



# **ANNUAL REPORT 2015**

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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, Bulgaria, 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.

## GOALS & OBJECTIVES

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.

## MID-TERM PRIORITIES

**Priority 1:** Monitoring EU & national policies on civil society through a common/regional framework on enabling environment for CSDev;

**Priority 2:** Improving funding policies & procedures for civil society at EU & national level;

**Priority 3:** Establishing structured dialogue between civil society in the Balkans, national & EU institutions;

**Priority 4:** Promoting alternative sources & models for supporting civil society;

**Priority 5:** Increasing opportunities for influencing EU & national policies & programmes for civil society;

**Priority 6:** Improving communication and increasing involvement throughout the 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 30<sup>th</sup> September 2009 with the Decision no. 3012009172866 of the Central Register of the Republic of Macedonia (CRM). BCSDN identification number is 6524710 and ax identification number 4057009503419.

## NETWORK MEMBERS & ORGANS

BCSDN consists of partner organizations, which are equal in their rights and duties as members of the network. **PRINCIPLE** 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. Albanian Civil Society Foundation, Albania;
2. Center for Development of NGO's (CRNVO), Montenegro;
3. Centre for Information Services, Cooperation and Development of NGO's (CNVOS), Slovenia;
4. Center for Promotion of Civil Society (CPCS), Bosnia and Herzegovina;
5. Cenzura Plus, Croatia;
6. Civic Initiatives, Serbia;
7. Diakonia Agapes, Albania;
8. Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization (EHO), Serbia;
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, Center for Change and Conflict Management, Albania;
14. Third Sector Foundation of Turkey (TUSEV), Turkey;
15. Vesta Association, Bosnia and Herzegovina<sup>1</sup>.

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

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

### Board members (mandate till 2017)

1. Venera Hajrullahu, Kosovo, Chair (elected as of 5<sup>th</sup> September, 2012) ;
2. Tina Divjak, Slovenia, Deputy-Chair (elected as of 29<sup>th</sup> August, 2014);
3. Aleksandar Krzalovski, Macedonia;
4. Slavisa Prorok, BiH;
5. Ana Novakovic, Montenegro;
6. Dubravka Velat, Serbia;
7. Gjergji Vurmo, 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 current Executive Director Tanja Hafner Ademi has been re-appointed to the position after a successful 360 degree evaluation and has started a new 3-year mandate on 7<sup>th</sup> October, 2014.

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<sup>1</sup> Organization with consultative status.

# 1. PROGRAMME FRAMEWORK

## 1.1. Goals

In the period 2012-2014, BCSDN is contributing to implementation of its mid-term priorities:

- Priority 1: Monitoring EU & National policies on civil society through a common/regional framework on enabling environment for CSDev
- Priority 2: Improving funding policies & procedures for civil society at EU & national level
- Priority 3: Establishing structured dialogue between civil society in the Balkans, national & EU institutions
- Priority 4: Promoting alternative sources & models for supporting civil society
- Priority 5: Increasing opportunities for influencing EU & national policies & programmes for civil society
- Priority 6: Improving communication and increasing involvement throughout the region

## 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/offices for cooperation with CSOs in member countries. Among **IGOs**, in focus are the EU institutions, Council of Europe (CoE), Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) 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 2015, the network continued with the implementation of its Mid-term Strategy, which has been extended to 2016 at the Tirana 2015 ACM, which took place on 17<sup>th</sup> April, 2015 in order to allow completion of all planned activities for the period. The Mid-term Strategy is based on and continues the network's efforts from the previous strategic period 2009-2011. The success of the network has been in its advocacy at the EU and regional level and creating synergies with efforts of its members at national and local level. In the mid-term period 2012-2016, the network remains devoted to the same but 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.

Concretely, the Annual Plan 2015 included the following measures and activities, under:

- **Priority 1**, regular annual Monitoring Matrix (MM) exercise and development of 2 new tools for further advancement of enabling environment (EE) for CSDev: new coding monitoring system and Government's EE self-assessment mechanism;
- **Priority 2**, development of first study on economic value of civil society and mid-term review of EU and state funding support for civil society;
- **Priority 3**, mix of European and country actions in support of improved cooperation between public institutions and civil society and role of CSO in EU integration process;
- **Priority 4**, finalized and promoted findings of donor strategies and priorities publication qualitative study;
- **Priority 5**, continuation of Balkan Public Policy Fund (BPPF) with focus on developing research and advocacy capacities on EE issues;
- **Priority 6**, continuation of network's standard information and coordination activities as well as their improvement via new website, expert database and new MM back-end platform development.

## 2. IMPLEMENTED ACTIVITIES

### 2.1. Monitoring EU & National Policies on Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development

The Strategic choice/approach for this area defined in the Mid-term strategy 2012-2016 aims to consolidate the existing research and knowledge on enabling environment in a consistent and applicative Monitoring Matrix defining the basis of a so called Civil Society Acquis to identify gaps, weakness of regulatory framework and practice, devise measures and lead action to address them.

#### 2.1.1. Widening and Deepening Monitoring and Advocacy

##### **Immediate results and impact include:**

- ✓ *Civil society has been fortified as one of the key criteria for EU accession. There is an increased focus by the EC on the EE for CSDev in the progress assessments of the Enlargement countries and a use of more systematic and unified monitoring methodologies, incl. further aligned with the Monitoring Matrix;*
- ✓ *Improved visualization and standardization of monitoring EE for CSDev;*
- ✓ *Public institutions on board to develop Government Self-assessment Tool on EE for CSDev*

After the extensive monitoring conducted by BCSDN's members the national presentations of the country reports for 2014, took place during April and May 2015. All reports are available on the [www.monitoringmatrix.net](http://www.monitoringmatrix.net) platform. In first half of the year, BCSDN published the new **Monitoring Matrix Regional Report for 2014**, and presentations of national-level reports for 2014 in 7 countries lead by BCSDN in-country members took place during April and May. The regional report was first discussed at the 17th April, 2015 workshop in Tirana, which was opened by Mrs. Romana Vlahutin, Head of EU Delegation to Albania and then on June 4<sup>th</sup> at the European Parliament to MEPs and other key EU stakeholders, at the **Brussels debate "Norms over Forms: Empowering Civil Society in the Western Balkans and Turkey"** hosted by Ms. Ulrike Lunacek - Vice-President of the European Parliament (The Greens/EFA) and co-chaired by

Ms. Venera Hajrullahu BCSDN's Board Chair. The debate served as an opportunity to discuss the state in which civil society operates in the region, the challenges commonly faced by CSOs, in particular limited tax benefits available to CSOs, inadequately transparent allocation of public funds and insufficient cooperation between government and CSOs, as well as the impact of EU and the EU integration process on CSDev in Enlargement countries and bring these to the attention of Parliamentarians and other European stakeholders.

With respect to the impact of EU and the EU integration process on CSDev in Enlargement countries, BCSDN has **analyzed the Enlargement Package** from the perspective of civil society development findings and recommendations to Governments in these documents since 2009. [This year's analysis<sup>2</sup>](#) showed that the 2015 Enlargement package, the first under the Juncker's Commission, brought several novelties. After last year's debut of civil society as one of the key criteria for Accession in each of the Enlargement countries, an increased focus was put this year on main dimensions of EE for CSDev and use of more unified monitoring approach in line with the Monitoring Matrix methodology<sup>3</sup>.

In order to enable easier, harmonized and sustainable monitoring of standards of EE for CSDev, BCSDN has in 2015 launched **development of coding assessment system, unified test questionnaire and back-end on-line platform** for monitoring organizations. On 22<sup>nd</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> September, training for 15 representatives of its member organizations and the EO staff on international and European non-profit law and regulatory best practices was organized to deepen the knowledge and exchange experience between 7 country monitoring staff. The training also

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.balkancsd.net/novo/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/202-1-BCSDN-2015-Enlargement-Package-Background-Analysis.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> [www.monitoringmatrix.net](http://www.monitoringmatrix.net)

served to present a proposal for the new coding system and back-end platform to be tested during the 2015 monitoring cycle. The proposal has been developed by a Monitoring Matrix Working Group<sup>4</sup> working through the year and a meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> July in Skopje, during which the Working Group members discussed the results and methodological challenges from the implementation of the proposal on coding and categorization of the country reports from 2013 and 2014.

BCSDN and ECNL organized a brainstorming meeting on designing “**Government Self-assessment Tool on the Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development**” that took place in Belgrade, on 25<sup>th</sup> November. The meeting was targeted to representatives of 6 national Offices for Cooperation with Civil Society and other similar type of mechanisms mandated to develop policies and mechanisms for cooperation with civil society in Enlargement countries. Representatives from Albania, BiH, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey attended the event. The aim of this initial meeting was to present the idea on behalf of the BCSDN and ECNL team and exchange ideas and expectations for the development of practical, effective and immediately implementable government self-assessment tool for monitoring the enabling environment for civil society development at national level. After the development of Guidelines of the EU for Support to Civil Society in Enlargement Countries, 2014-2020 on the part of the European Commission, the Government self-assessment tool is the 3<sup>rd</sup> and last pillar of the triangle to be established for improving the dialogue on the advancement of the enabling environment.

BCSDN team used the **Monitoring Matrix methodology** to **promote, inspired and raise-awareness of EE for CSDev beyond the Balkans region**. In May, BCSDN has taken up of developing a mapping study on EE in 8 **Black Sea countries** based among others on its Monitoring Matrix methodology, which was commissioned by the Black Sea NGO Forum to support its development of a joint civil society strategy for action in the region. The report was presented and discussed both with EU stakeholders including EC, EEAS, EP, Romanian representations on 9<sup>th</sup> September in Brussels, Belgium and presented at the 8th Annual Black Sea NGO Forum held on 2<sup>nd</sup> November in Tbilisi, Georgia. On 17<sup>th</sup> June, the MM was presented to 10 members of national platform members from **Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America** as part of CIVICUS-AGNA (Affinity Group of National Associations). The workshop served as an opportunity to reflect on civil society led tools in the assessment of enabling environment and new CIVICUS Civic Space Monitoring tool and how to use their results for advocacy and policy influencing. Tanja Hafner Ademi was a speaker on civil space at the **Open Government Partnership (OGP) Summit** on 29<sup>th</sup> October in Mexico City, Mexico to raise awareness on the importance of open and honest engagement in opening institutions and their work for citizens. BCSDN hosted the annual expert panel for the development of the 2015 USAID CSO Sustainability Index Macedonia report. Between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> December, BCSDN was present at the **17<sup>th</sup> EU-NGO Human Rights Forum: Protecting and Promoting Civil Society Space** where key global challenges of shrinking civic space and EU approach to it have been discussed with main UN, EU and other stakeholders. Finally, BCSDN prepared an internal brief on the conditions in which organizations and informal groups working with refugees are being treated in main transit countries (Macedonia, Serbia).

During 2015 BCSDN members continued with the annual monitoring for the preparation of the 2015 Monitoring reports. By the end of the year the focus was on data gathering and analysis through different methods. More than 635 CSOs were consulted across the region during the monitoring process through surveys and interviews. Members opted for different methods of collecting data and information for the reports, through improved questionnaire and online survey in Macedonia, face to face survey and interviews in 5 cities in Albania, shortened version of the questionnaire in Montenegro and interviews for the standards were information was lacking, focus groups in Turkey and extensive desk top research in all the countries. In **Turkey**, TUSEV has published a [policy brief](http://www.tusev.org.tr/arsiv/files/OrkunTemelBilgiNotu.09.04.15.pdf)<sup>5</sup> to reflect on the situation of the registration of foreign CSOs in Turkey and reviews the state of play of the legal and policy frameworks regulating this process in the Western Balkans. Also a social media campaign under the brand name of “**TUSEV Atolye**”<sup>6</sup>(workshop) was started with the aim of sharing data and information regarding CS enabling environment.

<sup>4</sup> The WG was composed of: Tina Divjak, Dubravka Velat, Taulant Hoxha, Tanja Hafner Ademi and Milka Ivanovska-Hadjijaska.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.tusev.org.tr/arsiv/files/OrkunTemelBilgiNotu.09.04.15.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.tusev.org.tr/tr/arastirma-ve-yayinlar/tusev-atolye>

## 2.2. Funding Policies and Procedures for Civil Society at EU and National level

The Strategic choice/approach for this area defined in the Mid-term strategy 2012-2016 includes influencing of European level funding policies and procedures (via a mix of involvement into existing efforts of European networks' advocacy efforts and promotion of support models synergies used by different foreign and local donors and the EC) and national level (advocacy on enabling support to participation to EU projects, state financing and tax regime for CSOs - Monitoring Matrix Area 2: Financial Viability and Sustainability).

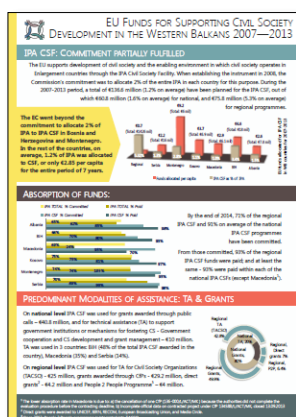
### 2.2.1. First Regional Study on Economic Value of Civil Society

The study on the **Economic value of the non-profit sector in the Western Balkans and Turkey**<sup>7</sup>, has been kicked-off in September, 2014, with the development of the first data gathering questionnaire. Based on the first mapping of data available and a joint workshop, members in 7 countries lead by expert Dubravka Velata collected economic data and analysis and interpretation took place between June and September, 2015. The purpose of this study is to enable greater availability of the statistical data on the financial and human resources characteristics of civil society. One of the aims was also to challenge myths about the financial parameters and size of the sector (i.e. annual budgets, wage levels, number of employees) and to get a deeper insight into the sector and its influence on the policy development and implementation. Ultimately, it is expected that public institutions in the countries concerned will recognize the economic value of CSOs and design key strategies for economic and human resource sustainability of civil society.

#### **Immediate results and impact include:**

- ✓ *First ever study with an overview of the current situation with the non-profit sector-related data collection, analysis and presentation in seven countries: Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey;*
- ✓ *Policy brief analyzing the EU funds for supporting civil society development in the Western Balkans for the entire IPA period 2007-2013*

As a thematic off-spring of the Regional MM report, this year BCSDN also produced a brief **"Ways of Non-Financial Gains for CSOs in the Balkans and Turkey"**<sup>8</sup> that maps the state of play of the legal and policy frameworks regulating non-financial support (e.g. office, training space, equipment) availability and distribution for civil society in the region. It focuses on best practices in the region on local and national level, concluding with a set of recommendations.



In April, a comprehensive research **The EU Funds for Supporting Civil Society Development in the Western Balkans 2007-2013** was finalized. The research resulted with publication of a policy brief, which provides analysis on how EU funds were used for supporting civil society development. The analysis is detailed assessment of the use of the Civil Society Facility, EIDHR as well as of the IPA Cross-border programmes, as another significant source of funding for CSOs in the WB countries. In addition, comparison was made between the EU and state funding to CSOs in three pilot countries for which data was available, to show how significant source of funding to CSOs is the state and the importance to increase the transparency of the distribution of these funds. The [policy brief](#)<sup>9</sup> containing graphic visualization of the findings was also translated into Albanian, Macedonian and Serbian and disseminated to all relevant stakeholders. The policy

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.balkanbcdn.net/novo/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/63-12-Report-on-the-Economic-Value-of-the-Non-Profit-Sector-in-the-WBT\\_final.pdf](http://www.balkanbcdn.net/novo/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/63-12-Report-on-the-Economic-Value-of-the-Non-Profit-Sector-in-the-WBT_final.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.balkanbcdn.net/new-policy-brief-ways-of-non-financial-gains-for-csos-in-the-balkans-and-turkey/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.balkanbcdn.net/eu-funds-for-supporting-civil-society-development-in-the-western-balkans-2007-2013/>



brief was presented at the opening session on BCSDN's Annual Council Meeting in Tirana and the public debate organized by BCSDN at the EP.

On 24<sup>th</sup>-27 November, BCSDN supported and participated to the TACSO **Regional Philanthropy Conference: Investment for the Future** by co-facilitating identification of the regulatory framework and advocacy steps to tackle this in all Enlargement countries.

### 2.2.2. Support to individual country advocacy activities

On 7th July, the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (MCIC), held a presentation on **"Civil society organizations and economic activities - possibility for sustainability?"**. Intended primarily for CSO management and accountants, the event served to inform CSOs that are engaged in, or are planning to start with, economic activities about the benefits, disadvantages and limitations of such engagement, as well as the legal framework in which CSOs' economic activities are to be implemented. In **Kosovo** different advocacy efforts were implemented in 2015 based on the Monitoring Matrix report recommendation in 2014. The focus was on advocacy for introduction of a regulatory framework on public funding for civil society and on improving the approach of the Kosovo Tax Administration towards civil society. An initiative to the Serbian Government to harmonize a definition of public interest in different laws in accordance with the provisions of the Law on Association and the Law on Endowments and Foundations was submitted by Trag Foundation, CI and another 113 civil society organizations. It was adopted at the end of 2015. The change was made by adopting the CSOs' proposals to amend the Rules on the Mechanisms for Determining and Keeping Records of Beneficiaries of Public Funds, which were put into effect. In Turkey, together with ECNL, TUSEV organized the "Economic Activities Workshop", TUSEV team drafted a report of the workshop including action plan. Soon after the Economic Activities Workshop, TUSEV had a meeting with the Head Commissioner of the Revenue Administration in order to follow up results of the workshop. The Head Commissioner committed to form a working group within the Revenue Administration Department with the aim to discuss the recommendations brought during the workshop, create a report and consolidate further data. Notwithstanding the fact that the working group did not come into force, on October 21st 2015, the Revenue Administration Department invited the Secretary General and the Tax Consultant of TUSEV to discuss prospects for reform in this field, which will continue throughout 2016.

## 2.3. Establishing structured dialogue between civil society in the Balkans, national and EU institutions

The strategic choice/approach for this area defined in the Mid-term strategy 2012-2016 is composed of advocacy for effective participation to existing structures for dialogue and programming, both at European and national level, under current, future IPA and Structural Funds.

### 2.3.1. Strengthening the role of civil society in Enlargement process including via research

**Immediate results and impact include:**

- ✓ Contribution bottom-up research incl. perspective of civil society on EU enlargement process;
- ✓ Contribution to main regional civil society-related initiatives (Berlin Process, WB Fund).

As the only partner from the WB, BCSDN has continued participation in the **FP7 "Maximizing the Integration Capacity of the EU"(MAXCAP)** project, providing civil society perspective in the project's activities that are targeted to EU and Enlargement countries decision-makers. On 7th April, BCSDN together with the European Policy Institute - Skopje organized public debate "Rethinking Enlargement: The Impact of Turkey's EU Integration Process on the Western Balkans" hosting professor Dr. Meltem Müftüler-Bac, from Sabanci University in Istanbul.

Between 19<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> April, BCSDN participated at the MAXCAP Young researchers' workshop and Mid-term Conference discussing the importance of the civil society in the EU integration process. Finally, BCSDN has contributed to 2 MAXCAP research activities: Scope conditions for the

effectiveness of the EU's enlargement tools and strategies; and the ongoing research on Examining EU's support to coalitions of societal actors to foster state building and the rule of law. Furthermore, BCSDN has been contributing to the outreach of MAXCAP outputs through dissemination of the project's products to its stakeholders and partners.

On advocacy front, BCSDN actively promoted and advocated for civil society involvement in the regional integration processes, including the Berlin Process and the newly established Western Balkans Fund. BCSDN participated to development of "Civil Society Initiative of the Vienna Western Balkans Summit", presenting BCSDN's work on setting the agenda in the area of civil society development and participated to the **Western Balkans Civil Society Forum** within the Vienna EU-WB Summit on 26<sup>th</sup> August. BCSDN has participated to the international consultation with think-tanks and CSO in Sofia on 23<sup>rd</sup> July in the framework of the Global Foreign Policy Strategy Review "The EU in a changing global environment: What next for Europe's Neighbours" where a discussion on the role of civil society was led with the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Frederica Mogherini. Finally, BCSDN has been following the establishment of the **Western Balkans Fund**, calling for more active involvement of CSOs in the process to both BCSDN's member organizations and governments (letter was addressed to all the Foreign Affairs Ministries of the countries involved).

### 2.3.2. Support to individual country advocacy activities

In **Albania**, a meeting was organized with the General Directorate of Social Policies at the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth to discuss on the continuation of the **initiative on Social Procurement** in Albania, started in 2014, with the preparation of the Policy paper on Social Procurement. PA representatives participated in the consultative meeting for the preparation of the final draft Law on Establishment and Functioning of the National Council for Civil Society. The meeting was organized by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Youth and the Agency for Civil Society Support. Upon the approval of the Council of Ministries, the draft Law was discussed on several Parliamentary Commissions and in the EU Commission. During a public hearing organized by the Work, Social Issues and Health Commission, PA successfully secured the working group on enabling environment for civil society development in Albania's participation at the hearings. Finally, the draft Law has been adopted in the Parliament on November 5th, 2015 with 76 votes.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> May, MCIC presented a policy document on the **Implementation of the Government Strategy** for Cooperation between the Government and Civil Society (2012-2017) in **Macedonia** for the period June 2012 to December 2014. It highlights that although half-way through its implementation period, 48% of measures envisaged in the Strategy were started and only 2 have been fully implemented so far. In addition, the event served as an opportunity to map future challenges in the cooperation and implementation of the planned activities both by representatives of Ministry contact point for civil society and CSOs themselves. The aim of the event was to present the progress in the realization of the measures from the Strategy implementation and to raise a discussion on the findings and recommendations from the policy document.

In Kosovo, KCSF actively contributed in the Functioning of the Council for implementation of the Government Strategy for Cooperation with Civil Society but also advocated for improvement of the newly proposed Anti-terrorism legislation and for the adoption of adopting a set of Minimum Standards for public consultation process at government level. In Serbia, CI was committed to contribute to changes in the Law on Social Protection and made efforts to raise a debate about the adoption of the Civic Code in which CSOs were not included.

## 2.4. Alternative sources & models for supporting civil society

The strategic choice/approach for this area defined in the Mid-term strategy 2012-2016 is to inform and influence exit strategies of foreign donors supporting CSDev and effective transition to domestically-funded civil society.

In 2014, an in-depth country specific analysis as well as the regional perspective, was produced by Queen Mary University of London and BCSDN entitled "Donor strategies and practices for supporting civil society in the Western Balkans"<sup>10</sup>. The motive behind this research was to inspire EU and other donors to reflect the needs of local civil society actors in their approach, methodology and strategies and to contribute to sustainable civil society development.

### **Immediate results and impact include:**

- ✓ *Mapping donors cooperation and coordination with local stakeholders;*
- ✓ *Influence on EU and other donor agendas to reflect the needs of local civil society actors.*

IDM produced a country specific policy output based on the in-depth expert study "Donor Strategies and Practices for Supporting Civil Society in the Western Balkans" conducted in 2013 – 2014. The aim of the policy brief was to strengthen the coordination and cooperation of donors and CSOs both on national and regional level, based on the principles of local ownership and support sustainability. The policy was disseminated through its regular mailing list, IDM website and social media and it was published in Albanian language.

## 2.5. Opportunities for influencing EU and national policies and programmes for civil society

The strategic choice/approach for this area defined in the Mid-term strategy 2012-2016 is to support advocacy capacities, develop skills and provide information on the existing civil society related policies and programmes.

### 2.5.1. Balkan Public Policy Fund

#### **Immediate results and impact include:**

- ✓ *47 submitted project proposals;*
- ✓ *12 proposals selected and kick-off implementation (2 per country).*

This year BCSDN and its members issued the 3<sup>rd</sup> Call for Proposals for CSOs from IPA countries to develop policy or advocacy proposals contributing to capacity building of CSOs in monitoring and advocating on civil society-related policies covered by the Monitoring Matrix areas or the EU CS Guidelines. 12 successful applicants (2 per each country) were selected out of 47 applications in total, for funding under the Balkan Public Policy Fund Programme. The latter were awarded grants

of EUR 3.000, training on advocacy and policy paper writing, and continuous support in the implementation of the project by BCSDN and its members. BCSDN members coordinated the proposal selection and the granting in their respective countries while the EO coordinated the effort, the promotion and supported national partners and grantees during the implementation.

IDM, on the part of Albania, was in charge of designing the call for proposals, leading the selection process in Albania, supporting the sub-grantees' research and advocacy efforts through its mentorship and offering technical and administrative support. Having three relevant research topics identified along the lines of the Monitoring Matrix, by the end of May 2015, IDM awarded the two grants to Partnere per Femijet and the Albanian Institute of Public Affairs. Partnere per Femijet focused on transparency and integrity of state funding to CSOs and produced the brief

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.balkancsd.net/balkan-civic-practices-11-donor-strategies-and-practices-for-supporting-civil-society-in-the-western-balkans/>

“The Situation of State Funding of Civil Society Organizations to Improve the Rights and Lives of Children and Youth in Albania”, whereas the Albanian Institute of Public Affairs aimed to contribute to the debate in Albania regarding civil society involvement in EU accession negotiations and published the brief “Albanian CSO involvement at EU Accession Negotiations: Best Practices from Previous Accessions”. Both sub-grantees gave presentations on October 30th, 2015 with Partnere per Femijet holding it at Mondial, Tirana and the Albanian Institute of Public Affairs at Olympia Center, Tirana. IDM Monitoring and Advocacy Coordinator and Local Administration and Grant Officer attended the presentations and spread the word through IDM website and social media. As for IDM mentorship, it included research and advocacy know-how support, assistance in policy products’ development and promotion.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, CSPC received 10 applications on the topic “Institutional Framework for Cooperation between Government and CSOs”. CSPC awarded the Association for Democratic Initiatives, Sarajevo, for a project titled “Advocating for Proper Implementation of the Cooperation Agreement between BiH Council of Ministers and NGO Sector in BiH – Support to the Group of NGOs Civil dialogue”, and, the Association for Analysis of Public Policies, Banja Luka, for a project titled “Effective Cooperation of CSOs with Institutions of Power as a Precondition for the Development of the Society”.

In March 2015, KCSF launched the call for proposals for Kosovo, both in Albanian and English language, for two areas – Employment Policies for Civil Society and Service Provision by CSOs as these are the least studied and to which an external perspective will bring insights in the assessment of the situation. As the first round did not yield the expected results, another one was issued in May 2015. Kosovo Center for Security Studies (KCSS), a well-established Kosovar think-tank, was granted for the study on the Employment Policies for Civil Society, while Civil Rights Program Kosovo (CRP-K), one of the largest CSOs in Kosovo, was granted for the study on Service Provision by CSOs. While the thematic expertise lied with the grantees, KCSF provided assistance concerning the understanding of the Monitoring Matrix and its respective standards. By the end of the first year of the project, both grantees completed the pre-final drafts of their studies, and were in the process of planning their publishing and advocacy campaign.

As for Macedonia, MCIC call for proposals evolved around two topics stemming from the monitoring matrix – state policies and the legal environment for employment in CSOs on which MCIC received 5 applications, and supportive environment for CSOs involvement in service provision on which MCIC received 4 applications. Regarding the former topic, MCIC selected the Association Konekt, Skopje, for a project titled “Policy analysis of the environment for employment in CSOs”, whereas for the latter MCIC awarded the Institute for Democracy ‘Societas Civilis’ Skopje, for a project titled “CSOs as service providers: Advancing the practice and broadening the possibilities”.

In Montenegro, CRNVO distributed the call for proposals via mailing lists covering more than 600 users, mailing lists of their partners and social networks. The topics based on the Monitoring Matrix, which seem to be most relevant for the case of Montenegro, were public funding and availability of statistical data on CSOs. As there was no sufficient amount of applicants in the first round, the initial deadline has been extended for 15 days. The grants have been awarded to two CSOs the first half of September and since then grantees are working on policy documents that are currently in the final phase. The two awarded grants in Montenegro were to: Centre for Civic Education (CCE)- “For Better Public Financing for NGOs!” and to Democratic Centre of Bijelo Polje for “Regulating Municipal Funding of NGO projects”.

In Serbia, two grants were awarded, one to the Center for Development of Non-Profit Sector, Belgrade, Serbia and another to Europolis, Novi Sad, Serbia. Both grants covered the process of transparent state funding, diversification of the budget line 481 and monitoring and evaluation process of state funding on local level (nine local self-governments in total). Their findings and recommendations will be crucial for all further advocacy efforts in this area and will be incorporated in the Monitoring report for 2015.

By the end of November 2015, all granted were finishing the publications and preparing the presentation of their policy outputs, more information about the grants can be found [here](#).

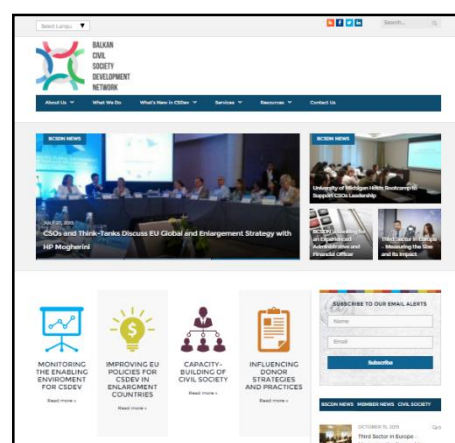
## 2.6. Communication and involvement through the region

The strategic approach/choice for this area defined in the Mid-term strategy 2012-2016 is focused on effective and sustainable functioning of BCSDN and effective internal and external communication.

BCSDN continued using and enhanced its existing outreach programs which include BCSDN's main website, the E-mail Alerts service, Newsletter and social media, focusing on strengthening the recognition and visibility of the network and its products. In December logo and the new organizational website [www.balkancsd.net](http://www.balkancsd.net) with a refreshed and modern new look, aiming to provide easier interaction and access to the information, and better user-experience were launched. Effective communication with partner organizations and networks, such as CIVICUS-AGNA, ENNA etc., continued during 2015, with increased sharing of relevant, timely information. Furthermore, similar to last year, BCSDN received several inquiries for membership from organizations not only in the region, but also world-wide, showing significant outreach of BCSDN communication activities and wide recognition of the network. Within the network, several opportunities for cooperation were identified and 3 joint project proposals were developed. The existing EO-level communication and outreach was reviewed and refreshed, and a comprehensive approach was used, leading to a wide audience reach.

### 2.6.1. Outreach and Communication

The main **BCSDN website** has attracted around 25,000<sup>11</sup> visits in 2015 made by more than 16,000 users. Returning visitors amounted to around 38%, confirming the established base of regular visitors that perceive our website as a relevant source of information, news and resources, but also informing that many new visitors were also attracted to the website this year. The number of visitors has showed an increase of 13.46% in comparison to last year, however the website traffic analysis also revealed a slight decrease in the interaction of the visitors, in terms on number of pages visited in one session and average session duration. This confirms that in world with unlimited amount of information, the web users seek more engaging websites, better visuals that would attract their attention, and simple user-web interaction. All of this has been attained with the **new design** of the main BCSDN website which aims to improve the user experience and attract more new visitors as well as keep the old ones, providing them easier interaction and access to the information (on the network, its activities - both EO and members' activities, and relevant civil society news from the region).



1New balkancsd.net website

The **Monitoring Matrix website**, on the other hand, attracted around 1,800 visitors in 2015, showing an increase of the number of visitors of more than 42%, and more than 116% increase in the number of pages viewed. The website also has a relatively high return rate of 52%, showing that more than half of the visitors, have been visiting the website multiple times. The highest peaks in sessions occurred is registered in April and May, around the time when the Regional and Country Monitoring Matrix reports are published, and in October, which coincides with the period when the EC is preparing the Progress Reports for Enlargement countries. The MM website was also further developed in 2015, with the introduction of a **new back-end platform**. This platform aims to

#### **Immediate results and impact include:**

- ✓ Refreshed visual identity of BCSDN (new website and modernized logo)
- ✓ Increased audience base and engagement through different communication outlets

<sup>11</sup> All numbers regarding website and social media statistics have been last updated on 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2015



enable the member organizations to analyze the gathered monitoring data and produce the reports, the expert panel to review them and provide feedback and the EO to publish the final results on the front-end. This “one-stop-shop” is a way to improve the communication within the network by circumventing the time-consuming process of back-and-forth sending of Word documents between the parties involved in the MM research. In addition, once the new reports are published, the information is visualized on the front-end in such a way that will enable the public to get more compressed information, effective communication of findings and systematic presentation of changes in the EE for CSDev across countries and years, thus allowing for higher outreach and user interaction.

Furthermore, BCSDN continued using its elaborate **social media** strategy, using different social networking channels, namely Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. BCSDN's **Facebook** page continued growing in 2015 and reached 2722 “likes”, which represents a 32% increase in number of Facebook followers since last year, but has also shown an increase in audience engagement with the page. In 2015 BCSDN used several sponsored ads catered to a desired demographic which has showed significant results in ensuring a wide reach of the target audiences and in increasing the engagement of users. Furthermore, a **Facebook “photo-story” campaign** was used for promoting BCSDN's products and engaging the audience over a longer time. The “photo-story” implies using interesting quotes or findings from our publications as a branded image, in order to create more attractive content and increase the recognition by promoting MM and BCSDN. Regarding other social networking channels, BCSDN's **Twitter** profile has increased its followers' base for 34%, reaching 289 followers, while the **LinkedIn** profile, despite not being frequently used, has doubled its followers, and has reached 92 followers, slowly building its expert audience and connections.

While social media have been used effectively for reaching a wider audience, BCSDN's Email Alerts (EMA) service and the quarterly Newsletters have remained the most effective way of reaching the more expert audience, and thus BCSDN's most important stakeholders. In 2015, the subscribers' base of the **E-mail Alerts** - a bi-weekly service that consolidates and disseminates interesting and up-to-date news and information about civil society in the region – has increased and now has more than 1500 registered users. The quarterly **Newsletter** service followed last year's concept of focusing solely on the network, in order to better communicate and promote BCSDN's activities and achievement. In addition to the 3 regular Newsletters, BCSDN prepared a **special Newsletter edition** on the topic of the EC Enlargement Strategy and Progress Reports, featuring BCSDN's background analysis and related publications, which was directly communicated to experts, media and relevant institutions. In the course of 2015, BCSDN published 24 E-mail Alerts and 3 regular and 1 special Newsletters.

Several publications were prepared and presented to the relevant stakeholders in 2015. The second Monitoring Matrix Regional Report was published as the 12<sup>th</sup> edition of the **Balkan Civic Practices**, and the 13<sup>th</sup> published edition was the report on Economic Value of the Non-Profit Sector in the Countries of the Western Balkans & Turkey. In addition to the Balkan Civic Practices publications, BCSDN published the policy brief Ways of Non-financial Gains for CSOs in the Balkans and Turkey and an analysis on the EU Funds for Supporting Civil Society Development in the Western Balkans 2007-2013. All publications were disseminated and promoted not only at the BCSDN events, but also at various relevant events throughout the region and wider.

Altogether, BCSDN's communication activities have shown positive results, and the feedback and engagement by influential organizations and relevant individuals has confirmed that the **information was reaching key stakeholders within and outside of its operational region**. BCSDN will continue improving efforts in engaging the target audience and increasing visibility and recognition of the network, for which a communication strategy on a network level, instead of EO-level, is also planned for the next year.



### 3. ORGANISATION

#### Becoming a global player

BCSDN and especially its Monitoring Matrix have become globally known and promoted as one of key global monitoring and advocacy tools for EE for CSDev. Through this promotion (see Section 2.1. for details), BCSDN's expertise and know-how has become sought for. This now provides BCSDN and its members with possibility to empower civil society actors beyond its region as well as link it to other relevant global processes.

#### Consolidating internal rules and capacities

After adopting a package of internal governance rules and procedure (Board Rulebook, Financial Policy, Rulebook of the Executive Office incl. systematization and Rulebook on Working Relations) to regulate the work of the growing Executive Office and insure smooth, effective and accountable management of network's activities in 2013, the network has devoted itself to their full implementation in 2014. Additionally, Accountancy policy was adopted in 2014. Moreover, further needs in building a trusted and respectable organization have been identified in the area of communication, conduct and financing of the network, thus commencement of rules in these area has started. Building capacity and expertise of executive staff has been one of key developments for the Executive Office, whereby its staff has participated to on-line courses, trainings and workshop to strengthen their knowledge and exchange of experience.

### 4. EXTERNAL COOPERATION AND NETWORKING

In terms of **governmental actors**, BCSDN has extended and deepened its cooperation with diversity of European institutions, esp. with European Parliament, European Commission and EESC via organizing a debate, concrete set of meetings to identify cooperation opportunities for its members with the EP and facilitating links to local CSOs and actors for EC and EESC. It has also established first hand 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 was involved in major Gov-CSO events and forums such as the Vienna Civil Society Forum etc. BCSDN participated to **Gov2Gov peer-to-peer mechanism** meetings and activities, esp. the development of the Gov-CSO on-line platform aimed to present relevant legislation, practices and information in the area of EE for CSDev and thus continued its traditional cooperation with main Government CSO focal points.

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 turned into a structured partnership with support to promotion of each others advocacy and monitoring tools. BCSDN has linked to the key European civil society and academic endeavor on identifying and measuring the value and impact of civil society in Europe - **Third Sector Impact project**, which has enabled BCSDN exposure and facilitation of know-how and research on the economic value of civil society. Exchange and cooperation with the **European Foundation Center (EFC)** has also stepped up via exchange of possible advocacy and monitoring activities linked to raising awareness of tax framework issue and linking regional to European-wide agenda and strengthened cooperation with **South-East European Indigenous Grantmakers Network (SIGN)**. Finally, BCSDN has established cooperation with **Black Sea NGO Forum** bringing together over 100 CSOs from 8 countries of the region, who gather annually to discuss cooperation and joint action of CSOs in the region.

### 5. INTERNAL RULES AND PROCEDURES

On its session held in Prishtina, Kosovo on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2014, the BCSDN Board has adopted a set of internal governance acts to improve management and efficiency of running a growing Executive Office (5 full-time employed staff) and to address a clear division of roles and responsibilities between BCSDN bodies not specified in the Statute. As part of the process, 5 acts were developed and adopted: the Board Rules of Procedure, Rulebook on Organization and Systematization of the Executive Office, Rulebook on Relations between the Employees and BCSDN and Financial Policy have been adopted. The Board requested the Executive Director to report on implementation of the acts and its impact on functioning of BCSDN and especially the Executive Office. In 2014, the Board also adopted Accountancy Policy detailing accountancy and financial procedure at the proposal of the institutional auditor.

## 6. FINANCIAL REPORT (in EUR)

Budgetlines		Financial report till 31st Dec	Budget (approved April 2015)	Budget (corr April 2016)	Financial report till 31st Dec
		2014	2015	2015	2015
1	OFFICE COSTS (incl. overhead)	14.721	15.725	15.725	13.317
2	TRAVEL & MEETINGS (incl. network organs)	14.567	17.463	17.463	13.739
3	COMMUNICATIONS	2.046	1.800	1.800	986
4	STAFF SALARIES	46.773	50.313	50.313	54.238
5	INFORMATION SERVICES (web, alerts etc.)	2.105	5.156	5.156	4.100
6	FINANCIAL SERVICES (incl. audit)	3.962	2.400	2.400	3.658
7	EXCHANGE RATE DIFFERENCES	1.207	0	0	1.570
8	DIRECT COSTS	290.366	218.467	164.381	163.583
TOTAL EXPANDITURES		<u>375.747</u>	<u>311.324</u>	<u>257.238</u>	<u>255.192</u>

Status up-date 6th April, 2016

### Notes:

- In 2015, includes only accountancy costs as audit has been paid as part of project activity audit, but add costs for accountancy software were incurred due to change of external accountant.



Budgetlines		Financial report till 31st Dec	Budget (approved April 2015)	Budget (corr April 2016)	Financial report till 31st Dec
		2014	2015	2015	2015
9	Members	3.753	3.750	3.750	2.730
10	BTD	25.766	30.000	30.000	28.485
11	EC IPA CSF FPA 2012-2014	529.098	322.860	-4.492	-4.492
12	FP 7 MAXCAP	20.543	20.537	20.537	6.662
13	SlovakAid/Pontis (BPPF) II	10.503	1.556	1.556	165
14	EACEA Europe for Citizens (CenzuraPlus)			2.022	2.022
15	OSI TTF	7.640	1.982	1.982	3.194
17	Own revenues	11.514	4.800	4.800	9.091
TOTAL REVENUES		<u>608.817</u>	<u>385.485</u>	<u>62.224</u>	<u>47.858</u>

Status up-date 6th April, 2016

**Notes:**

- 11 Two (2) pre-financing installments were paid in the course of 2015. First grant contract (Dec 2012-Nov 2014) was underspent and after approval of project financial report, amount of 4,492 EUR was re-paid to the EC.
- 12 Revenues are presented as in real currency as received on the account.

**Planned & expected till 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2016**

CIVUCUS (Civic Space Monitor regional node)	10.000 USD
USAID-MSI (service)	6.775 USD
SIDA/ICSC	Under negotiation (at least 35% full-time staff, 12% overhead + direct activities)