



# CITIZENS FOR CHANGE

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## WE HAVE PROTECTED SHAR MOUNTAIN ON PAPER, NOW LET US PROTECT IT IN REALITY AS WELL!

In the quarter that is covered by this issue of “Citizens for Change”, the state made a big step forward to better protection of the environment – it protected Shar Mountain by proclaiming it a national park. Finally, after 27 years since the first initiative in 1994, all the parties involved can take a deep breath, since one part of the road has been successfully passed and we all congratulate them for this. And we thank them, because what they did for Shar Mountain concerns us all. “It was a long and tedious process”, say the people involved, “with many involved parties, many experts, more domestic ones than foreign”, and because there were so many stakeholders in the process, the satisfaction is bigger. However, we are all facing new challenges now – how will all the needs, wishes, demands which have been put into a law be implemented in practice now. There are quite some examples of non-implementation of good laws, and probably therefore the euphoria with the proclamation must not be overwhelming. In a statement given for the Balkan Institute for Regional Cooperation (BIRS), Minister Nuredini said that the Ministry is obliged to establish the public enterprise that will manage the national park in the first three months after the adoption of the law, a deadline that ends at the beginning of October, if one takes into consideration the date on which the law was published in the Official Gazette. Then, a guard service will be established to protect the national park. Until then, the protected Shar Mountain is not protected yet. Or, as one mountain fan whom I met on Shar Mountain says, “there is a vacuum which is very dangerous, nothing can be done, yet nobody is taking care of it”. Therefore, all the people involved so far, all nature lovers who “cruise” Shar Mountain, the local population and all of us, we should be extremely careful – not to cause more harm than benefit. As much as we need Shar Mountain, it also needs us.

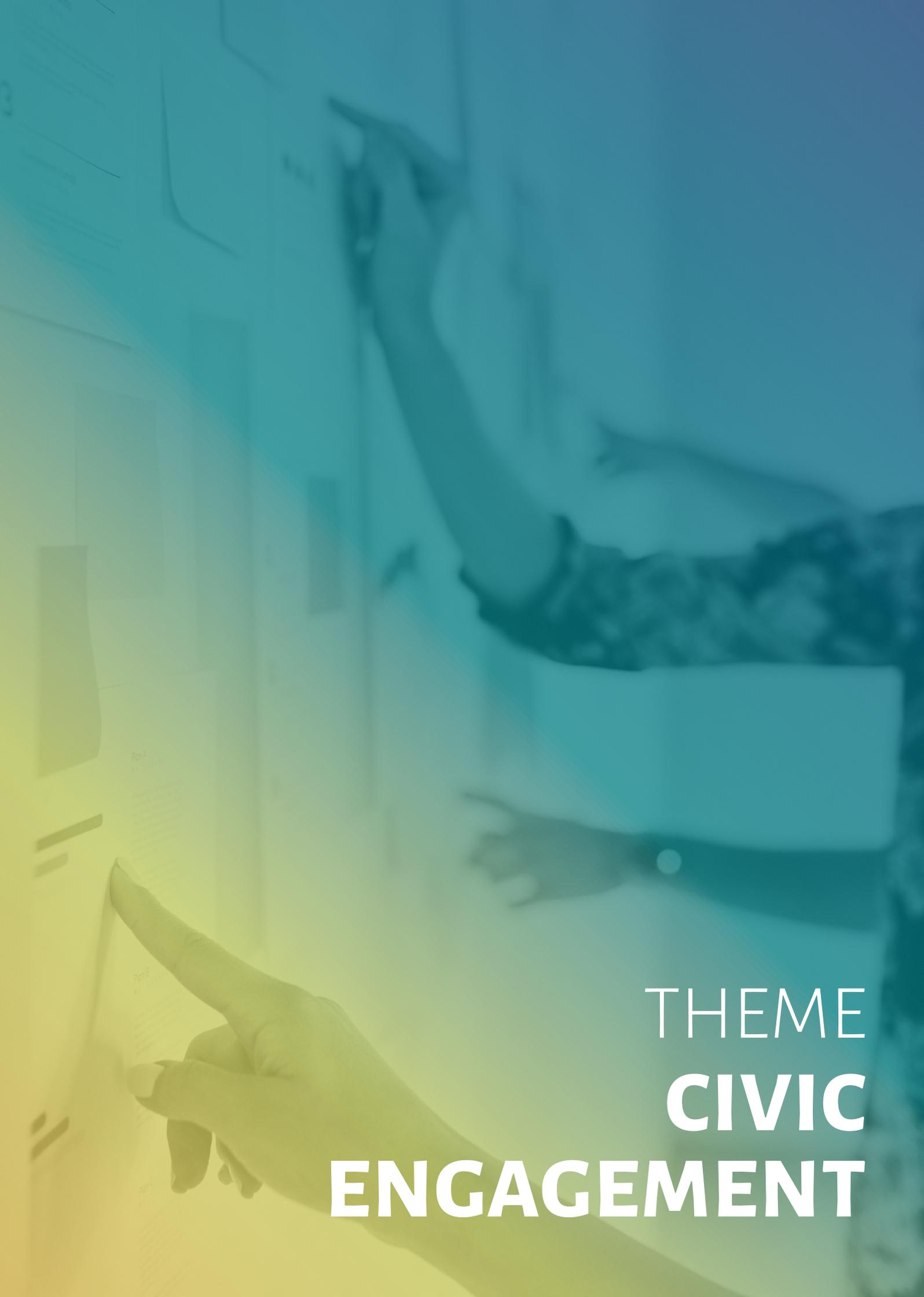
The main topic of this issue is the civic engagement, and in this spirit, you will find texts on many activities of the CSOs related to protection of water resources, cleaning of lakes, monitoring of rivers, but also those that draw attention to vulnerable categories of people, the second “Pride Parade”, introduction to the Law on Prevention and Protection from Discrimination, the LGBTI community, HIV positive persons, people with impaired sight, etc. In cooperation with the institutions or individually, CSOs fill in critical gaps with their work. The Centre for Change Management digitized part of the services of the Ministry of Education and Science, Bravura Kooperativa works on economic empowerment of the children without parents or parental care, and RESIS is dedicated to the communication rights of the vulnerable groups. Konekt has granted their sustainable development awards for the second time, and Rural Coalition has researched the state funding at local level.

And something else, as an announcement. There is a new Strategy of the Government for Cooperation and Development of the Civil Society. The Unit for Cooperation with NGOs announced broad consultations with CSOs, do not miss the chance to give your thoughts and remarks, before the process is closed.

Have a pleasant reading!

Gonce Jakovlevska  
Civica Mobilitas  
National Coordinator for ICO

*We are grateful to: Bardul Zaimi and Lorik Idrizi from BIRS, Natasha Dokovska Spirovska from NCP, Bekim Asani from LGBT United, Goran Vidachek from MHD, Vesna Cvetanoska from Inclusion, Mitko Arnaudov and Ivo Jankoski from Centre for Creative Communications, Petre Mrkev from SPPMD, Poliksena Ilioska from AN-BLOK, Aleksandar Nikolov from Bravura Kooperativa, Snezhana Trpevska from RESIS, Viktor Mirchevski from Konekt and Liljana Janoski from Rural Coalition for their contribution for the preparation of the texts for this issue. Cover photo: Aleksandar Donev/Mustseedonia. Photo archives of: MCIC, Civica Mobilitas, BIRS, Skopje Pride, LGBT United, MHD, Fourth Leaf, Inclusion, Centre for Creative Communications, SPPMD, AN-BLOK, Stronger Together, Bravura Kooperativa, CUP, RESIS, Konekt, All for Fair Trials, InnoHab, Rural Coalition, TACSO 3.*



THEME  
**CIVIC  
ENGAGEMENT**

# CSOs, Experts and Institutions Together Fought for Shar Mountain



Shar Mountain has become the first national park since the independence of the state after the members of the Parliament of the Republic of North Macedonia adopted the Law that proclaims part of the mountain a national park on 30 June 2021, with 66 votes for.

CSOs that have actively worked on this issue can take a deep breath, at least for a moment; this is a big step for them, for their efforts, for the local population and the country as a whole. The proclamation means rounding a process that has lasted for more than 20 years, starting in 1994 by the State Institute for Protection of the Nature and three years later (1997) it was transferred to the Ministry of Environment. Although there was a Law for Proclaiming Shar Mountain a National Park prepared, it was not supported by the MPs in 2001. The new process at the Ministry started as late as 2010.

One of the CSOs involved in this process, especially with their field work with the local population, is the Civica Mobilitas grantee, the Balkan Institute for Regional Cooperation (BIRC) from Tetovo. During one of their meetings with the mountain hotel owners, we spoke with Bardhyl Zaimi and Lorik Idrizi. Although the conversation had taken place before the official proclamation of Shar Mountain as a national park, still there was some certainty in the air that it would finally happen.

“We are proud that in the course of our project the mountain will be proclaimed a national park”, they say, “but we are aware that this is not the end. We have to continue working further, inform the citizens properly and narrow the space for disinformation and fake news”, they add.

**Shar Mountain is the fourth national park in North Macedonia. In 1948 the first two national parks – Pelister and Mavrovo, were proclaimed at the territory of the current North Macedonia. Ten years later, in 1958, the mountain of Galichica was proclaimed a national park. After almost 63 years, the country has a new natural area with highest level of protection.**

## Face to face discussion is the most appropriate

The activities about the proclamation of the national park, say my collocutors, have been more intense in the last three to four years. The CSOs, they think, have been adding this dynamic to the process. The Friends of Shar Mountain Coalition, the numerous bigger and smaller national and local associations are united in the idea to protect Shar Mountain. “Big work was done by the Friends of Shar Mountain coalition that has been working for three years already with the people on sensitizing them and raising their awareness on these issues”, says Bardhyl Zaimi. “When we speak with the citizens in the field, we understand that they know that there is an on-going process to protect the mountain, but they do not know the details”, adds Lorik Idrizi. According to him, the face-to-face discussion with the population has the best effects when one needs to raise the awareness on such an issue with these people. “We discuss spontaneously with the people, we have an expert with us who speaks about biodiversity and the effects on it with the proclama-

tion of the national park and the advantages that the citizens would have. We cooperate with everybody, there are small CSOs that are active in Shar Mountain villages gradually becoming aware what such a change would mean”, says Bardhyl. As far as the other ways of informing are concerned, he says that the citizens follow the media which are also a good source of information, but sometimes they can also be a source of disinformation. “Other organizations also work in this way and thanks to this now we have a completely different reality”, he says.

For Bardhyl and Lorik it is very important that they use the caravans to create synergy of the people with the experts and CSOs. This synergy is already visible. In the beginning, there was scepticism with the citizens. They have been largely dependent on the mountain for their existence because they mostly work with cattle breeding. “There was some doubt about how the grazing of the cattle would be regulated, but now they already know that the proclamation will have no impact on it, i.e. they would be able to take their cattle for grazing. The citizens do not always know how to tell what their problem is, and the institutions do not understand. We were the connection, we have informed the institutions about the problems, fears, wishes of the citizens. The civil sector seems to be specialized in this role, we understand the citizens and we know how to inform the institutions about this”, says Lorik.



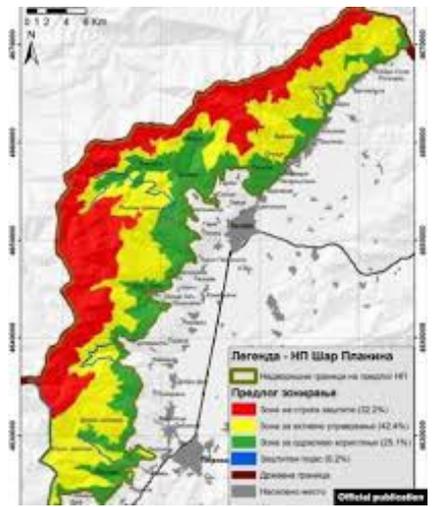
The field experience has shown them that the people are ready. They think that after the proclamation, the institutions should establish order. They have no illusions that it will be easy, but they notice that the people are more and more in favour of protecting the nature, especially after the pandemic. The negative occurrences, such as the illegal wood cutting are recognized as harmful by the people, but the state should establish control.

One of the obstacles that they have come across, along with the other CSOs with whom they cooperate are the obstructions by the hunters. They say that they are not supporters of proclamation of the national park because they will face bans on hunting.

**On the benefits**

The effects of the protection of Shar Mountain are big. According to a statement of Naser Nuredini, the Minister

of Environment, “there will be an establishment of a system for sustainable management of an area that is a treasure of biodiversity, home to two thirds of all plants in North Macedonia and a rich endemic plant and animal world’. However, on top of it, this change will also give an opportunity for socio-economic development of this region and the country as a whole and it will be a stimulation for broader cross-border cooperation. The announcements of the authorities and the expectations of the citizens are that the infrastructure will be improved, along with the possibilities for economic development, access for foreign investors, local and international tourism.



“The citizens are aware that with this proclamation the nature will be protected and there will be investments. Minister Nuredini himself, in the interview that he gave for BIRS said that they expected around EUR 300 million in the Polog region because of the proclamation of the national park”, says Bardhyl.

However, what is going to change at the mountain so that it becomes more interesting for the visitors once it is proclaimed a national park? We could say that there would be no changes, the mountain is the same. Still, as my collocutors say, the national park proclamation actually brands the nature, and it is perceived differently by the potential visitors.

The experts say that the state will be the first investor. It has to fix the roads, local water and sewage systems, create preconditions for everything to function better. Apart from this, the national park status gives security to foreign investors. And all of these activities mean bigger engagement for the local population.

**The protected area will be divided to area under strict protection which covers Kobilica, Ljuboten, Bistrica, Leshnica and Mazdracha at the border with Mavrovo national park. The other two are the zone of active management and sustainable usage and the so-called buffer zone where the ski centre is planned to develop.**

**After the proclamation**

Bardhyl and Lorik are enthusiasts. “Even after the proclamation there will be need to discuss with the population”, they say. “The awareness is not changed so fast and continuous work with them will be needed”. They stress that the

local citizens should feel the national park as their wealth and then they will maintain it as they maintain their own homes. “If the majority follows this philosophy, it will be easier to work with those who are problematic”, they think.

They say that Shar Mountain will enter many tourist guides and thus many tourist offers, which will bring new and numerous visitors to these areas. Still, they are aware that there is still lot of work. The state and the local population should wait for it prepared. Unfortunately, now this area cannot boast with licenced tourist guides, and the population is still shy to enter something that could be their existence, an offer for mountain or agro-tourism.

“CSOs will do what they do now, strengthen the awareness of the people, alarm about certain irregularities and problems, but the investments have to be managed by the government. If the government has a concept to develop this habitus, then things could move forward. We can give

**The Macedonian part of Shar Mountain has around 62,700 hectares in the protection map. Together with the Kosovo and Albania parts, the area has around 240,000 hectares. This makes this mountain one of the biggest cross border natural areas of Europe. Part of Shar Mountain which belongs to Kosovo territory was proclaimed a national park even during former Yugoslavia in 1986.**

them some ideas, how to make it more attractive, but they should manage the investments. The idea to proclaim the national park is a civil one, we hope that the political parties will not use it for their needs”, say Bardhyl Zaimi and Lorik Idrizi.

## Skopje Pride 2021: Liberating coming “Out of the Walls!”



With messages of love and equality, with hope for better future and wish for society without stigmatization and prejudices under the slogan “Outside the Walls”, the second “Pride Parade” took place on 26 June 2021 in Skopje.

Hundreds of citizens marched from “Zhena Borec” park to the City Park, where the march ended with an organized address of the participants and an entertaining programme. “In maybe the most challenging time that we have had this year and a half, we have gathered here again, we are loud, visible, together outside the walls. We have conquered the public space, to promote our fight for visibility and our equal participation in all areas of living”, said Elena Petrovska from “Margini” coalition, as part of the organizing board of Skopje Pride.

**People from the LGBTI community are part of our society and they deserve human rights and freedoms as any other citizen, said the participants of the Pride Parade in Skopje. The Pride Month is a celebration of freedom, diversity, acceptance and love.**

The participants asked that the discrimination of LGBTI persons stops, as well as for bigger engagement of the Public Prosecution when processing cases of hate speech and hate crime, because, as they say, impunity only encourages the perpetrators, which results in repetition of the acts.

The people present at Shkolka were addressed by Marija Kostadinovska, a parent of a member of the community, who publicly spoke in support of her daughter and offered help to the parents who go through the process of acceptance. “The parents should help their children go out of the walls. Live their life as they should – be their own, rather than hide from their parents”, she stressed.

The Pride Parade was supported by the President Stevo Pendarovski, Prime Minister Zoran Zaev, Minister of Defence Radmila Shekerinska, the Minister of Culture Irena Stefoska, the Minister of Education and Science Mila Carovska and the Minister of Labour and Social Policy, Jagoda Shahpaska. Shekerinska wrote on her Facebook profile that everybody is free to be what they are, and President Pendarovski said that people should not be stigmatized and isolated because of their sexual orientation, because everybody has the right to have the choice.

Skopje Pride continued with an entertaining programme and performances of numerous musicians and deejays from the local scene. The participants were Vasil Garvanliev, Fifi Janevska, Tuna Sejdi, Ivana Dragshik, Sonja Ismail, Vera Vendeta, Uzun Baba and Zoki Bejbe.

This second Pride Parade comes after one year of pause due to the Covid-19 crisis. The first one took place in 2019 and it was attended by participants from Greece, Serbia, Montenegro and other states.

## Menstrual Hygiene Stull Not Accessible

“Investing in menstrual health is investing in healthy generations” is the motto of the Association Journalists for Human Rights (NCP) in their seventh year of marking of 28 May, the Day of Menstrual Hygiene.

The focus was on the “Free Period” initiative for fighting menstrual poverty in our country via a donation of packages with menstrual products for the marginalized and socially vulnerable women and girls. Via the campaign that lasted for a day there were menstrual products secured for 120 girls from two primary schools from Tetovo and Resen.



Quantity enough for a whole school year, they say at the association.

“We have decided for these schools because they expressed interest to work on this topic. Actually, before distributing the packages, we constructed adapted toilets in the facilities to improve the hygiene and held on-line lectures on menstrual health”, stresses Natasha Dokovska Spirovska from NCP.

The “Free Period” campaign provided menstrual products for 120 girls from two primary schools in Tetovo and Resen, quantity enough for the whole school year.

The association, for fifth year in a row, once per year conducts a research on the state of affairs with menstrual poverty in the country. The results of the research have confirmed the need for such initiatives. The latest survey conducted in November 2020, with 1,290 participants showed that 90% of the participants in the rural environments in the country are absent from school four to five days in the month when they have their period, while 75% of the female students in the urban environments are absent for two to three days in the course of the month. The reasons for this are the inappropriate hygiene conditions in the schools, high price of the products for menstrual protection and the lack of education on menstruation.

For 75.6% of the women, the high price of the products is the reason to use newspapers, paper or textile during their period, instead of the standard hygiene products. There is also a high percentage (29.5%) of those who cannot afford any menstrual products.

Menstruation is not a luxury and the access to products should not be discriminatory, stress at NCP, reminding that the Day of Menstrual Hygiene is marked in order to raise the awareness of the need for an equal and easy access to menstrual hygiene products, appropriate hygienic conditions in the schools, as well as appropriate education.

## Promotion of the Law for Prevention and Protection from Discrimination among the LGBTI Community Members

Out of 63 participants, 76% were not informed about the Law for Prevention and Protection from Discrimination.

Tetovo, Skopje, Gostivar, Strumica, Bitola, Ohrid and Kumanovo are the cities where LGBT United Tetovo promoted the Law for Prevention and Protection from Discrimination with a series of events, informative sessions and discussions among the members of the community.

The goal of these events was to inform the members of the LGBTI community about the law that protects them from discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as all other grounds for protection listed in the law. “It is surprising that 63 participants, 76% were not informed about the new law that was adopted in October last year”, says Bekim Asani from LGBT United. Facing the situation in the field, the informative sessions covered promotion of more aspects of this law, such as: the grounds for discrimination, function, competencies and responsibilities of the Commission for Prevention and Protection from Discrimination, etc.

In the discussion with Asani, he also pointed out the lack of trust with the LGBTI community when it comes to the institutions, as it plays a significant role in the practical implementation of the law. Because of the lack of trust between the LGBTI community and the institutions, a very small part of the everyday cases of discrimination is being reported to the Commission for Prevention and Protection from Discrimination. “The events were an indicator that we should work on these issues. The plan is that in the future period we will stimulate bigger involvement by the Commission so that the community can have trust in them”, he adds.



The events for promotion of the Law for Prevention and Protection from Discrimination were the introduction to 17 May – the International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia, which LGBT United marked in a symbolic way, under the motto “United in Diversities and Solidarity”.

## Actions for Cleaning Lake Waters

The Macedonian-Croatian Association with “Pena” diving club mobilized their members and the local population in May and June 2021 in cleaning actions of Dojran Lake, Mladost Lake and Mavrovo Lake. These actions were preceded by the actions for cleaning of the Pena River and the lake and canyon of Matka which took place in March this year.



Dojran Lake was cleaned by 20 divers underwater and the citizens that were involved in the action cleaned the space around the lake. “Big quantities of diverse waste were collected, such as plastic, paper, plastic bags, glass, etc.”, say the organizers of the action and they add that this waste causes serious problems and consequences for the fish and biodiversity. The picture with the waste is seen at all locations where these activists cleaned.

“The motivation for these actions is to raise the awareness about ecology and preserving the natural wealth in Macedonia as a source of healthy environment”, says Goran Vidachek from the Macedonian-Croatian Association. “Water pollution is a result of the irresponsible behaviour

of the population which causes changes in the quality of water, which subsequently make the water unusable and harm the living organisms in it”, he adds. Speaking in more details, he mentioned the example of Mladost Lake where, according to the analyses for presence of blue-green algae, one could see that there is a high concentration of nutrients. These algae release strong toxins which has an impact on the decrease of the populations in the lake, decrease and even eradication of some species that live in the lake, including those that are protected by law and are endemic species. Because of this, the lake has been classified with a “bad environmental status”.

The clean-up actions of the Macedonian-Croatian Associations and “Pena” diving club are part of the project “For Clean and Healthy Water, Stop to Water Pollution”, which is financially supported by Civica Mobilitas.



# “It’s about Water” Documentary, an Alarm for Vardar Pollution



“For someone this will be a plea to come to his senses, for someone it will be a brutal scolding and facing one’s own actions, lack of basic culture to protect something which is an essence of our existence”, this is the start of the documentary “It Is about Water”, made by “Fourth Leaf” CSO, promoted on 15 May 2021 on YouTube platform.

The aim of the documentary is to strengthen the awareness of the public and the institutions in charge, to inform the citizens, CSOs and media on the state of affairs with water pollution, starting from the Vardar River and its tributaries, says the organization.

From the springs of Vrutok to the flow into the Aegean Sea, the recordings show a basin full with solid waste, release of various liquid chemicals from the factories along the flow, but also sewage, separations and flowing in of all kinds of organic waste on daily basis. The alarming situation with the pollution of the Vardar River is also confirmed by the Public Health Centre – Skopje. The conducted analysis of the quality of water, upon the request of the “Fourth Leaf” shows that it is 4th category of water, i.e. very polluted. The water in its natural state can be used neither for bathing and recreation, nor for watering. The documentary deals with these devastating results.

We will need decades for the situation to return to normal. This can be done by constructing purification stations, bigger control of the industry, but also via appropriate education on this topic in primary schools, as advised in the film by professor Trajche Stafilov, Ph.D. from the Chemistry Institute at the Faculty of Natural Sciences in Skopje

**The situation with the pollution of the Vardar River and its tributaries is alarming, as they are the source of life for a big number of settlements. On the other hand, the people who need it the most are the most unconscientious towards the river.**

The thirty-minute-long documentary has had more than 1,200 views on YouTube from June until now. It is part of the project “It Is about Water”, funded by Civica Mobilitas.

The film can be watched [HERE](#).



# The Youth of Ohrid Say: As People We Have Many More Similarities in Our Mentality and Culture, than Differences that Create Divisions

The event took place in the spirit of togetherness, with young people learning that only by respecting the differences we can build bridges of cooperation.

The event was used to present the results of the project activities where more than 120 high school students, university students, young people and members of youth organizations and forums of women of political parties participated. In the period of January to May this year, there were the following events that were held: workshops on multiculturalism, tolerance, building bridges of cooperation, mutual understanding, multi-ethnic and intercultural dialogue, fight against hate speech, stereotypes and prejudices; a multicultural camp where the participants developed leadership skills via intercultural dialogues and building a critical attitude towards social changes; tolerant coffee – discussion of 20 young people with representatives of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, Catholic Church and Islamic Religious Community, on topics related to religious tolerance and joint life.

“Via the implementation of each of the individual activities, we have realized that with Ohrid youth there is a huge potential to accept every segment of the differences that surround us. The knowledge on this topic has been transferred to the families and friends”, adds Cvetanoska.

The volunteers and youth in Ohrid have understood the message and they confirmed that they are prepared to dedicate themselves to the idea of positive multi-ethnic climate, which is abundant with wealth that is worth of respect and celebration. According to them, as people we have many more similarities in our mentality and culture rather than differences that create divisions.

The project had big impact in its environment. There are organizations from Croatia and Montenegro interested in this topic, wanting to implement it at regional level, via Erasmus+ educational programme. This is a fact that indicates that the success which we have created with Civica Mobilitas can contribute to a stronger and more coherent multi-ethnic region among the young people, say the people from “Inclusion”.



With gjomleze, ajvar, pindjur, baklava, kadaif and other traditional food of the Macedonian, Turkish, Albanian and Egyptian communities, the intercultural dialogue in Ohrid and the closure of the project “Through One Prism – We Are All the Same” of the Association for Multicultural Integration “Inclusion” was celebrated in a symbolic way.

The multicultural visit that took place on 22 May 2021 consisted of 30 people aged up to 35 years of more ethnic communities, participants in the project. “The event was in the spirit of togetherness, and the young people learnt that only by respecting the differences we can build bridges of cooperation”, says Vesna Cvetanoska from the association.



## First Radio Programme Specialized for Blind People and People with Impaired Sight

Six months, 24 shows and 1,440 minutes of radio air for the voice of the blind and the people with impaired sight in the country. The radio waves of the Skopje “Urban FM – 90.8” were enriched with a new programme content from January to June this year, supported by Civica Mobilitas via the project “Support to the Blind and People with Impaired Sight”.

Once per week, for one hour, the citizens with visual impairment sent their messages via the programme, got informed about topics that concern them, they asked the guests questions, gave suggestions and proposals.

“For the first time in a medium in Macedonia there was a programme on the challenges that the blind and people with impaired sight face in the country”, says Ivo Jankovski, President of the Association “Centre for Creative Communications”.

Once per week, for an hour, the citizens of this category sent their messages via the programme, they got informed on topics that concern them, they asked questions to the guests, gave suggestions and proposals. The proper choice of guests is most important for the effect of the programme to be achieved to the maximum, the association states, adding: “The selection of guests was made in consultation with the Association of the Blind. We have invited those that we considered would be best to present the specific topic that we speak about in the programme. Our guests were: doctors specialists, mayors, representatives of various ministries, government agencies, psychologists, etc.”.

## Using Musicals to Learn about Other Cultures and Exchange Experience

Fifty young people from Macedonia, Italy, Turkey, Spain, Estonia and Slovakia participated in an on-line youth exchange in June this year, as part of the project “European Orchestra”, coordinated by the Council for Prevention of Youth Delinquency – SPPMD, an institutional grantee of Civica Mobilitas, supported by Erasmus+ programme.

The participants aged 13-17 were prepared for interaction and exchange of various experience, traditions, beliefs with their peers from other countries.

“The exchange was supposed to take place in Slovakia in May, but because of the situation with the Corona virus it was held on-line. In this case, we tried, as much as possible, to virtually organize appropriate activities that would provide interaction and learning among the young. Of course, it was also a new experience for most of us, the older”, says Petre Mrkev from SPPMD.



The changes in the society show the success of the programme. After the participation of the mayors of the municipalities Karposh and Centar, Stefan Bogoev and Sasha Bogdanovik, the situation changed to better for the people with visual disability. In the municipality of Karposh the application “M-Community” which is used for a direct contact with the citizens was also turned into an audio adaptation; in the municipality of Centar they work on improving the infrastructure for mobility of the blind.

“We are very happy and satisfied that the feedback after the full implementation of this project is huge! Immediately after its completion, we received a letter from the Association of the Blind of the City of Skopje, asking us to continue the project, telling us that it is very important for them to have such a channel of communication to be in touch with all novelties important for them!”, stressed Jankovski.

The participants aged 13-17 prepared for interaction, mutual learning and exchange of various experience, tradition, understanding with their peers from other countries.

Every national team prepared a short theatre play – a musical based on specific national features. Within the exchange, every team performed a musical show from another country. A month before the exchange, the performances were translated into English and sent to some of the partners, in order for them to get acquainted with the script and prepare it.



The Macedonia team was made of 13 young people and 4 educators. Our representatives had the task to prepared the performance of Slovakia, while our script was performed by the Estonia team. The music at the event was directly performed by the young. Apart from the performances, every national team had prepared presentations and videos about famous musicians and musicals from their countries, who were presented and further discussed during the

virtual mobility. The participants from the country chose to present Tanec ensemble, as part of our traditional wealth and Toshe Proeski, as an omnipresent symbol of our modern music.

During the exchange, the participants upgraded their knowledge and they got acquainted with the StoryBoardThat application ([www.storyboardthat.com](http://www.storyboardthat.com)), which enables usage of various tools to prepare an animated musical play. After they have mastered the basic techniques, every team would work on preparing a short animation, based on traditional stories, in which they inserted their own music. Every team sed their unique way to present their story to the others.

“This was another positive experience for the young people. Many of them (as with the previous events) also cried, feeling sorry that they cannot see each other physically. They all expressed their wishes to prepare a joint new project, which will be a follow-up of the results of this project and which will enable them to continue their friendship and create together”, the organization adds.

## Volunteering Activities Improving the Social Responsibility of the Young

The Citizen Association for Culture and Arts AN-BLOK from Skopje conducted several seminars and workshops for young people aged 16-19 at the beginning of June 2021, on the topics of volunteering and social responsibility. Around 100 participants had the chance to hear more information and discuss the Law on Volunteering to improve the abilities to communicate with the elderly and the children.

The two lecturers, prof. Miroslav Pendarovski, Ph.D. Associate Professor at the Faculty of Psychology at the International Slavic University and Poliksena Ilioska, pedagogue at “St. Clement of Ohrid” primary school in Skopje worked with the participants to stimulate positive social values with them and develop awareness for conscientious and responsible behaviour and increased self-confidence. There were discussions on proper organization of free time and healthy lifestyles, proper growth and development and building healthy personalities with stable moral values and meeting the needs of the community and strengthening the ties with it.

After the seminars and workshops, the participants, with the support of the educators, continued with practical volunteering activity that is implemented in four small group homes of the public institutions “11 October” Children’s Home.

“With the project ‘Stimulating Social Responsibility with the Young via Volunteering Activities’ we want to stimulate their social responsibility via active and quality usage of free time”, says Poliksena Ilioska from AN-BLOK. According to her, this informal education that is provided for the young will be used for the volunteering activities, it will improve their social values and in longer term it will improve the quality of life at local level.

The participants are students of the medical high school “D-r Panche Karagjozov” from Skopje, and the financial support to the project is provided by Civica Mobilitas.



# HIV Positive Status for HIV Positive Stories

Have you ever asked yourself how the life of an HIV positive person looks in our country? The predominant image of living with this status is a state of constant sickness and suffering. However, this is completely different than the seven stories that our HIV positive compatriots tell us.

What makes all of these stories positive is the fact that their protagonists found out about their HIV positive status in time and started receiving regular therapy, while their lives almost did not change.

The Association for Support of People Living with HIV – Stronger Together, an institutional grantee of Civica Mobilitas and Health Education and Research Association – HERA conducted the campaign “HIV Positive Stories: I Live the Life in All Colours”, which marks the European Week of HIV Testing.

“It is well known that here, but also in a broader sense the conditions are not ripe for the HIV people to reveal their status and talk about their experience. The goal was to create a platform and space to talk on this topic, so at the same time people hear about these positive examples and find out about this side of living with HIV”, says Andrej Senih from “Together Stronger” association. What makes these stories positive is the fact that their protagonists found out

about their HIV positive status in time and started to take therapy regularly, while their life almost did not change.

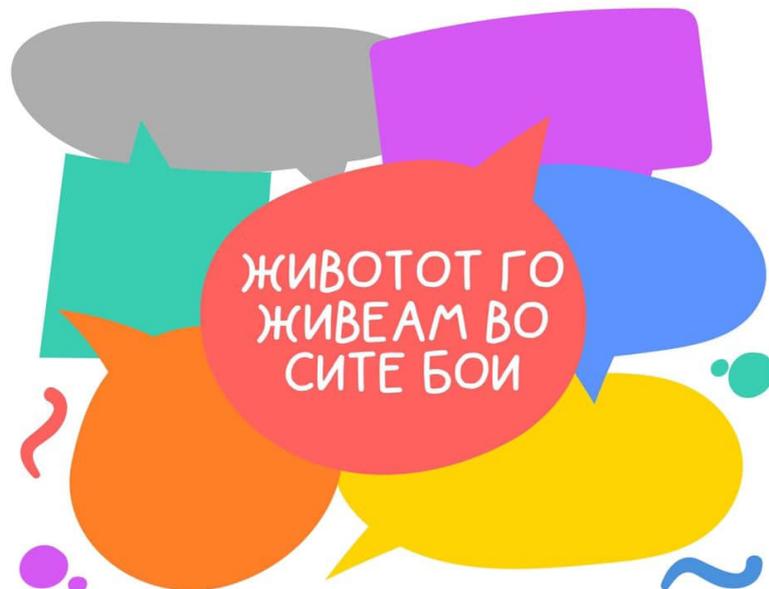
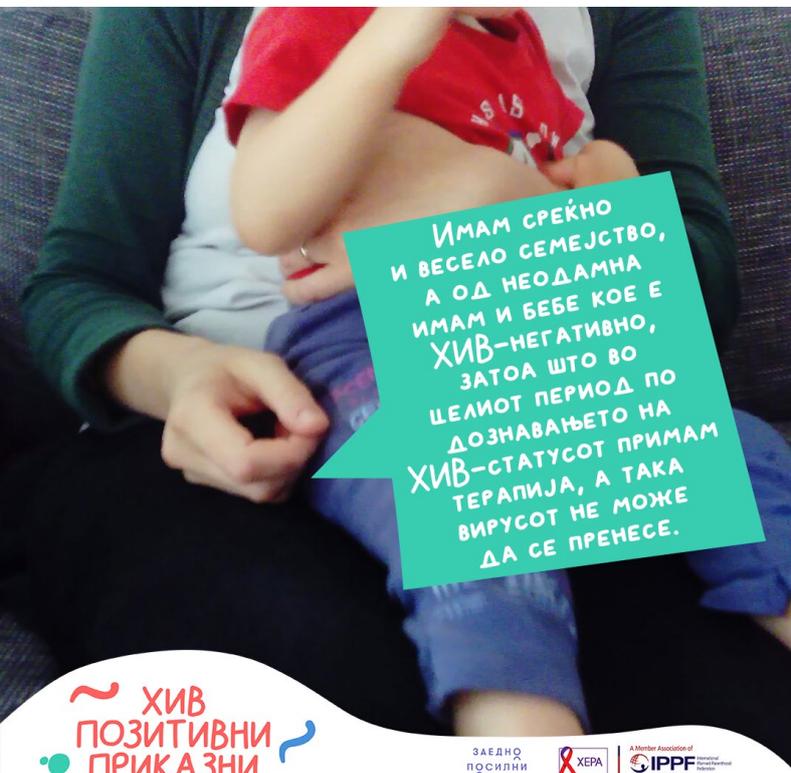
“Living with HIV might sound awful at first glance, but it is not. I have been living with the knowledge that I am HIV positive for more than a year, and it did not change a lot in my life. I work as before, and the only change in my daily routine is that I take my therapy on daily basis”, says Dejan A. from Skopje.

A four-member family also share their story about their positive status which they found out about via the health condition of their six-year-old daughter. They have lived with HIV for already nine years and K.M. says: “I have a happy and joyful family. Since recently I also have a baby that is HIV negative because I have been taking a therapy from the moment I found out about my status”.

Expressing their emotional experiences, apart from eliminating prejudices for living with the virus, the participants in this campaign also had a higher goal – to motivate as many people as possible to find out about their HIV status.

The Association for Support of People Living with HIV – Stronger Together and the Association for Health Education and Research – HERA joined more than 600 organizations in Europe this year to mark the European Week of HIV Testing, from 31 May-7 June 2021.

You can read the full stories [HERE](#).



**ХИВ позитивни приказни**

Европска недела на тестирање за ХИВ

31 мај - 7 јуни 2021

ЗАЕДНО  
ПОСИЛНИ

ХЕРА

A Member Association of  
IPPF  
International  
Partner Network

# CIVIC PARTICIPATION

## Children without Parents and Parental Care Need Economic Education and Integration

The participants at the two-day workshops of Bravura Kooperativa from Delchevo called “Challenge 18” had a unique opportunity to hear about the experience of a former beneficiary of a Small Group Home (MGD) about what he faced with after he had left the Home. The young people that leave the homes when they turn 18 receive a one-off assistance of MKD 180,000. This is the amount that he received, but he spent it in a short time, for entertainment, betting houses and similar things, becoming a young person at risk. Not knowing whom to address, the boy asked assistance from the Small Group Home which he had recently left. Following a series of discussions about what he wants and can work and where he sees himself, he has undergone preparations to join the Army as a professional soldier. This boy is not the only one that faces management of the funds that he has at his disposal. The research made by the Institute for Social Affairs shows that more than 90% of the children spend these funds in the first three months since they leave the home, mostly on expensive phones, lap top, clothes and other personal needs, which brings them to a situation of social risk again.

The social and economic integration of the children without parents and parental care was in the focus of this workshop, as well as the whole project of Bravura Kooperativa, called “Inclusive Bridge 18”, supported by Civica Mobilitas. “The presentations of the professors at the Faculty of Economy at ‘Goce Delchev’ University, Marija Gogova Simonkov and Elena Veselinova that concerned the available and potential sources of funding, financial management and how to come from an idea to a business were made in a very clear way, which helped all the participants”, says Aleksandar Nikolov from Bravura Kooperativa and he adds that he is especially thankful to the two professors for this.

The reactions of the participants show that the message has reached them. “Today I saw new possibilities, how to invest in myself and how to use in a smart way the money that I receive after leaving the Home, as well as the other possibilities for financing. The experience that has been shared with us by my older friend, about how he irrationally spent his money, made me think a lot,” says a 17-year-old boy who should soon leave MGD. For his 16-year old friend this is a possibility to find out how it is outside and how to fight and fulfil his rights.

Bravura Kooperativa, together with the collaborators from the Faculty of Economy at “Goce Delchev” University in Shtip are preparing “Guide to the Economic World”. This guide should be used by the MKFD employees to transfer this knowledge and skills to the children, in order to prepare them for functioning in the external world. The whole

The research made by the Institute for Social Affairs showed that 95% of the children spend the financial assistance of MKD 180,000 in the first three months after they leave the home, which brings them again in a state of social risk.

process, as Nikolov said, takes place in cooperation with MLSP and the Institute for Social Affairs, and this content should be part of the education of the current and all future users of MGD. In the next period, the beneficiaries who are 17 years old will be mentored by Economic Faculty students who will help them make a business plan, i.e. check the possibilities for employment or self-employment after they leave MGD.

The workshop took place on 27 and 28 May 2021 at “Park Panorama” hotel restaurant in Delchevo, and it was attended by 13 participants.



# New E-Services in Education Will Make the Lives of the Citizens Easier

The Centre for Change Management (CUP) has prepared a number of electronic services for the needs of the Ministry of Education, whose final beneficiaries are the citizens. Thanks to this digitalization one does no longer have to go to a counter or to the institutions to have formal recognition of primary school, high school or university education diplomas obtained abroad, for the enrolment in primary school, for application to the calls for scholarships and for applying for financial support to rehabilitate schools. Apart from this, with the background software there is also electronic management and resolving of cases by the Ministry commissions.

**The investments in digitization will lead to building a more resilient society and strong possibilities for dealing with corruption as an additional effect in the overall process.**

The procedure is simple, the citizens register at the e-service portal (uslugi.gov.mk), choose the service, fill in the data and send. The services that CUP has prepared are fully digitized, unlike part of the services that already exist at the portal that offers 1,300 e-services in total. The CUP analysis has shown that the incomplete digitization of the services decreases the usage.

“Digitization is very important in and out of this health crisis, as well as constant promotion of digital literacy with every citizen”, says Neda Maleska, the Executive Director of CUP. According to her, the continuation of investments in digitization undoubtedly leads to building a more resilient society and strong possibilities to deal with corruption as an additional effect of the whole process. “it is very important”, she adds, “to channel the process of digitization to the young. The universities should adjust to these processes in order to decrease to the minimum the administrative bureaucratic processes and barriers that the students face”, said Maleska.

The good digital services should go together with the good digital infrastructure (on-line devices and Internet). According to Kaido Pabuski, senior policy advisor at SIGMA, Covid-19 crisis has shown us that digitization is something that is not only impossible to avoid, but it has also become one of the biggest priorities. “Digitization still cannot cover everything, especially in education, and therefore it is important to know which part can be digitized, such as the services offered by CUP”, he said during the on-line conference “Digitization of Services in the Area of Education”, where he was one of the speakers.

According to Boro Jakimovski, a professor at FINKI, the fast and efficient transformation to digital society is necessary. “One needs strategy, coordination among the institutions, certain legal changes and of course adjustment of the human resources within the institutions. In a word, the cooperation and management of the resistance that occurs with part of the employees in the public institutions is needed,

but also a visible synergy among the public, private sector and the academic community on this topic”, he stressed.

In the preparation of the e-services, CUP cooperated with the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Information Society and Administration, whose first people spoke at the conference. The services are part of the project “Digitization of the Public Service in RSM for Unhindered Functioning”, financed by the Government of the United Kingdom, with the support of the British Embassy Skopje. The Centre for Change Management is a beneficiary of a Civica Mobilitas institutional grant.

## ПРОЦЕС НА ЕЛЕКТРОНСКА ПРИЈАВА НА ДЕЦА ВО ГРАДИНКИ

-  Најавете се на националниот портал за е-Услуги (uslugi.gov.mk).
-  Во делот на е-услуги отворете ја услугата за **упис на дете во градинка**.
-  При отворање на електронскиот формулар, автоматски се пополнуваат основните податоци за родителот и детето кое се пријавува. Изберете **до три градинки** каде би сакале да се пријави детето, во редослед по приоритет на интерес.
-  Внесете дополнителни податоци за детето и **испратете го формуларот**.

Оваа визуелизација е изработена во рамки на проектот „Дигитализација во јавниот сектор во РСМ за непречено функционирање“ финансиран од Владата на Обединето Кралство, со поддршка на Британската амбасада Скопје, а имплементиран од Центарот за управување со промени. Мислењата и ставовите наведени во оваа содржина не ги одразуваат секогаш мислењата и ставовите на Британската Влада.

## 5 ЧЕКОРИ ЗА БРЗА И ЛЕСНА ЕЛЕКТРОНСКА НОСТРИФИКАЦИЈА НА ВАШАТА ДИПЛОМА ИЛИ СВИДЕТЕЛСТВО

-  Пристапете кон националниот портал за е-Услуги (uslugi.gov.mk)
-  Пребарајте ја услугата за нострификација и еквиваленција на свидетелства и дипломи
-  Пополнете ја електронската апликација
-  Прикачете ги вашите документи
-  Извршете плаќање

Оваа визуелизација е изработена во рамки на проектот „Дигитализација во јавниот сектор во РСМ за непречено функционирање“ финансиран од Владата на Обединето Кралство, со поддршка на Британската амбасада Скопје, а имплементиран од Центарот за управување со промени. Мислењата и ставовите наведени во оваа содржина не ги одразуваат секогаш мислењата и ставовите на Британската Влада.



# Network of Audience Councils Will Work on Communication Rights of the Vulnerable Groups

RESIS Institute, with Civica Mobilitas support established the Network of Audience Councils (<https://www.resis.mk/mreza-od-soveti-na-publiki>) from January to June 2021, where there are children and minors, people with sense and other disability, people with rare diseases, LGBT community representatives, socially endangered groups, addicts and other vulnerable groups. The goal of the Network is to encourage the CSOs to work jointly and in a coordinated way on fulfilling the communication rights of the vulnerable groups in the public sphere.

More than 50 CSOs at local level working with various vulnerable groups are part of the network that will stand for fulfilment of the communication rights of those people in the public sphere.

There were six workshops held with the participation of CSOs from all regions in the country (<https://resis.mk/vesti-mreza-od-soveti-na-publiki/>), representatives of the Council for Media Ethics and the Agency for Audio and Audio-visual Media Services. Several key issues that the vulnerable groups in the country face when it comes to the public sphere were identified and there were discussions on joint initiatives and ideas for overcoming them.

“The access of vulnerable groups and local communities to the media contents is seriously endangered”, say the people at RESIS giving several reasons: the public service is marginalized and it has lost the connection to the civic society; the national private media focus on politics and mainly at events at central level; with the local media there is some cooperation, but they mostly cover the topics that concern the vulnerable groups marginally.

Another problem is the audio-visual regulation which does not define the issue of public interest appropriately, as it could also concern the work of the CSOs and campaigns for awareness raising. Because of this, commercial media most of the time refuse to give appropriate access or ask for high amounts for broadcasting them.

When it comes to legal regulations, one of the issues is the lack of legal regulation of the contents that are published on the Internet. Hate speech, discrimination and other insulting contents to certain vulnerable categories of citizens are much more present on the Internet, and therefore it is necessary for the CSOs to cooperate with the Council for Media Ethics much more (when it comes to on-line media) or to jointly follow and react when the rights of any vulnerable group are violated on the social networks. Apart from this, RESIS suggest to intensify the

communication of the CSOs with the regulatory body – the Agency for Audio and Audio-visual Media Services, which has competencies and instruments for influencing the media pluralism and content diversity in the audio-visual sphere, in order to improve the access and visibility of the vulnerable groups in the audio-visual contents.

The establishment of the Network was preceded by a process of action research (<https://resis.mk/images/abut-us/PDF/Proценка.pdf>) through which the CSOs themselves critically assessed the media contents, the situation in media pluralism and public sphere in a broader sense. Based on the results of the action research, RESIS prepared Guidelines for Strategic Networking and Communication (<https://resis.mk/images/abut-us/PDF/Nasoki.pdf>), which have the basic principles and directions for the work of the Network.

**МРЕЖА ОД СОВЕТИ НА ПУБЛИКИ**  
Поддржано од Програмата ЦИВИКА Мобилитас

Институтот РЕСИС, со поддршка на програмата ЦИВИКА Мобилитас, работи на воспоставување Мрежа од совети на публики, во осумте региони низ земјата, составени од претставници на ГО кои работат на остварување на правата на различни ранливи групи. Целта на оваа Мрежа е низ координирано заедничко дејствување граѓанските организации да извршат поголемо влијание врз медиумите и медиумските политики со цел да се направи квалитетен исчекор во поглед начинот на кој во медиумската сфера се остваруваат правата на ранливите групи.

АКТИВНОСТИ      ЕДУКАТИВНИ РЕСУРСИ      ВЕСТИ

Повеќе      Повеќе      Повеќе

**ГРАЃАНСКИ ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ - ЧЛЕНКИ НА МРЕЖАТА**

Југозападен регион	Вардарски регион	Југоисточен регион	Скопски регион
Северноисточен регион	Педагошки регион	Полошки регион	Источен регион

# COOPERATION

## Konekt Awarded New Leaders for the Sustainable Development Goals

On 23 June 2021 in Skopje, at a gala ceremony, Konekt CSO in partnership with the Global Agreement Network in the Republic of North Macedonia granted the Sustainable Development (Sustainable Development Goals – SDGs) Awards to companies, individuals and young business leaders from companies.

**“I admire the work of the winners or the awards and I would like to encourage other companies and individuals working in the private sector to follow their example,” – said H.E. Rossana Dudziak, UN Permanent Coordinator in RNM.**

The awards were granted in three categories:

With the companies, the awards were granted to EVN Macedonia AD Skopje, Macedonian Telecom, Grin IT DOO Skopje, Alkaloid AD Skopje, Pakomak DOO Skopje.

In the category of individuals, the awards were granted to Borche Stamenov from Bidat Informatika, as well as Ivica Pockov and Nikola Gligorov from Luksiko DOOEL Sveti Nikole.

The young business leader award (up to 35 years of age) were granted to Gorjan Jovanovski from Moja Firma DOOEL Skopje.

H.E. Rossana Dudziak, the UN Permanent Coordinator in RNM did not hide her satisfaction with the works of the winners who, according to her inspire with their examples, “...from how to secure computers to evert child during the Covid-19 crisis via recycling and donations, to introducing renewable energy sources, smart city solutions, to investing in training and promotion of current and future skills of the employees – I admire the work of the winners or the awards and I would like to encourage other companies and individuals working in the private sector to follow their example”, she said.

Apart from the awards, Konekt also granted awards in the same categories for contribution to fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Van Hool Macedonia DOOEL, Kam Markets, Makpetrol AD Skopje, Makprogres DOO, NOVA International Schools, Skopje Brewery AD, SunSmart Solar Systems Skopje, USJE Cement Company AD Skopje and Sprakasse Bank Macedonia AD Skopje were given the awards in the category for companies.

Ana Dangova Hut from INTER PARTES attorney-at-law company Skopje, Gjorgji Trajkovski from Macedonian Telecom, Jasna Velichkov from Arel Neuromarketing, Marija Georgievska from Nasha TV and Momir Polenakovik, from PricewaterhouseCoopers North Macedonia (PwC) received awards in the category for individuals.

At the ceremony for granting of the awards there was an address of Fatmir Bityqi, Vice Prime Minister for Economic Issues, Coordination of Economic Portfolios and Investments. “...For a change to happen, real partnership is needed, as well as collective engagement and joint fight. Therefore, I am especially happy to see that the private sector is more and more oriented to sustainable work and contributes to better society,” stressed Bityqi.

The people awarded responded to the open call in May 2021. “Via the sustainable development goals, the businesses channel the influence that they have to create a better society. The recipients of the awards are aware that sustainability is a key segment of the business development”, said Nikica Kusinikova, the Executive Director of Konekt and she added that they would continue to support all businesses in fulfilment of their goals by building partnerships with the civil sector and institutions.

The annual work plan of Konekt is supported by Civica Mobilitas.



**The sustainable development goals are accepted by all UN member countries and they need to be fulfilled by 2030. They are the action plan of the world for fair globalization and better future for all. Together, via courageous steps and cooperation among all sector of the society, we can put an end to the extreme poverty, fight against inequality and deal with climate changes. Join us to make a step forward and make sure that nobody is left behind.**

# When One Speaks of Corruption, One Rarely Thinks of Urban Planning, but when One Speaks of Urban Planning One Thinks of Corruption

“All for Fair Trials” coalition, in cooperation with Open Society Foundation Macedonia held an on-line round table on 12 April 2021 where the findings and recommendations of the research on corruption risks in urban planning at local level were presented.

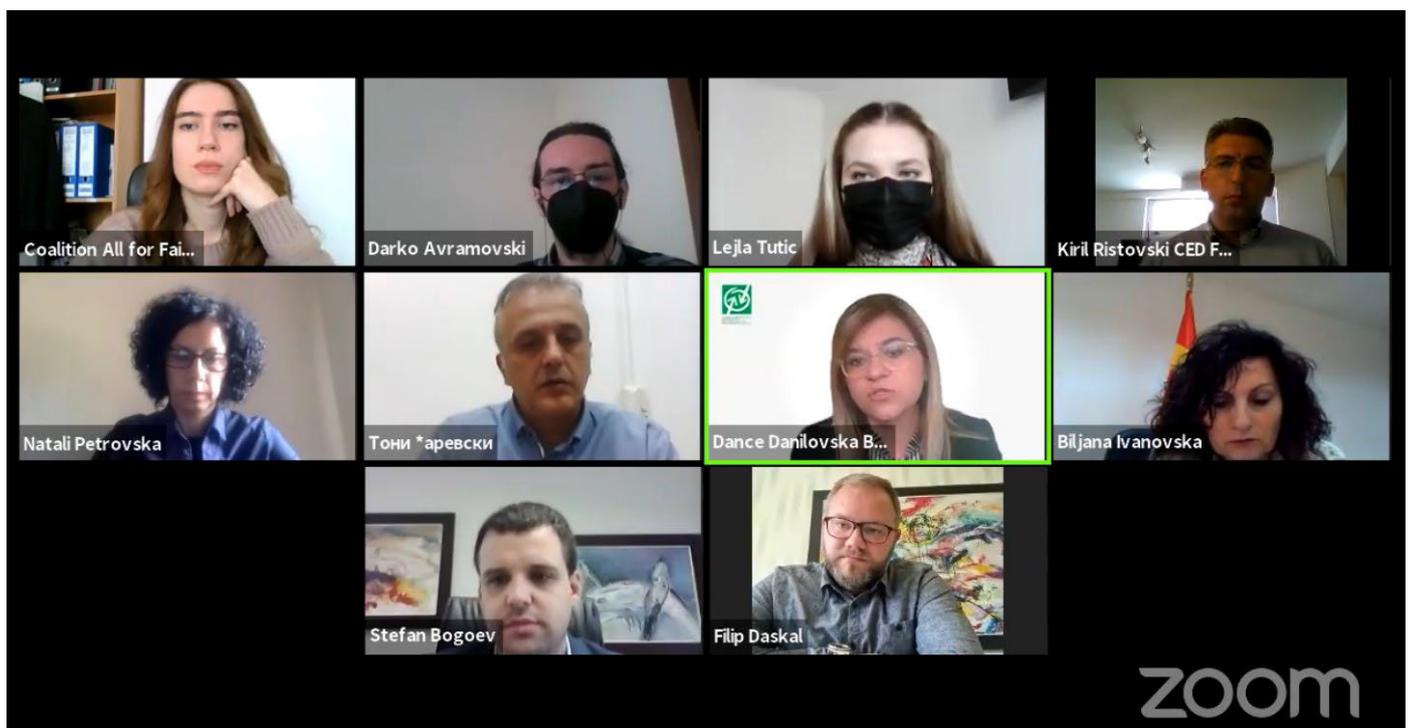
The project was implemented at local level, in the municipality of Karposh where the Coalition conducted a public survey with the citizens. The results showed that 30% of the citizens see the construction expansion as the biggest problem, unemployment is on the second place (10%), and the third most frequent problem is security (8%). Construction expansion is seen as an activity that brings corruptive actions with the local government. In order to restore trust in the local institutions, the Coalition and a team of employees at the municipality of Karposh worked on an “integrity system” in order to prevent corruptive behaviour, improve the services, encourage the people to recognize and report corruption. The Coalition has provided free legal aid, and the municipality has also appointed an integrity officer to protect the whistleblowers.

For the mayor of Karposh, Stefan Bogoev, trust can only be increased with systemic changes. “We promote digitization of the public services, which also means less human influence on the processes, and thus less space for corruption. Therefore, via ‘mZaednica’ mobile application, people from Karposh communicate directly with the sectors, and they can also apply for subsidies, submit requests for one-off financial assistance, etc.”, said Bogoev.

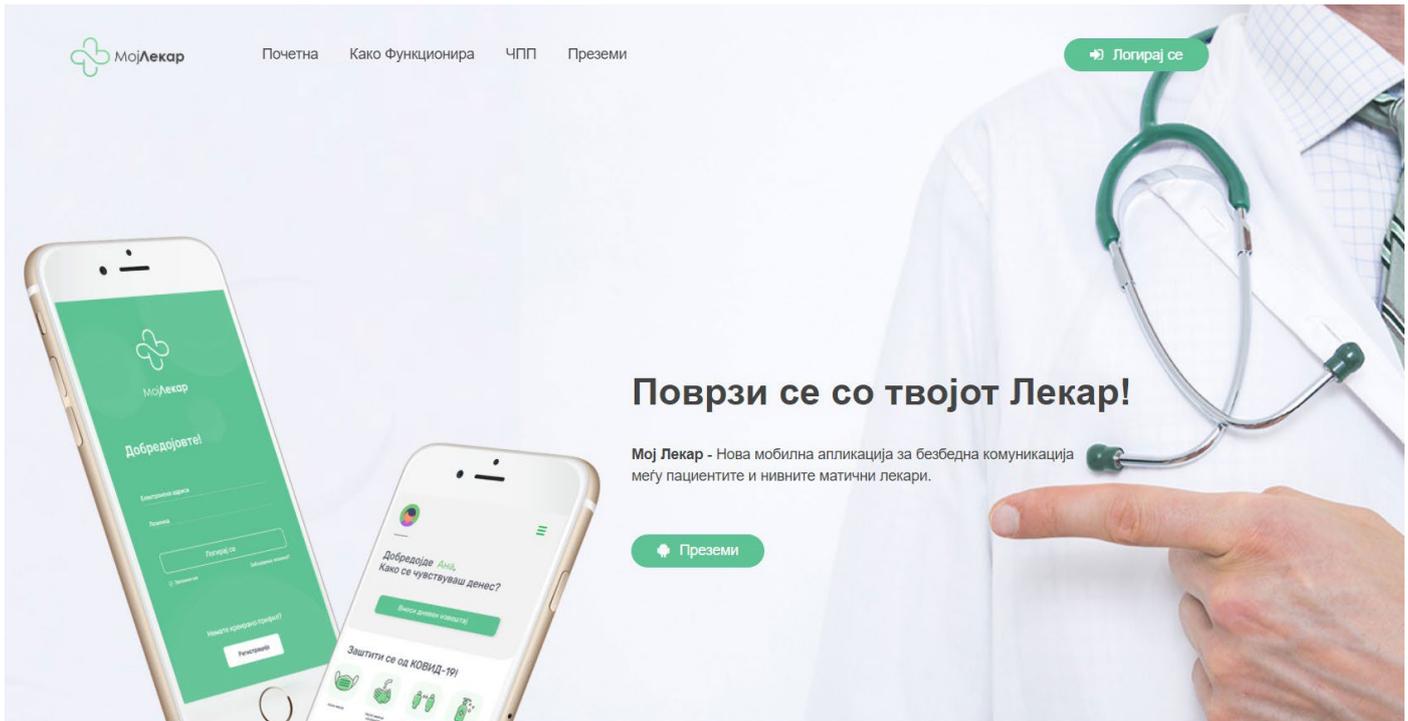
The findings show that urban planning is one of the three most frequent areas for which the citizens have requested legal aid.

The findings and recommendations of the risk analysis for corruption in the area of urban planning at local level were presented at the round table. There was an anticorruption assessment of the Law on Urban Planning as the most important law that sets the basis for urban planning. It is a “young” law adopted in February 2020. According to Darko Avramovski, legal advisor at the Coalition and author of the analysis, the shortcomings that can result in corruptive behaviour are caused by imprecise regulations in the law. Specific definitions would avoid the risk of alternative interpretations of the regulations in practice, as well as the occurrence of different actions, decreasing of legal security and predictability, as well as increasing the occurrence of corruption and conflict of interests, says Avramovski.

The analysis and other activities are part of the project “Corruption? Not in My Municipality!”, supported by the United States of America International Development Agency (USAID).



# Connect with Your Doctor via “My Doctor”



The Digital Innovation and Transformation Association – InnoHab in cooperation with the Association for Resident and Young Doctors (ASML) in May this year launched the free service for telemedicine, branded under the name “My Doctor”.

This is a mobile application accessible on Google Play, which provides secure communication between the patients that have Covid-19 and family doctors. In order to register, one needs the name and the surname of the patient, a valid phone number and an e-mail. The doctors are registered in the system only if they have a valid fax, valid phone number and an e-mail.

“My Doctor” has a base of 20 family doctors in our country, and until the end of June it was downloaded more than 500 times.

The service can be used for individual tracking of health, but also to share information with the family doctor. The expert has the possibility to connect with his patient by accepting the invitation to share data and thus, follow the health situation. “My Doctor” has a standard questionnaire for patients in self-isolation because of Covid-19, in order to follow the health situation 24/7. “How do you feel compared to the previous report?”, “Do you feel exhausted, do you have pain in your joints...”, “What is your temperature”, are part of the questions when filling in the daily report.

“Follow the situation of your health, use the technologies and enable the doctors more time for their real job – taking care of you, patients”, say the people at InnoHab.

**Using “My Doctor” connect with your family doctor, take care of your health and save the precious time of the doctors, which is the rarest resource in Covid-19 crisis.**

In the future, there will be more questionnaires on following other health conditions, explain the people at the association. Soon, the “chat” service will also be available via the application, to directly communicate with a doctor and have the possibility to have a video conference.

“My Doctor” service has been supported by the Embassy of Australia in Belgrade and the Balkan Trust for Democracy (BTD).

# ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

## Civica Mobilitas Grantees Discussed the Benefits of Self-Regulation

The first draft of the “Code for CSOs in Macedonia” was presented on the on-line workshop that took place on 21 June 2021, where 36 representatives of Civica Mobilitas grantees participated.

This tool should strengthen the system of self-regulation and contribute to bigger professionalism and accountability of CSOs, which is expected to increase the trust of the citizens and donors in the system.

Aleksandra Savevska, project assistant at the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (MCIC) in her presentation spoke about the need, preparation and contents of the Code for CSOs. “This is a good start to build the awareness for the inner improvement, how we want to work and what we want to achieve with our work for better development of the society. We think that such a tool should be implemented in every organization, of course, gradually with small steps”, stressed Savevska.

The Code covers seven basic values that describe the work of the CSOs and eight pledges, translated in 45 standards, i.e. work principles.

The short survey that was conducted at the beginning of the workshop, which included everybody, showed the perception of the people present that the public (citizens, private sector, etc.) has a partial trust in the CSOs. The majority of the participants think that the donors largely know the work of the CSOs, unlike the Government and state institutions whom they partially understand and know the pledges of the civil sector.

The participants discussed the self-regulation system in groups and they dealt with issues related to legitimacy, the current structure, but also institutionalization of the Code of the CSOs. Everybody agrees that the Code gives the

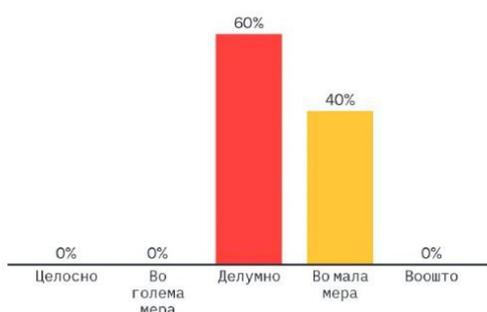


basic directions and rules for the work of the CSOs which are simple for interpretation and implementation. The Code will improve the organizations, it will contribute to increasing the trust of the citizens and donors in the CSOs, it will have an impact on creating a better image of the sector, and with the transparency it will enable the public to have an overview of the activities and achievements in the society.

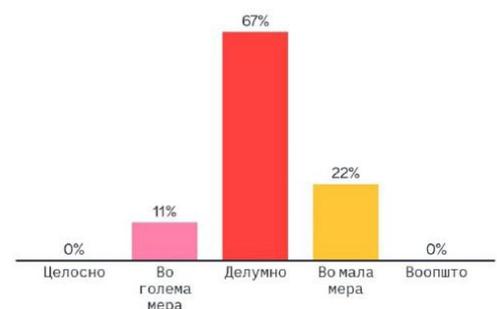
In the next phase the CSO representatives will review the draft version of the Code in detail and send their suggestions for its improvement.

The workshop is part of the activities implemented by MCIC via the programme “Sustainable Civil Society – State Funding for CSOs” which is funded by the European Union.

**Владата и државните институции ја разбираат и доволно добро ја познаваат работата на ГО.**



**Јавноста (граѓаните, приватниот сектор, итн.) има висока доверба во граѓанските организации (ГО).**



# More than 60% of CSOs Have Not Used Municipal or State Funding

Rural Coalition analysed the state funding of local CSOs with a special focus on agriculture and rural development. The main findings of the analysis were presented at a separate event that took place on 28 May 2021, on-line. “Partnership, expertise, cooperation are the three key pillars which are the basis for the cooperation between the CSOs and municipalities”, says Liljana Jonoski, the Executive Director of Rural Coalition and adds that this is the only way to promote the enabling environment for work of the CSOs in the municipalities and improve their sustainability.

The analysis follows the state of affairs in several municipalities: Ohrid, Bitola, Prilep, Kumanovo, Kriva Palanka, Kichevo, Krivogastani and Staro Nagorichane, and for three of them there are separate case studies made.

The authors of the analysis conclude that the funds from the municipal budgets are not used because of the organizations are not informed about this possibility, and the reasons for this are with both parties. Apart from this, another problem is the rebalance of the municipal budgets which does not allow for systematic planning of the funds. This can be a result of the low budget situation of the municipality, but also the capacity of the municipalities to plan their revenues and effectively spend them. The findings also indicate lack of thematic diversity of the projects which are supported and the biggest part of the municipal funds go to sport activities, and the cultural ones are on the second place. “The funds that the municipalities have for support of CSOs via Item 463 – Transfer to Non-Governmental Organizations are very small, but here comes the partnership and mutual support for application and implementation of projects supported by foreign donors”, stressed Donka Petrovska, a long-term CSO activist, now head of the Local Economic Development Sector and Strategic Partnerships Unit in the Municipality of Kumanovo.

Taking into consideration the special interest of the organization in agriculture and rural development, an additional research has been made, including 122 associations that

directly or indirectly work in this sector. Data collection was made via a questionnaire in the period between September and December 2020. “Rural municipalities are in a far worse situation than the urban ones”, said Nikolche Papuchkoski from the Local Economic Development Sector of the Municipality of Krivogastani, also in charge of CSOs. Because of small funds, what the municipality offers are partnerships, support to provide space or other types of resources to CSOs. “The municipality of Krivogastani is the first rural municipality that has prepared a strategy for cooperation with CSOs and local communities with the support of Rural Coalition”, added he.

**The organizations that work in the agriculture and rural development think that the calls for state funding are not publicly accessible and/or easy to be found. More than 90% could not find information about those that have received support.**

The findings show that 60.9% of the associations have not used financial support from the state institutions, and there was a bit higher percentage (65.2%) of those that have not used financial support from the municipality as well. Most of those that have used such a support, have received it once to three times in the last five years. Around 2/3 of those who have responded think that the calls for state funding are not publicly accessible and not easy to be found, while a big majority of 91.3% stated that information on the grantees is also not available.

The analysis and the event for its promotion is part of the annual work plan of the Rural Coalition, supported by Civica Mobilitas.



# Functional Mechanisms for Dialogue are Crucial for Enabling Environment for Civic Society



The EU project TACSO 3, organized a discussion on the cooperation between CSOs and public institutions on 17 and 18 June 2021. More than 40 representatives of CSOs and public institutions, mainly members of the Councils for Cooperation in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and North Macedonia, as well as CSOs that work on the topics and relevant public institutions from Serbia and Turkey.

**One of the needs is to build a consensus between the government and civil society stakeholders on the strategic priorities to create an enabling environment for civil society development and strengthening the accountability of the government bodies in charge of implementing the strategic measures that concern the work of the CSOs.**

The goal of the event was to discuss the needs and benefits of the cooperation between CSOs and authorities, as well as share the existing practices, discuss the effectiveness and efficiency of the Councils and learn from the best examples about the current trends of the civil dialogue in the region for enlargement and EU member countries, which was presented by the experts present.

The people responsible for the project at the EU Delegation in North Macedonia and Kosovo stressed that the functional mechanisms for dialogue between CSOs and public institutions are the crucial element for enabling environment for the civil society. Two experts made a comparative overview of the civil dialogue and cooperation in the EU member countries such as Bulgaria, Slovenia, Cyprus and presented a detailed case study of the Council of Croatia as a model for the other Councils in the Western Balkans and Turkey.

They summarised the current situation in the Western Balkans and Turkey and the lessons learnt from the existing Councils for Cooperation and speak about why the dialogue mechanisms are necessary. The issues of the civil society policies are needed to be put and kept on the government agenda and give regulatory possibilities for structured dialogue to shape the policies that concern the work of the CSOs. Also, one of the needs is to build a consensus between the government and the civil society stakeholders on the strategic priorities to create enabling environment for the development of the civil society and strengthening of the accountability of the government bodies responsible for implementation of the strategic measures that concern the work of the CSOs. The Councils should contribute to building confidence between the government and the civil society.

The speakers from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia also initiated a discussion on the work of the Councils, their mandates and leadership, as well as the factors for their effective and efficient work. There was a discussion on the composition of the Councils, selection criteria and procedure, as well as the transparency and communication with the rest of the civil society. The necessary resources for effective work of the Councils as a precondition for establishing functional mechanisms for cooperation were also discussed.

The participants also discussed that the effectiveness of the Councils depends on the respect of the basic freedoms, existence of a clear government policy (or long-term strategic frame) to support civil society, favourable political discourses and need for contribution of CSOs via the Council. The clarity of the mandate and range of work of the Councils also has a crucial role. Apart from this, following the influence of the work of the Councils is significant, which means that the Council should follow up its opinions and decisions.



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# Three Times more Landfills in the Country than Settlements



“Solid Waste Management/Landfills Needs vs. Possibilities” was the theme of Civica Mobiltas National Forum that took place on 30 June 2021 at Aleksandar Palace Hotel in Skopje.

The National Forum was opened by H.E. Sybille Suter Tejada, the Ambassador of the Switzerland said that everybody, both the institutions and the citizens, are responsible to help the nature renew. “The experts propose and create solutions that are safe for everybody. On the other hand, the citizens and CSOs should be included in the process of planning and implementation, to be sure that the institutions in charge will manage the waste properly”, said Ambassador Suter Tejada.

The participants in the discussion were the mayors of Kumanovo and Gostivar, and the representative of the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning (MZSPP).

“Are we as a society prepared to pay for the services, regardless of the political affiliation?”, asked Maksim Dimitrievski, the Mayor of Kumanovo. He thinks that the prices of the services should be realistic, unlike the factual situation. “The state the municipalities are very poor managers in this area. If we were good, we would not be in this situation. The future is in public-private partnership”, added Dimitrievski.

Mayor Taravari spoke about Rusinovo landfill, where one of the five regional landfills in the country is planned. He stressed that they had jointed the citizens at their protests against the location of the regional landfill. “We managed to have a short-term solution, that the Ministry considers the possibility to dislocate this regional landfill”.

According to Ana Mazneva-Karanfilova, there should be discussions with the civil sector on raising the awareness of the citizens. “They are the most competent on this issue and they can work a lot with the citizens”. She stressed that the investments in the waste infrastructure cost a lot of money which is partially obtained from the Swiss government, and the government will take a loan from the World Bank for the rest of the funds.

The CSO representatives discussed with the panellists about how much the local self-government maintains continuity in its strategies for hard waste management, the cooperation among the institutions, municipalities and the civil sector to strengthen the inspection superstitution in this area, how much real work is being done to educate the population about the benefits of the regional landfills, etc.

Lile Popovska, the representative of the Civil Inspection Council (GIS) stated that one of the problems is the insufficient control of the waste management system. She thinks that more coordination between the inspectors at national and local level is needed, as well as to build in civil control in the inspection supervision. According to Goran Vicachek from the Macedonian-Croatian Association, there should be communal police in order to improve the situation in the field. Konstanin Kraev from Changemakers organization thinks that the changes in the Law on Waste are not appropriate, especially when the control and supervision in the country are so weak.

For the first time, the business idea of Zoka Energy Solutions was presented before the public; it pertains to waste management and production of energy from it. The project anticipates collection of waste from 74% of the territory of the country and 48% of the population, which would lead to closure of all landfills.

Laze Filipov, the company representative, stressed that there are three times more landfills than the number of settlements in Macedonia and that the solution that they propose already functions in a number of European cities.

Apart from Zoka Energy Solution, Pakomak had a presentation on the latest models of waste selection.

The National Forum is the first event of Civica Mobiltas with physical presence this year. The health protocols were respected by all participants and the speakers and almost 80 CSO representatives.

# Proper Informing of the Citizens Can Restore the Confidence in Successful Census Implementation

“The CSOs can contribute to the education of the population when it comes to census. We are conducting a lot of activities for election education, and here I don’t see anything similar. They can explain the population why everybody should participate. With more communication and work in the field and in coordination with the State Statistical Office (DZS), the trust in the process can be increased”, stressed Aleksandar Krzhalovski, MCIC Director at the Civica Mobilitas thematic forum on: “Role of the Media and Civil Sector in the Public Information for Successful Implementation of 2021 Census”.



Katerina Sinadinovska, the President of the Council for Media Ethics in Macedonia considered the flow of information from DZS very important. “The responsibility of the media, CSOs and institutions is big. The more real news that experts transfer, the bigger the trust in the process”, said she.

The Civica Mobilitas thematic forum took place on 20 April 2021 in a different, television format, via “Programme 200” on Alsat-M TV, with the journalist Nazim Rashidi as the host and moderator. Apart from Krzhalovski and Sinadinovska, speaker at the forum was Apostol Simovski, Director of the State Statistical Office, and there was a short interview with H.E. Sybil Suter Techada, the Ambassador of the Switzerland in the country.

Speaking about the role of CSOs and media in informing about the census, the Ambassador Suter Tejada stressed that they “can intensify the discussion on the census and contribute that this sensitive issue is better understood by the citizens. The data of the census is not important only for the institutions, but for everybody as well”, said she. According to her, the media should distribute real information to the citizens and thus fulfil the role that they should have.

When asked if he could guarantee that all efforts will be made to have a relevant process by September, the time when the conducting of the census has been postponed, Director Simovski said unless he guaranteed he would not be leading this institution. “I have been in this Office for 30 years and my primary profession is the census. The reason for me to accept this function is to conduct a real statistical census in this country”, he stressed. Simovski added that the citizens can be calm because there cannot by any ma-

nipulation with the ethnic affiliation figures because of the way the data are entered, as it registers all changes.

Speaking about the lack of trust in the process, Simovski agreed that the politicians had had a maximum influence on the creation of this perception in the public. Regarding the information on the census so far, he stressed that he was pleased with the electronic and printed media that had correctly positioned themselves about the census. He recognized some negative tendencies with part of the online media, although mainly the approach was correct. “We were transparent to the maximum as an institution and probably this transparency is being returned by the media as well”, said Simovski.

Sinadinovska added that there had been no appeal with the Council of Media Ethics regarding the reporting related to the census. “However, it is a fact that main sources of information have been the political parties and leaders. The focus was on what the politicians had to say, rather than the experts”, said she. According to her, the problem for restoring the confidence are not the citizens, but rather the politicians. “I have supported postponing it because of the pandemics, but I don’t think that anything will change unless there is work done on the awareness of the politicians and political parties that should become responsible”, she stressed and added that she could not see a political will but an intention to discredit the complete system.

Postponing of the census and conducting it in September gives room for discussion and achieving a consensus among the political parties. “Unfortunately,” said Krzhalovski, “I don’t see that there are attempts to overcome the problems. For Civica Mobilitas, which works on improving the citizen participation in policy creation, it is important to have a good cooperation with DZS”. He added that he expected a joint declaration from the political parties that the census methodology is accepted by all and once again he stressed that CSOs want to be involved and help in the process of informing the public about the benefits of the census. This is in line with the DZS promotion concept, which, according to Simovski, plans to include the local and national media, but also CSOs. This promotion will take place during the summer if everything goes according to the plan.



# Mentorship Support Strengthening CSO Capacities



Redefining the goals and strategies of the organizations, preparation of organizational development plans, improvement of team work, etc., are part of the experiences shared by representatives of 11 Civica Mobilias institutional grantees at the final event of the programme Mentorship Support to CSOs, which took place on 22 June 2021.

“Together with the team and mentor, we managed to project future activities and issues that we would not have seen unless we had worked together, i.e. that somebody had guided us throughout the complete process. Additionally, via mentorship for organizational development we have revealed a huge potential with our organization that we did not know existed”, said Jasmina Golubovska, project coordinator with Legis CSO.

The mentorship support survey showed big satisfaction with the beneficiaries (they gave it 4.8 on the scale of 1 to 5). The scores were almost equally high for the mentors

who constantly worked with the organizations on their improvements in various areas. All the participants assessed the mentoring programme as very useful and the cooperation was stressed as one of the more important benefits in the process.

“For us, it was a real challenge during the pandemic to connect the dots between our target groups and the situation in which we were, but we managed. Our mentor Ljupka made us feel new energy which motivated us and brought in a dose of excitement”, stressed Maja Babik, member of the Executive Board of Borka association for fight against cancer.

Part of the mentorship support were 12 CSOs, Civica Mobilias institutional grantees, whose teams (5 to 10 members) worked with local mentors to strengthen their organizational capacities.

# The Public Should Be Informed about the Achievements of the CSOs

How to improve the information of the CSOs to the public so that it sees their contribution to the changes in the society? How can the reporting be moved from activities to achievements? How can the citizens be given an image that is broader than the everyday activities? These were main issues that were discussed by 20 representatives of Civica Mobilitas grantees at the workshop “Informing about the Achievements” that took place on 2 June 2021.



The short survey that was conducted at the beginning of the workshop with the participation of everybody showed that the organization use the social media more often than the web pages to share information on what they work. The majority of the participants confirmed that the information that is released most often pertains to implement activities.

Using presentations, group work and discussions, the participants had the opportunity to recognize the differences among activities, products, achievements, impact. They worked on already published information by their organ-

izations, analysed and improved it. They discussed if informing about achievements also means that one should not report about activities, but they should give the citizens the perspective, i.e. what they lead to and what the final effects will be.

They also spoke with the trainers about the process of preparation and distribution of information, way of writing and plan of distribution. The workshop was a great possibility to obtain feedback not only from the trainers, but also to hear the opinions and experience of the other colleagues from the civil sector. This made the workshop quite interactive and intense, which was especially important if one takes into consideration that it was held on-line.

The participants had high marks about this learning approach. They all agreed that these workshops are very needed and useful and expressed their preparedness to use the obtained knowledge and skills in practice.

The workshop was held by Marina Tuneva, Executive Director of the Council for Media Ethics in Macedonia and Conce Jakovlevska, Civica Mobilitas National Coordinator for Information and Communication.

Civica Mobilitas has supported initiatives for mutual learning and sharing among grantees, and this workshop is one of those examples, i.e. the Council of Media Ethics in Macedonia is a beneficiary of an institutional grant within the programme.

This is first of the series of planned workshops in the learning programme of Civica Mobilitas, intended for the programme grantees. In the coming period, there will be workshops and trainings with similar contents, but also other thematic trainings.

## Civica Mobilitas Beneficiary Impact Assessment

Civica Mobilitas is the first programme in RN Macedonia, but also in Europe, where there will be a Beneficiary Assessment (BA).

This is a unique and innovative process that involves the citizens and CSOs, i.e. Civica Mobilitas beneficiaries. Their assessments will be collected via interviews, focus groups and direct monitoring. The analyses of the answers will show if and to what extent Civica Mobilitas has impact on the social changes. The field information will be collected by around 80 civil monitors, and the collection of information will last about a month.

The structure of the Beneficiary Assessment functions independently, outside the programme team that imple-

ments the activities. In this way, the influence of those who conduct it is eliminated, and there is objectivity of the assessment. Apart from civil monitors, the structure includes co-facilitators and a national facilitator. Civica Mobilitas has selected eight co-facilitators, who will cover all eight planning regions together with the civil monitors.

Apart from the social changes impact, the Beneficiary Assessment will focus on the lessons learnt from helping CSOs work more effectively with their beneficiaries and the ways of communication between Civica Mobilitas and CSOs with their beneficiaries, as well as their effectiveness. The implementation of the overall process of Assessment will enable testing of the methodology which can later be used by CSOs to implement their beneficiary assessments.



So far, there have been three trainings for the co-facilitators where they got acquainted with the concept of Beneficiary Assessment, its principles and standards. They also spoke about who actually the beneficiaries are and what would be the key questions for them. Then, the techniques and tools for data collection were presented.

The National Facilitators for Beneficiary Assessment if

Liljana Alcheva. She set the work methodology, she will coordinate the co-facilitators and she will manage and supervise the process for data collection, preparation and confirmation of the report.

The results of the Beneficiary Assessment analysis is expected to be submitted to Civica Mobilitas in October 2021.

## Six New Small Grants Awarded to CSOs

The grant selection committee assessed the project concepts that the organizations submitted to the Small Action Grant Call of Civica Mobilitas (CM-MAK-02) in the period of 01.01.2021 to 31.03.2021.

57 applications were submitted, six of whom received small grants:

- THE YOUNG FOR PUBLIC INTEREST Development Association from Debar with the project Creating Conditions for Access of the Persons with Physical Disability to the Basic State Institutions and Other Needed Facilities;
- VICTIM Skopje Association for Support to Identified and Potential Vulnerable Groups with the project Rehabilitation of Women Prisoners;
- Organization of Women Lozovo with the project Economic and Social Rights of the Textile Workers;
- AN-BLOK Citizen Association for Culture and Art from Skopje with their project Stimulating Social Responsibility with the Young via Volunteering Activities;

- BRIGHTH FUTURE Centre for Culture, Communication and Education of the Roma from Kochani with the project Healthy Living Environment Is Our Responsibility – Let's Show in Action;
- El Hilal Humanitarian Organization Association with the project Raising Awareness, Encouragement, Motivation and Perception to Diversity.

The projects of the new grantees will be implemented in six different sectors, and they pertain to human rights, persons with special needs, tolerance, environment and natural resources, rule of law and education, science and research.

The selected CSOs are from various regions in RN Macedonia, i.e. from Skopje, Southwest, East and Vardar regions and they will be active in local, regional and national level.

The total support of Civica Mobilitas for these small action grants is MKD 1,796,340.

# CITIZENS FOR CHANGE

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