

ANNUAL REPORT

2019



BALKAN CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

The Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN) is a regional network of 14 local civil society development organizations (CSOs) from the Balkan with a mission to empower civil society and influence European and national policies towards a more enabling environment for civil society development in order to ensure sustainable and functioning democracies in the Balkans

Members



KOSOVO

NORTH
MACEDONIA



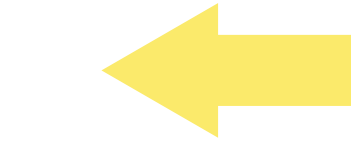
TURKEY

SERBIA



SLOVENIA

SERBIA



ROMANIA



ROMANIA



BOSNIA AND
HERZEGOVINA

MONTENEGRO



ROMANIA

ALBANIA



ALBANIA

Donors



Strategic Objectives

TO FACILITATE A COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT AND RECOGNITION OF A COMMON FRAMEWORK AND TOOLS

TO PROMOTE AND RECOGNIZE CIVIL SOCIETY AS A COMPETENT, DEMOCRATIC ACTOR IN THE EU ACCESSION PROCESS

TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODELS AND SOURCES FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ACCESS TO AND EFFECTIVE USE OF (FINANCIAL) RESOURCES

TO STRENGTHEN CSO CAPACITIES AND THEIR ROLE IN FUNCTIONING DEMOCRACIES

TO INCREASE COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION WITHIN THE NETWORK AND ITS RECOGNITION AMONG CORE STAKEHOLDERS

What happened in 2019

TO FACILITATE A COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT AND RECOGNITION OF A COMMON FRAMEWORK AND TOOLS

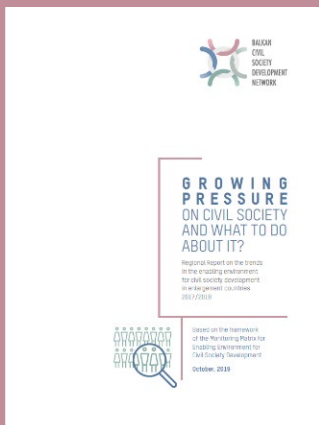
The Monitoring Matrix is one of the core and most valuable activities of BCSDN in the area of the Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development.

In 2019, BCSDN worked on developing a revised, unified methodology for the Monitoring Matrix. The revisions focused on establishing a unified approach in data gathering, as well as reviewing and developing common research instruments, aiming to enhance the proficiency of the analysis and the standardization of the whole MM exercise. BCSDN member representatives discussed this during a two-day workshop organized on 28-29 October in Skopje, North Macedonia, where they also reflected on the previous experience of implementing the Monitoring Matrix and planned the next phase of the implementation.



RESULT: BCSDN reviewed the Monitoring Matrix methodology and defined the way forward with a unified approach forward towards a unified approach of the Monitoring Matrix research.

Regional Report on the trends in the Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development in enlargement countries 2017/2018 titled *“Growing pressure on civil society and what to do about it?”* was published, discussing the major developments in both the countries' legal framework on civil society and in the practice.



BCSDN was engaged within the Technical Assistance to CSOs in Western Balkans and Turkey (EU TACSO 3) project framework to conduct a **Needs Assessment on the State of the Enabling Environment and Capacities of Civil Society of the Western Balkans and Turkey**, whereby BCSDN members (Partners Albania, CPCD, KCSF, MCIC, CRNVO and Civic Initiatives) implemented the in-country data-gathering and analysis.

RESULT: BCSDN Continued Monitoring and Promoting an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development.



In April 2019, the **International Civil Society Week 2019 (ICSW)**, organized by CIVICUS in partnership with Civic Initiatives, as a local host, and BCSDN as a regional partner, took place in Belgrade - a first for this region in almost 25 years of international convening, putting the Western Balkans in the center of attention of global civil society.

Under the theme *“The Power of Togetherness”*, 850+ civil society leaders, human rights activists and citizens from all over the world got together to explore how we can work together to defend spaces for civic actions.

The state of civic space in the Western Balkans was emphasized with BCSDN's participation in the main plenary session, as well as during the workshop *“Protecting Civic Freedoms – Our Stories of Resilience”* which BCSDN organized together with FOND Romania and the European Civic Forum. In addition, BCSDN led the implementation of 9 ICSW/local events and supported 30+ people from the region to take active part throughout the event. The event was followed by a Second online edition of the *Balkan Civic Practices: Promoting Civic Space*.

RESULT: BCSDN facilitated the organization of international Civil Society Week 2019 (ICSW) and brought focus on the civic space in the Western Balkan region to wide global audiences.

The collaboration on the **CIVICUS Monitor: Tracking Civic Space** project has continued, with BCSDN providing regular updates on the freedoms of association, assembly and expression in 7 WB countries and in Turkey, as part of the global tool for tracking the respect of civic freedoms in 196 countries.

In 2019, BCSDN was supported by KCSF for providing updates for Kosovo and Civic Initiatives for Serbia. Due to the downgrade of Serbia's rating in the Monitor, a press conference was organized to highlight the human rights deterioration in the country, where BCSDN discussed the regional context.



BCSDN co-organized the **Civil Society Summit** as part of ICSW 2019, together with CPDE, CIVICUS and Action for Sustainable Development. The Summit gathered 150+ civil society leaders and representatives to unite in the fight for democratic participation and civic freedoms and launched the Belgrade Call to Action.



2018 **Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index (CSOSI) for North Macedonia** was prepared by BCSDN in the scope of USAID's 22nd edition of the CSOSI for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia. The report was promoted at a public presentation in November 2019.

BCSDN stepped up in its engagement with the **CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE)** and was the regional focal point for the 3rd GPEDC Monitoring Round, while 4 of BCSDN's members are involved in the country level monitoring. BCSDN representatives participated at the CPDE Policy Conference in Beirut, Lebanon and the GPEDC First Senior Level Meeting at the UN Headquarters in New York.

BCSDN also took part at the Consultation meeting with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, organized by CIVICUS, ICNL and OHCHR in Johannesburg, South Africa.

RESULT: BCSDN expertise on enabling environment and civic space has been recognized regionally and globally.

TO PROMOTE AND RECOGNIZE CIVIL SOCIETY AS A COMPETENT, DEMOCRATIC ACTOR IN THE EU ACCESSION PROCESS

For the 10th consecutive year, BCSDN has analysed how the European Commission treats the issue of civil society development and assessed the progress made in the Enlargement countries within the European Commission: Enlargement Package 2019.



In 2019 BCSDN actively advocated for political support for civil society in the enlargement process and participated on the following events:

- 7th edition of the EESC Western Balkans Civil Society Forum in Tirana;
- Series of policy meetings and briefings organized by the Democracy, Conflict, and Governance Program at Carnegie Europe in Brussels;
- High-Level debate on the Western Balkans EU perspective and the way forward, organized by the EESC in the Bulgarian National Assemblies in Sofia;
- International Civil Society Forum 2019, in Bucharest, Romania.

BCSDN provided input on the announced **Conference on the Future of Europe** with draft opinion and a proposal for engagement of the citizens and civil society of the Western Balkans in the forthcoming discussions on the future of the enlargement process and civil society support.

Comparative Review Study on the Civil Society Involvement in the Process of Revision of the UNCAC Convention, assessing the role of CSOs from the region in the process was published, bringing insight into the best practices and lessons learned.

RESULT: BCSDN recognized as a lead in the understanding EU foreign and development policies in the region among CSOs and actively contributed to the EU enlargement debate and the role of civil society in it.

TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODELS AND SOURCES FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ACCESS TO AND EFFECTIVE USE OF (FINANCIAL) RESOURCES

BCSDN published the Opinion on the EU support to civil society in the enlargement countries: “10 Years of EU’s Civil Society Facility: How to further strengthen and empower the civil society in the enlargement countries?” which highlights the successes and challenges during the 10 years of implementation of IPA CSF and the need to improve the EU’s efforts towards supporting a more Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development.

10 YEARS

EU’S CIVIL SOCIETY FACILITY

HOW TO FURTHER STRENGTHEN AND EMPOWER CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE ENLARGEMENT COUNTRIES?

BCSDN launched the project “Protecting Civic Space - **Regional Civil Society Development Hub**” and established the Regional Civil Society Development Hub with the aim to become a regional center with global impact that creates and shares knowledge and innovation on the role of CSOs in promoting democracy and supporting the development of civil society in the Western Balkans in the long term. The pilot programme started in September 2019 with the duration of 2 years and is funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). The Hub will have different research and grants components and will aim to enhance cooperation and resilience of CSOs in the Western Balkan countries, that would contribute to a more open civic space. In 2019, BCSDN worked on the set up, strategy and guidelines for the Hub. A Task Force from BCSDN members has been established that will support the re-granting process.

RESULT: BCSDN providing a relevant source of knowledge and experience in future ways of supporting CSOs in the Western Balkans.

TO STRENGTHEN CSO CAPACITIES AND THEIR ROLE IN FUNCTIONING DEMOCRACIES

Since 2016, BCSDN has been a partner to the Global Standard for CSO Accountability, together with 8 other accountability initiatives around the globe, which developed a global reference standard that captures the dynamic understanding of CSO accountability. In 2019, BCSDN continued with the implementation of the Global Standard activities by:

- Supporting the promotion of the Global Standard at the ICSW 2019;
- Accommodation of the Rendir App, a self-assessment application in Macedonian language;
- Celebrating the Global Accountability Week 2019 to promote CSO accountability initiatives from the region and around the world and to advance the understanding of dynamic accountability.



As part of the program “Sustainable Civil Society – State Financing of CSOs”, BCSDN prepared the report “Mapping of Networks: Practices of Accountability” - a background analysis to provide input for the grants to be allocated to CSOs networks in North Macedonia.

In 2019, BCSDN conducted a public call for grants for CSO networks with the aim to enable the capacity building of CSO networks for transparent and accountable work.



In the frame of the Global Accountability Week 2019, BCSDN’s member MCIC prepared a video, promoting the program “Sustainable Civil Society – State funding for CSOs” and the #BeAccountable initiative.

RESULT: The Global Standard successfully promoted in the region; BCSDN global efforts on accountability furthered on national level in North Macedonia and Albania.

TO INCREASE COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION WITHIN THE NETWORK AND ITS RECOGNITION AMONG CORE STAKEHOLDERS

Outreach and Communication

Through its social media networks and communication products, BCSDN continued to be perceived as a relevant source of information, news and resources on civil society in the Balkans with a particular reference on topics such as: Enabling Environment and CSO Accountability. The number of social media followers continued raising, reaching: -4.842 “likes” and 5.095 followers in total. 7 new videos related to the ICSW were published on the BCSDN YouTube channel. BCSDN also launched a Blog page attached to the main webpage, sharing op-eds, event testimonies and academic contributions.

BCSDN published 24 editions of the Email-Alerts, BCSDN’s most recognized service, and 3 newsletters, covering the main achievements and activities of the network for 2019, as well as relevant news from the members. The audience for both EMAs and our Newsletter is more than 1.800 Subscribers.



In addition to the 4 other publications, BCSDN published the second online edition of the Balkan Civic Practices as a reflection on the International Civil Society Week 2019. Through 8 contributions, the publication shares stories of CSOs actions in times of shrinking civic space in the Balkans and the wider Europe, giving valuable practical examples of successful actions towards promoting civic space and creating synergies among the CSOs.

RESULT: BCSDN’s Email Alerts, as well as its webpage and social networking channels, recognized as a relevant source of information on civil society in the Western Balkans region.

BCSDN’s publications made valuable contribution towards promoting civic space and creating synergies among the CSOs.

Outputs

5 publications | 1 Online Edition - Balkan Civic Practices

2 organized events - one regional, one international

13 representations

4842 facebook & twitter likes in total
5095 facebook & twitter followers in total

8 videos

2 call for proposals

24 Editions of Email Alerts | 3 Newsletters

Organisation & Internal Development

Annual Council Meeting in April 2019, in Belgrade
and 3 Board sessions

New Office

4 New employees

New Financial & Procurement Policy

Diversity & Inclusion Audit

Statute Open for Review

External Cooperation And Networking

BCSDN expanded its communication and cooperation with **key global civil society networks** and institutions in key areas of its work.

Throughout 2019, BCSDN has continued its cooperation with **key global civil society networks and a diversity of European institutions** (EC, EESC, COTE in DG NEAR etc). In 2019, BCSDN also joined the Council of Europe INGO Conference.

As part of the cooperation with **CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation**, BCSDN has continued working on the CIVICUS Monitor as a regional research partner for the Western Balkans and Turkey, taking part in the annual workshop organized this year in Accra, Ghana. BCSDN is also included in other programmes of work such as the Vuka! Coalition and the AGNA network, as part of which BCSDN took part at the Transformative Scenario Planning Training on CSO Resourcing in Johannesburg, South Africa, and the AGNA Annual General Meeting in Amman, Jordan.

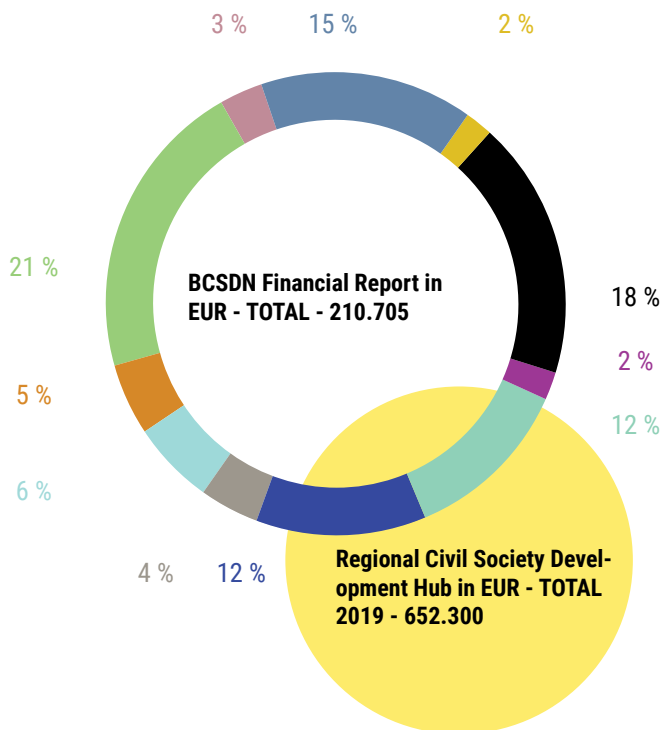


BCSDN contributed to the global development movement, serving as the European secretariat for the **CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE)**.

BCSDN participated as a representative for the European Region at the All Secretariats Meeting in Beirut, Lebanon, and was involved in the preparations of the annual work plan, coordination and outreach of CPDE related activities in the region.

2019

Financial report



Members

Balkan Trust for Democracy (BTD)

Mirror to the State Report on Accountability Reforms (IPA CFCD Macedonia MCIC)

Going the distance: building shared commitment for CSO's sustainability (IPA Macedonia MCIC)

Global Standard for CSO Accountability (SIDA through the ICSC)

CSO Sustainability index / FHI360 / USAID

CIVICUS CSM

FOND Romania - CPDE

Rockefeller Brothers Fund

GDSI Limited (TACSO3 Needs Assessment)

CARRIED OVER for activities 2020

SIDA – Regional Civil Society Hub

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