

BCSDN Newsletter (January - June 2022)

[View this email in your browser](#)BALKAN CIVIL SOCIETY
DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

NEWSLETTER 75

Dear colleagues and partners,

After six months of 2022 behind us, we are found at a crossroads caused by global turmoil and civic repressions. While overcoming the socio-political and economic challenges and the governments' breaches of basic freedoms caused by the "still lasting" corona crisis, we have been faced with a war not far from the Balkans, with consequences to be felt way beyond.

With the Russia-Ukraine war with no end in sight, we [stand in solidarity](#) with the CSOs and activists working tirelessly inside and outside Ukraine, and we raise our voice for civic freedoms, peace, and democracy. We must not underestimate the power of solidarity, courage

Furthering the activities of the Regional CSDev Hub, we continue to support regional actions and cooperation, as well as immediate and rapid actions of enhancing the basic freedoms in the region, and protecting civic space.

Our active involvement in several international initiatives, such as the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE) and the Global Standard for CSO Accountability, helped us bridge the regional and international gaps by sharing best practices and effectively replicating the international expertise in a national and regional context. The [reference](#) of the Global Standard in the new EU Guidelines is

Going from one crisis to another fosters us to be more resilient, and through collective action, advocacy, and mobilization, remain constant in pushing for the change we want to see.

Within our efforts to promote enabling environment for civil society development, it's been the 9th consecutive year as we completed a full Monitoring Matrix cycle.

strengthen our capacities and accountability actions on regional level.

We invite you to continue following our efforts and supporting us in jointly building a more reflective, stable, and accountable civil society in the region.

Enjoy the read!

BCSDN Team

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Changes in the Executive Office team

In May 2022, the Executive Office grew with the engagement of Ivana Simjanovska as a Project Assistant for the Regional Sida Hub. In June, the engagement of Ferdin Arsoski as a Policy and Advocacy Officer ended, and we welcomed back Marija Vishinova after nine months of maternity leave. We wish them a successful time ahead!

BCSDN Coordinating Regional Action on AML/CFT with ECNL's Support

UPCOMING

Monitoring Matrix Regional Report 2021 and Updated Website

After the summer period, BCSDN will publish the final Monitoring Matrix regional report for 2021, analysing the enabling environment for civil society in the Western Balkan and Turkey. The MM website (www.monitoringmatrix.net) is under reconstruction and by the end of the year will provide the option to explore the countries' findings across the key areas and topics. Country reports for Albania and Serbia have already been

Online Platform for the Regional Civil Society Development Hub in Development

In July 2021, BCSDN started working on establishing an independent website dedicated to the Regional Civil Society Development Hub. The new website should be the institutional memory of the Hub supported by Sida, where CSOs can access various resources on enabling environment, accountability, and other civil society related topics. It will serve as a resource platform, providing information to the wider public about the open call for proposals, publications, generated documents, grantees and projects implemented, activities, experts, etc. In addition, the website shall contain one section with restricted access (requiring login) for partners directly involved in the Regional Hub governance structures and the activities' implementation.

New Research on CSO-Private Sector Cooperation

As part of the [CPDE](#) activities, in August 2022, BCSDN will publish a joint publication of three papers developed as part of the Call for Research Proposals on CSO – Private Sector Engagement for Promoting Civic Space. The papers have been prepared by ACER (Albania), EPI (Macedonia) and Trag Foundation (Serbia) and aim to shed more light to the topic of CSO-Private sector engagement in the Balkans.

4th Extension of the Global Standard Project

As a part of the [Global Standard for CSO Accountability](#) efforts, in August 2022, BCSDN will initiate the Regional Community of Practice. The group will serve as a collaborative space allowing regional practitioners to gather diverse perspectives and explore solutions on how CSOs can use dynamic accountability to foster a more participatory and inclusive approach in the Western Balkans. A kick-off meeting will be organized online in September, while in October, a regional online event will discuss challenges and lessons learned in implementing the national codes in Albania and North Macedonia.



Explaining Western Balkans

Podcast Series by BCSDN

BCSDN's new podcast series aims to explain (not so) everyday events ongoing in the Balkan region. This is our attempt, in a vivid, witty, and fun way, to keep you informed about major and daily political events in the Western Balkans, thorough enough for listeners who are yet to find the Balkans on the map, but relevant enough for informed community members from the region.

- [\[Podcast\] Episode 1 – Cold December in Belgrade](#)
- [\[Podcast\] Episode 2 – European Values vs. Bosnian Reality](#)
- [UPCOMING] Episode 3: CSO, Interrupted: Lost in the Veto(s) - The long way to EU of North Macedonia (*Stay tuned!*)



WHAT WE HAVE WORKED ON

Monitoring the State of Civil Society

Throughout the first part of 2022, BCSDN and its members implemented the ninth annual monitoring cycle of the Monitoring Matrix, covering the developments in the civil society environment in the region during 2021. In addition, we monitored the [impact of COVID-19](#) on civil society in the Western Balkans in 2021, as means of identifying both the challenges and lessons learned from the pandemic. The [MM preliminary regional findings](#) were premiered at a [regional event](#) that took place at the end of May, in Belgrade, organized with the support of the Balkan Trust for Democracy (BTD). Together with over 40 representatives from national and international CSOs, donors, journalists, and interested individuals, we

event covered all the aspects of (shrinking) civic space: how to recognize its narrowing, how to shift it through the physical and cyberspace, how to expand it, and how to act together to combat the imposed restrictions. A detailed summary of the discussions will be published in the coming weeks.

Regional CSDev Hub: Continuous Support to CSOs for Promoting Civic Space

To our great pleasure, we have been enabled to continue the support towards the work and the impact of our CSO fellows throughout the region. With Sida's continuing support, the [Regional Civil Society Development Hub](#) granted additional funding to the ten regional networks for their new and core endeavors towards pursuing their mission throughout the region. In addition, the [second call for ad-hoc grants](#) was open in April, and 12 new projects have been supported until now, amounting to a total of 30 ad-hoc grants awarded in both calls. Furthermore, in line with the strategic support, BCSDN conducted [two-day training](#) for the regional grantees and the monitoring officers of the Hub on Communication, Advocacy and Networking Skills. The regional workshop took place in Struga, providing the participants with an agenda full of lively discussions, learning opportunities, and skills building.

Ongoing Advocacy and BCSDN Representation in the Public Discourse

We have continued our advocacy efforts and joined forces with other civil society actors with whom we share the same values. On 29 March, our Acting Executive Director, Ms. Anja Bosilkova-Antovska took part in the online regional forum "[Civil society organizations response and adaptability](#)," organized by CRNVO, and on 13 April at the public debate titled "[Monitoring the Rule of Law for EU Member States and Candidates: Bridging the Gap](#)" organized by the European Policy Institute (EPI) in Skopje. Continuing our EU advocacy and closely following the developments around the EU Guidelines, on 8-9 June, the Acting ED and several representatives of BCSDN members took part at the EU WBT Civil Society Forum 2022, where the new Guidelines for Support to Civil Society in Enlargement countries 21-27 were presented. In the following period, building on our [position on the importance of the EU Guidelines](#), BCSDN will prepare a new position regarding the operationalization of the Guidelines and their use/implementation in practice by the different actors involved.

Promoting Accountability and Sharing Good Practices

As one of our key interests, we actively worked and contributed in the field of accountability. We published BCSDN's first research on "[Constituent Led Accountability in the Western Balkans](#)" alongside the document "[Where Do We Stand vis-à-vis the Istanbul Principles?](#)". Both publications explore the practices and understanding of CSO accountability in the Western Balkans and provide a ground for further

cooperation and action. BCSDN directly supported the strengthening of accountability of one of its Hub's partners as our Marija Vishinova delivered [training to BLD](#) on accountability standards which helped the network develop and adopt its Accountability Principles.

With the CPDE partnership, we contributed to CPDE's [capacity-building materials](#), giving our insight into the communication and management of our network, and participated in the [All Secretariats Meeting](#) that took place in May 2022 in Paris. In addition, we have also encouraged joint actions towards the common good, holding an online workshop on [CSO–Private Sector Cooperation](#) through which we presented several shining examples contributing towards promoting civic spaces and defending human rights, to which we followed up with a call for research proposals aiming to arouse interest and get a clearer picture of the state and potentials of such cooperation.

...MEMBERS' HIGHLIGHTS

Civic Initiatives have launched [Zemlja za nas platform](#) to gather all active citizens in one place - who have an idea, initiative, or proposal on how the society can be a better place. The platform will promote events and initiatives that concern all-important social areas that affect people's lives in various ways, but also inspiration and support.

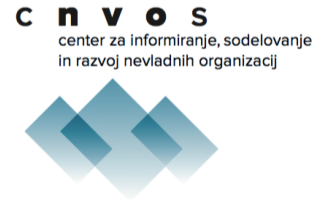


CPCD has [closed the implementation period of USAID's Independent Media Empowerment Program](#), which has been implemented for the past years. CPCD awarded 174 grants in the amount of 5,507,332 KM and produced more than 3,500 pieces of media content, contributing to the diversity and quality of media production in BiH.

CRNVO hosted the online forum ["Civil society organizations response and adaptability"](#), organized within the regional project "Fostering regional cooperation and policy responses in time of crisis". The forum aimed to provide an overview of the current situation in the WB and EU, highlighting the impact, key issues, and challenges faced by CSOs and the role of the relevant stakeholders, to present the main



best practices concerning the topic.



In April, **CNVOS** conducted the [PR Academy](#). The Academy covered various topics, among which the way of responding to politically motivated attacks on NGOs; how the number of attacks can be reduced? how organizations could prepare for targeted attacks during peacetime, which actors organizations could rely upon while experiencing attacks, etc.

FDSC, for the second consecutive year, has organized the most important event in Romania and the Eastern Partnership countries, dedicated to the new currency that is changing the business world - the social economy. The event fostered a dialogue between policymakers, representatives of the EC and OECD, impact finance experts and the social economy, pioneers and innovators with a social mission, in order to mobilize the necessary resources to increase the impact of the social enterprises.



**Fundația pentru
Dezvoltarea
Societății
Civile**



As a part of the Citizen Engagement Activity, **KCSF**, in partnership with the USAID, on 7 April, held the first meeting of the Informal Philanthropy Forum in Kosovo in Pristina. Designed to be a platform for dialogue and action between CSOs, citizens, the private sector, and public institutions, as well as to foster cross-sectoral partnerships and strengthen trust, the Informal Philanthropy Forum transcends boundaries between each group.

On 13 April, in Skopje, MCIC held the Civica Mobilitas thematic Forum: [“State Funding for Bigger Sustainability of CSOs”](#). During the forum, the participants reflected on the low

level of state financial support to CSOs compared to other countries in the region and that the financial sustainability of CSOs should be the basis for a stable, functional, and sustainable civil society. On the other hand, the government representatives reflected on the practice of granting state funding to CSO.



МАКЕДОНСКИ
ЦЕНТАР ЗА
МЕЃУНАРОДНА
СОРАБОТКА



Partners Albania is implementing an initiative that aims to empower NPOs to proactively engage in an enabling legal environment in the context of [preventing money laundering and combating terrorist financing](#). This is the first initiative of a long-term intervention that focuses on mapping and analyzing the legal and regulatory framework in Albania in this area.

In January, TUSEV kicked off the implementation of the [Monitoring of Freedom of Association Project](#), funded by the EU and implemented in cooperation with STGM. Within the scope of the project, which will last until October 2024, TUSEV and STGM will work on producing data to contribute to the enabling environment for civil society in Turkey, facilitate dialogue between public institutions and CSOs and develop proposals to improve the quality of regulations on CSOs in line with international standards.



The head of the UNHCR Representation, Francesca Bonelli, together with her team, [visited the Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization](#). On that occasion, UNHCR representatives get acquainted on the work of the Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization, with an emphasis on support provided through various projects to vulnerable groups, children, and young families from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and refugees.

BCNL has published a [retrospective article](#) summarizing the organization's main achievements of its 20th anniversary. The article covers information on amendments to over 20 laws, MLA implementation, social engagement, etc.



...MEMBERS' PUBLICATIONS



- EU TACSO 3: "[EU Guidelines for Support to Civil Society in the Enlargement region \(2021-2027\)](#)"

- BCSDN accountability reports: "[Constitutional Accountability in the Western Balkans](#)" and "[Understanding CSO Accountability in the Western Balkans: Where Do We Stand vis-à-vis the Istanbul Principles?](#)"

- Balkan Civic Practices: [Impact of COVID-19 on Civil Society in the Western Balkans in 2021](#)
- Civic Initiatives - report from the monitoring activities during the election period: "[Elections under scrutiny 2022 - Civil society for fair elections](#)"
- IDM Albania: "[The Dynamics of Implementation of the LEADER Approach and Its Way Forward in Albania](#)"
- BNLD: "[Desk Research on Social Enterprises Need and Challenges – Report](#)"

BCSDN VIDEO: There is Always a Way to be More Accountable!



Our video shares perspectives on how CSO accountability is implemented in practice and how an organization can do more and, thus, inspire others. It notes that CSOs should always aim to stay connected and do better for their beneficiaries, protect the environment, promote social justice and

This Newsletter is publication of the Balkan Civil Society Development Network.
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