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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the latest edition of the Newsletter published by Balkan Civil Society Development Network! The main aim of this publication is to inform member and partner organizations about latest news from the network and networks' website <http://www.balkancsd.net>. Each Newsletter consists of short information about the news from the website and "Announcement Board," which covers monthly reports on developments in the network. Full articles and information are available on the BCSDN website.

ACTIVITIES & EVENTS

BCSDN NOW ON SOCIAL MEDIA- FACEBOOK AND TWITTER!

BCSDN has joined two most known and used social media of today, Facebook and Twitter. The aim is to further improve outreach and inform interested public about our activities. You can become a fan on Facebook or to follow our Twitter feed by subscribing through our website Other social media are also being utilized in order to further share our work, such as Scribd for our publications. A YouTube channel for video and Flickr for photos from our events will also become operational with our new website in 2010.

CONFERENCE REPORT

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR CIVIL PARTICIPATION IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROMOTED AT AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE IN LJUBLJANA

The international conference "Civil Participation in Europe" was organized in Ljubljana, Slovenia by CNVOS, a BCSDN member in cooperation with the Council of Europe Conference of INGOs and Ministry of Public Administration of Slovenia on 12th and 13th November, 2009. The aim of the conference was to promote the Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation in the Decision-making Process. Several BCSDN member organizations and the BCSDN Executive Director participated to the event. A short report and links to the Code and other relevant CoE documents are available on the BCSDN website.



REGIONAL INITIATIVE

LOCAL CSOs INITIATE REGIONAL NETWORK ON CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



The regional conference "Development of Corporate Social Responsibility – Examples of Good Practice" was organized by Center for Development of NGOs (CRNVO), a BCSDN member in Hotel Crna Gora, Podgorica on 2nd and 3rd November, 2009. The aim of the conference was to bring together representatives of civil society, business sector and governments to discuss the current state of and practices in corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the region and identify ways for regional cooperation. The conference was attended by over 50 representatives of civil society, business and government sector from Montenegro and the region. Several BCSDN member organizations (CNVOS, CPCS, CRNVO, KCSF and MCIC) and the BCSDN Executive Director participated in the conference. The 2nd day of the



conference featured a regional meeting of organizations during which an initiative for a regional network on CSR was launched. Short report from the conference and BCSDN presentation as a best practice in networking and regional cooperation is available on the BCSDN website.

CONFERENCE REPORT

STRENGTHENING THE TRIANGLE CSOs-NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS-EUROPEAN COMMISSION: REINFORCING THE EUROPE-WIDE CIVIL SOCIETY AND BUILDING PARTNERSHIP



BCSDN Executive Director) along with representatives of eight BCSDN member organizations (CRNVO, CI, MCIC, Cenzura, CNVOS, Vesta, CPCS, and KCSF) attended the annual review conference on the progress on civil dialogue in the Western Balkans and Turkey. The eight members contributed to the annual report on the state of civil dialogue in their countries. Find all country reports and short report on the debate on the BCSDN website. A letter to organizers on an incident by EC representative is also available.

EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCE

NETWORKING IN EUROPE AND THE BALKANS: PRESENTATION OF BCSDN AT 6TH ASSEMBLY OF FENS, BELGRADE, SERBIA, 17TH OCTOBER, 2009



The sixth annual assembly of the Federation of Non-governmental Organizations in Serbia (FENS) was held on the 17th and 18th of October 2009 in the Sava center in Belgrade. There were around 200 representatives of civil society organizations participating at the Assembly, guests from the Government of Serbia – Bozidar Gelic, vice-president of government for EU and Milan Markovic, Minister for state government and local government (MSGLG), international organizations with their seat in Belgrade and Miljenko Dereta, Executive Director of Civic Initiatives, Co-president of FENS and Member of BCSDN Board. Saso Klekovski, First Executive Director of MCIC talked about the importance of networking on European and regional level. A short report from the event is available on the BCSDN and Civic Initiatives websites.

ADVOCACY

EC FINANCIAL REGULATION CONSULTATION FINAL CALL FOR INPUT BY MEMBERS

On 19th October, the Commission has launched a public consultation on its Financial Regulation, which regulates rules for all EU programmes and financing (incl. IPA, EIDHR) managed by the Commission and its agencies. The consultation is specifically focused on two issues: grants and administration procedures. Since most organizations are benefiting from Commission funding and have experienced problems in this, the consultation presents an excellent opportunity to submit a joint input. Six members (CenzuraPlus, Civic Initiatives, CRNVO, Diakonia Agapes, EHO and MCIC) have so far contributed to the preparation of the BCSDN input. The contributions point to several problems shared by most of CSOs receiving funding from the EC, e.g. problems with co-financing, long application and evaluation procedures, fluctuating exchange rates and limited (7%) overhead. There were also several ideas shared on how these problems could be solved by the EC (e.g. introduction of institutional support for organization in IPA countries, limiting congested publication of several calls and fast-track procedure for small grants). On initiative of the BCSDN, the CSF Technical Assistance (TACSO) project staff has taken on to inform and coordinate national input in all Western Balkans countries and Turkey as a way to enable local CSOs to have their say in the consultation. The deadline for submission of input is 18th December. It is expected that Commission will present its proposals for changes to the Regulation in mid-2010. There is still time for interested members to give additional contribution into the final BCSDN input.



CSF TA PROJECT (TACSO)

1st EU STEERING GROUP MEETING AND PROJECT INCEPTION REPORT COMMENTS

BCSDN Executive Director participated to the 1st EU Steering Group meeting, the EU-level advisory body to the TACSO in Zadar on 19th October. The group was informed that first concrete activities will start after the inception period ending on 17th November. Consultants were informed about the anxiousness and scepticism about the project among local CSOs. The successor of the project (phase II) is already in the planning. Since the contracting takes up to 1,5 years, the evaluation of the project will take place in May next year. As a member of the group, BCSDN received and submitted comments to the Inception Report of the project summarizing the need assessment, general work plan and composition of the Local Advisory Groups. The main comments include: lacking clear strategic choices for project intervention; inappropriate reliance on e-based tools for grassroots and rural area-based CSOs as specific target group of the project; understanding of the capacity-building/development as a toolbox to meeting the set project objectives; use of the website as support to capacity-building, not project visibility; need on the clarity on monitoring function as a support to EC services or CSOs; the need for linking between national and regional level activities planned under IPA CSF and the need to clarify roles and responsibilities of the project decision-making structures. Both the report from the meeting and comments to the Inception Report are available upon request.

ZADAR INCIDENT

LETTER TO ZADAR CONFERENCE ORGANIZERS ON COMMISSION REPRESENTATIVE'S OUTBURST

Mr. Henk Visser, DG Enlargement, responsible for Technical Assistance project within the framework of IPA Civil Society Facility shouted and used inappropriate language reacting to complaints by representatives of CSOs, among them our member Mr. Miljenko Dereta, at the Zadar conference on 19th and 20th October. In reaction, BCSDN sent a letter which expressed the expectations that organizers (ECAS and NCSDF) "...will be addressing the incident in your conference report and through an official reaction to the Commission. We sincerely hope that this event will remain a single incident with little as possible damage to the process of building further partnership and dialogue between the Commission and local CSOs in the Balkans." The letter was sent to all participants at the conference, as well as the Commission. ECAS is still preparing the conference report. There has been no official reaction from the Commission.

IPA CSF POLICY PAPER

POLICY PAPER NOW AVAILABLE IN FIVE LANGUAGES!

Our policy paper, "The Successes and Failures of the EU-Pre-accession Policy in the Balkans: Support to Civil Society," which was first presented at "The Right to Be Heard: EU Enlargement Policy and Civil Society in Western Balkans" workshop held in Brussels on 10th September is now available in English and 4 local languages (Albanian, Croatian, Macedonian and Serbian) from the BCSDN website. Please, report dissemination and any feedback you receive.



EC PROGRESS REPORTS 2009

PROGRESS REPORT 2009: TOWARDS A CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY DIALOGUE ACQUIS?

Following the recent publication of the European Commission's Progress Reports on candidate and potential candidate countries, BCSDN reviewed them immediately. We have compiled a short analysis of the reports as they pertain to civil society which is available for download. Additionally raw data from the Progress Reports are available along with the benchmarks. This analysis is an introduction on preparing a new policy paper on civil dialogue and event in Brussels in May or June 2010. The analysis and data are available on the BCSDN website.



EXECUTIVE OFFICE

ADMINISTRATIVE SET-UP OF THE OFFICE

October and part of November was used to set-up the basic administrative procedures and independent functioning of the BCSDN Executive Office as a separate legal entity including Workbook, Archive and work on preparation of general acts such as Board and Council Rulebooks, which are necessary for normal functioning of network bodies.

FUNDRAISING

The second half of November and beginning of December was used to prepare and submit two project proposals based on the BCSDN Work Plan 2010-2011. The proposals were addressed to Balkan Trust for Democracy and US Democracy Commission. OSI Think Tank Fund has also showed interest and a Concept Note will be submitted by mid-December for possible support to networks' research and advocacy activities in the future.

NETWORK BODIES

3rd BOARD MEETING

The 3rd meeting of the BCSDN Board took place on 20th October during the Zadar conference. The Board's agenda included: discussion on follow-up activities and Work Programme 2010-2011; discussion on Executive Office costs, incl. membership and other business. Goran Djurovic CRNVO stepped down as the Board's Chair. He remains in the Board as its member. Tina Michieli, CNVOS as the Deputy-Chair leads the work of the Board at the moment. The draft minutes of the meeting are available upon request.

ANNOUNCEMENT BOARD

IPA CIVIL SOCIETY FACILITY FOLLOW-UP

The Facility remains one of the main focuses of the work of the network. Currently, ways to involve European Parliament in the post-Lisbon context are being explored directly and through partner networks in Brussels.

TRIALOG INTERNSHIP

There have been further developments with regards to possibilities for an internship at the TRIALOG office in Brussels. Two members, KCSF and DA expressed interest in the internship thus far. Currently, details are being arranged with TRIALOG in order to start the internship in mid-January. Interested members will be informed on time. Any BCSDN member organization interested is invited to contact the Executive Office.

RE-DESIGN OF THE WEBSITE

The re-design has been delayed to beginning of 2010, due to prioritization of the re-design of other MCICs websites. Once the first draft design is available, all members will be invited to give their comments and suggestions.

***Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN)** was launched in 2003 and is a network of 12 civil society organizations from the Balkan region (Albania, BiH, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia). The network is committed to sustainable peace and stability, prosperity, harmony of societies in the Balkan region. The mission of the network is to strengthen civil society through developing indigenous civil society concepts, practices and empowering civil society actors.*