



ANNUAL REPORT 2021

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ABOUT BCSDN

The 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, Kosovo, North 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 a more enabling environment for civil society development in order to ensure sustainable and functioning democracies in the Balkans.

BCSDN's **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 the exchange of information and experience between its members and national and local state institutions and the EU;
- Coordinating and compiling research 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 North Macedonia (CRNM). BCSDN's identification number is 6524710 and the tax identification number is 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. Bulgarian Center for Non-Profit Law (BCNL), Bulgaria
2. Center for Development of NGOs (CRNVO), Montenegro;
3. Centre for Information Services, Cooperation and Development of NGOs (CNVOS), Slovenia;
4. Center for Promotion of Civil Society (CPCS), Bosnia and Herzegovina;
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; (consultative member)
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 are 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. The mandate of the Board members is 3 years. The current Board mandate has started on June 19th 2020.

BOARD MEMBERS (MANDATE UNTIL 2023)

1. Tina Divjak, Slovenia, Chair of the Board;
2. Taulant Hohxa, Kosovo
3. Bojana Selakovic, Serbia;
4. Aida Daguda, Bosnia and Herzegovina,
5. Klotilda Kosta, Albania.
6. Rana Kotan, Turkey

Ms. Ana Novakovic from the Center for Development of NGOs (CRNVO), Montenegro formally resigned from the Board in July 2021 following her resignation from as the Executive Director of CRNVO.

The Executive Office in Skopje, North 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. As of September 1st 2020, BCSDN's Executive Director is Biljana Spasovska.

PROGRAMME FRAMEWORK

1.1. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The new mid-term strategy of BCSDN was adopted in 2021. This strategy has been adopted after thorough discussions and comprehensive assessment of the realization of the objectives from the 2017-2020 strategy. In line with the newly defined objectives, BCSDN will be contributing towards the following objectives:

1. To facilitate a common understanding of the enabling environment for civil society development and a recognition of its role in the sustainable development of the region and its accession into the EU;
2. To strengthen CSO capacities and their place in functioning democracies;
3. To increase the collaboration and the recognition of the network with and among the core stakeholders;
4. To improve the functioning, communication and collaboration of the network.

1.2. 1.2. TARGET GROUP & AREA

BCSDN target group are CSOs working on civil society development (CSDDev) 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, the Regional Cooperation Council, 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

The COVID-19 pandemic and associated challenges continued during 2021, however it was a year marked with many accomplishments for our network. We continued with the inclusive strategic planning process, resulting with a finalization of a new mid-term Strategy 2021-2024. We finalized a full cycle of monitoring of the civil society enabling environment in the six Western Balkan countries that resulted in early publication of a Monitoring Matrix Regional Report for 2021, preparation of a new Report for EU TACSO 3 against the EU Guidelines for civil society support in Enlargement Countries, and developing a joint approach to monitor CSO capacities and accountability. All these has enabled us to strengthen our evidence-based advocacy towards the EU for more conducive civil society environment and for more strategic, inclusive and fair approach to planning the policy and support for the civil society. In our advocacy during the past year, we

have put more efforts to collaborate with other regional networks and relevant international stakeholders to promote the role the recognition of the civil society's role in the sustainable development of our region towards the EU and the rest of the international community. Throughout the whole year we successfully brought others on board to promote our civic space through our Regional Civil Society Hub funded by Sida: we supported the actions of 10 regional CSOs networks and providing small rapid grants to 15 organizations to address immediate needs and/or to develop innovative solutions to contemporary challenges. Lastly, we continued our commitment to promote civil society accountability and to contribute to global platforms and international partnerships.

IMPLEMENTED ACTIVITIES

1. FACILITATING A COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR CIVIL SOCIETY AND A RECOGNITION OF ITS ROLE IN THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION AND ITS ACCESSION INTO THE EU

One of BCSDN main objectives is to increase the understanding among the wider audience that for the civil society to be effectively tackling societal challenges, the existence of environment that is enabling for the functioning and further development of the civil society is essential. The strategic approach is to utilize the Monitoring Matrix (MM) as the framework onto which a consensus shall be established, and which has the tools for identifying key measures that need institutional consolidation. The MM findings have been the basis for BCSDN members' national-level advocacy and for the regional-level advocacy conducted and coordinated by BCSDN towards the EU, as well as for international advocacy (such as towards other international organizations, Council of Europe, OECD, UN, etc.) through which the policy makers and donors in the region might be influenced.

Monitoring and Promoting an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development

Immediate results and impact include:

BCSDN conducted full cycle of monitoring the civil society enabling environment

The MM used as the main tool for evidence-based advocacy by the members

Due to the impact on the COVID-19 crisis on civil society, the network's strategic decision was to implement another full cycle of monitoring of the civil society enabling environment for the past year. Based on previous discussions and plans to implement the full MM methodology every second year (due to the complexity of the methodology and the dynamics of the changes in the areas being monitored), this year's research will be followed by a lighter monitoring methodology and a different, more pertinent way of presenting the latest findings in 2022, with another full cycle to be conducted in 2023.

These strategic decisions and a related implementation plan in practice were confirmed with the network's strategic planning in September 2021, as well as on the [research partners' workshop](#) organized in December in Belgrade. At this workshop, members' representatives involved in the MM research also discussed the crucial role of the Matrix in their successful advocacy efforts on national level. With the reports presenting a unique, very relevant and credible source of information on the CSO enabling environment throughout the region, in the next period BCSDN

should focus more on enhanced communication and reaching out to a wider audience of CSOs as well as citizens, to improve the understanding of the importance of having an enabling environment for civil society in place.

BCSDN's members implementing the Monitoring Matrix in 2021 completed the field research and their draft reports by April 2021, after which the EO focused on the publication of the regional report, in order to ensure its availability in time for the EC Country reports development. The Regional MM report for the Western Balkans was launched in July 2021 and presented at an online event followed by more than 40 CSOs, donors and EU representatives from the region and across Europe. The report findings suggest that 2020 has been marked by profound challenges for the state and the functioning of the civil society in the Western Balkans, influenced by the economic circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. As common challenges, the report notes severe restrictions and violations were imposed against the freedom of assembly and expression while reflecting on a worrisome narrowing of the civic space in the region and very few legal changes in line with the improvement of the enabling environment. The Monitoring Matrix Country reports have had certain delays and have been partly published by the end of 2021. The reports for 2020 have been published on BCSDN's website and are available [here](#).

The research under the Monitoring Matrix has continued to serve as the basis for BCSDN's advocacy processes. BCSDN's [contribution has been integrated](#) into the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Policy Instrument on Enabling Civil Society which was adopted by the DAC in July 2021. This document is the first international standard centered on the actions of civil society actors as providers of development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. The monitoring is also integrated within BCSDN's Regional Civil Society Development Hub and the findings support the development of the intervention logic and the priority areas for the re-granting programme of the Hub. This made it possible for BCSDN to **bring in and support more actors in tackling the key challenges concerning the civil society operating environment in the region.**

In 2021, BCSDN again implemented the annual monitoring of the state of civil society development for 2020 under the EU Guidelines for Support to Civil Society in Enlargement Region, 2014-2020, commissioned within the framework of the EU TACSO 3 project. The final report, (expected to be) published in December 2021, aimed to inform the preparation of the Commission's Country (Progress) Reports for the Enlargement countries and Civil Society Facility (CSF) programming cycle in 2021. The assessment reflects also on the full period of the Guidelines implementation and aims to contribute to the revision of the new Guidelines.

Identifying the issue of anti-money laundering and countering-terrorism regulations as a potential concern in the region, BCSDN partnered with ECNL and Partners Albania for Change and Development to organize the [regional workshop](#): "NPO engagement in Anti-Money Laundry/ Combating Financing of Terrorism processes– lessons from the WBT" on 18 March 2021. The workshop addressed the governments' restrictions as part of the legal measures in response to MONEYVAL recommendations, including legal provisions to restrict basic civic freedoms, including freedom of expression of association, freedom of assembly, and participation right; limitations of civil society access to financial services, delays or termination of transactions; burdensome administrative requirements.

Contribution to Global Monitoring and Advocacy Trends

BCSDN continued the research collaboration with CIVICUS for the **CIVICUS Monitor**, which started in 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, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey. In 2021, BCSDN was supported by KCSF, Civic Initiatives and TUSEV in providing updates for Kosovo, Serbia and Turkey, gathering relevant information on the civic freedoms in the countries. 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 result in supporting further action by CIVICUS for organizing in-depth interviews with civil society activists regarding worrisome developments.

BCSDN also continued the partnership with USAID and FHI 360 to produce the 2020 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index (CSOSI) for North Macedonia, as part of USAID's 23rd edition of the CSOSI for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia. The report examines the overall sustainability of the CSO sector in 24 countries in the region, by looking at seven specific dimensions of sustainability: legal environment, organizational capacity, financial viability, advocacy, service provision, sectoral infrastructure, and public image. The report for North Macedonia is available in the [Macedonian](#) and [English](#) language and was publicly [presented at an online event](#) in July 2021.

Promoting Civil Society as a Competent, Democratic Actor in the EU Accession Process

Immediate results and impact include:

BCSDN advocated towards key stakeholders to promote the role of civil society within and for the accession process of the Western Balkans and Turkey

In 2021, BCSDN participated at several meetings that provided valuable opportunities for advocacy towards key stakeholders to promote the role of civil society within and for the accession process of the Western Balkans and Turkey.

In January 2021, BCSDN [held a meeting with the Commission's Directorate-General for Neighborhood and Enlargement Negotiations](#) representatives where it presented the findings and key recommendations from the last monitoring of the civil society enabling environment in the region. The meeting, followed by more than 30 representatives, including EUDs and TACSO representatives, served as an opportunity for exchanging information about recent developments affecting the civil society environment in the region.

In March 2021, [BCSDN participated at a meeting of the EESC Section for External Relations](#). The meeting titled "Western Balkans, in the context of the EU-Western Balkans relations and the Covid-19 pandemic" brought prominent speakers from the EU institutions to provide their views and debate on EU's commitment to enhance the accession process, and BCSDN Executive Director Biljana Spasovska presented the state of play with the civil society in the Western Balkans based on the MM findings, as well as BCSDN's key recommendations for the EU on how to reinforce its support for strong and resilient civil society.

In June 2021, BCSDN's Executive Director participated the regional event ["Strengthening the Rule of Law in the Western Balkans: Old tools for new rules?"](#) organized by the Institute for Democracy

“Societas Civilis”, the Politikon Network and the Center for Contemporary Politics. The event, which took place in Skopje, aimed to reflect on the democratic backsliding and the ongoing rule of law reform process in the Western Balkans, and Ms. Biljana Spasovska discussed the civil society role in the EU integration process as a responsibility of both governments of the candidate countries and the EU. The key takeouts from the discussion were reported by the [European Western Balkans](#).

At the online conference “[The role of the Civil Society in the EU Accession Process](#)” within the EU TACSO 3 Project, BCSDN’s Executive Director, Ms. Biljana Spasovska, moderated the session titled “General overview of the mechanisms for CSOs involvement in the IPA programming structures” where representatives of DG Near, the EU Delegation in Skopje, the Belgrade Centre for Security Policy and The Open Society Foundation Macedonia discussed mechanisms for CSO involvement in the IPA programming and monitoring. The event mobilized over 80 representatives of CSOs, state institutions, EU delegations from the Western Balkans, as well as and international organizations and experts.

BCSDN took a prominent role on the [8th EESC Western Balkans Civil Society Forum](#) that took place in Skopje in October 2021, organized by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). After the opening by North Macedonia’s Prime Minister Zoran Zaev, BCSDN’s Executive Director Biljana Spasovska took part in the inaugural session “Roadmap towards a clear EU accession perspective for the Western Balkans”, along with EESC President, Ms. Christa Schweng, Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, Mr. Olivér Várhelyi, State Secretary at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Slovenia, Mr. Gašper Dovžan, European External Action Service Head of Western Balkans Task Force, Ms. Jasna Jelišić, and Regional Cooperation Council Representative, Ms. Tanja Misheviki. On the second day, several BCSDN member representatives took part in the panel on “Achieving an enabling civic space in the Western Balkans”, sharing their experiences and recommendations, supporting the network’s findings and positions.

The final high-level meeting for the year where BCSDN participated was the 2021 [EU-Western Balkans Summit](#) organized by Friends of Europe took place on the 7th of December. BCSDN’s Executive Director took part in the session titled “Talking to the inside out: new routes for bridging the gap”, discussing the state of civil society in the region and the role of EU in engaging with WB civil society. The other panellists in this session, dedicated to the impact of the local and the regional governments on the development of the Western Balkans, the support to grassroots initiatives and the private-civil sector partnerships, were the Macedonian Minister for Education and Science, the Serbian Minister for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue, and the Mayor of Tirana.

Throughout the year, BCSDN participated in and closely followed the work of the [CSO Convention on the Future of Europe](#), coordinated by Civil Society Europe. Over 75 European networks and platforms have come together to scrutinize the democratic functioning of the Conference of the Future of Europe and ensure a real involvement of citizens and their representative associations in the process. During the constituent meeting after the official launch of the Convention, held in March 2021, followed by CSO joint declaration, BCSDN advocated for the inclusion of Western Balkans citizens and civil society in the Conference of the Future of Europe.



For the 12th consecutive time, BCSDN prepared an [analysis of the annual European Commission Enlargement Package](#), assessing the progress made in the area of civil society development and dialogue with public institutions in Enlargement countries. The background analysis, set against the Monitoring Matrix, this year was titled “EU, Are

You Still Committed to Empowering Civil Society?”, noting that the EC has presented a bleak assessment or omitted developments that are vital for civil society and its development, even in cases where local CSOs have been vigorous in their advocacy efforts and public reactions on both national and international level.

Promoting improved funding models that enable CSOs' work

In April 2021, [BCSDN published its Opinion](#) on the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III), discussing how the EU can support civil society more effectively. In the new IPA III, civil society remains a thematic priority for intervention and is, for the first time, a cross-cutting theme in all five windows.

A programming document on the new IPA III Civil Society Facility 2021-2023 Multi-Beneficiary (Regional), that was circled among CSOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina promoted BCSDN to devote more time for advocacy for more inclusive, strategic and fair EU support for regional civil society actions. Following internal strategic discussion within the network, the Executive Office coordinated consultation with several CSOs and networks from the region and launched a joint advocacy action. Outlining the key shortcomings and concerns when it comes to EU's regional support to civil society, the document named [Non-Paper on the IPA III CSF and Media Programme 2021-2023 \(Multi-Country\) Action Document](#) served as a basis for coordinated advocacy of more civil society organizations towards the EU. The positions outlined in the document were presented by BCSDN at different events and advocacy occasions.

2. TO STRENGTHEN CSO CAPACITIES AND THEIR ROLE IN FUNCTIONING DEMOCRACIES;

BCSDN believes that in times of active pressure on civil society and civic space, civil society actors need to ensure they retain their core missions, integrity, legitimacy, and high level of trust. Civil society in all its forms has an important role in holding all stakeholders, including itself, to the highest levels of accountability. At the same, to be able to fight back, CSOs need to work more closely together and join forces for achieving common goals, and to protect and expand their civic space. Building on its own experience and learning the power of regional cooperation first-hand, BCSDN committed to supporting collaborative regional CSOs' actions for promoting civic space and supporting others to be more accountable actors in driving positive change.

Sub-granting support launched to support CSOs capacities for promoting civic space

The focus of the Regional Civil Society Development Hub's re-granting component in 2021 was the provision and monitoring the implementation of two types of grant contracts:

- Regional multi-action country grants to support regional initiatives, wider civil society participation, and enhanced cooperation in the region for promoting civic space.
- Ad-hoc grants to provide rapid support to CSOs for immediate actions of CSOs aimed to protect or advance the civic space.

For the *regional multi-action country grants*, in 2021 the awarded beneficiaries have successfully implemented the activities foreseen with their contracts. Namely, through an open call for proposals published in the summer of 2020, 10 regional multi-country action grants have been awarded to regional networks and initiatives supporting a diverse group of grantees.

Many of these projects focus on improving the policy dialogue among CSOs and authorities at different levels and fostering the citizens' engagement in decision-making processes. Through strengthening these processes, for example, the Western Balkans Regional Platform for advocating media freedom and journalists' safety aims to advance the state of freedom of expression, and Think for Europe Network (TEN) aims to strengthen civil society monitoring in PAR area. SEENET – South East Europe network on natural resources, energy, and transport strives to identify and analyse potential legal framework improvement areas to initiate a dialogue about participation in environmental decision-making. Youth Initiative for Human Rights contributes towards wider civic space through the establishment of innovative inclusive practices of civil society, securing greater participation of all stakeholders concerned.

Other projects encourage new ideas about conducting advocacy in different contexts. For instance, the Informal network At-Risk Youth Social Empowerment Network (ARYSEN), focuses to enhance the advocacy capacities of CSOs service providers to allow for greater involvement in policymaking and to increase policymakers' awareness of the CSOs' role in service provision. Advocating for LGBTI rights and fundamental freedoms, ERA – LGBTI Equal Rights Association for Western Balkans and Turkey, Serbia aims to improve the sustainability and resilience of the LGBTI movements. ConWeb – Network of national consumers' organizations of South-East Europe, on the other hand, aims to develop and promote an innovative CSO cooperation model with businesses through consumer-friendly certification services.

Lastly, there are also projects aimed at strengthening CSOs' capacities. By exchanging experience on evidence-based advocacy and monitoring EU integration and reform agenda, the Association for regional cooperation Balkan Network for Local Democracy aims to create a regional CSOs cooperation and learning resource for advancing active citizenship at a local level. SIGN – South Eastern European Indigenous Grantmakers Network aims to build knowledge and infrastructure for increased financial sustainability of CSOs and promote strategic giving and provision of support to all actors in the process. Finally, the informal network of organizations for improving the role of civil society in the implementation of palliative care represented by "BELhospice" strives to enhance CSO's role in the implementation of palliative care and protection of human rights of patients with life-limiting illnesses and their families.

Concerning the *ad-hoc grants*, the Call for proposals was opened throughout the year providing support to the CSO efforts in promoting the civic space in the Western Balkan region. The purpose of this type of support is to provide rapid funding for CSO's immediate needs or innovations, in the

form of direct expert support or funding for various regional actions, contributing to strengthening regional cooperation in promoting civic space.

In April 2021, the call was revised to broaden the scope and the target groups for the funding opportunities under the Call. Thus, in addition to non-governmental and not-for-profit CSOs, CSOs' networks, platforms, associations and foundations registered in one of the WB6 countries, the informal organizations were also welcomed to apply for the ad-hoc support.

This call had two streams:

- The *immediate need* mechanism aiming to provide support for civil society actors who prompted by unpredicted events must immediately respond to the current challenges or recognize a window of opportunity for influencing public opinion and policy processes.
- The *innovation* stream refers to actions for the promotion or development of new approaches and methods of working and/or engaging with constituencies and stakeholders, or other innovative solutions to address the challenges CSOs are facing.

By the end of 2021, we have successfully awarded about 15 grants aiming to advance the civic space in the Western Balkans and contribute to a more conducive environment for civil society development by addressing the challenges identified in different areas:

- Influencing public opinion and policy process and advocating changes in draft laws
- Inducing public debates and increased citizens engagement through innovative participation mechanisms
- Establishment of a cross-sectoral regional network of actors to create and protect civic spaces in rural areas for peer-support and co-creation of shared resources
- Exchanging practices and models for data-driven advocacy and participation in policymaking in the region
- Supporting the establishment of a regional anti-fascist network as a response to the retrograde political processes in the region, the strengthening of right-wing extremism, the weakening of democratic institutions and the polarization of society, etc.

Contributing to Improved CSO Accountability

During 2021, BCSDN continued the activities to support more accountable civil society in the region in the scope of the project implemented in partnership with the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE) as well as the Global Standard for CSO Accountability developed together with eight other accountability initiatives around the globe in 2016. The Global Standard is a reference standard that captures a globally shared dynamic understanding of CSO accountability.

Immediate results and impact:

BCSDN global efforts on accountability scaled down on national level in the Western Balkan countries, especially in North Macedonia and Albania.

Under the CPDE project, BCSDN prepared a video campaign to promote awareness of CSO dynamic accountability and effectiveness. Titled "[There Is Always a Way to be More Accountable!](#)" the video provides concrete insights on how CSOs improve their accountability.

BCSDN continued with its efforts to further promote accountability on a national level by promoting the Global standard and testing its applicability with national networks and organizations, under the EU-funded program "**Sustainable Civil**

Society – State Financing of CSOs", implemented by the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (MCIC) in partnership with BCSDN and CNVOS from Slovenia in April 2021. On 30 March 2021, BCSDN held an [online event](#) to present the project results of 5 Macedonian CSO networks, which enhanced their capacities, transparency, and accountability under the program. With the grant's support, these networks created or revised their strategic documents and internal management systems; established or upgraded the existing organizational structures; improved the participatory and democratic decision-making; developed a strategic approach for operations.

October marked the official launch and signing ceremony of the [Code of conduct for CSOs in North Macedonia](#). The Code of conduct is an initiative of more than 50 organizations to take a significant step forward towards the promotion of self-regulation in civil society. The Code has been greatly based on the experience and knowledge shared through the Global Standards for CSO accountability. Similarly, in Albania, building on the last two years' efforts to strengthen the accountability of CSOs, the National Resource Center of Albania (Partners Albania) facilitated the final establishment of the [Code of Standards for Albanian CSOs](#).

As part of the global communications and advocacy around the CSO accountability and the efforts within the Global Standard, BCSDN celebrated the Global Accountability Week 2021 from 22-24 November online. In the marking of the GAW, BCSDN actively shared content on CSO accountability on social media and promoted resources and good practices from partners' experiences. As part of the GAW 2021, BCSDN organized an online [workshop](#) to explore a more dynamic approach to accountability. The workshop aimed to introduce the Global Standard for CSO Accountability to BCSDN's partners in the Sida Hub and to provide space for sharing accountability approaches and mechanisms for improving the way we engage those we try to serve.

3. TO INCREASE THE COLLABORATION AND THE RECOGNITION OF THE NETWORK WITH AND AMONG THE CORE STAKEHOLDERS

BCSDN continued collaborating with international and global actors in the field, building on its achievements and growth into a prominent network recognized among international CSOs and key institutions for its efforts to promote the development of civil society and the civil society operating environment in the region. Therefore, throughout the year, BCSDN took part in several relevant activities and events.

As part of the activities of CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE), acting as the Secretariat from the Europe Region, BCSDN took part at the 2021 All Secretariats' Meeting, taking place from 28 June to 2 July. The virtual event gathered the secretariats of CPDE's constituencies, including six regions, sectors, and task forces to reflect the past achievements, current status, and ongoing activities. The event provided updates on key development cooperation and development effectiveness policy issues, understand the situation of the global platform's constituencies, and review past agreements while committing towards the promotion and the way forward of effective development cooperation. Ms. Biljana Spasovska, BCSDN's Executive Director, and Ms. Marija Vishinova, BCSDN's Communication and Information Officer, represented the Europe secretariat.

In this role, BCSDN represented CPDE also at the [Global People's Assembly](#) organized in parallel to the UN General Assembly. The panel was organized by Forus, CIVICUS, and CPDE on 21 September discussing the state of human rights and civic space around the globe, with a specific focus on risks and opportunities in the digital era. BCSDN Executive Director Ms. Biljana Spasovska, participated in the panel along with Mandeep Tiwana, CIVICUS Chief Programmes Officer and Deirdre de Burca, Forus' Advocacy Coordinator, speaking about the state of civic space in the Balkans and the experience from our region on how civil society can respond to threats to civic space and human rights. The key messages raised at the discussion were then conveyed at the General discussion of the UN General Assembly.

As part of the CPDE involvement, Ms. Visinova also participated in the [CPDE Workshop on the Aid Observatorio](#), a CSO database of development projects financed by the Official Development Assistance (ODA) or international financial institutions (IFIs), which provides on-ground narratives and evidence-based analysis of development projects in developing and fragile countries. During the three-day course in June, CSOs from regions worldwide (Latin America, the Middle East, and North Africa, Eastern Europe, Africa, and Asia) followed lectures and participated in interactive activities to advance people's research to strengthen civil society. Thus, the workshop created a space for open and fruitful discussions, sharing the best practices between CSOs for setting up research-related projects. Following this training methodology, BCSDN organized a [regional training on effective development cooperation](#) in Belgrade, where all representatives of all BCSDN's WB members participated.

BCSDN's Policy and Advocacy Coordinator took part in the [Civil 20 \(C20\) Summit](#), which took place from 5-7 October in a hybrid event format, in the plenary panel "Civic Space Restrictions in the Era of COVID: Why Is Democracy at Risk?", organized by RACI Argentina. As one of the official Engagement Groups of the G20, C20 provides a platform of CSOs around the world to bring forth the political dialogue with the G20. This discussion on the effect of the COVID-19 crisis on the state of civil society and fundamental rights included representatives of eminent organizations with a long-standing portfolio of monitoring and advocacy in this area, including CIVICUS, ICNL, BCSDN, and VANI.

For the 5th consecutive time, BCSDN participated at the annual [Black Sea NGO Forum](#) organized by FOND Romania in October 2021. Focused on raising awareness about civil society challenges during the pandemic and identifying opportunities for further cooperation, the forum aimed towards the identification of the common challenges that CSOs are currently facing. BCSDN's Policy

and Advocacy Coordinator, Anja Bosilkova-Antovska, participated at the plenary session “SDGs and Development Effectiveness Principles in the spotlight”

4. TO IMPROVE THE FUNCTIONING, COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION OF THE NETWORKS

Outreach and Communication

The BCSDN **website** has remained a relevant source of institutional memory for the work of the network, making all the news on the network and members’ activities and products publicly available and accessible. It also continued to be perceived a relevant source of information, news, and resources on civil society in the Balkans, based on the continuous web visits throughout the year, similar in dynamics with previous years. All contents published on the website have been promoted through the social media channels of the network, further promoted also by its members, additionally attracting traffic to the website. Social media activities aiming to get more website visits, only in the last quarter of the year, attracted around 1000 clicks to the website. The website is regularly updated and maintained and has attracted many returning visitors, mostly from the Western Balkan countries, but also a significant number from the USA, France and Germany. The Monitoring Matrix platform has been updated throughout the year, as Monitoring Matrix reports have been published including a more user-friendly presentation of the key monitoring findings and recommendations.

In 2021, BCSDN has continued to use **different social networking channels**. BCSDN's Facebook page records a constant increase in the number of followers, impressions, and overall traffic. This year’s page number of likes has increased to 5.777, while the average reach of the page has reached 45.445 people, while the average engagement rate is now 1.251. BCSDN’s twitter account is finishing 2021 with an average tweet impression of 5.402 and total number of 998 followers. In the past year LinkedIn has been very popular channel for gathering information on the work of BCSDN, marking constant growth of the audience (between 25% and 50% per week).

The **Email Alerts (EMAs)** have remained BCSDN’s most important tool for reaching expert audience and BCSDN’s stakeholders and has been perceived as a valuable source of information and exchange among the key actors of civil society development in the region. We note satisfying click rate of the Email Alerts and constant increase of the number of subscribers. BCSDN has also published its Yearly Newsletter, covering the network’s projects and accomplishments during 2021. The audience for both EMAs and our Newsletter is more than 2000 subscribers.

During the CPDE Communications Workshop that took place online on 19 October, BCSDN shared its experience within the session titled “Best practices in communications work”. BCSDN Communication and Information Officer Marija Vishinova presented the communications and advocacy tools through which the network carries out its communications processes and activities.

Immediate results and impact:

BCSDN’s Email Alerts, as well as its webpage and social networking channels, recognized as a relevant source of information on civil society in the Western Balkans region.

BCSDN’s publications made valuable contribution towards promoting civic space and creating synergies among the CSOs.

At the end of the year, BCSDN celebrated the 20th anniversary of regional cooperation with the members, by sharing a [joint article](#) to which several members contributed.

External Cooperation and Networking

BCSDN has enhanced communication and cooperation practices with key global civil society networks and institutions, playing valuable roles in the main areas of the network's activities. Another successful year of continuous cooperation *CIVICUS - World Alliance for Citizen Participation* through the CIVICUS Monitor platform where BCSDN is a regional research partner for the Western Balkans and Turkey. BCSDN has remained active within the Affinity Group of National Associations (AGNA network) as well.

BCSDN has stepped up its contribution to the global development movement for the *CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE)*. As of October 2020, BCSDN is performing the role of Secretariat for the Europe region, implementing a three-year programme "Strengthening development partnerships for contributing to more sustainable development in Europe and beyond" funded by the EU, SIDA and ADA. The programme is implemented in partnership with FOND Romania, who is coordinating the Black Sea Region. The programme aims to contribute to the enabling environment of CSOs, improving CSO capacity to engage in development partnerships, and broaden the support base for CSOs and their positions.

5. ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, RULES AND PROCEDURES

BCSDN held the [Annual Council Meeting in April 2021](#) with an [Extended session in June 2021](#). Among the most important things from the ACM were the adoption of the new Strategic Framework for the network for the period 2021-2024, the discussion around membership fee, the BCSDN Accountability Report 2020, the need for amendment of the Code of Conduct for introducing operational compliant mechanisms and a selection of new BCSDN Code of Conduct Committee, etc. The Council agreed on the need for having an additional strategic planning meeting to discuss further the priorities for the network in the near future. On the ACM's extended session, the representatives of BCSDN member organizations discussed the civil society situation in their countries, the difficulties concerning the operating environments and circumstances in times of COVID-19, and the current issues in their organizations. The meeting served as a networking opportunity for BCSDN EO and its members to exchange best practices of civil society development in the region, identify common challenges, and create new synergies. Lastly, in September 2021, BCSDN Council representatives got together in Budva, Montenegro for a long-awaited [Strategic Planning Workshop](#) for the network. The Board held five sessions throughout the year.

Internal Rules and Procedures

In 2021, the functioning of BCSDN Executive Office was further strengthened with the development and the adoption of several internal rules and procedures. Most of these documents resulted from the recommendations provided from the Due Diligence process performed in 2020 as part of the implementation of the pilot phase of the Regional Hub.

The Rulebook on working relations was updated. The policy regulates the relations and obligations of the EO towards its employees and vice versa and it establishes a salary scaling system, setting with that a fair, transparent and rewarding working environment for its staff. As BCSDN is committed to be an organisation that is accountable, transparent and ethical in its management and governance, that retains the confidence and trust of its members, staff, and donors, a Policy for prevention of conflict of interest, corruption and fraud was developed to respond and manage (potential) risks of conflict of interest, corruption or fraud. Finally, in addition to this, the Policy for management of risks, developed as Risk Registry, was prepared and adopted for the EO to be able to identify potential risks and foresee ways to mitigate them.

In regards to its commitment to strengthening its accountability, BCSDN EO prepared a Self-Assessment Report set against the Code of Conduct that was presented and approved by BCSDN Council. A new Accountability Committee was also elected, following the end of the mandate of the previous Committee members. Along with verifying the compliance of BCSDN and its members with its Code of Conduct, one of the main tasks of the new Committee is to further operationalize BCSDN Complaint mechanism.

6. FINANCIAL REPORT (IN EUR)

	Budget lines	Financial report till 31 st Dec	Financial report till 31 st Dec	Financial report till 31 st Dec
		2019	2020	2021
1	Members	4.708	2.475	250
2	BTD	36.923	/	38.862
4	Mirror to the State Report on Ac. Reforms (IPA CFCD Macedonia MCIC)	4.124	/	/
5	Going the distance (IPA Macedonia MCIC)	25.933	13.045	265
6	Rockefeller Brothers Fund	44.208	40.773	33.124
7	Sida - Global Standard for CSO Accountability	24.999	/	25.022
8	CSO Sustainability index / FHI360 / USAID	7.180	10.841	6.783
10	CIVICUS CSM	13.366	24.202	17.583
12	CPDE	10.735	36.720	1.387
13	Other revenues (Tax ret., exch. rates, reimburs.)	4	217	7.564
14	GDSI Limited (EU TACSO 3)	6.590	63.455	38.456
15	Sida – Regional Hub	652.300	731.086	147.843
	CARRIED OVER	31.939	583.204	1.127.198
	TOTAL REVENUES	863.009	1.506.018	1.444.338

	Budget lines	Financial Report till 31 st Dec	Financial Report till 31 st Dec	Budget Approved	Financial Report till 31 st Dec
		2019	2020	2021	2021
1	OFFICE COSTS (incl. overhead)	15,217	16,258	15,960	13,604
2	TRAVEL & MEETINGS (incl. network organs)	9,359	5,388	15,000	9,914
3	COMMUNICATIONS	1,596	2,610	4,220	2,956
4	STAFF SALARIES	81,818	102,595	124,770	132,195
5	INFORMATION SERVICES (web, alerts etc.)	2,068	8,805	14,000	6,006
6	OUTSOURCED SERVICES	6,941	8,317	9,900	9,081
7	FEES AND CHARGES	/	/	6,600	8,271
8	DIRECT COSTS CARRIED FORWARD	139,304 (606,109)	229,481 (1,131,836)	1,130,000	776,107 (486,204)
	TOTAL EXPENDITURES	256,900 (863,009)	374,182 (1,506,018)	1,320,450	958,134 (1,444,338)