VENRO:

- Board develops strategy → General Assembly approves

OFOP:

- The Board of Directors together with office director are responsible for strategic planning.
- The Board can also decide to propose voting on strategic decisions during the General Meeting.

Public Network:

- Board works out strategy and annual plan → Secretariat finalizes the document → Board approves → The document is given to the General Assembly for approval.

NENO/EMSL:

- Board of directors is responsible for long term planning. General Assembly approves strategy.

7. Role of the Board

APRODEV:

- Management supervision
- Planning of internal organizational development (for example: Invitation of external consultants)
- Lobby work

VENRO:

- Develop strategy
- Supervise Secretariat
- Lobby work
- Decide on Working Groups (each board member is head of 1 WG)
- Board decides on member or guest-membership (3/4ers majority)

OFOP:

Board of OFOP is responsible for:

- Strategy planning
- Directing the current activities of OFOP (approve plans)
- Carrying out its budget
- Making financial obligations
- Passing on opinions about common matters of association and its members, after the proper consultations
- Representation/acting on behalf of OFOP
- Passing its own statute
- Creating expert committees, appointing and dissolving working groups
- Affiliating new members
- Employing the Director of the office
- Board Members or OFOP Special Representatives take part in the work of Committees or Working Groups formed by other institutions or consortiums.

Public Network:

- Acting as Coordinating Council of the network
- Each board member acts as head of one working group and interacts with relevant management partners, National Assembly “counterpart” standing committee leaders, and Ministries.
- Developing strategy for the network
- Development and approval of the annual plan
- Supervising and advising secretariat
- Representing the network
- Research works: Analysis of political documents and law drafts
- Lobby work

NENO/EMSL:

- Supervisory board (Board of Directors) The supervisory board is engaged in
 - o Long-term planning of NENO/EMSL
 - o Guiding the managing board
 - o Dealing with non-regular questions.
 - o Approving new members
- The supervisory board meets four times a year.

8. Role of the Secretariat

APRODEV:

- Strategic planning
- Annual budget planning
- Coordinating projects of working groups
- Organizing own projects
- Organizing rooms for meetings, conferences
- Facilitating communication with Commissions

VENRO:

- Developing annual work plan together with Working Groups
- Developing annual budget together with Working Groups
- Providing meeting rooms
- Realizing projects together with Working Groups

OFOP:

Director of the office is responsible for:

- Organizing the office's work
 - o Coordinators are responsible for planning activities related to the program they are running.
- Preparing the sessions of General Meeting, Board and participation in fulfillment of the resolutions made by them
- Managing the office and its employees
- Execution of the duties ordered by the Board
- Making the decisions and fulfilling the obligations of granted authorities

Public Network:

- Organizing process for strategy development and approval
- Organizing projects
- Facilitating communication with National Assembly and Ministries
- Organizing website
- Organizing PR
- Organizing board meetings, general assembly, etc.
- Organizing conferences and meetings (invitations, place/room, information delivery)

NENO/EMSL:

- Managing board (Secretariat, Executive Director): The Managing Board (currently consisting of one member of the Executive Director) represents NENO/EMSL in legal matters and regulates everyday activities of the Managing Board.

9. Role of the Working Groups / Committees

APRODEV:

- Organizing projects
- Financing projects
- Lobby work
- PR

VENRO:

- Developing annual work plan and annual budget together with Secretariat
- Contributing ideas for projects: submit draft resolutions and working proposals to the board
- Cooperating with Secretariat in development and implementation of projects
- Lobby work: WG may appear in public as a division of the association (if approved by involved board member)
- PR

OFOP:

OFOP has no permanent Working Groups. The Board appoints them and dissolves them, depending on needs.

- Currently OFOP has Working Groups on:
 - o European Funds
 - o Monitoring Committees
 - o Social Economy
 - o Public Health
- Working Groups are financed by grants.
- Working Groups are composed mainly of experts from member organizations, but also representatives from other NGOs.
- Working Groups have regular meetings that are organized by the office and the outcomes of its work are usually an official document that has to be approved by the Board of Directors.

Public Network:

- Developing opinion and presenting opinion to National Assembly, and the government (through expertise consultation, through Public Hearings, through public discussions, through representation in relevant forums and councils)
- Collecting public needs and promoting public needs at the national level.
- Developing and promoting ideas, proposals, projects for cooperation with state institutions.

NENO:

- NENO does not have Working Groups. There is no permanent structure working with issues.

10. Role of the Members:

VENRO:

- General Assembly elects Board
- General Assembly proposes Working Groups
- Members pay membership fees
- Members act according to the statutes of the Association

OFOP:

OFOP has three types of members: Ordinary members, supporting members, honorary members.

- Ordinary members are obliged to:
 - o Take part in achievement of statutory goals of Association,
 - o Obey the provisions of statute and other resolutions made by the Board,
 - o Pay the membership fee
 - o Safeguard the reputation of the association
- Supporting Members have the same obligations but they also should give essential material and financial assistance to the association.
- The Honorary Members are those with the great merit for OFOP

Public Network:

- There are two types of membership: 1. Members that have signed a Memorandum with Public Network – “Network Corporational Members” (currently about 50% of all members), 2. Members that have not signed a Memorandum with Public Network – “Non Corporational Members” (currently about 50% of all members)
- Non-Corporational Members
 - o can take part in the network’s activities
 - o can participate in Public Hearings
 - o receive information
- Corporational Members
 - o enjoy all the rights and benefits as any member of the network
 - o have the right to elect board and committee members
 - o have the right to run for position of Board Member or a committee member
 - o approve the network’s regulations and strategy
 - o can participate in Working Groups

NENO/EMSL:

NENO (or EMSL in Estonian) is Public Benefit Organization, hence “our work is not focused directly on our members' benefits, but to the benefits of civil society and Estonian NGOs in general, regardless whether they are our members or not.”

- Full members:
 - o The only responsibility of a member is to pay membership fees
 - o Right to vote at General Assembly
 - o Right to run for position of Board Member

- Participate in putting together NENO's positions
- Access to information
- Organize NENO's events
- Access to counseling and consultancy services
- Other members:
 - Participate in putting together NENO's positions
 - Access to information
 - Participate in NENO's events, access to counseling

11. Lobbying:

APRODEV:

- **EU commissions** request APRODEV expertise to achieve high quality political product.
- Good advocacy is based on good analysis:
 - o APRODEV organizes the analysis with members
 - o Members organize analysis with experts
- APRODEV channels analysis results to EU commissions at Brussels

VENRO:

- Policy influence is one of the core-tasks of VENRO. Target group of Lobby work is:
 - o **Parliament** and the different **standing committees** (especially Standing Committee for Economic Cooperation and Development)
 - o Individual **deputies**, whom are regularly contacted
 - o Regular talks with the **Chancellor** and the **Minister for Economic Development and Cooperation** (these talks are conducted by the board of VENRO).
 - o Ministries: Further there are working contacts between VENRO and **specialists working at the Ministries** (Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation). VENRO always represents the interest of its member organizations.

OFOP:

- OFOP observes major bodies of civil dialogue in Poland. The Federation supports the non-governmental members of these bodies and monitors consultation process within the Third Sector .
- OFOP is active through their representatives in groups and committees:
 - o European Economic and Social Committee
 - o CIVICUS group AGNA
 - o European Network of National Associations (ENNA)
 - o Standing Conference of Social Economy
 - o Working group on Good Governance (Ministry of Regional Development)
 - o Public Benefit Council is an advisory body (ancillary to the minister responsible for social security).
 - o Advisory committee to the Ombudsman
 - o Monitoring Committee on National Thematic Network for Partnership at Ministry of Regional Development
 - o Citizens of Culture committee (Ministry of Culture)
 - o Committee on Alliance for Culture pact at the Prime Minister's Office.
 - o Debate Forum at Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland.
- OFOP's lobby actions usually include developing measures and guidelines through comparative analyses and feedback (good practice), which is collected during meetings of the working groups. Collected evidence is analyzed to draw recommendations and formulate positions that are the subject of advocacy in the appropriate bodies.

Public Network:

- Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with National Assembly (NA) of the Republic of Armenia
- MoU with General Prosecutor's Office
- Represented through member organizations in the Sustainable Development Program Civil Cooperation Network (SDP CCN)
- Public Network represented in the SDP CCN board
- Members of the network are represented in councils attached to the President's office and the Prime Minister's office.
- Members of the network have signed Memorandums on behalf of Public Network with the Ombudsman's office.
- Representation in the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum
- Contacts to NA deputies
- Public discussions
- Press conferences

NENO/EMSL:

- NENO's main partner is Ministry of Interior, which is the responsible body in the government for civil society development.
- In cases of taxation or planning the use of EU funds, NENO works together with Ministry of Finance.
- Before parliamentary elections NENO puts together the NGO manifesto, proposing the activities that Civil Society finds necessary to do by the parliament and government. This is NENO's proactive advocacy work.
- NENO reacts to government edicts, legislation, drafts of law, etc.
- NENO members participate in different Working Groups of the government
- NENO organizes meetings with politicians and officials
- NENO comments on topical issues in the media
- If NENO needs to put together a position paper, NENO office notifies the entire network; anyone who is interested can have their say. (At the same time, NENO does not claim that it represents all the opinions available in the NGO community and every organization who does not agree with NENO, can naturally present their own opinions as well.)

12. Products and Services:

APRODEV:

- Members share resources and make their joint voices heard at EU level (Individually they are too small to influence Brussels).
- Members don't pay much money and have access to high level politicians in Brussels
- Individual members create a case in their country and can make it an international case through the network
- Members can share costs for consultants and auditors: They save money through the network
- Members can learn from each other

VENRO:

- The Working Groups, made up of the organization's members, are an important part of VENRO. Here, development processes are assessed and symposia are organized.
- Jointly developed positions are published
- Training for its members
- Political lobbying
- Publications
- Public relations

OFOP:

- Assist NGO representatives in institutional dialogue
- Share best practice and work towards effective involvement of citizens on European level
- Work towards legislative changes
- Information
- The National Thematic Network for Partnership
- Participation School and Representation School for member organizations.
- Products are achieved by the following methodologies:
 - o Official stands
 - o Analysis
 - o Publications
 - o Seminars and conferences
 - o Training services

Public Network

- Assisting members in institutional dialogue
- Access for members to National Assembly Standing Committees
- Access for members to Ministries' councils
- Access for members to Public Hearings
- Analysis of political documents within the interest of network members
- Participation in parliament's expert groups for qualified experts
- Publications
- Information for members about work of Parliament, and Ministries in the frame of the network members' interests
- Providing communication focal point for National Assembly

- Members can request assistance from other members (e.g. expert consultation free of charge)
- Unifying members with the aim to formulate a joint position

NENO/EMSL:

- Define principles of cooperation between state and civil society (Estonian Civil Society Development Concept (EKAK))
- Public consultations
- NENO/EMSL is leading an advocacy coalition of NGOs
- Mapping of NGOs and training of NGOs (e.g.: monthly members' evenings where they share their best practices)
- Facilitation of access to all government committees
- Annual summer school for non-profit organizations on various issues since 1999
- Civil Society Portal www.ngo.ee
- Information network that includes approximately 1500 organizations
- Weekly electronic newsletter, quarterly NGO magazine, electronic newsletters in English and Russian in every two months, handbooks and leaflets
- Services and counseling for members they need to fulfill their potential

SLOGA:

- Administrative, technical, informational, promotional, organizational, expert/content support for members
- Information services for members
- Priority for members to attend international training and cooperation
- Priority for members at partnership cooperation in domestic and international consortium projects
- Media and organizational support for the events in the realm of informing the public
- Representation in the political organs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other ministries
- Priority for members to attend educational seminars
- Active role in development of SLOGA's policies
- Help with preparation of projects for open calls
- Right to express membership in SLOGA Platform by using its logo on one's own letters, promotional material, etc.

13. Where Do Members Meet:

APRODEV:

- Conferences: **Secretariat** organizes rooms
- General Assembly is hosted every year by a **different member**. Members cover their own travel expenses and accommodation costs

VENRO:

- Committees/Working Groups meet at the **Secretariat's office** (20 persons).
- If larger numbers needed, they rent **conference rooms**.
- Also they meet at **members' offices**

OFOP:

- OFOP prefers to use the premises that are owned by other NGOs or grant makers for larger meetings (for example: General Assembly = 80-100 participants)

Public Network:

- Secretariat's office
- Conference rooms of members and partners
- In some cases rooms are rented for events

Recommendations for Public Network:

(This chapter is only accessible for Public Network members)

Sources of Information:

Internet:

www.socialplatform.org/

www.aprodev.eu/

www.venro.de

www.ngo.ee/en

http://ofop.eu/

www.cedag-eu.org

www.sloga-platform.org

www.fors.cz

