

CSO activities related to the COVID-19 response

30 June- 6 July

The announcement 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

-**SHARE Foundation** has published a special newsletter dedicated to the Covid-19 information system. The Covid-19 information system has been controversial since its inception. We are not sure who made it, under what conditions, or whether the system was made in accordance with the standards of information security and personal data protection. However, the most worrying was the controversy over whether the data on the spread of viruses stored in that system are credible. SHARE tried to clarify some of these issues in its new [video](#). It is also possible to read the [legal analysis](#) of the system in the new newsletter.

- **Partners for Democratic Change Serbia** followed media coverage during the corona virus pandemic. The results of that research were presented in the [report](#) "Media and the right to privacy during the corona virus epidemic". The report deals with the issue of treatment of personal data of citizens in media coverage of the corona virus, starting from the fact that health data are very sensitive personal data and that declaring an epidemic and imposing a state of emergency did not suspend domestic legislation, regulations of the Regulatory Body for Electronic Media and Code of Ethics for Journalists of Serbia.

- **The Center for Free Elections and Democracy (CeSID)** has prepared preliminary practical and long-term [recommendations](#) within the project "Dialogue on Elections: Improving Electoral Conditions to a Better Electoral Process in Serbia" supported by the Open Society Foundation, with the aim of improving the electoral process. The recommendations were prepared immediately after the end of the voting on June 21, 2020, while the final recommendations will be part of a broader report. They proposed short-term recommendations in the areas of electoral administration, voter lists, voter protection, media and funding. Long-term recommendations for comprehensive electoral reform have been proposed, which they believe are necessary and should be the subject of future talks. The recommendations include changing the electoral system from a proportional to a personalized proportional system, reforming the election administration and its professionalization, as well as reforming the process of registering parties and collecting signatures for participation in elections.

- **The Foundation Center for Democracy** organized an [online panel discussion](#) on the topic "Economic Challenges and Changes in the Labor Market in the Age of COVID". The aim of this panel was to achieve a dialogue between experts and other stakeholders who can comprehensively present the economic trends that emerged during the state of emergency, and above all their impact on the labor market and the socio-economic position of vulnerable groups. In the development of government policies, plans and economic measures, the focus must remain on vulnerable groups. The key issue will also be the initiation of social dialogue and the strengthening of international cooperation.

- **Initiative for Economic and Social Rights - A11** filed a [complaint](#) with the Regulatory Body for Electronic Media against Happy Television, and on the occasion of the show "Good Morning Serbia" broadcast on June 6, 2020 in which guests expressed inappropriate attitudes toward the African-American community in the United States. It is said in statement that by broadcasting such content, the show's editor and Happy Television heavily violated the provisions of the Law on Electronic Media, which stipulates that a media service provider is obliged to provide free, truthful and objective information and the educational level of citizens, and that the media service is provided in a way that respects human rights, and in particular the dignity of the individual, does not contain information that encourages, in an overt or covert manner, discrimination, hatred or violence because of race, color, national affiliation and other real or assumed personal characteristics.

- **Transparency Serbia** announced that one of the rare [recommendations](#) given by the TS during the dialogue on election conditions, which were accepted and applied, refers to the publication of the original minutes of the polling boards. This has made it possible for any interested citizen to see the abundance of irregularities in the compilation of these minutes, which was previously available only to the Republic Election Commission and the representatives of the four lists that received the most votes at a polling station. Some of them exercised this right and made public the information that the minutes from the polling stations were often filled in by the same people, that the minutes were allegedly made immediately after the elections and that the numbers were changed. In addition to what can be seen from the published minutes, another problem is now visible in connection with the June elections - that the minutes themselves do not correspond to the real state of affairs when it comes to ballots. If the suspicions turn out will be confirmed, it would further raise the question of the responsibility of the thousands of polling station members who signed the deficient minutes.

INFORMATION

- **The Independent Association of Journalists of Vojvodina** [called](#) on the competent health institutions and other state institutions to transparently and timely inform journalists about the local and regional situation regarding the spread of Covid-19 disease. It is said in statement that journalists throughout Serbia have been denied the right to receive information about the spread of the infection and therefore cannot do their job in accordance with professional standards. They also point out that it is inadmissible that public databases, which should serve as reliable sources of information, do not offer updated data, nor that journalists do not receive timely answers to questions of public importance.

The Independent Association of Journalists of Vojvodina (NDNV) issued a [statement](#) demanding that the Prime Minister of Serbia, Ana Brnabic, initiate a procedure for the urgent dismissal of the Minister of Culture and Information, Vladan Vukosavljevic, due to his uncivilized appearance in communication with the media and insults to journalists. In the column published by daily Danas, journalists Nedim Sejdinovic and Mihal Ramac, Branko Vuckovic and political scientist Dusko Radosavljevic presented their views, and the Minister reacted by sending an email to the editor-in-chief of Danas. NDNV warns the Prime Minister that the lack of reaction to such unscrupulous statements of Minister Vukosavljevic would be very dangerous for the further functioning of the media community in Serbia, because that would mean that the laws are completely subordinated to the whims of individuals in power.

PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

-**The Autonomous Women's Center** presented a [study](#) on social policy in Serbia, from a gender perspective and from the perspective of women with experience of gender-based violence. It is a presentation of activities aimed at transposing the *acquis communautaire* into the legislation of the Republic of Serbia, from the recently adopted Action Plan for Chapter 19 - Social Policy and Employment. The analysis focuses on four areas: social inclusion, social protection, non-discrimination and equal opportunities.

The Autonomous Women's Center issued a [press release](#): Why don't we have a report and assessment on the effects of the implementation of the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence? The statement emphasize that three years after the beginning of the application of the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence, we do not have an official, unified report of state bodies on the effectiveness of its application, because no sessions of the Government Council for Suppression of Domestic Violence have been held since July 2018. Three years after the beginning of the implementation of the law, the central records on cases of domestic violence (in electronic form), which would unite data from the competent state bodies, have not been established. Based on the monthly collected data, the Autonomous Women's Center prepares periodic reports on the application of the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence, and in this announcement they stated the data for 2019.

HUMANITARIAN AID

-**The Association RAINBOW** from Sabac continued its [activities](#) within the project "Response to the COVID 19 pandemic in the territory of Macva and Kolubara districts", which was supported by Switzerland, which seeks to provide the necessary support to those who need it. During May and June, they distributed 1000 packages, as follows: 250 Valjevo, 300 Sabac, 68 Koceljeva, 32 Vladimirci, 50 Ljubovija, 50 Mali Zvornik, 50 Bogatic, 70 Osecina, 65 Mionica and 65 Ub.

- **The Catalyst Balkans Foundation** has announced that it is on their donation platform donacije.rs within the campaign launched by the B92 Fund and the Serbian Philanthropic Forum for emergency assistance to Novi Pazar, Sjenica and Tutin in the fight against the Covid-19 virus, more than one million dinars were collected in just 24 hours, and 1,500,000 dinars in less than two days. From the collected funds, the necessary equipment was procured and delivered to hospitals in these cities. The goal has now been raised to 2,500,000 dinars and the action continues.

- **The Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation**, during the past week, held the third [Philanthropy Festival](#), which seeks to raise awareness about giving, philanthropic heritage, charitable activities and collective actions through numerous interactive and educational activities in order to improve the culture of giving in society. On the last day of the festival, citizens were invited to get involved in charitable actions of civil society organizations by choosing the activities they want to support through the platform dobrocinitim.rs, in order to individually contribute to the culture of giving becoming a habit.