



A note from our Director:

Dear colleagues and partners,

I am grateful to have the opportunity to address you as this year reaches its end!

New challenges, new roles, and new opportunities are what marked 2022 for us. While I was on maternity leave for the biggest portion of the year, our Policy and Advocacy Coordinator, Anja Bosilkova Antovska, took over the role of Acting Executive Director and led the team through the new endeavors. The team has been walking bravely and tirelessly, completing yet another successful year!

Continuing our efforts on the enabling environment for civil society in the region, we are proud that the Regional Civil Society Development Hub doubled its scope of support in 2022, compared to the past year, awarding 28 ad-hoc and 9 regional grants. Several in-person events opening space for discussion and mutual learning conducted throughout the year and a few more online gatherings, capacity-building activities – both created and attended, and the new resources published for fellow CSO workers are once again here to remind us that we have remained true to our mission and vision.

In 2022, we also took on some new roles and explored new areas of work. We have shone a light on the cooperation between civil society and the private sector, and we have joined the efforts of regional CSO engagement in the field of anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism. We solidified our engagement on issues of importance to the civil sector, both regionally and internationally, by taking a new role within the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness, as a co-chair of the CPDE, and the Global CSO Standard for Accountability by joining the Dynamic Accountability Community of Practice Coordination team.

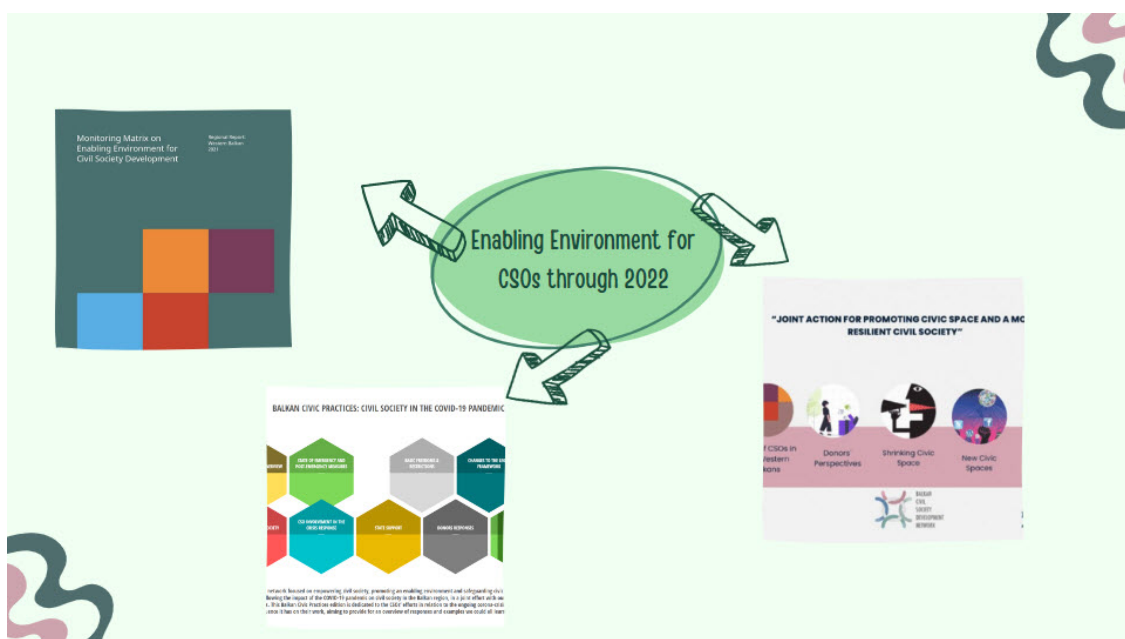
As we summarize our efforts and achievements during 2022 with this newsletter, we are very happy with how we are concluding this year. At the same time, we are excited about everything 2023 has to bring! Wishing you all a prosperous year ahead!

Biljana Spasovska

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PROMOTING A MORE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT

In conditions of prolonged crisis, the corrosive influences shrinking the civic space continued appearing in various forms, but we kept fighting the good fight. We concluded yet another cycle of our **Monitoring Matrix** and painted a comprehensive picture of the CSO environment in 2021 throughout the region, including the **impact of COVID-19 on civil society**. We continued contributing to the CIVICUS Monitor, covering 8 Balkan Countries, and we flagged the state of endangerment with civic rights in Serbia as the country was put on the Civicus' Watch List. At the conference **"Joint Action for Promoting Civic Space and a more Resilient Civil Society"** we organized in Belgrade this summer, we tackled the issue of the shrinking civic space together with civil society actors and donors in the region, providing space to talk about the mutual challenges and the new opportunities. With AML/CFT regulations identified as one of the most important issues affecting the work of civil society, BCSDN started coordinating the related regional CSO positions and efforts, as part of the Global **Expert Hub on AML/CFT**. The WBT Hub met in Paris in September and Tirana in October to enable a closer regional exchange to identify common challenges and to concretize a regional action plan on AML/CFT.



PROMOTING CIVIL SOCIETY AS A COMPETENT PARTNER IN THE EU ACCESSION PROCESS AND CONTRIBUTING TO MORE EFFECTIVE FUNDING FOR CSOS

For years, we have been following the EU's approach to supporting civil society in the Enlargement countries and advocating for civil society to be recognized and adequately supported as a competent partner in the EU enlargement process. For the 13th consecutive time, we have published our **background analysis on the EU Enlargement package**, assessing the progress made in the area of civil society development and dialogue with public institutions, vis-a-vis our Monitoring Matrix methodology and findings. Our network has also taken a stand regarding the relevant processes of concern for the CSOs and addressed the missing aspects that we have pledged on. In May 2022, we shared our concerns regarding the **Guidelines for EU Support to Civil Society in Enlargement Countries**, which was preceded by the reaction by the network's reaction to the DG NEAR **Consultations on the IPA CSF Regional Call**. Following developments also on EU level, we published a position on the **EC Consultations on a European Statute for NPOs and Single Market Accession**, noting that it is vital that all European CSOs, including those from the Enlargement region, have a say in such an initiative.



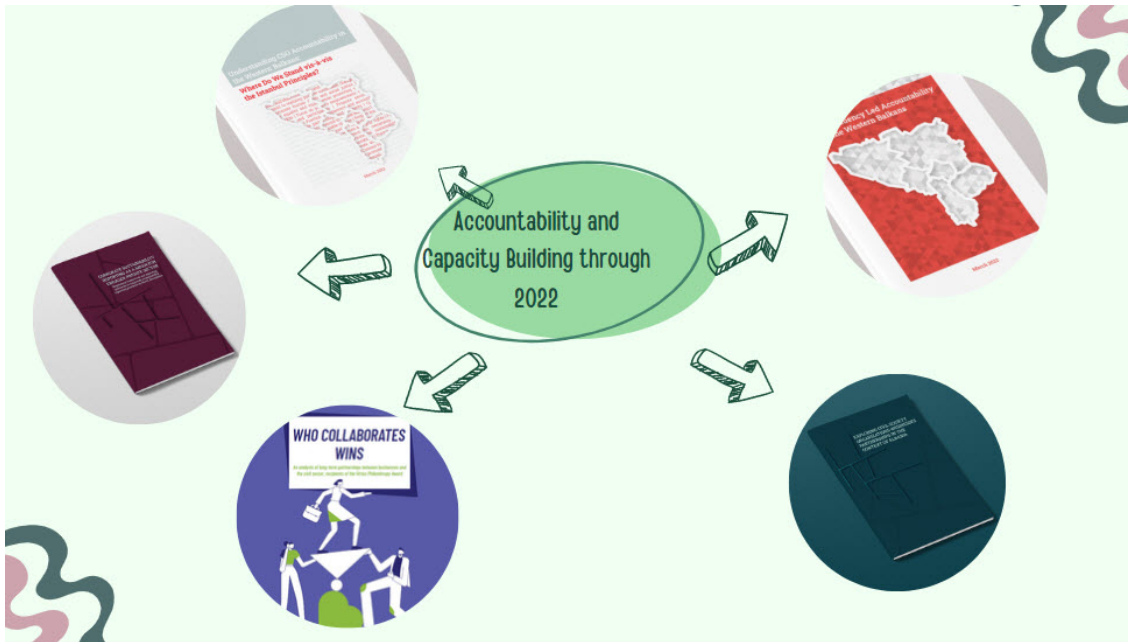
- 1) WBT Civil Society in the New Geopolitical Reality: A Crisis as an Opportunity for Restoring EU Enlargement Credibility?
- 2) Guidelines for EU Support to Civil Society in Enlargement Countries – A Key Document Still Missing?
- 3) BCSDN Reaction to the DG NEAR Consultations on the IPA CSF Regional Call
- 4) BCSDN Position on the EC Consultation on a European Statute for NPOs and Single Market for Associations

PROMOTING ACCOUNTABILITY AND STRENGTHENING CSOS CAPACITIES

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efforts to kick-start a more effective regional exchange of practices that will lead towards a more accountable civil sector in the region, we launched the [Regional Accountability Community of Practice](#), as a space for sharing experiences on a regional level, enabling continuous learning, improving our work, and advancing our accountability understanding and practices. As background, we also conducted and published two research documents on CSOs' understanding and practicing of accountability in the region.

We celebrated the [Global Accountability Week 2022](#) and organized a regional event reflecting on the recent success and challenges of Donors- CSOs' relations in building a more accountable, resilient, and effective civil society in the Western Balkan region. Another endeavor and a novelty to the work of BCSDN is that we have started paving the path towards more effective [cooperation between the private sector and civil society](#), by supporting more in-depth research of the state of this cooperation in the region and providing spaces for discussion among different stakeholders.



- [BCSDN Exploring Constituent Led Accountability in the Western Balkans](#)

- [Understanding CSO Accountability in the Western Balkans: Where Do We Stand vis-à-vis the Istanbul Principles?](#)

- [Three New Resources on CSO – Private Sector Engagement](#)

CONTRIBUTING TO REGIONAL AND GLOBAL INITIATIVES

During 2022 we continued our effective engagement and collaboration with international networks and initiatives, including [CIVICUS](#) (through the Monitor, AGNA, and the Vuka! Coalition), the [CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness](#), and the [Global Standard for CSO Accountability](#). These collaborations provided many opportunities for advocacy and strengthening the network's capacities and expertise. Among other, we took part in the 2022 Effective Development Co-operation Summit in Geneva, where our ED Biljana Spasovska discussed the principles of effective multilateral support, and the [Innovation for Change Network \(I4C\)](#) interregional event under the theme "Brave Spaces for Collective Action" where we represented the Western Balkan region in a global gathering aimed at exploring innovative ways to combat restrictions on civic space. We have made the most out of the opportunities to **use and create advocacy venues** out of the events at the regional and European level, by sharing our experience from the work of the Monitoring Matrix and discussing the importance of an enabling environment for civil society actors. To this end, we participated in the 15th edition of the [Black Sea NGO Forum](#) in Bucharest, the [EESC Civil Society High-Level Conference on Youth Policy](#) in the Western Balkans, the 4th [Public Participation and Deliberative Democracy Festival in Brussels](#), and the

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