



BALKAN  
CIVIL  
SOCIETY  
DEVELOPMENT  
NETWORK

# **ANNUAL PROGRAMME REPORT 2004**

Skopje, Macedonia  
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## 1. BACKGROUND

Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN) was commenced in December 2003 based on the Capacity Building Hub initiative, started in 2000 as a part of the World Council of Churches South-East Europe Ecumenical Partnership. BCSDN is a network of 11 civil society and ecumenical organizations from 7 countries and territories in South East Europe (Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro and Kosovo). Its vision is commitment to sustainable peace and stability, prosperity, harmony of societies in the Balkan region and mission to strengthen civil society through developing indigenous civil society concepts, practices and empowering civil society actors.

The current Programme is based on the needs assessment of all participating organizations and forms the basis for network's plan of action for the period 2004-2006. It builds on past cooperation between members and successful implementation of a three-year capacity-building programme Capacity Building Hub 2001-2003. The network is based on partnership among member organizations, which share a common vision and mission and have similar capacity building needs and resources. The Secretariat of the network is situated in the Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation (MCIC), Skopje, Macedonia.

The overall objective of the Programme is to contribute to development of capacities and strengthening of cooperation in civil society in the Balkans. The specific objective and purpose of this Programme is to increase individual/staff and organizational capacity of relevant CSOs and their cooperation in the Balkans. The main goals within the Programme purpose are: to improve/mediate financial constraints of CSOs through improved skills and knowledge about mobilization of resources and support; to improve cross-border and cross-sector cooperation; to improve quality standards, skills and knowledge among CSOs.

Thus, the Programme develops package of services needed in order to develop capacities and strengthen cooperation in the civil society in the Balkans; namely through partner organizations targeted in this Programme. Besides information-sharing, offering of capacity-building packages that consist of: tailor-made training/ToT; exchange/exposure/consultancy visits; workshops are the core activity of this Programme. Identified areas of common expertise that need to be strengthened are: EU fundraising, lobbying and advocacy; resource and support mobilization and ethic standards in training and consultancy. The Programme also promotes regional cooperation and build capacities in the following specific areas of work: gender; anti-trafficking; decentralization; corporate social responsibility, anti-corruption and diaconal practices.

The first two quarters of 2004 were devoted to consolidation of the network and preparation of the Programme 2004-6. The first Steering Group meeting took place on 10-11 May, 2004 in Skopje, Macedonia. Four projects, out of which two were extended into 2005, were implemented in the second half of 2004.

## 2. PROGRAMME FRAMEWORK

### 2. 1. Overall objective

The vision of the network is to strive towards sustainable peace and stability, prosperity, and harmony of societies in the Balkan region. Its mission is to strengthen civil society through developing indigenous civil society concepts, practices and empowering civil society actors in the Balkans. Its overall objective within the framework of this Programme is to contribute to development of capacities and strengthening of cooperation in civil society in the Balkans.

### 2. 2. Programme purpose

The specific objective and purpose of this Programme is to increase individual/staff and organizational capacity of relevant CSOs and their cooperation in the Balkans.

The main goals within the Programme purpose are:

- to improve/mediate financial constraints of CSOs through improved skills and knowledge about mobilization of resources and support;
- to improve cross-border and cross-sector cooperation;
- to improve quality standards, skills and knowledge among CSOs.

### 2. 3. Tasks (components)

Tasks to be fulfilled are:

- Identification of specific, targeted and tailor-made capacity building activities;
- Planning of capacity building activities;
- Promotion of partnership and cooperation through information-sharing;
- Implementation and monitoring of all activities.

### 2. 4. Target group

The Programme is aimed at a two-fold target group: members and other relevant intermediary CSOs in Balkan countries.

#### 1. Members:

- National CSOs:
  - Albania: Albanian Civil Society Foundation (ACSF);
  - Bulgaria: Women's Alliance for Development (WAD);
  - Croatia: Non-profit's Information and Training Centre (NIT), Education for Organizations in Civil Sector (EOS);
  - Macedonia: Macedonian Centre for International cooperation (MCIC);
  - Romania: Opportunity Associates Romania (OAR);
  - Serbia and Montenegro (including Kosovo): We Are With You (WAWY).
- Ecumenical and/or church-related organisations:
  - Albania: Diaconia Agapes;
  - Bulgaria: Pokrov Foundation;
  - Romania: AIDRom;
  - Serbia and Montenegro (inc. Kosovo): Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization (EHO).

#### 2. Other intermediary CSOs in Balkan countries:

These organizations are to be selected additionally, based on the theme or/and existing partnerships and cooperation with organizations and networks in the region.

### 3. ACTIVITIES

#### 3.1. Planned activities

The Programme envisages development of capacity-building package of services needed in order to develop capacities and strengthen cooperation in the civil society in the Balkans; namely through organizations targeted in this Programme. Besides information-sharing, offering of capacity-building packages that consist of: tailor-made training/ToT; exchange/exposure/consultancy visits; workshops are the core activity of this Programme. Identified areas of common expertise that need to be strengthened are: EU fundraising, lobbying and advocacy; resource and support mobilization and ethic standards in training and consultancy. Specific areas of work through which this Programme also promotes regional cooperation and build capacities areas: gender; anti-trafficking; decentralization; corporate social responsibility, anti-corruption and diaconal practices.

In 2004, BCSDN planned different capacity-building activities in the area of EU funding, lobbying and advocacy and cooperation on specific areas, among them two trainings, one exchange visit, one backstopping/coaching, exposure visits and one workshop. Planned information-sharing and promotion activities were: programme promotion, website, Newsletter, calendar of events, Balkan Civic Practices.

#### 3.2. Realised activities

Based on the Programme Document 2004-6, BCSDN launched four projects in 2004, of which one was extended into 2005 (see list of all projects in Annex 1). Within the framework of these projects, 11 activities were planned, of which 7 were implemented in full, two in part (calendar of events, one edition of Balkan Civic Practices) and two were fully extended into 2005 (exchange visit, backstopping/coaching).

##### 3.2.1. Capacity-building in EU funding, lobbying and advocacy

###### Trainings

*Regional training on EU funding, lobbying and advocacy* was organized between 15 and 19 November in Skopje, Macedonia. The main goal of the three-day training was to improve information, skills and knowledge of members of the network in the area of EU funds, lobbying and advocacy. The focus of the training was on getting to know EU policies, structures, mechanisms related to countries in Western Balkans and improve skills in forming partnerships and quality of PCM related to accessible EU funds and programmes. The training was delivered jointly by a senior trainer from PCM, Belgium, BCSDN coordinator and one MCIC trainer. 17 staff from 5 BCSDN members (ACSF and Diaconia Agapes (Albania), MCIC (Macedonia), EHO (Serbia), NIT (Croatia)) and 3 organizations (Useful to Albanian Women (Albania), Center for Development of NGOs (Montenegro) and TALDi (BiH)) from outside of the network attended the training. This gave additional opportunity for cross-border exchange of experience through case studies and partnership between organizations.

Staff from OAR (Romania) and WAD (Bulgaria) attended *APRODEV Partnership Workshop on EU funding, lobbying and advocacy* in Bratislava between 14 to 16 October. The goal the training was to improve information, skills and knowledge of members of the network in the area of EU funds, lobbying and advocacy. The focus of the training was on getting to know EU policies, structures, mechanisms related to New Member States and Accession countries and improve skills in forming partnerships and

quality of PCM related to accessible EU funds and programmes. Additionally, organizations had the opportunity to exchange experience through case studies and form partnership with APRODEV partner organizations attending the training.

#### Study visits

*EU study visit to EU institutions in Skopje* was organized on 18 November in the framework of *Regional training on EU funding, lobbying and advocacy*. Representative from EC Delegation to Skopje for civil society (Mr. Nafi Sarachini) and European Agency of Reconstruction (Ms. Jutta Bulling) introduced EU programmes and funds for civil society in Macedonia. An exchange on procedures and access to EU funds took place between the representatives and participants. As this was the first time for most staff to meet EU representatives personally, the event was appreciated by all participating sides.

In the framework of APRODEV Capacity-building Programme participation of staff from several BCSDN member organizations to *EU study visits to Brussels* was supported by the Programme. The main goal of visits was to introduce staff to Brussels-based institutions, help them understand how these work and meet their representatives. Support was given to participation of staff from MCIC (Macedonia) and EOS (Croatia) to the four-day EU study visit for Western Balkans (21-24 June) and WAD (Bulgaria) and OAR (Romania) to the EU study visit for CEE (8-11 November). Participants to Brussels found visits useful to understand the complexity of EU structures and related bodies and the need to engage in lobbying and advocacy.

#### Workshops

*Regional Workshop: The Role of Civil Society in EU Integration and Democratization Process in the Balkans* (22-23 July) was held in Skopje, Macedonia. The main goal of the workshop was to create a forum for discussion between civil society organizations and representatives from EU institutions *vis-à-vis* their national governments and strengthen their partnership in the EU integration process. A press-conference was held on 21 July to inform and raise awareness among the public about this issue. The workshop, which was jointly organized by APRODEV and MCIC, hosted 40 representatives from civil society (BCSDN members and APRODEV partners), national governments and EU institutions in the region. Presentations and conclusions delivered were published in the scope of Balkan Civic Practices (see 3.2.2.).

Support was given to OAR (Romania) and WAD (Bulgaria) to attend *APRODEV Regional Workshop: Civil Society Organisations in the New Member States and Accession countries: Actors in Development Policy* (7-8 December) held in Budapest, Hungary. The main goal of the event was to address key issues related participation of civil society in the EU development policy and promote their cooperation with national governments and EU institutions.

#### *3.2.2. Other capacity-building activities*

##### Exposure visit to GA of IFMSA

Support was given to exposure of 15 students from the region to attend the General Assembly of International Federation of Medical Student Association (3-9 August) held in Ohrid, Macedonia. Each year, the Assembly brings together over 700 students from around the world with the goal to exchange experience in improving health of people around the world.

### Working Groups on special issues

Four Working Groups (WGs) were launched at the Annual BCSDN Partnership/Steering Group meeting in May 2004 in Skopje, Macedonia. Their aim is to promote dialogue, exchange and cooperation between BCSDN members and other interested CSOs in areas of special interest to civil society. Namely, gender and anti-trafficking, corporate social responsibility and anti-corruption, decentralization and diaconal practices, each under auspices of one lead organization; member of BCSDN. While first WG meetings were planned for end of 2004 and beginning of 2005, none of these took place, due to full schedules for lead organizations.

Realization of other exchange activities, namely support of one exchange visit and backstopping/coaching, was postponed to first half of 2005, due to late start of the implementation of the Programme.

### *3.2.3. Information-sharing*

#### Programme promotion

The network has been consolidated through adoption of Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN) as its new name. Moreover, visual identity and basic promotion material such as leaflets, poster presentation, memorandum have been developed.

BCSDN has been promoted through a poster presentation, leaflet and first edition of Balkan Civic Practices to Macedonian public and CSOs on the occasion of 4<sup>th</sup> annual NGO Fair-Forum on Civil Society in Macedonia that took place between 3-5<sup>th</sup> December, 2004. Simultaneously, the network presented itself (through the help of EHO) at the South East European NGO Festival that took place in Novi Sad, SCG between 1-5<sup>th</sup> December 2004.

#### Website

BCSDN website consists of basic information about the network, its activities and updates on funding and other opportunities. The website has been registered under an independent domain name <http://www.balkancsd.net> to make it more accessible to members, other CSOs and the general public. The website is updated daily and maintained by the Secretariat. The website has been visited 701-times between March and December 2004 (or approx. 78 visits on average/month). Considerable increase in visits is reported between November and December (from 90 to 150 visits/month), i.e. the period when the new domain name had been registered.

The training database consisting of, 34 training/consultancy offer and 25 trainer profiles and has been updated with a search engine to allow effective access and use to the database to potential training beneficiaries. The software allows search by categories such as training language, location, type of training etc.. Training/consultancy offer and trainer profiles are also available in alphabetical list.

#### Mailing list

BCSDN mailing list has been created in January and has 22 members. So far, 121 messages have been exchanged through this medium, i.e. average 10 per month. It is designed as a public discussion group (organized through yahoo group service) at [balkancs@yahoo.com](mailto:balkancs@yahoo.com). The purpose of the mailing list is to enable direct and simultaneous communications between member organizations. The list is used to communicate and inform members about initiatives, announcements, development in the

network etc. Subscription to the mailing list is possible directly at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/balkanacs/> or by invitation of the moderator (BCSDN Coordinator).

Additionally, weekly e-mail alert service has been introduced in October as an additional tool for improved access to up-to-date funding, training, education and other opportunities. Nine editions have been published by the end of December. Opportunities are compiled by BCSDN Secretariat every week and sent out to members each Friday. E-mail alerts consist of information on funding, training and education opportunities, publications and research of interest to member organizations. Each edition is also published on the BCSDN website.

#### Newsletter

The Newsletter is published on BCSDN website and sent to members on a monthly basis. It is prepared by the Secretariat and edited by BCSDN Coordinator with the aim to inform partner organizations about latest developments in the network, otherwise published on networks' website. Between February and June, the Newsletter was published twice month. Due to use of other information tools (mailing list, weekly e-mail alerts), the Newsletter has been published on a monthly basis since July on. It is published only electronically (PDF format) on 3-4 pages.

#### Calendar of events

Calendar of events is designed as the main tool for sharing information on partner organizations' events and activities. The aim is to share information on organizational, training and other activities in order to promote culture of information-sharing for effective and efficient work. Calendar of events was to be published and distributed in printed and electronic form once to twice a year, based on information provided by partner organization. Request for information to partners has been launched to partners in the beginning of the calendar year 2004 but the response was low. Ad-hoc response and short timeframe for planned events allowed for publishing of announcement of partners' events only through the website and mailing list rather than in a special calendar of events.

#### Balkan Civic Practices

Publication *Balkan Civic Practices* has been launched in November 2004 with the first issue under the title "The Role of Civil Society in EU Integration and Democratization Process in the Balkans". This issue published presentations delivered at a workshop organized by MCIC and APRODEV under the same title held on 23-24 July, 2004 in Skopje. The publication consisted of 9 articles on the topics covered on 69 pages. It was published in electronic (PDF and CD) format and hard-copy (500 copies). The published texts were delivered and thus published, only in English and distributed (in electronic or hard-copy) to around 90 addresses. Only one issue of *Balkan Civic Practices* has been published due to late start of the implementation of the Programme.

## **4. ORGANISATION**

### **4.1. Governance and Management**

All undertaken activities (formulated as projects) were approved by MCIC Governing Board. Overall responsibility for the programme management lies with the Executive Director. Project Coordinator is responsible for overseeing the overall running of the Programme. Full-time BCSDN Coordinator was responsible for programme



coordination, its administration and thus, running of the Secretariat (established to divide responsibilities of MCIC as manager and member organization in the network).

The Programme is governed in cooperation and consultation with other BCSDN members through annual Steering Group meetings. The Group consists of senior representatives of member organizations. The annual meeting took place on 10-11 May in Skopje, Macedonia and approve the strategy and work plan for 2004-6 as outlined in the BCSDN Programme. Contact Group, i.e. group of contact persons discusses and advises on concrete network activities.

MCIC has well defined procedures, including financial ones.

The Executive Director is responsible for overall management while the Accountant is in charge of financial management of the organization. Expenditures above a certain amount (as stated in Rules of Procedure) must be approved by the Governing Board (programme as well as operational). MCIC also has a Supervisory Board that has the right to control the management of finances.

Invoices are checked on 3 levels (Responsible Officer, Accountant, Executive Director).

Annual financial statements are audited by KPMG.

#### **4. 2. Procedures**

Joint activities are managed and implemented by MCIC, i.e. the BCSDN Secretariat, and follow MCIC standard rules and procedures for activities (formulated as projects).

Activities on specific areas as well as part of joint activities (e.g. exchange visits) are managed by MCIC and implemented directly by BCSDN member organizations. For this reason, MCIC developed a regular procedure to initiate, fund, monitor and report on BCSDN activities. This was necessary to create a simple and effective procedure to manage relationships between MCIC and the other BCSDN members, as well as to create basis for monitoring and evaluation of implemented activities.

The procedure consists of three elements:

a) Funding Proposal - a short standard form to present the BCSDN activity (including goals, target group, schedule, description of activities, participants and budget);

b) Contract - after reviewing the proposal, MCIC and the leading agency for the particular activity sign a standard contract (in English), which represents legal base and a financial document for the fund disbursement;

c) Reports - the leading agency for particular activity, according to the clauses of the contract is required to submit a final report including an evaluation.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5. 1. Conclusions**

The implementation of Programme activities started in second half of 2004, due to prolonged planning, coordination and securing of financial support by donors for the Programme 2004-6. Within the framework of four projects, eleven different activities have been implemented, among them five capacity-building and six information- sharing activities.

Primarily, activities were managed and implemented by BCSDN Secretariat in MCIC in cooperation with BCSDN members and APRODEV (Capacity-building Programme on EU funding, lobbying and advocacy). This was due to the fact that joint

priority activities primarily target joint capacity-building needs by all member organization, rather than only their exchange and cooperation. Also, there has been high realization of joint project activities (out of 11 planned, 7 were fully implemented, 2 in part and 2 extended into 2005), while activities on specific areas have been delayed to 2005.

Based on recommendations in External Evaluation 2002 and Annual Report for the Programme 2001-3 the following efforts have been made on the network level:

a) Coordination and communication: Contact persons were set in each BCSDN member organizations for better communication in the network. Different information-sharing tools (e.g. mailing list, weekly e-mail alerts) have been introduced to improve possibilities for communication between members. However, these are primarily successful in vertical communication, i.e. between the Secretariat and members;

b) Rules, procedures and structure: Coordination mechanisms and structure of the network have been agreed and defined through establishing of two bodies. Namely, Steering Group (group of senior representatives from members, which meets on annual meetings to discuss management and strategy for the work of the network) and Core Group (group of contact persons, which meets once a year to discuss and coordinate concrete activities of the network) have been established. Principles for cooperation have also been developed, thus further contributing to clarification of rules and procedures in the network;

c) Partnership ideology: two measures have been undertaken in order to promote the sense of ownership and partnership. Working Group on vision and mission has been established in order to discuss and develop their definition. Secondly, new name, logo and visual identity has been developed to promote and communicate network's identity to its members and other CSOs.

## **5. 2. Recommendations**

The implementation of the Programme 2004-6 started with a delay. Implementation of extended activities in the area of EU funding, lobbying and advocacy and planning for capacity-building package of activities in the area of mobilization of resources and support is underway.

In order to work on past achievements and to address its weaknesses the following recommendations should be taken into consideration in the continuation of the Programme:

a) Communication and coordination (internal) should be further strengthened through improving horizontal communication, i.e. bilateral and multilateral communication between member organizations. Further efforts should also be made in promoting organizational rather than individual based involvement of members;

b) Rules, procedure and organizational structure have been clarified in terms of governance and communication. However, further clarification of membership criteria and management of the Programme, especially on the activity level is needed for development of sustainable, clear, effective and decentralized structure of the network;

c) Partnership ideology should be further strengthened through continued discussion and development of clear vision and mission. Furthermore, the promotion of networks' identity to members should also be continued with the focus on communicating membership, cooperation and networking benefits of the Programme. Low communication and engagement of members in the network should be openly discussed at the next Steering Group meeting in the framework of future challenges and sustainability of the network after the end of Programme 2004-6;

d) Networking and external communication: cooperation with other networks or networking organization in implementing the Programme (such as with APRODEV on the capacity-building activities on EU funding, lobbying and advocacy) is an important contribution to developing network as a regional platform and reference point of CSOs in the region and outside. Further networking and cooperation opportunities should be developed as a capacity-building and sustainability measure for both the Programme, network and its members.

## 6. BUDGET

Included in a separate file.

### ANNEX 1: List of all projects

Description	Project no.
Regional workshop for EU integration	04-12 BNT 101
Support to GA of IFMSA	04-12 BNT 102
Training on EU funding and advocacy	04-12 BNT 103
Identity and promotion of the network	04-12 BNT 104

### ANNEX 2: ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

- Minutes of the 1<sup>st</sup> Steering Group Meeting - Skopje, Macedonia (May, 2004)
- Annual Report on Capacity-building Hub Programme 2001-3
- Evaluation of the Capacity Building Hub Programme (May 2003)
- BCSDN website (<http://www.balkancsd.net>)