

CITIZENS FOR CHANGE

JULY - SEPTEMBER 2019 // CIVICAMOBILITAS.MK

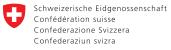
NEWSLETTER NR.2











Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC



CIVIC ACTIVISM BEARS FRUIT

"Persistence pays off despite all denials, threats, physical and verbal attacks, inspection tortures of the government that neither wanted to speak nor solve the problem with the unsafe water in Gevgelija"-this is part of the Facebook post of the civic initiative "Arsena" from Gevgelija. At the very beginning, they start the post with the words: Six years of tireless civic activism that has born fruit and in this way they marked the end of a big battle for the citizens, a battle in which the people from Gevgelija received clean and healthy drinking water which, as the mayor Pockov says "has no arsenic, only H2O runs in the faucets at home".

Civica Mobilitas has supported the tireless activists of Arsena, who made as many as 10 analyses of the water in an international licensed laboratory to convince the local government to undertake steps towards solving the problem. The results showed as much as 177% more arsenic than the maximum allowed limit, according to the World Health Organisation. Apart from the authorities, the Arsena activists also informed the citizens, educated them and then together with the organised various activities to make pressure to build a new well water supply system. And they succeeded!

This is a shiny example of civic activism or engagement. And luckily, it is not the only one. For example, "Na Tochak". When they gathered for the first time in the spring of 2012, there was very little talk and even less action to raise awareness about the bike as a means of urban transport. Raising it to the level of an equal participant in the Skopje's traffic, they would agree, was just a nice thought. Today, after seven years of activism and #81 Critical Mass in Skopje only, thousands of people have personal awareness about urban cycling. Not only in Skopje, but also in other cities in the country. Skopje has more than 80 km of bike lanes, in the city and by the river, and the local authorities work on reconstructing and building new ones that would connect the whole city. There is still a lot to be done, as the "Na Tochak"

enthusiasts would say, but they managed to attract the attention both of the previous and current local government about this issue. Their proposals are well thought through and every government that has a vision for the future and anticipates the trends will consider them.

In the end, if these two stories are summarised, if questions are asked, who has contributed to clean water, who has started an initiative to lobby for new biking trails in the capital? The only possible answer is the citizens via their civic engagement. The engagement means work, but such work that would make changes in the life of a community, such as the citizens of Gevgelija or the community of bikers and thanks to them all participants in traffic.

For such a change it is necessary to include knowledge and skills, values and motivation, such as the activists of Arsena and Na Tochak.

Building and protection of democracy do not only mean the adoption of laws and conducting elections, but it also involves all other segments of living in a society, which makes the society healthy.

ACTIVE CITIZENS solve problems:

ACTIVE CITIZENS choose better leaders and stimulate better leadership;

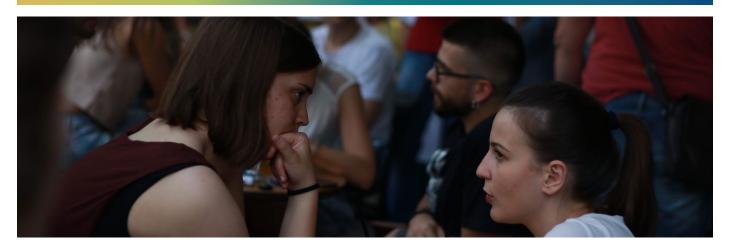
ACTIVE CITIZENS do not tell the politicians "tell us what you think we want to hear", but "tell us the truth and we will help you do your job better".

Welcome to the new issue of Civica Mobilitas' Citizens for Change, the cover theme of which is civic activism.

Gonce Jakovlevska Civica Mobilitas National Coordinator for ICO



"Youth in Action" Raised the Awareness about Trafficking of Human Beings with More than 11 Campaigns



Open Gate has been active for more than 20 years, providing help, support and protection of the victims of human trafficking. More than 1,000 young people, on annual level are directly involved in the prevention activities, and around 500 professionals are part of the activities for capacity strengthening of professionals. So far, they have supported more than 200 victims of trafficking and around 5,000 callers at the SOS phone line were given information, advice and support.

The organisation invests in upgrading the skills and knowledge of the young people, strengthening their self-confidence and practical skills, expanding their views, creating ideas and implementing them, it motivates them to pass the most important message and contribute in changes in their communities.

This year's campaign "Youth in Action" and the support to youth activism which is done by Open Gate was the occasion for the conversation with Stojne A. Dimishkovska, program manager in this organisation and Dimitar Vrglevski from Prilep who was one of the participants in the youth campaigns.



CC: For those who hear for the first time, could you explain what youth campaign is and what is its goal? Who can participate and how?

SD: One of the activities that we undertake for prevention and education of young people on human trafficking is youth campaigns. These are activities from the youth for the youth. Via this approach we have introduced a new youth model of learning by experience which is innovative, creative and first of all acceptable for the young population. By conducting the campaigns the capacities of the youth are strengthened, but at the same time their faith that they can and know how to contribute to the social life and make positive changes among their peers. The movement #Youthinaction is open to everybody who wants to be involved in the fight against human trafficking. The selection is made via a public call in which young people should briefly present their ideas on contributing to prevention.

CC: The youth campaigns that you supported at the beginning of the year were implemented in the course of this spring. Tell us something more on these projects.

SD: The initiative #Youthinaction included 11 youth local campaigns with a common mission "Together against Human Trafficking". Each media campaign was unique in its character, created by the youth but also fully implemented by them. The message was sent to more than 100,000 citizens.

The final products are the documentary "Open Your Eyes", the theatre play "On Your Own Skin", literary and art works, multimedia exhibition of a social incubator, workshops, a scout camp, guerrilla actions, a mobile application, etc. All multimedia products prepared in these campaigns are accessible at www.lastrada.org.mk and the Facebook group Заедно против трговија со луѓе ("Together against Human Trafficking").

CC: How do young people react to human trafficking? Why are they your spokespersons but at the same time your target audience?

SD: Young people are under the highest risk from this phenomenon. According to the statistics, most of the victims identified in the country are aged 12-16, and the information that they have is at a very low level.

Young people have always been leaders of the most influential movements, starting from the fight for the rights of the textile workers to one of the biggest movements on climate changes that is taking place now. Young people have huge potential and energy which, if properly channelled, can yield excellent results. They are creative, innovative, and they can always introduce new approach in their work.

DIMITAR VRGLEVSKI - Youth campaigns participant



CC: Where did the motivation to become involved in the fight against human trafficking come from?

DV: As a society, we feel too safe, we do not try at all to be informed, and this makes us easy targets. I live in Prilep, a nice town, where the citizens are quite passive and unaware about the threats of the human trafficking. When I saw the call for youth actions, I felt an obligation to do something because it was important for me in what environment I live. If I had the chance to contribute to building a strong environment, I would use it without hesitation.

CC: What is your experience from the implementation of the campaign? What were the biggest challenges that your team faced?

DV: In the process of campaign implementation there were no big obstacles. What I was personally bothered by and what I saw as a challenge was the immaturity of the young people. The lack of seriousness that they had for human trafficking was at times such that they did not consider this a threat at all. However, I am aware that this is not their fault, but that it is rather the non-functional educational system, but it is a separate topic.

CC: How did you overcome this apathy and how did you motivate your fellow citizens to get involved in the campaign?

DV: Attracting the attention of passive people is not easy. We thought that if we reached to their emotions, we would have the best effect; thus, we attracted their attention via social experiments which were comical in the beginning, and we also included young people as the faces of the campaign.

When we presented the local youth as victims of human trafficking via photo and video materials, the audience started to see the problem in a different way. The degree of compassion grew, and also did the interest of the people to hear something more about human trafficking.

CC: According to you, why is it important for the people to get engaged in their community and do you think that it will result in resolving a specific problem?

DV: No problem has been solved by an individual (at least not in democratic environments). My personal view is that if we criticize and speak about a problem, we also have to do something about it, in a way. One should not be afraid of joining and the people should be aware about the need of their involvement in the social events. It will not always be easy and simple.

However, we are the environment in which we live, we make the society as it is with our actions. In the end of the day, we should assume the responsibility for the situation in which we are.

If you want more information on the work of Open Gate, you can call the free SOS line at 0800 11111 every working day from 8:00 to 20:00 hrs. Open Gate - La Strada was institutional grantee in the first phase of Civica Mobilitas



Guerrilla Actions of Poinaku Initiative

The independent members of the municipal council of Bitola, Gabriela Ilievska and Ivan Chulakoski, from the independent initiative "Poinaku"("In a Different Manner"), together with their supporters, showed up at the red carpet at the opening of "Manaki Brothers" festival wearing T-shirts with "Tell the Clouds that Bitola Is Dying" written on them.

"Our message is that Bitola is dying waiting for better times with the pollution and changes for the better in all areas. We want to send the message that the city is forgotten. On a daily basis we face people moving out, getting sick. It has been forgotten all over North Macedonia and we wanted to remind that it exists. Our goal is not to boycott the festival, on the contrary, it has to exist; however, we wanted to show the public that Bitola lives only for that one week while "Manaki Brothers' lasts", said Gabriela Ilievska for sakamdakazam.mk.

"Poinaku" is a civil association that ran independently at the last elections and won two seats in the municipal council, which happened for the first time in a municipality with more than 40,000 citizens. Their mission is to solve the local problems and directly involve the citizens in the decisions that are made by the elected politicians.

The association has undertaken several independent initiatives such as placing 50 holders for garbage bags at city streets, which were removed by "Komunalec" municipal

enterprise because collecting garbage outside the marked spots was against the Law on Public Hygiene and the Decision for Maintaining the Public Hygiene at Public Areas in Bitola.

Some of their other activities for cleaner Bitola are the initiatives for cleaning the auxiliary facilities at "Officers' House" (Oficerski Dom), cleaning "Bela Cheshma" lot and removal of posters and cleaning the bus stops in Bitola.

(photo: SDK)



"We Have Found the Real way to Reach Young People at Festivals"

"This year's participation of HOPS at D-Festival was way beyond all previous ones", says Biljana Madzar from HOPS and her opinion is shared by her colleagues from the organization who were part of the activities from 12-14 July in Dojran.

Both Biljana and her colleagues Blagorodna Koceva-Simjanov stress that in the previous two years HOPS had looked for a way to come closer to young people also led by its mission to inform and education them on drug abuse and overcoming its harmful effects.



This year HOPS offered a number of educational events under the title "Drugs and Music Festivals". The events consisted or: discussions with a psychologist, information of overcoming the harmful effects of drug combining, creative works on (re)use your mind, psychiatrist's address on "Cannabis as a Potential for Anxiety Treatment", conversation with a lawyer on one's rights when encountering the police, etc.

"The interest of young people to talk to a psychologist took us by surprise", says Biljana. "They did not mind standing in front of the tent and waiting as long as an hour to enter and talk. These are the new generations who are obviously more open to this kind of activities", she added. In two days, 30-40 young people talked to the psychologist, on an individual or group basis. In the beginning they filled in a questionnaire and then they talked to an expert.

"When we put up the board that had a table with drugs and their combinations, young people showed their interest from a distance", says Blagorodna. "In the beginning they would make a photo from a distance, and as the time

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passed, they started to come closer to better see the information and in the end they relaxed and talked about it. She says that these contacts with young people are especially useful for them and they also collect information that are later helpful in adjusting their approach.

The creative team helped the participants to creatively express themselves by producing masks and other hand-crafts for which they had used plastic bottles and other kind of waste from the festival.

"We think that we have found the real way to reach young people at festivals, include them in educational and informative talks and help reduce the harmful effects caused by drugs", says Biljana.

The participation of HOPS at D-Festival was part of the project "Creative Action for Social Change: Civic Engagement of People at Social Risk", which is financially supported by Civica Mobilitas - Action grant.

Environmental Action - White is Clean and Healthy



Twenty volunteers of the Centre for Sustainable Community Development from Debar (CSCD), 10 young people from the town of Ifs from France who were the guests of the association and more than 30 citizens of Debar, young people, shop owners and residents of the surrounding buildings of "8 September" street took part in the environmental action of the association to disinfect the trees in the centre of the town by whitewashing them and spraying them with insecticide which was organised on 24 July 2019.

"The main goal of the action was raise the public awareness of the citizens of Debar to preserve the young trees at the main street in the city, as well as their biological and atmospheric protection", said Shium Marku, programme manager at CSCD Debar.

The participants at the action disinfected and whitewashed more than 300 trees. Besides the visual effect, whitewashing also protects from the sun and disinfects the bark of the tree.

The action is part of the "Together for Clean Debar" action which is supported by Civica Mobilitas - Action grant.

I Move the Change, I Read "Lice v Lice"

"Lice v Lice", the only street magazine in the country, marked its seventh birthday during the Civica Mobilitas festival "Day of Civil Society Organizations" under the motto: "I Move the Change, I Read ,Lice v Lice". The birthday celebration was a possibility to promote the 37th issue dedicated to climate changes and environment.

"Lice v Lice" has remained dedicated to its cause seven years later: sustainable development, empowering the vulnerable, informed citizens, citizens in action.

"With so much energy are there any chances of us not to succeed in changing the social narrative that pulls us down? I think that we all know the answer. The citizen can, and we are all trying to show that", said Klimentina Ilijevski, the Executive Director of Public in her speech.

This magazine has been a pioneer in social entrepreneurships in the country which contributes to social and work reintegration of vulnerable categories via social contact, respect of the rules and obtaining habits for structured life style which enables the disadvantaged persons to be prepared for the open labour market.

The magazine sellers, or as they are called, "social change promoters" are disadvantaged persons - young people on the street older than 16, homeless persons, people with special needs, social welfare recipients, former drug and alcohol users, former convicts.

The sellers of the magazine keep 50% of the amount of each sold copy (whose price is 100 denars), and the remaining half is used to build a system for their support and print a new issue of the magazine.



LGBTI Activism Is Crucial for Increased Visibility of the LGBTI Community's Problems



The last Saturday of June this year, the National Network for Fighting against Homophobia and Transphobia organised the first Pride Parade "Skopje Pride", whose goal was to attract public attention to LGBTI people, i.e. to inequality, stigma, non-acceptance and violence that they faced. The Parade started at "Zhena borec" park and the participants moved to the City Park where they stayed for a couple of hours after the short addresses. The event passed without incidents. "Skopje Pride" was the occasion to talk to Irena Cvetkovikj, the Executive Director of "Margini" coalition, a member of the National Network.

CC: As a long time fighter for the rights of the LGBTI persons, are you satisfied with how the Pride Parade in Skopje took place? With the number of supporters who went out on the streets? With the reactions that it caused? With the media coverage?

IC: I think that the pleasure with the first Pride Parade in Skopje is shared by all of those who support the fight for LGBTI rights. I am personally very satisfied with the organization and the holding of this march. What makes me especially happy was the non-imposing presence of the police, which in some countries in the region can even be bigger than the pride itself. Moreover, the emotions and the energy that was shared by all the people present, the greetings and support by the passers-by, etc. Finally, the biggest pleasure was the fact that we had a huge presence of LGBTI persons at the first Pride, which were even seriously more than the number of the supporters.

Although the figures are not always the most important, it is worth mentioning that our expectations and desires were to reach a figure of 500 people. You can imagine our positive surprise when around 2,000 people arrived at the Pride. I think that the massive attendance is due to the fact that the first Pride took place at the right time, spontaneously and logically. Of course, the reactions are different and there are people who think that it is never the right

time for a Pride, but it is quite to be expected and normal in democratic societies. We are proud and happy because of the huge support and positive reactions of a significant part of our society.

Finally, I would like to thank the media who were up to the task and reported on the pride correctly. There was a lot of hate speech, but on the social media, and not within the media contents. Maybe it is the hate speech that motivated part of the people to come and support us, and we managed to bring out the best event out of the worst.

TRADITIONAL VALUES MARCH

Part of the citizens expressed their disagreement with Skopje Pride by participating in the civil-religious gathering that took place on the same day as the Pride. The motive of the organisers, the "Alliance for Life" initiative was to stress "the real traditional family values and way of living". The mach started in front of the Holy Mother of God church and ended in front of the main Orthodox church St. Clement of Ohrid.

Part of the messages of the organisers were intended for the decision makers, both the current and the future ones. They think that most of the believers do not agree with redefining marriage and family. "Sex and gender are biology, not ideology", "Traditional family is always in", were part of the mottoes of the march participants.

The march was supported by Edinstvena Makedonija party.

CC: The Pride Parade coincided with the 50the anniversary of the "Stonewall Protest". Are we so late in the fight for LGBTI rights?

IC: The first Pride in Skopje was consciously organised on the date that marks the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall protests. **CONTINUE READING** →

There were two key reasons for this: 1. To mark this for us exceptionally important historical event, and 2. To show that we are exactly half a century late in our fight for human rights. We are aware that we live in a conservative and traditional society, but we are also aware that our people more and more understand the power of social emancipation and the power of progress. In other words, we might be 50 years late, but at least we move forward instead of standing in the same spot.

CC: According to you, to what extent has activism contributed to the visibility of the LGBTI problems?

IC: Activism, and especially LGBTI activism has a key role in the visibility of the LGBTI problems. Unfortunately, in this respect the academia, the intellectuals, the cultural, educational and even media workers lag behind. What makes us happy is that there are more and more young people who want to be engaged in activism with the belief that they can be the carriers of changes that they desire.

CC: Can activism contribute to overcoming other problems, regardless whether they are related to marginalized groups or the society as a whole? **IC:** I absolutely believe in the interconnection of the activist ideas and values, i.e. every movement, no matter how focused it is on a specific group of people or theme, also contributes to the democratisation of the society as a whole. The last years we often hear the syntagm "One Society for All". That one society for all is only possible if we all together, each one of us in his/her own field fights and invests oneself in a cause which is good and beneficial for all of us.

IRENA CVETKOVIKJ



20th Year of the Red Cross in Action - Promoting Humane Values CKA-PHV

This year, the CKA-PHV programme included 1,091 young people from all over the country in 150 small projects. The participants were aged 13-17, and sometimes even younger.

Young people collected money for treatment of a child with cerebral paralysis, helped with the financial independence of a person that used to be on social welfare, they contributed to the feeling of equality among the children and youth at the Day Care Centre for Children and Youth with Special Needs in Veles.

They also helped granny Cava from Chashka (the shortest woman in the country) by providing a boiler for her and helping her with the renovation of her house. They also helped an eleven member family by providing them with food, clothes, hygiene items and home utensils.

The most numerous, most successful and best ranked were the six projects that were made by 40 young volunteers of the Red Cross from Ohrid that helped more than 100 people from vulnerable categories of citizens.



Skopje Joined the Global Week for Future

Skopje is part of the global wave of climate awakening! With wonderful energy and in the biggest number so far, with the support of "O2 Initiative", "Don't Be Garbage", "Clean Air Movement", "Skopje Smog Alarm" and "I Love Vodno", "Fridays for Future marked the beginning of the "Week for Future" on 20 September, by sticking their demands in front of the Government entrance.

"Proclaiming a climate state of urgency at national level; activating a special national body -commission for fighting climate changes; closing the existing coal power planes and switching to 80% renewable energy sources by 2030 and 100% by 2050; plan to decrease the usage of cars, together with a complete renovation and expanding the capacities of the public transport; introducing climate issues into the formal education", were only part of the demands of this initiative.

"The complete climate revolution starts with each one of us. We keep on saying: 'What can I change as an individual?!' You can absolutely change - a lot! Activism is a very important thing. Somehow more young people should be included, because many of us, when we are in high school, do not seem to be interested in what is going on in the world. And that is not OK. It is a fact that we have an alarming situation, and something has to be done for a visible change. For example... you don't have to become a vegan, although it is great, but it is good to know where the food that you buy in the supermarket comes from", said Edi Frcovski, a biology student at the Faculty of Natural Sciences.

The event was poorly covered by the media, although hundreds of people participated, including well-known environmental associations.

On 21 September, "Fridays for Future" participated in the bike ride through Skopje, organised by Eko Svest and #Na-Tochak, while the next day they supported the event "Welcoming the Tram Called Desire for Clear Air" organised by "We Are Karposh 4" and "Eko Karposh 3 2 1", as part of the project "Eko-remet" (Eco Disturbance).

On 25 September, there was a panel discussion with the participation of three of the biggest experts on climate changes in the country: prof. Risto Ciconkov, Ph.D., author of the first report (2002) on climate changes for North Macedonia; prof. Natasha Markovska, Ph.D., representative of North Macedonia in the International Panel on Climate Changes (IPCC); as well as Simona Getova, MA, an alumni of the Central European University in Budapest in the area of environment management and policies.

On 26 September there was a workshop held on "Empowerment and Glocal Action" organised by Young Friends of the Earth - Macedonia, and the week ended with another Friday protest which had started at the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning.

In the meantime, Tatjana Chakulev, an activist in "O2 Initiative" environmental organization, stressed in her interview for Skopsko Eho that the measures planned for this year had been either removed from the Programme which was changed at the end of August, or they were in the tendering phase and there was a single public procurement, without a signed contract. None of the measures was implemented and completed, although it was supposed to happen before the beginning of the winter season.





FROM CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Particised Management Structures in the Public Enterprises

The Center for Civil Communications (CCC) has published their research Law or Politics: Selection of Management and Supervisory Board Members at State-Owned Enterprises.

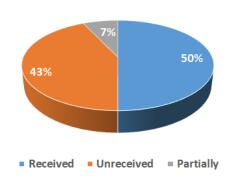
The findings show that the government and the local self-government units do not have an official document that regulates the process for selection of members to governing bodies at public enterprises established by them. In the capacity of founding entities, they do not announce open calls for selection of members to governing bodies at state-owned enterprises, do not verify qualifications of potential candidates, and do not conduct interviews with potential members.

This non-transparent process raises justified concerns that the lists for appointing members of the management and supervisory broads of the state-owned enterprises are made outside the institutions, i.e. in the party circles.

"Based on the biographies, we concluded that the management board members include a jewellery shop owner, a petrol station manager, many people who are municipal employees, school secretaries, managers at other stateowned enterprises, state administration employees, etc. When it comes to the supervisory boards that should control the financial work of the state-owned enterprises, we concluded that only one third of them have any relevant experience in the area of finances to be able to follow the material and financial work of the state-owned enterprise," says Sabina Fakikj from CCC.

CCC recommends that a bylaw is adopted to precisely define the manner of selection of members of management and supervisory boards. They will use all mechanisms to try and reach to those in charge to have their initiative adopted.

Received responses for the CVs of the memebers of MB and SB



Zelena Lupa and OZ Strumica Bring Probation Law to Life

As many as 83% of the people surveyed, who are prisoners at the Strumica penitentiary do not know what probation is, and the percentage of those who do not now of a conditional release with a protecting supervision is the same, as it can be seen in the research of the associations Зелена лупа and Организација на жени — Струмица (Organization of Women - Strumica), published at the beginning of July this year.

Although the Law on Probation was adopted at the end of 2016, its implementation still goes very slowly. The public is not sufficiently informed, and according to the survey results of these two organizations, those who are directly affected by it are also not informed.

WHAT IS PROBATION?

Probation is a "conditional release" which is a subject of supervision over the person who has committed a crime. The goal of the Law on Probation is "protection of the community from crime and re-socialization and reintegration of the persons that are subject of probation activities" (Article 2). The alternative measures that can be issued as part of this law are conditional verdict with protected supervision, house arrest and socially beneficial work. Apart from the re-socialization and re-integration of the convicted persons, the state will also have a financial benefit from these measures. According to Jasmin Kalach, MA, "one day in prison costs our state 950 denars, and one day of probation only 50 denars" (http://respublica.edu.mk/blog/2019-05-13-08-37-21).

According to the survey results, 96% of the people asked are motivated for re-socialization and reintegration in the society after the end of the sentence and they do not know that there are special measures that are given by the Employment Agency for their employment after the end of the sentence.

The two CSOs, as part of the activities of the project "Activating the Law on Probation at Local Level via Effective Partnerships in the Municipality of Strumica", supported by Civica Mobilitas, organized an informative workshop for the convicted persons where they informed them about the possibilities offered by the Employment Agency, resulting from the Law and about the project and its activities that concern active involvement of the convicts themselves.

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The responses indicate that 77% of them are prepared to learn trade/skills for working with concrete, concrete tiles and other concrete elements. Almost all of them (93%) are certain that they would not commit another crime if they have a job after the end of their sentence, having acquired some trade. This is the basic idea of Zelena Lupa and the Organization of Women -Strumica project, which apart from informing and raising awareness on the probation measures to all stakeholders, will prepare 30 convicted persons for the labour market which will contribute for them to fulfil the criteria for the alternative measure of conditional release.

Zelena Lupa and the Organization of Women-Strumica have an intensive cooperation with the municipality in the implementation of this project, as well as the Strumica prison, Centre for Social Work, probation officer, Employment Agency and the business community.



More than 60% of the Citizens Thinks that the environmental Issues Should be Resolved by the Municipalities

On 18 September 2019, the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia organised an Open Day for Consultations with the Civil Sector on the Programmes for Air Pollution Decreasing. CSOs have contributed via their initiatives for implementing measures for fighting air pollution which pertained to proposals for identification of industrial polluters by increasing the inspections, as well as activities and measures for energy efficiency and specific measures for fighting the so called energy poverty.

Ana Cholovikj-Leshoska, from "Eko-Svest" association indicated the results of the most recent public opinion survey focusing on the air pollution and waste management, as two pressing issues. According to it, almost 60% of the participants thought that the main competences in the area of polluted air management were with the municipalities. The survey result that states that more than 50% of those asked did not know that measures in this field are undertaken or think that they are not good is discouraging.

It is positive that more than 75% of those asked stated that they would make a change in their lives, i.e. they would take a low interest loan, they would implement measures if the financial assistance is complete or they would implement a measure if they have a one-time partial financial aid.

"In the civil sector we said that much more should be done in Bitola as assuming responsibility. So far it could really have been transformed into a green city and more could have been invested into establishing the public transport", concluded Cholovikj-Leshoska, mentioning the work of REK Bitola as the main reason that the people from Bitola feel the consequences of the air pollution the most.

The Deputy Minister of Environment and Spatial Planning Jani Makraduli presented the draft measures for involvement in activities, such as: establishing a health-environmental informative system for following the effects of the air pollution and promotion of the system for monitoring the type of pollutants, dislocation of the illegal settlements in Skopje, replacement of the heating systems in health institutions in the most polluted cities and adjustment of the old buses and construction machines that pollute with installing special systems for harmful emission reduction.

He also announced the legislation on replacement of wood stoves within individual households with air conditioners – inverters (renewable source according to EU standards) which would receive 100% subsidies.



Only 11% of the Total Energy Production Comes from Renewable Sources

Earliest at the end of the next year or the beginning of 2021, the citizens of Skopje can expect that gas will reach them, says Bajram Rexhepi, the director of the Macedonian Energy Resources (MER), answering a question by a journalist at the panel discussion "Renewable Energy Sources and Energy Efficiency for Better Environment", organised by the Institute for Communication Studies (ICS) on 24 September this year.

According to Petre Shilegov, the mayor of Skopje, the secondary network was finished last year and now the last phase should start; after the end of this phase, the gas will become accessible for the households. At the panel discussion, Shilegov stressed that part of the production and industrial capacities have been transferred to gas, as well as all heating production plants.

The citizens of Gjorche Petrov, Radishani, Butel, Gazi Baba and Drachevo should be the first ones to obtain natural gas in their homes. The misunderstandings between the central and local government that concerns the different concepts on who should connect the households to natural

gas are of no benefit to anybody. This is especially true if this prolonging of the solution also implies prolonging of bringing the gas to the households.

Besides gasification that would significantly decrease the pollution, the Minister of Economy Kushtrim Bekteshi said that there had already been measures undertaken for bigger energy efficiency, such as building solar collectors, replacements of wooden with aluminium windows, purchase of stoves on pellets, etc. The experts asked that all alternatives of renewable energy sources are used.

The amount of electricity produced by renewable energy sources is only 11% of the total energy production, says the second biannual report on the climate changes in North Macedonia. As much as 80% of the needs for electrical energy are mainly met by using coal which contributes to harmful influence on climate changes.

The panel discussion is part of the ICS "Don't Ignore! React!" campaign for better environment.



COOPERATION

Monitoring the State Commission for Prevention from Corruption

The Platform of Civil Society Organisations for Fight against Corruption held a press conference on the start of the project "Monitoring the Success of the Work of the State Commission for Prevention from Corruption".

The methodology for monitoring the accountability of the institutions affected by the decisions of the State Commission for Prevention from Corruption (DKSK) was presented at the conference, whose goal is to check the quality of the actions following DKSK recommendations, thus improving the work of the individual institutions.

Marko Troshanovski, President of the Institute for Democracy - Societas Civilis Skopje (IDSCS) stressed that this project aims at creation of a collective immunity of the institutions in the fight against corruption, i.e. to prevent the phenomenon instead of curing it.

"By putting public pressure on the institutions that DKSK recommended to act following findings for corruption, on our side as a civil society we hope that the institutions will finally start to do their work and it will become part of their capacity and practice. We will also focus on continuing the communication between DKSK and the Platform, and the topic will be the National Strategy for Fight against Corruption where the parliament should have an important role when it comes to supervision", he said.

Misha Popovikj, senior researcher at IDSCS presented the monitoring methodology where it is defined which areas have the highest priority in the fight against corruption. "The criterion was not only how frequently corruption happens in some areas, but also what impact the corruption has on the big picture.

As in illustration, in some area maybe there are 1,000 bribes per year, but together they can cause smaller damage for the society than a corrupt change of an urban plan which contributes to pollution. This is the approach that we need to see on the side of DKSK", says Popovikj.



Human Rights in the Business Sector on Paper Only



Around eighty representatives of the chambers of commerce, companies, CSOs and international experts concluded that the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGP) in the policies and work of businesses largely depends on the creation of stimulating conditions on the side of the state and the efforts of the businesses and their organisations. The Minister of Labour and Social Policy Mila Carovska and a senior representative of the European Union Delegation in the Republic of North Macedonia, Virve Vimpari spoke about the dedication of the country to human rights and their relation to the EU integration.

In her address, Nikica Kusinikova, the Executive Director of Konekt association said that the new chapter in the way in which the companies around the world do their business had started in 2011 when the United Nations adopted the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

"While previously the state had the primary role in respecting human rights, now it is generally accepted that the companies have equal responsibility to respect them in all segments of their work, starting from the employees, consumers, chains of supply, community in which they work. In our country, the framework for the business and human rights is not known and via this initiative we want our companies, institutions and other stakeholders to be involved in the global trends", said the Nikica from Konekt, an organisation that has been working on stimulating social responsibility for a long time.

There was an open discussion about the implementation of UNGP in the public policies of the state and the internal policies of the companies. Besides this, the findings of the research "Respect of Human Rights in the Business Sector" were shared; according to this, the companies more declaratively stand for human rights within the scope set in the legislation. The number of companies, that have attempted to integrate UNGP in their internal policies and conduct previous check on human rights is, however, small. In practice, there are relatively few companies that use an essential approach to human rights protection. Only 28.8% of the included companies make a risk assessment related to human rights, and 13.6% than undertake some planned approach in this direction.

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Improved civil society environment for the first time in six years

More than 80 CSO representatives met on 9 July 2019, to discuss the 2018 Report on Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development in North Macedonia.

"The fact that Switzerland is continuing to support civil society speaks for itself about our dedication to create a stable environment for civil society, but it is even more important that the government and other institutions work in that direction as well"- said Ambassador Sybille Suter Tejada. She added that these positive signs speak about a changed philosophy within the state institutions and that she feels optimistic about the civil society future beyond the Swiss support.

The environment for the civil society in 2018 was significantly improved. The positive data is very important since after six years of monitoring, this is the first report with registered accomplishment contributing towards civil society support and development", said Simona Ognenovska, one of the authors of the Report.

According to the Report, the basic legal freedoms are legally guaranteed and respected in practice. In this area, the most notable development was closing the inspections for 22 CSOs, which started at the end of 2016. The area of Framework for CSO financial viability and sustainability was partially improved, and the key changes occurred in the Profit Tax Law, where the CSOs are no longer subjects of the Law.

The most significant improvements were detected in the area of CSO-state relationships. Those include the establishment and effective functioning of the Council for

Cooperation of the Government with CSOs, as well as the implementation of the Strategy for Cooperation with and Development of Civil Society 2018-2020.

One of the speakers in the panel was Gordana Gapik Dimitrovska, state counselor in the Ministry of Information Society and Administration, and co-chairman of the Council for Cooperation. She talked about CSO inclusion in the policy making, and she presented the results from the first Annual Report for Assessing the Consultations in 2018.

In addition, Biljana Spasovska from Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN) shared the regional experiences regarding the shrinking space that CSOs on the Balkan are facing. She mentioned the negative campaigning against CSOs, activists and journalists, as well as the civil society resistance like some kind of counterbalance to the situation.

The recommendations in the 2018 Report on Enabling Environment include necessary changes in the Criminal Code, which treats CSO representatives like official persons; putting the current Law on Lobbying out of force; as well as simplifying the registration procedures for projects exempt from VAT. Regarding the expectations in the area of direct state support, it is necessary to establish a Civil Society Development Fund; to provide co-financing for projects supported by foreign donors; to switch from the current practice of yearly funding to multi-annual organizational and project support; and to increase the transparency, efficiency and accountability in the process of distributing funds.





Day of the CSOs – An interactive get-to-know event in the heart of Skopje

The Civica Mobilitas Festival "Day of the CSOs" was held on the Skenderbeg Square and the Park Ibni Pajko on 14 September 2019.

"I sincerely hope that this event today will contribute towards stronger links and bigger trust towards CSOs", said H.E. Sybille Suter Tejada, the Ambassador of Switzerland in North Macedonia in her opening speech and add that the presence of citizens "in so big number is a clear sign that citizens realize more and more that CSOs are the best avenue to make their voice hard in the constant fight for their rights." Apart from the ambassador Suter Tejada, welcoming speeches had Ljubica Jancheva, President of the Council of the City of Skopje; Zahir Bekteshi, President of the Council of the Municipality of Chair; and Klimentina Ilijevski, Executive Director of the CSO Public.

The programme consisted of more than 80 parallel events, as well as performances by the Dance studio "Eat the Beat", fashion show by 15 students from Debar (Center for Sustainable Community Development – CSCD Debar), Goce SAF and Strajk.

The visitors had the opportunity to inform themselves about the civil organizations, their goals and achievements, as well as their chance to get involved in the activities of the day. The program was rich and diverse.

In the creative corner, Coalition "SEGA" organized a workshop on creating notepads from paper, so the youngsters went home with notepads in different shapes such as dragons, birds, smileys etc. "Creative Macedonia" held a quilling workshop where the participants learned how to create filigree art from paper. Also, "Artelj" had a pom-pom workshop for the youngest participants and they created keychains, hairpins, hairbands and animals only using wool. "Narodna Tehnika" showed the participants how to construct cars, planes, houses and trucks from paper.





The educational corner had a very diverse programme as well. "Biovita" from Kavadarci taught the participants the meaning of organic production, as well as the difference between organic, conventional and GMO production. The workshop was held by organic grape producers, wine producers from organic grapes, beekeepers etc. "Youth Can" held a quiz with more than 20 people answering on a variety of question on topics such as geography, food, sport and movies. The winners were awarded with books. Also, "SCOOP" showed their investigative video stories as a presentation.

In the youth corner, Geshtalt Centre Mladen Kostic "Aspekti" taught the participants in their training how to adapt during life changes. Similarly, "SOS Children's Village" had a training on how to cope with loss, through a symbolic game with laces. "Multikultura" from Tetovo held a creative workshop with their quiz Vingo in which the participants were answering questions on civil society.

Apart from these, the CSOs in the park Ibni Pajko were organizing plenty of activities as well, ranging from quizzes, workshops on bicycle maintenance, handicrafts, games for young mountaineers, scout games, t-shirt exhibition, environmental monopoly, first aid, planting trees, HIV testing etc.

More than 1000 people attended the festival. For some of them this was a unique chance to interact with the CSOs, share their thoughts and ideas, and even to join some of the initiatives. For others that were coming from the civil sector it was a great chance for networking and finding potential partners. The participating organizations expressed their satisfaction because the event helped them increase their visibility and some of them even mobilized new members on the spot.





Promotion of 27 new Civica Mobilitas grantees

Civica Mobilitas promoted its new Action and Institutional grantees on 9th of July 2019 in hotel Arka in Skopje. The Ambassador of Switzerland, H.E. Sybille Suter Tejada, presented the grantees with their certificates.

She said that they are the core of the new phase of Civica Mobilitas because they are the main actors, they are shaping and contributing to the change of this society.

Twelve organizations were awarded with Action grants aimed at supporting CSOs that promote their causes and activities, with a total budget of almost 21 million denars. The planned activities will be implemented in the sectors of health and protection, democracy, people with disabilities, information and communication, environment, human rights, rule of law and gender issues.

During the Award Ceremony, 15 new Institutional Grants were promoted as well. Their total budget is over 66 million denars. These organizations are active in the areas of information, communication and media; human rights; civil society development; rule of law; anticorruption; LGB-TI; good governance; environment; and children, youth and students.

The awarded CSOs are from the Skopje, Vardar, Polog, East, Northeast and Southwest Region.





Weekend hiking on Solunska Glava



To celebrate the 1st anniversary of the marking of the Jakupica hiking trials and the summit Solunska Glava, which was supported by Civica Mobilitas' project "Establishment of a Mountain support and rescue team", HE Ambassador Sybil Suter Tejada visited the Mountaineering Association "Cheples" on July 20, 2019 and joined the mountaineers on its hike to Solunska Glava (2540 meters).

During the visit, the Ambassador learned about the challenges faced by local mountaineers in guaranteeing the safety of the alpinists, hikers and mountain bikers visiting Jakupica. The engagement of all of them are voluntary.

The situation on the hiking trials to Solunska Glava has already improved thanks to the Swiss financial support that was provided, through #Civica Mobilitas project for the Federation of Mountain Sports of North Macedonia as well. The Federation has prepared and adopted regulation for categorization, setting up and maintenance of trails, raising awareness of the public about importance of safe trials and trained staff for setting and maintaining trails.



Local Mentors for Civica Mobilitas Institutional Grantees selected

The participants that entered the final round of Civica Mobilitas' Mentoring for Organizational Development programme, that was facilitated by Ana Vasilache, have successfully completed the activities related to their knowledge and skills development. They are now capacitated to act as local mentors for the new generation of Civica Mobilitas Institutional Grantees.

Civica Mobilitas will hire Sunchica Sazdovska, Ljupka Simonovska – Schulz, Ivan Jovanov and Maja Smilevska to support the current generation of institutional grantees in the development of their Organisational Development Plans.

In addition to these mentors, Dragana Mitrovikj, Marina Gjorgjioska Kitanoska, Katerina Vasileska have also completed the mentoring programme.

The mentors are ready to transfer their knowledge and skills to the institutional grantees. They will also strengthen the feeling of ownership by the supported grantees over their own organisational development plans as these will be developed together with the mentors via a participative process.

The advantage of working with local mentors is that it enables Civica Mobilitas to organise more field visits and have

more direct meetings with the grantees. These are used to build stronger relationships with the grantees and tailor the organisational development plans to their specific needs.

The focus of the organisational development process is on strengthening the leadership of the mentored organisations, moving away from individual leadership towards collective leadership. The process will help the institutional grantees making organisational changes that are necessary to fulfil their vision, achieve their mission, and reach their goals more efficiently and effectively. The process is meant to empower the institutional grantees as individual organisations but also to strengthen them as a group that, working together as one, can have a much bigger influence on society than when each organisation would work just for itself.

Civica Mobilitas' Mentoring for Organisational Development is one of Civica Mobilitas' main learning instruments. The new mentoring approach builds on Civica Mobilitas' experience with mentoring during its previous phase (2014-2018) and the feedback it received from previous institutional grantees.



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CITIZENS FOR CHANGE

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