Balkan Civic Practices: Promoting Civic Space
CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS
"Global Challenges – Local Responses"

BCSDN invites contributions from its members and partners in the form of articles, case studies and creative reflections (details below) for the **Balkan Civic Practices edition on Promoting Civic Space**, to be published in April 2018. In the first phase of the call, contributors should submit abstracts (of max. 150 words) until **5 March 2018**. After the abstracts are approved, full contributions should be sent until **20 March 2018.** Selected contributors will be awarded a fee of USD 250.

This edition aims to reflect on the challenges in the environment for civil society development in the Western Balkan and Turkey, focusing on local responses in the fight against the eventual closing of civic space. The execution of this activity is supported by the Balkan Trust for Democracy, as part of the project "Reaffirming value of civil society", implemented by BCSDN.

Strong and free civil society is vital for having sustainable development and for driving social and democratic change. However, according to various reports, civil society is "free" in only handful of countries in the world. The most frequent violations to civic space on a global level are detentions of activists, limitations of protests or use of excessive force, and attacks on journalists. A more recent trend is also governments introducing new forms of bureaucracy to slow down CSOs, demonizing the independent civil society and presenting CSOs as enemies of the state and of the people. The rise of populism and government-"owned" CSOs are further feeding these arguments and fueling the discourse among the public.

In parallel with these political phenomena affecting the civic space, civil society is facing additional challenges: decline of public trust in the sector, absence of civil society infrastructure and insufficient funding. The decline of the citizens' trust towards civil society is corresponding with the decline of the overall trust in the institutions and in democracy; however, it is also a result of the failure of civil society to be more representative and accountable to their constituencies. Many donors' funding strategies further enhance the problem: as response to the increasing pressure they face to measure results and lower administrative costs, many channel their support through bigger organizations and/or private consultancies, creating incentives for growth of professionalized CSOs, which are excellent at "accounts-ability", but less good at driving change. In turn, in absence of funding for capacity building of smaller CSOs and lack of an overall strategy for development of civil society, the sustainability, diversity, and empowerment of the sector is put into question.

Unfortunately, these trends have not surpassed the Balkans region either: in the last years the space for effective civil society development and operation in the Western Balkans and Turkey has shaken immensely, with numerous incidents and cases of violation being reported in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey. The trust in the civil society has not been on the rise in almost any of the countries in the past years. In such times when the local trends are in fact global ones, across the world CSOs can do a lot to promote the civic space globally.

It is with these challenges in mind that this Balkan Civic Practices edition aims to bring together professionals, academics and activists from the network, to debate what can be done to promote civic space in the WBT countries.

BCSDN seeks to advance the debate and mainstream issues of the enabling environment to CSOs and citizens by publishing contributions on any the following themes:

- Raising awareness about civic space and the enabling environment for civil society development
- Monitoring the enabling environment and building a better evidence base
- Freedom of expression towards protecting civic space: social media, hate speech, fake news, media literacy and critical participation in the public sphere
- The value of civil society in bringing positive change for the citizens
- CSOs internal accountability and transparency: impact on public trust in civil society
- Building coalitions with a broader scope of stakeholders/unusual suspects (e.g. businesses, trade unions, religious communities, informal activists and groups, etc.)
- Joining resources in times of limited funding for immediate action
- The importance of investing in civil society infrastructure: enhancing the sector's sustainability and allowing for prompt responses by civil society
- Donors funding mechanisms and participatory grant-making: responding to the urgent needs and social challenges including the immediate threats to civic space
- Leveraging international pressure: using relevant bilateral and multilateral commitments undertaken by governments on the international level
- New forms of participatory democracies: new technologies, citizen participation

Other related themes to promotion of civic space can also be eligible, upon consultation with the editorial team. Submissions can be sent in the following formats:

- **ESSAYS:** Analysis of a chosen topic, with preference for articles that are based on empirical research.
- **CASE STUDIES:** Critical case studies on the implementation of advocacy strategies and other experiences and which examine their impact on promoting civic space.
- **INSTITUTIONAL REFLECTIONS:** Short pieces by CSOs on their experience in management, evaluation, fundraising and sustainability or other related issues.
- **ARTISTIC PIECES:** Infographics, collections of photographs, or videos that relay a specific message (which can, if necessary, be explained by a short text).

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<center>SELECTION PROCESS AND AUTHORS' RIGHTS</center>

In the first phase, contributors should send an abstract to the BCSDN Executive Office, which will be subject to approval based on the editorial policy. Upon approval of the abstract, contributors will be invited to submit their full contributions.

Once submitted, the contributions will be subject to a review process. Each contribution is reviewed by the BCSDN Executive Office, if it meets the required standards, by the Editorial team. The Editorial team consists of two independent reviewers outside the BCSDN EO, with relevant knowledge and expertise in the area.

Each author selected will receive a fee of USD 250 for the contribution.

In relation to authors' rights, the BCSDN Balkan Civic Practices will use Creative Commons-Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 to publish its texts. This preserves the rights of the authors, while allowing readers to share its content.

Any submission that contains citations without appropriate references (plagiarism) will be disregarded immediately.

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<center>FORMAT</center>

Contributions should be sent to executiveoffice@balkancsd.net in electronic format (Microsoft Word file) and using the following standards:

- **Length:** Each contribution should be between 7,000 – 20,000 characters (including spaces).
- **Language:** Contributions must be submitted in English and should use clear and concise language. Translations into local languages, if submitted, will also be published, yet an English version of the contributions is mandatory.
- **Font:** "Cambria", size 12 and 1.5cm line spacing should be used for the main body of the text.
- **Footnotes:** Footnotes should only be used where necessary. Footnotes should be concise and follow the Chicago format for full note citation. "Cambria", size 10 with single line spacing. It is not necessary to include a bibliography at the end of the text

The contributions should also include a brief biography of the author (maximum 50 words) and the date when the article was written.