

CITIZENS FOR CHANGE

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GOOD BASIS FOR A NEW BEGINNING

This is the last issue of "Citizens for Change" newsletter, the voice of Civica Mobilitas and the overall civic society. Let us be more specific, this is the last issue of this phase of Civica Mobilitas and in this format, in which we were presenting the activities and achievements of CSOs in the last four years.

As we promised, the focus of interest were the citizens as beneficiaries of the services provided by CSOs, but also as initiators and participants in the social changes. For them, we published 360 pieces of information in "Citizens for Change". If we assess the activities and achievements based on the pieces published, we would say that they were most often related to civic engagement or activism, to which we have dedicated 133 texts. Immediately next to them are the texts related to civic participants, or 98 texts in total. The newsletter had its response to one of the most dramatic health crises, the Covid-19 pandemic. The activities of CSOs related to it were part of several newsletter issues, and one issue was fully dedicated to it.

Civica Mobilitas has been supporting CSOs and their development for 12 years already. The result of this are strengthened organizations, not only financially but also with respect to their knowhow and skills, their visibility and their battle of being asked and heard, being an essential part of the discussions and policy creation in the country. It was and it still is one of the most significant programmes for this support. In the three implementation stages, a total of 324 CSOs were allocated 463 grants, and only in the last phase there

were 149 grants that brought 130 CSOs into the big family of grantees. However, Civica Mobilitas is not an exclusive community and the programme strives to reach all citizens and CSOs and share information and knowledge that are being created during its implementation. Therefore, we are open to all organizations, to all civic society stakeholders who will enable us to strengthen civic participant, improve the cooperation, build the relations with our constituent's, make the environment in which we function better for work.

Civica Mobilitas "Citizens for Change" will continue in the new phase as well, which is to start on 1st April 2023. In it, the newsletter will transit to improved sustainability which would imply much bigger involvement of civic activists in the preparation of the texts. Civica Mobilitas team will be here to make this transition easier, and the newsletter will remain part of the mosaic that the Swiss Embassy uses to support the civic sector for 12 years already, not only financially, but also essentially and content-wise; this support has not only strengthened the sector, but it also made it louder and more visible. This is closure of a phase, but also a call for all colleagues to be part of "Citizens for Change" in the new phase.

Let us share information because it is worth only when it reaches the place where it is needed.

Have a pleasant reading!

Gonce Jakovlevska Civica Mobilitas National Coordinator for ICO

We would like to thank: the National Network to End Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (NNEDV) RCS Spectrum from Kriva Palanka, Association for Humane Housing Habitat Macedonia, the National Platform for Women's Entrepreneurship, Romalitiko, Association of Journalists of Macedonia, Queer Centre, National Youth Council of Macedonia, Institute for Communication Studies, Association for Research and Analysis – ZMAI, Center for Civil Communications, Coalition All for Fair Trials, Antigambling Movement from Tetovo, Regional Advocacy Centre Delchevo, Food Bank – Macedonia, Macedonian Enterprise Development Foundation, Mobility Veles, Eco Guerrilla Prespa, Treebanks, Dose of Happiness, Konekt, Mobility – Bitola and Face to Face for the support and access to information during the preparation of the articles of this edition. Photo archives: MCIC, Civica Mobilitas, Network for Protection against Discrimination, RCS Spectrum, Habitat Macedonia, National Platform for Women's Entrepreneurship, Romalitiko, AJM, Queer Centre, NYCM, ICS, ZMAI, CCC, CAFT, Antigambling Movement, RAC Delchevo, Food Bank – Macedonia, MEDF, Mobility Veles, Eco Guerrilla Prespa, Treebanks, Dose of Happiness, Konekt, Mobility – Bitola and Face to Face.



Panel Discussion "On Other (Un) Recognised Aspects of Violence against Women"



In 2022, the National Network against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence worked on two thematic reports on gender-based violence, together with young researchers. Both reports were presented on 15th December 2022.

The first report concerns economic violence as a form of gender-based and domestic violence. According to him, the respondents recognize the forms of economic violence to a great extent, such as: limiting the disposal of personal revenue and finances by a partner of family member, exclusion from making financial decisions, asking for permission and finances for meeting personal needs, prevention and limitation of the employment choice and possibility to earn money, as well as limiting the disposal of the budget for maintaining the household and caring for a child.

Around 30% of the respondents said that they had been victims to this kind of violence, but only 9.4% had reported it to the police station. Actually, since the Law for Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence has entered force in May 2021, there have been only four recorded cases. The reason for the low level of reporting can be found in the fact that the Centre for Social Works recognized only one type of economic violence, which is covering for communal costs, utilities and household maintenance costs.

The second report covers the anti-gender movements and their influence on the violence against women. The document finds a clear strategy of antagonizing of the mechanisms for protection from gender-based violence, such as: creating a false image of what Istanbul Convention is and its presentation as a threat to identity, false information on the consequences and way an in

which gender-based violence is treated if the Convention is implemented, as well as political mobilization by presenting a general threat of gender equality and protection from gender-based violence.

With respect to the efforts of the institutions and them addressing gender inequality, it is a general conclusion that gender equality is partially mentioned as part of the ministries in charge and it is expressed as "future efforts". At the moment there is a lack of defined specific ways in which the institutions plan communication with the public and citizens to promote gender equality as part of the Macedonian reality.

The last part of the research is an interview with Irena Cvetkovik, Pd.D. in Gender Studies. According to her, political engagement of the institutions and politicians when it comes to gender equality exists only to meet the Euro integrative and democratic expectations of the international partners and organizations. On the other hand, real cases of Public Room, Monika Jovanovska from Veles and others remain ignored by the system and rejected by the institutions. With respect to the growth of anti-gender movements, according to her, it is important to make a difference between citizens with conservative views and what the anti-gender movements really are. The key difference is that with the latter there are terms such as "gender ideology", "indoctrination", "postulates of liberalism and neoliberal democracies", etc.

The reports have been prepared within the project "On the Road to the EU: Prevention of Violence against Women in the Republic of North Macedonia" and the project "Institutionalization of Quality Services for Rehabilitation and Integration of Women Victims of Violence".

Memorandum for Implementation of Civic Priorities Kriva Palanka 2023-2025 Signed



RCS "Spektar" and the Municipality of Kriva Palanka have signed a Memorandum for Implementation of Civic Priorities in the period of 2023 – 2025, which resulted from the consultations with the citizens. The signing took place on 26th December 2022 during the public debate in the presence of citizens, representatives of the civil sector and the municipal administration.

The municipality accepted all priorities which had been identified by the citizens in prior consultative meetings. The focus was on regulating the traffic jams and local road infrastructure, waste management, communal services, employment, quality of municipal services, the youth, women, etc.

"I am especially happy that these priorities match the plans and anticipated projects of the municipality, which means that we are moving the rights direction and we fulfil our task to work in the interest of the citizens. Some proposals are especially useful and we will use them to make the most appropriate solutions for the local community", said Sashko Mitovski, Mayor of Kriva Palanka.

The Memorandum is part of the activities of the Coalition Forum for Civic Dialogue, led by the NGO Infocenter, with the participant of nice CSOs from the country, among which Spektar. Forum for Civic Dialogue is supported by the "Olof Palme" International Center from Sweden within the project "Civic Alliance for Progressive Changes at Local Level".



Changes in the Law of Housing Needed for Its Easier Implementation



The Association for Humane Housing Habitat Macedonia organized a roundtable on the Law on Housing as part of the working group whose aim is to prepare new changes and amendments to the existing law. The Minister of Transport and Communications Blagoj Bochvarski stressed that this inclusive process provides transparency when completing the existing legal shortcomings that it would enable its unhindered implementation, which is in the interest of all citizens.

The right to housing is part of the appropriate living standard and it is part of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

"The need to improve the Law on Housing resulted from the long experience with the obstacles in its implementation in the field, which depends on many conditions. The right to housing is part of an appropriate living standard and it is in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; as a Ministry, we have the task to create conditions for quality housing for all", said Bochvarski at the roundtable.

On several occasions, Habitat Macedonia participated in the preparation of draft texts for the Law on Housing, including the cooperation with a number of institutions and ministries around different aspects covered by the law. These aspects include: social housing and apartment building management, practical implementation of the law regarding energy efficiency of the apartment buildings, preparation of registers of apartment buildings for the municipalities, as well as implementation of the TABULA methodology for building typology.

"By organizing this debate, we include all stakeholders and interested parties which have not had the chance to express their opinion so far. This concerns first of all the owners of the separate parts of apartment buildings represented by their communities of owners or authorized representatives who communicate with the licensed companies that provide management services. Our goal is to have a law that would be applicable and it will be implemented by all stakeholders that will fulfil the conditions for quality urban housing of the citizens", said Zoran Kostov, Executive Director of Habitat Macedonia.

The draft text of the new Law on Housing is expected to be open for public debate in the first quarter of 2023.

Women's Entrepreneurship Summit "Inspirational Future"

According to the data of the tax office, there are 104,507 legal entities registered as active tax payers in all regions in the country, 27,711 of which have women managers. According to the submitted tax balances, all together provide revenue of about 230 billion denars and provide jobs and salaries for 121,693 workers. All of these companies develop the regions where they work, successfully represent us at local and international markets and continuously contribute to GDP growth.

This was stressed by the Director of the Public Revenue Office Sanja Lukarevska at the opening of the Second Summit of Women's Entrepreneurship entitled "Inspirational Future" which takes place as part of the National Platform for Women's Entrepreneurship (NPZP).

The Deputy Minister of Economy Zoran Manevski in his address spoke about the Annual Award for Women Entrepreneurs which had been introduced by the Ministry of Economy as the institutional patron of NPZP, which is awarded to the best companies owned and managed by women. He stressed that the number of selected companies that meet the criteria for participation in 2021 was increased from 51 to 73 compared to 2020, which is a significant indicator that the set goals for encouraging women to start their own business have been achieved. At the Summit, the awards for best entrepreneurs in micro, small and medium enterprises were awarded. The award for best woman entrepreneur in the micro enterprise

category was given to Daniela Josefska from "Josefski Consulting", an accounting bureau from Kochani, in the small enterprise category "Sakam kniga" and the owner Ivana Spasev, and in the area of medium enterprises Slavica Aleksovska and her company "Sateks" from Prilep.

NPZP also awarded Irina Trostjanska, the owner of FIT MIX Studio Trostjanska DOOEL as the "Best Young Leader", while the "Best CSO – Good Practice" award was given to Verica Milevska-Stefanovska from the Chamber for Private Security.



Romalitico and Strip Centre Veles

The Comic Centre of Macedonia from Veles organized a thematic comic competition "About Our Friends and Neighbours" in 2022, dedicated to illustrating the needs and issues that the Roma community in the country faces. The winning works are now published in electronic and printed version, available to the broad audience.

This competition and the activities around it increase the visibility of the Roma community via a creative campaign and encourage the young people to creative thinking about the reasons and solutions of the problems that they face.

Firdeza Zekirova, a thematic expert on this project, explains that only the comic can clearly tell a story, via images that would fully explain the actions and attitudes to the Roma. "Sending a social message to all stakeholders should open the question — Can we change anything? Are we all prepared as individuals to have the change start with us?" adds Zekirova.

The comic catalogue includes the first awarded work of Angela Petrushevska with her comic "Roma Life Is Far from Easy", the best drawing by Emran Arifov with his comic "One Day in Roma Neighbourhood", the work of Hasina Abduli "The Everyday Life and Problems of the Roma Population" for which she was given a special award and many other beautiful works.



CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Demands for Alleviation of the Work of the Local Media

Upon the initiative of the Association of Journalists of Macedonia (AJM) there was a meeting with the Director of the Agency of Audio and Audio-visual Media (AVMU) Zoran Trajchevski and part of the expert service of the regulator.



During the meeting there was a discussion on two main issues: decreasing the costs of the local and regional media to the regulator, as well as the lack of correspondent network of national concessioners.

"It is necessary to decrease the gap between the journalists and cameramen who work in other cities and the colleagues who work in Skopje. According to AJM analyses, there are media that do not have a single correspondent, some of them have two or three, it is a fact that the need for this is much bigger" – said Mladen Chadikovski, AJM President.

With respect to work permits, i.e. compensation that the media give to the regulator, in 2018 they were decreased for 30%, while last year the decrease was up to 50%. The financial difference that AVMU needs because of the decrease is compensated by the Government. As they say, the problem is much broader because of the fact that the regulator does not have a possibility to decrease them more than now, or to cancel them altogether, because they will have a financial loss in this way, and it will have to be compensated by the Government, which is not possible at the moment.

The conclusion of the meeting is that AJM and AVMU will continue to review ways of alleviating the work of the local and regional TV and radio stations and that AJM will submit an initiative to change the rulebooks of the regulator so that the national TV stations have the obligation to engage correspondents to report on issues of local public interest.

Systemic Dealing with Discrimination and Hate Speech to LGBTI People

According to Queer Centre finds, LGBTI people in Macedonia are exceptionally affected by discrimination. The Commission for Prevention and Protection from Discrimination determined 26 cases of discrimination from May 2021 to September 2022, as well as instructions for discrimination where there is calling for, encouraging and spreading of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, as it was said at the round table on "Systemic Dealing with Discrimination and Hate Speech to LGBTI People".

Unlike the Commission for Prevention and Protection from Discrimination, the enforcement bodies such as Basic Public Prosecution and the Ministry of Interior fail in recognizing discrimination and hate speech directed to LGBTI community, as indicated in the date of the Queer Centre.

Basic Public Prosecution and the Ministry of Interior fail in recognizing discrimination and hate speech directed to LGBTI community members.

From May 2021 to September 2022, this centre submitted 64 lawsuits to the public prosecution and 16 lawsuits to Mol. Five lawsuits were rejected by the prosecution, and for 20 lawsuits they were informed that there was no room for follow-up on the side of the prosecution.

MoI have no answer to any of the submitted lawsuits.

"This tradition of impunity when it comes to hate speech only normalizes it, feeds it and encourages such a criminal behaviour. Our goal is via appeals and lawsuits to test and stimulate the institutions in charge to protect the LGBTI citizens who are victims to discrimination and hate crime", says Martin Tasevski, a legal advisor at the Queer Centre. "It is the responsibility of the state to demonstrate decisiveness and send a clear message that these things are unacceptable, and that they have no place in a modern democratic society made of differences, and it can be done most efficiently and act preventively only if there is a practice of appropriate sanctioning of the perpetrators of such acts", adds Tasevski.

"The bodies in charge should know better and without any delay take all available measures and specific activities in



line with the protection of the wellbeing of these citizens. It is important not to forget that the laws are not carved in stone, but they rather meet the needs of the citizens for one society. Taking into consideration that this society has to stop treating LGBTI people as invisible, it has to adjust the laws to the needs of this group of citizens, who contribute to the system equally with the others, but do not enjoy the same rights", added the psychologist and Queer Centre Director David Tasevski.

The roundtable included participants from the Commission for Prevention and Protection from Discrimination, the Parliament of RNM, Ministry of Interior, Basic Public Prosecution, Council for Media Ethics in Macedonia and others, as well as CSOs that represent the sexual and gender minorities.

Promotion of Baseline Study for Social Enterprises in North Macedonia

The National Youth Council of Macedonia (NMSM) introduced and promoted its Baseline Study on Social Enterprises in North Macedonia. The study made a mapping of the social enterprises in the country with a special focus on the youth, and a complementary product that was presented was the social enterprises register, first of this kind in our country, whose goal is to synthetize the basic information on social enterprises that is publicly available.

NMSM Secretary General, Mariana Angelova, stressed at the promotion of the baseline study that the experience of the organization had shown that youth employment is a priority and that, according to the analyses, the rate of youth unemployment is quite high.

The NMSM experience had shown that the rate of youth unemployment is very high which makes efforts for employment a priority.



"In order to contribute to resolving this challenge, as an organization we have decided that besides our direct work with the youth and building their competences, we also need to support other entities that have the potential to provide sustainable employment for the young, especially those from vulnerable categories. This project has the goals to increase youth employability via social entrepreneurship, support youth and social enterprises that employ young people and contribute to overall development of the social entrepreneurship in our country", said Angelova.

The platform mladipretpriemaci.mk was also presented during the conference, to be used as a platform for group financing of ideas to establish social enterprises in North Macedonia and collect capital for promoting the services and products of the already existing social enterprises.

The ten grantees of the project "Social Entrepreneurship for Youth Employment" also presented their ideas at the event.

MK - bit.ly/3EUNqga ALB - bit.ly/3EugQAu

Political Parties as a Main Source of Disinformation in Macedonia

Among the Macedonian citizens there is a predominant opinion that the political parties and media are the ones that spread disinformation the most. Big part of them think that they can recognize disinformation, but they admit that sometimes it happens that they share false information themselves. The citizens are mainly informed via television, Facebook and web sites, but they have little trust in media.

This is shown in the results of the public opinion survey about the ability of the citizens to recognize and deal with disinformation, which was conducted by the Institute for Communication Studies (IKS) in October as part of the "Use Facts" project.

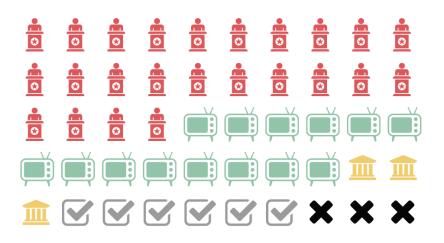
The citizens think that the political parties are the ones that spread the most disinformation in Macedonia, while the media are on the second place, as shown by the public opinion survey. The view that the political parties spread the most disinformation dominates with more than half of the population above the age of 55.

Television is the most frequently used sources of information, while Facebook and the web sites are on the second and third place respectively. As for the trust in the media, more than half of the respondents stated that they doubt all news that they read. More than half of the citizens think that they can sometimes recognize disinformation and think that it sometimes happens that they too share incorrect information. The citizens most often feel upset in the cases when they see that they have read disinformation.

Sensations are most "effective" with the most educated. According to the level of education, most of the respondents with completed postgraduate studies, doctorate or specialization would read news with sensationalist, i.e. false title.

The results of the survey show that in Macedonia it is necessary to do a lot more work on increasing the ability of the population to recognize disinformation and its sources, but also to strengthen the professionality of media, which would in turn restore the trust with the population.

Кој најмногу шири дезинформации во Македонија?



- Политички партииМедиумиДржавни институции
 - Сите наведени Друго Не знам/нема одговор

Report on the Transparency of the Municipal Budgetary Processes for 2021 in North Macedonia



Only five municipalities in North Macedonia has a satisfactory level of transparency of their budgetary processes in 2021, as indicated by the new Index of Transparency of the Municipalities for 2021, prepared by the Association for Research and Analyses – ZMAI.

"16 municipalities in total have sufficient transparency of their budgetary process. Most of them, i.e. 41 have minimum transparency of their budgetary process. All of this shows that there is a minimal transparency of the municipal budgets for the citizens in 2021. The highest value for 2021, according to the report, is in Karposh, while the lowest in Arachinovo", stressed Jovana Avramovska Nikolovska from ZMAI.

The conclusion of the researchers is that the highest factor for the poor transparency of the municipalities if the insufficient inclusion and justness to the citizens when it comes to the budgetary process. There are differences in the levels of transparency when it comes to municipalities divided as urban and rural, geographic location and the dimension through which transparency is reviewed.

Viktor Mitevski, ZMAI President, said that there is a big gap when it comes to transparency between urban and rural municipalities, i.e. the highest achievements are most often with the urban municipalities, and lowest with the rural ones.

"Unfortunately, all mechanisms that are used in the rural environments are not formally covered and the citizens do not see them as systemic mechanisms, but when they present their ideas, they address directly the Mayor, the President of the Municipal Council, officials that actually need to forward it to the Council, but because it is not an appropriate mechanism, these requests most often do not end in the budgets", said MItevski.

Report: https://zmai.mk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/index-mk-2021-min.pdf

There Are Almost no "Green" Procurements in the Country

In the country there are almost no "green procurements" although the Law on Public Procurements provides for this and encourages it. The institutions do not even respect the small number of measures adopted by the Government that should influence the environment protection via public procurements, as it is stated in the crucial finds in the Report on Research of Public Procurements related to the environment protection to detect the corruption risks, as published by the Center for Civic Communications (CCC) today.

Although the Government decided to procure water in glass bottles as early as December 2019, according to the research, 90% of the water that is bought by the institutions is in plastic bottles, and around half a million Euro is spent on this. Although it is an obligation, as stated by CCC, the institutions do not ask the bidders for proofs that they undertake measures regarding the created waste of the products that they sell. Despite the conclusion of the Government to procure "ecological" vehicles, as many as 94% of the procured vehicles at annual level are diesel or petrol.

"Ecological features of signs are not requested with the procurement of products that directly pollute the environment, such as the cleaning devices, toners, printers etc. 'Green' aspects in the procurements are absent from the start of the procedures – the planning of the procurements, the description of the products and selection criteria – until the implementation of the contracts.", they say at CCC. They explain that when it comes to the tenders related to the protection of environment there are two offers per tender on average, which means that the competition is lower than at other tenders in the country. The right to discretionary decisions when it comes to whether the environmental protection standards will be implemented and if the Government recommendations are consistently respected is a fertile ground for external influence, and therefore, corruption, as stated in the key findings of the research.

CCC assesses that the country should urgently adopt a policy for "green" public procurements that will be obligatory to be implemented by all state institutions.



The research, followed by a policy document that contains proposals for bigger implementation of green procurements have been prepared as part of the project "Adjusting to Climate Changes by Prevention of Corruption in Public Procurements". The project is implemented by the Center for Civic Communications and the Platform of CSOs for Fighting Corruption, and it is financially supported by the Foundation Open Society Macedonia.

Report: zelenimk.pdf (ccc.org.mk)

Recommendation document for stimulating the implementation of "green" public procurements and prevention of corruption in the process: zeleni2mk.pdf (ccc.org.mk)

SPS Coalition Presented the Reports on the Work of Judicial Council and the Council of Public Prosecutors

All for Fair Trials Coalition presented two reports of the work of the Judicial Council and the Council of Public Prosecutors and a report that concerns the monitoring of the judicial procedures in the courts in the country.

Darko Avramovski, Executive Director of All for Fair Trials Coalition said that there were no big differences with respect to the actions of the councils and courts since last year and the same shortcomings have been detected.

"What we could see is that the Department for Prosecution of Organised Crime and Corruption at the Basic Criminal Court in Skopje is a bit more efficient in acting with respect to cases and consistent following of the rules of the criminal procedure, including the principles of openness and transparency. However, what was interesting is that we saw that the penal policy within this department is to a large extent similar to penal policy in the other procedures which is a bit unusual if one takes into consideration that

these are serious crimes in the area of organized crime and corruption", he said.

Besa Ademi, the President and Judge at the Supreme Court said that all of these activities that mean monitoring of the work of the judiciary and prosecution have an exceptional contribution in the fight against corruption. According to her, transparency, openness, efficiency in the work and undertaking specific measures for legal and conscientious work are some of the crucial factors for it.



Referendum on Removing Gambling Places from Settlements



Antigambling Movement from Tetovo organized a public debate as part of the process to initiate a local referendum in order to ask the citizens if they want the facilities for games of chance to be removed from the settlements. They say that this step is a consequence of the alarming situation in the whole country because of the huge number of facilities like this throughout the whole state.

"The initiative will come from us. We will start from Tetovo and we will continue with the idea in all other cities and municipalities to have this referendum organized and once and for all solve the problem with these facilities of games of chance. The question will be if we agree to remove all of these facilities for games of chance", said Xhemal Abdiu from the Antigambling Movement.

Professor Qebir Avziu explained that this would be a facultative referendum and it would not have a compulsory character for the Government and the state. Still, according to him, this procedure will send a positive message in the whole country and that the other municipalities will also initiate organizing such a referendum.

The first man of Tetovo, Bilal Kasami said that the municipality would support such a referendum. "We have asked the sectors in the municipality to find legal possibilities to organize a referendum. It is not directly a competence of the municipality, it is a business that is organized and controlled by the Ministry of Finance, but I believe that we will find a way to organize a referendum on this issue in the laws, with the competence of the municipality as a local government", says Bilal Kasami.

The movement against gambling has asked for several times that the casinos and gambling facilities that are close to schools are dislocated, but this proposal was not taken into consideration.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Stimulating and Developing Youth Activism in Delchevo



The Regional Centre for Advocacy from Delchevo organized a two-day workshop to encourage and develop youth activism, as part of the project "Youth Voice for Local Action". The main goal of the workshops is to show the young people the ways in which they can deal with challenges and how to use the possibilities that the local community offers to develop youth activism.

Mario Veljkovik who had the role of the trainer at the twoday event, stressed that volunteering and youth activism are one of the crucial ways of action, via which the young people start to be involved in the social developments. "By transferring certain experience, something that has already functioned and produced good results, we want to share examples on how the young people can be involved, in order to come to a positive change in our society", added Veljkovik.

At the workshop there were high school students, university students, youth workers, volunteers, people from CSOs who work with the young people from the region of Delchevo. Rodne Deolska, Project Coordinator, says that she has high expectations about the result of this event because it has encountered a great interest by the participants.

In the later phase of the project "Youth Voice for Local Action", there will be several podcasts that cover themes targeting the young people from Delchevo, followed by another capacity building workshop, as well as organization of a youth camp, where the young people will also get acquainted with the beauties of Delchevo.

Food Bank and Its Collaborators Make Lives of Citizens in Crisis Easier

Food Bank Macedonia continued with their humanitarian actions to help and distribute food to people in need. In the last quarter of 2022, they donated 2,300 kg, 347 packages and 13,000 pieces of food.

The leadership of QSI International School of Skopje, the teachers and professors together with the students and their parents this year again organized the Food Drive 2022. Thanks to the action, there were 800 kg of food collected for the children of the Day-care Centre for Street Children from Shuto Orizari and part for children with special needs from Veles.

The donation of 500 pieces of salty packages of Vitalia Healthyfood were distributed by volunteers from the National Roma Centre from Kumanovo for the people from Kumanovo and its surroundings who are in urgent need of this help.

Vitaminka Prilep donated more than 12,500 sweet and salty pieces, i.e. more than 250 packages that the volunteers

of the local Food Bank MK – Kavadarci distributed to the people in Kavadarci and its surroundings.

Within the "A Child to a Child" Action and in cooperation with the people in charge, children and parents of the three kindergartens from the Municipality of Centar – 13th November, Kocho Racin and Rade Jovchevski Korchagin collected more than 1,500 kg of food and hygienic means. The products, packed in 31 packages of food and hygiene means were shared with seven caretaking families for children without parents from Kale and Madzir Maalo and small group homes in Kapishtec.

More than 50 families from Kumanovo and Kavadarci received food packages thanks to the engagement of the National Roma Centre from Kumanovo and Eco-Life from Kavadarci.

This support enables the vulnerable families to manage the financial crisis to some extent and provide food for their members.

Rely on the Youth



The young people from the rural areas need cultural life, sport activities, but they are also interested in getting involved in activities related to environment protection. Unfortunately, they are demotivated by the lack of events and activities, they rarely express their initiatives before the teachers or the representatives of the municipalities, and at the same time they do not have enough knowledge and skills to prepare projects that would contribute to the positive development of the community.

This is only part of the conclusions of the four workshops in the project "Rely on the Young", which is implemented jointly by the Macedonian Enterprise Development Foundation (MEDF), Rural Coalition, ELIT — Association of Women Managers and Junior Achievement Macedonia. The workshops took place in the villages of Tearce, Staro Nagorichane, Novaci and Makedonski Brod in order to involve the young people in improving the lives in their communities via activism and volunteering.

One of the more surprising reasons for demotivating the young was the general apathy to improvement of the living standard in their community. Many of the young people have abandoned their moral and ethical values,

while their parents have no influence on them taking into consideration that many of them have also abandoned their values.

There were many proposals given by the young in order to solve the expressed problems and needs. Among them are joining of the CSOs and their joint approach in the communication and coordination with the municipality, organization of events for promotion of the region, organization of ecological activities, as well as supporting the young in opening new businesses.

In order to implement the above listed proposals, the project "Rely on the Young" will allocate 10 grants for implementation of youth initiatives and holding 15 trainings for application writing and projects for young and women in the rural environments.

Target group are the young people in the rural communities of the Northeast, Pelagonija, Polog and Southwest planning regions who have limited capacities and access to initiative innovative solutions for local problems, measures that support prosperity, employment and social services within their communities.

Day of the People with Disabilities of Macedonia Marked in Veles

Under the auspices of Mobility Macedonia, and organized by Mobility Veles, 4th December – the Day of the People with Disabilities in Macedonia was marked.

The Mayor of the municipality addressed the people present and he stressed that he would continue to advocate for a better and more meaningful life of the people with disabilities in the municipality and that he would always stand for the needs of these people.



The President of Mobility Macedonia Branimir Jovanovski stressed in his speech that this association had been acting for 36 years already in the area of improvement of the rights and position of the people with disabilities. He stressed that this year there was stress on the negotiations with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy on increasing the compensation for care and assistance of another person and the compensation for disability and permanent financial assistance. According to him, the success is partial because only the special compensation was increased for

15%, but the other compensations were not increased and they are a serious obstacle for the independent and unhindered life of the people with disabilities.

During this event there was a special affirmation of the world champion in shooting, Olivera Nakovska Bikova who united the European, world and Paralympictitle by winning gold medals at all of these competitions, which makes her one of the most successful athletes in the country.

First Youth Hub Open in Prespa

After one-year interactive work with 10 young people from Prespa, in November 2022 there was a celebration for the opening of the Youth Prespa Hub in the premises of Eco Guerrilla Prespa.

The purpose of this Hub is to include the young people from Prespa in detecting their needs and ideas to improve the quality of life of the young person. The Hub offers its own programme via education, training and networking with the business sector and local self-government, in order to contribute to strengthening the situation of the young people in Prespa.



Within the Hub there were several more products prepared, such as: authentic Prespa souvenirs, promotional postcards with Prespa motifs, new tourist route "Eco Tour", as well as a mobile promotional stand that will be used for any promotion of Prespa. In the meantime, the web page of the Hub has already been launched: https://hub.ecogerilaprespa.org.mk/

These products will contribute to improving the tourist offer of the ecotourism in Prespa, and they are also available at the single application for promotion of tourism in Prespa http://prespa2go.mk/

7,000 Trees Planted in a Weekend

As part of their humanitarian and socially responsible work, the Association for Environment Protection and Rehabilitation Treebanks planted 7,000 trees in the village of Ajvatovci in the Municipality of Ilinden, as well as in the Berovo village of Budinarci. This was the start of the weekend action where 3,500 trees were planted in the first part of the action.

The funds for planting of trees were provided by donations from EcoAsist Romania, Breon DOOEL Skopje, A1 Macedonia DOOEL Skopje and Treebanks own funds, obtained via travel reservations of Treebanks affiliated links. Planting was organized in coordination with the local self-governments and National Forests public enterprise.

Treebanks have planted 15,000 trees so far at multiple locations around the country. The CSO has worked since 2019, and the funds for planting trees are provided via affiliated partnerships.

At the CSO they say that the trees help in purifying the air that we breathe, filtrate the water that we drink and secure habitats to more than 80% if the land biodiversity in the world. The forests secure work for more than 1,6 billion people, absorb harmful carbon from the atmosphere and they are the key components of 25% of all medicines. "Because we do not have a spare planet!"

"Snezhe the Porcupine", an Inclusive Performance in Sign Language in the Theatre for Children and Youth

"Dose of Happiness" CSO organized the inclusive performance "Snezhe the Porcupine" on 13 December. This activity is part of the project "Look with Your Heart, Speak with Your Hands".

The idea for this performance comes from the speech problem that most of the children with Down Syndrome face. One of the solution sis that other children learn the sign language so that they can communicate easier. The performance included many children that have been through the first level of learning the basic signs.

"In the world that we live in, being different means being lonely. Different means that you can never hug your old friends and make new ones. However, the children from 'Dose of Happiness' and their friends have shown that being different does not imply being lonely, but rather being different and special is wonderful", say the organizers.

The positive criticism and interest of the broader public has only confirmed that these activities are the right way to inclusion and that the association should continue with their mission.

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Legislation as a Mover of Philanthropy

The changes in the Law on Donations and Sponsorships in the public activities will provide easier tax incentives for citizen and enterprise donations. Representatives of the business community, institutions and CSOs shared their experience at the Philanthropy Forum in Skopje and created models for increased cooperation, in order to stimulate donations and sponsorships.

The research of "Konekt" association shows that half of the companies donate during the year, which is an indicator that we have a significant philanthropic potential. With respect to citizen donations, North Macedonia has climbed to the solid 25th place this year, compared to the 75th in 2013, according to World Giving Index.

The Vice Prime Minister on Economic Issues Fatmir Bytyqi said that any form of philanthropy means care and respect for one's compatriots and the state. "Because of the significant role of philanthropy in stimulating development, there are on-going changes in the Law on Donations and Sponsorships in the public area to make it easier to secure tax incentives for citizens and enterprises", announced Bytyqi.

According to Drilon Iseni from the Chamber of Commerce of Northwest Macedonia, the changes in the law will secure its better functioning. On the other hand, the big number of requests for donations should be resolved in a strategic way, i.e. to help the companies channel the donations in the parts of the society where they will have a bigger effect.

Deputy Ambassador at the USA Embassy in the country Eric Mayer hopes that the Government will use donation partnerships to recognize corporate and individual philanthropists as partners in the social agreement rather than only as shareholders that can be addressed for support during times of crisis, such as the recent pandemic.



Changes in the Law on Association and Foundation Adopted

On 2nd November 2022, the MPs voted for the changes in the laws on associations and political parties that prohibit the CSOs, foundations and political parties to use names, nicknames, pseudonyms related to fascism, Nazism, genocide, the Third Reich, etc.

These changes were initiated after a bigger group of citizens held a protect against the announced opening of the Bulgarian Club "Boris III" on 7th October 2022 in Ohrid, N. Macedonia.

The citizen protect was directed against the association that has the name of a well-known fascist statesman from the II World War period (Emperor Boris III), who was in close relations with Hitler. This opened a public debate on the need to legally regulate the usage of names, nicknames, pseudonyms that would cause negative feelings with an ethnic community.

Soon afterwards, on 17.10. 2022, the MPs supported the adoption of the Draft Law for Changing and Amending the Law on Associations and Foundations.

As it was explained by one the parties that submitted the initiative, "these legal changes have the aim to put an end to opening associations and foundations whose programmes, goals, activities and actions are directed to violent undermining of the constitutional order of the country, stimulating and calling for military aggression, as well as towards stirring national, racial, religious hate or other intolerance, hate, genocide, extermination, spreading or support, encouraging or approving fascism, Nazism, national socialism and the Third Reich, as well as undertaking activities related to terrorism or activities against the Constitution".

Grants for CSOs from the State Budget Allocated

Before the end of the year, the Government of RNM adopted a Decision to Distribute Budget Funds for 2022, intended for financing programme activities of associations and foundations. There were 15 million denars distributed from the Budget, Part 040.10 – Ministry of Political System and Relations among the Communities, Sub-programme 11 – Promotion of Interethnic Relations, Item 463 Transfers to Non-governmental Organizations, intended for financing the programme activities of the following associations and foundations.

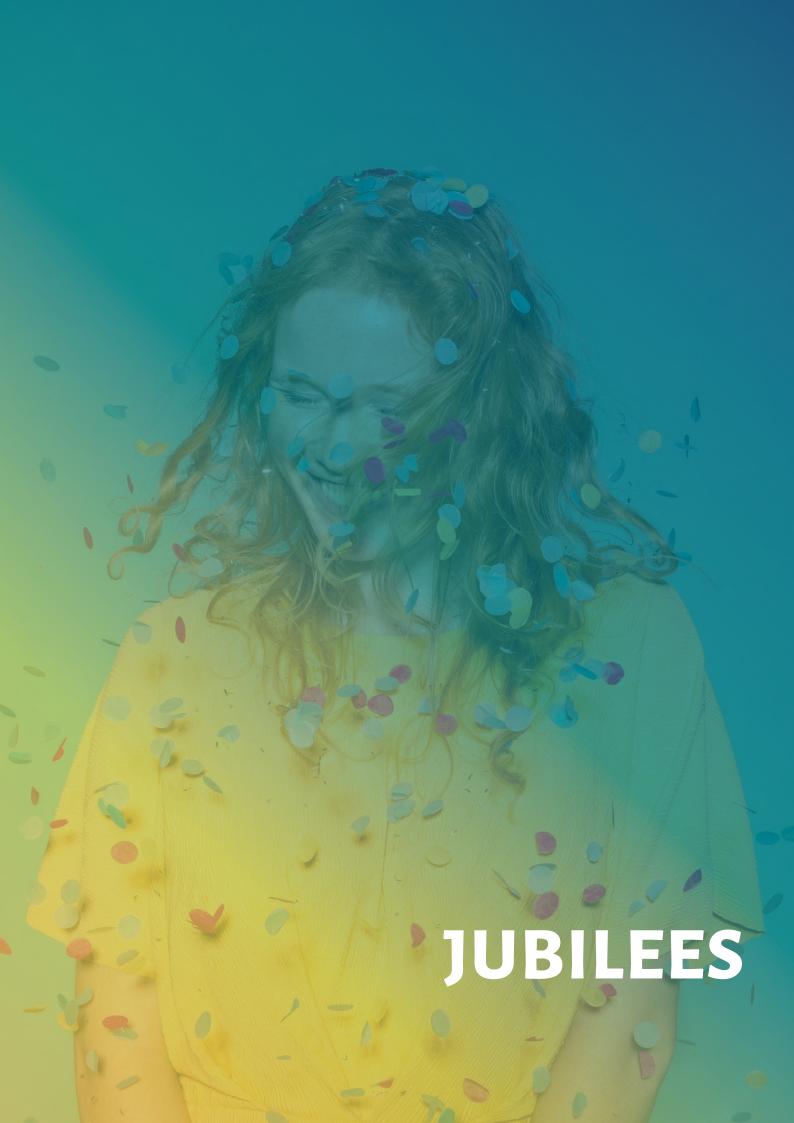
Financial support was given to 33 CSOs:

- 1) Dituria CSO from Kichevo,
- 2) Vlaznia Association for Education from Kumanovo,
- 3) Association for Democratic Initiative from Gostivar,
- 4) Dua Ylberin Association for Help to Children with Special Needs from Skopje,
- 5) Association for Cerebral Palsy from Tetovo,
- 6) Shkendia Athletic Club from Tetovo,
- 7) "Joint Values" ZW Association of Citizens for Support of Interethnic Dialogue and Community Development from Skopje,
- 8) Racio Association Centre for Educational and Cultural Development from Skopje,
- 9) OYA Association Organized Association of the Young from Gostivar,
- 10) UFUK Association of Citizens for Young, Democracy and Human Rights,
- 11) Bota Ime NGO,
- 12) Intermunicipal Association of People with Physical Disability of the Municipalities Veles, Gradsko and Chashka Mobility Veles,
- 13) Klavis Association of Citizens for Development of Multicultural Society, Multiethnic Tolerance and Cohabitation.
- 14) Multikultura Association from Tetovo,
- 15) National Association of the Blind of the Republic of North Macedonia,
- 16) Blue Firefly Association for Promoting the Quality of Life of the People within the Autistic Specter from Skopje,
- 17) Youth Cultural Centre from Bitola,
- 18) Eco Vita Art Association for Culture, Ecology and Sport from Skopje,
- 19) National Roma Centre Association from Kumanovo,
- 20) Polio Plus Movement against Handicap from Skopje,

- 21) Aqua Association for Development and Activism from Struga,
- 22) Legis Association of Citizens for Promotion and Protection of Cultural and Spiritual Values from Skopje,
- 23) Centre for Civic Perspective Association for Civic Activism from Tetovo,
- 24) Green Club from Tetovo,
- 25) Student Parliament at the Faculty for Information Science and Computer Engineering from Skopje,
- 26) Sportiv Association for Organizing and Implementation of Sport Activities from Skopje,
- 27) Kindness Association of Citizens for Helping the Homeless and Socially Endangered Families and Individuals.
- 28) SEOS Association for Social Development from Struga.
- 29) Simbolicum Macedonian Association for Applied Psychology from Skopje,
- 30) Balkan Institute for Regional Cooperation from Tetovo,
- 31) Good Society Institute for Sociology from Tetovo,
- 32) OTI Group Associated for Transparent Information from Skopje,
- 33) Drita e Drvenit Saraj Cultural and Artistic Association from Skopje.

The budget allocated to each of the organizations is 454,000 denars.

Improving the system of state funding is one of the priorities of the civil society, and according to the Work Programme of the Government of RNM for the period of 2022 – 2024, is a priority of the executive power in the country. CSOs saluted the decision of the Government to allocate funds for financing of CSOs by the Ministry of Political System and Relations among the Communities via the Council for Cooperation with the Government in March 2022, but they also asked that the long positive practice of financing CSOs by the Budget of the General Secretariat of the Government of RNM for 2022. Unfortunately, the Government did not have any understanding for this request. State funding was also a theme of Civica Mobilitas thematic forum "State Funding for Bigger Sustainability of CSOs".



35 Years Mobility - Bitola



The Association of People with Physical Disability of Bitola, Demir Hisar and Resen "Mobility" – Bitola celebrated the jubilee 35 years of the establishment of the association in the ZIO sports hall (CSR – Bitola).

In his introductory speech, the president of the Association, Prim. Dr. Niko Jankov gave a short overview of their journey over the last three and a half decades, filled with many activities on local, national and international level, while also pointing out that there is still a long way to go.

"Accessibility remains one of the biggest obstacles in the lives of the people with physical handicap, but also of the people with any kind of disability. I am especially pleased that "Alternative Touristic Experience, Alternative Journey", one of the biggest projects we have worked on, is implemented in our jubilee year and will bring results that will benefit all people with disabilities, but all of us as well" — said Dr. Jankov.

Deputy Mayor of Bitola Bojan Bojkovski was also one of the guests at the event. "Municipality of Bitola makes all the efforts to make the lives of these people, our fellow citizens, as easier as possible, and I would like to emphasise that we will continue to be partners in such projects also in the future, such as the last project for installing signalisation for the people with disabilities" — he said in his address.



The Manager of the project "Alternative Touristic Experience - Alternative Journey", Ivona Jankova, shared more details about their activities, thanks to which Bitola became the first city in the region with a tourist offer for people with disabilities.

The project envisaged tourist signalisation for 10 most important cultural and historic monuments in Bitola. The signalisation includes two-dimensional photos of the points of interest as well as a description in Macedonian and English language with Braille alphabet for people with impaired eyesight, as well as a QR code that leads to the application with audio narration in Macedonian and English language as well as a video narration with sign language. Apart from this, printed guides with tactile images and descriptions in Braille alphabet in Macedonian, English and Greek language were promoted.

Many members of Mobility Bitola have also attended the celebration, as well as members of Mobility Skopje and Mobility Shtip, Deputy Mayor of Bitola Bojan Bojkovski, Director of PE Parkinzi Goran Stepanovski and many friends and supporters of the Association. Mobility Bitola continued the tradition of awarding certificates of gratitude at their jubilee celebrations for the successful projects and cooperation in the past period.

Face to Face and Kometal GjP Celebrate Their Jubilees with a Joint Score

The tenth anniversary since the issuing of the first edition of "Face to Face" and the twentieth anniversary since Kometal GjP won the prestigious Champions League was marked with an inclusive sports event. Former handball players, members of the golden generation of the female team of Kometal Gjorche Petrov and the sellers of the magazine for sustainable growth "Face to Face" played a symbolic match in the sports hall of "11 October" primary school in the presence of many sports fans.

"Face to Face" sellers are the first association of successful examples of how our fellow citizens who belonged to the

vulnerable group have become well integrated members of our society" – say representatives of "Face to Face" and add that this is the reason this match aims towards conveying the message that every good result is the consequence of a lot of work, trust and active efforts.

Klimentina Ilijevski, executive director and editor-in-chief of the magazine said that the editorial of the first edition of "Face to Face" had the same message as the match itself: "To win means not only to be the first. To win means to bring change."

- The match is a nice opportunity to support inclusiveness and develop people's awareness that although we are all different, we all belong to the same society and that stigmatisation needs to be completely rooted out, said handball player Budimir just before the event.

This central event that marked the tenth anniversary of "Face to Face" magazine and their continuous efforts for a better and more inclusive society was organised in cooperation with the Agency for Youth and Sports.



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New Self-Sustainability Methods for CSOs



The innovative approach towards sustainability of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) was the topic of the two-day workshop of Civica Mobilitas (CM) that took place in Mavrovo on 28 and 29 November 2022. The workshop was conducted by international and local experts under the guidance of Simon Forester, international expert of Civica Mobilitas and Nathan Koeshall, director of Catalyst Balkan.

Twenty representatives of the Civica Mobilitas grantees acquired theoretical and practical knowledge regarding the innovative ways for fund generation and CSOs sustainability. Models and templates to generate funds that lead to more sustainable CSOs were discussed at the workshop. Donation models, peer-to-peer model, membership model, crowdfunding etc. were some of the

models that were part of the programme. The participants were introduced to the Canvas model which is used for overall planning of key partners, resources, activities, connections etc. aimed at a more organised approach for fund generation.

The participants expressed their interest to implement some of the new ways to generate funds. They pointed out that it is of high importance for the CSOs to dedicate attention to this topic in order to go beyond the traditional fund generation framework. Apart from the great interest for this workshop, the participants pointed out that they have the need for more workshops of this type also in the future as well as trainings that will provide better knowledge which they can easily implement in the everyday functioning of their organisations.

Civica Mobilitas Partnership Action Grants Allocated

Civica Mobilitas Grant Selection Committee evaluated the received applications and awarded nine grants to be implemented by a total of 30 organisations (list of the awarded applicants and their partners is placed at the end of this article).

Through this call Civica Mobilitas addresses the socioeconomic and energy crisis in the country. These crises have caused significant increase of the social polarisation due to various factors. Although the Government provides financial support to the economically vulnerable groups, the public education system, the health system and the public enterprises, the state financing and the overall support to the civil society organisations is minimal or non-existent. These actions provide therefore support to civil society organisations that will work on issues related to polarisation, financial crisis (budget deficit) and energy crisis.

The projects will include activities for depolarisation of the public discourse as a precondition towards a constructive dialogue to build healthy and accountable institutions; evaluation of the anti-crisis measures for the vulnerable categories of citizens and companies; accessibility of health services for the socially vulnerable groups of citizens. Part of them will focus on evaluation of the energy efficiency

of public/municipal facilities in 4 target municipalities (Berovo, Pehchevo, Debar and Struga) and will propose evidence-based measures and solutions. There will be monitoring of state and municipal budget expenditures that change under the influence of the economic crisis (inflation, stagnation and energy crisis) and affect the lives of the citizens. At the same time there will be activities dedicated to prevention and protection against discrimination as well as promotion of social inclusion and equality etc.

The supported activities will be implemented at national level. The grantees come from seven regions: the Skopje region, east, south-west, Pelagonija, north-east, Polog and Vardar regions.

A total of 75 applications from 229 CSOs have been received at the call that was open until 11th November 2022. Out of these, 66 met the administrative criteria and were submitted to the Committee.

- Institute for Social Sciences and Humanities, Skopje in cooperation with Association of Citizens INSTITUTE FOR MEDIA AND ANALYTICS IMA Skopje, Association-Balkan Institute for Regional Cooperation BIRS Tetovo and Association of Citizens with Rare Diseases LIFE WITH CHALLENGES BITOLA with the project Through Depolarisation to Democratic, Stable and Inclusive Institutions: Contribution to the Civil Society
- 2. Association of Citizens FINANCE THINK Institute for Economic Research and Policies, Skopje in cooperation with the Association for Rural Development LOCAL ACTION GROUP AGRO LIDER Krivogashtani and Association Rural Coalition Kichevo with the project Monitoring, Evaluation and Proposals for Anti-crisis Measures in Times of Limited Budgets
- in cooperation with the Association for Equal Development SOLUTIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT Skopje and the Association for Social Development and Democracy NGO PULSE OF DEMOCRACY Kumanovo with the project Contribution towards the Public Debate and the Measures to Counter the Consequences of the Economic Crisis
- 4. Association of Resident Doctors ZLS Skopje in cooperation with the Association for Health Prevention and Social Protection of Citizens PREVENTUS Skopje and the Association of Students of the Medical Faculty: European Medical Students Association of Macedonia with the project You Are Important too!

- 5. Association Initiative for Societal Change-InSok Skopje in cooperation with the Association for Social Integration and Personal Development CENTRE FOR INTEGRATION AND SUPPORT Skopje and the Association for Rights and Humanity INTEGRA NAU Skopje with the project Coalition of Civil Society Organisations Forum of Small Communities in the Republic of North Macedonia
- 6. Association of Citizens REGIONAL CENTRE FOR FORESTRY AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT Skopje in cooperation with the Association of citizens INSTITUTE FOR GREEN POLICIES Berovo, Association of Environmentalists NATURA Struga and Association Centre for Sustainable Development of Debar Community with the project Managing Energy Efficient Municipalities
- 7. Association of Citizens Centre for Civil Communications CCC Skopje in cooperation with the Association of Tax Advisors of the Republic of Macedonia ZDSRM Skopje and the Centre for Active Citizens AKTIVO Veles with the project Effects of the Financial and Energy Crisis over the Policies and the Citizens
- 8. Coalition Sexual and Health Rights of the Marginalised Communities MARGINI Skopje in cooperation with the HELSINKI COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS Skopje, Association for Rural Development Local Action Group VARDAR LEADER Gradsko and Macedonian Young Lawyers Association MYLA Skopje with the project Visible, Connected and Loud Action for Equality and Non-discrimination through Participation and Multisectoral Cooperation
- Association FORUM CENTRE FOR STRATEGIC RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION Skopje in cooperation with IMPETUS – Centre for Internet, Development and Good Governance Skopje and Association of Citizens CENTRE FOR EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRATION Bitola with the project Youth Activism against Corruption

CITIZENS FOR CHANGE

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