

# 2016.

## **STRATEGIC AREA 1: Support to Civil Society Development and Citizen Participation**

Program for Civil Society Development is implemented through CI's resource functions. The Program is implemented through Resource Centre that has crucial role in Serbian civil sector as most important provider of information and services important for development of CSOs. Variety of tools such as: help-desk services, information events, provision of trainings and seminars, mentoring and coaching etc. are used to strengthen the capacities of CSOs, individuals and institutions.

Program is implemented in accordance with CI Public Policy Program in order to contribute to greater civic participation.

Consortium led by Civic Initiatives (including Human Rights House, Center for Development of Non-Profit Sector and Foundation Dokukino), selected within EU funded project "The Technical Assistance to Civil Society Organizations" (TACSO), under the name TACSO by Civic Initiatives is working as Resource Centre (RC) for development of civil society in Serbia. In the previous period this partnership was used to additionally strengthen CI and consortium to take over all TACSO responsibilities in future period by improving the ability to implement capacity building activities, partnership, advocacy, visibility actions as well as help desk services. Resource center provides technical assistance to citizen associations, informal groups and CSO networks in order to develop their internal capacities, mutual networking, better communication with citizens, local self-governments and the media. In the process of transition TACSO services, during 2016 CI prepared CSOs Needs Assessment Report which was done by TACSO office during previous years. Combining outsourced survey, desk research and wide consultation process with the most important stakeholders, this document is used as baseline for further capacity building of civil society in Serbia by RC as well as other relevant actors.

### **1.1. Strengthened capacity of CSOs in Serbia to fulfill their own objectives.**

Technical assistance (TA) was provided through help desk services (meetings, phone calls, communication via e-mail) and field technical assistance sessions (trainings, mentoring). Through help desk services experts have, by e-mail, telephone or individual meetings, answered 172 inquiries concerning the work and development of civil society organizations. Received inquiries mostly referred to administrative and financial procedures, registration of organizations, legal advices, information concerning financial resources and European standards for writing projects and reporting. RC has provided technical assistance sessions on different topics that were determined based on the assessments of beneficiaries needs. In order to become more accessible to CSOs and provide relevant and timely information RC has implemented a novelty in its work – Open doors day – held every 10th of the month throughout the year. All interested civil society organizations can directly communicate with CI staff and get advices about the problems they encounter in their work. During 2016 RC organized 10 technical sessions for 82 representatives of 85 CSOs on topics such as: visibility, financial and administrative management of CSOs, diversification of funding sources, network development, writing projects etc. RC experts (CI staff) were also engaged in facilitation of strategic planning process of two individual organizations. As most of RC experts are members of CI staff, we provided follow-up mentorship for most of TA activities which was evaluated as very strong and significant support for RC beneficiaries. During 2016, networks assistance program that was launched in August 2015 was continued. Within this program assistance was provided to 28 networks in the fields of strategic planning, advocacy and network development. During 2016, 11 events were organized, gathering 271 network representatives. Supported networks are active in different fields: human rights, European integrations, ecology, urban development, poverty reduction, social protection, etc. Provided assistance resulted in creating strategic plans, campaign plans for public advocacy

and communication strategies of networks. This was a unique support tailor made for different type of networks and also resulted with increased level of support to individual organizations (networks members). Special attention was given to CSO visibility and trustworthiness within community through set of actions that were implemented by RC during 2016. CI organized two CSO Fairs in Kruševac and Požega with engagement and volunteerism which gathered almost 70 CSOs from Western and Central part of Serbia in order to promote work, increase visibility and enhance the involvement of CSOs in democratic social processes on the path of EU integration and promotion of civic engagement.



Third edition of two day conference PRacka (Pracka – catapult) was organized in November, as unique annual event dedicated to trends in communications in the nonprofit sector. Representatives of 50 organizations from all over the country had the opportunity to share their experiences, the current problems they are faced with and come up with the best solution to communicate their results to the public. The focus of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Pracka was: how to engage storytelling to change existing narrative and influence public perception of CSOs and other sectors. General aim of PRacka as annual event is to contribute to CSO sustainability by



straighten the capacities of CSO to increase visibility of their work towards their users, partners, media, donors and general public by sharing experience and expert knowledge and skills. Two basic visibility trainings were organized for 40 CSOs as well as several technical assistance sessions focusing on communication strategies and developing PR plans for CSOs. Resource center, with the TACSO Serbia office support, has started a training program for the new generation of trainers in the field of advocacy and strategic planning.

The aim of the program was to adequately respond to the growing needs of the civil society sector for strategic planning and advocacy issues, as well as to empower the training base of the Resource Centre and to promote trainers, their knowledge and skills to the sector. Over the course of several months, 27 trainers went through the Training for Trainers (ToT) set of workshops and assignments, with both technical support and mentorship from the TACSO by CI staff and experts and underwent the process of strategic or advocacy planning with local organizations. At the end of the ToT, 22 successful candidates received Certificates of Completion. Through their learning experience, the trainers for strategic planning development have had 17 strategic plan workshops with 132 participants from 35 CSOs from eight cities. The advocacy trainers have held 11 advocacy plan workshops with 97 participants from 25 CSOs from five cities. With this type of activities, CI strengthened own capacities. These trainers have already involved in regular RC activities as a members RC Pull of trainers for support in the area of the strategic planning and strengthening advocacy potential of CSOs.

In May 2016, CI managed to bring in Serbia fundraising expert from Revolutionize UK Alan Clayton - one of the leading consultants, coaches, creative directors and inspirational speakers on the world circuit, who has worked with over 320 non-profit clients around the world on different kind of fundraising, using researches on people's emotional behavior, donor insight and motivation as a tool for fundraising. His lecture "New Ambition Master class" was an unique opportunity for CSOs to learn on new fundraising techniques.



Also, Resource Center was involved in the process of straightening capacities of civil society to engage in development 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 development CSOs through the activities of the project Western Balkan CSOs for Global Development. CI representatives together with representatives of local CSOs participated in CB events: national CSO meeting, advocacy seminar and two regional workshops. During this year, CI also initiated process of introduction Quality Assessment System for CSOs in Serbia. Having in mind the specific situation in Serbia, where majority CSOs are not fully developed and recognized as partners by state institutions, and the public trust and perception of CSO work is not on high level, QAS could be established as self-regulatory mechanism and the tool to fostering CSOs development, accountability and transparency.

### **1.2. Strengthened capacities of individuals, either those from institutions and systems or leaders in specific areas.**

Starting from June 2016, within Youth Build programme, CI are implementing activities focused on youth employment and employability in the South Serbia and Sandzak in order to enhance the employability and employment of young people from these underdeveloped regions, through the establishment of a mechanism for the continuous support in the development of business skills and increase the competitiveness of young people on the labor market. Group of 30 young people from South Serbia and Sandzak was provided by leadership and livelihood trainings with aim to gain knowledge, skills and support to respond to new trends in business and changes in the labor market. After completion of working practices in local companies it is expected that, based on the expressed competencies, certain number of young people remains to work with employers. In a final phase, a group of participants will form the "Business info centers", which will operate as educational centers for young people on the development of business skills and knowledge, as well as model of cross-sectoral cooperation and support the development of local businesses. Business info centers will also serve as a resource to support small or newly established companies in the form of consultation, technical support and strengthening their internal capacities for business development.

Business info centers should be supported by local-self-government and Youth offices in Novi Pazar and Bujanovac during March 2017.





Within the period June – November 30 CI implemented activities aimed on strengthening dialogue on the purpose of EU integration of Serbia and increasing level of information and prejudice on Serbia's membership in the EU. This was done by providing clear information and answers to young people, encouraging them to independently investigate the benefits of membership and be engaged as active that arguably and freely expresses their ideas. 10 teachers of the different subjects in social sciences (civics, sociology, philosophy, geography, etc.) and 251 students of second and third year of high school from 3 towns in Serbia participated in the workshops of deliberation during the Civic education classes.



At the end of 2016, based on inputs of previous beneficiaries, CI started with implementation of activities aimed at strengthening citizen participation, encouraging citizens for greater participation in public life and their networking. Local citizens groups will be supported for local actions in their communities related with promotion of democracy, principles of good governance and freedom of expression. All local groups in different municipalities will be linked within the national network Local Front.

During 2016, CI continued efforts to contributing to citizens' participation through cooperation with Athens-Greece based organization InterAlia aimed at educating university students and young professionals on the issues of fund abuse and mismanagement, with specific focus on EU project funds. Also, young people have been involved in the activities within international network HomoEuropeanus (CI are one of the founders), established in order to provide bridge the knowledge gap about the EU between the younger generations from Member States as well as from Candidate Countries. Teachers and high school students have been passed through a process of reflecting on the values and their perception of EU Afterwards, students who participated in project were encouraged and organized to perform different activities in which ideas they had on EU would be put into practice in their communities.

Local office in Bujanovac particularly was focused on strengthening capacities of young people. At the beginning of the year, regular annual survey on the effects Youth Build program in the South of Serbia has done. The results indicate that the program has had a positive effect on young people. In southern Serbia (Preševo, Vranje, Bujanovac) program from the beginning passed 133 participants / ca, of which 78% managed to get a job or internship. Two trainings were held in Bujanovac, for high school students with topics related to gender equality, anti-discrimination and respect of human rights. Based on assessment of the needs of young people in this municipality, local CI office organized workshops on writing a CV and motivation letter and active job seeking for students of the Faculty of Economics in Bujanovac. Also, public debate on financial education for citizens, particularly youth, has been organized in cooperation with the Central Bank of Serbia. The main objective of the discussion was increasing level of financial literacy of young people, as well as raising the general level of knowledge and information that will enable young people to better understand different types of financial services.

Together with partner organization Integra (Kosovo) CI organized 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of Mirdita, dobar dan" festival with the goal is to establish new ties between Serbia and Kosovo by persons active in culture, media, civil society, through critical presentations and dialogue on contemporary issues facing the region and promote culture as a way of cooperation and learning about each other. The four day Festival consisted of various cultural and public events presenting life in Prishtina. Over 1000 people attended different events of the festival. The festival as a whole was conceived of as a forum for strong debate and a space to inform and educate the public about



issues that are sensitive in the political mainstream – particularly the relations between Kosovo and Serbia. The festival is also conceived as an informal, cooperative, environment in which artists, documentary film makers, journalists, writers, civil society activists, politicians and government officials can build relationships, with a view to supporting stronger good faith of Serbia-Kosovo cooperation.

## 1.2. Strengthened capacities of institutions on local and national level

CI continued expanding its cooperation with independent institutions in Serbia (Ombudsperson, Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data protection and Commissioner for Protection of Equality) in order to form a network of local CSOs through which citizens would have eased and facilitated access to the abovementioned institutions. During three month period, from March till May 2016 round table discussions with citizens from local communities and representatives of independent bodies were organized throughout Serbia. Aside from fulfilling its primary aim, project additionally raised trust and visibility of local organizations in their communities. As it was a common occurrence that citizens were filling complaints to Ombudsperson personally during roundtable discussions, evaluation feedback from participating institutions also showed importance of reaching out directly to citizens and their communities.

Also, CI continues to provide overall coordination and administrative support to project officially implemented through Human Rights House Belgrade, aimed at strengthening capacities of Serbian Ombudsperson for legislative initiatives. During 2016 total of 28 legal analyses prepared by CSOs were commissioned spanning thematically from freedom of assembly, specific labour rights of women in agriculture, rights of persons deprived of liberty, asylum seekers, freedom of the media and cultural rights of minorities. All analysis is publicly available on websites of Ombudsperson and Human Rights House Belgrade.



In cooperation with Ministry of state government and local self-government and Office for

Cooperation with CSOs, CI has organized two consultative meetings on the draft Action plan 2016-17 for Open Government Partnership with representatives of more than 80 CSOs, media and provincial and local self-government. Members of inter-sectorial working group (Ministries, Office for Cooperation with CSOs, Anti-Corruption Agency and CSOs) presented the measures

and activities proposed in draft of the Action Plan 2016-17 for OGP Initiative, roles and duties of all involved actors. Considering the draft of the Action Plan for 2016-2017 participants confirmed the importance of involving civil society in the consultation process, as well as the state's commitment to the of the administration's openness and its' commitment to the values promoted by the Open Government Partnership.

We were regularly consulting and cooperating with Office for Cooperation with Civil Society in designing and implementing our/their or joint activities. During 2016, after strong efforts of CI and other CSOs, the Government appointed new director of the Office after almost a year

without Director. CI initiated a numerous activities toward Government in the area of the civil society development which were supported and facilitated by the Office. Also, regular meetings have been organized with Ministry for state authorities and local self-government, Ministry for the culture and media and Chief of the Serbian Negotiation Team

## **STRATEGIC AREA 2: To influence development and implementation of public policies at all Levels**

During 2016 Civic Initiatives maintained focus of 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 core values (democracy, human rights and related values) into legislative and practice.

### **2.1. Networking of CSOs**

Civic Initiatives maintained its membership and active roles in networks of various levels: Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN), Central and Eastern European Citizens Network, Network of Sector Organizations for Serbian IPA programming of CSO, Human Rights House, Federation of NGOs of Serbia, National Youth Council of Serbia as well as in media and culture SECO Civic Initiatives maintained its membership and active roles in networks of various levels: Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN), Central and Eastern European Citizens Network, Network of Sector Organizations for Serbian IPA programming of CSO, Human Rights House, National Youth Council of Serbia as well as in SECO group for media and culture and in National Association of Youth Work Practitioners (NAPOR).

Civic Initiatives, which is the leading organization in the framework of the SECO mechanism for civil society, media and culture successfully coordinated gathering of inputs from CSOs related to consultation on midterm review of Indicative Strategy Paper for Serbia (2014-2020). Within the process of increasing visibility and influence of SECO mechanism, CI was in charge of



increasing level of the understanding of the SECO structure and its role in IPA planning and programming. In that sense, CI developed Communication agenda of the SEKO mechanism, and also initiated joint activities of the all leading organizations aimed on strengthening dialogue with Serbian Office for European Integrations. Also, CI, hosted members of Turkish delegation during their study visit to Serbia, aimed on examples of good practice in the area of the cooperation between state and CSOs in

Serbia as well as Serbia EU Integration Process as new framework of enabling environment for civil society development.

During 2015, CI strengthened position of BCSDN on national level through monitoring and advocating for enabling environment for civil society in Serbia. CI published the 3rd 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 is also recognized as important tool in the monitoring progress of state-CSOs relations, implemented by EU DG Enlargement. This action also provided participation of CI representatives in numerous regional and the EU level conferences and meetings and

addressing our comments and inputs on current situation and way forward for civil society to relevant EU structures/DG Enlargement. The results of monitoring were included in 2016 EU Progress Report for Serbia. Also, CI prepared the Report on the Economic Value of the Non-Profit Sector in Serbia in 2013 and 2014. The report contains data on situation with the collection of relevant data in Serbia, key economic data on the non-profit sector in Serbia in 2013 and 2014, recommendations for Serbia, as well as Comparative analysis of the economic value of the non-profit sector in the region. HRHouse and its five participating CSOs members continued to successfully work in its joint space from November 2014. During 2015, HRHouse was lead and administered by CI with full participation of other members. HRH with CI support managed to position itself as important stakeholder within civil society scene. Among others, HRHouse is leading civil sector activities related to chapters 23 within EU integration process (EU Convention Network).

## **2.2. Enabling environment for CSO development**

In 2016 Civic Initiatives continued advocating for changes in legal framework regarding development of CSO and creating more sustainable and inclusive environment. 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 cooperation 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 2nd Monitoring report for Serbia. Recommendations from this report related to civil society-state relations were included in Progress report published at the end of 2016. After the series of consultation meetings, organized by Civic Initiatives and supported by Trag foundation, in June 2016 CI submitted to Ministry of Justice an initiative for change draft amendments to the provisions of the Civil Code relating to associations, endowments and foundations. The initiative was aimed to eliminate the proposed solutions in the draft Civil Code, which impinge on the questions of freedom of citizens' association importantly change and limit the operation and functioning of CSOs. Totally 247 CSOs from 58 towns/municipalities supported this initiative.

CI informed CSOs on the changes related with re-establishing the obligation of the opening and closing sub-account with the Treasury Administration, prepared short guidelines with step by step information for the opening this account. After forming new Government, request for cancelation this changes were delivered to the relevant Ministry. This obligation existed previously, but it was abolished in 2014.

Also, during 2016, the local administration of public revenues sent Decisions for payment communal taxes for displaying the association's name as publicly visible to the numerous associations, without discrimination in in terms of requirements defined by the legal framework. CI prepared a proposal for a complaint form and made it available on its website. For those who have already paid the amounts of solutions, but subsequently found that are not eligible for payment of communal taxes, it was suggest to apply for a refund of the amount paid to the competent administration of public revenues. CI had the leading role in the monitoring the public call announced by Ministry of Justice for distribution of funds collected from the deposition of prosecution with total 351.509 million dinars (app. 2,8 million EUR) amount provided. The Evaluation Committee allocated whole amount of funds mainly state institutions and local governments for projects relates mostly to their regular activities and which for money should be distributed from existing budget lines (procurement of medical vehicles, equipping health centers, construction, etc.). Public call elements were set imprecisely, evidence of compliance with the conditions of the competition were reduced to the submission of signed statements, supported areas were generally defined (achieving public interest), as well as criteria for evaluating. Although it was formed in 2015 working group on changing the Law on Volunteering organized only one meeting in a year and a half aimed to discuss on proposition



submitted. The analysis of the effects of the Law on Volunteering should determine whether the changes of the Law are necessary. However, the Analysis isn't prepared yet. Therefore, CI organized a series of the consultation meetings with CSOs in order to collect up-dated inputs regarding implementation of the Law on Volunteering. During 2016 we made permanent advocacy efforts on local level regarding full implementation Government Regulation on transparent state funding and Guidelines for the inclusion of CSOs in the regulation adoption process as well as full implementation of recommendation of Independent institutions. These activities were part of our different events and programs and aimed on strengthening capacities of local CSOs to advocate full implementation the Government documents on local level. Thanks to CI's effort, obligation of development a uniform methodology of planning, monitoring and evaluation of implemented programs and projects by CSOs and monitoring of expenditure of allocated funds was included in II Action plan for OGP implementation.

From August 2015 to February 2016, CI conducted the analysis of public spending in this area in order to analyze effective budget allocation to CSOs providing social services. During the 1<sup>st</sup> half of 2016, we conducted follow-up of this activity in order to monitor implementation of the Government regulation on funds for social services on local level. During pre-election period, the Government suddenly adopted this regulation without any public debate. Civic initiatives informed other CSOs on its adoption as this is very significant document for CSOs-social services providers. As the Government very quickly after adoption, signed the contracts with LSG, we started with monitoring of its implementation and this will be the subject of detailed analyses during 2017. Our intention is to compare data from mentioned above research and try to create further recommendation for improving position of CSOs as social services providers.

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

During 2016, CI identified the pressing needs to address the issues of freedom of expression and of the media outside of the scope of Action Plan for EU Accession Chapter 23 (Human rights House is leading the Working group for the Chapter 23 - Judiciary and Fundamental rights) These issues mainly being: safety of journalists, privatization of the media, relieving work independent regulatory bodies from political pressures, transparent and accountable model of financing the media and media contents.

CI continued with active advocacy campaign to secure the civic participation process go smoothly without political interference in the process of the election CSOs candidates for Board member of Regulatory body for Electronic Media. First round of election took place in November and December 2015 but due to attempts of political influence into election process, but no candidate has been voted for in National Assembly of Serbia. Therefore, the National Assembly announced the second call for CSOs representatives. Group of CSOs (including CI) which supported candidate from the first round submitted complain to the Administrative court. All these activities led to the first set of activities that was implemented through support of Freedom House, which marked the return of this organization to Serbia after 12 years.

Activities were aimed at setting in motion stronger public pressure towards decision makers to adopt a new model of journalist protection that would encompass every individual that engages into any form of research and publication in areas of public interest. CI have organized a series of visits to cities and towns in Serbia in order to gather as much as possible experience and learn about the obstacles media and journalists in smaller communities face on a daily basis. CI's partner for these activities was Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS). For the reporting period, CI has organized six round table discussions in few municipalities.

As a result of these activities, in cooperation with Ombudsperson CI have commissioned three legal analysis regarding freedom of the media, minority rights and the media and safety of journalists.

Analysis have been completed, published and will be used in the future as part of advocacy efforts. So far, analysis have been used to influence drafting Memorandum on Safety of Journalists in May 2016. Memorandum was presented to State Prosecutor Office, Ministry of Interior and journalist associations. To raise the issue and open public debate on the case of TANJUG (state agency which still operates thanks to the legal gaps and political influences), CI have established cooperation with OSCE and through it organized a round table discussion in



March 2016. One of the conclusions from this round table discussion was that CSOs need to continuously address these issues through EU negotiation process.

Following conclusions from the abovementioned conference as well as round table discussions

throughout Serbia, in order to address these issues in a more systematic and effective manner, in June 2016, CI have formed a cross-sectoral group for freedom of expression and the media within National EU Convention and organized a two-day conference that was attended by the

representatives of CSOs, local media, journalists, Press Council – a self-regulatory body as well as representatives of The Ministry of Culture and Information and Head of Serbian EU Negotiations Team, Tanja Miscevic. As a result of these activities, in July CI have published analysis “Monitoring freedom of expression and freedom of the media in the process of EU integration” that will in the future serve as a starting document that will be updated as the progress is being made and new issues identified. This analysis was also presented during the first consultative meeting to more than 24 members of cross-sectoral group in October 2016. All these activities have been implemented with support of the UK Good Governance Fund.

In December 2016, CI have organized and facilitated national human rights conference “Basic rights, public policies and practice – EU standards”. It represents a follow up of the conference organized in 2014 by the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Italian Presidency of Council of the European Union “Basic rights, antidiscrimination and protection of vulnerable groups, including LGBT”. Keynote speakers at the conference were Head of Serbian EU Negotiations Team, Tanja Miscevic and Head of EU Delegation to Serbia, HE Michael Main conference conclusion was that EU integration process needs to be communicated in a manner that indeed reflects on everyday life of citizens in Serbia and that CSOs on national level for that part must form partnerships with state and local CSOs.

## 2.4. Youth policy

During 2016, CI transferred the MLADGRAD award ceremony to the KOMS. One of the CI strategic decision in 2016 is decreasing level of the activities related to youth policy was organized by Civic Initiatives, and KOMS (where CI are one of the founders) expressed the wiliness to continue with award process on the International youth day. CI will be involved in the further processes including developing new concept. The new concept is planned to take the 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 and more merit-based award system.

During 2016, Civic Initiatives advocated the establishment of the Youth Council in Bujanovac. Also, strong connections were established with the new elected local leaders who expressed willingness for further cooperation and participation of CI office in local decision-making processes and establishing new practices. Also, local office in Bujanovac conducted activities regarding child rights in order to

improve protection, promotion and implementation of child rights in accordance with the UN Convention through the empowerment of civil society to advocate for local mechanisms for the protection of the rights of the child.

## **2.5. Reform of educational system**

Focus on Civic Education remained on the list of priorities of CI during the year of 2016.

After turmoil that followed statement by Minister of Education, Srdjan Verbic given in late December 2015 on the need for reduction of classes of Civic Education classes and CI's rapid response the issue of educational reform and specific activities were further delayed by parliamentary elections in April, followed by negotiations of forming the Government that ended in mid-August. As soon as the cabinet was formed, CI initiated contact with newly instated Minister of Education, Mladen Sarcevic. So far two meetings were held with Secretaries from The Ministry of Education that expressed interest and support to establish formal cooperation with CI on the issue of Civic Education. Joint platform for future activities has been agreed upon and preparations for kick off conference are under way to take place in the first quarter of 2017.

## **STRATEGIC AREA 3: Strengthening CI capacities and re-positioning GI as a lead capacity building and advocacy organization in Serbia**

CI continued implementation of Capacity Development Plan during 2016 and this will continue during 2017, as planned. At the moment CI have 12 employees and two interims, one per each program. In terms of management and structure, new CI board was elected on July 15<sup>th</sup> on the Assembly meeting. Assembly members agreed that they are satisfied with the work and results after CI's transition. CI have not only managed to survive, but have retained the quality, field of work and even opened some new topics. In 2016, two Board meetings were held. On the first Board meeting, members, President and Vice President of the Board and Acting Executive Director of CI were elected. New Board members are: Ivana Cirkovic – President (ex Director of the Government Office for cooperation with civil society), Relja Dereta – Deputy president (Expert for communications and NGO activist), Zarko Puhovski (University professor and publicist from Croatia), Mia Vukojevic (Program manager, OAK Foundation Geneva) and Srdjan Bogosavljevic (Founder of CI and director of the Ipsos Strategic Marketing Agency). Due to the departure of Executive Director Maja Stojanović on maternity leave, Program Manager for Public Policy Bojana Selakovic was chosen for the position of Acting Executive Director. On the second meeting in September 2016 three crucial recommendations of the Board were given in order to strengthen further growth of the organization: narrowing the focus on a smaller number of topics, and thus the activities, improving external communications in order to contribute to a better understanding of the sector by the citizens and establishing more efficient CI structure. CI plans to use these recommendations on Strategic planning in January 2017.

Also, Board approved the decision regarding transition process in the local offices that will be transferred in the independent spin of organizations. Most of employees still will be engaged in the different role and with full support in their further activities. This was made after careful needs assessment and achievements of the office. Taking in to consideration duration of CI presence in Bujanovac and Novi Pazar all efforts and invested resources, and capacity building of the employees, it is estimated that efficiency will be better with independent local organizations in these communities. CI continued implementation of the existing fundraising plan by identification of additional sources of funding as well as by identifying new fundraising techniques. Among others, existing fundraising plan includes development of donate button, development of crowd-funding campaigns, development of economic agreements to provide technical assistance in the areas of our expertise, etc. As it is mentioned within the Strategic Area 1, CI organized the lecture of the fundraising expert from Revolutionize UK Alan Clayton. For the first time, CI piloted event organization with charging tickets in order to practice new way

of fundraising. Alan Clayton also managed 2-day workshop for CI stuff providing the methodology and facilitating the process in order to support our efforts in defining the subject of the fundraising campaign based on constituency building. CI provided financial support from OAK Foundation for further mentorship of the Revolutionize UK experts during campaign implementation which is planned for spring 2017. Donate button is developed and CI plans to use it and promote it during the campaign.

Regarding economic grants and partnership with the companies that implement tenders in the area of civic participation, CI continued work on TACSO project supported by European Commission and implemented by SIPU International. Within this project CI receive yearly grants (2015-2017) of 65.000 Euros for staff and admin costs. The activities within this project, implemented/organized by Civic Initiatives, are covered directly from the SIPU International and ranges around quarter of the million each year. PERFORM program supported by Swiss Government and implemented by Helvetas which was delayed due to extraordinary parliamentary elections during 2016, continued in the area of the strengthening position of the Civic education in Serbia. As it was planned, CI officially became a partner in the Consortium for the implementation of the UK Good Governance Fund led PwC (UK). Within this partnership, CI provided an expert support for the National Convention for European Union in the area of the Freedom of expression. Other costs for these activities were paid directly by PwC. Capacities for delivery of services - In order to improve staff capacities in delivering and facilitating different kinds of trainings for CSOs and other actors, CI organized training of trainers (ToT) for staff members in January that was held by Dubravka Velat, current CI's Advisor. This was very important for CI because, although the staff members are experts in their fields of work, they had a lack of the coaching skills. After ToT, individually mentorship for staff members was provided. Also, 6 staff members are attending external Capacity Building Program tailor made for RCs by TACSO Regional Office. As a result, some staff members who never before held trainings, managed to prepare and deliver trainings.

Individual learning – CI staff participated at external trainings and events in order to raise its capacities: P2P regional conference on EU guidelines, conference Civil society role in public administration reform, study visit of NKEU to Brussels with in P2P component, P2P study visit to CSOs and intuitions in Estonia, TAIEX workshop on Freedom of expression and media pluralism, TACSO Regional capacity building Program for RCs. Internally, CI stuff members conducted more than 30 coaching and peer support sessions on different topics. In 2016 CI covered 88,79% of total events of the RC by internal capacities.

Decision making mechanisms - Consultations regarding revision of procedures for sharing information, delegation, decision making and responsibility were held and some changes are made in order to mirror the current state of affairs. Draft Policy on attraction and management of volunteers also was made.

Taking into consideration Board recommendations, process of the new Strategic Plan will be started. Thus, development of CI software will be done during next period due to the fact that the existing draft is made based on the current SP.

## **PUBLIC RELATIONS**

CI continued with the existing PR strategy in 2016 with some alterations due to the shift in trends. Most of our targeted audience is now receiving information through social media like Facebook and Twitter and websites are not their primary source of information. This trend led us to use social media channels for communication channels parallel with website posts for dissemination of our messages. Our official website gradjanske.org and the Platform of Resource Center have declined in average visit for about 40% (average visit is now around 6000 unique users per month). However, average time spent on the website have increased, which leads to a conclusion that those looking at the website know exactly what they are looking for. CI



website and the Resource Center platform have had around 80 000 visits in 2016. Analytics showed that most of the website visitors use their mobile phones to access the website.

On the other hand, official FB page of CI have had an average organic reach of 5500 FB users per post, which is over 2000 more than previous year and it is estimated that our Facebook posts reached more than 450 000 Facebook users. Our FB community counts almost 8000 followers. Our Twitter account is followed by almost 9000 people, almost 1000 more than in 2015. Both Facebook and Twitter account of CI are perceived as a main source for timely and accurate information regarding both CI and nonprofit sector in Serbia and we are recognized by wide audience as an organization who answers all inquiries fast and efficient. CI YouTube video channel has 43,523 views so far.

CI now have Instagram account, relatively new platform for NGOs that we explored in 2016 and with carefully selected photos and hashtags, we are introducing CI to a new target audience with success. We have used Instagram for several campaigns and more informal photos of CI staff and office „atmosphere” to attract different target groups and new supporters.

CI continued to send public statements regarding all mentioned issues - freedom of assembly and association, civic education, human rights and discrimination, national and local youth policies, social protection, etc. Public statements were spread out both as a reaction to current situations and as an expression of CI attitude about different issues which weren't covered enough in the media. Also, CI continued close cooperation with FONET News Agency, which is following and publishing news about all CI events and activities.



Civic Initiatives and its activities were presented in more than 441 texts, statements and media appearances. In accordance with collected clipping units, it is estimated that we have managed to reach up to 3 500 000 people via traditional media.

CI celebrated 20th birthday with social media campaign, naming 20 milestones in 20 years, Birthday party event gathered important domestic partner NGOs, donors, representatives of institutions and government bodies as well as ex and current CI staff.

Third PRačka conference gathered new followers its Facebook page Post engagements during the conference was over 38.000 and average reach was about 5000 per post. Hashtags used #PRacka and #PRipovedanje reached up to 29 000 Twitter users.

According to the Outreach plan for 2016 and consultations with CI Board Members, CI has decided to focus its resources and discontinue usage of websites and FB pages of several finished projects and increase presence on the remaining channels.

To meet the interests of different target audiences and communicate with them, CI has continued developing the following Internet platforms that are successfully combining traditional websites and blogs with social media networks:

- [gradjanske.org](http://gradjanske.org) is the main CI website where all project activities are being published. It is combined with the main CI Facebook page: [facebook.com/GradjanskeInicijative](https://facebook.com/GradjanskeInicijative), CI Twitter profile: [twitter.com/gradjanske](https://twitter.com/gradjanske) and You Tube channel: [youtube.com/user/gradjanske](https://youtube.com/user/gradjanske). We now also have an Instagram account @gradjanske and LinkedIn account Civic Initiatives/ Gradjanske inicijative.

- [razvoj.gradjanske.org](http://razvoj.gradjanske.org) is a website of CI Resource Center launched in 2014. This website contains all relevant information for CSOs, such as trainings, tutorials, competitions, funding opportunities, etc.

- Mireditadobardan.com is an official web presentation of Miredita, dobar dan festival. This website is in English and is connected with Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/mireditadobardan>
- [youthbuildsrbija.org/](https://youthbuildsrbija.org/) promotes all the activities of the YouthBuild Serbia program and similar topics and it is also available as a Facebook page: [facebook.com/YouthBuildSrbija](https://www.facebook.com/YouthBuildSrbija)
- <https://www.facebook.com/konferencijapracka> is an official Facebook page of #PRacka conference, containing the news about the conference and other relevant information about communication for CSOs
- [facebook.com/pages/Gradjansko-vaspitanje/](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Gradjansko-vaspitanje/) is a Facebook community of Civic Education teachers, their students and partners
- [www.fens.rs](http://www.fens.rs) is the Internet presentation of the Federation of Nongovernment Organizations of Serbia (FENS) where all relevant information about this network can be found. However, the content of this website is yet to be updated due to the future strategic changes within the network.

Civic Initiatives Newsletter in 2015 transformed into TACSO by Civic Initiatives – but the purpose remained - to keep all of our CSOs informed about all of the activities relevant for civil sector in Serbia. In 2016 – 47 Newsletters with 597 news items were sent (weekly) through Mail Chimp campaign sender – specialized online platform, to around 4000 addresses.

CI Outreach plan for 2017 is in draft version, to be fully done by the end of February 2017. This plan contains a precise division of PR roles and duties, timetable of preset events for 2017, topics which we plan to present to the public, messages for different target groups and different communication channels through which we plan target wider audience and gain supporters.

