

CSO activities related to the COVID-19 response

9-15 June

The announcements of the pandemic and the measures taken by the Serbian government to fight against the COVID-19 virus have changed the work of civil society organizations. The monitoring included 145 civil society organizations from all over Serbia. Most CSOs, almost a third, are involved in humanitarian work, while fewer than 15 organizations carry out their regular activities. In addition to humanitarian work, other areas that can be categorized as organizational activities are: monitoring, information, psychosocial support and advocacy. When it comes to individual activities within these areas these are: providing legal assistance, human rights monitoring, providing psychological assistance, dealing with health care, networking, education and fundraising. Slightly less than half of the organizations are active in Belgrade, and other CSOs are located throughout Serbia.

It is particularly important to emphasize the importance of working with the most vulnerable groups, through information on the poor current situation and the possible consequences of the pandemic on the groups concerned such as people with disabilities, women, children and the elderly, as well as migrants and the homeless.

Although the state of emergency in Serbia was lifted on May 6 according to available data the organizations will continue to organize their activities in the way they did in the state of emergency, especially bearing in mind that the consequences of the pandemic will be felt by their users in the coming period.

The following are the activities of some of the organizations that have been implemented in the past period:

MONITORING

-Bureau for Social Research- BIRODI in order to contribute to the preservation of the election public will begin the daily presentation of the findings of monitoring the reporting in the TV news on televisions with national frequency and N1 television about the actors of the election campaign. The data will be displayed in a daily and summary table. They published aggregate data for the period [8-13 June](#) as well as data for [12-13 June](#).

- The Center for Free Elections and Democracy (CeSID) [announced](#) that together with IPSOS Serbia they will organize a parallel counting of votes and be the first to publish estimates of turnout and election results on election night 2020. For this occasion, a stratified sample of 500 polling stations will be prepared. Turnout data will be collected during the day, ie election results during the evening. During the election day, CeSID and Ipsos Serbia will publish turnout estimates five times (intersections at 09:00, 11:00, 14:00, 17:00 and 19:00), while the first results are expected around 20:45, after which they will be broadcast live update until Ipsos Serbia and CeSID publish a preliminary assessment of the election results and associated mandates.

- The Initiative for Economic and Social Rights A11 [published](#) the results of a survey on the situation of the needs of displaced persons in informal collective centers entitled "What life looks like in informal collective centers in Serbia". The survey was conducted in October and November 2019 and covered

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seven municipalities with ten informal collective centers (one third of which are informal Roma settlements) and a sample size of 95 households with a total of 395 members. The unit of the survey was households, and an appropriate quota sample was used, with at least one third of the estimated number of households from each informal collective center.

- **The National Coalition for Decentralization (NKD)** within the initiative „ I vote when I vote”, [analyzed](#) the submitted electoral lists for the elections for deputies of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, which are scheduled for June 21. They focused on the territorial representation, as well as the positioning of candidates from the four largest cities - Belgrade, Novi Sad, Nis and Kragujevac, on the submitted electoral lists. According to them, the reason for this research is the fact that the citizens of 57 out of 174 cities and municipalities in Serbia in the last four convocations of the National Assembly did not have a representative in parliament, and in the current convocation there are no more than half of municipalities in Serbia (107). While in the past four convocations, the deputies from Belgrade had as many as 360 mandates, the citizens of 13 municipalities in Serbia have never had their representatives in the National Assembly.

-**The National Convention on the European Union** issued a [statement](#) within the WG for Chapter 23 on the completion of public consultations regarding the revision of the Action Plan for Chapter 23. The working group urges the Government not to adopt this document of strategic importance for the EU accession process before parliamentary elections. Since the mandate of the Government has expired and it does not have full legitimacy for making important decisions for the future of the country, the document should not be adopted now, when it has not been adopted in the previous 18 months, it is stated in the announcement. The working group also considers it problematic that a large part of the allegedly accepted comments were essentially not accepted in the proposed form.

-**The Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence (BFPE)** held the fourth [webinar](#) within the project Active Citizens - Better Society: Advocating for Cooperation and Democratic Development. Participants had the opportunity to see how the terrain is “mapped” in order to identify actors who are more or less active, for, against or neutral in relation to the advocacy initiative and see what are the possible angles and perspectives on a particular advocacy topic.

- **The Center for Democracy Foundation** organized a [webinar](#) on the topic "Solidarity during the pandemic- The response of civil society in the local community". The webinar discussed how to reach the most endangered, how to organize the supply of senior citizens, how the cooperation between the local self-government, civil society organizations, and health institutions functioned.

- **The Belgrade Center for Human Rights** [announced](#) that the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights - FRA has published a report on the state of basic human rights for 2020. For the first time, in addition to EU member states, the report also includes candidate countries for membership - Serbia and Northern Macedonia. The FRA 2020 report especially emphasizes the importance of protecting basic human rights due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Transparency Serbia** [announced](#) that the transparency of the work of state bodies continues to decline. Transparency in the actions of the Government and other state bodies was significantly reduced during the state of emergency due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The example highlighted the decision on the secrecy of

the number of respirators in the country, information on the procurement of respirators and medical equipment, as well as information on the needs of health care institutions and donations received.

-The Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability (CRTA) [announced](#) that their observation mission has completed the recruitment and training of more than 1,700 observers who will be deployed on a random and representative sample of 500 polling stations on Election Day June 21. Observing the election process in such a sample will enable CRTA to report on the course of the elections, compliance with the law and election procedures at all polling stations in Serbia. Observers, trained to the highest international standards, will monitor the quality of the election process at polling stations as well as the events and atmosphere in front of polling stations.

- The Center for the Rights of the Child has published a summary analysis of the newly adopted [Strategy for the Prevention and Protection of Children from Violence from 2020 to 2023](#). At its session on May 21, 2020, the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the Strategy for Prevention and Protection of Children from Violence for the period from 2020 to 2023, with the corresponding Action Plan for 2020 and 2021. This document represents an important step in the process of strategic improvement of the protection of children from violence in Serbia, especially bearing in mind that the previous National Strategy for the Prevention and Protection of Children from violence covered the period from 2009 to 2015. The Center for the Rights of the Child states that despite the indisputable importance of this strategic document, there are still certain omissions that occurred [during the process of its adoption](#).

- The Initiative for the Rights of Persons with Mental Disabilities MDRI-S and the Association Our House from Belgrade call for an [info session for employers](#) on the importance of including young people with mental disabilities in the world of work. The info session will present the benefits that an employer can achieve when hiring a person with a disability (for adjusting the workplace, reimbursing the salary of a work assistant, wage subsidy for a person with a disability without work experience, etc.) according to the Law on Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities, as well as the obligations of employers under the same law.

The Initiative for the Rights of Persons with Mental Disabilities MDRI-S and the Association Our House are also organizing a [one-day training](#) on the importance of including young people with mental disabilities in the world of work, which we will realize on Thursday, June 25, 2020 in Belgrade. The training is intended for people with mental disabilities, parents / guardians of people with disabilities as well as organizations of people with disabilities.

PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

-The Autonomous Women's Center issued a [statement](#) entitled: React before the crime, not after! The statement states that during the previous week, we read about the murder of two more women, as well as about a series of attacks on women who could also have been victims of this crime. Since the beginning of the year, 14 women have been killed in Serbia by a partner or family member, and in addition to them, the perpetrators have killed 4 more people. The Autonomous Women's Center asks what the competent state institutions will do to stop this ?

HUMANITARIAN AID

- **The Serbian Philanthropic Forum** organized a [discussion](#) on what the state should and must do for the non-profit sector, non-governmental organizations, associations and the civil sector. At the outset, representatives of Catalyst Balkans presented the key points of the research on the financial needs and challenges faced by non-profit organizations during and after the crisis caused by the pandemic. It was also pointed out that organizations, foundations, companies gathered in the Serbian Philanthropic Forum, collected and realized aid worth almost 2 million euros, from aid to health institutions, to aid to associations that gather and help those to whom the pandemic only brought additional problems with which they faced.

- **The Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation** continued to distribute aid packages in cities across Serbia. A total of 836 packages were distributed in [Cacak](#) in cooperation with the school "1. November", the Center for the provision of social protection services "Zračak", the Association of the Blind and Visually Impaired, the Association of Citizens LARIS, the Association of Paraplegics Cacak, the Association of Dystrophics, the Circle of Serbian Nurses, the Association for Cerebral Palsy, the Association of Deaf and Hard of Hearing . In [Prokuplje](#), 432 packages were distributed to the most endangered families - 402 for the users of someone else's care in this city and assistance, and 30 for the users of the "Sunce" day care center for children with disabilities. While in [Nis](#), a total of 1452 packages were distributed to the most endangered residents - families of school students with dormitory "Bubanj", SoS children's village Nis, Association of Dystrophic Patients Nis, people with disabilities, single parents, families without income, children without parental care.

- **The Rainbow Association** continues to [provide assistance and support](#) to all vulnerable groups of people affected by the global corona virus pandemic within the project "Response to the COVID 19 pandemic in the territory of Macva and Kolubara districts". This association states that the first and most important goal of their work is: "We are not waiting for endangered groups and individuals to come to us, we are reaching you!"