

Quarterly Newsletter

Edition No. 5 June 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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OPPORTUNITIES

Announcements

Reaction of civil society organizations regarding the draft law on the registration of non-profit organizations

On July 10, the Ministry of Justice published in the Electronic Register for Notification and Public Consultation the draft law "On the registration of non-profit organizations". The accompanying report of the draft law mentions the institutions that have contributed to its drafting. We find very concerning that in this group of institutions, the civil society organizations were not mentioned, because they were acquainted with the draft law only after its publication for consultation, while special attention should have been paid to their involvement in the drafting process.



The initiative to revise the Law, introduce a simpler and more efficient registration procedure for NPOs and create an electronic register is positive, however, the draft law brings many changes which are a concern for civil society organizations, as well as ambiguities which are needed to be clarified in order for the law to function better.

The National Resource Centre and Partners Albania immediately initiated a consultation process with civil society organizations to discuss the draft law and come up with concrete recommendations in its regard. Through an open letter addressed to the institutions responsible for drafting the law, as well as information to donors and international organizations in the country, 27 civil society organizations, part of the consultation process, expressed their concern about the draft law and their opinion and recommendations on principle and articles of the law. For more read here: The Open Letter and Comments and Suggestions on the Draft Law

In response to the request of civil society organizations, a meeting was organized at the Ministry of Justice with representatives of the Directorate of the Codification and a representative from the group of CSOs, where all problematic issues of the law and relevant suggestions were presented. The comments and suggestions of the CSOs were accepted by the representatives of the Ministry, who committed themselves to review of the draft based on what was discussed and suggested.

On Volunteerism and its further development in Albania



For several months, Beyond Barriers Association in cooperation and with the facilitation of the National Resource Centre for Civil Society and the participation of a group of civil society organizations from different municipalities of the country, have undertaken an initiative for further development of volunteerism in Albania and an environment legal and regulatory enabler that would contribute in this regard.

During this period, we have held <u>several meetings</u> and discussions with CSOs and CSO networks, focusing on the issues raised by the legislation and its implementation.

Following the discussions, through an <u>open letter</u> we addressed the institutions to start a dialogue that will pave the way for concrete proposals for improving the legal and regulatory framework for Volunteering in Albania.



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Advocacy & Policy dialogue

Strengthening CSO networks and coalitions in Albania for more initiatives and greater impact

THIRRJE PËR SHPREHJE INTERESI



PROGRAMI I ASISTENCËS PËR RRJETET, KOALICIONET DHE GRUPIMET E ORGANIZATAVE TË SHOQËRISË CIVILE

The call is open until September 3, 2020

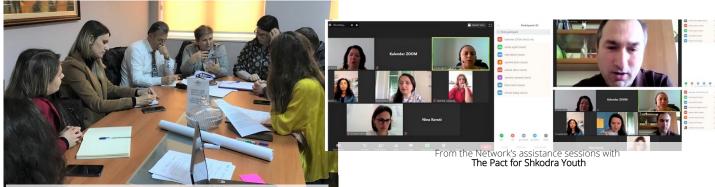
The annual technical assistance program in support of formal and informal networks, coalitions and groups aims to further develop, issues and causes that they want to advance in all areas where CSOs contribute.

Through over 30 meetings, mentoring, counselling and training sessions, as part of dedicated assistance programs specifically designed based on the needs and priorities of the networks during the first year of the assistance program, was achieved: designing of advocacy campaign in order to provide social services for young people with disabilities over the age of 18, in the Elbasan Region from the Parents of Elbasan Network and an advocacy campaign to increase energy efficiency and reduce energy poverty which is expected to be implemented very soon by the watchdog

network "An eye for the environment"; review of the actual strategic plan of the "Youth Voice" Network and review of the priority issues for the 2021-2024 Strategic Planning of the network; while The Pact for Shkodra Youth, increased knowledge on legal framework and regulation and practices on voluntarism and became part of the national initiative for further development of volunteerism in the country. For more details on the results and beneficiaries of the assistance program read here

The Centre will continue throughout this year and the next, to assist through the Assistance Program all networks, coalitions and informal groups of CSOs interested to further strengthen their capacities and initiatives.

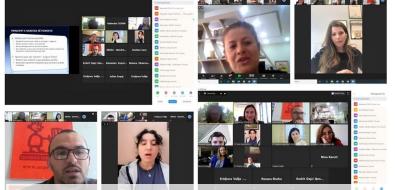
Currently, for the September-November 2020 Assistance Program, the call is open until September 3, 2020. For more, find here <u>Open Call</u> and the <u>application form</u>



From the Network's assistance sessions with **Parents of Elbasan Network**







From the Network's assistance sessions with **Youth Voice Network**

with "An eye for the environment" watchdog network

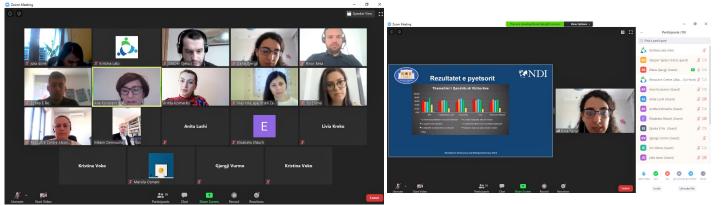


Consultation meetings with CSOs on the establishment of the Visitor Center at the Albanian Assembly

In the framework of the establishment of the Visitor Center at the Albanian Assembly, <u>NDI Albania - National Democratic Institute</u> in cooperation with the National Resource Centre, held several focus groups and consultative meetings during May 2020.

25 civil society organizations operating in the field of human rights, disability, youth and education, discussed in these meetings about the establishment of the Visitor Center, its functions and activities, in response to the interests of the public.

Previously, the Centre has cooperated with NDI also for the wide distribution in the sector of a survey questionnaire regarding the establishment of the centre and its functions. Its main findings were presented during meetings with representatives of civil society organizations and some active networks in the country.



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



During the meeting with the members of the Women of Orikum Independent Forum for drafting the petition and collecting signatures of the kindergarten of Orikum -Vlora Regional Office



During a series of meetings with representatives of the Municipality of Vlora in the framework of the initiative for the protection of the Soda Forest - Vlora Regional Office



During the meeting with the Municipal Council of Vlora regarding the new procedures of the online register of petitions and requests from civil society - Vlora Regional Office



Providing information and assistance to CSOs -Shkodra Regional Office



During a series of meetings with representatives of civil society organizations in Malësi e Madhe: VIS Albania and ARKA Koplik Youth Center to address the problems of local organizations and communities during the emergency Covid-19- Malësi e Madhe - Shkodra Regional Office



From meetings with representatives of civil society organizations in the Municipality of Mirdita - Shkodra Regional Office



Increasing Transparency and Accountability of CSOs

Strengthening accountability, transparency and sustainability of civil society organizations – Code of Standards for CSOs

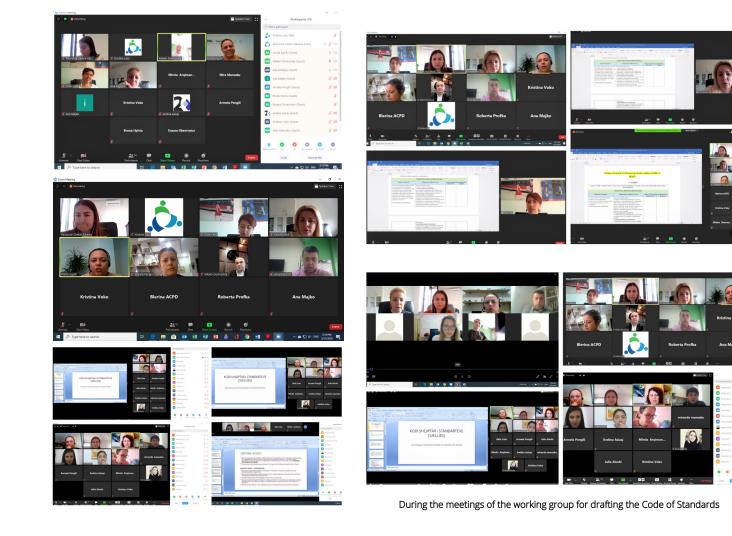
During these months, the National Resource Centre has continued the work of drafting the Code of Standards for CSOs, an early initiative of Partners Albania, which was re-introduced in the sector last year, in order to create a self-assessment mechanism that will contribute to raising the standards of activity of CSOs, their transparency, accountability and good governance.

After organizing a <u>series of information and consultation meetings</u>, about 200 CSOs participating in the meetings were invited to join a working group for further development of the Code. 18 organizations that expressed their interest joined the Resource Centre and Partners Albania and became part of the working group of the Code of Standards.

Based on the experience of the Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN) and other CSOs around the globe, part of the Global Standards Initiative, the Code of Standards was further developed by experts and the working group, tailored with the dynamics of sector development in Albania.

The Code is structured in 4 main principles and 7 commitments that CSOs member must meet and maintain. In parallel with the Code, the working group has worked on the development of a Self-Assessment Questionnaire, with measurable indicators, which will serve as an Assessment Framework for fulfilling the commitments of the Code.

The Code of Standards will be presented and widely shared with the nonprofit sector and stakeholders interested in a series of online online meetings that the Centre will organize in the upcoming months.



KTIVITETET E QKI

Capacity Building



The Covid-19 pandemic emergency, accompanied by quarantine conditions, has created a series of challenges for the work of the non-profit sector. These challenges, among other things, require new alternative forms of work for the staff of organizations as well as the provision of services to beneficiaries.

In response to the non-profit sector needs under the Covid-19 emergency, Partners Albania and the National Resource Centre for Civil Society, as part of the rapid support packages provided are offering free access ZOOM Platform, supporting civil society organisations in conducting their activities online.

Since the beginning of May, continuing of the online activity through the platform was provided for 41 organizations working in the field of human rights, environmental protection, tourism development and agriculture, good governance, education, provision of services for people with disabilities, women and girls, children and youth, marginalized groups, etc. These organizations work and contribute with their activity throughout the country, specifically in: Shkodra, Fushë-Arrëz, Tropojë, Dibër, Tirana, Durrës, Lushnje, Vlora, Elbasan, Librazhd, Berat, Gjirokastër, Përmet and Saranda.

Only within the first month of making the platform available, the beneficiary organizations have conducted about 45 trainings, 60 meetings with various actors and interest groups and have provided about 40 other online services such as information sessions, counselling sessions, etc. for the groups they serve.

All interested CSOs can still benefit of this opportunity and have free access for one year to the ZOOM Platform, by contacting us at <u>info@resourcecentre.al</u>. Read here the <u>Assessment Report</u>. Read here about the <u>Sector Support Package</u>

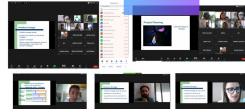
NPO Academy 2020

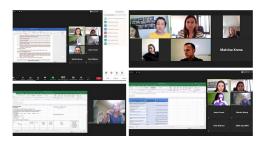
The program of the NPO Academy 2020 has continued during these months with online lectures on: Organizational Management and Development; Financial Management; Ensuring financial support through grants. Proposal writing and project management, EU grants as well as Strategic Planning for CSOs.

Financial M<mark>anagem</mark>ent Academy 2020



Strategic Pl<mark>anning</mark> Academy 2020





Proposal Writing &

Academy 2020

Management- EU Grants

NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTRE



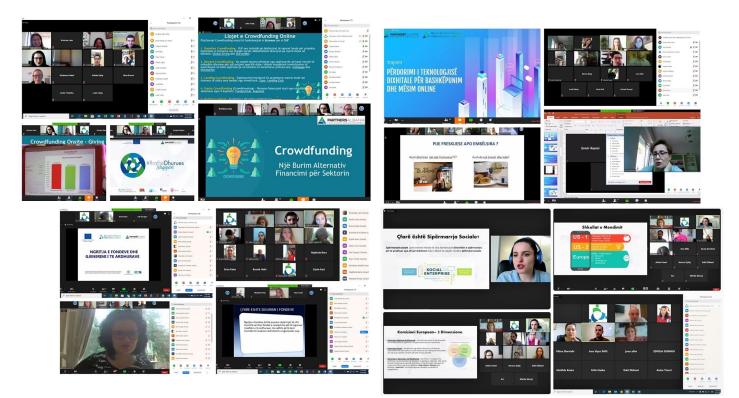
Assistance and mentoring sessions for NPO Academy participants

In addition to lectures, as part of the Academy in these months have been held about 20 group mentoring sessions with Academy participants to guide and provide assistance in improving their internal organizational policies and procedures, financial reporting and writing project proposals.



Training Programs for CSOs

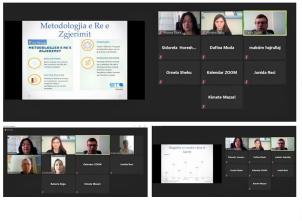
The Centre continues to provide online training programs dedicated to the non-profit sector, based on the needs identified through <u>the needs assessment of the sector</u>, the regional offices of the National Resource Centre, as well as with direct requests from CSOs. About 240 representatives of CSOs from Tirana, Lezha, Fieri, Shkodra, Laçi, Elbasan, Vlora, Gjirokastra, Vau i Dejës and Dibra participated in regional trainings and further increased their knowledge on the topics of: "Fundraising and Revenue Generation", "Strategic Planning", "Social Entrepreneurship", "Use of online collaboration platforms", "Crowdfunding "as well as "EU funding schemes and programs".



Info sessions with CSOs on the EU accession process

During April-June, in the frame of the capacity building component, the <u>European Movement Albania (EMA)</u> organized a series of information sessions on European Integration in Gjirokastra, Vlora, Patos, and Dibër.

About 30 representatives from civil society organizations and local actors joined in the information sessions to be informed about the history and key moments of the process of Albania's EU Integration, the stages of the process and what is Albanian state of negotiations compared to other countries in the region, and negotiating structures and opportunities for greater involvement and engagement of civil society in this process.



In the following months, EMA will organize other online information sessions for local CSOs across the country aiming to reach as many local CSOs, activists and local community groups as possible. Visit our website for upcoming events.



Online meeting with civil society organizations on the draft Strategic Plan of the Albanian Assembly



Following the work for drafting the first Strategic Plan, the Albanian Assembly in cooperation with the OSCE held a virtual consultative meeting on May 20, 2020. The meeting was attended by 25 participants, representatives from the Assembly, OSCE, NDI and civil society organizations.

In the opening speech of the meeting, the representatives of the Assembly emphasized the importance of consultation with civil society as one of the important actors with whom continuous coordination and cooperation is needed. The meeting continued with the presentation of the draft Strategic Plan drafted by the working group. In closing, it was discussed on the continuation of the process and the deadlines for the finalization and implementation of the plan that is expected to start within this

year. Read more about the meeting

Meeting of the National Council for European Integration (NCIE)



On 09 June 2020, the National Council for European Integration held a virtual meeting on: "Recent developments in the framework of the preparations for the negotiation process in the European Union and the presentation of the comprehensive draft plan of European Integration Measures".

Present at this meeting were the President of the Republic, Mr. Ilir Meta; the Assembly Speaker Mr. Gramoz Ruçi; The Prime Minister, Mr. Edi Rama; Acting Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Mr. Gent Cakaj, the Ambassador of the European Union Delegation, Mr. Luigi Soreca, Members of the Albanian Parliament, heads of independent institutions, ambassadors of the highest representative of EU member states as well as representatives of the non-profit sector - members of KKIE. We note that representatives from civil society in the National Council of European Integration are: Mr. Albert Rakipi, Mr. Klodjan

Seferaj, Mr. Gledis Gjipali, Mrs. Zana Vokopola, Mrs. Krisela Hackaj, Mrs. Albana Dhimitri, Mr. Erlir Puto, Mrs. Suela Kusi Drita, Mrs. Dafina Peci, Mrs. Erida Skendaj and Mr. Gjergji Vurmo.

After the presentations on the topic of the meeting, discussions, comments and suggestions from the leaders of independent institutions and members of the National Integration Council followed. Mrs. Erinda Ballanca, the Ombudsman, noted the need for some corrections in the document and at high representation of institutions during the process of drafting the plan of measures for integration.

Mr. Gjergji Vurmo, IDM representative, requested the inclusion of the concept of broad consultation with civil society among the objectives of the document. <u>Read more about the meeting</u>



Venice Commission Opinion on Anti-Defamation Package

The Venice Commission, in its opinion expressed on May 28 on the Anti-Defamation Package, is critical of the law, its applicability and the negative effect it may have on freedom of expression.

The opinion confirms all the concerns raised by civil society during the debates on the adoption of the Anti-Defamation Package last year, as well as in the statement drafted by civil society organizations on this issue.

Read more on the CSOs Declaration and the Venice Commission Opinion



Open letter of CSOs in support the inhabitants of rural areas in the situation created by COVID-19



On April 1, 2020, with the initiative of the Albanian Network for Rural Development (ANRD), a group of 24 civil society organizations, through an open letter addressed to the Prime Minister Mr. Edi Rama asked for support for the inhabitants of rural areas in the situation created by COVID -19.

The letter aims to address in a unified form some of the main concerns raised by farmers, offers proposals to mitigate the raised problematics and seeks the attention of government structures to the critical issues it raises.

Read the full letter here



Open letter from civil society organizations and international organizations for the protection and respect of children's rights in the country

In June 2020, through an Open Letter, a group of 13 civil society organizations and international organizations working in the field of child protection in Albania, addressed to the responsible institutions for the protection and respect of children's rights in the country, requesting effective protection of any child at risk of violence or sexual abuse. <u>Read the full letter here</u>

"Tax assignation system" as a potential fundraising mechanism for Albania



Partners Albania, following the work in support of civil society sector for the development of alternative ways of financing with the aim to increase its sustainability, has recently presented a paper on "Tax assignation system".

The document serves as a source and information material for all organizations interested in diversifying financial resources.

It brings a new concept of tax assignation mechanism as a sustainable model for strengthening the CSO sector by improving its image, increasing public confidence and financial sustainability. The document analyses the best models and practices of Southeast European countries and not only, which have been pioneers in the application of this mechanism.

The paper was further presented and discussed in various online tables organised in collaboration with the National Resource Centre, with over 50 participants' organisations all over the country. <u>Read the full</u> paper here



Public Opinion Poll: Trust in Governance 2019

The Institute for Democracy and Mediation, in its seventh annual edition, presented the Opinion Poll 'Trust in Governance' 2019, conducted during November and December 2019 across the 61 municipalities of Albania.

Its purpose is to explore public perceptions regarding trust in institutions, transparency and accountability, corruption, citizen engagement in policy and decision-making, satisfaction with public service delivery, and enforcement of non-discriminatory laws and policies.

In 2019, Albanian citizens continued to trust religious institutions (65.6%) and the army (59.4%) the most, followed by educational institutions (57.3%), civil society organisations (56.3%), state police (54.6%), healthcare institutions (51.4%), and the media (50.7%). Central

and local government, parliament, prosecution, the president, and the courts continue to receive low trust ratings with political parties receiving the lowest rating (22.5%). The executive, as compared to the legislative and judicial branches, maintains a higher level of trust. In contrast to domestic institutions, international institutions/organisations like NATO, the UN and the EU, rank as the most trusted institutions. Read the full opinion poll here





Enabling Environment for Philanthropic Activity in Albania

Following the long dedicated work in the field of philanthropy, Partners Albania has published the paper " <u>Enabling Environment for Philanthropic Activity in Albania</u>". The paper aims to present an overview of the philanthropic state of affairs in Albania and provide the main trends and best practices from other countries, which could serve to a better comprehension of the dynamics from the stakeholders', part of the philanthropic organisation sector.

Since January 2015 Partners Albania conducts the monitoring of philanthropic activity in Albania, accessible for the public through <u>monthly and annual quantitative and qualitative reports</u>.

Protests against violence and sexual abuse



During June, following several abuse cases, hundreds of Tirana citizens and activists joined the call for a peaceful assembly against violence and sexual abuse of girls. Young people, civil society organizations and activists

marched with placards in their hands to prevent cases of gender-based violence in Albania. Similar protests against the abuse of children, young people, girls and women were held in Durrës, Elbasani, Fieri, Vlora, Saranda, Lezha, Shkodra, Korca, etc. Citizens and activists called for gender equality, respect for human rights, severe prosecution of abusers, raising public awareness about reporting cases of abuse, creating an electronic register to identify abusers, etc





Read more

IPA III Civil Society Consultation Report is published

As part of the drafting of the IPA III Program, during February, EU TACSO3 facilitated a consultation process with civil society at regional level. The consultation aimed to provide a space for civil society to contribute with its views and recommendations to the development of the new IPA III instrument. 54 organizations and groups / networks of organizations in the Western Balkans and Turkey were involved in this process.

Considering the IPA III Instrument as very important for the financial, institutional and political support of the non-profit sector, the National Resource Centre, following the call for recommendations, organized a consultation with several organizations from the sector at the national level and drafted a document with comments and suggestions for this issue. <u>Read more</u>

Here you can find the full **<u>REGIONAL REPORT</u>** that includes contributions at the country level.

Balkan Civic Practices: Civil Society in the Covid-19 Pandemic

BALKAN CIVIC PRACTICES: CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



As a regional network focused on empowering civil society, promoting an enabling environment and safeguarding civic space, Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN) is closely following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on civil society in the Balkan region, in a joint effort with the 14 member organizations.

This Balkan Civic Practices edition is dedicated to the CSOs' efforts in relation to the ongoing corona-crisis, as well as the influence it has on their work, aiming to provide for an overview of responses and examples we could all learn from.

The website of BCSDN offers the opportunity to explore various topics across the countries of the region and to download all the published materials, including special newsletters produced by BCSDN on this topic.

The bulletin provides a description of the situation in all Balkan countries and will address issues related to the situation and the efforts of CSOs in this period.



EU TACSO 3 Regional Meeting "Emergency response to COVID-19"

From 2 to 4 June, 2020, was organised the Regional Meet-up event "Emergency Response to COVID-19" organised by EU TACSO with participants of 85 CSOs representatives from the region and Turkey, DG Near and EUD in Turkey. During the meeting were shared experiences related to coping with the situation, studies and assessments conducted at the national and regional level, challenges and needs to be further addressed.

As part of the meeting, the presentation of <u>P2P On Demand</u> was made, a component of the program that allows ad-hoc support for the organization of activities / events. It provides assistance and aims to address the ongoing needs of CSOs, Networks, National Resource Centres, European Union Delegations, etc. in the Western Balkans and Turkey.

Ms. Arjola Agolli, Program Director at Partners Albania and Manager of the National Resource Centre for Civil Society, was part of this two-day meeting. Following the presentation of the findings of the assessment of the situation of CSOs in the country, the work of PA and the Centre these months, in her speech discussed on the challenges of the CSO sector and opportunities for their addressing in the future. <u>Read more about the meeting</u>.





Regional training program-Digital and ICT tools in the work of CSOs



On July 2020 EU TACSO 3 organised a three-day regional training programme on digital and ICT tools in the work of civil society organisation in the Western Balkans and Turkey. About 50 CSOs representatives from the region, including 14 organisations from Albania were part of this training program which aimed at informing about online tools and providing skills on their use, as well as sharing practices for the use of digital tools and ICT. For more information on EU TACSO 3 training and other activities, you can follow the updates on their website

Freedom House report "Nations in Transition 2020"

Freedom House

NATIONS IN TRANSIT 2020



Countries in Transition is the only comprehensive, comparative and multidimensional study of reform in the former communist states of Europe and Eurasia.

According to the annual report, some of the Balkan countries marked a decline in the level of democracy during 2019, compared to a year earlier, including Albania.

Albania, which again this year is in the category of hybrid regimes / democracy in transition, marked a decline in democratic governance and the electoral process. On a rating scale from 1 to 7 points, where 1 is the lowest level of democracy is 7 the highest, Albania from 3.89 points a year earlier, this time had 3.82 points. <u>Read the full report</u>



THIRRJE DHE MUNDËS



QUARTERLY CALENDAR

July 2020							
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26	27	28	29	30	31		

Mark your calendar! Be involved in our upcoming events!

August 2020						
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30	31					

September 2020								
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27	28	29	30					

NPO Academy

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

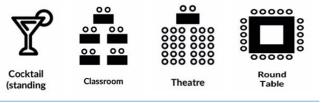
Suitable conference room with natural lighting, contemporary equipment, air-conditioning, etc.

We welcome you!

For reservation contact us at:

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