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VISION & MISSION

Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN) is a regional network of local civil society development organizations (CSOs) from the Balkan region (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia and Turkey).

Its **VISION** is sustainable peace, harmony and prosperity of societies in the Balkan region.

Its **MISSION** is to empower civil society and influence European and national policies towards more enabling environment for civil society development in order to ensure sustainable and functioning democracies in the Balkans.

BCSDN **GOALS** and **OBJECTIVES** are:

1. Increased role of civil society by strengthening its voice in policy- and decision-making process on national, regional and EU level;
2. Promoted civil dialogue between civil society actors, state institutions and the European Union in order to influence public policy;
3. Developed advocacy knowledge and skills of civil society actors as a base for achieving greater impact; and
4. Strengthened communication, coordination and cooperation between civil society actors in the Balkan region.

METHODS OF WORK

BCSDN realizes its goals mainly through advocacy and lobbying activities, by:

- Developing joint positions and statements on initiatives and areas of interest common to all member organizations and taking necessary action;
- Coordinating and cooperating with other organizations, networks and other actors on joint positions and initiatives;
- Coordinating cooperation between its members and developing joint projects and initiatives;
- Facilitating exchange of information and experience between its members and national and local state institutions and the EU;
- Coordinating and compiling researches and relevant information;
- Coordinating capacity-building and other events.

BCSDN is a registered foundation under the Macedonian Law on Citizens Associations and Foundations (Official Gazette of RM No. dated 31/98 and 29/2007) as of 30th September 2009 with the Decision no. 3012009172866 of the Central Register of the Republic of Macedonia (CRM). BCSDN identification number is 6524710 and tax identification number 4057009503419.

NETWORK MEMBERS & ORGANS

BCSDN consists of partner organizations, which are equal in their rights and duties as members of the network. Principles of cooperation, partnership, tolerance, dialogue and respect for others are the main working principles in the network. The network organs consist of the Council, the Board, the Executive Office and the Executive Director.

Members

1. Center for Development of NGO's (CRNVO), Montenegro;
2. Centre for Information Services, Cooperation and Development of NGO's (CNVOS), Slovenia;
3. Center for Promotion of Civil Society (CPCS), Bosnia and Herzegovina;
4. Cenzura Plus, Croatia;
5. Civic Initiatives, Serbia;
6. Diakonia Agapes, Albania;
7. Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization (EHO), Serbia;
8. Civil Society Development Foundation (FDCS), Romania
9. Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM), Albania;
10. Kosovar Civil Society Foundation (KCSF), Kosovo;
11. Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (MCIC), Macedonia;
12. Opportunity Associates Romania (OAR), Romania;
13. Partners Albania for Change and Development, Albania;
14. Third Sector Foundation of Turkey (TUSEV), Turkey.

The Council is the highest organ of BCSDN and is composed of one authorized representative per each organization with a member status. The Council is chaired by the Chairperson of the Council, who is selected on an annual, rotating basis.

The Board is the governing and supervisory organ body of BCSDN. It is composed with up to 7 members: Chairperson of the Board, Deputy Chairperson of the Board and up to 5 Board members. Mandate of the Board members is 3 years. The current Board mandate has started on 19th June, 2014.

Board members (mandate until 2020)

1. Tina Divjak, Slovenia, Chair of the Board;
2. Aleksandar Krzalovski, Macedonia, Deputy Chairperson of the Board;
3. Ana Novakovic, Montenegro;
4. Bojana Selakovic, Serbia;
5. Slavisa Prorok, BiH;
6. Klotilda Kosta, Albania.

The Executive Office in Skopje, Macedonia, manages the daily functioning and coordination of the network.

The Executive Director is the major administrative and financial official and represents BCSDN with other institutions, networks and donors. The Executive Director is appointed by the Board and participates in Council and Board sessions without the right to vote. The Executive Director Ilina Neshikj has been appointed as the new Executive Director after an open call was conducted in October 2017. Ilina Neshikj has been Acting Executive Director from January 20th till the appointment on November 1st, for a mandate of 3 years.

1. PROGRAMME FRAMEWORK

1.1. Strategic Objectives

In the period 2017-2020, BCSDN is contributing to implementation of its mid-term strategic objectives:

- To facilitate a common understanding of the enabling environment for civil society development among key actors and recognition of a common framework and tools
- To promote and recognize civil society as a competent, democratic actor (partner/player) in the EU accession process;
- To support the development of models and sources for CS access to and effective use of (financial) resources;
- To strengthen CSO capacities and their role in functioning democracies;
- To increase the communication and collaboration within the network and its recognition among core stakeholders.

1.2. Target Group & Area

BCSDN target group are CSOs working on civil society development (CSDev) in the Balkan region. The direct beneficiaries are local civil society development and resource organizations. With its activities, the network targets stakeholders such as national institutions and international governmental organizations (IGOs). Among national institutions, the focus is on national public bodies and/or offices for cooperation with CSOs in member countries. Among IGOs, in focus are the EU institutions, Council of Europe (CoE), the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), the Western Balkan Fund and related inter-governmental initiatives in the Balkan region. BCSDN promotes the principle of inclusiveness of marginalized and vulnerable groups in the society (incl. Roma community, inhabitants of rural areas). BCSDN works in countries of the Balkan region, Europe and internationally, according to its mission, vision and goals.

1.3. Planned Activities & Results

In 2017, the network started with the implementation of its new Mid-term Strategy, which has been co-created by BCSDN members and different organs through a strategic and consultative process in 2016. The Mid-term Strategy is based on and continues the network's efforts from the previous strategic period 2012-2016. The success of the network has been its international recognition and creating synergies with efforts of its members at national and local level. In 2017, the network remained devoted to the refined strategic priorities in the attempt to consolidate its efforts in the enabling environment for CSDev in Balkan countries and the role of civil society in the EU integration process, while further strengthening information-sharing and coordination of civil society in creating synergies for cooperation and advocacy measures of its members. Greater focus has been put on strengthening internal accountability through a consultative creation of the network's Code of Conduct but also through promoting accountability within the sector.

2. IMPLEMENTED ACTIVITIES

2.1. To facilitate a common understanding of the enabling environment for civil society development among key actors and recognition of a common framework and tools

RATIONALE: *For civil society to operate in an enabling environment, a common understanding of the enabling environment for civil society development among key actors – CSOs and institutions, needs to be established, and thereafter integrated in the key national instruments in the respective countries. More so, key enabling environment measures that are identified, as regional minimum standards for consultations, public funding reforms, measures vis-à-vis basic rights backsliding, economic value of CSOs, need to be implemented by 2020. The strategic approach is to utilize the Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development as the framework onto which a consensus shall be established and which has the tools for identifying key measures that need institutional consolidation.*

The IPA FPA project “**Balkan Civil Society Acquis – Strengthening the Advocacy and Monitoring Potential and Capacities of CSOs**”, implemented in the countries of Western Balkans and Turkey by BCSDN members and supported by the European Commission and the Balkan Trust for Democracy, has come to an end after four years of successful implementation (1st December 2012 to 31st December 2016). The project worked on strengthening of CSOs capacities on issues related to enabling environment and sustainability of civil society at regional and country level and strengthening structures for CSOs integration and participation in EU policy and accession processes at European and country level. Balkan CS Acquis’s greatest achievement is succeeding to change the discourse on civil society development, bringing enabling environment at its forefront and bringing this issue closer both to policy-makers in the region, the EU and different donors, as well as to CSOs throughout the countries who have understood and engaged in more in-depth work on specific EE issues. Strong support to the project efforts from the EC, EUDs, the EESC, and at times a strong Governmental support, has led to involving civil society actors in structured cooperation with the EU institutions, as well as with the Governments in the reforms of civil society-related policies on a national level.

Monitoring the Enabling Environment for CSOs in 2016

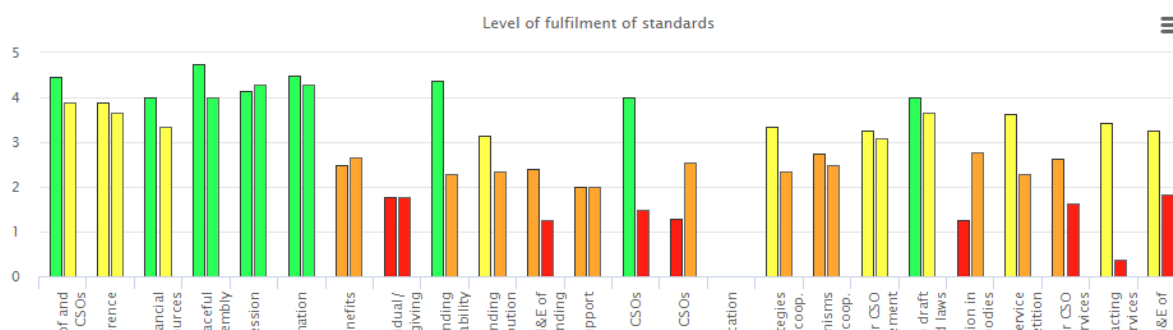
After the monitoring exercise conducted by BCSDN’s members on the environment in which civil society operated during 2016 in the 7 target countries, the Monitoring Matrix 2016 Reports on Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development were published on the Monitoring Matrix platform. Due to the ending of the Balkan Civil Society Acquis project in early 2017, the **country reports** did not have national presentations. The national reports present the developments in EE in 2016, outlining the key conclusions and recommendations for improvement. In addition, the reports contain formulations that directly address the EU Guidelines indicators. Analysing all 24 standards in the Monitoring Matrix framework, the reports enable an in-depth presentation of the situation with the intention to enable analysis and concrete recommendations to be addressed by public institutions, donors, civil society and other stakeholders.

Immediate results and impact include:

- ✓ Use of the Monitoring Matrix findings for in-depth presentations and contribution on public participation, anti money-laundering and financing terrorism
- ✓ Contributing to global advocacy and research trends in shrinking civic space

For the first time, some of the national reports were accompanied by a **visual presentation of the findings**. The novelty in this year’s monitoring exercise – coding the reports and using charts for visualization – allows the viewers to see the level of fulfilment of the standards in the countries where this was applied. Through the colour depiction, viewers can easily distinguish areas where improvements are needed or where the environment in which civil society in the individual country operates is favourable. Next to each standard’s visualization is a brief textual description with key facts and information enabling the readers to better understand the situation, without reading the detailed

reports. This change in the methodology aims to address the need for standardization of quality of the country reports and to enable compressed and effective visual communication of findings and systematic presentation of changes in the enabling environment for CSDev on the level of standards across countries and years. Although some of the reports do not have such visualization yet, all seven Monitoring Matrix reports were published on the MM platform with their full content, following the same structure and level of details as the ones from previous years.

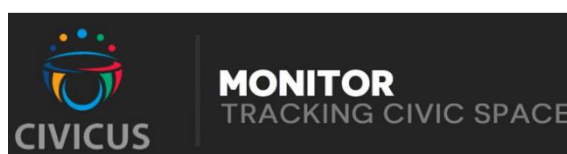


Based on the national reports, in September, BCSDN published the new **Monitoring Matrix Regional Report** for 2016 presenting the regional state of play of civil society in the past year and highlighting the priorities for intervention by national and EU institutions at the regional level towards creating a more enabling environment for civil society. Although the report was not presented to the public in a separate event, BCSDN used many different opportunities to present its findings to different audiences in the region and beyond. The regional report served as a basis for BCSDN advocacy and promotion efforts during presentations, such as: the 6th EESC Western Balkans Civil Society Forum, presentations at the CoE and RCC related to public participation, strategic meetings with WEBER project partners and so on. In addition, BCSDN issued a thematic newsletter dedicated to promoting the 2016 MM Regional Report, briefly communicating the main findings and introducing the purpose and content of the report to the readers.

In December, BCSDN published the document **FATF Recommendation 8 on Non-Profits: Mapping Key Findings and Recommendations for WB Countries**. The main aim of this [document](#) is to enhance civil society's understanding of the overall mission of the Financial Action Task Force FATF, which is one of the international actors that create counter-terrorism rules and policies. The document aims to provide a condensed information on the character of FATF Special Recommendation 8 on Non-profit organisations (NPOs) and its implementation in the countries from the Western Balkans and Turkey. In the document, FATF recommendation 8 as it stands in the current FATF methodology is introduced. This is followed by a brief overview of the main criticism on the implementation of FATF standards in relation to NPOs and FATF's monitoring methodology. Finally, a summary of country ratings, key findings and recommendations concerning NPOs are presented.

Contributing to Global Monitoring and Advocacy Trends

BCSDN continued the research collaboration with CIVICUS for the **CIVICUS Monitor: Tracking Civic Space project**, which started in May 2016. The project allows for global comparisons and trends in real time regarding freedom of association, freedom



of peaceful assembly and freedom of expression around the world. BCSDN, as one of the 20 regional partner networks, is responsible for bi-monthly research updates for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey. By tracking civic space in a continuous manner, BCSDN is also providing alerts and early warning notification when worrying signals are observed, some of which resulted in supporting further action by CIVICUS for organizing in-depth interviews with civil society activists regarding worrisome developments in several countries. A Research Partners Workshop within the project was organized on 29th-31st May in Johannesburg, South Africa, and BCSDN's Junior Policy and Advocacy Officer on Civil Society Development, Sanja Bogatinovska, attended. The workshop aimed at furthering the discussion about future cooperation on



the CIVICUS Monitor, share experience and practices in order to improve reporting and flow of updates, and plan potential advocacy opportunities. Additional activity as part of the project took place during the International Civil Society Week in Suva, Fiji, where Anja Bosilkova-Antovska, BCSDN's Information and Communication Officer, joined the CIVICUS Monitor team in organizing and hosting an interactive, three-hour workshop. The workshop explored how researchers can overcome the challenges to effective civic space research and how the

quality of monitoring and analysis of civic space can be improved. At the workshop, Bosilkova-Antovska presented an overview of the patterns of violations to the basic freedoms in the Western Balkan and Turkey region and discussed how these challenges affect our research on civic space and what are the gaps and opportunities of the CIVICUS Monitor.

BCSDN has implemented the 20th Edition of United States Agency for International Development (USAID) **Civil Society Organization (CSO) Sustainability Index**, focused on Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia, for Macedonia during 2016-2017. The Index measures the sustainability of each country's CSO sector based on the CSOSI's seven dimensions: legal environment, organizational capacity, financial viability, advocacy, service provision, infrastructure, and public image. On 10th August, BCSDN presented the Index along with USAID staff. The 20th edition of the USAID CSO Sustainability Index Report finds that while the overall CSO sustainability in the Southern Tier (South East Europe) countries remained largely stagnant in 2015, only in Macedonia has a negative change been recorded in overall sustainability as a result of the difficult political environment that restricts civic space. As of December, BCSDN started implementing the 21st edition of the Index for Macedonia.

Promoting the Enabling Environment for CSDev

Within the project "Protecting Civic Space – Duties and Participants", supported by Civica Mobilitas, BCSDN organized the **regional conference "The Role of CSOs in Promoting Civic Space"** on 21st June in Skopje, Macedonia. Gathering more than 40 CSO representatives from Macedonia, the Western Balkans and Europe, the conference aimed at discussing ways for promoting civic space and fostering enabling environment for civil society. The keynote speaker of the conference was Danny Sriskandarajah,



Secretary General of CIVICUS, who provided the global perspective of shrinking civic space, pinpointing to reasons for a difficult enabling environment. The following discussions were organized into three panel sessions focusing on exchange of good practices for monitoring and advocacy, improving accountability, and enhancing cooperation within the sector. On the panel session titled CSO actions in promoting enabling environment for civil society development – introductory addresses were given by Aleksandar Krzhalovski (MCIC); Tefvik Basak Ersen (TUSEV); Fani Karanfilova-Panovska (Foundation Open Society Macedonia); and Kotilda Kosta (Partners Albania for Change and Development). The panel session Practices and standards for civil society accountability was addressed by Katja Gürten



(Global Standard for CSO Accountability) and Iliina Neshikj (BCSDN). Finally, during the third panel session Building coalitions for promoting civic space, addresses were given by Marina Škrabalo (GONG); Raluca Teodor (Civil Society Development Foundation); and Petrus Theunisz (CIVICA Mobilitas). Speakers and participants discussed the necessary reimagining of the role of democracy, the need for reinforcing solidarity among CSOs and activists, and the need for CSOs to improve their own accountability, both internally and externally.

BCSDN team used the Monitoring Matrix methodology to promote, inspire and raise awareness on enabling environment for civil society development within and beyond the Balkan region, on various occasions:

On 10th-11th July, BCSDN participated at the **6th Western Balkans Civil Society Forum** in Sarajevo, organized by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). Participants adopted a Final Declaration calling for increased media freedom, opening the doors of the Western Balkans to EU enlargement, implementation of migration policies and increased employment opportunities, and women's rights. BCSDN Executive Director, Ilina Nesik, spoke on the panel related to freedom of expression and presented the shrinking of civic space occurring in the region in the last years.

Klotilda Kosta (Director of Programs at Partners Albania), as a Board member of BCSDN, represented Balkan Civil Society Development Network at the **Regional Meeting on Better Regulation in Western Balkans**, organized on 21st-22nd September in Tirana by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and the Regional School for Public Administration (ReSPA). The aim of the meeting was to discuss the challenges of public participation in Western Balkans, and to discuss and agree on the Recommendations on Public Participation in the Western Balkans. Klotilda Kosta presented the BCSDN regional findings and recommendations on CSO and public participation in decision-making in the WB countries, included in the 2016 Regional Monitoring Matrix Report.



On 24th-25th October, alongside 185 representatives of civil society in Macedonia, Anja Bosilkova-Antovska, BCSDN's Information and Communication Officer, was representing BCSDN at the **Civica Mobilitas Networking Meeting**, taking place in Ohrid, and the thematic forum following the meeting on the topic of "Cooperation between the Government and civil society". The event gathered 186 of the Civica Mobilitas grantees with the aim to exchange knowledge and experiences, discuss the challenges they are facing and identify effective ways to overcome them. Bosilkova-Antovska presented BCSDN's project "Protecting Civic Space: Duties and Participants" which aims to promote mechanisms for monitoring and improvement of the environment in which CSOs operate, and to increase the understanding of CSOs for accountability and transparency.

For the third year in a row, BCSDN took active participation in the **CIVICUS International Civil Society Week (ICSW)**, this year held between 4th and 9th December in Suva, Fiji, together with more than 700 activists, change makers, researchers and practitioners from all around the world. Beyond discussions on the effects of climate change and efforts to mitigate them - the main theme of the event - the debates during the five days were tackling global issues from shrinking civic space to unprecedented rise of populist leaders, inequality, conflict and so forth. The main involvement of BCSDN's representatives



Ilina Neshikj and Anja Bosilkova-Antovska was regarding the launch of the Global Standard for CSO Accountability and the CIVICUS Monitor workshop on improving research on civic space. BCSDN representatives also took part in other events during the week, such as the AGNA peer exchange on membership; the Innovation Lab workshop on campaigning to protect civic space; the Partos session on new ways of cooperation for civil society worldwide; the reception with members of the Vuka! Steering Group, etc.

BCSDN participated at the **10th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum** organized in Chisinau, Moldova from 4th-6th December by the Romanian NGDO Platform FOND, with the support of the European Commission, the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in partnership with UN Regional Hub for Europe and Central Asia, and CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness – CPDE. This year's anniversary edition was aimed at reassessing the strategic positioning of the Black Sea NGO Forum in the region and how it can adapt and further develop the opportunities it provides for the CSOs in the Black Sea Region, in order to enable sustainable regional cooperation. BCSDN's Policy and Advocacy Officer,

Biljana Spasovska participated at the conference presenting the Monitoring Matrix and the findings from the 2016 Regional Report, as well as the Global Standard for CSO Accountability.

On invitation by the Council of Europe, BCSDN participated on a **CoE strategic meeting** devoted to the newly adopted Council of Europe Guidelines on Civil Participation. The meeting, attended by BCSDN's Policy and Advocacy Officer Biljana Spasovska, took place on 4th and 5th December and gathered CSO experts from the Western Balkans and EU Neighbourhood countries in order to contribute for better promotion and implementation of the Guidelines. The aim is to improve the civil participation in policy and decision making on national and local level in the countries - members of the Council of Europe.

On the invitation by the European Economic and Social Committee, BCSDN participated to a **Study Group Meeting on the Economic and social cohesion and European integration of the Western Balkans** – challenges and priorities that took place on 11th December in Brussels. BCSDN's Policy and Advocacy Officer, Biljana Spasovska presented in front of the EESC members the challenges faced by the civil society organizations, based on the 2016 Regional Monitoring Matrix Report.

2.2. To promote and recognize civil society as a competent, democratic actor (partner/player) in the EU accession process

RATIONALE: *With the 2012 Communication “The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe’s engagement with Civil Society in external relations”, the EU give value to a dynamic, pluralistic and competent civil society and recognized the importance of constructive relations between states and CSOs. An emphasis of the EU policy was also put on CSOs’ engagement to build stronger democratic processes. The EU has put forward priorities for EU support in order to promote a meaningful and structured participation of CSOs in domestic policies of partner countries, in the EU programming cycle and in international processes. BCSDN will continue the monitoring of the EU support in this context, providing best practices of CSOs’ involvement in the enlargement and promote the role of CSOs in implementing, supporting and monitoring EU accession reforms. BCSDN will also look to reflect on global processes by promoting partnership with civil society, in order to deliver greater impact and better outcomes in global governance.*

Western Balkan CSOs for Global Development

Immediate results and impact include:

- ✓ *BCSDN leading new ways of understanding EU foreign and development policies in the region among CSOs*

The project Western Balkan CSOs in Global Development, in which BCSDN is a regional coordinator, continued throughout the year, ending in November 2017. The project objectives were to strengthen Western Balkans’ civil society and its involvement in efforts towards global poverty eradication and global justice, and to mobilize and support CSOs to work together to raise public awareness in EU candidate countries for improving education and engagement in the international development agenda.

BCSDN took part at the **two-day capacity-building event** “Advocacy for CSOs’ active involvement in development policies” organized by MCIC on 23rd and 24th March in Tetovo, Macedonia. In addition, BCSDN participated at a **study visit** organized by HORIZON 3000 and Pontis Foundation on 2nd-5th May in Vienna and Bratislava. The aim of the study tour was exchange of experience and lessons learned with various institutions and organizations from Austria and Slovakia such as OEFSE, the Austrian Platform, the Slovak MFA, the Slovak Platform etc. BCSDN Policy and Advocacy Officer, Biljana Spasovska took part at the meetings and presented the Regional Monitoring Matrix Report in front of project partners and donors.



As part of the project, BCSDN developed a **Policy Brief: Fostering an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Contribution to Global Developments**, aimed to presents the environment in which CSOs in the Western Balkans function as a prerequisite for CSOs to be able to contribute to global development processes the localization of the SDGs. In addition, BCSDN published **two country papers**, one on Kosovo and another on Bosnia and Herzegovina, analysing the state of play with the Official Development Assistance and the state of development of civil society. The aim was to provide information for assessing the potentials for civil society's meaningful involvement in development policies in Kosovo and BiH, and meeting the countries' commitments related to the EU accession in the area of development and humanitarian aid. The papers were developed based on the findings from the monitoring conducted in 2016 by the Kosovar Civil Society Foundation (KCSF) and the Civil Society Promotion Center (CPCD) in BiH.

BCSDN participated on the **2017 Policy Forum on Development** - a global meeting held in Brussels in March. As each year, Policy Forum members come together to discuss EU development policy. This year the multiannual financial framework was discussed and the recommendation for EU financial instruments was presented. BCSDN contributed to the discussions and advocated for possibility for the IPA CSOs and local authorities to be able to participate to the EU global instruments for development.

The **Civil Society Forum in Trieste**, organised on 11th-12th July as part of the 4th Intergovernmental Summit of Western Balkans and EU countries, brought together more than 100 representatives of CSOs, including BCSDN's Policy and Advocacy Officer, Biljana Spasovska. Focusing on topics high on the Summit's agenda, such as rule of law, youth cooperation, regional cooperation and bilateral issues, the Forum aimed to provide a platform for their greater involvement in the Berlin Process.

2.3. To support the development of models and sources for CS access to and effective use of (financial) resources;

RATIONALE: Financial sustainability is the one of the top priority for organizations dealing often with budget cuts and the shifting priorities of the donor community. Competition for resources and visibility is seen as a key barrier to CSO effectiveness. While availability of funds is continuous struggle for civil society the CSOs on the other hand are demonstrating their value as facilitators, conveners and innovators as well as service providers and advocates. BCSDN sees civil society's effective role in tackling societal challenges as essential and therefore will focus its research and advocacy on presenting successful and innovative funding models in the region and beyond that enable CSO's work. It will also monitor the donor's presence in the region and their funding in order to promote a support that is accountable, coordinated, effective and based on experience.

BCSDN Position: EU Support to Empowerment and Capacity-building of Civil Society in (Pre-) Accession Countries

As a key regional actor in civil society development, BCSDN with its members has been involved in following all phases of EU regional support to CSOs, and this year, with the new programming ahead, BCSDN has published its Position on how this ultimate phase, in which local CSO should take over the responsibility and ownership, should look like. The document, published in February 2017 highlights the need for EU to maintain a genuine regional approach and efforts, so as to achieve greater in-country effectiveness, while remaining linked to the common objective for these countries which is to contribute to the consolidation of democracy and the future accession to the EU.

Immediate results and impact:

- ✓ *BCSDN recognized by donors as relevant source of knowledge and experience in future ways of supporting CSOs in the Western Balkans*

Continuous Promotion and Advocacy Based on First Regional Study on Economic Value of Civil Society

In 2015, BCSDN and its members for the first time collected and studied the data on non-profit sector in seven countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey. This is the first study ever that gives an overview of the current situation with the non-profit sector-related data collection, analysis and presentation in the countries above. It provides information on the quality and reliability of data on the economic impact of the sectors in those countries, including also challenges that CSOs face to obtain relevant data. Furthermore, this in-depth research maps and illustrates the financial capacities, size, outputs and value of the sectors vis-à-vis the overall economy. In February 2017, BCSDN's member organization from Turkey – TUSEV translated the publication, making it available in Turkish language. The full study is now available in English, Albanian, Serbian, Bosnian, Macedonian and Turkish, translated with the contribution of BCSDN members.

Contribution to the Direct and Democratic Resourcing for CSOs

Within the global efforts for more effective ways of supporting a diverse and resilient civil society, in early 2017, CIVICUS gathered civil society and donor representatives in South Africa to discuss ideas for how to make it easier for small and spontaneous civil society formations to access the resources they need. The group recognised that the trends towards donors making fewer, larger grants and the increasingly onerous audit/risk requirements were making it difficult for these formations to access financial resources, except as sub-grantees of bigger, often Northern, first recipients. The group also recognised that there were a small cadre of organisations that were committed to channelling funds to a more diverse set of grantees, often using small grants and more participatory grant-making processes. The idea behind this gathering was to connect some of the 'fundermediaries' and see if these experiences could unlock the potential for channelling more resources into supporting a diverse and resilient civil society. BCSDN was invited and participated on the second **Roundtable on more direct and democratic resourcing** in London in October 2017, where donors and international CSOs discussed mapping initiatives and plans around more direct and devolved civil society resourcing through sharing experiences and drawing lessons on good and bad practice and identifying what more could be done. These efforts have led to discussions between CIVICUS, SIDA and BCSDN regarding potential funding and piloting such programme in the Western Balkans. A concept note was submitted to Sida in December 2017.

BCSDN Executive Director Ilina Nesik has been one of the experts contributing to the consultations on the opening of the **European Endowment for Democracy Fund to the Western Balkans**. She has participated to two closed evented in Brussels where she presented the state of civil society development and its participation in the democracy development in the region.

BCSDN EO and members submitted a joint proposal for financial support of the EC with the overall aim to increase the financial enabling environment in the region with focus on recommendations on improvement of the public funding and tax environment. The proposal has been unsuccessful and is subject to further fundraising efforts.

2.4. To strengthen CSO capacities and their role in functioning democracies;

RATIONALE: In times of changing role of civil society and active pressure and shrinking civic space, civil society actors need to ensure they retain their core missions, integrity, purposefulness and high levels of trust. Independent organizations are needed to act as watchdogs, ethical guardians and advocates of the marginalized or under-represented. Civil society in all its forms has an important role in holding all stakeholders, including itself, to the highest levels of accountability. BCSDN will work in strengthening its own internal capacities and practices and sharing those accountability standards with wider civil society.

Active Partner in the Global Standard for CSO Accountability

BCSDN, together with eight other Accountability Initiatives, developed the Global Standard for CSO Accountability based on their own existing accountability standards and practices. The Global Standard is a reference standard that captures a globally shared dynamic understanding of CSO Accountability.



Immediate results and impact:

- ✓ *Global Standard successfully launched with BCSDN having and active, leading role*

A Content Advisory Workshop was held in Berlin on 20th and 21st February. The Content Advisory Group – consisting of representatives of BCSDN, Rendir Cuentas, Accountable Now and the ICSC, the Project Development Team and three external experts worked on further developing and refining the content of the Global Standard. BCSDN also participated at a partnership meeting in New Delhi, India, from 24-28 April, where the partners, hosted by Vani, had the opportunity to visit local community organizations, meet representatives from other South Asian

countries and discuss the added value and usability of the Standard in the Asian Context. The meeting also served as an opportunity to finalize the Global Standard, further develop the guidance materials and to discuss future steps of the partnership and the Standard implementation.

On 20th-22nd September, up to 300 representatives of CSOs, donors, political actors, UN bodies, and academia, met at Sida's head office in Stockholm to discuss an "Active Space Defence", focusing on exchanging experiences and practices for how to work in contexts of shrinking space for civil society activists and organisations. Ilina Nesik participated at the event as part of the Global Standard for CSO Accountability presentation, leading the session on Dynamic Accountability – putting stakeholder feedback at the heart of CSO accountability practice.

The Standard was officially launched at the International Civil Society Week in Suva, Fiji in front of around 50 representatives of CSOs, donors and INGOs from all over the globe. The journey of the development of the Standard and its content was presented by Anabel Cruz, chair of CIVICUS and co-chair of Rendir Cuentas, one of the partners of the Standard. BCSDN Executive Director Ilina Nesik actively participated on the launch, during preparation on the project partners meeting in Sydney,



Australia, but also as a panellist on the launch leading the discussion on the ways of operationalizing the Standard and presenting the possibilities for implementations shared by the partners. The Standard was presented as a mean to counter shrinking civic space and present a positive narrative about our sector, as an opportunity for improving existing Codes of Conduct that networks already have or as a self-assessment tool for the sector. BCSDN led the discussion on how to use the standard as a capacity-building tool.

The next phase of the Global Standard project is foreseen as enlarging the initiative towards more networks and organizations that will be able to contribute to the dynamic accountability of the CSO sector. A fund will be open to which organizations could apply and regional focal points will also contribute to the geographical wide-spreading of the understanding and supporting of the dynamic accountability worldwide. BCSDN's Ilina Nesik was appointed as member of the Executive Committee of the initiative that will take on the role till the beginning of the next phase.

2.5. To increase the communication and collaboration within the network and its recognition among core stakeholders.

RATIONALE: In order to ensure effective and sustainable functioning of the network, BCSDN will keep on strengthening the network's 3 Cs: communication, coordination and cooperation, but also increase opportunities for collaboration. A communications strategy, as well as protocols regarding issuing public statements, fundraising etc., will be developed for strengthening the internal collaboration and the network's effectiveness and efficiency. BCSDN Executive Office is the organ in charge to initiate and coordinate joint projects and actions, maintain communication with all relevant stakeholders, promote the work of the network and strengthen its brand visibility on national and regional level. The EO will continue to will timely share relevant information to its members and other civil society actors through its regular communication tools (E-mail alerts, newsletters, social media and websites). In terms of outreach to the wider public, the focus is on communicating the enabling environment standards through innovative communication tools and methods with tailored-content, translated into the local languages for stronger effects of the network's advocacy efforts.

Outreach and Communication

The main BCSDN **website** has attracted around 22,000 visits in 2017. The 36% returning visitors point to the established base of regular visitors that perceive the website as a relevant source of information, news and resources, but also to the fact that many new visitors were also attracted to the website this year - around 64% in 2017. The Monitoring Matrix website attracted around 1,400 unique visitors in 2017. The notable decrease since the 2,800 visitors in 2016 is due to the technical problems with the platform during 2017, which disabled the access to the website for months in a row. In the beginning of 2017, the Monitoring Matrix platform was again used by the member organizations in developing the country reports, while the expert panel reviewed them and provided feedback before publishing the final country reports online.

Immediate results and impact:

- ✓ *Email-Alerts recognized as a relevant source of information on civil society in the region*

In 2017, BCSDN continued using different **social networking channels**, namely Facebook, Twitter and, sporadically, LinkedIn and YouTube. BCSDN's Facebook page had an increase and reached 3598 "likes" in total. An increase in audience engagement with the page was also noted, while the organic reach of the posts was on average 5000 Facebook user per month. Regarding other social networking channels, BCSDN's Twitter profile has reached 587 followers, roughly 20% more than last year.

The **Email Alerts** (EMAs) have remained BCSDN's most important tool for reaching expert audience and BCSDN's stakeholders. The audience for both EMAs and our **Newsletter** is more than 1700 Subscribers. The Newsletter focused on the network and the main developments in the sector throughout the region, sharing the network's achievements and activities, and relevant civil society news from the region. In addition to the two regular Newsletters, BCSDN prepared a thematic Newsletter edition for promoting the Regional Monitoring Matrix Report for 2016, and by the end of the year, BCSDN EO published 24 EMA's.

In 2017, BCSDN published several **publications**. In January, BCSDN published an overview of the MAXCAP Lessons and Prospects for Enlargement and Beyond, summarizing the main working papers of all research related to EU Enlargement process in the Western Balkans and Turkey. In February, BCSDN published a Position on EU Support to Empowerment and Capacity-building of Civil Society in (Pre-) accession Countries. In September, the fourth Regional Report on Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development in Enlargement Countries (2016) was published and printed in 300 copies. Three publications were produced and published online as part of the activities of the Western Balkan CSOs for Global Development project, including two country papers on Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina analysing the state of play with the civil society, authored by Biljana Spasovska, BCSDN's Policy and Advocacy Officer, and the policy brief Fostering an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Contribution to Global Development, authored by Iлина Neshikj and Biljana Spasovska from BCSDN, and Dejana

Stevkovski from Civic Initiatives. Lastly, in December, BCSDN published the document FATF Recommendation 8 on Non-Profits: Mapping Key Findings and Recommendations for WB Countries.

3. ORGANISATION

Changing staff and membership

As of 20th January, Ilina Neshikj was appointed to the position of Acting Executive Director. After the open call for ED and review of all candidates, Ilina Neshikj was appointed as Executive Director in November, with a mandate of 3 years. In the EO, the staff that was on maternity leave came back. The temporary staff finished their contract, along with Sanja Bogatinovska, BCSDN's Junior Policy and Advocacy Officer. As of December 2017, the EO was relocated to a new location in Skopje.

4. EXTERNAL COOPERATION AND NETWORKING

In terms of **governmental actors**, BCSDN has continued its work with a diversity of European institutions, esp. with European Commission, European Parliament and EESC via organizing debate, meetings. It has also continued cooperation with the newly established Center of Thematic Expertise on Civil Society (COTE) in DG NEAR, which is tasked to support monitoring of civil society issues in Enlargement countries. At regional level, BCSDN has also continued the traditional cooperation with Government CSO focal points, although their regional Government2Government platform was less active in 2017.

BCSDN expanded its communication and cooperation with **key global civil society networks** and institutions in key areas of its work. Cooperation with *CIVICUS - World Alliance for Citizen Participation* has been transformed into concrete cooperation on supporting its Civic Space Monitoring platform for the Western Balkans and Turkey region as well as in other programmes of work such as the AGNA network and the VUKA coalition. BCSDN has strengthened cooperation with *Civil Society Europe* by sharing information and advocacy input. BCSDN has established cooperation with *Black Sea NGO Forum* bringing together over 100 CSO from 8 countries of the region, who gather annually to discuss cooperation and joint action of CSOs in the region. It has stepped up its contribution to the global development movement, by the *CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE)* finally creating a Balkans region a separate representative to present and advocate for its civil society interest and contribute to the Partnership. BCSDN will serve as a secretariat for the CPDE as of 2018. Finally, by becoming the 9th members of the global initiative for improving CSO accountability - *Global Standard on CSO Accountability*, BCSDN has further expanded its global partnerships and outreach of its work.

5. INTERNAL RULES AND PROCEDURES

The latest version of the BCSDN Code of Conduct was presented to BCSDN Annual Council Meeting held in June 2017 in Skopje, noting the changes (after extended consultations with members) in order to ensure better alignment with the Global Standard for CSO Accountability.

A decision was reached for the text to be refined one more time at content-level, and if it is accepted by members through committing to these principles, further work will be done on a more detailed implementation framework, for which members will again have the opportunity to discuss and approve. The proposal for the Code was presented to BCSDN Board in December meeting.

6. FINANCIAL REPORT (IN EUR)

Budgetlines		Financial report till 31st Dec	Financial report till 31st Dec	Financial report till 31st Dec
		2015	2016	2017
9	Members	2.730	3.213	3.256
10	BTD	28.485	/	22.137
11	EC IPA CSF FPA 2012-2014-2016	-4.492	185.018	12.518
12	FP 7 MAXCAP	6.662	/	/
13	SlovakAid/Pontis (BPPF) II	165	/	/
14	EACEA Europe for Citizens (CenzuraPlus)	2.022	/	/
15	OSI TTF	3.194	/	/
16	SIDA/Global Standard for CSO Accountability	/	26.996	31.426
17	MSI USAID	/	8.170	3.529
18	Horizont3000	/	6.878	6.580
19	CIVICUS CSM	/	4.477	6.700
20	Civica Mobilitas	/	/	16.242
21	Other revenues (Tax ret., exch.rates, reimburs.)	9.091	3.118	12.192
Carried Over from previous years				50.162
TOTAL REVENUES		<u>47.858</u>	<u>237.875</u>	<u>164.742</u>

Status up-date 31st December, 2017

Budgetlines		Financial report till 31st Dec	Financial report till 31st Dec	Budget (approved April 2017)	Financial Report till 31 Dec
		2015	2016	2017	2017
1	OFFICE COSTS (incl. overhead)	13.317	13.390	14.484	14.698
2	TRAVEL & MEETINGS (incl. network organs)	13.739	971	11.986	12.103
3	COMMUNICATIONS	986	2.282	2.157	2.303
4	STAFF SALARIES	54.238	61.275	48.119	48.484
5	INFORMATION SERVICES (web, alerts etc.)	4.100	5.110	5.074	5.384
6	FINANCIAL SERVICES (incl. audit)	3.658	6.384	5.782	6.605
7	EXCHANGE RATE DIFFERENCES	1.570	991	1.258	5.399
8	DIRECT COSTS	163.583	165.462	39.910	69.766
TOTAL EXPANDITURES		<u>255.192</u>	<u>255.865</u>	<u>128.772</u>	<u>164.742</u>

Status up-date 31st December, 2017