

Quarterly Newsletter EDITION NO. 17 JULY 2023

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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Civil Society Week 2023

The Civil Society Week in Albania returns in its second consecutive year!

For the second year in a row, Partners Albania and the National Resource Centre for Civil Society in Albania in partnership with civil society actors throughout the country, during 29 May-3 June 2023, organized Civil Society Week 2023, a series of events and thematic promotion space, dedicated to the work and activity of organizations and civil society activists in the country.

The week creates opportunities for all actors of civil society to come together, as engines of positive changes in society, to discuss and create solutions and joint actions in the future. In line with the European Week and the announcement by the European Commission of 2023 as the "European Year of Skills", This year, Civil Society Week was dedicated to the activity and contribution of civil society organizations to the education and training of different groups in society, mainly youth and marginalized groups.

Under the motto "Skills for all: To learn, work, engage", over 120 activities were organized throughout the country, with the participation of civil society organizations, activists, academic institutions, etc. who joint the week.

Life skills, employment and self-employment skills, engagement in policymaking skills, digital and green skills, media and information skills, knowledge transfer skills, etc. were just some of the topics raised and addressed throughout the week's activities, bringing together important actors from the civil society sector, local and central government institutions, academic institutions, businesses, media, etc. to discuss and address problems and difficulties encountered during the development and further strengthening of skills among all target groups.



Find here a summary of Civil Society Week 2023 activities.

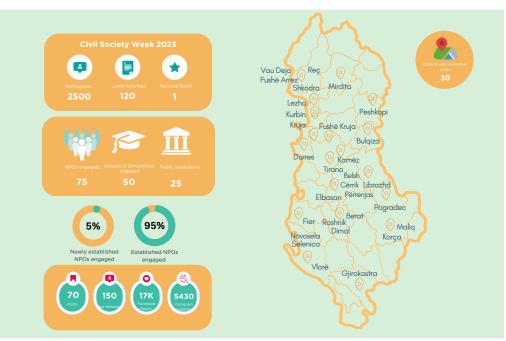
CALLS & OPPORTUNITIES

"Capacity And Needs Assessment of Civil Society Organisations In Albania" Report

Following its work and efforts in strengthening sectors' capacities, during March-May 2023, NRC developed the study on " Capacity and needs assessment of civil society organisations in Albania".

Learn more about the report's findings <u>here</u>.











NATIONAL EVENT "SKILLS FOR ALL: TO LEARN, WORK, ENGAGE"

This year too, Civil Society Week concluded with a national event, organized in Elbasan, with the theme "Skills for All: To learn, work, engage". Over 120 representatives of civil society organizations and activists from all over the country, as well as representatives of local and central government institutions, professional schools, academic institutions, businesses, and media, became part of the event.

Through 5 thematic workshops on (1) Skills for Life (2) Participatory democracy: empowering citizens and stakeholders for greater engagement in policymaking (3) Training and integration in work and society of persons with special needs and abilities (4) Employment and self-employment- Developing skills for a more sustainable and inclusive economy (5) Training and integration of persons from vulnerable groups, the event created opportunities for participants to engage and contribute to discussions to highlight the challenges encountered during work and efforts to develop skills, the sharing of good practices as well as a series of recommendations for























CAPACITY AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS IN ALBANIA

Following its work and efforts in strengthening sectors` capacities, during March-April 2023, NRC developed the study on "Capacity and needs assessment of civil society organisations in Albania". The Assessment Report, an annual study of the Center, presents a detailed overview of the current needs of organisations for capacity building in the areas of organisational management, financial sustainability, participation in policymaking, and the European integration process.

The identified needs will serve as a basis for the development of future capacity-building programs by the National Resource Center in service of the civil society sector. Furthermore, the findings of the assessment can also be used by organisations, donors, and other institutions working in support of civil society organisations and further development of the sector in the country. Learn more about the report's findings.

Read the report here.



The National Resource Center continues to provide help-desk support to civil society organisations through its three offices in <u>Tirana, Shkodra, and Vlora</u>. Among the most requested information during these months are on the operational legal framework of NPOs, information about programs for the capacity building of CSOs offered by the Center and other actors, information about organisations and networks for partnership creation, events open for participation by CSOs, etc.

At the same time, to address the requirements for facilitating networking and establishing cooperation by CSOs with other organisations, NRC continues to further enrich the <u>NPO Directory</u>, an online platform that helps all the organisations that are part of it for greater exposure in the sector, increased cross-sectoral cooperation as well as networking with other organisations in the country, region and beyond for joint projects and initiatives. The platform so far has over **160 registered NPOs**. We invite all interested organisations to register <u>here.</u>

LEGAL SERVICE

Even during this period, the National Resource Center has offered education and legal counseling according to the requirements and needs of NPOs or civil society activists, mainly on issues such as legal procedures for the establishment and registration in Albania of a branch of a foreign organisation, fiscal obligations on funds from paid services after exceeding the fiscal threshold of 20% of annual income, reorganisation of its founding documents and executive structures, the procedure of patenting the organisation's paid services, etc. The Legal Service is offered every **Wednesday**, ONLINE, from 14.00-17.00.

We invite all organisations and groups that need information and assistance regarding the establishment, operation, and legal and fiscal compliance for NPOs to contact us at info@resourcecentre.al

For more information on the legal service and how to benefit from it, read <u>here</u>







ACTIVITIES FROM THE REGIONAL OFFICES OF THE NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTRE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY IN ALBANIA



Information sessions with youngsters from high school and university in Vlora organised during the Civil Society Week, on the need for active inclusion of youth in advocacy and policy-making, volunteering and Erasmus programs.



Meeting with local organisations: Association of lonely elderly people and Youth with a Mission in Vlora, to get to know each other and cooperate for more solidarity and support for the elderly..



Helpdesk from the Vlora Regional Office, regarding Code of Standards for NPOs.



A meeting between civil society organisations in Shkodra and representatives of the American Peace Corps, for increased cooperation and coordination of work between the parties.



Part of the show "Good Morning Shkodra" on Radio Shkodra and "Good Morning Albania" on Albanian Radio Television for the promotion of the activities of civil society organisations within Civil Society Week, as well as the role and the contribution of CSOs in Shkodra and beyond in the northern region.



Helpdesk service from the Shkoder Regional Office, regarding Code of Standards for NPOs.



NPO ACADEMY





#Lecture 3 focused on the governing structures of CSOs, roles of structures and responsibilities, policies, procedures, and regulations, as well as various challenges in the management of the organisation. The participants in the Academy were also introduced to policies and procedures formats, which can adapt and help them at the organizational level.

The lecture was held by Diana Djaloshi, an expert with over 25 years of experience in important fields for the non-profit sector such as project design and management, advocacy, organizational development, and strategic planning.





#Lecture 4 focused on the main concepts of Financial Management and Control. During this lecture, the participants were introduced to issues related to financial management and its principles, budgeting, and accounting in non-profit organisations, financial statements, analysis and reporting as well as obligations in the state. The lecture was led by Jetmira Hysenaj, Finance Manager, and Fjoralba Balla, Financial Officer, at Partners Albania, with over 20 years of experience in the financial and non-profit sector, with significant expertise in several areas such as: financial planning and analysis, accounting, taxes, grant management, financial control, etc.





#Lecture 5 focused on fundraising and securing support from grants, public funds, philanthropy, as well as working with the private sector. During the lecture the perspective and importance of raising funds as a means for increasing the financial sustainability of NPOs was discussed. The lecture was facilitated by Entela Pinguli, an expert with over 20 years of experience years in civil society. Special guest in this lecture there was also Ms. Valbona Guri, Director of the Department of Marketing at Credins Bank, to introduce the first Crowdfunding platform in Albania Smile.al, as well as share with organisations examples of corporate philanthropy, as well as the contribution of Credins Bank in the field of art, education, sports and so on.





planning strategies for an organisation, the design process and involvement of actors, as well as monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the strategic plan. The lecture was facilitated by Ilina Neshikj who has significant professional experience that includes coordinating the global network of INGOs Accountable Now, the Balkan Civil Society Development Network, BCSDN, a regional network of 14 CSOs in the Balkans and Turkey, and most recently, the Civil Liberties Union for Europe. Her expertise includes civil society development, CSO sustainability, accountability, as well as strategic communication and advocacy.

#Lecture 6 focused on the role and importance of

MENTORING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR ACADEMY PARTICIPANTS

In parallel with the lectures, as part of the program, **mentoring sessions** were organised with all participants to provide assistance and further guidance based on addressing their individual needs on the main issues that were treated during the lectures.

Some of the main issues addressed during the mentoring sessions were: internal organisational and financial practices based on accountability standards of the non-profit sector, VAT refund procedure, legal requirements for NPOs and difficulties faced during their implementation, organisational and individual challenges throughout the fundraising process and strategic planning, as well as good practices in these regards.





GRANTS MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING

During May-June, another training program on "Grants Management and Monitoring" was organised by National Resource Center with the participation of **15 CSOs** representatives from Tirana, Durrësi, and Berati. The program is designed for organisations that provide financial support to other CSOs, through various sub-granting schemes mainly with funds from the EU and other donors.

Through the four modules, the participants increased their knowledge and practical skills on issues such as the management manual of grants and its formats; drafting of the grant contract; financial principles and budget; reporting and monitoring procedure and evaluation, and grant closure. The program will return next year as part of the Centre's program to strengthen the capacities of CSOs. Interested organisations can contact us at info@resourcecentre.al to participate in future programs.







DIVERSIFICATION OF FUNDING RESOURCES FOR CSOS

Financial sustainability remains one of the biggest challenges faced by the sector in the country. Diversification of funding resources for organisations and the increase of capacities in this direction remain very important for the sector.

During this period, the Resource Center has organised two programs training on this issue, where about **40 participants** were presented with new concepts and knowledge for generating income from other funding sources beyond grants.





TRAINING PROGRAMS ON DEMAND - "PROJECT PROPOSALS WRITING"



In June 2023, in response to the requests of a group of organisations from different cities, NRC organised in Shkoder a regional training program on "Project Proposal Writing "with the participation of **23 representatives** of CSOs from Shkodra, Vau i Deja, and Lezha. The writing of project proposals remains a permanent need in the sector despite its developments.

Increasing the capacity of the organisation's executive staff, beyond the leader and the main manager, has been noticed in recent participation in training programs. Investment in human resources is necessary for a stronger and more efficient organisation.

Organizations interested in capacity building in specific thematic areas are invited to contact us at any time at info@resourcecentre.al.

EU AQUIS, ANGAZHIMI DHE ROLI I OSHC-VE NË PROCESIN E INTEGRIMIT TË VENDIT NË BE



The National Resource Center and the European Movement in Albania (EMA), in the frame of capacity building program in strengthening CSOs, have organised several regional workshops in **Tirana, Vlora** and **Shkodra**, on the engagement and role of the civil society organisations in the process of the country's integration into the EU.

The workshops focused mainly on the role that civil society actors should play in the negotiation process for more effective results, form of their inclusion, as well as funding opportunities from European Union programs supporting civil society. The process of screening, the legal framework for membership negotiations, challenges, and the main shortcoming that the administration faces today in the context of capacities, as well as transparency and information for a larger scale of involvement of CSOs were discussed among experts and participants in workshops.

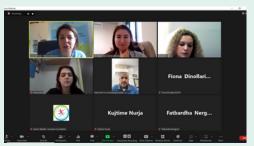


TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR CSO NETWORKS

For several months, Resource Center as part of the technical assistance program for networks, coalitions, formal and informal groups of CSOs, is providing support in strengthening the capacities of **3 networks** and groups of organisations. Youth Hub Network for the Western Balkans and Turkey, Community Organisations Network, and the CSOs Group for Voluntarism in Albania were assisted in the identification of priority issues for advocacy, based on issues faced during their activity as well as identified specific needs of local communities. Following the facilitation of discussions and provision of assistance, the networks have advanced in their advocacy initiatives as well as strengthened communication between members/partners involved.







Youth Hub Network for the Balkans
Western and Turkey is working in
addressing two issues: (1) lack of
access of CSOs in schools and e
cooperation with the institutions of
education (2) lack of access to funds
granted by National Agency for
Employment and Skills (AKPA) for
young job seekers.







Community Organisations Network
as part of the assistance is working in
developing mobilization and
fundraising plans, for the
implementation of three social
community initiatives in the city of
Pogradec, Kamza and Tirana.







CSOs Group for Voluntarism in Albania, organised various round tables and meetings with legal experts for discussion of proposals for legal changes that will be presented to the inter-institutional working group with representative from the government and organisations, in order to improve of the law on voluntarism.



INSTRUCTION ON VALUE ADDED TAX

Following the entry into force of the Law on Value Added Tax in January 2023, the Ministry of Finance and Economy has issued **Instruction No. 11,** Date 13.4.2023, For Some Additions and Changes to Instruction No. 6, Date 30.1.2015, "On Value Added Tax in the Republic of Albania", Amended.

With the change of the new law, it is expected that NPOs should be exempted from VAT.

Read the Instruction <u>h</u>ere. Read the Law <u>here.</u> UDHËZIM Nr. 11, datë 13.4.2023

PËR DISA SHTESA DHE NDRYSHIME NË UDHËZIMIN NR. 6, DATË 30.1.2015, "PËR TATIMIN MBI VLERËN E SHTUAR NË REPUBLIKËN E SHOIPËRISË". I NDRYSHUAR"

Në mbështetje të nenit 102, pika 4, të Kushtetutës së Republikës së Shqipërisë dhe ligji nr. 92/2014, datë 247.2014, "Për tatimin mb vlerën e shtuar në Republikën e Shqipërisë", ndryshuar, ministri i Financave dhe Ekonomisë

EUROPEAN COMMISSION REPORT FOR ALBANIA CONSULTATIVE MEETINGS WITH CSOS

Delegation of the European Union in the frame of preparation of the Annual Report of the European Commission for 2023 for Albania, during April organised consultative meetings with civil society organisations regarding their opinions on the developments of the last year in regard to the areas covered in the progress report.

The structure of the Annual Report of Albania 2023 will be the same as the report of 2022. For each of the criteria, the political, economic, and European standard criteria, an assessment of the Albanian progress will be made since June 2022, in terms of concrete decisions taken, legislation adopted, and the degree of implementation.

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR CIVIL SOCIETY MEETINGS

The National Council for Civil Society organised on April 24, 2023, a meeting with representatives of civil society organisations and several institutions, in order to discuss the thematic priorities for some areas identified as key for CSOs activity. Further, on June 19, 2023, in the premises of the Prime Minister's Office, was held the <u>next meeting</u> of NCCS focusing on (i) the main issues discussed from the meeting with civil society organisations; (ii) the new Roadmap drafted document and the time frame of this process; (iii) the election of a representative of NCCS from civil society, who will represent the Council in the Inter-Ministerial Committee on **SDGs 2030.**



EUROPE WEEK 2023



During 16-26 May, the Delegation of the European Union organised **Europe Week 2023**. Under the motto "Your Skills Your Future", Europe Week 2023 stopped in Tirana, Shkodra, Vlorë, Cerrik, Dibër, Korçë, and Gjirokastra.

In line with the announcement of 2023 as the European Skills Year, the importance of the development of skills was emphasized highlighting the achievements of young people who have further advanced with the support of EU programs.



WEEK AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA, TRANSPHOBIA, AND BIPHOBIA -IDAHOT 2023 IN ALBANIA



This year too, within the framework of **IDAHOT** in Albania during the month of May 2023, the Week Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia was organized. Albanian LGBTIQ activists from the LGBT Alliance, Pro LGBT, Streha, Open Mind Spectrum Albania, and Pink Embassy organized a series of activities to raise awareness against violence and discrimination against LGBTI people. Read more here.

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THE EU CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM FOR WESTERN BALKANS AND TÜRKIYE 2023

From 31 May to 1 June 2023, **TACSO 3** organised in Podgorica, Montenegro the EU Civil Society Forum for Western Balkans and Türkiye 2023 bringing together over **150 participants**, including representatives from civil society, EU officials, and government authorities. As an annual event, the forum is a platform for sharing knowledge and developing strategies to promote the growth of civil society in the region.

The primary objectives of the Forum '23 were to discuss the findings of the baseline assessment against the <u>DG NEAR Guidelines for EU Support to Civil Society in the Enlargement Region 2021 - 2027</u> and to contribute to an agenda for future action for civil society in the region. As part of the event, following the presentation of the findings of the Report, several plenary sessions and thematic roundtables were organised in groups according to Specific Objectives of the DG NEAR Guidelines for EU Support to Civil Society, specifically on enabling environment for civil society, government-civil society cooperation, and CSO capacity and accountability. Speakers shared their expertise and perspectives, fostering informative discussions among participants. Representatives of Partners Albania, invited as contributors to the session "Organisational Governance and Accountability", shared their experience on this issue, focusing especially on the Code of Standards for NPOs, as a new practice and among the first in the region, in support of the sector and the advancement of its standards. More information on the Forum can be read here.







MONITORING MATRIX ON THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT - REGIONAL REPORT: WESTERN BALKANS AND TURKEY 2022

In April, the **Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN)** published the Regional Report " Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development " which provides an assessment of the state of civil society in Western Balkans and Turkey for 2022. Some of the main findings in the report include: (i) Political developments in several countries have resulted in reduced opportunities for civic action, infringements on fundamental freedoms, and the intensification of smear campaigns against civil society organizations (CSOs) and media; (ii) legal frameworks regarding anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism pose challenges to CSOs in the region, along with insufficiently regulated and non-stimulating fiscal and tax treatment of CSOs and inadequate public funding. These challenges threaten the viability and sustainability of civil society in the region and require urgent attention and action from policymakers and other stakeholders.

Following previous MM reports, the report again offers specific recommendations for the national governments but introduces recommendations for other stakeholders too – civil society, donors, and recommendations regarding the EU integration process.

Read the full report **here**





TACSO 3 - BASELINE ASSESSMENT REPORT AGAINST THE DG NEAR GUIDELINES FOR EU SUPPORT TO CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE ENLARGEMENT REGION, 2021-2027"

EU TACSO 3 published the first Baseline Assessment Report against the <u>DG NEAR GUIDELINES FOR EU SUPPORT to CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE ENLARGEMENT REGION, 2021-2027".</u> The report provides a detailed analysis of the situation of civil society in the region against the 59 indicators of the Guidelines.

The assessment of indicators provides valuable information for all stakeholders, including EU institutions, local CSOs, and governing institutions. The main findings show that; (i) the legal framework is generally in line with international standards. However, challenges arise throughout its implementation, with consequences on the state of enabling environment. Of concern are efforts in the region to criminalize defamation, restrictions or ambiguity in the requirements for organizing public assembly, and SLAPPs – civil lawsuits designed to limit freedom of speech; (ii) there is a mixed record on cooperation and partnership between civil society and public institutions. In some countries of the region, there are legal provisions for public consultation on the drafting of key laws and policies; however, the quality of consultation varies and is often left to the discretion of public servants; (iii) regarding the capacities of CSOs and resilience, while transparency and accountability improvement is needed, positive trends are observed regarding organizational learning, stakeholder consultations and diversification of funds.





READ HERE THE REPORT

BCSDN REACTION

TO FARA INITIATIVES IN THE REGION: DEFENDING DEMOCRACY WILL DEFEAT DEMOCRACY



The Balkan Network for the Development of Civil Society (BCSDN) through a public statement in May, has called on the authorities not to introduce and approve legal initiatives that undermine the ability of NGOs to act freely and independently!

The network sees with great concern the developments in several countries of the region, where the initiative of various legislative acts with the claim of increasing transparency and accountability, often leads to the silencing of critical voices.

To learn more, read <u>HERE</u> the BCSDN statement on the initiatives of Foreign Agents Registration Acts (FARA) in the region: Defense of Democracy will Defeat Democracy!

WINNERS OF THE 2023 EU AWARD FOR ROMA INTEGRATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS AND TÜRKIYE

In April the European Commission announced the 14 winners of the fifth **EU Award for Roma Integration in the Western Balkans and Türkiye**. This year's award recognizes achievements promoting the Roma inclusion dimension in the Digital Agenda and Green Economy.

The award ceremony took place in the framework of the 2023 EU Roma Week (24-27 April 2023) hosted by the European Parliament. The EU Award for Roma integration aims to give visibility and boost political commitment and support for Roma inclusion in the Western Balkans and Türkiye.

For more <u>read here.</u> Winners here.





EU FOREIGN INTERFERENCE LAWIs Civil Society at Risk?

Civil Society Europe is bringing together **230 civil society organisations** from across Europe to express concern and opposition to a proposed 'foreign interference' directive which would create a register of Foreign Funded organisations. This legislation could have unintended negative consequences, hindering CSOs' ability to fulfill their role as defenders of democracy in Europe and beyond. The legislation will also limit the EU's capacity to support civil society at risk and human rights defenders globally. For more, read the news here and the open letter here.

Civil society is a strong supporter of enhanced transparency and accountability while preserving space for independent civil society to carry out its activities. As such, civil society organisations call on the Commission to consider three factors ahead of any proposed legislation: (1) the requirement for a fundamental rights impact assessment, (2) the clarity and purpose of such a directive, and (3) the EU's fundamental rights obligations.





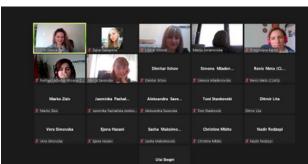
JOINT CIVIL SOCIETY ACCOUNTABILITY EFFORTS IN THE BALKANS RACOP

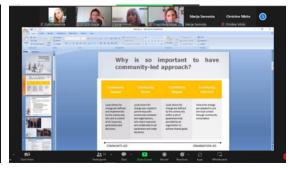
The second meeting of the Regional Accountability Community of Practice (RACoP) was held in June 2023, with approximately **25 representatives** from the Balkans organizations, to discuss and share practices and experiences on how the CSO partnership can support and further develop communities.

The Regional Accountability Community of Practice (RACoP) initiative, launched in November 2022 by the Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN), aims to increase continuous learning by improving the work of CSOs and networks in the Balkans, as well as advancing accountability understanding and practices.

The community serves as a space for CSOs in the region to share their experiences and good practices, build knowledge and find synergies with different initiatives in the region on the topic of Dynamic Accountability.









DECLARATION OF MINISTERS AND HIGH-LEVEL DELEGATES OF THE MEMBER STATES AND TERRITORIES OF MONEYVAL



In a Declaration published in May, member states acknowledged the unintended consequences resulting from the improper application of AML/CFT standards, as well as cases of abuse of AML/CFT standards on different continents, and pledged to prevent abuses of such among MONEYVAL member countries.

For more, read the **Declaration** here.

MONEYVAL STRATEGY 2023-2027

MONEYVAL Strategy on anti-money laundering, combating the financing of terrorism and proliferation financing of weapons of mass destruction (2023 – 2027), foresees the creation of a platform for dialogue with the community of NPOs, academic institutions and the private sector specialized in AML/CFT, with the involvement of the specialized structures of the Council of Europe.

To learn more about the strategy, find the full document <u>here.</u>



THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

adopts the resolution "Promoting the Social and Solidarity Economy for Sustainable Development".



At its **66th plenary** meeting, The United Nations General Assembly adopted the resolution "Promotion of Social Economy and Solidarity for Sustainable Development".

This is considered a historic moment, as the resolution provides an official definition for the Social and Solidarity Economy and recognizes that it can contribute to the achievement and localization of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Read the Resolution here.

To learn more about the Social and Solidarity Economy and its role in the 2030 Agenda, visit the **UNTFSSE** website.











































Open Call for **Proposals**



QUARTERLY CALENDAR MARK YOUR CALENDAR! BE INVOLVED IN OUR UPCOMING EVENTS!







nPO Academy



Trainings & Seminars for CSOs

Advocacy & Networking

Public Forums and Events

Office in Tirana

Elbasan Street, Park Gate Building, 10th Floor, Ap. 71/73, Tirana (In the premises of "Partners Albania for Change and Development") Tel/Fax: +355 4 2254881

E-mail: info@resourcecentre.al

Office in Shkodra

Str. Studenti, Square of Democracy, 7th Floor, the building near Shkodra Radio, Shkoder (in the premises of the "Women in Development" Association)

E-mail: shkodra@resourcecentre.al

Office in Vlora

Neighborhood 29th November, Str. Dede Ahmet Amataj, Mother's Day 15, 2nd Floor, Vlora (in the premises of "Aulona" Centre)

Tel: +355 3 3224531

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