

CITIZENS FOR CHANGE

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LET US IMPLEMENT OUR READINESS FOR COOPERATION

"I am convinced that in a dialogue with the CSOs we can build better policies, we can make better decisions on certain areas of society." This was one of Prime Minister Mickoski's messages sent to the CSO representatives at the Civica Mobilitas National Forum that took place on 15th November 2024.

Prime Minister's readiness for cooperation with CSOs was supported by the participation of five more government ministers, as well as Secretary General Janushev. The readiness of the CSOs was supported by the participation of around 200 representatives.

The need for cooperation between the national government and the CSOs does not need to be especially stressed. It is not only in the interest of the government and the CSOs, but it is even more important for their final beneficiaries, the citizens. In their addresses, part of the government representatives demonstrated consultations with the CSOs in the processes of policy changes or adoption. "There is no way for us to make a strategy that will not include the CSOs", said the Minister of Education and Science Vesna Janeva answering a question on the consultations related to the national education strategy that should be adopted in 2026. She said that MES had already involved 40 CSOs in the consultations for adoption of changes to six laws related to education.

It was interesting to hear that part of the ministers experience us from the CSOs as critics rather than criticisers. "A good critic provides constructive criticism that brings solutions", says the Minister of Digital Transformation, Stefan Andonovski. His expectations from the CSOs are not only that they provide solutions to improve policies, but, even more, to use their expertise that, according to him, "should naturally come from the civil sector". This contribution of CSOs, according to him, is invaluable and it is the connection between the citizens and the institutions.

Other government representatives also showed their readiness and openness for cooperation. By organizing this forum, in cooperation with the government, Civica Mobilitas helped in restoring or establishing mutual contacts and agree on subsequent meetings.

We hope that this readiness will not remain at declarative level only; at least we in the sector will try to "call upon" the ministers, Secretary General and the Prime Minister to keep to their word. This will enable all of us at our next meeting to speak about results rather than about plans only.

Have a pleasant reading!

Gonce Jakovlevska Civica Mobilitas National Coordinator for ICO

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Lectures on Improved Health in Pelagonija



In December, there were three lectures on "Prevention for Better Health" in the municipalities of Prilep, Krivogashtani and Dolneni with at least 90 participants of various ages. The goal of the lectures was to raise the awareness of the local population on the importance of health prevention and promotion of healthy life habits.

The lectures covered various aspects of health, such as prevention from chronic diseases, importance of healthy diet and regular physical activity. Special attention was dedicated to mental health and the techniques for dealing with stress.



The participants found out about the importance of regular check-ups and management of risk factors, such as smoking and unhealthy diet. They were actively interested in the prevention measures and they asked for additional information on healthy habits.

The three lectures on "Prevention for Better Health" are part of the project "Her Voice – Her Power: Empowerment of Marginalised Women and Girls in Pelagonija" which is implemented by the Center for Civic Initiative – Prilep in partnership with the Association for Legal Education and Transparency L.E.T. STATION from Prilep and the Multi-ethnic Association for All Ages from the village of Crnilishte, Dolneni.

Educational Workshops on Fighting Violence: Awareness Raising in Various Cities "Stop Silence, Stop Violence"

Within the international campaign "16 Days of Activism to Eliminate Violence against Women and Domestic Violence", there were three educational workshops on raising the awareness on violence and promoting mechanisms for prevention and protection in different municipalities in Macedonia. The workshops took place in November and December 2024 in Kanatlarci, Mogila and Kochani.

On 27th November 2024, the first workshop with women and youth was held in Kanatlarci. The lectures were intended to recognize different forms of violence, as well as the importance of personal safety and prevention from domestic violence. The workshop was held by Mirjana S. Nedanovska, Head of the Prevention Department and the inspectors Kite Trajkovski and Melek J. Tekeshanoska. The participants were encouraged to assume their responsibility for their own protection and for the protection of their closest ones and fight against violence, stressing that this fight is the responsibility of the whole society.

There was also a workshop in Mogila on 30th November 2024. The topics were the same, and the lecturers were joined by the inspector Karolina Dimeska. The participants

were informed the available mechanisms for protection and the rights of the victims of violence. The workshop stressed the importance of the education as a key factor in the creation of a safer community, where everybody has the right to live without fear and violence.

The last in the series of workshops took place on 7th December 2024 in the municipality of Kochani. Martina Gagoski, lawyer, helped the participants understand the increase of psychological violence and discuss its consequences. The people present actively debated and shared hypothetical examples, at the same time expressing their genuine dedication to elimination of violence in all forms. The workshop stressed that the fight against violence is a constant obligation for all community members and one should work on building a society without violence.

These educational events were part of the project "Voice and Participation of Women and Youth in Creating Public Policies and Enabling Environment for Civic Participation", which is implemented by "Women's Civic Initiative ANTICO" in partnership with the Association "ALWAYS COHABITATION" and "ZOK ADRION".

Support to Women and Youth in the Community in the Focus of OZOSVN



In the part months, the Organization of Women of the Municipality of Sveti Nikole implemented a series of events and activities in order to raise the awareness about health, civic engagement and gender equality, as well as stimulate active involvement of girls and young women in the community.

From 28th to 31st October 2024, OZOSVN organized a three-day training for civic engagement and active involvement of girls and young women in the municipalities of Sveti Nikole, Kochani, Pehchevo, Kavadarci, Negotino and Shtip. The goal was to encourage young women to be more active in their local communities, as well as raise the awareness on the importance of gender equality and women's activism.

The organization marked October, the month of awareness raising on breast cancer. On 26th October 2024, in cooperation with the Municipality of Sveti Nikole they

organized an event where the citizens had the possibility to inform themselves about caring about themselves and their mental and physical health via music, interactive lectures and free of charge check-ups.

"Joint Care: Prevention and Health Care Advice for Men's and Women's Health" was the title of the debate that took place on 26th November 2024. The goal was to raise the awareness about the preventive health care measures and stress the need for caring about the health of men and women. Health care did not stop here; on 19th December 2024, OZOSVN set a stand where the citizens were informed about the work of the organization, as well as the health care programmes that they offer. The stress was on the promotion of OZOSVN Health Programme. The citizens were given fliers with a guide on breast self-check, as part of the efforts to raise the awareness about the importance of the health prevention.

OZOSVN has successfully organized the self-help group for women who have and have been treated from malignant diseases. On 26th December 2024, they organised an assessment workshop with 23 women who expressed their satisfaction with the possibility to directly express their ideas and proposals, and thus also help the planning of future activities that will contribute to their better health and wellbeing.

With these activities, OZOSVN has continued to work on promoting health and wellbeing of women and young in the community, as well as on encouraging active and responsible civic engagement.

Volunteering as a Way to Personal Growth and Social Changes

With the event "Inspirational Conversations on Volunteering", the Coalition of Youth Organizations SEGA and the Youth Council of Prilep marked the International Volunteering Day on 5th December 2024 at "Borka Taleski" City Library in Prilep.

Zoran Ilieski, the Executive Director of Coalition SEGA addressed the fifty participants at the event. He stressed the essential role of volunteering as a catalyst for social changes and personal development and described how he had gained organizational skills, learned to lead teams and mobilise communities to fulfil joint goals by volunteering. With his speech, he encouraged the young people to continue to be active, sharing that the biggest award of volunteering is the feeling that you had done something significant for the others.

"Volunteering is not only helping the community, but it is also a unique possibility for personal growth and building permanent relations with people. With each project I have learned something new about myself and the power of joint action," stressed Ilieski. The event continued with the addresses of the Mayor of the Municipality of Prilep, dr. Borche Jovcheski, who said that the volunteers were the heart of each community and appealed to the young people to continue to volunteer and build their future by active participation in initiatives that bring positive changes.

The President of the Republic of North Macedonia, Mrs. Gordana Siljanovska-Davkova also addressed the event. The President greeted the audience and stressed that volunteering is an important pillar of each society, which stimulates youth spirit of togetherness and solidarity. She stressed the importance of volunteering as an act of altruism and solidarity and stressed that "by volunteering values such as trust, cooperation and feeling of togetherness are built". The President encouraged the young people to continue investing in the community via their time, labour and ideas, stressing that "they are the movers of positive changes".



Davkova completed her address with very inspirational words sent to the young people, "In each of us there is a genuine need to help the other and it is at that moment when we reach our hand, that we become human. When we do good, there is harmony created inside us and around us. It is a synergy that goes beyond the border of personal and flows into the collective".

The participants took an active part in the discussion, by asking questions on how to start volunteering, how to overcome obstacles, remain motivated and be inspired by the experience of the speakers. The speakers encouraged the young people to follow their interests in volunteering, because volunteering gives a possibility for personal development, but also for significant contribution to the community.

Local Governments' Capacity Strengthening for Better Implementation of the Western Balkans

The project for implementing the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (ZAZB) at local level, which is implemented by the Center for Climate Changes in cooperation with seven more partners, has continued to cover all regions in Macedonia with a series of regional trainings and workshops. The goal of these activities is to promote the implementation of the environmental policies with a stress on decarbonization, circular economy, pollution prevention and sustainable food production.

As part of the project, in the last months of 2024, there were 5 trainings in various regions, where the representatives of the municipalities, CSOs and other local stakeholders identified the main challenges and priorities in the implementation of the Green Agenda. At the regional meetings, the participants discussed the importance of local environmental strategies and plans, stressing that many municipalities face problems and challenges such as improper waste management, lack of water supply and water purification infrastructure, as well as inefficient systems for fire management.

In the Eastern Planning Region, the training organized in Berovo gathered the representatives of the Eastern Planning Region, who discussed solutions for dealing with these issues and the importance of the more efficient implementation of environmental policies. It was also stressed that one needs more specific steps to promote rural communities and agricultural sector by promoting ecological and organic agriculture.

At the workshops in the Vardar and Southeast Planning Regions, the stress was on the problems with waste, transport and water supply, as well as the need for modernization of infrastructure and development of recycling systems and more efficient management of natural resources. The trainings also included examples of good practices and possibilities for investments in renewable energy via IPARD programme.

In Skopje and Polog regions, serious challenges when it comes to coordination among municipalities and lack of resources to implement green measures were detected. The representatives of municipalities and CSOs agreed that more communication is needed, as well as investments in infrastructure and campaigns to educate the public on the importance of sustainable development.

It is especially important that, according to latest data, only 20% of the 81 municipalities in Macedonia have Local Environmental Action Plans (LEAP) and most of the municipalities have not updated their plans. This shows

the lack of efficient implementation of local strategies on environment, which shows the need for biggest support and resources for the local authorities.

The project is supported by the Swiss Government via Civica Mobilitas programme and its goal is to create regional partnership for better implementation of the Green Agenda at local level. The next steps include regular working meetings, modernization of the infrastructure for monitoring of waters and air, as well as implementation of systems for waste selection and more efficient control of environmental standards.

March: United against Violence against Women and Girls!



As part of the global campaign for 16 Days of Activism against Violence against Women and Girls, on 6th December 2024 in Shtip there was an inspirational march under the motto: "United against Violence against Women and Girls". It was organized by the Educational Humanitarian Organization (EHO), in cooperation with the Municipality of Shtip and with ample support of Loud Textile Worker, and it was a proof that together we can create a lasting change.

The high school students actively participated in the march, carrying posters and sending a strong message of solidarity and action. Their energy amplified the joint call for change and showed that the young people are ready to fight for safer and more equal future.

The march was not only a symbolic event – it was also a possibility for interactive discussions with the young. The discussion topics included different types of violence, breaking stereotypes and prejudices, as well as building a culture of equality and prevention. Everybody who participated sent a clear message that violence is unacceptable, and only united we can create a real and lasting change.

In EHO, they actively work on empowering women and girls via their Centre for Integrated Multisectoral Approach, providing a package of services for the women affected by violence and standing for legal reforms that would protect the victims.

The organization actively lobbies for legal reforms, and the key change that they ask is the change to Article 130, Paragraph 2 of the Criminal Code, which would allow that the perpetrators of violence are prosecuted by the state, rather than only upon victim's demand. This change is of essential meaning for providing real justice and protection of victims.

The march was only one of the activities that stress the importance of uniting in the fight against violence.

Economic Gap and Labour Rights Challenges for Prevention of Violence against Women

The National Network against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence organized a panel discussion on the topic of "Importance of Gender Equality for Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls." The addresses of the panellists covered several aspects of gender equality, which are the basic preconditions for decreasing violence against women.

Ana Bojchevska Mitrevska from "Reactor" spoke about economic inequalities, especially about the salary gap and the prejudices to women, especially the ones that have children. Uranija Pirovska, the Executive Director of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights presented the situation with labour rights of women, focusing on the challenges that the textile workers face, while Liljana



Jonoski, the Executive Director of Rural Coalition spoke about the rights of the women from Rural areas and the extent to which stereotypes and traditional norms influence their awareness and education on gender-based violence. Ana Avramoska-Nikushova from the National Network against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence spoke that only 2% of it is reported, as well as about the needs of development of specialized services for prevention and protection of the victims of domestic, gender based and any kind of violence.

At the panel discussion, they presented disheartening facts about the situation of gender equality and its direct relation to violence against women. Salary gap between men and women has increased, the difference in average salaries between men and women reveals specific issues that indicate that there is discrimination of women at the labour market. The existence of equality between men and women in RN Macedonia is but a phrase, it has not happened yet, therefore men and women do not have equal opportunities, as they said at the discussion,

One of the most vulnerable categories of women are the farmers who have difficulties to exercise their right to maternity leave, they work in informal economy and take care about the children; it is the economic aspect that prevents them from reporting violence, which is still considered a private affair in the rural areas.

Centres for Social Affairs and the police that are the first ones that the victims of gender-based violence should address do not have enough resources to act with due diligence, the safe houses offer only temporary shelters to victims of violence, the state does not have mechanisms for economic empowerment and the women victims often go back to the perpetrator because they do not have another choice. A positive example was the social mentorship project that enabled women to find a job, become independent and free from the circle of violence.

CIVIC PARTICIPATION

The "Product" Needs Improvement

Are There Innovations at Universities?

"The universities are a place of research, new technologies and transformative innovations, resulting in start-ups that would change the world. However, the lack of meaningful funds in Macedonia makes the university not such a favourable place for innovations in biotechnology, clean energy and artificial intelligence," says Vasko Karangeleski, Executive Director of BRULS and an expert in digital transformation in his **column** published on 19th December 2024.

According to him, the crucial problem when it comes to innovations is the gap between academic research and commercialization. This needs an access to finances for development and commercialization, solid understanding of business principles, management of intellectual property and understanding of empty dynamics. Although the start-up community grows and offers its support, the innovations often remain invisible, and the intellectual property is not used.

This situation has imposed the question if the establishment of spinoff companies by the universities is the solution for innovation commercialization? Or maybe the problem is that the universities do not have a legal and acceptable modality to create spinoff companies?

Karangeleski hopes that the next debates on high education will set firm legal grounds to establish university spinoff companies that would enable that the produced intellectual ownership is used via commercialization of the solutions and financial benefit of the University from successful stories. In any case, as he says, the impression is that the "product", i.e. both the student and the University needs finishing.

The **column** has been prepared within the project "Advocacy about Inclusive Development" which is implemented by the Forum of Reasonable Policies, IOHN and BIRS, with the financial support of the Swiss Government via Civica Mobilitas programme.

Insufficient Usage of the Data from the Real Owners' Register in the Fight against Corruption

On the occasion of the International Day of Fight against Corruption, 9th December, the Center for Civic Communications, the Association for Tax Advisors and Aktivo published the Analysis of Using Data about Real Owners in the Fights against Corruption in North Macedonia.

The results of the analysis show that the institutions in charge in the country make small use of the data on the real owners in order to prevent, discover and sanction money laundering and in the fight against terrorism, while they do not use them at all for other purposes and for prevention of corruption, crime and abuse in other areas.

Especially concerning is the fact that the Office for Financial Intelligence and the institutions have different data on the number of cases against money laundering and financing of terrorism, which indicates a lack of unique system to follow these cases. From 2022 to April 2024, the Office received 194 initiatives from bodies in charge, from which it prepared and submitted 21 reports to the Basic Prosecution for Organised Crime and Corruption. In the same period, it submitted 50 reports on suspicious transactions to the Prosecution on its own initiative, which means that out of the 71 reports that the Office has submitted to the Prosecution, 70% are upon their own initiative.

Additionally, out of the 17 institutions in the country with whom the Office should cooperate, eight of which should fight against money laundering and financing terrorism, according to law, only two have specific figures on the cases where they used data from the Register of Real Owners.

During the Covid-19 crisis, North Macedonia did not follow the recommendations given by IMF and did not release the names of the real owners of the companies that had signed contracts for public procurement related to corona crisis.

The country has not followed up on the pledge of the Open Government 2021-2023 National Action Plan, i.e. it did not publicly release the real owners of the companies that gave their offers and those that were granted agreements for public procurement.

To improve the usage of the data on the real owners in the country, it is necessary to undertake several crucial measures. The recommendations focus on expanding the scope of real owners, alleviating the access to data for a broader circle of stakeholders, connecting with other bases and data, bigger interoperability among the institutions and improving the checking of the data. These measures will contribute for strengthening the fights against crime and corruption, as well as for improving the transparency of public procurement and other areas of public interest.

The analysis is part of the project "Using Data about Real Owners to Decrease Corruption" supported by the Swiss Government via Civica Mobilitas.

National Conference "Health Policies for Everybody: Empowering and Support to Girls, Women and Vulnerable Groups"



Health challenges in North Macedonia require intensive cooperation between the public sector and CSOs, especially when it comes to improving the health care protection of most vulnerable groups. At the National Conference "Health Policies for Everybody: Empowering and Support to Girls, Women and Vulnerable Groups" which took place on 21st November 2024 in Skopje, the experts stressed that the health programmes should be based on specific proofs and that they have the option to measure and follow the results. Only in this way can one improve accountability and efficiency of public health policies, creating a health care system that will be inclusive and just.

The project "Promoting the Health Rights of Girls, Women and Vulnerable Groups" supported by the Swiss government via Civica Mobilitas works on improving four health prevention programmes, including the Programme for Active Health Care Protection of Mothers and Children, Programme for Early Detection of Malignant Diseases, Programme for Participation when Using Health Care and Programme for Protection of the Population from HIV

Infections. The analyses of these programmes show that there are serious shortcomings, such as limited funds, low implementation with the most vulnerable categories of women and much lower number of citizens covered by the programmes than needed.

For example, the Programme for Early Detection of Malignant Diseases covers 25,000 women per year (instead of the planned 115,345) of the group of women that need to be covered by screening for a period of three years. The women without health insurance were left without free of charge check-ups during their pregnancy and delivery. Despite these challenges, with 94% of the budget for the Programme for Active Health Care Protection of Mothers and Children used in 2023 (16.8 million denars of the planned 18 million), the budget items intended for the most vulnerable categories of women show the lowers percentage of usage: out of the planned 890,000 denars, 316,190 denars have been used (35% implementation).

Elizabeta Bozhinoska, HERA Programme Director said that CSOs have a crucial role in promotion of health care, especially when it comes to vulnerable groups that cannot access health services. With significant support and improved coordination with the institutions, favourable conditions for access to health care for everybody can be provided.

Representatives of the Parliament of the Republic of North Macedonia, among whom the MPs Rashela Mizrahi and Venko Filipche said that in order to improve the accessibility of health care services, it is necessary to increase the coordination between the institutions and civic sector, as well as to increase the budgets for health prevention.

Former Minister of Health, Venko Filipche stressed that the health care reform should be multisectoral and that it is necessary to have bigger coordination among the public, civic and private sectors. The prevention budgets should be increased and the CSOs and crucial to fill in the gap where the health care system has no access to vulnerable groups of citizens. Therefore, the opposition had submitted an amendment to increase the HIV programme budget for 2025, in order to maintain prevention.

With these activities and improved cooperation, there are conditions created to build a more just and inclusive health care system for the most vulnerable citizens, especially women and girls, which will improve the health care rights for everybody.

The National Conference "Health Policies for Everybody: Empowering and Support of Girls, Women and Vulnerable Groups" is part of the project "Promoting the Health Rights of Girls, Women and Vulnerable Groups" supported by the Swiss Government via Civica Mobilitas programme, and is implemented in partnership by the associations HERA – Association for Health Education and Research, Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of Women – ESSE, Association for Support to People Living with HIV – STRONGER TOGETHER Skopje and the Association Initiative for the Rights of Women from Shuto Orizari.

Involvement Community for Resilience to Corruption

On 16th October 2024, there was a thematic forum entitled "Involved Community for Resilience to Corruption" held at the Civic Resource Centre in Skopje, gathering more than 70 representatives of local self-government, CSOs, media, activists and citizens for a joint discussion on effective ways of fighting corruption at local level. The forum was organized as part of the project "Digital Transformation at Local Level (DIGILOC) – Involved Community for Resilience to Corruption", funded by the Swiss Government via Civica Mobilitas.

The focus was on increasing the transparency of the institutions via digitalization and introduction of inclusive tools for the citizens. In his introductory address, Aleksandar Krzhalovski, the National Leader of the Civica Mobilitas team states that the fight against corruption at local level cannot be successful without active involvement of the citizens. Digitalization enables more transparent and faster access to information, which is crucial to build trust in the institutions.

Bardhyl Jashari, the Executive Director of Metamorphosis Foundation, stressed that the Index of Openness, which is part of the project has a great importance in the fights against corruption, because it provides transparency and



gives the citizens the possibility to follow the work process of the institutions.

The results of the Assessment of Good Governance in the Local Self-Government Units in the Republic of North Macedonia was presented at the forum via the Index of Openness for 2024, which shows that despite small improvements, the average degree of openness of the local self-governments in North Macedonia is only 37%. This figure confirms that there is still ample space to improve the transparency of local authorities.

The most open local self-government was the Municipality of Bitola. At the forum, the Mayor Toni Konjanovski stressed that the mayors should understand the responsibility that they have before the citizens and that they can increase the trust and active participation of the citizens via transparency.

Part of the forum were also the new possibilities of the digital tool mCommunity, which provides consultations with the citizens and determining the priorities of the community. Dragan Ananiev, Secretary of the Municipality of Kochani which uses the tool, shared their experience from using the platform in the fight against corruption. He explained that this application was mostly used by the citizens to report communal problems.

The project continues to work on strengthening the resilience to corruption via digitalization and cooperation among the citizens, local government and CSOs, which makes the community more open and more responsible,

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Towards Closer Cooperation between the Government and CSOs: Proposals for Changes in the Council for Cooperation



The Department for Cooperation with NGOs at the General Secretariat of the Government, in partnership with the projects funded by the European Union "EU Support to the Civic Resource Centre — Phase 2" and "Technical Support for Improvement of the Enabling Environment for CSOs in the Republic of North Macedonia" in October 2024 conducted a cycle of consultations with CSOs on changing and amending the Decision for Establishing a Council for Cooperation between the Government and the Civil Society.

At the four events there were more than 90 participants from CSOs and government institutions, which provided their comments and recommendations on the proposed changes, mainly related to proposals for overcoming the problems that the Council has faced in its work so far.

There were new rules proposed for selection of deputy members of the Council, and the CSOs were enabled to vote for more candidates from various areas of work. It is recommended that the number of members of the Council is decreased from 31 to 26, with 13 members from the people working in government bodies and 14 members and deputy members from the associations and foundations. Regarding these members, the General Secretariat of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia is expected to have a **public call** on 20th January 2025. The Council is established with a decision of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, as an advisory body to promote the cooperation, dialogue and stimulate the development of civil society in Macedonia.

The Department for Cooperation with NGOs at the General Secretariat of the Government, in partnership with the Civil Resource Centre will conduct information sessions in January 2025 to present the public call for selection of members and deputy members of the Council for Cooperation between the Government and the Civil Society. With **four informative sessions** the organizations will have the possibility to ask questions and receive explanations on the call, selection and the voting.

The event will be used to inform the organizations about the changes in the legal frame to improve the enabling environment for development of the civil society in the country, as well as the process for preparation of the new 2025-2028 Strategy for Cooperation and Development of the Civil Society, with an Action Plan.

Citizens of Skopje Asked for Clean Air with a Protest March

The citizens of Skopje held the second protest march against air pollution in December, organized upon the initiative of "Green Humane City".

The protest march FOR CLEAN AIR stressed the concern of the citizens about the pollution of the capital. There were four demands sent to the institutions in charge at the protest that took place on 10th December 2024.

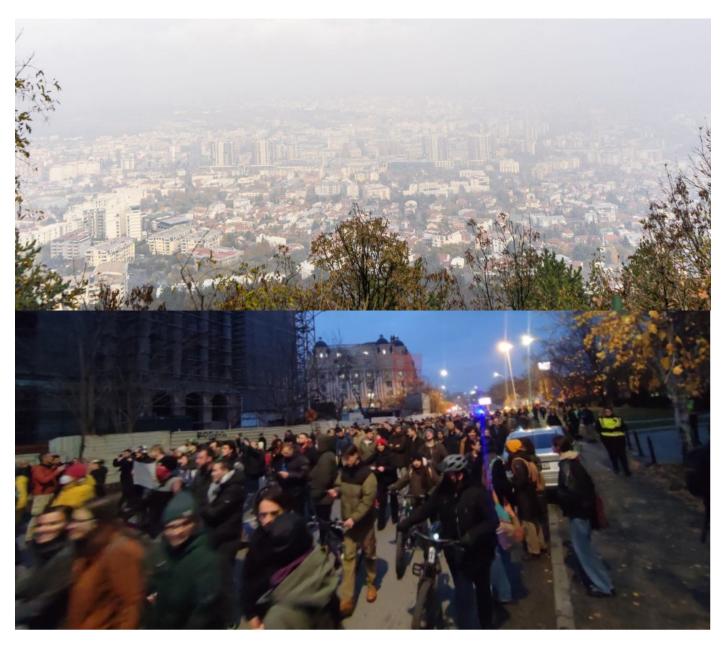
The first demand concerned a public continuous monitoring of the industrial facilities. This monitoring would allow to specifically identify the sources of pollution and their impact on the environment. "The second demand concerns ecological heating of facilities such as the Children's Hospital in Kozle, which still uses heating oil. The third demand is resolving the car-centredness of the city, prioritizing the public transport and bikes above cars and the fourth demand is better waste management", said Borjan Jovanovski from "Green Humane City" initiative.

After holding the first protest in November, the organization "Green Humane City" said that they had

submitted these demands to the institutions in charge, but they had not received any response before the second protest. According to them, without any reaction from the institutions, the hospitals continue to be filled with people, who spend a lot of money in pharmacies.

Skopje is often among the ten most polluted cities in the world, but the only measure that is often used is the free public transport when the air is polluted for days. The organisers of the march warn that this measure is not enough, because 3,000 to 5,000 lose their lives on yearly basis as a direct consequence of their exposure to harmful PM 2.5 particles.

An additional confirmation of the seriousness of the problem is the statement of the World Bank Country Manager for Kosovo and North Macedonia, Massimiliano Paolucci, who says that the citizens of Skopje and Tetovo are exposed to significantly higher levels of toxic PM 2.5 particles, compared to the citizens of the Western European countries.



Donor Circle in Strumica to Support Local Initiatives



More than hundred citizens participated in the first Donor Circle organized by the Centre for Research and Analyses "NOVUS", where there were funds collected for support of three CSOs.

By raising paddles, the citizens donated 500, 1,000 and 1,500 denars for the implementation of the work started by the associations Mobility from Strumica, "Speech of Heart" from Bosilovo and "Aktiv" biking club.

"Mobility" had started an initiative to raise funds to fix the van that they use to transport people with physical disabilities. The "Speech of Heart" had asked for funds to hold workshops for helping parents of children with autism, while the members of "Aktiv" biking club had started an initiative to expand the Belasica camping with new bungalows for accommodation and leisure time.

Save Dzurnovska from "Novus" stated that their donor circle was an excellent way of mobilizing the community and joint investment in improving local life. "Our goal was to make small acts of goodness to improve the life of the community together. They presented themselves before the citizens who decided themselves where to donate. We will continue organizing such donor circles in the future as well, as we can only improve the situation with joint forces," said she.

The three organizations collected about 135 thousand denars. The money will go to the three civic initiatives which would benefit the whole community. The donor circle was implemented by CIA "Novus" in Strumica in cooperation with "Konekt" who have been trying to introduce philanthropy as a new way of joint investment in local initiatives and projects.

Public Transport Problems in Skopje

The public transport in Skopje was in total collapse in November. In Skopje there were only 25 buses. The lack of petrol blocked the normal functioning of JSP for several days and it caused a serious problem in the transport of students and employees in the capital.

The University Student Assembly at "Cyril and Methodius" University in Skopje wrote a letter and asked the Mayor Arsovska and JSP to return the bus lines and establish new transport solutions.

Via the social networks, the citizens organized for transport and appealed to everybody going to work with their own cars to stop at the closest bus station and ask students and pensioners if there was somebody that could offer a lift to a destination on their way.

"Women, I have read that there would be no buses tomorrow. I am going to work tomorrow at 6:25. If somebody needs a ride in that direction, let me know. I can take a maximum of 3 women, because I have a baby in the back seat. We will squeeze together. Write to me," says a post on the social networks.

Another woman from Skopje wrote:

"People, this is horrible, I was exhausted at work all day today. I waited for two hours this morning. In the end I paid a taxi. I waited for two hours and it did not show up, we all took taxis. On Friday I am going to protest, and you do as you please!"

The citizens from Skopje municipality of Shuto Orizari, but also high school and university students went out to protest on 22nd November in front of the City of Skopje to express their anger with the irregular city transport in the capital of North Macedonia. "Public transport, and not public chaos" was the motto of the students who asked that the political battles do not affect the wellbeing of the citizens.

Because of this current situation related to JSP and the regular bus lines, the First Children's Embassy in the World MEGJASHI expressed their serious concern. With a press release, the organization appealed that there is safe and regular public transport secured, which is of crucial importance for the children and youth to reach their schools and the educational institutions.

At MEGJASHI they stressed that the lack of public transport endangers the right to education and they called upon the institutions in charge to undertake urgent measures to resolve the problem, stressing that the political interests cannot endanger the basic rights of the citizens.

STRONGER TOGETHER Collects Funds for People with HIV







On 1st December 2024, STRONGER TOGETHER marked the World Day of Fight against AIDS and at the same time they celebrated their 15th birthday with a charity event. This day, which has been celebrated for 36 years already was dedicated to raising awareness on the stigma and discrimination which still concern the people living with HIV. Macedonia, along with all United Nations countries aims to put an end to the HIV epidemics by 2030.

Under the slogan "HIV Does not Make Me Less of a Man", the association organized a charity auction and a night party. In cooperation with the Faculty of Art and Design at the European University, 18 students designed 20 posters that were exhibited at the event. During the evening, there were certificates of gratitude given to the students, donors and distinguished members of the association.

The second part of the evening was dedicated to the auction of eight of the best student designs. Via an interaction with the audience, all works were successfully sold in an entertaining process of auctioning. The designs, frames in square frames were auctioned as paintings that can be placed in a private or professional space. All pieces have

preventive messages on HIV inspired by this year's slogan: "HIV Does not Make Me Less of a Man".

The auction, led by Katerina Sinadinovska and the DJ set by Sonja Ismail was successful and the collected funds amounting to 101,020 denars will be used for helping people with HIV in a difficult social situation by providing the basic food and hygiene products, as well as by covering the travel expenses for their medical needs in 2025.

Macedonia, along with all United Nations member states aims to put an end to the HIV epidemics by 2030. The stigma and discrimination are still part of the lives of the people living with HIV, and therefore STRONGER TOGETHER continues to fight to decrease them.

The event was supported by Alkaloid Kons, ZEGIN, European University, New Moment and MAKKA BAR, and the goal was to continue the fight against the stigma and provide support to those facing HIV.





ZMAI Celebrates One Decade of Innovations



On 12th November 2024, there was a conference on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Association for Research and Analyses (ZMAI). The conference on the topic of "Future Managed by Data: Pioneering in the Future with Data and Artificial Intelligence" gathered visionaries, entrepreneurs and professionals to think about one decade of transformation and research the future of data and artificial intelligence.

The keynote speaker Troy Stovall, Chief Executive Officer of Maryland Technology Development Corporation (TEDCO) stressed the transformative potential of data and artificial intelligence. "Al and data are not only tools for transformation, they are also mirrors that reflect our greatest ambitions and challenges. It is not about fear of the future, but rather about its responsible shaping with the available possibilities," said he, encouraging the audience to accept the transformative power of these technologies.

After his address, there was an interactive Q&A session which provided the audience with discussions and thoughts on the future of technology and its role in the society.

The conference continued with interviews with successful alumni of the StartUp Academy, intensive and educational 8-wekk long programme that has been functioning since 2013. The team consists of experienced and successful entrepreneurs and dedicated mentors, whose task is to the direct young entrepreneurs at the labour market and strengthen their entrepreneurial skills.

These successful Macedonian entrepreneurs and professionals shared their personal travels and views, illustrating how the Academy had equipped them to advance in the quickly developing digital landscape.

Emilija Shumanovska, the founder of Yes Pasta, spoke about her entrepreneurial journey, saying that every challenge is a change for growth, while Goran Stojanovski, a specialist for data-based growth and specialist in digital transformation, said that the balance in business partnerships is crucial for success.

The conference on the occasion of ZMAI's 10th anniversary was a proof of the lasting impact of the StartUp Academy and its dedication of innovation and growth. It has remained an inspiration for the entrepreneurs and change creators, encouraging them to use the power of data and artificial intelligence for better future.

Helsinki Committee Celebrates 30 Years of Fighting to Promote and Protect Human Rights



The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights (HCHR) celebrates its 30th anniversary this year, marking symbolically the Day of the Signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on 10th December.

The celebratory event took place at The Faculty of Law in Skopje, where there were professors, lawyers, CSO representatives and the media. At the event, the numerous guests had the chance to see part of Borjan Jovanovski's documentary in which the first president and founder of the Macedonian Helsinki Committee for Human Rights Meto Jovanovski reminds himself about the beginnings and challenges when the organization was established.

The people present were addressed by HCHR Executive Director, Uranija Pirovska, who said that even after 30 years of existence, the organization continued to face challenges, but it has been overcoming them successfully. "The only goal of the people at the Helsinki Committee has always been the fight for the cause, which is human rights protection. Our focus has always been to vulnerable, marginalized and towards those phenomena that directly endanger human rights", said Pirovska. She also stressed the significance of the platforms to follow the hate speech and hate crimes, which have existed since 2013 with the support of OSCE Mission – Skopje.

Umerr Al-Khatib, the Head of the Human Dimension Department at OSCE Mission saluted the significant contribution of the Helsinki Committee in the promotion of human rights and the rule of law in North Macedonia and the region, while the constitutional judge Osman Kadriu reminded about the importance of the organization in the protection of the rights of the vulnerable groups, such as prisoners and unemployed, and its initiatives to align legislation with the Constitution. He stressed that the Helsinki Committee had submitted the biggest number of requests and initiatives to the Constitutional Court, asking that some laws and their alignment with the Constitution of the country are reviewed.

Professor Gordan Kalajdziev reminded about the development of HCHR. He spoke about the contribution for human rights and rule of law which are the central concept of a legal state. Kalajdziev appealed that the division of power should be respected, because there is no democracy without it.

Neda Zdraveva, the President of the Helsinki Committee stressed the achievements of the organization and underlined that only in the last four years, the Committee managed to provide free legal aid to more than 1,000 citizens, it has registered thousands of instances of hate speech and several hate crimes, it has written dozens of press releases stressing the shortcomings in the development of social and political system in the country, in order to call upon the authorities to diligently and responsibly do their work in the fulfilment and protection of human rights.

Center for Civic Communications and Lila Milik winners of "Meto Jovanovski" State Award for Human Rights

On 10th December, the International Human Rights Day, at the Parliament of the Republic of North Macedonia, there was a celebration on the occasion of "Meto Jovanovski" state award for 2024, whose winners are the Center for Civic Communications and Lila Milik. Meto Jovanovski" state award is the highest recognition of long term achievements in the area of promotion, protection and advancing of human rights.



Young People Can and Want to Be Part of the Activities for Environmental Improvement



On 7th October 2024, Civica Mobilitas team organized the second meeting between the grantees and HE Véronique Hulmann, the Swiss Ambassador. The supported projects in the area od environment and climate changes were presented at the meeting, and the goal, besides closer introduction, was also to stimulate discussion on the challenges that the organizations face during the implementation and to see the possibilities for synergy among them and the other projects supported by the Swiss Government.

"We need bigger awareness among the politicians on the issues related to the environment," stressed Ambassador Hulmann, and Carmen Thönnissen, Deputy Director of the Global Programme for Food Security at the Swiss Development and Cooperation Agency stressed that CSOs should work on changing the mentality and follow the implementation of policies where they exist.

CSO representatives informed about their current activities which included innovations on green social work, composting processes and bio waste collection, Green Agenda for the Western Balkans in the municipalities, etc. Part of them stressed that the climate changes should be discussed and worked on more at local level, but that one should also take into consideration the limitations of the municipal budgets and human resources, especially with the small municipalities.

Ambassador Hulmann encouraged thinking about establishing a platform on environment at national level. She was interested in including the young people in the activities on this topic, especially if one takes into consideration that their apathy is often discussed. The people present agreed that the young people should be the key actors of change. "Regardless of how unmotivated they seem, if you find the rights approach, they participate," said Irina Glavinchevska from the Scout Brigade KRSTE JON from Struga and she added that it is important to show the young people that their voice is heard and valued. Similar experience was shared by Nikola Neshkoski from Eco Logic. According to him, the problem is that the teaching of children is mainly based on theory, and little on practice, while on the other hand, they much more prefer to participate and learn from practice. "When young people are given recognition, they want to continue and be active," said he.

At the meeting there were also representatives from the Centre for Youth Activism Krik, Centre for Social Initiatives "Hope", Centre for Climate Changes — Gevgelija, Eco Green Movement — Berovo, Scout Brigade KRSTE JON — Struga, Resource Environment Centre (REC), Eco Logic and Regional Green Centre Ohrid.

Goals and Strategies to Build "Islands of Integrity"



The implementation of the workshops "Islands of Integrity" continued for 12 Civica Mobilitas grantees. The participants at the third workshop started to prepare the first version of the document which includes goals to strengthen the integrity and prevention/limitation of corruption and strategies for achieving the goals via systemic changes.

The two conceptual frames that were used in the diagnosis phase were based on the corruption formula, according to which corruption equals a monopole plus discretion minus transparency and accountability and the cost-benefit analysis. In the first frame, the two gaols the participants worked on were: limit the monopoly and discretion and improve accountability and transparency. In the second frame, the goal was to increase the benefits of the work with integrity and losses due to corruption.

In this respect, the participants worked in groups and had plenary discussions on what the strategies would be that would limit monopoly and discretion, types of controls that each organization should have, how to avoid corruption and discretion at higher level, as well as who should control those who control.

In the second part, the participants discussed what motivates the behaviour of the people and what would make them work with integrity. They worked more in detail on the systems that create external and internal motivation, i.e. how to create an efficient system for rewards and punishments and how to encourage autonomy, cherish perfecting and improving the goal.

The participants will finish the document after they return to their organizations, after consulting their colleagues. After this, there is one more workshop before preparing the strategy and action plan with whose implementation they will make organizational changes to strengthen their integrity and decrease vulnerability to corruption in their organizations.

Share Your Successes with the Citizens via Civica Mobilitas ePlatform!



Do you know that this year Civica Mobilitas contents reached more than 12,000 citizens from 80 different countries? In 2024, we published more than 300 pieces of news from more than 30 CSOs in three languages: Macedonian, Albanian and English.

Don't miss the chance to increase the visibility of your organization!

Share your news, initiatives and successes on our platform in the part "News from CSOs". This is how you can join:

- Automatic news takeover: If your web page supports automatic news takeover, register its address and we will take over your news automatically.
- Manual news adding If you do not have a web page or it does not support automatic takeover, you can easily share your news via simple completion of the form to add news to our platform.

Why is it important to increase your visibility?

In the current digital world, presence at various platforms is crucial to reach broader audience. By sharing your news with Civica Mobilitas, your spread your message and attract people who are interested in your work and mission.

Simple way to reach more citizens

Our platform enables you to share your activities without an additional engagement. Especially in the automatic takeover of news, each news that you have will automatically appear with us as well, providing you bigger visibility without an additional effort.

Increased visibility offers new possibilities

More visibility means more chances for cooperation, support and influence. Sharing your success and initiatives you strengthen the image of your organization, but also your role in the community.

Share your successes with the citizens via Civica Mobilitas ePlatform!

CSOs Have Developed Strategies for Sustainable Financing



What does sustainability of CSOs mean? How to think in a visionary way? How to assess sustainability? What are the good practices in this area? These were some of the questions that were discussed by the participants of the workshop "Good Practices for CSO Sustainability" led by Simon Forrester, international Civica Mobilitas expert, which took place on 24th and 25th October 2024 in Berovo.

Jasmina Golubovska from "Legis" and Angela Zdravkovska from "Krik" spoke about the good practices of their organizations in this area. They stressed the importance of partnerships, credibility and providing revenues in line with their mission. "Every possibility to upgrade our knowledge and to share experience is welcome to strengthen the cooperation among the CSOs. This is provided by Civica Mobilitas," said Golubovska.

The participants discussed the term sustainability in their organizations. "Our vision of sustainability includes development of educational resources that enable the young people with debating skills and critical thinking," said Risto Saveski from the Youth Educational Forum (YEF).

For Kalina Lechevska from the Institute for Social Sciences and Humanities (ISSH), sustainability is providing grants for support of current research in cultural, political and gender studies, in order to continue promoting democratic values.

Forester encouraged the participants to try the blue sky thinking concept, which helps in visionary thinking without limitations. This method helped CSOs to distance themselves from everyday operational challenges and think about their long-term goals. The model of three sustainability circles was also presented, as it helps CSOs assess their sustainability when it comes to mission, activities and external relations. Forester stressed that the cooperation among sectors can increase resilience and strengthen the collective impact.

In the end, Forester presented innovative international models of financing from Great Britain, India and South Africa. These examples could inspire the Macedonian CSOs to explore new sources of revenue, including social enterprises and local partnerships.



"Better and Safer Future for Myself and My Children"



There is no wrong time for making changes in our own lives, in the community or the society where we live. The people who are prepared for this accept challenges more easily and recognize the possibilities. Just like our collocutor whose experience we share.

E.A. is a young woman, a single mother of three children who faces the challenges of life on daily basis and looks for solutions for them. I met her at the professional beautician courses for Tetovo women. "I have to fight, for myself and my three children to whom I should provide a better and more secure future," she says. The financial stability and security of E.A. look more certain since she has joined the courses organized by the Women's Civic Initiative ANTICO, supported by the Swiss Government via Civica Mobilitas. She found out about the courses via CSO information, she registered and joined the group that started working on 25th September 2024. The courses are free for the participants and they enable them to obtain skills that would make it easier for them to join the labour market and strengthen their economic independence.

Read the complete story here.

Positive Social Changes Are Possible via Cooperation of the Government and CSOs



Civica Mobilitas held their annual event, this year in cooperation with the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia and with a joint title National CSO Conference – Civica Mobilitas National Forum.

The forum took place on 15th November in Holiday Inn hotel and there were more than 200 CSO representatives from the whole country, who were greeted by the Swiss Ambassador H.E. Véronique Hulmann; other speakers were Hristijan Mickoski, Prime Minister; Aleksandar Krzhalovski, Civica Mobilitas Team Leader; Igor Janushev,

Secretary General of the Government, as well as Izet Mexhiti, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Environment and Spatial Planning; Vesna Janevska, Minister of Education; Zlatko Perinski, Minister of Local Self-Government; Zoran Ljutkov, Minister of Culture and Stefan Andonovski, Minister of Digital Transformation.

Ambassador H.E. Véronique Hulmann spoke about the support of the Swiss government for civil society and stressed that, apart from the achievements, there are still challenges such as "polarization of society, politicization

of CSOs, financial vulnerability, lack of transparency and lack of trust between the state and the civil society". She stressed that overcoming these challenges together will contribute to establishing necessary conditions for civil society becoming a credible partner of the government.

The RNM Prime Minister Hristijan Mickoski in his address stressed that he was convinced that in dialogue with CSOs there can be more quality decisions for changes in the society. "The essence of these meetings is what we really should deliver," he said and added that between this and the next event there should be activities that will be agreed upon. "We are open to work together with the civil sector and find joint solutions to real problems, I think that there is no bigger transparency than this," he added.

Improving the trust between the Government and the CSOs and in the society in general is one of the crucial issues according to Aleksandar Krzhalovski, Civica Mobilitas Team Leader. He invited the participants to use the Forum in the spirit of cooperation. The RNM government Secretary General Igor Janushev asked the CSOs for time to show that they can help.

Read the complete story here.

Organizations Finalise Their Integrity Strategies



Twelve Civica Mobilitas grantees completed their planned workshops "Islands of Integrity". During the fourth workshop that took place on 20th November 2024, they worked on their strategic and action plans on integrity in their organizations.

The action plans were actually further explanation of the strategies that they had formulated during their previous workshops, which covered three main objectives:

1) limit the monopoly and discretion in decision making, 2) improve transparency and accountability and 3) increase the benefits from working with integrity and decrease the losses due to corruption.

Discussions during the workshop explained part of the dilemmas. On the other challenges, the organizations can consult their mentors. After the workshop, the organizations will continue their internal discussions on the planned strategies and activities and they will prepare the first draft the Strategic and Action Plan. These documents will be finalised after the mentors' comments, and the organizations will start to implement them since the beginning of the next year.

Better Treatment of People with Disabilities – Let's Learn from Each Other



"We are all here for the first time, eye to eye, to speak openly rather than criticize, to find ways how to help each other," this is how Gordana Trajkovska, President of "Poraka" from Negotino greeted the people with disabilities, parents and the medical personnel who got together at the first-round table entitled "Let's Face Challenges and Stigmatization".

One could almost touch hope and resolution in the room where everybody was gathered. Gordana "broke the ice" with the emotional story about her 34-year-old daughter Bozhidarka, beneficiary of the services of "Poraka". "The fight is not only for physical accessibility, but also for empathy, respect and equal treatment," she said. "Every day is a struggle, but every day is a possibility as well. I am a witness of this situation, because I see it from the role of a parent, and as a president of the organization that provides the services," says Gordana.

The parents of children with disabilities, Valentina Taseva and Daliborka Zlateva, spoke about the everyday challenges, such as transport, specialized medical aids, appropriate education of doctors and the huge financial burden of physical exercises, medical aids and respiratory machines.

Read the complete story here.

"We Need a Collective Response to Challenges for Achieving Lasting Results"



Exchange of experience and discussions on the challenges in the implementation of the activities were in the focus of the traditional Civica Mobilitas Networking Meeting that took place on 4th and 5th December 2024 in Skopje, with 94 representatives of 58 CSOs, programme grantees and experts.

"There is no democracy without strong civil society at national, but also at local level," said the Swiss Ambassador Véronique Hulmann in her address to the participants. She spoke about the trust of the citizens in the civil society that provides them with credibility before decision makers. According to her, in this phase, the goal of Civica Mobilitas is to increase the accountability between CSOs and citizens. The other goal is the dialogue with decision makers, such

as the Government and municipalities, and the third one is the advocacy capacity. These goals are reflected in the grants that were given to the organizations that work together, not only on one project, but on one cause, the change that they want to achieve and promote.

"Your presence and active participation today and tomorrow are crucial for the success of this meeting and the results that we will transfer to our future work," stressed Darko Dimov, Civica Mobilitas Coordinator, in his address.

"Civica Mobilitas is a community that makes changes," said Salija Bekir Halim from the association "Initiative for Women's Rights" from Shuto Orizari in her address. As a member of Civica Mobilitas community and a current grantee, she stressed the importance of the programme as a platform for support and networking of CSOs. Speaking about the achievements of her organization, she stressed the usefulness of the partnerships and exchange of experience, on top of the financial support. "Only together we can build a just and inclusive society," said Bekir Halim, and she added that the cooperation with Civica Mobilitas and the other organizations is crucial to fulfil the vision for a better society.

Read the complete story here.

Find and Share Resources for the Civil Sector on Civica Mobilitas e-Platform

If you need quality resources for your activities in the civil sector, Civica Mobilitas e-Platform is the real place for you! You have more than 1,000 free materials available in Macedonian, English and Albanian.

What can you find?

- More than 850 resources in Macedonian
- More than 130 resources in English
- More than 70 resources in Albanian

Do you have resources to share?

Every resource that you have can contribute for the community. Increase your visibility and share your materials by filling in the form available in Macedonian, English or Albanian. The resources can be in audio or video format, as database, infographic, presentation, promotional material, publication, story that would be useful for the citizens and CSOs.

Why is it important to share your resources?

- Support to other organizations Your experience and materials can help others in their activities.
- Bigger visibility By sharing your resources, you increase the recognisability of your work and your contribution.
- Promoting transparency and cooperation By sharing, you stimulate a culture of cooperation and exchange of knowledge in the civil sector.

Fill in the form and make your materials available to everybody in the civil sector.

Look at the available resources and find what you need.

From Waste to Innovation: Young People as Carriers of Ecological Transformation



The change starts with us, but most of all with the young. It is them, with new knowledge and awareness, that can be the carriers of positive changes in their surroundings. When the young people get acquainted with the challenges in their environment, they become active participants in the transformation process.

I was inspired by the educational workshops on "Techniques for Bio Waste Transformation" organized by the Resource Environmental Centre (REC) in partnership with Eco Logic and Florozon — Centre for ecological Democracy. The workshops took place at the biotechnological lab of the chemistry high school "Marija Kiri Sklodovska" in Skopje and they were intended for the primary school students. I had the privilege to be present at one of the workshops and personally observe the experiments in the company of the students of "Kiril Pejcinovik" primary school from Kisela Voda.

Quiet, many of them shy, the students came to the lab. As Tamara Radovanovik from REC explains, many of the students here came across such type of lecture for the first time. "In the beginning they are a bit sceptical and shy, but as the activities progress, they see that it is really something interesting and significant for their future," she says, as the students put on the white robes and prepare their hands for work.

Read the complete story here.

CITIZENS FOR CHANGE

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