At the very end of last year, the government adopted the Strategy for Cooperation with and Development of the Civil Society. The civil sector received the fourth strategic document for the period of 2022 – 2024. Those who have followed these processes closely and have been involved in them say that unlike the previous document, this one has improvements in defining the success indicators. This should enable the interested parties to more closely monitor if the strategic goals are being implemented. And there are many of those. In the three priority areas there are 12 strategic goals and 26 operational ones.

CSOs requested, and the government has agreed that it will be dedicated to promoting the state funding system. In the indicator that concerns this strategic goal, the government is obliged that that the state funding from the central budget and the municipal budgets for 2022 will be 20% of the total CSO revenues, and in 2024 it will reach 30%, i.e. around 2 billion denars. As a comparison, in 2020, the participation of the state funding (at central level) amounted to 5% of the total revenue of the CSOs, or in absolute figures, around 5.5 million Euro. Even if it remains at the same level as the funds allocated at local level, it amounts to around 11 million Euro, or around 10% participation in the revenues.

Is the Action Plan indicator in the Strategy ambitious? It is probable, if one takes into consideration that the planned budget for CSOs have not survived more than three months, amounting to around 9 million Euro at central level (Item 463). If one assumes that the same amount of money would have been allocated for CSOs at local level and that the total budget for the CSOs would remain at the 2020 level, the level of financing would be lower than the one indicated in the Action Plan. However, these calculations are no longer valid now. The finances started to be reallocated as early as the first quarter with an explanation that it is necessary at a time when the country faces several crises.

Apart from the Ukraine war, all other crises were also active at the time the state budget was planned, as well as the municipal ones. The finances invested in CSOs at the end go to the citizens – which is a common interest of both parties. The question is how seriously the government understands the CSOs? What does it “buy” with promises that they know they cannot meet? And what does it gain by this situation which looks like a child’s game “Now You Can – Now You Can’t”?! And maybe we need to make a step backwards and ask if the Government knows what they voted for when they adopted the fourth Strategy for Cooperation with and Development of the Civil Society and its Action Plan? This is how seriously CSOs will take the Government and its promises.

I wish you a pleasant reading.

Gonce Jakovlevska
Civica Mobilitas
National Coordinator for ICO

With thanks to: Art Mania – Kumanovo, Zdravec 2002 from Makedonska Kamenica, Association for Support, Integration and Resocialization – LINK, IDSCS, Akcija Zdruzhenska, Institute for Communications Studies (ICS), Inno Hab, Center for Communication Studies (CCC) for their support and access to information in the preparation of the texts for this issue.

Photo archives: MCIC, Civica Mobilitas, Radar, Art Mania, Link, Inno Hab, Center for Environment and Sustainable Development, Bagdanci, Finance Think, IDSCS, Akcija Zdruzhenska, Center for Civil Communications, RIKO, Foundation Open Society Macedonia.
THEME

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT
The creation and adoption of the document was preceded by consultations with the CSOs; nevertheless, one of the remarks was that there was a lack of debate. Although a group of CSOs (14-15) worked together with the institutions on the new Strategy, the broader involvement was limited to written submission of proposals and ideas, without a possibility to confront arguments, not even online.

The new strategic document has three priority areas and 12 strategic goals in total.

The first priority area is in the scope of enabling environment, i.e. it concerns the normative, institutional and financial frame for civil society development. The four strategic goals in this area concern advancing the legal framework for cooperation with the institutions; approximation of the tax framework to the specific features of the CSOs and promotion of the state financing system for CSOs.

The second priority area concerns the civic participation, or according to the formulation of the Strategy: democratization, active participation of the CSOs in the social processes, in the policy creation and monitoring, with a special focus on EU integration process. The strategic goals are directed to increasing the involvement, strengthening the partnership and advancing the legal framework on the right to peaceful gatherings and direct participation of the citizens in the decision making.

The last, third priority area concerns the civil sector as an actor in the social-economic development. In this part there is the biggest number of strategic goals, five in total and they cover the development of social entrepreneurship, recognition of CSOs as employers, development of volunteering, relations and support of the business sector and increasing the participation of CSOs in service provision for the needs of the community.

This is the fourth cycle of strategic planning and unlike the previous document, there is an improvement in the defining of the success indicators, which enables those who are interested to follow more easily if the strategic goals are being fulfilled. For example, in the first priority area, in the fourth strategic goals, which concerns advancing the system of state financing for CSOs, according to the indicator, the state financing from the central budget and municipal budgets in 2022 will be 20% from the total CSO revenues, and in 2024 it will come to 30%, or around 2 billion denars. The Strategy also envisages establishing of a Fund for Civil Society Support and Development and Co-financing EU Projects.

Although the monitoring of this strategic document is done by the Council for Cooperation between the Government and Civil Society with the Support of the Department for Cooperation with the Non-governmental Organizations at the General Secretariat, still nobody prevents all interested CSOs from monitoring its implementation and alarming about any underperforming during its implementation.

The new strategic document has three priority areas: enabling environment, civil participation and civil sector as an actor in the social-economic development.

According to the indicator set, state financing from the central budget and the municipal budgets in 2022 will be 20% from the total CSO revenues, and in 2024 it will reach 30%, or around 2 billion denars.
At the press conference held on 24 March 2022 in front of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, the Council asked for a rebalance of the budget in order to reserve funds for the implementation of the 2022 Draft Programme of the General Secretariat of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia for Financing the Programme Activities of the Associations and Foundations.

The Council for Cooperation between the Government and the Civil Society disagrees with the cancelation of the procedure for adoption of the 2022 Draft Programme of the General Secretariat of the Government of North Macedonia for Financing the Programme Activities of the Associations and Foundations. “With this decision, the Government has abandoned the previous good practice of consultations with the Council and CSOs, which is against its stands declared in the Work Programme of the Government for 2022-2024, especially in the part for providing favourable work environment for the civil society and the reform of the state financing g for CSOs”, states the Council for Cooperation.

The Council has welcomed the Government decision to allocate funds for financing CSOs at the Ministry of Political System and Relations among the Communities and encourages other institutions to follow this example. The Council has been consulted and involved in the programming of the priorities for financing of the funds provided by the Ministry of Political System and these funds will be allocated in accordance with the priorities and goals of this ministry, which concern the societal and social cohesion among different ethnic communities and other minorities and vulnerable groups in our society.

The Council asked that the long positive practice of financing CSOs from the Budget of the General Secretariat of the Government of RNM is not abandoned. “We are aware that this is a year of multiple crisis – health, energy and economic, which has disproportionally more affected the CSOs and most of all the citizens whose needs they meet and whose interests they represent. We remind the Government and the public that the final beneficiaries of these funds are the citizens of this state so that they can overcome the challenges that they face more easily, as the latter have been drastically affected in the crisis period”, they say.

Here you can read the integral release of the Council.

ECrowd.mk the First Crowdfunding Platform for CSOs

“Be part of the changes. Now it is easy, donate!”, this is the message that will encounter you at the first crowdfunding platform for CSOs in Macedonia, eCrowd.mk.

“The idea of the platform is to enable practical tools for donating, and in this way we want to contribute to improving the culture of donating to non-profit goals”, say at the Association for Digital Innovations and Transformations INNO-HAB Skopje. In order to register at the platform, you need a phone, e-mail and several basic documents. If everything is OK, in several hours from the registration you will have the possibility to collect funds for your cause from your supporters. The platform can be used by legal entities registered according to the Law for Associations and Foundations. eCrowd saves the donation collectors time, energy and resources, and the same goes for the donors. The system is simple. You donate for the organization whose work you like or you support some of the current crowdfunding campaigns. Until this moment, there are forty-six organizations and eighteen projects in various areas, such as tak-
The goal of the project “Make It Easy – Establishing the First Crowdfunding Platform for Civic Initiatives in North Macedonia” supported by Civica Mobilitas is to contribute towards increased independence of the CSOs. “Literally any card holder in the world can donate to an organization in our country via a free of charge registration at the platform and donate the amount for support with several clicks”, say the people at Inno-Hab. There have been 764,489 denars donates so far.

The project Make It Easy – Establishing the First Crowdfunding Platform for Civic Initiatives in North Macedonia has been implemented in cooperation with the Centre for Economic Analyses Skopje, Association for Support of Socially Excluded and Poor People FOOD FOR ALL – BHM Skopje and the Association of Residents and Young Doctors Macedonia – ASML.

CSOs and Media Contribute to Progress and Reforms in the Society

The European Union Delegation in the Republic of North Macedonia held a consultative e-meeting with CSOs on 10 February 2022, concerning the forthcoming Call for Project Proposals within IPA III Instrument for Support of the Civil Society and Media 2021-2022.

Steffen Hudolin, Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation (EUD) called the CSOs and media to be proactive and act as equal and competent partner of the Government.

Irena Ivanova, the Task Manager at EUD, presented the process of consultations and the general framework of the forthcoming call for project proposals. EUD will continue with their support to horizontal measures, i.e. the support to the development of the enabling environment for civil society development youth and gender aspect. The calls will also focus on introduction of innovative measures for improving the visibility in the work of the CSOs and their relations to the citizens.

At the online event there were representatives of around
90 CSOs that discussed the priority sectors and other important elements that should be included in the Call for Project Proposals. The specific recommendations and defining the needs of the sector were to improve the implementation practice. The participants welcomed the initiative of EUD to encourage networking of the organizations, which would make space for strengthening the cooperation and working in the sector. There was stress on regional and local development, i.e. balanced approach to possibilities in order to strengthen the local communities. The attention should also be directed to economic growth and development in whose framework one can address numerous current issues such as the informal economy, market competitiveness, labor market, as a sector priority noted in the latest EU country report. There were also talks about conducting research and analytical activities as a starting point in improving the existing and creating new policies.

The call for project proposals should reflect the new EU strategic approach to the enlargement region, as defined in the programme framework of the Instrument for Pre-accession Aid (IPA III) and in the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans (EIP) for 2020. This new framework identifies the key areas of the policy in order to promote the socio-economic development, provide long-term recovery of the region and move it forward on its way to the EU. In this context, this Call should support active involvement of the CSOs in the given policy areas and strengthen the participatory democracy in the country.

The consultative event was supported by the Civic Resource Centre of the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation.
Almost Half of the Economic Promises of the Government Are in the Opposite Direction rather than the Promised One

“Big economic promises, big failures” is the title of the analysis of the Work Programme of the Government 2020-2024 which was made by Finance Think CSO. Only five of the promises have been fulfilled, four are being fulfilled, and 12 promises go in an opposite direction than the promised one. “The reasons for this situation include an unrealistic setting of targets taking into consideration that the economy is in crisis caused by the pandemic, as well as setting targets that can disturb the market or can block an unreasonably big chunk of budget funds to fulfil the promise”, says Finance Think.

In the group of fulfilled promises there are mainly the promises of the so-called operational targets in the tax area, i.e. the decrease of the VAT percentage for restaurant services to 10%, craftsmanship services to 5%, raising the registration threshold for VAT to 3 million denars, and not increasing the profit tax rate. Two promises, or 7.4% have not been fulfilled: decreasing the personal income tax in the IT industry to 0 percent in 2023, with a planned decrease to 5% in 2021 and 3% in 2022, as well as the increase of the minimum pension to 10,700 denars in 2021. Four promises, or 14.8% are on the way to be fulfilled. They are: sustainable and inclusive growth of 4%, FDI scope of total amount of 1 billion Euro to 2024, increasing the import to...
8 billion Euro in 2024, growth of the average salary of 20-30% by 2024.

Therefore, Finance Think recommends that the goals set in the political party programmes and subsequently in the Government programme are realistic and that attention is paid to implementability and cost. The approximation of political promises in the economic area with the economic fundamentals, the current development phase, as well as with the mentality of the citizens and companies will contribute to better and more efficient economic policies.

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## During the Two Crisis Years, the State Institutions Bought 142 New Vehicles and Paid 3.6 Million Euro for Them

On 16 March 2022, the Center for Civil Communications (CCC) published the research and database on the purchased new vehicles by the state institutions during the crisis period from March 2020 onwards.

The research shows that 142 new passenger vehicles have been purchased for 3 million 609 thousand Euro. 42 state institutions have purchased vehicles.

The biggest number of passenger vehicles have been purchased by the government Service for General and Common Affairs, which has replaced the previous Passat cars with 45 new Skoda Superb Ambition vehicles.

When it comes to competition at the tenders for procurement of new vehicles, it continues to drop, i.e. at as many as 83% of the tenders there was only one bid per tender.

More than 40% of the new vehicles cost more than 30 thousand Euro.

The three most expensively paid vehicles are Skoda Superb FL with 47 thousand Euro and Mercedes C180 with 44 thousand Euro, both for the State Video Lottery; the third place is Hyundai Sonada of the Agency for Electronic Communications with 43 thousand Euro.

When it comes to brands, it seems that the favourite one with the officials is Skoda, which leads with 60 vehicles, same as the previous years. The long second place of Volkswagen has been taken over by Fiat, which amounted to 25 vehicles, and the third place with 13 vehicles is now Citroen.

Among the companies, the biggest value of contracts is again for Porsche Leasing with almost 2 million Euro, MIDA Grand Motors with almost 300 thousand Euro and Automobile-SK with 274 thousand Euro.

The analysis covers only the passenger vehicles, but not the commercial ones, i.e. cargo, transport and technical vehicles.

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### Five vehicles with highest prices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vehicle</th>
<th>Price (Euros)</th>
<th>Supplier</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skoda “Superb”</td>
<td>47,551</td>
<td>State video-lottery</td>
<td>2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercedes “C180”</td>
<td>44,143</td>
<td>State video-lottery</td>
<td>2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyundai “Sonada”</td>
<td>43,110</td>
<td>A&amp;K</td>
<td>2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skoda “Superb”</td>
<td>39,338</td>
<td>President of RNM</td>
<td>2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skoda “Superb”</td>
<td>39,035</td>
<td>SOZR</td>
<td>2021</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Comparison between procurement of vehicles in the years of research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Number of procured vehicles</th>
<th>Value of the procured vehicles (mil. €)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013-2015</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>5,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018-2020</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>8,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020-2022</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>3,6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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## Ignoring the Single Mothers Has to Stop

“We do not want pity, we want justice”, “I should not suffer slaps and insults, so that I don’t end up on the street with my child”, the single parents marched for their rights with chants and banners in their hands, for the first time in history. The march under the motto “The Topic of Single Parents Must Not Be a Taboo”, which was organized by “One Can!”, started at Zena Borec park, and ended in front of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) where the participants stressed the problems that they face on daily basis.

“Our face is almost a decade long. After all legal mechanisms that we used, this is the only thing that we have not done so far. We went out on the street on behalf of every single mother and single parent family and we ask for sup-
There Are not Enough Public Toilets on the Motorways: Citizens “Hold It” When They Travel

The next time that you start a travel around the country, do not forget to plan your physiological needs. It might sound absurd, but this is more than necessary taking into consideration the situation with the public toilets on Macedonian roads. There are toilets at gas stations, but most of them do not meet the standards, both in terms of hygiene and accessibility. There are either no public toilets or there are very few of them, as the Association for Social Innovations and Sustainable Development RADAR concludes at the recent gender analysis “Public Toilets at the Public Roads around the Country”.

In “One Can!” recommendations it is also stressed that the state does not have a register of single parent families, single mothers and children who use the services of the Centre for Social Affairs. According to them, it is necessary to assess the needs of the single mothers and help them. They need interventions in crisis situations, psychosocial support and legal counselling, as well as empowering the women and children via access to trainings, family and parental counselling.

“Defining the status of single parent, just institutions, financial support and free of charge participant in the higher education for the children of single parents are part of the demands of the participants in the march.”

In order to define the single parent status, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is asked to define the terms “single parent” and “single parent family” in appropriate laws in an appropriate way. From in front of the Ministry where the peaceful march started symbolically, they ask that the single mothers are helped to resolve their accommodation issue, by securing social apartments or granting housing loans without interest and down payment, and to also create mechanisms for quality employment of single mothers.

“Their fight is almost a decade long. After all legal mechanisms that we have used, this has remained the only thing that we have not done yet. We went out to the street in the name of every single mother and single parent family and we ask for support by all state institutions” – One Can!

“Defining the status of single parent, just institutions, financial support and free of charge participant in the higher education for the children of single parents are part of the demands of the participants in the march.”

“In this way we want to express and show the image of the single parents and single parent families in front of the complete Macedonian public and all stakeholders in the Macedonian society” is the message that was sent by the parents. The peaceful march which took place on 13 February 2022 aimed at raising the public awareness about the everyday problems that the single parent families in our country face.

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In the research conducted this year, they have determined that there has been not a single public toilet by the motorways “Friendship” and “Mother Theresa”, which are part of European corridors and they are subject to European standards. For example, at the stretch from the centre of Skopje to Tabanovce border crossing, in both directions there are 11 gas stations with toilets. Nine of them are not accessible for people with special needs, and on the scale of 1 to 5 they have an average 2.9 for cleanliness. It is a bit better at the Skopje – Gjyqëshia stretch, where in both directions there are 22 gas stations with toilets, which had an average 3.6 score for cleanliness. “Part of the citizens said that there were toilets which were in really good shape, however, there are also toilets which did not meet their expectations and needs. Most of the publicly available toilets are not fully accessible for the people with disabilities”, they say at “Radar-Skopje”.

At the on-line presentation of the gender analysis, as a woman and person with disability, Elena Kochovska said that she abstains from drinking liquids and eating certain food, depending on how long the travel is. “When you endure, when you hold it, there are additional problems. Not having enough public toilets is a clear picture of the level of development of the country”, says Kochovska, who has been part of the Movement against Handicap “Polio Plus” for years. The first special toilet for people with special needs, broad and separately marked is at 134 km away from the centre of Skopje.

More than half of the people surveyed in the analysis “Public Toilets at Public Roads in the Country” think that there should be rest areas and toilets at every 30 km.

The research also notes that there are no public toilets that passengers can use at the pay tolls around the country. Additionally, by the motorways there are no appropriate parking lots. The empty spaces that are often used for vehicles to stop are not appropriately equipped or are filled with garbage, the people at “Radar-Skopje” react.

The European recommendations on this issue are different. Thus, according to one of the EU regulations on trans-European transport network, it is stated that the infrastructural standards for infrastructure for road transport also stipulate “placing rest areas on the motorways approximately at each 100 kilometres, in accordance with the needs of the surrounding, market and environment, in order, among other things, to provide an appropriate area for parking of traffic users with an appropriate level of security and safety”. According to the European TEM (Trans-European North-South Motorway) standards, the recommended practice on the distance between the rest areas should be 15 – 25 km. More than half of the people surveyed in the analysis think that there should be rest areas and toilets at 30 km distance. At the national regulations on public roads, in the Law for Public Areas there are no separate regulations that pertain to the recommended practice on the distance between the rest areas, public toilets, recommendations for public toilets, obligations for their placement and maintenance, distance in kilometres and according to which standards. The Law only states that one can build facilities that can be used for the needs of the vehicles and passengers, as well as auxiliary facilities (public WB and shower), without more detailed explanation on the standards for their placement.

From Radar-Skopje they indicate that it is necessary to have public toilets by the roads. They recommend that they are managed by the public roads enterprise or to lease them to external operators. A second possibility is that the public toilets can also be given to a private company, which will be their owner and manage with them.

In Macedonia, there are 4,862 km of state roads. Out of them, 262 km are classified as motorways, 911 km district roads and 3,689 km regional roads.
A Country where the Women Are not Equally Included Is a State without Progress

8th March, the International Women’s Day is a symbol of the fight for women’s rights and their economic, political and gender equality. The will to fight was clearly seen with hundreds of activists who gathered in front of the Government of RN Macedonia, marking the start of the sixth March for Women’s Rights, organized by the Platform for Gender Equality and women’s rights activists. This 8th March is marked by women’s poverty, enabled and maintained by the system, deepened as a result of the two-year Covid-19 pandemic and its consequences.

“Today we are protesting for all textile workers who remained without jobs, for the women in the rural environments who remained without public transport and access to health services for the women with disabilities who were made even more invisible by the additional inaccessibility. For the Roma women who remained without their poorly paid jobs, for the women who have no access to reproductive health, which leads them to even bigger poverty”, said Bojana Jovanovska from the Platform for Gender Equality. Also, as she said, they protested for the women experiencing violence in their homes, on the streets and on-line space. For the women victims of violence whose reports had no follow-up, for the single mothers who were forced to leave their jobs because the kindergartens and schools had been closed, for the exhausted health care workers, for all women who had lost their lives in the battle with Covid-19 because of lack of health services.

Chanting the slogan “Poverty Has a Female Face”, the activists reminded that despite the fact that the women are one half of the population in the country, they still do not have equal rights in almost any aspect of their lives, at work or at home, in politics or in social life, and a country where the women are not included as equal is a country in which there is no progress. The responsibility was located within the institutions which, due to absence of policies, strategic documents and mechanisms that support the promotion of gender equality and rights of women allow for systemic discrimination and violence, but also in lack of gender sensitive measures for handling the Covid-19 pandemic and mechanisms for economic empowerment of women. The participants in the march asked for urgent adoption of the Gender Equality Strategy, adoption of a Law on Gender Equality, introduction of functional inspection services which prevent exploitation and discrimination of female workers and acting with due diligence towards the victims of gender-based violence by the institutions.

We ask for adoption of the Strategy for Gender Equality, adoption of Law for Gender Equality, introduction of functional inspection services that prevent exploitation and discrimination of workers and acting with due diligence towards the victims of gender-based violence by the institutions.
After the speeches of the activists in front of the Government, the march continued to “Zena Borec” park, where the activists had their final addresses. “This fight and this day is for all of us, and it pertains to equal access to social and health rights, for equal access to public transport and information, equal access to labour market, equal care for the children and elderly family members, gender equality which will be visible at every step and in every household, which would take the women out of the shadow once and for all”, they concluded.

Digitization of Social Services for Elderly and Feeble Bodied

For the first time in history, in Makedonska Kamenica there has been an innovative digital approach to care for the elderly and feeble bodied persons in the mountain villages of Sasa, Moshtica, Kosevica, Kostin Dol, Lukovica, Todorovci, Dulica and Cera. “With the closure of the Sasa mine, big part of the young people has left their place of living looking for existence and they left the state to go abroad, leaving their elderly parents alone”, says Miran Mitrevski from Zdravec 2002 Association. This was the main reason for establishment of the project “Digitization of Social Services for Care of Elderly and Feeble Bodies Persons in the Rural Environments”, which will care for the elderly in the rural environments at any time.

In cooperation with the Association of Pensioners of Makedonska Kamenica, a social map has been prepared, mapping this category of citizens, people who live alone or in a community, at the territory of the municipality. Following the mapping of 50 elderly and feeble bodied people, 50 GPS smart bracelets have been provided. With these bracelets, the association easily follows their movement, health condition and the users can easily call for emergency help or send a voice message. He stresses that a Dispatch Centre has been established, fully technically equipped, dispatchers have been trained to monitor the situation, a mobile team has been established to work on the field and it is in constant coordination with an expert team made of a social worker and a psychologist. “So far, we have had 150 interventions with this group of citizens. Most of the time, we buy suppliers for them, we intervene in providing them with health care, and what is most interesting, they ask that we reconnect them with their families. The team uses digital tools to enable them communication with their family members residing outside the country”, add the people at Zdravec 2002. In the near future, the association states that they would purchase 30 new GPS bracelets with the support of the municipality of Makedonska Kamenica, thus covering the whole territory of the municipality and all the citizens of this category will be free.
“Social risks have a tendency to make the everyday social functioning of an individual or a family, or to disable it. They threaten a big part of our society”, say at the Association for Support, Integration and Resocialization LINK. However, with empathy, dedication and enthusiasm, the situation is already better for the people with social risk in the municipalities of Butel and Chucher Sandevo.

Via the project “Detecting, Counselling and Referral of People under Social Risk”, supported by Civica Mobilitas, there were three workshops for young people and people under social risk. The workshop for young people was on the topic of “Non-violent Communication” focusing on cyber violence as most present with this group. In accordance with the requests and needs of the students and experts of “Toli Zordumis” primary school, 20 students were introduced to the meaning of violence, as well as the ways to face it and overcome it, via interactive exercises. The second workshop was to meet the needs of the long unemployed persons with low economic capacity. Seven people under social risk were educated on the topic of “Economic Empowerment and Inclusion in the Labour Market”. Because of the increased need of psychosocial services to single parents, there was a Group Workshop on Aid and Support to Single Parents.

“Via the workshop for people under social risk, the capacities for development of resilient powers were improved, as well as countering and intervening in cases of gender-based violence, peer violence or different kinds of social risk, where the individuals without sufficient support are subject to social exclusion and deprivation”, say the people at LINK.

The statistics only confirms the excellent work that was a result of the workshops. Three people under social risk obtained certificates for working with elderly and people with Alzheimer via HUMANOST association, one person has been employed as a caretaker in an elderly hospice, and one person has been employed in a Small Group Home and the Special Institution – Demir Kapija, in cooperation with the Centre for Youth Activism KRIK. The situation has improved for the single parents in the municipality as well, two mediations for employment have been provided, as well as three resolved cases for rights in the area of social welfare, three referrals to an institution in charge for reporting domestic and gender-based violence and one person has been referred to the Health Insurance Fund.
The Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) with the support of the German Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs gathered the young leaders from Sarajevo, Belgrade, Podgorica, Pristina, Skopje and Tirana at the promotion of the platform hajde.media, developed with the contribution of 1,500 young people from the Western Balkan countries.

“The will and enthusiasm of these young people, especially in the current situation which is caused by Covid-19 were very inspirational. They are professionals, they made excellent stories in the programme which are now shared on Hajde platform! They should continue doing this and be proactive. You are the present and you are the best thing of RYCO”, said Leyla Turchilo, RYCO programme mentor.

Ajde! platform informs about events in the region, shares possibilities for volunteering, employment, participation at conferences and trainings. It has been designed to contribute to building the young people as individuals and to create regional networks of friendship and cooperation among the young people.

“We have established a direct contact among three schools from Travnik, Kumanovo and Kikinda. Via our programme we have managed to connect these local communities for the first time. IN order to get acquainted with the young people from the region, we had to leave the region and meet them in Germany, Switzerland, etc., but not, with RYCO, we can also do it at home”, said Aken Gudalo, teacher at “Petar Barbaric” catholic school centre.

“Ajde!” youth platform was promoted on 8 December this year, during the regional meeting of the ministers for youth and education that took place in Tirana. This is only the beginning of building a platform that will be used as an excellent starting point for the young people in the future.

“All young people are invited to be the soul of this platform, but it is not only about Ajde! as platform. It is about us connecting today, in this period around New Year. Let us wish to be successful in the next year”, said Albert Hani, Secretary General of RYCO.

**“Age of Non-Reason”**

A satirical overview of the everyday events in our society, mostly of all in Struga, but these are situations that can be applied for any Macedonian situation or municipality. In short, this is the description of the short film “Age of Non-Reason”, which is a result of the cooperation between the Association for Culture and Arts Art Mania Kumanovo and the Association for Affirmation of Culture Bager Genesis 2.0 Struga, under the auspices of Civica Mobilitas.

“The focus of their responses and the film has been mostly towards the environment which the citizens stressed as the most burning and most sensitive topic, more specifically the lack of care for management, usurpation and destruction of the Struga coast of the Ohrid Lake”, they say at Art Mania.

The script was prepared as a collection of non-formal discussions with people from Struga, and then turned into a story that is understandable for everybody living the absurd that is being presented as a veil over the real problems. “The focus of their responses and the film has been mostly towards the environment which the citizens stressed as the most burning and most sensitive topic, more specifically the lack of care for management, usurpation and destruction of the Struga coast of the Ohrid Lake”, they say at Art Mania.
“The Age of Non-Reason” is an improvised stand-up of a clown, who, with a strongly expressed irony thorough a metaphor, is a symbol of important political stakeholders at local level. “For the audience it was especially entertaining to see this show, to laugh, but at the same time to be concerned and aware about the alarming situation in our environment, for the way of ruling that is practiced, but unfortunately to also see his own lack of interest in positive changes”, they say at Art Mania, adding that the next film screening will take place this summer. At the association, they think that in this way they have managed to encourage the citizens in the future to take active participation in decisions that pertain them directly. “We plan next to have the film placed on our web page, and then, depending on circumstances, we will send it directly to some embassies, as well as to the ministries in charge, which do not fulfil their competences, to be the keeper of one of the most important locations in the world”, they conclude at the association.

The team of actors is made by Miuroslav Petkovik in the main role, there are supporting actors from Struga and Ohrid, while the film team is made by professionals, helped by young film enthusiasts from Struga. The short film is produced by Letna Produkcija.

The goal of the film is to encourage the citizens in the future to take active participation in decisions that directly affect them.

COOPERATION

“We Report” for Better Communication of the Citizens and the Municipality of Bogdanci

In the time of digitization, the modern tools have the aim to make our lives easier in any aspect. They are more and more often used for establishment of an easier and faster communication of the citizens with the local authorities. This is the main idea of the project “Establishing a Mechanism for Improved Cooperation between the Municipality of Bogdanci and the Citizens”, implemented by the Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development from Bogdanci, and supported by Civica Mobilitas. They have created the application “We Report” to strengthen the commu-
The goal is to involve the citizens in the proves of civic initiatives, decision making, as well as reporting problems in the municipality. Together, we will all contribute to healthier and cleaner environment and we will promote the quality of life for all citizens of Bogdanci,” they say from the organization.

Via “We Report”, the municipality informs the citizens about the activities that are implemented, such as holding sessions of the Municipal Council, public debates, conducting public surveys, publishing mechanisms for appeals and complaints on projects that are being implemented at the territory of Bogdanci, etc. “We are looking into the option that the application is also used by the House of Culture ‘Brand Petrushev’ – Bogdanci, so that the citizens are informed about the cultural events that take place in the Municipality of Bogdanci”, they add at the Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development.

The application, published on 4 March 2022 has been available via Google at Plat Store for now, although there is an Apple Store version that is being prepared, to be used by the IOS system users. In the period of a month, there have been 68 citizens of the Municipality of Bogdanci who have downloaded the application and actively used it.

“We Report” can be easily downloaded by scanning the QR code of the promotional flier.

Simulation Exercise for Floods in Kavadarci

The Institute for Democracy, in cooperation with the Municipality of Kavadarci, on 17 March 2022 conducted a simulation exercise for flood dangers. During the exercise, there was a simulation of a hypothetical flood following heavy rains and storm, increased water level of the rivers Crna Reka and Luda Mara and controlled release/uncontrolled spill over of the water in the accumulation systems of Tikvesh Lake and Moklishko Lake-Gradot, accompanied by melting of the snow in the mountains from their basins.

The representatives of the municipality, together with the district units of the Centre for Crisis Management, the Directorate for Protection and Rescue, the Public Health Centre, Ministry of Interior, Fire Fighting Service, public enterprises Komunalec and National Forests, as well as representatives of the Municipality of Kavadarci directly participated and made decisions in accordance with their competences, taking into consideration their current capacities, resources possibilities and abilities.

The script for the exercise covered a period of approximately seven days prior and during the heavy rains and slow melting, up to thirty days after the end of rains and decease of the water levels in the river basins and accumulation lakes.

The people present were addressed by Marko Troshanovski, President of the Institute for Democracy; Mitko Janchev, the Mayor of the Municipality of Kavadarci, and the Ambassador of the United Kingdom Rachel Galloway. Troshanovski stressed that the project “Improved Capacity for Crisis Management of the Municipalities” helps the municipalities develop strategic and action plans and procedures that will help them prevent and be prepared when accidents happen, to decrease the damages for the municipalities, state and the citizens.

“I am convinced that these projects are of great importance for every city, every municipality, and the strategic plans are basis for their safety in dealing with any kind of unwanted situation”, said Mayor Janchev.

Ambassador Galloway thinks that these exercises help in identifying the strengths, but also the challenges that we can face, but they also help us learn how we can improve our response to crises at individual and collective level.

“The effective coordination between the national and local authorities is of key importance for this process. The local resilience and preparedness are crucial for protection of the people when crises happen, but they are also important for the future development and maintaining the living community”, thinks Galloway.

The exercise has contributed to discovering the hidden shortcomings of the system and find ways to overcome them. The exercise also determined that the possibilities of the headquarters to discuss and seek solutions are limited, there is a different level of knowledge about the theme and there are trainings lacking. The participants in the exercise agreed that the exercises are an excellent way of strengthening the capacities of the entities for preparedness and response through an open discussion.

The simulation “Kavadarci – Flood 2022” has been implemented as part of the project “Improved Capacity for Crisis Management in the Municipalities in North Macedonia”, which is financed by the Government of the United Kingdom, with the support of the British Embassy Skopje, and implemented by the Institute for Democracy “Societas Civilis” from Skopje.
Needs Assessment for Building Gender Sensitive Policies for Social, Post-Covid Resilience and Healing

This comprehensive study is part of the project “Gender Dimension of the Focus Policies – Strengthening the Resilience in the Post-Covid Period”, which the Institute for Social Sciences and Humanities – Skopje has been implementing together with the Association for Promotion of Gender Equality Akcija Združenska and the Association Radika-DE from Debar. The project is supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation under the Civica Mobilitas programme.

In the first part, there is the assessment of the desk analysis on the socio-economic needs of women and CSOs working on the issues of gender equality in the post-Covid context, using relevant international reports, as well as statistical data speaking of disproportional economic-social effects on the female population and public policy documents. There have been recommendations prepared for the state and international institutions that will in the future be advocated before their representatives at consultative meetings.

The second part of the study is the field assessment made by ISSH-Skopje in the period of May-October 2021. There has been a qualitative research made, i.e. in-depth interviews with 10 representatives of CSOs from all regions in the country, working in the area of gender equality. In the period of May-August 2021, a quantitative research was made, i.e. a phone survey. There were 602 women surveyed from all over the country, a representative sample based on nationality, age and education.
The first consultative meeting with part of the organizations that signed the Code for Civil Society Organizations took place on 8 February 2022. At the on-line workshop, four months after the official promotion and the signing of the Code, there were 24 CSO representatives.

The participants discussed in groups about the implementation of the self-regulation system, exchanging experience, ideas and proposals for broader promotion of the Code in the civil sector. “The mutual cooperation and support is an excellent opportunity to stress how important the Code is for the CSOs, strengthening its position. With this approach and dialogue, we will contribute for consistent respect of the Code, protection of its integrity and the integrity of the sector”, says Nikica Kusinikova from Konekt.

Apart from the issue about the broad promotion, there were also discussions about the areas of the Code where there is a need for further learning and practice. Aleksandra Savevska, Project Officer at the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (MCIC) informed about the support in the implementation of the document. She spoke about the results of the survey on this topic, where for the 21 signatories that were surveyed by the end of 2021, the three top priorities were: need of further assistance in communication, advocacy and visibility for 70% of the organizations; good governance for 65% of them and 55% for building relations with the employees, members, volunteers and interested parties.

There will be assistance provided by the team in charge for implementation of the Code for CSOs. In this phase, there is an annual timeframe prepared for the implementation of the promotional activities, as well as preparation of a plan of activities for promotion, where the current signatories will be included. The participants gladly agreed for a joint promotion of this document. The proposal of the organizations to speak about this topic within their events was also accepted, as well as at working groups, networks, workshops, etc., in order to increase the number of organizations that are signatories to the Code.

The Code for CSOs aims to strengthen the self-regulation system and contribute to bigger professionality and accountability. A total of 58 CSOs have already signed, and all interested organizations that want to join the Code can do so, filling in the following statement (deklaratë për pranimin e Kodit). The statements are filed at the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation at the following e-mail: asv@mcms.mk and they are reviewed by the organizations that are signatories as part of the informal network for transparency and accountability of CSOs.
Four New Small CSO Grants Awarded

The grant committee evaluated the project concepts submitted by CSOs to Civica Mobilitas call for small action grants (CM-MAK-02) in the period of 1 October to 30 December 2021. 59 applications were submitted, four of which were awarded small grants:

- Intermunicipal Association of People with Bodily Disabilities at the Municipalities of Veles, Gradsko and Chashka – MOBILNOST Veles with the project “Make It Yourself for Your Child (Manual for Preparation of Educational Materials from Waste Materials)”;
- Changemakers CSO Gevgelija with the project “Organizing Sustainable Waste Management at the Territory of the Municipality of Gevgelija”;
- Association for Tourism and Hospitality – Krushevo with the project “Strengthening the Cooperation between the Tourist Sector and Local Public Enterprises”;
- Prima Centre Skopje – Association for Creative Development with the project “Building and Municipality Protected against Fire”.

The new grantees will act in the sectors of health and health protection, people with disabilities, civil society development, and environment and natural resources. The activities will be implemented in a period of eight to twelve months.

The selected CSOs come from the Skopje, Vardar, Southeast and Pelagonija regions in RN Macedonia and they will be active at local and regional level.

The total support of Civica Mobilitas for these small action grants is MKD 1,313,000.

The Code Will Increase the Mutual Trust of the Organizations and Build a Better Image about Them

On 31 March 2022, there was an on-line informative session about the Code of CSOs where there were 34 representatives of organizations, Civica Mobilitas grantees.

The participants spoke in groups about their experience with self-regulation in the organizations and gave their opinion on the potential benefits of the Code, the challenges that they would face with the implementation and in which way they would apply the tool in their work. The Code for CSOs will help in increasing the quality of work within the organizations. This will contribute to bigger transparency that will increase the trust between the organizations in the system and the citizens. There will also be a better image with the donors and it will improve the financial situation, which is the general conclusion of the discussions.

Part of the participants expressed their interest in signing the Code, stressing that it comes at the ideal moment for their organizations. They will have support from the implementation team.

So far, a total of 62 CSOs signed, and all interested organizations that want to join the Code can do so by completing the following (deklaratë për pranimin e Kodit). The statements are filed at the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation at the following e-mail: asv@mcms.mk and they are reviewed by the organizations that are signatories as part of the platform for development of the Code and improving the transparency and accountability of CSOs.