

BCSDN ANNUAL REPORT 2020



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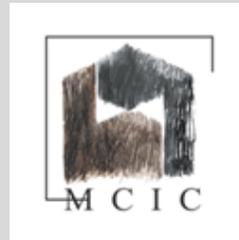
The Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN) is a regional network of 14 local civil society development organizations (CSOs) from the Balkan with a mission to empower civil society and influence European and national policies towards a more enabling environment for civil society development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



BALKAN CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

MEMBERS

DONORS



consultative member



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

To facilitate a common understanding of the enabling environment for civil society development among key actors and recognition of a common framework and tools

To promote and recognize civil society as a competent, democratic actor (partner/player) in the EU accession process

To support the development of models and sources for CS 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

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

In 2020, BCSDN's members implementing the Monitoring Matrix published the [national reports](#), while BCSDN EO prepared a [regional report](#) that identifies the key common issues related to the enabling environment for civil society development across the region. Through sets of recommendations, the report aims to support efforts of CSOs, public authorities, and the European Union in the creation of a more conducive environment for civil society.

The findings are used for continuous awareness-raising about the importance of EE among the wider civil society and the relevant stakeholders, and for evidence-based advocacy on a national level by BCSDN members.

As of 2019, MM has been integrated within BCSDN's Regional Civil Society Development Hub, and the findings of the monitoring are also basis for developing the intervention logic and the priority areas for the Hub's re-granting programme. This made it possible for BCSDN to bring in and support more actors in for tackling the key challenges concerning the civil society operating environment in the region.

To provide for easier presentation and comparison of the monitoring findings, a new [Monitoring Matrix website](#) was launched that allows for more user friendly experience.



RESULT and IMPACT: BCSDN conducted full cycle of monitoring the civil society enabling environment

TO PROMOTE AND RECOGNIZE CIVIL SOCIETY AS A COMPETENT, DEMOCRATIC ACTOR (PARTNER/PLAYER) IN THE EU ACCESSION PROCESS

Balkan Civil Society Development Network

POSITION ON THE NEW EU CIVIL SOCIETY GUIDELINES

BCSDN published its [Position](#) towards the review of the Guidelines for EU support to civil society in enlargement countries, 2014-2020, which was promoted and presented jointly by BCSDN members on the Regional Civil Society Forum organized by TACSO in Skopje, January 2020.

BCSDN participated at the Western Balkans Think Tank Forum “Stimulating Strategic Autonomy. Western Balkans’ contribution for a shared European Future”, organized by the Institute for Democracy “Societas Civilis” Skopje (IDSCS) together with the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) as an integral part of the 2020 Berlin Process Co-Presidency programme hosted by the governments of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia.

Following the increased focus on the EU Accession Process as one of the priorities of the Croatian Presidency with the European Council, BCSDN contributed to two important documents to highlight the need for commitment to the civil society development: [CSO Declaration on Zagreb EU – Western Balkans Summit](#), and thanks to our member FDSC, to the [Declaration of the EESC's External Relation Section](#).

Contracted by EU TACSO 3, BCSDN finalized the Needs Assessment on the State of the Enabling Environment and Capacities of Civil Society of the Western Balkan and Turkey (Needs Assessment). The overall purpose of the [Needs Assessment Report](#) is to inform the EU TACSO 3 Capacity Development and the People to People (P2P) Core programme design, which is to be implemented during 2020 and 2021, and to inform the new Guidelines for EU support to civil society in Enlargement countries, 2014-2020, the monitoring process and its review.

The collaboration on the CIVICUS Monitor Tracking Civic Space project has continued. BCSDN provided regular updates on the freedoms of association, assembly and expression in WBT countries, as part of the global tool for tracking the respect of civic freedoms in 196 countries.

2019 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index (CSOSI) for North Macedonia was prepared by BCSDN in the scope of USAID’s 23rd edition of the CSOSI for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia. The [report](#) was promoted at an online presentation in November 2020.



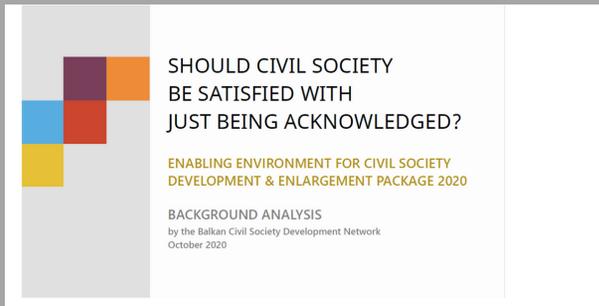
RESULT and IMPACT:
BCSDN expertise on enabling environment and civic space has been recognized regionally and globally.



Balkan Civil Society Development Network
Advocacy Platform towards the EU

May 2020

To be transparent and accountable in the advocacy, BCSDN published its [Advocacy Platform](#) to show what it is that it stands and advocates for, taking stock of the vast experience accumulated in the network in supporting the civil society to contribute towards more sustainable and functioning democracies in the Balkans.



BCSDN published its [11th consecutive Background analysis](#) of the European Commission Enlargement Package 2020, assessing the progress made in the area of civil society development and dialogue with public institutions in Enlargement countries, against BCSDN's Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development.

RESULT and IMPACT:
 BCSDN finding new ways of promoting the role of the civil society within and for the accession process of the Western Balkans and Turkey

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



BCSDN partnered up with the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS), and in March organized a [workshop](#) in Brussels to discuss how to improve the EU integration process and the role CSOs and local authorities play in it, vis-a-vis the planning cycle for the new Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance.

Towards the Preparation of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III), BCSDN has [contributed](#) to the Consultation of Civil Society Organizations, alluding that the IPA implementing mechanisms should provide clear basis for defending the civic space and stronger financial viability of the civil society in the enlargement countries.

RESULT and IMPACT:
 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

Regional Civil Society Development Hub



With the aim to provide strategic support for regional actions for promoting the civic space, BCSDN established the [Regional Civil Society Development HUB](#) in 2019, and in the past year, has been working on launching the HUB's grant support mechanisms.

With the support of our members and the Hub's Steering Group, BCSDN:

- Finalized the [Hub's Strategy](#) that outlines the strategic framework and the intervention logic of the Hub.
- Launched two types of support for other CSOs:
 - i. [Ad-hoc grants](#) to provide rapid support for immediate actions of CSOs aimed to protect or advance the civic space;
 - ii. [Regional multi-action country grants](#) to support regional initiatives, wider civil society participation, and enhanced cooperation in the region for promoting civic space.

The regional call had two objectives: (1) to contribute to a more conducive environment for civil society development by addressing the challenges identified with our detailed monitoring of the civil society operating environment; (2) to contribute towards more resilient and accountable work of CSOs for promoting the civic space, in line with our efforts to pro-mote the concept of dynamic accountability embedded in the Global Standard for CSO accountability.

RESULT and IMPACT: Strategic regional approach to promoting the civic space developed. Other CSOs brought on board and supported for promoting the civic space.

To ensure outreach for the calls, we have organized [open consultations](#) and distributed the announcements on all of our communications channels and those of our members.

During 2020, BCSDN continued the activities in the scope of the Global Standard for CSO Accountability, developed together with eight other accountability initiatives around the globe by:



- [Workshop for Macedonian networks](#) to share lessons on CSO accountability and the self-assessment mechanisms;
- The Rendir App- self-assessment tool was translated into [Macedonian language](#);
- Five Macedonian networks received funding under our EU – funded programme: Sustainable Civil Society State Financing of CSOs, implemented by MCIC in partnership with BCSDN and CNVOS from Slovenia during the period 2018- 2021, to improve their internal accountability and have continued their work with BCSDN and the Global Standard.
- Together with MCIC, created a [video](#) to guide CSOs using the Rendir App
- Improved internal accountability practices of the network (Accountability Framework); National Code of Standards developed in Albania

GLOBAL ACCOUNTABILITY WEEK 2020

Sign up to join the conversations:
<https://web.civicus.org/GAW2020>

#BEACCOUNTABLE #GAW2020

EXCHANGE ACTIVITIES
(Times in GMT+2)

October 12: Accountability in the Digital Age	9 AM
October 13: Civil Society Organisations' Accountability in times of COVID-19	2 PM
October 14: The Power of Stakeholder Engagement in Accountability Practices	3 PM
October 15: Accountability Self-Assessment Tools (Round Table Discussion)	1 PM
October 16: Post-pandemic: Legitimacy, Transparency and Accountability Best Practices	9 AM

In the frame of the Global Accountability Week 2020, BCSDN led a [session on CSO Accountability in times of COVID 19](#). The event was followed by more than 35 CSO international representatives, where BCSDN together with prominent speakers from India, Argentina, and the Balkans discussed challenges and responses regarding CSO accountability during crisis.

RESULT AND IMPACT: BCSDN global efforts on accountability scaled down on national level in the Western Balkan countries, especially in North Macedonia and Albania.

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



Collaboration and Solidarity in times of Crisis



Monitoring the COVID-19 pandemic impact on civil society, BCSDN has developed a [Special Online Edition](#) on the Effects of COVID-19 on Civil Society in the Balkans. The website provides regular updates on the regional overviews: [The State of CSOs, their involvement in the Crisis Response & State, and Donors Support](#), and [Restrictions on Civic Space and Citizens' Basic Freedoms](#), explores different topics across countries, and covers all materials published, including the thematic newsletters Solidarity in Times of COVID-19.

BCSDN hosted two on-line events together with ECNL. The [first webinar](#), "Emergency End Game- Oversight of Covid 19 Measures that impact civic space in the Western Balkans, Croatia, and Romania", held in May 2020, provided the overview of current practices and responses in the Western Balkans, Croatia and Romania. The [conference](#) held in July 2020, hosted CoE and OGP representatives, discussed the challenges of public participation in the Balkans during the crisis. In result, [2 blogposts](#) were delivered on the issue.

Outreach and Communication

Through its social media 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: 5,431 (increase by 13% from last year) 4,842 "likes" and 6,115 (increase by 20% from last year). The most engaging post had been the posts published announcing the two sub-granting opportunities, resulting with more than 5000 engagements (reactions, comments or shares).

BCSDN published [24 editions of the Email-Alerts](#), network's most recognized service, and [4 thematic newsletters: Solidarity in Times of COVID-19](#), dedicated on the CSOs' work, efforts and actions on the situation caused by the ongoing Corona crises. At the end of the year, BCSDN has also published its [Yearly Newsletter](#), covering network's projects and accomplishments during 2020.

The audience for both EMAs and our Newsletter is more than 1.800 Subscribers.

RESULT AND IMPACT:

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

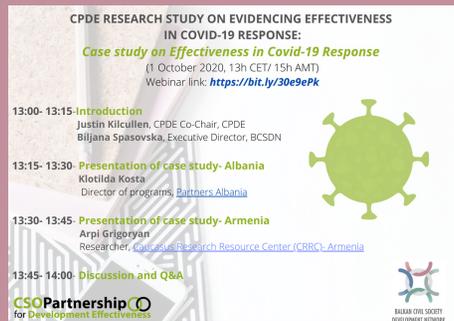
Results and impact:
Improved awareness about the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the civil society.
Improved CSO capacities to respond to the Covid-19 crisis



BCSDN has continued its work with a diversity of European institutions, esp. with European Commission, European Parliament and EESC via organizing debates and meetings. Representatives of this institutions took part at the BCSDN workshop organized in March 2020.

BCSDN expanded its communication and cooperation with key global civil society networks and institutions in key areas of its work. Cooperation with CIVICUS – World Alliance for Citizen Participation continued through the CIVICUS Monitor platform, with BCSDN being a regional research partner for the Western Balkans and Turkey, as well as in other programmes of work such as the Affinity Group of National Associations (AGNA network). As members of CIVICUS, BCSDN took part at a pilot mentoring programme for promoting Diversity and Inclusion, and as member of the AGNA BCSDN contributed to the AGNA Annual Council Meeting, as well as the Global Accountability Week.

BCSDN has stepped up its contribution to the global development movement, serving as a secretariat for the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE) for the Europe region as of 2020.



As part of the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE) global activity in evidencing Effectiveness in COVID-19 response, BCSDN held a [regional webinar](#) for presenting of case studies from Europe about evidencing effectiveness in Covid-19 responses.

In partnership with FOND Romania, who are coordinating the Black Sea Region, BCSDN will be implementing three years EC financed programme of the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE), “Advancing CSO Advocacy and Capacity on EDC and Partnerships”. The programme aims to contribute to the enabling environment of CSOs, improving CSO capacity to engage development partnerships, and broaden support base for CSOs and their positions

On the 13th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum, focused on CSOs' challenges during crisis, BCSDN ED Biljana Spasovska discussed the importance of civil society cooperation for achieving sustainable development in the region.

[Contribution form BCSDN](#) has been integrated in the global Compilation of Carnage Europe: Coronavirus as a Catalyst for Global Civil Society, where in the joint article “Filling Democracy’s Gaps in the Western Balkans” by our current and former Executive Directors Biljana Spasovska and Ilina Neshikj speak about the challenges and achievements of the civil society organization in our region in times of covid-19 crisis.

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

OUTPUTS

7 publications

Organized events 5 regional, 1 international

9 Representations

4,842 Social media likes and 6,115 followers

2 Calls for proposals

24 Editions on Email Alerts, 5 Newsletters

4 contributions

New Executive Director

New Board Composition

Online Annual Council Meeting

1 New member

Financial and Procurement Policy finalized and adopted

Update of HR management policy, and policies for prevention of fraud and corruption.

Policies for prevention of conflict of interest, fraud and corruption in the process of development.

ORGANISATION & INTERNAL DEVELOPMENT



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