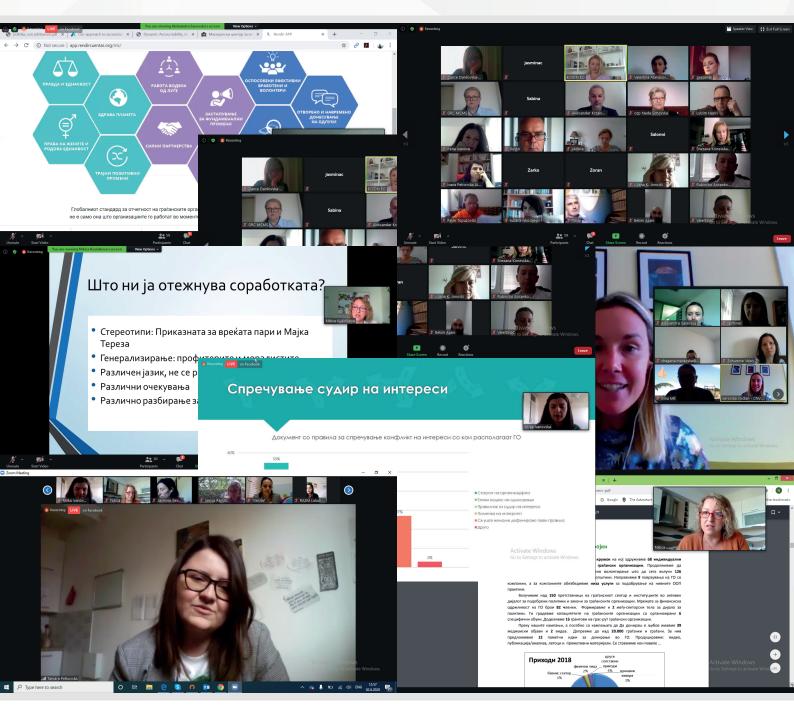


CITIZENS FOR CHANGE

MAY - AUGUST 2020 // CIVICAMOBILITAS.MK

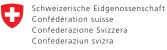
NEWSLETTER NR.5











Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC



LIVE OR ON LINE, AS LONG AS THINGS ARE MOVING

"Let this thing ease up a bit and we'll see each other" this was one of the regular lines in the previous months, usually at the end of the phone conversation. "This thing", i.e. Covid-19, has not eased up, but it rather brought us a strange summer. The state of emergency ended, some measures were cancelled, some citizens were relaxed and "the thing" took off; instead of a break between the first and second wave, it brought an "extended first wave" which, according to the figures, was even more intense that the time when we locked ourselves at home at 4 pm. The obsessive following of the press conferences of the Minister of Health also did not ease up: we rather replaced it with the question "How many of them today?", thinking of the numbers of the newly infected with Covid-19. The recommended trinity: masques, hand disinfection and social distance have become a regular practice for part of the people, and the "protocols" of the institutions an obligatory reading.

Many of the institutions have slowly returned to their regularly planned activities. The mutual coordination has intensified, the experiences of the previous months when we "had set the foundations" of on-line work were used and the activities were adjusted for the so-called new normalcy. Conferences, debates, trainings, meetings were transferee to ZOOM, Teams and other similar platforms. Something still had to take place and it was possible to have things "live", by respecting all measures of precaution and safety. Such were the CSO activities which responded to the challenge called Covid-19 by distributing food and hygiene products intended first of all for support to the socially vulnerable categories of citizens. They are the real heroes of this time.

Civica Mobilitas grantees were no exception to these trends. The ad hoc grants, intended for overcoming the extraordinary situation caused by Covid-19 enabled rapid response of the CSOs for their target groups. One Can, Romalitico, HOPS and One worked on mapping the needs, coordination and distribution of humanitarian aid to single parent families, Roma families, people who use drugs, sex workers, children who use drugs and their families, etc. The pandemics has intensified the need for psychosocial support, and Interactive and Wake Up have

implemented activities for access of the young and other citizens to this kind of support via digital tools. The crisis centre Nadez has worked with the women victims of domestic violence, which has intensified during the state of emergency, and Sumnal has worked with the students of fifth grade, helping them overcome the problems with distance learning. The activities of other grantees were also conducted by adjusting to the new conditions.

The results of the activities of Civica Mobilitas grantees and the CSOs in general are not measured only by tons of food, hygiene products or hours spent learning and discussing with, or encouraging the beneficiaries. They are measured by the satisfaction of the parents who have food for their children, the burden off their backs, the feeling that there was somebody who thought of them and helped them in these difficult times, by the gratitude of those who managed to escape the violence perpetrators and find some safe shelter, the new perspectives that have been open to the people and the self-confidence that they have obtained. Maybe we do not speak of this often, but we are proud that we have been part of the solutions to their problems regardless whether they have been related to Covid-19 or caused by something else.

In the fifth issue of Citizens for Change, you can find interesting contents on the campaign "Do Not Bet with Your Life" of the Association of Social Workers, the successful model of fundraising for houses for the poor by "Project Happiness" CSO, "Megjashi" research on the views of the parents on the organization of the classes in the new school year, the fight for clean air of the citizens of Gostivar and many other stories.

Have a pleasant reading!

Gonce Jakovlevska Civica Mobilitas National Coordinator for ICO



Saga of the State Support to CSOs in the Midst of Covid-19 Crisis Continues

The 9 April government decision to drastically decrease the financial support to CSOs with some EUR 525,000 caused a lot of public commotion. The decision implied that the government dismissed civil society as a relevant partner in dealing with the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In a joint reaction, 72 CSOs stated that the government's decision-making process had neither been transparent nor participatory: the government had not consulted civil society at all before it announced the changes. The 72 stressed that CSOs were, in fact, the first responders to the crisis and that had actively worked to alleviate the damage caused by the Corona crisis. CSOs helped the government reallocate part of the available funds to their initial purpose, but also allocated funds to dealing directly with the crisis.

The government responded to the CSOs on 5 June and issued its Decision on the Criteria and Procedure for the Division of Funds for Financing Program Activities of CSOs and Foundations for the Implementation of the Program for Funding the Program Activities of the CSOs and Foundations for Measures to Deal with Covid-19 Crisis. The government published a call for proposals on 6 June with a deadline on 11 June 2020. Although the deadline was short, the government received 549 applications, which it assessed within two days selecting 40 projects with a total value of MKD 29,519,495 (479.192 EUR). The grant selection committee consisted of five Government-appoined members and two members of the Council for cooperation with and development of the civil sector.

The short application deadlines of just 5 days, and especially the short time it took the government to allocate the grants were two of the main points of criticism by the CSOs. The government issued a press release stating that the alternative to working with short deadlines was not to provide financial assistance at all and for civil society to lose these funds all together.

Selected grantees

"Each of the evaluators has individually assessed all received applications in 36 hours. This means that each one of them reviewed an application in 4 minutes and 40 seconds, working non-stop for 36 hours without a single break", states the note of the National Youth Council of Macedonia. They are only one of more than 50 CSOs, which have reacted to the unprincipled treatment of the civil sector by the government.

CSOs were divided on this issue which caused disputes among them. The ones that were dissatisfied were not understood by the government. The activities continued as planned, i.e. on 19 June there were contracts signed with the grantees, based on which funds were disbursed on 1 July.

VMRO-DPMNE and the coalition "Renewal for Macedonia" stated that granting funds during the election campaign was actually a bribe and they complained to the State Commission for Corruption Prevention (DKSK). This compliant was accepted by DKSK but the Administrative Court annulled their decision and rejected the appeal as not grounded. "It is correct that the above disbursements from budget funds cannot be made, but, according to the opinion of this court, in this specific case the disbursement of funds from the budget of the Republic of North Macedonia was made based on decisions and Program for Granting Financial Aid in a state of emergency, and the payment was only the implementation of these decisions and Programs", ruled the Administrative Court.

Sabina Fakikj from the Civil Communications Centre and a member of the Cooperation Council thinks that the CSOs should not have been divided and risk to be seen by the public in a negative way. "In a state of pandemic, I think that you all know that financial assistance was also granted to media. We have not heard that the financial support to the media was related to election bribe. However, we heard of a huge discreditation of CSOs, both of those who received grants and those who did not. You will agree that this is something that is to the detriment of all of us", concluded Fakikj.

Reactions of some civil society organizations

The dissatisfaction with the Decision of the Government for distribution of the state funds was manifested by some of the civil society organizations with an objection and reaction to the Government, the technical Prime Minister Oliver Spasovski and the Council for Cooperation with and Development of the Civil Society Sector. They also sent information to President Pendarovski and the EU Delegation in Skopje. CSOs asked the Government to

answer several questions regarding the criteria, related to the registration of the winning organizations and the possible conflict of interest. Namely, according to their knowledge, some of the winner organizations had members who are state officials.

The government did not respond to the organizations' reactions. In the next period, they plan to monitor the implementation of projects of the organizations that have received financial support by the Government.

Report on CSO Governance Practices and Transparency

The Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (MCIC) prepared a Report on the Governance Practices on Transparency and Accountability of CSOs in order to see the current practices in the country.

Some of the issues identified were: management structures, division of functions of the bodies in the CSOs, the way of decision making, organizational and administrative work, prevention of conflicts of interest, financial work, human resource management, reporting practices, following and involvement of members, etc.

One of the biggest challenges is the poor division of executive and management functions in practice, i.e. it often happens that the same people are at the same time members of the two bodies. For example, 56% of the CSOs responded that the employees, including the Executive Director, are also members of the governance bodies and have the right to vote. Also, more than half of the organizations have a double structure of the governance bodies, which includes an assembly and a board, and with 41% of them, only one of these bodies is present.

Biggest part of the CSOs have included the rules for prevention of conflict of interest in their statutes (55%), but more than 27% have not defined such rules yet. Also, only one fifth have a written policy on gender equality and diversity, which opens the issue of the efforts for gender inclusiveness and representativeness of CSOs within their membership and involved human resources.

One of the findings indicates that CSOs have insufficiently developed rules and procedures for human resource management. Even though 56% of the CSOs have staff that works with open-end contracts or for certain working hours, only one third (33%) of them have rulebooks on human resource management. Apart from this, although most of the CSOs are founded by members, still 67% of them do not use "attracting new members at annual level" as an indicator for the efficiency and effectiveness in their work.

The report recommends that CSOs exclude the Executive Director and employees voting in the governance (nonexecutive) body; that they should develop clear criteria and competencies which the members of the Executive Boards should have; that they develop a specific plan for monitoring and evaluation of the organisational strategy; develop rules and procedures for human resource management.



Органи на управување/раководење во граѓанските организации



Извор: Извештај за управувачките практики, за транспарентноста и отчетноста на граѓанските организации, 2020, МЦМС

2019 Enabling Environment Report

"In 2019 we had a relatively enabling environment for the civil society. We can stress that the CSOs were included in the drafting of the texts of part of the most significant laws, such as the Law for Access to Information of Public Character, Law for Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interest, Law on Social Protection, Law on Free Legal Aid, etc.", said Snezhana Kamilovska Trpovska from MCIC with respect to the 2019 Report on Enabling Environment for the Civil Society.

Kamilovska stressed that despite the generally good finds, there is a lack of involvement of the CSOs in the early stages of the process of policy creation, rather than when they are already in a draft law stage.

According to the finds of the report, the state aid to the civil society in 2019 was not only not increased as it had been recommended, but it dropped for 13% compared to 2018. Although there were announcements of a comprehensive reform of the state funding model, still there were no significant changes in this area.

There were several events in 2019 which increased the transparency and accountability of the process of distribution of public funds to CSOs. For the first time, the state bodies submitted data on the division of funds to CSOs at national and local level, and the Ministry of Finance announced the names of the beneficiaries at the Open Finances web page.

Part of the novelties is also the change in the VAT Law, which has become more favorable for CSOs. With this change, the taxpayers have to register as VAT payers if the total turnover in the past calendar year is over 2 million

MKD (32.466 EUR), or whose total turnover is expected to be more than this amount in the course of the year. The previous threshold of 1 million denars was a burden for the CSOs that planned to be engaged in economic activities.

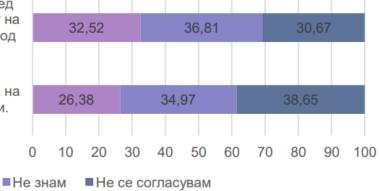
The recommendations of the report included harmonization the new legal regulations with international ones (more specifically for the draft law on lobbing and public gatherings); comprehensive reforms to the state funding for CSOs; earlier involvement of the CSOs in the consultative processes.



Има пристап до релевантни информации пред одржување на консултациите (пр. нацрт текст на закони, подзаконски акти, анализи, мислења од други институции, итн)

Организациите се вклучени во рана фаза на подготовка на законодавство и политики.

■ Се согласувам





FROM CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

COOPERATION

First House of the Project Happiness CSO's "Warm Home" Project Constructed

"Project Happiness" CSO is one of the successful examples of CSOs mobilizing community funds. In February they started with finishing the construction of the house for Simonovski family which is made by up of a single father and five children. Project Happines managed to finish this first Warm Home on 10 March.

From "Project Happiness" they say that the situation in which they had found the family was very difficult. The children slept on the floor, without electrical or water supply installations and the house looked more like a shell. Thanks to the main donors, "Senator" casinos and "Paint It Black" hotel from Gevgelija, the children now have a room of their own, beds, toilet, running water, electricity for the first time, i.e. they have a decent home, which is what any person deserves.

During the construction, other companies and donors joined the initiative and thanks to that, Project Happiness managed to complete the construction relatively fast. The CSO is satisfied with the outcome, as well as the fast and professional implementation of their initiative.

Apart from this house, the "Warm Home" project also anticipates rehabilitation and construction of 10 houses for families with children who live in exceptionally inhumane and difficult conditions, without basic living necessities. This is one of the biggest humanitarian projects in our country, and therefore they appeal to all construction companies, as well as to all other interested donors, to support it and contribute to big changes.



CSO Reaction on the Third Package of Economic Measures Related to Covid-19

"The third package of measures, instead of one-time 'gifts' was supposed to contain larger, systemic changes, in the direction of building a more solidary society, which will take care of the workers, the poor and all other voiceless and discriminated against", said five CSOs and six trade unions in their reaction to the third package of measures of the government to deal with the Corona crisis.

The organisations claim that, although the government had informed them before it publically announced the call for proposals, that call had not been changed according to their demands. The government had not accepted a single remark. Apart from this, the government did not respect the agreement on the people who had lost their jobs during the crisis. According to the agreement, they were supposed to be covered by a systemic solution for insurance in case of unemployment, i.e. to receive compensation in the period that depended on their working experience rather than for two months only.

The reaction was signed by the Confederation of the Trade Union Organizations of Macedonia (KSOM), the Trade Union of the Employees in the Administration, Judiciary and CSOs (UPOZ), the Independent Academic Trade Unions (NAkS), the Independent Union of Journalists and Media Workers (SSNM), the Trade Union of Culture of the Republic of Macedonia (SKRM), the Trade Union of the Macedonian Diplomatic Service (SMDS), the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of the Republic of Macedonia, the "Loud Textile Worker" CSO, "Solidarity" leftist movement, JADRO — Association of Independent Cultural Scene, and Subversive Front.

Rehabilitation and Legalization of the Houses of the Socially Endangered Roma in Vinica

The Roma Resource Centre and Centro Laici Italiani per le Missioni (CELIM) from Milan in cooperation with the municipality of Vinica continued with their activities for improvement of the quality of housing of Roma.

The process for legalization of the houses of the socially endangered Roma families has started. For a long time, these families had problems legalizing their properties because of lack of finances. At this moment, the legalization of the first 15 houses has been finalized. In the next period, they would work on 40 more cases. In this way, these families will obtain documents for legalization and a property document for their homes. Roma Resource Centre and CELIM have planned to ultimately solve legalization problems and provide property papers for 255 households

Apart from this, the CSOs have already rehabilitated seven out of 22 houses. In the coming period, the remaining 15 houses will be rehabilitated. These activities are im-

plemented in the project "Securing Decent Conditions for Housing of the Roma Community in the Municipality of Vinica", funded by the EU.



Cooperation for Better Functioning of the Probation System

Nine CSOs active in the area of probation, rule of law, transparency and good governance have recently established the Probation Coalition. Its members are: Civic Organization for Law, Politics, Education and Media; Proficio; Zelena Lupa, In Vivo and Tek Bal Market from Skopje, LGBT United from Tetovo, Initial Voice from Prilep, the Organization of Women from Strumica and Inclusion from Ohrid.

"The establishment of the Probation Coalition has been initiated by Zelena Lupa, as part of the activities of the project 'Implementation of the Probation Law at Local Level via Effective Partnerships in the Municipality of Strumica" which is implemented together with the Organization of Women from Strumica with the financial support of Civica Mobilitas", said Katerina Babulova from Zelena Lupa. She stressed that the coalition aims at detecting the critical areas and weaknesses in implementation of the probation measures and improve the probation system as a whole via joint cooperation of the CSOs and key stakeholders. The top priority is to successfully re-socialize and re-integrate the convicted persons in the society.

"Our experience from Strumica is positive", says Babulova, "it will be transferred to our coalition partners. Our idea is that everybody is trained to provide direct support to the persons that will use the probation measures. Then, at local level they will work with convicted persons by providing advice, informing on their legal obligations, directing them

to the appropriate services to successfully implement the probation measures and contribute to their efficient integration and re-socialization in the society."

The coalition has set several goals: increasing the interest in using the probation measures; contributing to increasing the public trust in the probation system; identifying the problems with the probation system and indicating the need of legal and institutional reform; acquainting the public with the standards and rights for probation and strengthening the trust of the citizens in the functioning of the probation system; decreasing the possibilities for inappropriate treatment of the institutions towards the users of probation measures and providing equal access to justice by giving free legal aid.

The coalition is open for new members who would cover all cities where there are prisons. Babulova believes that together they have the will and strength to move forward the implementation of the Law on Probation which had been in force for five years but its results are quite insignificant.

PARTICIPATION

Municipal Inspectors Protect the Local Bigwigs Rather than the Citizens

According to their survey on research titled "Municipal Inspectors – Problems and Challenges" of the NGO Infocentre, more than 40% of the respondents think that the inspectors depend on the mayors for their work. Almost the same percentage of citizens think that the municipal inspectors are not professional and efficient, as well as that they protect the interests of the political and business bigwigs rather than the citizens and the public interest.

The inhabitants of the Skopje region, people with higher education and those aged 35-44 are the biggest advocates of the thesis that the inspectors depend on the will of the mayors.

Very few citizens (less than 10%) stated that they or somebody close to them had reported a problem with the municipal inspector in charge. Almost two thirds of those who had reported a problem in the municipality are dissatisfied with the experience and actions of the local inspectors.

One of the biggest problems that the inspectors face are their small salaries and compensations, which are not in line with their profession. When working on the field, they do not have the proper supervision equipment, field vehicles, tools for measuring the noise, protection gear etc., which contributes to them not feeling safe.

According to the research, the municipalities most often act on reports and complaints of the citizens within one week to one month. One of the reasons for the slowness of the process is the insufficient number of inspectors, as well as the complex and long legal and administrative procedures during the inspection supervision.

"Megjashi" Checked the Opinions of the Parents on the Classes in the New School Year

Before the beginning of the school year, the First Children's Embassy in the World "Megjashi" researched the views and experience of the parents/guardians on the methods of organizing the educational process of the children in school year 2020/2021.

The results have indicated that more than two thirds of the parents/guardians (68.7% of the people asked) would accept combined lessons, i.e. lessons with physical presence and on-line. A bit more than half of the people asked (52.4%) would sign an agreement for their child/children to go to school every day, unlike 26.9% who would not agree to this as long as there is Covid-19 epidemic. When asked how the classes should be organized, the predominant answer is on-line and combined classes.

Taking into consideration that during the on-line classes the students need more support from the parents, the research also checked their views. Around half (49.9%) said that they had partially the time and possibility to help their children in learning, while 16.7% said that they could not do it, i.e. that they had no time and possibility to help their children with studying.

As for the experience from the on-line classes of the previous school year, almost half (47.3%) think that it has only partially met the needs of the students. Only 3.7 percent-

age points is the difference with those who think that the previous on-line lessons have not met the needs of the students at all. The majority of (58.2%) think that their children have obtained better marks via on-line lessons, but with less obtained knowledge. One of the obstacles in the on-line lessons are the technical conditions that the families have. When asked, almost two thirds (64.3%) said that they had appropriate technical conditions to follow on-line classes, 28.7% only partially, and 6.4% had no appropriate spatial and technical conditions to follow on-line classes.

The research was conducted via a public survey with 1,003 people. The survey was conducted via the Internet in the period of 22 July to 3 August 2020.



Knowledge Sharing is Crucial in Building a Modern Public Sector

The private sector has established more advanced experiences in knowledge maintenance that enables them to be more effective and more efficient and gives them a comparative advantage. This is not the case with the public sector, or at least most of it. This was indicated in the research of the Center for Change Management (CUP), called **Developing Knowledge-Based Public Sector**, dealing with checking the practices for maintaining and sharing knowledge in the private and public sector.

The research indicates that 74% of the institutions store the documents on which their staff works daily, locally, at the computer on which they work. Only around 16% store them in a joint folder. This folder can be accessed by all employees in only 19% of the cases, while in 50% of them it is necessary to approve access or give authorization to use such a joint folder.

As for knowledge sharing, as many as 84% stated that their institutions do not have internal procedures or other rules to define it. This shows that the concept of institutional knowledge and memory has been neglected in the institutions, which, when it comes to regular functioning, and especially when working at distance, such as during pandemics, should contribute to the satisfaction and confidence of the citizens.

"The idea was not to criticize the administration but to indicate that if such crises continue to happen, i.e. if the crisis continues, we have to adjust our processes and be functional from home as well", said Neda Maleska Sachmaroska, the Executive Director of CUP. She stressed that these are documents that are being produced by the employees, research, information of subsidy users, etc. based on which trends can be followed and this knowledge can be used to create better policies. "When the employees leave the institutions, the knowledge practically leaves with them. If

there is a big turnover of people, the institutional memory becomes even more important", she added.

The debates on the public administration, especially its efficiency, have never stopped, they were rather enhanced by the current state of affairs with the pandemic caused by the Corona virus. The inability of the public servants to function outside their offices has increased the dissatisfaction of the citizens with the services of the institutions. CUP state that this has reflected on their research, i.e. the number of answers to their requests for information of public character decreased.



New Turbulences Related to the Law on Protection from Discrimination

Just before the tenth early parliamentary elections, 17 political parties signed the declaration for priority adoption of the Law for Prevention and Protection from Discrimination which followed based on the request of nine CSO networks representing more than 100 CSOs.

"The purpose of the Declaration is that the political parties pledge that this Law will be adopted immediately after the establishment of the Parliament of the Republic of North Macedonia, without additional delays, and that afterwards, in accordance with the legal deadlines, they would select the new composition of the Commission for

Prevention and Protection from Discrimination. This law protects the constitutionally guaranteed right to equality of the citizens, it stipulates a procedure for protection from discrimination, active undertaking of measures for prevention of discrimination and promotion of equality of all citizens, especially the most marginalized groups", say the CSOs.

The Law for Prevention and Protection from Discrimination was adopted by the previous Parliament on May 16 2019, but the Constitutional Court cancelled it with a decision that was adopted at its 14 May 2020 session. The

decision followed the initiative submitted by the previous Commission for Protection from Discrimination to assess the constitutional grounds and legality of the law, because the law had been adopted without the necessary majority defined by Article 75 of the Constitution.

As the then Minister of Justice Renata Deskoska informed, "this decision does not bring the previous law to force, and the new law of 2019 was cancelled". This means that the citizens are without a commission, i.e. without an official body for their protection from discrimination on all grounds.

The initiators of the declaration are the Network for Protection from Discrimination (MZD), the National Network for Fighting Homophobia and Transphobia (NMHT), the Gender Equality Platform, Macedonian Platform against Poverty (MPPS), Network 23, the Informal Network of Roma Organizations, the Blueprint Group for Judiciary Reforms, the CSO Platform for Fighting Corruption and the Platform for Sustainability of the Services for HIV Prevention and Support.

Corruption in the Employment of the People with Disabilities

"Polio Plus" CSO organized a conference in June where they discussed the corruptive practices that people with disabilities face at their place of employment. According to the research that was conducted by the CSO, many of these people are not informed or not interested in these abuses, which is a consequence of the exclusion of the people with disabilities from creation of policies that concern them.

Elena Kochoska, "Polio Plus" project coordinator, stressed that the low education and the lack of qualifications for participation in the policies can be the reason for the people with disabilities to be excluded from the policy creation policies, but she thinks that the biggest problem is the indifference by the people with disabilities.

The discussion of the participants led to a conclusion that the institutions in charge should help more, but the people with disabilities are those that should be proactive and more courageous in their fight against abuse.

Another aspect that was covered was the accessibility to the institutions as a factor that leads to corruption and inconsistences. Apart from the physical obstacles, the people with disabilities also face bureaucratic obstacles. Slobodan Ivanov, a member of "Polio Plus" shared his experience with the procedure of collecting documents for employment, which lasted several months.

This activity is part of the Polio Plus project which raises awareness and recognition of corruption at employment of the people with disabilities.



ENGAGEMENT

Eco Neighborhood – First Educational Social Game on Energy Efficiency

"Eco Logic" CSO prepared the first educational game in the country that deals with energy efficiency and renewable energy sources. In "Eco Neighborhood" the most important thing is building clean environment. By using various transport means and discovering new interesting facts on renewable energy sources, the players move along the way to the goal, which is filled with various challenges.

"You will have the chance to invest in points that are hard to be scored, in order to save energy via energy efficient light bulbs, energy efficient windows, sun panels and home insulation. The road to the goal is full with lot of interaction and fun", say the creators of the game.

The game is available the on-line platform "Tabletopia" which can be accessed via a mobile phone and computer. It is intended for children aged above 10 and it can be played by two to four people. For the fans of classic social games, there are also directions on how to recreate the game at home on paper.

"Eco Logic" CSO works on improvement and promotion of various social issues and challenges via themes that are not part of the regular curricula, while being of huge importance for the proper moral, social, physical and environmental development of children. Such an example is the "Velo Training Field" project, which is implemented with Civica Mobilitas support, which strives to improve the knowledge of children and their parents when it comes to the advantages of cycling, sustainable transports, air pollution and safety in traffic.



"Don't Bet on Your Life" Campaign

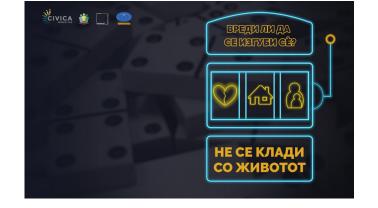
The addiction of sport betting and other games of chance is one of the problems of today which is especially prevalent among young people. According to the analysis made by the Association of Sport Betting Facilities in the country in 2013, 46% of the citizens or 61% of the men bet, almost three quarters of them have income that is lower than the average. In countries with low living standard, such as North Macedonia, gambling is not only fun, but it often becomes an addiction. In order to raise the awareness about the appropriate treatment, the Association of Social Workers of the City of Skopje, in cooperation with the Association of Clubs of Cured Alcoholics started the campaign "Don't Bet with Your Life". Civica Mobilitas supports this project with an action grant.

The survey that was conducted by the CSOs on a sample of 4,000 high school students showed that 69% of the students had at least once played some game of chance, and it is most often lottery and sport betting. It is important to mention that 20% of the people surveyed sometimes or

regularly bet before going out in the evening. This behavior is concerning because these students consider the games of chance as a source of quick profit, which can then easily create addiction and also create other social, psychological and medical problems. Regarding the awareness of the parents about the betting of their children, the responses are divided. A total of 43% stated that the parents knew, 34% responded that their parents did not know, while 12% were not certain if their parents were aware of their betting.

In order to raise awareness and more broadly promote the addiction helpline, the CSOs prepared a media campaign with three videos sending strong messages on the consequences of the games of chance on family, friends, career and health. One of the messages also concerned the frequent excuses of the addicts, implying that they themselves were not aware that they had a problem with the betting but that they did this only for fun, or that they could stop whenever they wanted.

The CSOs state that they needed prevention measures with which the youth will be more intensively informed about this addiction. The CSOs also think that the local community has a key role to play in awareness raising. One of their recommendations concerns opening of counselling centers for help and support to the young and their families facing this problem.



Winners at the "Green Ideas" Competition Selected

ARNO Association of Social Innovations announced the winners of this year's competition "Green Ideas" which was held on-line this time. The best ones are the ideas "Vajs Additive" of Vajs Group DOOEL — Skopje, "Bee Friends" of the Core Group of Bee Breeders CSO from the Bregalnica region, "Honey East", as well as "Protection of Kolbarenje Phenomenon in Macedonia and Promotion of Traditional Maleshevo Specialties" by Dushica Krsteska from Berovo. These ideas will continue to compete at regional level for the USD 10,000 award. So far, our country has had six regional winners and a total investment of USD 60,000 for development of business ideas.

There have been consultancy services vouchers provided for the national winners by "MKA2000" Association for Management and Consulting, and a participation fee for the first ranked "Vajs Additive" for their participation at an international on-line training of the Fund for Innovation and Technological Development.

"I am especially happy that this year we had a successfully conducted competition and 32 applications, which is really a big number if one takes into consideration the circumstances and Corona virus crisis which hit our country. I wish the winners success and we hope that this year we will return with awards from the regional competition, thus showing once more that we are a country that takes care of the green and social economy", says Ivona Krstevska from ARNO.

"Green Ideas" is a competition for selection of ideas/projects for green entrepreneur or business ideas that promote traditional production of products, support to small local businesses, which use resources of the local community and which stimulate innovative ideas for environment development. Apart from our country, it also takes place in: Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Greece. Every year, three participants of each country compete at the regional competition. The four representatives that will win at the regional competition win USD 10,000 or 5,000 for the implementation of the ideas in their respective countries.



"An Hour for an Hour" Time Bank for Developing Community Values

"Youth Can" a youth CSO from Skopje, supported by the Fund for Innovation and Technological Development (FITR) prepared the digital platform "An Hour for an Hour" with which the users use their own time as a resource for payment and exchange of services with other people, instead of money.

"The Golden Rule" of the time bank concept is the following: One hour of my time equals one hour of your time. One hour of the provided service to somebody earns a credit of one hour for a service to be obtained. For one hour of obtained service, one "pays" a one-hour credit.

This tool will help the young become active and independent citizens who believe that they can independently or jointly make positive changes in the community and the society as a whole. "We believe that the young people can take active participation in the development of their communities and via youth and social activism as powerful tools for social change respond to their needs in the community", says the team of "Youth Can".

The "An Hour for an Hour" project has been supported by FITR as part of the Creathon (Creative Marathon) intended for ideas that aim to alleviate the conditions during the Covic-19 pandemics.

Citizens of Gostivar Took Their Fate in Their Hands

With an incredible dedication, for almost 40 days (to the closing of this issue of the magazine) the informal citizen initiative Stop Rusino – Clean Air for Gostivar has been holding the ramp to the entrance of Rusino landfill near Gostivar closed for everyone except for the trucks of the public communal enterprise from Gostivar. Their basic demand is to rehabilitate and dislocate the landfill and find another location where a regional landfill will be built according to EU standards.

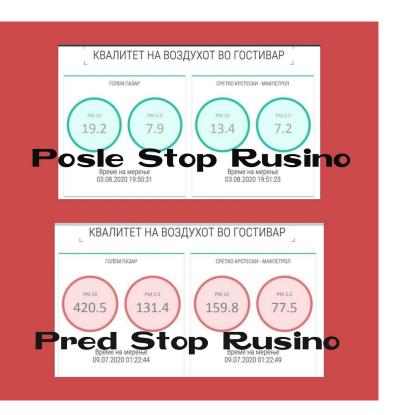
The citizens supporting this initiative have alarmed the institutions many times about the poor state of the landfill's waste management, the impact on the environment and health of the citizens. They also protested in Gostivar several times, but without any effect. The final drop was the July fires at Rusino landfill because of which covered Gostivar in smoke and in an unbearable stench. After this, on 2 August, the citizens that are part of this initiative put a ramp several kilometers from the landfill itself and provided 24-hour citizen guards.

"Organizing a 24-hour blockade is not a simple thing", say the activists. One needs people that will be there in shifts during the day and night to control the transport of garbage. Therefore, they constantly thank everybody for their support and call the citizens to join them. "In this fight for health we expect the support from everybody, regardless of their religion, ethnic and political affiliation", say the people from the initiative.

Activists can be satisfied with their achievements so far. The big fire at the landfill had been extinguished and the landfill is regularly covered with earth, an obligation that was previously neglected by the operators. There were cameras set to help identify the arsonists. The air in the city is cleaner some of the measurement stations indicate that the air is 22 times cleaner after "Stop Rusino – Clean Air for Gostivar".

"We are here to find a solution to Rusino, based on European standards", say the activists. "We address all parties, all parliamentarians and municipal councillors that we have voted in from Gostivar to give us their support. The solution is not with us, but with the institutions. We are here to encourage the institutions", they add. The supporters of "Stop Rusino – Clean Air for Gostivar" initiative number in the in thousands and these number grow on daily basis. They are a big support to finding a solution for this problem of the people from Gostivar.

Rusino landfill should be one of the six regional landfills that would be built in accordance with EU standards. According to the strategic documents for establishing an integrated system for waste management at national level, the waste from nine municipalities of the Polog region will be stored at Rusino.





"We Want to Study" - Said the High School Students at Their Protests

On 31 August, high school students, parents and civil activists, organized by the Association of High School Students, protested against the decision of the Government to start the new school year with on-line classes. "We want to study", said they protesting from in front of the building of the Ministry of Education and Science to the Government building. The protestors asked that the school year starts with a combined model of teaching, giving each school the chance to decide itself whether it would open for the students or not. Unless their demands are met, the high school will boycott the classes.

Before the protest, representatives of the high school students met the new Minister of Education and Science Mila Carovska. "We want our demands to be taken into consideration tomorrow at the government session and that combined model of teaching is selected", said the Blendi Hodai, the President of the Association of High School Students after the meeting. Minister Carovska convinced them that teaching can start with physical presence where there are conditions for it, taking into consideration the public health.

The reactions of the high school students to the decision for on-line classes have been caused by the experience with such teaching from March until the end of the previous school year. They think that it would not be a quality one and that the whole educational system is not ready for full on-line classes yet. Besides, they add that the new high school students should be given the chance to meet their teachers live. These are part of the reasons because of which the Association of High School Students proposes a combined model of teaching.

The protest was preceded by a number of meetings with the authorities. On 21 August they met the Government and it was announced that they would work together on improving and best implementing the model according to which the lessons in primary and secondary education would be organized and implemented in Covid-19 conditions. The Government accepted the suggestion for bigger involvement of the high school students in the preparations for the organization and implementation of the accepted model in order to have the best solutions in the interest of the students and teachers. On 25 August they participated in the meeting of the Commission for Contagious Diseases. The Minister of Health, Venko Filipche, explained the process of introduction and easing of the restrictive measures in accordance with the epidemiological situation.



COVID-19

Macedonia 2025 Donated Protective Gear for the Health Care Workers

In order to help the protection of medical personnel in the country, in the period of April-May, Macedonia2025 organized an on-line donor campaign called "Let's Protect the Health Care Workers Who Take Care of Us!". From the beginning of the pandemic, it is a concerning fact that out of the total number of infected people there are many health care workers.

The collected funds were used to buy protective gear which was donated where it was most needed. As part of the campaign, there were 20 intubation boxes donated in DPPU Honor and 700 liters of disinfectants to Public Health Institution Health Home Skopie. Then, there were 1750 protective masks (KN95) sent to a number of health care institutions in the country, such as the JPU Health Home Kumanovo (320), Idadija Policlinic (130), 8 September City General Hospital (450), D-r Hristina ordinance (110), PHIHealth Home Skopje (30), Bucharest Policlinic (50), PHI D-r Maer (30), Association of Resident and Young Doctors - ASML (250), PHIUK Toariluc -Orthopedics (120), JZU "13 November" Specialized Hospital for Geriatric and Palliative Medicine Skopje (30), Gjorche Petrov Policlinic (130) and PHIUniversity Clinic for Radiotherapy and Oncology (100). Also, we collected funds for 1,200 face shields, which were donated to AMSL.

"Because friends are known in trouble. We are thankful from all of our hearts to Macedonia2025 for their donations and support to the health care workers who are on the first front line against Covid-19. Be healthy and calm!" said some of the health care workers.

With the support of our members, collaborators, individual partners and good citizens, we have contributed to the safety of those who risk their lives on daily basis for us. We express our huge gratitude to all of those who have donated in the on-line fund-raising campaign. The lack of protective health gear is still significant and the recent increase in the number of positive cases shows that there is a big need of increase citizen participation.

With this activity, Macedonia2025 has implemented one of its strategic goals, which is advocating the ideals of transparent, democratic and inclusive society, which is good for the citizens, economic development and the country.

Author: Ema Jakimovska, Macedonia 2025



"Art" Campaign against Disrespecting the Protective Measures from Covid-19

Shtip art activists have implemented several activities related to the irresponsible behavior of the employers, transporters, workers and institutions during the pandemic, showing their lack of respect for the protection measures of the World Health Organization and the Crisis Headquarters.

"Because of the lack of respect of the measures we have witnessed spreading of the Covid-19 infection and the inability to protect the citizens of Shtip and its surrounding. We want to send the message that the irresponsible behavior has its price. Previously the super heroes of Shtip drove in the buses, but now they are half empty because the Corona virus infection was spread in them. Now, the buses transport Covid-19 viruses instead of super heroes", say the activists.

In front of the textile factories, the Municipality of Shtip, the Freedom Square and the city market, the activists placed installations with fiscal bills, invoices and payment receipts with the data with the numbers of people infected and the measures that had been violated as an indicator that irresponsible people's behavior resulted in an increased number of infected, diagnosed, hospitalized and deceased people.

"We appeal to all citizens, employers, transporters and institutions to respect the measures, so that we are all responsible, solidary, professional and protect the collective health in our Shtip", say the Shtip Art Activists.



CITIZENS FOR CHANGE

Editor and Chief: Gonce Jakovleska

Editor: Aleksandra Siljanovska

Translator: Elizabeta Bakovska

Newsroom address: Nikola Parapunov str., no. 41a, PO Box 55, 1060 Skopje

Telephone: ++ 389 (0)2 3065 381

E-mail: helpdesk@civicamobilitas.mk



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