



Annual operational REPORT

2015

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STRATEGIC AREA 1:

Supporting Civil Society Development
and Citizen Participation



tivities, partnership, advocacy, visibility actions as well as help desk services.

CI continues to be the main source of relevant information for civil society through its web site and social media channels. It is worth mentioning that we almost tripled the number of people following us on social media, as we have almost 7000 Facebook (<https://sr-rs.facebook.com/GradjanskeInicijative>) and around 8000 Twitter (<https://twitter.com/gradjanske>) followers. Besides, CI designed and launched a specific Resource Center web page (<http://razvoj.gradjanske.org>) which is, with around 7000 visits per month, the main source of information for the Serbian civil sector.

The

CI Program for Civil Society Development continues to be the most important pro-

vider of information and services relevant for the development of Serbian civil society. The Program acts as a Resource Centre that strengthens CSOs, individuals, and institutions by using a variety of tools such as: help-desk services, information events, interactive web platform, provision of trainings, seminars, mentoring and coaching, dissemination of small grants, etc.

The Program activities are designed to enable parallel work and synergy to strengthen the capacities of CSOs, institutions and individuals. In addition, the Program is implemented in accordance with the CI Public Policy Program in order to contribute to a greater civic participation.

A Consortium led by Civic Initiatives (including the Human Rights House, the Center for Development of Non-Profit Sector and the Foundation Dokukino), selected within EU funded project the “Technical Assistance to Civil Society Organizations” (TACSO). It is working as a Resource Centre for the development of civil society in Serbia. In the past, this partnership was used to further strengthen CI and the Consortium to take over all TACSO responsibilities in the future, and this by improving the ability to implement capacity building ac-

1.1.

Strengthening the capacity of CSOs in Serbia to fulfill their own objectives.

We introduced the Resource Center Help Desk function that is available to all interested parties on daily basis and covers a wide range of issues related to civil society. In the meantime, we established a system of tracking of received and answered inquiries. The system is used as a Resource Centre and is regularly updated and modernized.

Over the year, Civic Initiatives provided assistance to a number of inquires (more than two hundred) through the Help Desk Service using e-mail, phone calls, meeting etc., resolving different issues encountered by CSOs. We were mostly asked to help organizations to resolve administrative and financial issues (registration of new or functioning CSOs in accordance with the law for existing CSOs, registration of business activity as CSOs are allowed to choose one, etc.). However, we also received inquiries from well-established and experienced CSOs which were asking for assistance in the implementation or the preparation of complex EU or USAID funded projects.

The assistance to CSOs was also provided through regional on-field technical sessions organized in smaller cities throughout Serbia (Aleksinac, Sabac, Sombor, Novi Sad,

Beograd, and Cacak) gathering 84 representatives of local CSOs. In most cases, the initiative for technical session came from local CSO who contacted us and requested support. The lead for the technical organization of trainings was left to local CSO. It allowed them to strengthen their position within their local community and the relations with local self-governments whose representatives also participated in the trainings.

CI organized a number of trainings for representatives of 49 CSOs. We designed and implemented four trainings aiming at arming participants with basic skills that are needed for CSO functioning. One of the seminars was specifically designed to meet the needs of women groups. CI published a public call for participation to the trainings. The public call included an assessment questionnaire that helped us determine the real needs of the participating organizations and enabled us to create a tailor-made agenda.

A special attention is given to raise CSOs visibility and trust within communities. We organized two CSO Fairs, one in Sandzak and one in Southern Serbia, the most deprived areas in Serbia. More than 50 local CSOs presented their work and had the opportunity to interact with citizens. Local governments supported the events, while media reported them.

A special event called PRacka (Pracka – catapult) was created and implemented with the objective to contribute to CSOs' sustainability. It aims at straightening the capacities of CSOs in order to increase the visibility of their work towards their users, partners, media, donors and the general public. It allows them to share their experience, expertise and skills. Approximately 100 persons representing organizations from all around Serbia participated and evaluated the events as greatly useful.

We also continued to support the establishment and functioning of CSOs dedicated to youth. This included targeted technical assistance and individual work with leaders and members of these CSOs.

CI, in close cooperation with the Office for Cooperation With Civil Society and the Office for EU integration, published the Review of Potential Domestic and Foreign Funding Opportunities in Serbia (12th edition), providing information to CSOs, individuals and institutions about available funding opportunities.

We implemented a set of activities to support 35 networks representing around 500 CSOs, with the goal to strengthen their further functioning. An adapted assistance matched different capacities and fields of work of each network. The assistance included the provision of a set of trainings on advocacy, networks functioning (basic training for CSO networks that included the representatives of 6 networks), support for networks strategic planning (process design and facilitation), and the dissemination of small grants to support concrete networks advocacy actions. In addition, through this activity, we supported networks gatherings and meetings, and in some cases their official establishment (for those that previously functioned informally). We also designed and implemented technical sessions that were designed to match respective networks' needs in order to raise their respective capacities. The network supports also include mentoring and follow-up after the workshops and trainings. So far, 5 network advocacy plans were delivered through the processes which included coaching and facilitation of advocacy preparatory sessions, defining advocacy plan, supporting dialogue sessions with target groups and the creation of a framework for further promoting the advocacy messages. A total number of 100 CSOs contributed during these processes. Strategic planning workshops were held for 4 networks. This process will continue throughout 2016.

RC also initiated the process of strengthening the capacities of civil society to engage in the development of cooperation policy influencing on national and EU levels, capacities to raise awareness and engage in global learning activities, and capacities related to organizational development for the development of CSOs.

1.2. Strengthening the capacities of individuals, from institutions and systems or leaders in specific areas.

CI, together with NDI, as a successor of the NDI youth program, organized training for 18 youth representatives of political parties with the objective to strengthening their capacities to create evidence based public policies. After the training, with mentorship support, the participants created their evidence based public policies.

In 2015, CI implemented the YouthBuild program in Southern Serbia for the 4th, and for the 3rd time in Sandžak. This time with a different form compared to the usual one, called Youth Build IT. It was intended to provide the participants of the program with knowledge in the field of IT, namely the processing and maintenance of websites, a profession which is one of the most wanted. The YB program consists in activities that empowered young women from Bujanovac, Vranje, Presevo, Novi Pazar, Tutin and Sjenica coming from multiethnic, economically and socially devastated areas of Serbia. Respectively, one group of young women from Southern Serbia (15 participants) and one group from Sandzak (15) finished the Program.

The training program plan is made to respond to the requirements of the labor market in municipalities involved in the program. Considering that information technology represents one of the most profitable branch of industry and the fact that women are less present in this profession, we wanted precisely

to encourage and motivate them by providing the knowledge they needed. Besides the training given to develop websites, the participants of the program have attended the training for local activism and have acquired basic knowledge and skills of local activism. During this training, the participants are empowered to be independent, proactive, and to acquire a theoretical knowledge on local development, activism, concluding local partnerships and the implementation of local actions. Individual empowerment of young people is also encouraged through the improvement of personal skills in order to find a job or starting their own business.

A competition for a free production of two websites for organizations, companies and institutions from the territory covered by this project was announced in the framework of local activities. On the one hand, the aim of this competition was to highlight the importance of the internet in modern business. On the other hand, the aim was to promote the participants' knowledge and skills they acquired in order to be recognized in their communities.

It is worth mentioning that a study visit to Belgrade was conducted during the program. During this visit, 30 young women were given the unique opportunity to visit the Microsoft Developer Center.

After a tour of the Development Center, they were able to chat with the engineer about topics such as personal development and progress, gain information about his work, only in the Balkans, which are very proud of. Moreover, they presented their programs used for startups and the opportunities offered by these programs. They also visited Strawberry Energy and Start-it Center (very successful youth start-up IT companies in Belgrade).

After a formal completion of the YB classes, the participants of the program gained the necessary knowledge to continue being active in their communities, to actively look for jobs, or created their own business. 6 of participants found a job. One has opened her own firm which deals with decorations and graphic design.

Civic Initiative will continue to follow and to provide support without reservation to their initiatives. The YB program is followed and being promoted by national and local media as well as through CI social media outlets: www.facebook.com/YouthBuildSrbija and youthbuildsrbija.org.

1.3. Strengthening the capacities of institutions on local and national level.

CI included representatives of local self-governments in the implementation of our activities. This meant that they participated in debates on inclusion of CSOs in decision-making processes, on dealing with transparent funding of CSOs as well as on technical assistance sessions and CSOs Fairs. Nevertheless, these activities were not solely oriented towards them, they enabled local self-government representatives to listen to CSOs inquires, to interact with them and later to make respective decisions having expressed what they has in mind beforehand.

As a chair organization of HRHouse, CI enabled and connected The Commissioner for the Protection of Equality and the Councils of National Minorities. Through respective activities, we enabled these institutions to better cooperate with councils and national minorities in general as well as to protect and advocate for their rights. CI organized six trainings for 80 representatives of 21 Councils in order to give them the necessary knowledge and practical tools to use available mechanisms to prevent discrimination.

In addition, we recently started the implementation of a project that aims at getting independent Bodies closer to citizens by creating CSO focal points in local communities.

In December 2015, Civic Initiatives, through HRHouse and in cooperation with the Office of the Ombudsman, initiated activities to strengthen the capacity of the Ombudsman to launch legislative initiatives in cooperation with the civil society. The aim is to contribute to the improvement of the normative framework for the protection of human rights in accordance with international standards. During 2015, Civic Initiatives has organized initial and contract signing meeting with 18 organizations selected by the Ombudsman's commission. By the end of 2015, one analysis has been submitted out of a total of 44 that will be completed and submitted to the Office of the Ombudsman. The analyses are also published on the Ombudsman's website.

Another set of activities with independent bodies is also meant to strengthen and to further develop capacities of all independent bodies (Ombudsman, Commissioner for Protection of Equality and The Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection) through the development of local CSOs focal points platforms, in order to enable them to respond to violation of rights and related needs of larger number of citizens of local communities. By doing this, independent bodies will increase their credibility and trust among citizens. The full implementation of this project, whose preparation started in the last quarter of 2015, will allow citizens to better understand their rights, ways of accessing them in democratic society and thus the importance to develop democratic institutions .

Civic Initiatives held a number of consultations/meetings with different state institutions and their representatives. During these meetings, we had the opportunity to inform them about civil society's needs and opportunities. Among others, the CI executive Director, Maja Stojanovic, had meetings with the Prime Minister, the Minister of State Administration and Local Self-Governance, the Minister of Education etc. She, along with other CI representatives, had a number of meetings with other high government representatives (Deputy Ministries, Heads of Ministry Departments, etc.).

We are regularly consulting and cooperating with the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society in designing and implementing our/their or joint activities. However, The Office has been functioning for almost a year without a Director despite CI campaign to force the Government to solve the problem. The Prime Minister promised that the situation will be solved during a meeting with leaders of most prominent Serbian CSOs where the CI Executive Director participated.

The role of local offices in Bujanovac and Novi Pazar in the improvement of local communities is growing almost on a daily basis. They are recognized among all local level stakeholders as important and inventive civil society institutions. Local offices in Bujanovac and Novi Pazar also provided help desk services and initiated a trainings specifically designed to improve the capacities of local organizations related to the preparations of project proposals. The trainings are implemented by the CI staff as well as by local trainers educated within CI's ToT programs.


CI, as a TACSO Resource centre, supported the series of the two-day training "Enhancing cooperation of local governments and civil society organizations and transparent budget financing of their activities," which took place in February and March 2015. It was organized by the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society of the Republic of Serbia. The training was designed for representatives of local governments and municipalities. The aim of the training was to standardize public calls for financing CSOs by local governments and support the establishment and promotion of cooperation with civil society organizations.





STRATEGIC AREA 2:

Influencing the development and
implementation of public policies
at all levels



2.1. Networking of CSOs

Civic Initiatives maintained its membership and active role in networks on various levels: the Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN), the Central and Eastern European Citizens Network, the Network of Sector Organizations for Serbian IPA programming of CSO, the Human Rights House, the Federation of NGOs of Serbia, the National Youth Council of Serbia as well as in media and culture. In 2015, CI got its second mandate in SECO as the lead organization for civil society and in the National Association of Youth Work Practitioners (NAPOR) for which Civic Initiatives went through another accreditation process which resulted in Civic Initiatives being ranked in the top 3 organizations. Civic Initiatives, which seeks to raise the standards of youth employment programs, required a reaccreditation of its programs by the National Association of Youth Work Practitioners (NAPOR). CI went through the process of reaccreditation between July and October 2015. Civic Initiatives was officially reaccredited by NAPOR for the period 2015-2018.

Civic Initiatives, which is the leading organization in the framework of the SECO mechanism for civil society, media and culture, successfully coordinated a gathering of inputs from CSOs that are related to the programming of EU related IPA funds, both for CSF program Serbia 2016 and 2017 and Regional CSF program for Western Balkan and Turkey (IPA Multi-beneficiary program 2016 and 2017).

In addition, in cooperation with the TACSO Serbian office, CI initiated a project that aims at supporting all SEKO mechanism by increasing their visibility and influence as well as enabling smaller CSOs coming from rural parts of Serbia to take part in activities. In that sense, CI also organized a series of consultative meetings on local level with civil society organizations on the national and local level in order to present and improve the operation of this mechanism for the first time on local level. The organizations highlighted that

In 2015, Civic Initiatives maintained its focus on the Public Policy Program on monitoring and analyzing state actions directed on legislation and policy implementation in the area of civic participation. Civic Initiatives maintained its approach of inclusiveness and strong networking in order to insure stronger influence, more encompassing inputs and better representation of CSOs. In addition, we invested significant efforts to influence public policies related to enabling environment for civil society functioning and integration of civil society's core values (democracy, human rights and related values) into legislations and practice.

membership in this mechanism is significant, especially for smaller organizations, but that it requires greater involvement in the working mechanism, as until now, it has served only a source of information. One of the main needs of the organization is capacity building for participation in the programming and the use of EU funds.

In 2015, CI strengthened the position of BCSDN on a national level through monitoring and advocating for enabling environment for civil society in Serbia. CI published the 2nd National Monitoring Report on enabling environment civil society development and contributed to the comparative analyses/report of the civil society environment in Western Balkans countries and Turkey. The Report was presented in April 2015. The report is a mechanism for monitoring the development of enabling environment for civil society, primarily as a tool for citizen associations and the self-assessment of the Government and donors. It is also recognized as an important tool in the monitoring progress of state/CSOs relations, implemented by EU DG Enlargement. This action also provided the CI representatives to take part in numerous regional and EU level conferences and meetings and address our comments and inputs on the current situation and way forward for civil society to relevant EU structures/DG Enlargement. The results of monitoring were included in the 2015 EU Progress Report for Serbia.

HRHouse and its five participating CSOs members continued to successfully work in a common space since November 2014. In 2015, HRHouse was lead and administered by CI with full participation of other members. HRH, with CI support, managed to position itself as an important stakeholder within the civil society scene. Among others, HRHouse is leading civil sector activities related to chapters 23 within EU integration process (EU Convention Network).

A consultative meeting for SEKO was held in Bujanovac in order to determine the priority topics for this region: human and minority rights, civic participation, youth security

and mobility and the provision of social services. Both sides agreed to cooperate on these issues, with a special focus on the prevention of youth emigration to other countries. CSOs of this region considered that they are not able to work on their sustainability because they do not have the capacities to push this whole process. Almost all organizations have a problem with working space and can barely pay the rent. CI will continue to work on strengthening the capacity of these organizations.

2.2. Enabling environment for CSO development

In 2015, Civic Initiatives continued to advocate for changes in legal framework regarding the development of CSO in order to create a more sustainable and inclusive environment.

After years of advocating for changes in Laws on Volunteering, the initiative started in May 2014 due to a sudden rise in the number of volunteers in activities of rebuilding and recovery from the floods. A working group on changing the Law was formed and started working in 2015 with 10 representatives of CSOs (CI representative included) which is good practice example for participation of civil society in the early stage of the adoption of the regulation.

Civic Initiatives and another 113 civil society organizations adopted at the end of 2015 an initiative for the Serbian Government to harmonize a definition of public interest in different laws in accordance with the provisions of the Law on Association and the Law on Endowments and Foundations submitted by Trag Foundation. This change was made by adopting the CSOs' amendments on the Rules on the Mechanisms for Determining and Keeping Record of Beneficiaries of Public Funds which were put into effect on January 30th

2016.

In 2015, after years of CI and other CSOs advocating for the creation and adoption of a strategic document regulating civil society development, the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society of the Republic of Serbia finished the widespread consultation process toward making the National Strategy for an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development in the Republic of Serbia. The final document draft was submitted to the Government, but is still not adopted.

CI was involved and actively contributed to the “DG Enlargement Guidelines for Support to Civil Society in the Enlargement Countries 2014-2020”, which will be used for regular self-assessment of progress in the co-operation of State institutions and civil society organizations that will be monitored in the European integration processes. Within this process, CI had a leading role, as TACSO Resource Centre, in the preparation of the 1st Monitoring report for Serbia. The recommendations from this report regarding civil society/state relations were included in the Progress Report published in October 2015.

CI participated in the creation of Economic Value of the Civil Society in the WBT countries analyses (covering all activities in Serbia). This publication is available both on BCSDN and CI websites. This is the first study ever that gives an overview of the current situation of the non-profit sector in WBT countries and its economic impact. The Study maps and illustrates the financial capacities, size, outputs and value of the sectors vis-à-vis the overall economy. It will contribute to the process of legitimizing the non-profit sector and its activities and will raise awareness among state actors of the need to support civil society via state budgets and other resources.

In order to provide a unique database for monitoring legal framework and tracking developments in the practice in the area of enabling environment for CSOs, CI created and launched an online platform www.udruzenja.info. The purpose of the platform is to enable all interested individuals, citizens’ associa-

tions and other organizations and institutions, to contribute to the monitoring and advocacy efforts and also have an insight into the legal framework and practices enabling environment in Serbia. The platform is based on the principles and areas of the Monitoring Matrix and EU Guidelines 2014/2020.

As a member of BCSDN, CI awarded 2 grants to Serbian organizations and supported activities related to transparent state funding in 8 Serbian municipalities. Within this process, 2 policy briefs were prepared and published: “Towards efficient budget policies on local level - budget line 481 donation to NGOs” by the Centre for Development of Non-Profit Sector & Centar - Public Policy Research Centre, and “Line 481 - to improve the processes of monitoring and evaluation” by the Center for Democratic Development “Europolis”, Novi Sad. Both documents are available in Serbian on the CI website.

After the legislation in the area of Social Care changed and enabled CSOs to provide social services, Civic Initiatives have initiated a thorough analysis on public spending in this area in order to analyze effective budget allocation to CSOs providing social services. It thereby monitors the implementation of the new law and its effects on CSOs. The research focused on all 167 local self-governments during a period covering the years 2012, 2013 and 2014. Civic Initiatives requested budget spending data related to social care services and CSOs, from all local self-governments through Law on Access to Information of Public Interest. This comparative analysis is to be published in the first quarter of 2016.

CI continued to work on the establishment of a supportive environment for CSOs as service providers. CI was a partner in organizing a National conference about CSOs as social services providers. The Conference gathered more than 50 CSOs and government representatives. CI used the Conference findings and recommendations for the analysis of public spending in this area in order to analyze the effective budget allocation to CSOs providing social services.

In November 2015, as a part of a follow-up of building capacities of individuals and organizations to conduct further research like the abovementioned, Civic Initiatives provided a seven-day workshop on corruption and transparent state funding on local level, fund abuse and proper fund allocation for 4 activists/volunteers from small communities of Vranje, Novi Pazar and Bujanovac. These activists/volunteers are to conduct research and interviews in local communities during the first quarter of 2016, after which some of these stories will be published in a documentary in cooperation with activists from Romania, Bulgaria, Greece and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The initiative for the adoption of a Civil Code in Serbia started and a public debate was opened, though not in as transparent and inclusive manner in which it should have been. In December 2015, considering the significance of such a legal act for CSOs working in different areas, Civic Initiatives has organized a kick-off meeting with 12 leading CSOs in order to form an informal coalition. A platform will be created through which CSOs will be able to participate in the public debate and provide their input and contribution to issues they encounter.

In November 2015, CI organized a public debate about giving a more important role to civil society in Serbia with eminent representatives of Serbian CSOs. The debate was inspired by the anniversary of the passing of Miljenko Dereta, founder and long time director of Civic initiatives. The debate was opened by Eric Chenoweth, co-director of the Institute for Democracy in Eastern Europe and the editor of the special report: "Reflections on unfinished revolutions".

2.3. Monitoring of the EU integration process in Serbia and advocacy during process

In 2015, Civic initiatives took part in all relevant activities of established mechanisms for the cooperation between Government and CSOs in Serbia within the process of monitoring screening and negotiations. The Human rights House is leading the working group Judiciary and Fundamental Rights (for the chapter 23) and coordinated the process of consultations on the Action Plan for Chapter 23. The Action Plan adoption process included numerous CSOs relevant for this area and for the first time provided complete feedbacks on all CSOs inputs and comments and can be used as good practice example for other process of regulation adoption.

Since 2015, CI is also an active member in the National Convent Working group for the chapter 10 (Information society and Media). As a member of both group, CI initiated the formation of the National Convent sub-group for Media freedoms. Since the adoption of the "set of media laws" in 2014, which amongst others includes the Law on Electronic Media, Civic Initiatives has established a permanent monitoring for the implementation of this law. The reason for this, besides the overall monitoring of the freedom of information, is a clear provision of this law that provides for civic engagement in such form that CSOs can elect their candidates for Board member of Regulatory body for Electronic Media. The first round of election took place in November and December 2015, but due to attempts of political influence into the election process, by the end of 2015 no candidate has been elected for the National Assembly of Serbia. CI is running an active advocacy campaign to secure a smooth civic participation without political interference.

In 2015, CI initiated a public debate "Free Media" which was organized by HRHouse and all leading CSOs dealing with media freedoms, journalist associations and associations of media. The debate was followed by a series of meetings enabling better networking and coordination among all actors on the media scene.

Civic Initiatives partnered up with Policy Center (Belgrade, Serbia) and Integra (Prishtina, Kosovo) to organize the second festival of Kosovo culture and arts in Belgrade – “Miredita, Dobar Dan.” The goal of the festival is to contribute to the establishment of closer relations between the Serbian and the Kosovo societies and to initiate debates tackling common issues of our past as well as the future in the processes of EU integrations of these two countries. In June 2015, cultural and art events, along with political debates were held in Belgrade. In the second half of the year Bekim Fehmiu Week was held in several towns in Kosovo, screening most significant movies of famous Kosovo and Yugoslav actor as the symbols of the festival. Also as part of the cultural exchange, CI is working on translation of Bekim’s book to Albanian and its promotion in Kosovo. The overall coverage of the festival, in Belgrade and Prishtina, was positive and stroke encouraging comments from the wider public. CI will continue to organize the “Miredita, Dobar Dan” festival annually. The organization of “Miredita, Dobar Dan” 2016 started with the first partner meeting held in Belgrade.

and a more merit-based award system.

CI continued to work with and to support the work of the youth umbrella networks: KOMS and NAPOR. Among other, our representative had an important role in these organizations’ planning and strategy orientation within the participation in their governing bodies. Besides, CI’s idea for the creation of a youth network functioning in all six western Balkan countries was formalized and a declaration about the creation of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office was signed in Vienna by leaders of all six countries, with the presence of relevant EU representatives. CI representatives actively took part in the consultation process led by KOMS. This was the result of a coordination meeting, initiated and organized by CI, alongside with the Ministry of Youth and Sport, the National Youth Council, the Youth Initiative for Human Rights and the British, German and French embassies regarding the Western Balkans Youth Union. The idea was to secure the continuity of the Regional Initiative for Mobility (RIM), a mechanism created in 2011 for a regional cooperation in three Western Balkans countries: Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia.

The Ministry for Youth and Sports of the Republic of Serbia has initiated the creation of the National Program for Youth Employment, for which the National Youth Council of Serbia (KOMS) was entrusted with responsibilities. Toward this goal, a working body for the elaboration of the National Program was formed, in which representatives of the most prominent civil society organizations have participated. Members of Civic Initiatives formed an integral part of this body, which from June to October 2015 organized a series of joint meetings of the working group, planned a visit to the business sector, and created a draft for the National Program for Youth Employment. The Program proposal was completed in October 2015 and is awaiting adoption by the Government of the Republic of Serbia.

After completing the official training, the participants of the YouthBuild group from Bujanovac have conducted two local activities on the occasion of the International Volunteer

2.4. Youth policy

Traditionally on 12 August 2015, on the International day of Youth, the sixth MLADGRAD award ceremony was organized by Civic Initiatives. As the award in previous years was dedicated to organizations and local self-governments that showed the biggest progress in youth involvement in decision-making process, this year’s ceremony was organized to present a new concept for the award. This new concept is planned to take a bottom-up approach, organizations that work and monitor work of local self-governments will be the ones suggesting candidates. This will lead to a more proactive approach by CSOs on local level, less influence by local self-governments

Day and an on the International Day of human rights. A tea party was organized on the International Volunteer with citizens, as well as with the youth survey on the issue of volunteerism. A seminar on Human rights and Discrimination was organized for the International Day of human rights. The participants of the program from Sandzak organized a public discussion on the Human Rights Day with a special focus on women's rights in Sandzak.

The local office of Civic Initiatives in Novi Pazar actively provides support to youth organizations of civil society and local youth offices in Novi Pazar, Sjenica and Tutin in the form of expert advice and active participation in the development of strategies and action plans as well as through the organization of additional trainings in order to strengthen their capacities.

need for the reduction of classes of Civic Education, Civic initiatives engaged rapid response and contacts with the Ministry. The aim of such reaction was to prevent any large-scale decisions being made considering the subject without opening a wide and public debate. So far, Minister Verbic has altered his initial statement and changed this public policy course more in line with open and inclusive public debate. In coordination with the Ministry, CI will organize a wide public debate in the first quarter of 2016.

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2.5. Reform of educational system

In 2015, the thematic focus of CI continued to be on the status of Civic Education subject in the education system in Serbia.

In November 2015, Civic Initiatives organized an international conference on Civic Education with 12 partner organizations from Europe, EU member and candidate states. The conference was aimed at opening the discussion with students and encouraging exchange of experience on different models of Civic Education teaching. A draft policy brief was presented at this conference and shared amongst the 183 participants, mostly high school students and Civic Education teachers. After a statement given in late December 2015 by the Minister of Education, Srdjan Verbic, on the



