BALKAN CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

MCIC

ANNUAL PROGRAMME
REPORT 2005

Skopje, Macedonia
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Contents

1. SUMMARY

Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN) was commenced in December 2003 based on the Capacity Building Hub initiative, started in 2000 as a part of the World Council of Churches South East Europe Ecumenical Partnership. BCSDN is a network of 12 civil society and ecumenical organizations from 7 countries and territories in South East Europe (Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro and Kosovo). Its vision is commitment to sustainable peace and stability, prosperity, harmony of societies in the Balkan region. Its mission is to strengthen civil society through developing indigenous civil society concepts, practices and empowering civil society actors.

The current Programme is based on the needs assessment of all member organizations and forms the basis for network's plan of action for the period 2004-2006. It builds on past cooperation between members and successful implementation of a three-year capacity-building programme Capacity Building Hub 2001-2003. The network is based on partnership among member organizations, which share a common vision and mission and have similar capacity-building needs and resources. The Programme is managed by the Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation (MCIC), Skopje, Macedonia. Therefore, MCIC is the seat of BCSDN Secretariat.

The overall objective of the Programme is to contribute to development of capacities and strengthening of cooperation in civil society in the Balkans. The specific objective and purpose of this Programme is to increase individual/staff and organizational capacity of relevant CSOs and their cooperation in the Balkans. The main goals within the Programme purpose are: to improve/mediate financial constraints of CSOs through improved skills and knowledge about mobilization of resources and support; to improve cross-border and cross-sector cooperation; and to improve quality standards, skills and knowledge among CSOs.

Thus, the Programme develops package of services needed in order to develop capacities and strengthen cooperation in the civil society in the Balkans; namely through partner organizations targeted in this Programme. Besides information-sharing, capacity-building packages consisting of tailor-made training/ToT; exchange/exposure/consultancy visits; and workshops are the core activities of this Programme. Identified areas of common expertise that need to be strengthened are: 1) EU fundraising, lobbying and advocacy; 2) resource and support mobilization and 3) ethic standards in training and consultancy. The Programme also promotes regional cooperation and build capacities (through Working Groups) in the following specific areas of work: gender and anti-trafficking; decentralization; corporate social responsibility and anti-corruption and diaconal practices.

In 2005, BCSDN concentrated on implementation of remaining activities on EU funding, lobbying and advocacy (1st priority area), start of activities on mobilization of resources and support (2nd priority area) and Working Groups on special issues (diaconal practices, decentralization). Out of 8 originally planned projects, 7 were implemented. One project will continue implementation in 2006. The difference between planned and realized projects is due to long contracting procedure (from July to December) with the European Commission, which awarded a two-year support to already planned and some new activities of the network.

On organizational level, the second Steering Group meeting took place on 1-2 April in Tirana, Albania. Based on consensus by all member organizations, Center for Development of NGOs (CRNVO), Montenegro became the 12th member of the network. The Secretariat promoted the network and its work on several occasions (Networking

conference for NGOs in SEE, EuroBalkans Foundation, Belgrad, SCG 25-26 June; East West Institute NGO Council Meeting, Ohrid, Macedonia 22 July; EU and Strengtening Civilc Dialogue, Zagreb, Croatia, 30 September). Cooperation with APRODEV also continued and BCSDN actively participated in creation of its new capacity-building programme 2006-9. Under the APRODEV programme, BCSDN became permanent member of the APRODEV Working Group on Central, Eatsern Europe and Central Asia, which manages the programme.

2. PROGRAMME FRAMEWORK

2. 1. Overall objective
The vision of the network is to strive towards sustainable peace and stability, prosperity, and harmony of societies in the Balkan region. Its mission is to strengthen civil society through developing indigenous civil society concepts, practices and empowering civil society actors in the Balkans. Its overall objective within the framework of this Programme is to contribute to development of capacities and strengthening of cooperation in civil society in the Balkans.

2. 2. Programme purpose
The specific objective and purpose of this Programme is to increase individual/staff and organizational capacity of relevant CSOs and their cooperation in the Balkans.
The main goals within the Programme purpose are:
- to improve/mediate financial constraints of CSOs through improved skills and knowledge about mobilization of resources and support;
- to improve cross-border and cross-sector cooperation;
- to improve quality standards, skills and knowledge among CSOs.

2. 3. Tasks (components)
Tasks to be fulfilled are:
- Identification of specific, targeted and tailor-made capacity building activities;
- Planning of capacity building activities;
- Promotion of partnership and cooperation through information-sharing;
- Implementation and monitoring of all activities.

2. 4. Target group
The Programme is aimed at a two-fold target group: members and other relevant intermediary CSOs in Balkan countries.
1. Members:
  • National CSOs:
- Albania: Albanian Civil Society Foundation (ACSF);
- Bulgaria: Women's Alliance for Development (WAD);
- Croatia: Non-profit's Information and Training Centre (NIT), Education for Organizations in Civil Sector (EOS);
- Macedonia: Macedonian Centre for International cooperation (MCIC);
- Romania: Opportunity Associates Romania (OAR);
- Serbia and Montenegro (including Kosovo): Center for Development of NGOs (CRNVO), We Are With You (WAWY).

- • Ecumenical and/or church-related organisations:
- Albania: Diakonia Agapes;
- Bulgaria: Pokrov Foundation;
- Romania: Ecumenical Association of Churches in Romania (AIDRom);
- Serbia and Montenegro (inc. Kosovo): Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization (EHO).
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2. Other intermediary CSOs in Balkan countries:
     These organizations are to be selected additionally, based on the theme or/and existing partnerships and cooperation with organizations and networks in the region.

3. ACTIVITIES

3. 1. Planned activities

The Programme envisages development of capacity-building package of services needed in order to develop capacities and strengthen cooperation in the civil society in the Balkans. This is primarily targeted at BCSDN member organizations. Besides information-sharing, capacity-building packages consisting of tailor-made training/ToT; exchange/exposure/consultancy visits; and workshops are the core activities of this Programme. Identified areas of common expertise that need to be strengthened are: 1) EU fundraising, lobbying and advocacy; 2) resource and support mobilization and 3) ethic standards in training and consultancy. This Programme also promotes regional cooperation and build capacities (through Working Groups) in specific areas of: gender and anti-trafficking; decentralization; corporate social responsibility and anti-corruption and diaconal practices.

In 2005, BCSDN planned continuation of different capacity-building activities in the 1st priority area (EU funding, lobbying and advocacy), cooperation on specific areas (WG on diaconal practices and decentralization) and start of activities on 2nd priority area (resource and support mobilization). These included: trainings, exchange activities (exchange and exposure visits, backstopping/coaching) and workshops. Planned information-sharing and promotion activities were: programme promotion, website, Newsletter, calendar of events, Balkan Civic Practices. All together, 8 projects were planned.

3. 2. Realised activities

Based on the Programme 2004-6, BCSDN realized 7 projects in 2005, among which one project was extended from 2004 and one was opened in 2005 and extended to 2006 (see list of implemented projects in Annex 1). Within the framework on these projects: 2 trainings, 4 exchange activities, one workshop, one publication, regular monthly Newsletter, up-date of website (including new funding database) and regular weekly e-mail alerts, i.e. all together 11 activities, were implemented. One training and conference were implemented as additional (unplanned projects). Small project funds activities were started, but as a separately funded project.

3.2.1. Capacity-building in EU funding, lobbying and advocacy (1st priority area)

Exchange and exposure visits

      One exchange visit was realized between Pokrov Foundation, Bulgaria and Philanthropy, SCG. The exchange visit took place between 13 and 18 May in Belgrade when 2 Pokrov Foundation staff visited Philanthropy premises and projects to learn more about their activities and plan for joint activities in the future. Two Philanthropy staff returned their visit to Pokrov Foundation headquarters and projects in Sofia, Bulgaria between 13 and 16 June. The visits resulted in developing concrete ideas for further cooperation in the field of elderly, prevention and volunteers.

      Several exposure visits were also realized, among them participation of BCSDN members and partners to MCIC annual Consortium meeting, which was held in Skopje, Macedonia, 24-26 May. One partner organization joined the meeting to learn more about MCIC and exchange ideas with the donors. In cooperation with APRODEV, exposure visit to its General Conference: *Sustainable Development in European Integration: the Role of Civil Society Organizations* (7-9 November, Brussels, Belgium) was realized. Two BCSDN members (OAR, Romania and WAD, Bulgaria) took part in the conference with BCSDN support, while other members participated with own or APRODEV support. The conference enabled exposure to EU Brussels-based stakeholders in time when new EU financial framework 2007-13 is being negotiated and thus, gave partners the possibility to learn and give their views on impact of EU policies and programmes in their countries. The BCSDN Coordinator also participated in regular meetings of the APRODEV Central and Easter European Working Group-now Working Group on Central, Eatsern Europe and Central Asia (4 March, 13 September, 10 November) in charge of managing the APRODEV capacity-building activities. BCSDN became member of the Working Group under the new APRODEV programme 2006-9.

Workshop

      In cooperation with the European Commission Delegation in Skopje, a public lecture titles *Bulgaria's Experience in the Process of Integration into the European Union* by Bulgarian Minister for European Integration was organized on 27 May in Skopje, Macedonia. The lecture focused on the importance of internal coordination and communication campaign in the process of negotiation for the membership status. Around 250 participants, from different institutions such as ministries, local government, parliament, religious communities, media, CSOs, international organizations attended the lecture.

3.2.2. Mobilization of resources and support (2nd priority area)

Trainings

      At the end of the first quarter 2005, preparations for implementation of activities under 2nd priority area, i.e. mobilization of resources and support, started. A questionnaire for needs assessment of member organizations was send and returned by 7 (out of 11) members. Terms of reference for implementation of all activities in the 2nd priority area were prepared based on feedback received in the questionnaires. The first training on mobilization of resources took place between 27 June and 1 July in Romania. The training was delivered by member organization Opportunity Associates Romania and focused on approach to business sector and income-generation activities. The event was attended by 15 participants, representatives from 6 BCSDN members. The 5-day training also included visits to two case study organizations.

Additionally, the BCSDN Secretariat managed training on mobilization of resources for Christian Aid Kosovo partners. The training was held between 10 and 13 February in Ohrid, Macedonia and was conducted by a joint trainer team from MCIC and EHO, both BCSDN member organizations. This training enabled the use of BCSDN training resources and transfer of know-how between BCSDN members and other CSOs in the region, thus presenting a positive example of cooperation between BCSDN members.

Other planned activities (e.g. training, exchange activities, workshop, publication) on this priority area have not been realized in 2005. In July 2005, the European Commission awarded BCSDN with a two-year support for its activities, among which were also activities on this priority area. The signing of the contract which enabled continuation of resumed activities only took place in December 2005. Thus, implementation of these activities will continue as of January 2006.

Funding database

With the help of intern engaged at the BCSDN Secretariat, a database of 106 funding sources was created and published on the BCSDN website. For each funding source, the database includes information on area it supports; geographical coverage; type of support and deadline. It is searchable for any of the above area or in alphabetical order. The aim of the database is to provide timely and accessible information to BCSDN members and other CSOs on funding opportunities.

3.2.3. Working Groups on special issues

Four Working Groups (WGs) were launched at the Annual BCSDN Partnership/Steering Group meeting in May 2004 in Skopje, Macedonia. Their aim is to promote dialogue, exchange and cooperation between BCSDN members and other interested CSOs in areas of special interest to civil society. Namely, gender and anti-trafficking; corporate social responsibility and anti-corruption; decentralization; and diaconal practices, each under auspices of one lead organization – BCSDN member. Additionally, Working Group on vision and mission was established in 2005 with the aim to define vision, mission and membership criteria for joining the network.

The first Working Group meetings on the topic diaconal practices and decentralization were held in 2005. The other two meetings haven't been scheduled yet. The Working Group on diaconal practices meeting was organized by EHO in Novi Sad, SCG between 11 and 13 May. Representatives from 4 BCSDN members and 4 local faith-based organizations came together at the meeting to share their past and future challenges. Participants developed a joint plan of action which included: continuation of contacts between the representatives on this topic; identification of funding possibilities for future exchange visits between organization working in diaconia and other joint activities; organization of research, collection, analysis and publication of data on reality of diaconal work; best practices and success stories; organization of international diaconal conferences; training and volunteer camp.

The second Working Group meeting on decentralization took place in Skopje, Macedonia between 9 and 10 December under the title *Democratization & Development in Local Communities: Problems and Challenges in the Balkans*. The meeting was held in the framework of the 5th NGO Fair – Forum of Civil Society in Macedonia organized by MCIC in Skopje, Macedonia. Decentralization was the main topic of this year's Fair. In the two days, the workshop brought together around 20 participants from 7 countries from the region to share and exchange their experiences on the topic. The main

conclusions of the meeting was a mixed picture and experience in the region in terms of: political/legal framework (in some parts passed legislation, challenges faced on implementation level (e.g. Montenegro, Croatia, Macedonia), while in other parts chaotic legal framework due to unclear political status, which hinders existence of CSOs and cooperation with municipalities (e.g. Vojvodina); practice (difference in bottom-up vs. top-down processes as well as models (e.g. cross-border cooperation, community-based groups) used in promoting cooperation and inclusion of CSOs in decentralization process); future (funding possibilities for cross-border regions and municipalities mainly from EU (new Neighbourhood Programme), while capacities need to be developed on local level to absorb these funds).

3.2.4. Information-sharing

Programme promotion

With the help of an intern, a database of over 500 CSOs and other civil society actors from the region and wider was compiled. A promotion mailing with basic information about BCSDN and possibilities for cooperation was send to them. Around 40 positive responses to the mailing were received.

Website

BCSDN website consists of basic information about the network, its activities and updates on funding, opportunities, network documents and reports. The website is registered under an independent domain name http://www.balkancsd.net. The website is updated daily and maintained by the Secretariat. The website has been visited 2,036 times between January and December 2005 (or approx. 228 visits on average/month). Considerable increase in visits is reported between July and August (promotion) and November and December (call for internship).

The new funding database with 106 funding sources with a search engine has been developed (see more 3.2.2.). Cover story from each of implemented activities was published on the BCSDN website, including pictures, event reports, handouts, minutes, in order to provide information to partners and interested CSOs about BCSDN activities.

Mailing list

BCSDN mailing list has been created in January 2004. Between January-December 2005, 72 messages have been exchanged. On average, this is 6 messages per month or 1.5 messages per week. The total number of list members is 35. Since January 2005, 12 new members joined the list. It is designed as a public discussion group (organized through yahoo group service) at balkancs@yahoogroups.com. The purpose of the mailing list is to enable direct and simultaneous communications between member organizations. The list is used to communicate and inform members about initiatives, announcements, development in the network etc. Subscription to the mailing list is possible directly at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/balkancs/ or by invitation of the moderator (BCSDN Coordinator).

Weekly e-mail alerts

Regular weekly e-mail alerts are sent out to all members and other interested CSOs every Friday. 43 issues have been published in 2005. Each weekly e-mail alerts consists of information such as news, funding, training and education opportunities and new publications. According to the web survey conducted among BCSDN users, this is one of the most useful services in their work. In 2005, the weekly e-mail alerts have been

improved from an MS Word to HTML format, which enables more professional and easier access to information distributed. Weekly e-mail alerts are currently distributed to over 80 addresses.

Newsletter

The Newsletter is published on BCSDN website and sent to members on a monthly basis. 12 numbers have been prepared and published in 2005. The Newsletter is prepared by the Secretariat and edited by BCSDN Coordinator with the aim to inform partner organizations about latest developments in the network, otherwise published on networks' website. It is published in electronic (PDF format) and consists of 3-4 pages on average.

Calendar of events

Calendar of events is designed as the main tool for sharing information on partner organizations' events and activities. The aim is to share information on organizational, training and other activities in order to promote culture of information-sharing for effective and efficient work. Calendar of events was to be published and distributed in printed and electronic form once to twice a year, based on information provided by partner organization. Calendar of events is currently not realized through a special service, but rather through ad-hoc information-sharing through other information-sharing tools (e.g. mailing list, website, weekly e-mail alerts).

Balkan Civic Practices

The planned publication of second issue of *Balkan Civic Practices* on the topic of EU funding has been rescheduled to 2006 due to newly created situation with awarding of two-year support by the EC (see also 3.2.2.). For this reason, BCSDN supported printing of publication *Demystification of Eurointegration* by Civil Society Resources Center.

4. ORGANISATION

4. 1. Governance and Management

All undertaken activities (formulated as projects) are approved by MCIC Governing Board. Overall responsibility for the programme management lies with the Executive Director. Project Coordinator is responsible for overseeing the overall running of the Programme. Full-time BCSDN Coordinator (Project Officer) is responsible for programme coordination, its administration and thus, running of the Secretariat (established to divide responsibilities of MCIC as manager and member organization in the network).

The Programme is governed in cooperation and consultation with other BCSDN members through annual Steering Group meetings. The Group consists of directors/senior representatives of member organizations. The 2005 annual meeting took place on 1-2 April in Tirana, Albania and approved the Annual Report 2004, work plan for 2005-6 as outlined in the BCSDN Programme and discussed internal and external cooperation. The Core Group, i.e. group of contact persons from each member organization discusses and advises on concrete network activities on an ad-hoc basis.

MCIC has well defined procedures, including financial ones. The Executive Director is responsible for overall management, while the Accountant is in charge of financial management of the organization. Expenditures above a certain amount (as stated in Rules of Procedure) must be approved by the Governing Board (programme as

well as operational). MCIC also has a Supervisory Board that has the right to control the management of finances.

Start-up meeting of partners under the new EC support for 2006-7 took place on 11 December in Skopje, Macedonia with the aim to discuss operational details before resuming of implementation in January 2006.

4. 2. Procedures

Joint activities are managed and implemented by MCIC, i.e. the BCSDN Secretariat, and follow MCIC standard rules and procedures for activities (formulated as projects).

Activities on specific areas as well as part of joint activities (e.g. exchange visits) are managed by MCIC and implemented directly by BCSDN member organizations. For this reason, MCIC developed a regular procedure to initiate, fund, monitor and report on BCSDN activities. This was necessary to create a simple and effective procedure to manage relationships between MCIC and other BCSDN members, as well as to create basis for monitoring and evaluation of implemented activities.

The procedure consists of three elements:

a) Funding Proposal - a short standard form to present activity (including goals, target group, schedule, description of activities, participants and budget);

b) Contract - after reviewing the proposal, MCIC and the leading agency for the particular activity sign a standard contract (in English), which represents legal base and a financial document for the fund disbursement;

c) Reports - the leading agency for particular activity, according to the clauses of the contract, is required to submit a final report including an evaluation.

Invoices are checked on 3 levels (Responsible Officer, Accountant, and Executive Director).

Annual financial statements are audited by KPMG.

5. EXTERNAL COOPERATION

As an informal and open network, BCSDN cooperates with other networks, organizations and stakeholders to realize its goals. In 2005, BCSDN continued its cooperation with Association of Protestant Development Organizations (APRODEV) from Brussels, Belgium through participation of BCSDN member organizations in their capacity-building programme and the work of the Working Group on Central and Eastern Europe (now Working Group on Central, Eastern Europe and Central Asia), which manages the programme. With the new APRODEV programme 2006-9, BCSDN became a permanent member of the Working Group and is expected to share responsibilities with APRODEV in managing and implementing capacity-building in the area of EU funding, lobbying and advocacy.

Through award of two-year grant contract by the European Commission for its activities in 2006-7, BCSDN has created partnerships with two strategic partners, i.e. European Citizen's Action Service (ECAS) from Brussels, Belgium and Center for Information Service, Cooperation and Development of NGOs from Slovenia. These partnerships will further BCSDN's and its member organizations' goals of cooperation and strengthening partnerships between organizations in and outside of the region.

This year, an interest has grown in membership possibilities in the network. Organizations from and outside of the primary region of BCSDN work, such as Serbia, Turkey and Slovenia, have expressed interest to become members of the network. This is

probably a result of programme promotion (see 3.2.4) and growing relevance of BCSDN activities to other CSOs in the region. Since the network does not have developed criteria for membership, a special Working Group on vision and mission was created in 2004 to work on this issue. The Group is yet to meet and develop proposal in 2006. However, Center for Development of NGOs (CRNVO) from Montenegro became the 12th member of the network in July, based on consensus by all member organizations as there is currently no member from that territory (similarly is the case with Bosnia and Herzegovina).

The Secretariat promoted the network and its work on several other occasions: Networking conference for NGOs in SEE, EuroBalkans Foundation, Belgrad, SCG 25-26 June; East West Institute NGO Council Meeting, Ohrid, Macedonia 22 July; EU and Strengtening Civilc Dialogue, Zagreb, Croatia, 30 September.

6. BOTTLENECKS, PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

The programme has achieved good realization of activities in the areas of common interest (i.e. 1st and 2nd priority area), which are managed by the Secretariat in the first half of the year, while this was lowered in the second half. This was due to pending signature of the grant contract with the EC (EC awarded BCSDN a grant for two-year support in July 2005, which covered some of activities planned for 2005), which took place only in December 2005. Implementation of activities in specific areas of concern was improved. The first meeting of the Working Group on diaconal practices and Working Group on decentralization took place. The two other Groups (i.e. gender and anti-trafficking; and social corporate responsibility and anti-corruption) are yet to take place, due to tight organizational schedule of member organizations leading the two Groups.

Communication in the network remains vertical (i.e. Secretariat-members), with exception when direct feedback on particular issues is requested from members (i.e. questionnaires for need assessment, participation in coordination activities). Members see reasons for these in overwork in their own organizations and constrained financial situation created by withdrawal of donors from their organizations. The Steering Group gave recommendations on overcoming this situation: finding additional financial support for participation at coordination meetings; calls/information on possibilities for supporting exchange and other visits and creation of a mechanism for supporting joint application and development initiatives. Additionally, activities under 2nd priority area are to be implemented by interested member organizations, in cooperation with the Secretariat, with the aim to enable greater involvement and relevancy of the Programme to the members. The following measures have been implemented so far: training on mobilization of resources was delivered by a member organization, which should strengthen the ownership of the programme/network. Further, the EC approved a join application by members, which will enable financial support for activities of the network and its members in 2006 and 2007.

On the other hand, interest in the network and cooperation/becoming member is growing on the part of other CSOs in the region and beyond. Although the network functions as open and informal, these calls for further need for the network to agree on different modes of cooperation with other CSOs and actors, primarily through the work of the Working Group on vision and mission (see 5.).

In carrying out activities in this year, decentralized implementation has been applied to some activities in the area of common concern. This was aimed at enhancing

relevance and involvement in operational level as well as ownership of the programme/network by all member organizations. One exchange visit (Pokrov Foundation and Philanthropy) and training on mobilization of resources (organized and delivered by Opportunity Associate Romania) were implemented in such a way. Additionally, publication of cover stories and activity reports on BCSDN website was aimed at motivating other member organization by way of best practices and positive example of such practices. Decentralized implementation and cover story publication will continue in implementation of BCSDN activities in 2006-7.

This year, BCSDN engaged volunteers-interns, who helped in implementation of daily work at the Secretariat. They were primarily involved in helping out with information activities such as promotion, development of new funding database and weekly e-mail alerts. Based on this ad-hoc experience, a call for interns was lunched in November 2005 with the aim to systematically recruit volunteer-interns for 2006. There was a big interest (30 applications, with candidates from all over the world). Inters were helpful with the workload in the Secretariat as well as enabled opportunities for young people to learn more and act as multipliers for the work of BCSDN.

7. FINANCIAL REPORT

See attached Excel sheet

ANNEX 1: List of implemented projects

Description	Project no.
CA Training on mobilization of resources	05-12 BNT 101
Follow-up and consultancy on EU issues	05-12 BNT 102
Public conference on EU integration	05-12 BNT 103
Training on mobilization of resources and support	05-12 BNT 104
Small project funds	05-12 BNT 105
Balkan Civic Practices No.2	05-12 BNT 201

ANNEX 2: Additional references

- 222-5 Minutes of the EU N2N Start-up Meeting, Skopje, Macedonia (11 December, 2005)
- 222-1 Minutes of the 2nd Steering Group Meeting - Tirana, Albania (1-2 April, 2005)
- BCSDN Annual Report 2004
- Evaluation of the Capacity Building Hub Programme (May 2003)
- BCSDN website (http://www.balkancsd.net)