

Quarterly Newsletter

Edition No. 4 March 2020

This quarterly newsletter provides information on the National Resource Centre's activities, on the latest developments in the civil society sector in Albania, on the funding, capacity enhancement, networking opportunities for CSOs, and other relevant news from the region and beyond.

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Physical Distancing and Social Solidarity We are all together in this!

In response to the situation created in the country and worldwide due to COVID-19 pandemic, Partners Albania as an organization that serves the civil society sector in Albania, and support its development needs through National Resource Centre for Civil Society, joining the call of networks where it adheres and <u>CIVICUS appeal</u>, sent an appeal to the donor community to continue their support of the sector and show enough flexibility and adjustability with the current circumstances. <u>Read the full letter in the next page.</u>

Given that the difficult time we are experiencing has a direct effect on the work of non-profit organizations in the country, through a questionnaire, Partners Albania and the National Resource Center have quickly collected some information from the sector to identify the main problems of CSOs in this situation, and to identify ways to address them and provide assistance to the sector, also in fulfillment of the Center's activity goal.

Physical Distancing and Social Solidarity

ANTIONAL RESOURCE CENTRE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY IN ALBANIA · THURSDAY, MARCH 26, 2020 · 4 MINUTES Reads

Dear colleagues, collaborators, partner institutions and supporters

This is a special message in times of big uncertainties. Today our nation and the world are facing an unimaginable threat that is challenging health and social care systems at the global level and is impacting our existence is no many directions. As the world comes together like never before to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, government, health workers, police and army forces, businesses and civil society are working together to safeguard the health and welfare of popole.

Physical (rather than social) distancing is considered essential in stopping the spread of the virus and for this reason, it is vital for each of us to embrace and observe the government measures to this regard. Still, it cannot stop social solidarity, and we have seen it developed in so many innovative and inspiring forms. The new rules of living, have made us find new ways to interact, stay connected and support each other in these times of hardship.

The civil society sector has a big role to play during this period in its mission to assist its $% \left(1\right) =\left(1\right) \left(1\right)$



#WashHands!

#SafeHealthProfessionals

#KeeptheDistance!









Physical Distancing and Social Solidarity



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The civil society sector has a big role to play during this period in its mission to assist its constituencies and communities it serves. In this pandemic people in need, vulnerable groups will feel even more vulnerable and we have to do our best, with the support of our generous donors, to

mitigate this risk at our best efforts.

It will require civil society groups to make shifts in their strategies, reorient their programs and actions in addressing the needs and issues related to the COVID-19 situation. Continuation of activities, at a moment when the number one priority is ensuring the safety and welfare of our staff, will require adaptation and innovation.

It will require donors, either governmental donors (national and international) or private businesses and individuals to continue supporting the sector and show enough flexibility and adjustability conform the situation. This is an urgent situation, which requires an urgent response. The entire civil society infrastructure is under threat because of financial uncertainties, with projects being frozen, lack of financial liquidity or reserve funds to maintain staff and even minimum operations running.

<u>Partners Albania</u> as an organization that serves the civil society organizations in Albania, and support its development needs through <u>National Resource Centre for Civil Society</u>, joins the call of networks where it adheres and CIVICUS appeal to the donor community to:

Listen to grantee partners and together explore how you can best help them face the crisis, trusting they know best what is needed in their own contexts

Encourage the re-design and re-scheduling of planned activities and deliverables and provide clear guidance on how to seek approval for these changes.

Support new and creative ways of creating a culture of solidarity and interaction while adhering to the physical distancing and other precautionary measures.

Offer greater flexibility by reconsidering payment installments based on actual needs, converting existing project grants into unrestricted funds, or adding extra funds to help build-up reserves or cover unexpected costs.

Simplify reporting and application procedures and timeframes so that civil society groups can better focus their time, energy and resources in supporting the most vulnerable rather than on meeting heavy reporting and due diligence requirements.

In the meantime, we at Partners Albania and NRC continue with our programs and services, which are transferred totally online. We are very happy to see that during these last two weeks, despite the general distress and fear, the interest and engagement of our audiences remain high. We commend all the organizations and individuals, but also our trainers, consultants, service providers for their commitment and flexibility.

In addition to our already planned activities, Partners Albania is working to:

- 1. Keeping close contacts with its sub-grantees to discuss the best way possible to adjust to the situation and support them.
- 2. Swiftly assess the effect of the situation on the civil society organizations in the country. A questionnaire has been already sent out which can be accessed here https://www.surveymonkev.com/r/PSM9W95
- 3. Provide relevant information to the sector with regard to COVID-19. For that you can visit the new window on our website, labeled COVID-19 where you may find information on government measures, measures and instructions affecting the NPOs, main links to websites reporting on the pandemic, inspiring stories and innovation taking place in Albania and globally.
- 4. Provide free services for civil society groups. We are working to provide free access to online platforms to groups in order to support their activity.
- 5. Provide training on the use of such platforms.
- 6. Facilitate volunteer mobilizing and fundraising efforts.

Please, continue to write and call us! We are committed to doing our best to assist you in your noble efforts to address the situation.

We are all together in this! We are together not only in our fears and anxieties but also in our need for each other to create hopes for the future.



Advocacy & Policy dialogue

IPA III Preparation - Consultation with CSOs

Following the call of European Commission for participation of civil society organizations in the process of preparation of IPA III, National Resource Centre for Civil Society in Albania widely promoted the call and organized a consultation process with CSOs on the IPA III programming framework and process. CSOs provided suggestions in relation to thematic priorities as well as on the process of preparation and implementation of IPA III.

For more information **find here** the document with the feedback and suggestions of CSOs, sent to the European Commission and to Technical Assistance for Civil Society Organisations (TACSO 3) Project who coordinates the process of feedback collection at regional level (Western Balkan and Turkey).









Strengthening CSO networks & coalitions in Albania for more initiatives and higher impact

Strengthening of the CSO' networks is an important element of the development of civil society in Albania. National Resource Centre provides support for capacity building of the networks as a component of its strategic objectives to strengthen the capacities of civil society and to contribute to the creation of an environment that is conducive to civil society, participatory democracy and the EU integration process in Albania.

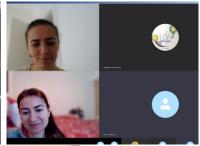


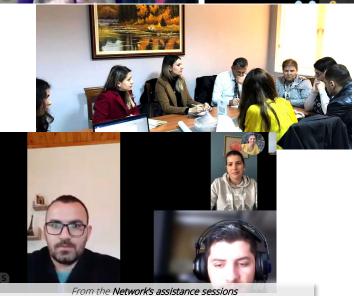
Since January 2020, the Centre has been providing technical assistance to four CSO networks. Following an open call for expressions of interest, "Youth Voice" Network, Network of Parents' Associations in Elbasan, The watchdog network of environmental NGOs "An eye to the environment" and "Youth Development Pact" Network in Shkodra, were selected among 22 applications from local and national networks, as the first beneficiaries of the technical assistance program of NRC.

Priority at this stage, was given to supporting new informal networks and groups and local initiatives, targeting a variety of areas where networks work. Initially are organized several meetings to identify networking needs and based on that were prepared 4 tailored assistance and mentoring programs.

The assistance will focus on enhancing and strengthening institutional capacity and organization, drafting of advocacy plans and strengthening network capacity on advocacy and lobbying, empowering target groups, and increasing visibility and impacting of the networks at local and national level.









Advocacy & Policy dialogue

Consultation meeting with civil society organizations on the new draft law on public procurement



Partners Albania and National Resource Centre for Civil Society in collaboration with the Public Procurement Agency (PPA) on February 2020 held a consultation meeting with civil society organizations on the new draft law on public procurement. Partners Albania for Change and Development for years, as part of its work for the enabling environment for civil society has been contributing and advocating for the improvement of the legal framework and the development of social procurement practices. The new law enables CSOs to get involved in public procurement, something that has been problematic so far.

Ms. Reida Kashta, Director of PPA, presented some key issues of the law, particularly regarding procurement of social services but not only, as well as the involvement of CSOs in public procurement. CSO representatives presented

their considerations and recommendations on the draft, and considering the high importance that it has, expressed their willingness to be involved in the next steps and contribute to the drafting of bylaws. National Resource Centre will continue to facilitate and organize consultation processes in this regard, considering the high interest of CSOs for the topic and the key role that CSOs have in social service provision.

Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for Civil Society



From January 2020, National Resource Centre started to conduct the research for the preparation of the Monitoring Matrix Report 2019. 160 interviews were conducted with CSOs across the country to collect the initial information. Following that several meetings and focus groups were organized on specific issues i.e public consultation with CSOs, the role, access and cooperation of CSOs with the Central Finance and Contracting Unit; and mechanisms for cooperation with government at central and local level. The report will be finalized and published by April 2020. The findings of the monitoring matrix serve as a guide for policy recommendations and advocacy initiatives undertaken by CSOs and coordinated and facilitated by the National Resource Centre.

Activities from the regional offices of National Resource Centre for Civil Society in Albania





During a series of information sessions with University of Vlora students. The importance of activism and youth volunteering in addressing problematic youth and civic issues as well as the challenges faced by youth were the focus of the meetings, **Vlora NRC office**



During the meeting with members of the Independent Forum of Orikum Women to revitalize the and raise awareness of the necessity of mobilizing for joint initiatives that address the problems of this community and beyond, **Vlora NRC office**



From the interviews with CSOs on "Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for civil Society", **Lezhe**





Providing information and assistance to CSOs, Shkodra NRC office



Capacity Building

NPO Academy

By February 2020 has started the 2020 NPO Academy. The Academy is an annual program that gives the opportunity to CSOs executives and high-level managers to enhance skills and develop competences. Following an open call for expression of interested, 22 CSOs representatives were selected to attend the program. 11 modules were designed and 11 lectures will be delivered as part of the annual program, by 16 lectors and guest speakers (national and international experts).

The NPO Academy 2020 program continued during these months with a series of lectures and mentoring sessions on "Legal framework for NPOs in Albania" and "EU accession process and the role of CSOs".

The NPO Academy is one of the key activities of the capacity building functions that National Resource Centre. Read here for more information on the program, the criteria and the application process to be enrolled in the next year Academy Program.









MOMENTE KYC TE HISTORIUT TE MARREDHENEVE

Glorido Cignal (Hendry

Andrea Astronia

Andrea A



Training Programs for CSOs

During this quarter, National Resource Centre continues to organize a series of training programs for local civil society organizations based on the needs identified as part of the "Capacity and needs assessment for civil society organizations in Albania". In response to the interest of CSOs were organized a series of trainings in different topics and location, trying to reach as many as possible and diverse CSOs and civil society activists.

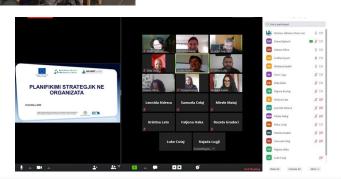
Considering the high interest of CSOs on social entrepreneurship and on the experiences of the reuse and administration of the assets confiscated from the organized crime, in January were organized four training programs on this topic were organized in Shkodra, Vlora, Tirana and Durresi.

Furthermore were organized training programs on "Strategic Planning" with CSOs in Elbasani and Durresi; on "Legal framework and fiscal treatment of NPOs" with CSOs in Fieri and on "Effective communication, media and public relation" with CSOs in Vlora Shkodra and Tirana.

About 200 representatives CSOs participated in the trainings and advanced their knowledge during this quarter.







In the face of the continuing spread of COVID-19, National Resource Centre from mid March 2020 adapted the methodology to the situation and continued its capacity building activity with other two online trainings on proposal writing and strategic planning with CSOs in Shkodra and Vlora regions.



Info sessions with CSOs on EU accession process

<u>European Movement in Albania (EMA)</u> as one of the implementing partners organized during this quarterly a series of info sessions with CSOs on EU accession process.

About 50 representatives from civil society organizations and local actors in Elbasani, Fieri and Lezha participated in these info sessions and advanced their knowledge on understanding on EU integration process, on the acquis/negotiating chapters and the role that CSOs should have in the this process, in order to be prepared to sit in consultations with the government and discus specifically for the Chapters.

In the upcoming period, EMA will organize a series of online info sessions for local CSOs across the country aiming to reach as many local CSOs, activists and local communities' groups. Visit our website for our upcoming events.

Meantime, as part of its help desk services and meetings with the sector, NRC will continue to provide information and assistance to all interested CSOs on the integration process and how they can contribute to that on topic or sector bases.









From Info sessions with CSOs in **Lezhe**



Western Balkans and Turkey Regional Civil Society Forum: Strong Civil Society Needed for Successful EU Accession Process

On 22 and 23rd January 2020, TACSO 3 organized in Skopje the Regional Civil Society Forum with the participation of over 110 representatives of CSOs from: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Northern Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey, as well as senior representatives from the European Commission and public institutions in the region.

At the Forum, the representatives of the European Commission presented the architecture of the new EU Pre-Accession Instrument for the EU budget period 2021-2027 (IPA III) for the first time and thereby opened a consultation process with CSOs on their recommendations for future support and use of EU funds in Western Balkan and Turkey. National Resource Centre for Civil Society and about 10 civil society organizations from Albania, participated to the event and contributed in the Forum discussions, and shared their experiences and opinions on several issues regarding the development of civil society sector in the region.













In the Forum was presented also the assessment report on the situation on the environment and capacities of civil society in IPA Beneficiary countries. The report finds that there is a general trend of decline and increased pressures on civil society by public institutions and in this context, there was a discussion between representatives of CSOs and the European Commission on how best to respond appropriately with both policy and financial means at the EU disposal. These need to focus on helping CSOs be closer to the citizens and at the same time have open access and quality dialogue with public institutions. Participants agreed that a strong civil society is crucial for countries to successfully prepare for use of IPA funds as well as a process of negotiations for EU membership. Photo gallery of the Forum is available here: Day 1, Day 2.

National Consultation and Validation Meeting on the TACSO 3 Needs Assessment of WBT CSOs





From the consultation and validation meeting in Tirana

Earlier in January, EU TACSO 3 in partnership with the EU Delegations and the National Resource Centers in all countries organized in-country consultation and validation meetings with CSOs, on the needs assessment of WBT CSOs and on the country reports.

The Regional Needs Assessment Report on the State of the Enabling Environment and Capacities of Civil Society against the Guidelines for EU Support to Civil Society in Enlargement Countries, has been prepared by BCSDN and its member organizations. The report for Albania was prepared by Partners Albania for Change and Development. The purpose of the need's

assessment is to inform the EU TACSO 3 Capacity Development and P2P Core programme design to be implemented during 2020 and 2021. It will also serve to inform the Guidelines for EU support to civil society in Enlargement countries, 2014-2020 (EU Civil Society Guidelines) monitoring process and its review. An in-depth insight into the enabling environment and the state of capacity of civil society has been gained through the assessment. The regional report and the national reports will be published soon.



Public Consultations for the European Commission's 2020 Annual Report on Albania



The Delegation of the European Union to Albania is preparing the Albania 2020 Annual Report. The structure of the 2020 Annual Report will be the same as the 2019 Report. For each of the criteria, an evaluation will be made of Albania's progress since March 2019. Progress will be measured in terms of concrete decisions taken, adopted legislation and degree of implementation.

Given civil society organizations' key role in Albania's European integration process, the Delegation highly values the CSOs' insights and organized during February 2020 a two day consultation in three session, specificly on: Rule of Law issues (functioning of the judiciary, fight against corruption and organised crime, legal and irregular migration); Democracy and fundamental rights and on the chapters of the EU acquis.

A large number of CSOs participated in this consultation and contributed with their feedback and opinions. On March 24, 2020 General Affairs Council of the EU (Ministers of EU Affairs) gave a green light to opening of EU accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania, a great milestone that this report will include.





1st Western Balkans Civil Society Summit

The <u>Western Balkans Civil Society Summit</u> was held from February 27-29 in Tirana. It gathered more than 100 civil society representatives who discussed the future development of the region and the role of the civil society sector in enhancing the regional cooperation.

As During the days of the summit, many panels were held with high representatives from the governments, from different sectors and high representatives of international and regional organizations in the region, to discuss with the representatives which are some of the challenges and success until now. Read more on the Summit.







BCSDN's Position on the EU Civil Society Guidelines

BCSDN has prepared a brief Position paper outlining the lessons learned and the key recommendations for the new Guidelines past 2020.

The Guidelines for EU support to civil society in enlargement countries, 2014-2020 (The Guidelines), developed by DG NEAR in consultation with civil society, have aimed to encourage enlargement countries to make legislation conducive for civil society, promote the involvement of civil society in the pre-accession process, and provide a framework for monitoring and evaluation of the results achieved with the EU assistance.

Many civil society organizations in these countries, including BCSDN, have regarded the Guidelines as the key document for ensuring enabling environment for their actions and their development-a crucial precondition for civil society to play a significant role in the countries' development and the EU enlargement process. Read the document <a href="https://example.com/here-en/black-new development-new developmen



CSOs Request to the Albanian Government for financial support to cope with the situation created by COVID-19

On March 24th 2020, a group of civil society organizations through an open letter to the Prime Minister Mr. Edi Rama and the Minister of Health and Social Welfare Mrs. Ogerta Manastirliu, requested financial support for the civil society organizations to cope with the situation created by COVID-19. Given the fact that the sector counts a large number of employees as well as the large contribution of CSOs to the social challenges of the country, CSOs request to be included in the Financial Support Plan of the government. Read the full letter here

CSOs Statement on Major Violation of Normative Law



With the initiative of the Albanian Helsinki Committee, a group of 24 civil society organizations, through an Open Declaration, believed that the Normative Act with the power of Law no. 1, known as "ANTI-CCK" legal package contradicts important principles underlying the rule of law laid down in the Constitution of the Republic of Albania and in the jurisprudence of the Constitutional Court.

Despite the request of civil society organizations addressed on 5 February 2020, the Parliament of Albania regretfully notes that the two Parliamentary Committees adopted the normative act without any public consultation. Read the full statement here

CSOs Request for verification and initiation of disciplinary proceedings against the responsible persons (judges / prosecutors) for the practice of security measure against the late Bilbil Hasani, suicide in IECD 313

Trans. on 17 Man 2020

The Support

For Algorithm Conference on Conferen

On February 21, in the Institution for Execution of Criminal Decisions 313 "Jordan Misja", was found suicided in his cell with a blanket the citizen Bilal Hasani.

According to media reports, he has been charged by the prosecution for stealing a portfolio, with the value of 1,200 Lek. Following this tragic event, a group of human rights civil society organizations addressed an open letter to the competent institutions, such as the High Inspector of Justice, the General Prosecutor of the Republic of Albania, the High Judicial Council and the High Prosecutorial Council. Read the full letter here

Gender Equality Index for the Republic of Albania 2020

In January 2020, Albania published the first Gender Equality Index Report. The index, which is an instrument of the European Institute for Gender and Equality (EIGE), captures gender gaps in six different domains, plus two additional domains and a total of 31 indicators.

"Now that Albania has its own Gender-Equality Index, it will be able to monitor progress. With a detailed analysis of remaining gender equality challenges, politicians can use the Index as a strategic guide to plan policy measures," said Virginija Langbakk, Director of European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), in the event held for the presentation of the report. Representatives of various institutions, donor agencies and civil society organizations attended the event.





Read the report here

I am Generation Equality: Realizing Women's Rights



On March 09, 2020 on <u>International Women's Day</u>, women from all over Albania, the Delegation of the European Union together with several partner organizations and women's' rights activists, gathered at Europe House to be part of a series of events aimed at raising awareness on women's rights.

Discussion sessions on gender equality, women's rights, breaking stereotypes and mentalities, women's participation in entrepreneurship, situation of women in rural areas, engagement of boys and men and other issues took place throughout this day.

The "Open Market" offered an opportunity to present a variety of handmade, traditional crafts, medicinal herbs from several groups of women from different regions in Albania. All incomes generated will be used for various women's' groups in need.



























open



online tools, online trainings, capacity-development activities, manuals, toolkit









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ONLINE: www.amshc.closed





QUARTERLY CALENDAR

Mark your calendar! Be involved in our upcoming events!

April 2020							
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28	29	30					



Trainings & Seminars for CSOs



Networking Events



Public Forums and Events

MEETINGS AND CONFERENCES



Partners Albania offers a 45 m2 meeting room, equipped with all the necessary equipment to carry out various events such as training, workshops, conferences etc.

Advantages:

Very good location

Competitive prices

Networking and exposure opportunities

Opportunities for online meetings, conferences, trainings, webinars up to 25 participants

Suitable conference room with natural lighting, contemporary equipment, air-conditioning, etc.

We welcome you!

For reservation contact us at:

Elbasan Street, Park Gate Building, 10th Floor, Ap. 71/73, Tirana

Mob: 00355 697889600 Tel. 00355 4 2254881







Classroon



Theatre



Table

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