

**BCSDN Newsletter (September - December 2021)**[View this email in your browser](#)**BALKAN CIVIL SOCIETY  
DEVELOPMENT NETWORK**

*Dear colleagues and partners,*

*Although COVID-19 remained the talk of the year, 2021 has been a remarkable year for BCSDN.*

*We implemented a full cycle of the Monitoring Matrix for civil society enabling environment, assessing the state of play and the impact of the pandemic on the civil society in our region. Using the findings for evidence-based advocacy, we organized several workshops, participated in high-level events, and expanded our collaboration with other regional networks and new and existing partners to strengthen the civil society's voice in policy and decision-making at the national,*



*Lastly, we further strengthened the network's functioning, communication, and collaboration. We managed to gather together with our members for a strategic discussion about the future aims of our network, developed our new Strategic Framework for 2021-2024, and prepared several internal*

*At the same time, we put efforts to empower other CSOs to become legitimate and accountable actors in our societies. Our Regional Civil Society Development Hub has been fully operational and in 2021, we successfully implemented two re-granting programmes, supporting ten regional networks and 15 small ad-hoc projects that contribute to expanding the civic space in our region.*

*With new ideas and ambitious plans for the next year, we are ready to welcome 2022.*

*We wish you Happy Holidays and a prosperous New Year!*

*Enjoy the read,*

*Biljana Spasovska*

*BCSDN Executive Director*

## IN THIS EDITION

### ANNOUNCEMENT BOARD

### WHAT WE HAVE WORKED ON

- [Regional Civil Society Development Hub](#)
- [Continuous Advocacy Efforts towards the EU](#)
- [Participating at High-level Regional and Global Events](#)
- [Celebrating the Global Accountability Week 2021](#)
- [Organizing a Research Partners Workshop in Belgrade](#)

### [MEMBERS' HIGHLIGHTS](#)

### [MEMBERS' PUBLICATIONS](#)

[BCSDN VIDEO: There is Always a Way to be More Accountable!](#)

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Executive Director Maternity Leave Announcement

BCSDN's Executive Director Ms. Biljana Spasovska is going on maternity leave as of January 2022. In her absence, Ms Anja Bosilkova Antovska will be taking over her duties and responsibilities as an Acting Executive Director.

## UPCOMING

### Regional Workshop: The role of regional civil society collaboration in promoting peace and democracy (TBA)

Following the rise of nationalistic rhetoric and anti-democratic developments in the region, BCSDN will host a regional workshop to discuss the role of civil society and the importance of regional solidarity in addressing these issues

### **New BTD-funded Project on Improved CSOs Responses to (Post-)Pandemic Challenges in the Western Balkans**

We are happy to announce the signing of a new grant agreement with the Balkan Trust for Democracy for implementing a year-long project, starting from October 2021, which aims to contribute towards enhanced civil society resilience in facing COVID-19 and post-pandemic challenges through regional cooperation. The project encompasses different activities and products, such as monitoring, development of policy documents and regional advocacy actions, and a regional workshop for exchange of experiences and best practices, among other.

and the civil society responses in the region, and to draft the next steps for regional mobilization and solidarity.

### **Regional Workshop on CSO-Private Sector Engagement (TBA)**

As part of the [CPDE](#) activities, BCSDN will organize an online regional workshop on CSO-private sector engagement, where CSOs could share good practices of collaboration with the private sector for common objectives.

### **Implementing the USAID CSO Sustainability Index for North Macedonia (January 2022)**

In mid-January, BCSDN will start preparing the 2021 CSOSI for North Macedonia. The report is part of the CSO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia, prepared by USAID and FHI 360, covering relevant civil society developments during 2021.



Regional cooperation has been the cornerstone of our work, the reason for our existence – and this year, we are celebrating 20 years of eventful and successful collaboration! In the past two decades, as the landscape in which CSOs are acting has changed significantly, many obstacles have been



## WHAT WE HAVE WORKED ON

### **Regional Civil Society Development Hub: Supporting CSOs to Promote Civic Space**

In the last four months of 2021, the ten Western Balkans civil society networks that are implementing [regional grants](#) under the Regional Civil Society Hub were finalizing their project activities towards promoting and protecting the civic space in the region. In addition, the Hub provided 10 [ad-hoc grants](#), out of the 48 applications received only during this period, enabling CSOs from the region to address their immediate needs for advancing the state of fundamental freedoms and influencing public opinion and policy processes. All projects contribute to the overall objective of the Regional Hub to strengthen regional cooperation to promote civic space in the Western Balkans.

---

### **Continuous Advocacy Efforts towards the EU: Comments on the IPA III CSF and EC Enlargement Package**

The EU remained a focal point of BCSDN's advocacy processes. Closely following the development of the IPA III Civil Society Facility 2021-2023, BCSDN in cooperation with several CSOs and networks from the region published a [non-paper on the planned EU support to civil society](#) in the IPA beneficiary countries. Along with the lack of consultations on a national and regional level and limited access to information on the process, the document contains worrying and dissatisfying proposals that undermine instead of support CSOs in IPA beneficiaries. In the same manner, for the 12th consecutive time, BCSDN has prepared an [analysis of the annual EC Enlargement Package](#), assessing the progress made in the area of civil society development and dialogue with public institutions in Enlargement countries. The background analysis, set against BCSDN's Monitoring Matrix, notes how, at times, the EC has presented a bleak assessment or omitted developments that are vital for civil society and its development, despite the vigorous advocacy efforts by local CSOs.

---

### **Participating at High-level Regional and Global Events: Different Venues for Advocacy**

To further our advocacy efforts in the region and beyond, BCSDN representatives took part in several high-level events in this period. BCSDN's Executive Director Biljana Spasovska took part in [EESC's 8th](#)

opportunity for advocacy towards the EU was the [2021 EU-Western Balkans Summit](#) organized by Friends of Europe, where Ms Spasovska spoke at a panel dedicated to the impact of the local and the regional governments on the development of the Western Balkans, among high-level government representatives from the region.

In addition to these key events for the region, our participation at global events allowed us to raise awareness about the state of civic space in the Balkans and the specific challenges faced by CSOs in our region, based on the findings from our regional monitoring. BCSDN's Policy and Advocacy Coordinator, Ms Anja Bosilkova Antovska, took part in the [global C20 Summit](#), ahead of the G20 Leaders Summit, in the plenary panel on civic space restrictions in the era of COVID-19, along with representatives of eminent organizations including CIVICUS, ICNL, and VANI. Finally, BCSDN's Executive Director took part in the [Global People's Assembly](#), in a panel on the state of human rights and civic space around the globe, organized by Forus, CIVICUS and CPDE.

---

### **Celebrating the Global Accountability Week: Exploring a More Dynamic Approach to Accountability**

As part of the Global Accountability Week 2021, BCSDN gathered together with our partners for an [online workshop](#) to explore a more dynamic approach to accountability. Our aim was to take a deep dive into accountability by presenting the [Global Standard for CSO Accountability](#) and to provide space for sharing accountability approaches and mechanisms for improving the way we engage those we try to serve. The [#GAW2021](#) took place online, from 22-24 November, combining various activities and contents shared with the aim to inspire and promote accountability of CSOs.

---

### **Organizing a Research Partners Workshop in Belgrade**

On 13 and 14 December, BCSDN's members gathered in Belgrade for a two-day workshop dedicated to exploring the topic of development effectiveness and building their capacities for promoting effective development cooperation. The regional training was part of BCSDN's three-year project supported by the [CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness \(CPDE\)](#). The second day of the workshop was dedicated to discussions around the Monitoring Matrix and the implementation of the networks' joint research and advocacy activities. Through extensive discussion, it was once again confirmed that the [Monitoring Matrix](#) plays a crucial role in the advocacy processes led by our network, being a one-of-a-kind source of data and information for the area of enabling environment for CSOs.

**...MEMBERS' HIGHLIGHTS**

Civic Initiatives participated in several key citizen initiatives aimed at strengthening the democratic spirit and good governance, such as the petition against the new Referendum Law in Serbia. The initiative collected more than 68,000 signatures that were [deposited in the Serbian Parliament](#), resulting in the [withdrawal](#) of the draft amendments to the Law.



**CPCD** has started a joint initiative with other CSOs in BiH and a campaign towards the international community that calls for the active involvement of civil society in the political and social decision-making processes. The [open letter](#) of this initiative has been co-signed by over 90 local organizations, and is supported by BCSDN.

Within the Resource Center activities, **CRNVO** has managed to provide in-house [mentorship support for CSOs](#). Through this program, local CSOs have been able to get consultations on legal and financial issues related to the work of NGOs, project preparation, communication with the public, public advocacy and preparation of reports.



After five years of advocacy, **CNVOS** have found allies in the Ministry of Labor, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities and the Directorate for Social Affairs in their efforts for establishing a practice for co-financing social protection programs. Starting from 2022, the salaries of the providers of [social welfare programs](#) will be increased, eliminating the inequalities within the public sector.

**FDSC** took part in this year's [National Youth Convention](#), during which the framework of national youth challenges, plans, and resources has been established. The event has



**KFCS** has organized the debut edition of the [School of Activism](#). The School of Activism aims to provide support in the development of capacities and increasing competencies among CSO for political participation, participatory representation, and transparency.

During the Civica Mobilitas "[Civil Society Day](#)", **MCIC** hosted the launch and signing ceremony of the national Civil Society Code. The Code sets out the values and principles on which good governance of CSOs is based: justice and equality, accountability and transparency, participation and inclusiveness, as well as care for the environment and sustainable development.



МАКЕДОНСКИ  
ЦЕНТАР ЗА  
МЕЃУНАРОДНА  
СОРАБОТКА



**Partners Albania** is implementing an initiative that aims to empower NPOs to proactively engage in an enabling legal environment in the context of [preventing money laundering and combating terrorist financing](#). This is the first initiative of a long-term intervention that focuses on mapping and analyzing the legal and regulatory framework in Albania in this area.

With the aim of fostering a giving culture in Turkey, **TUSEV** became the country leader of the [global #GivingTuesday movement](#) and adapted the movement to the local context in 2021. #PaylaşmaGünü was celebrated on 30 November with the participation of over a hundred CSOs, corporations, social enterprises, and individuals, simultaneously with other participating countries globally.



Türkiye Üçüncü Sektör Vakfı  
Third Sector Foundation of Turkey



In order to improve living conditions in substandard settlements in Serbia, **EHONS**, together with local partner self-government units, supports the process of legalization and improvement of [housing conditions for vulnerable groups](#) in these territories through the project "Social Inclusion of Roma and Other Vulnerable Groups in Serbia 2019-2022".

**BCNL** has [celebrated 20 years](#) of defending the right to association and working for developing a better environment for exercising this right. BCNL have positively influenced the adoption or amendments of over 17 laws and other normative and strategic documents that are relevant to civil society organizations, including the amendments to the Law on Non-Profit Legal Entities in 2006 and 2016.

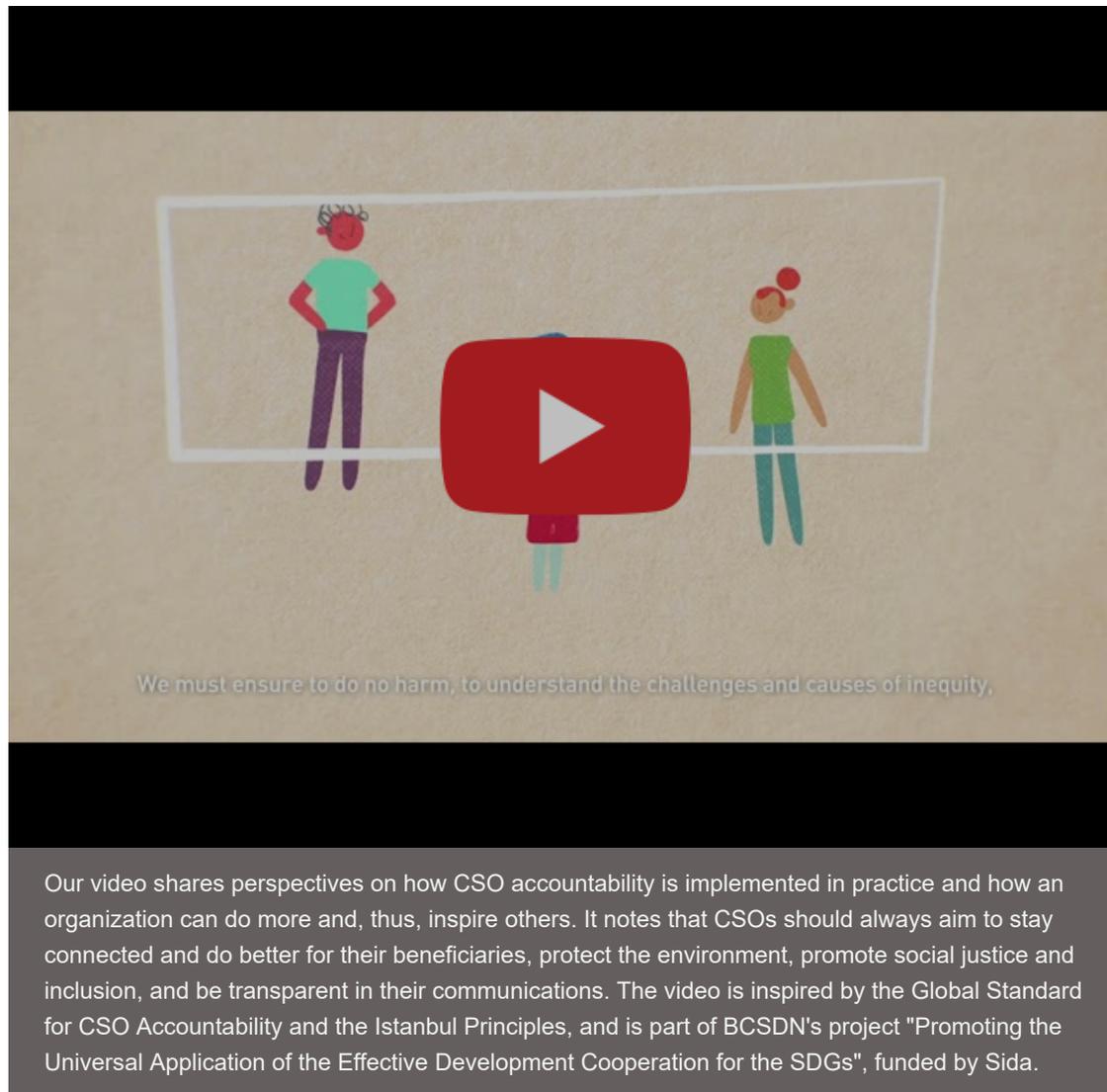


As part of the project 'Engaging communities in civic education in Albania', **IDM** has successfully set up ['Youth4Change' clubs](#) with students from six religious communities and public high schools who will work together to tackle different problems in their communities and come up with proposals for their solution.

...MEMBERS' PUBLICATIONS



- Following the publication of the [Civil Society Code](#), **MCIC** also published the [Civil Society Code Implementation Guide](#) - two documents essential to the enabling environment and good governance of CSOs in North Macedonia.
- **IDM Albania** has published "[Guidelines for Central Government Institutions on R&R](#)" - designed to support the rehabilitation and reintegration (R&R) processes for returning people from conflict zones, provide guidance on sensitive issues related to addressing violent extremism; as well as insights on non-violent CVE approaches to combating terrorism, including preventive, intervention and R&R programmes.
- **CRNVO** has published its annual survey "[Attitudes of Montenegrin citizens on NGOs](#)". The content of the report provides insight into citizens' attitudes about the recognition of NGOs and general sentiment towards them, public confidence in NGOs, as well as to what extent the activities of NGOs coincide with the expectations and needs of citizens.
- **Partners Albania** has published "[Monitoring of political, social, and economic participation of youth 2020 – Country Report Albania](#)" as part of the WB&T for EmploYouth regional project, funded by the EU.



This Newsletter is publication of the Balkan Civil Society Development Network.  
It is published on a periodic basis in English. For more information on the network visit:

<http://www.balkancsd.net> or contact [ExecutiveOffice@balkancsd.net](mailto:ExecutiveOffice@balkancsd.net).

Executive Office  
Macedonia Street 43-1/9  
1000 Skopje, N. Macedonia

Want to change how you receive these emails?  
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#)

This email was sent to [mvs@balkancsd.net](mailto:mvs@balkancsd.net)  
[why did I get this?](#) [unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)  
Balkan Civil Society Development Network · Macedonia St 43-1/9 · Skopje 1000 · Macedonia

