



Annual operational REPORT

2017

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	STRATEGIC AREA 1: Supporting Civil Society Development and Citizen Participation.....	3
1.1.	Strengthening the capacity of CSOs in Serbia to fulfill their own objectives.....	3
1.2.	Strengthening the capacities of individuals, either from institutions and systems, or leaders in specific areas.....	5
1.3.	Strengthening the capacities of institutions on local and national level.....	6
<hr/>		
2.	STRATEGIC AREA 2: Influencing the development and implementation of public policies at all levels.....	7
2.1.	Networking of CSOs.....	7
2.2.	Enabling environment for CSO development.....	8
2.3.	Reform of educational system.....	9
2.4.	Monitoring of the EU integration process in Serbia and advocacy during the process.....	9

STRATEGIC AREA 1:

Supporting Civil Society Development
and Citizen Participation

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

Throughout 2017, RC continued to provide technical assistance on different topics based on the assessments of beneficiaries' needs. The assistance was provided through help desk services (meetings, phone calls, communication via e-mail) and on-field technical assistance sessions (trainings, mentoring). Through help desk services, experts have, by e-mail, telephone or individual meetings, answered to more than 90 inquiries concerning the work and development of civil society organizations. The received inquiries were mostly related to administrative and financial procedures, registration of organizations, information concerning financial resources, and diversification of funding. Civil society organizations, when interested, can also directly communicate with the CI staff and get advice about the problems they encounter in their work through Open doors day, which is held every 10th of the month since 2016. During 2017, CI has provided technical assistance through tailored sessions to 50 representatives of 46 CSOs from different parts of Serbia. A TA field session was held in Subotica for 13 CSOs from Vojvodina, and covered topics related to advocacy, transparent funding of CSOs and participation of CSOs in decision making on

local level. In Belgrade, 11 TA sessions were held as a part of the "Open doors day" that has been organized every month in the premises of RC in order to ensure greater availability of experts to all interested CSOs. The topics covered regarded financial management, HR management, budgeting, visibility etc. As most of RC experts are members of the CI staff, a follow-up mentorship for most of TA activities was provided and was evaluated as a very strong and significant support for RC beneficiaries.

A special attention was given to CSOs' visibility and trustworthiness within the community through a set of actions that were implemented by RC over 2017. During this reporting period, two Civil Society Organization Fairs called "Citizens in Action" were organized. The CSO Fair held in Zaječar was organized in cooperation with The Office for Cooperation with Civil Society and with the support of local Regional Agency for Development of Eastern Serbia. The Fair attracted 40 representatives from 18 CSOs from across the region of Eastern Serbia. CSOs had the opportunity to showcase their products, actions, and talk to citizens. Along with the main exhibitory program, additional special events were organized: a media corner and a presentation of the work of associations. The most visited event of the Fair was the panel discussion: "Cooperation between local government and civil society", it gathered 46 representatives of 25 interested organizations. The discussion provided an opportunity for CSOs to present their problems in cooperation with the local government, and to hear some positive examples of good cooperation and to learn from the experience of others. The second CSO Fair was organized within the Final TACSO conference on October 11th. The focus was on CSOs with social entrepreneurship component and CSOs that are service providers. The fair gathered 42 representatives of 28 CSOs from different parts of Serbia and was also used as a forum for exchange of experiences among regional CSOs, which will additionally strengthen the position of rural CSOs that are usually deprived of such opportunities. The Fair was used to present the work of local CSOs to regional and EU stakeholders,

as a networking opportunity, but as well to exchange positive experiences and share challenges relevant for the improvement of social entrepreneurship.

In order to further promote the efforts of various CSOs, RC continued promoting success stories. During 2017, a total of 24 success stories of civil society organizations in Serbia were published and shared through all available communication channels.

A digital media help kit to CSOs containing models and templates for simple communication strategy and action plan, press release, news story and media advisory has been published and circulated through all communication channels.

The ToT program for new generation of trainer in the areas of Strategic development and Advocacy was finalized and the RC expert pool was enriched with 21 certified trainers (8 for advocacy, 13 for strategic planning). During this period, an additional learning opportunity was provided to newly certified trainers. RC launched an open call for the provision of technical assistance to CSOs in the fields of strategic planning and advocacy. With the support of RC experts, assistance was provided to 26 CSOs (18 in the area of strategic planning and 8 in the area of advocacy) from different parts of Serbia active in various fields. A total number of 19 workshops were held in 9 towns in Serbia, gathering 166 representatives of participating CSOs. After the initial workshop, mentorship support was provided to CSOs in order to develop strategic plans and advocacy campaigns. As a result of the workshops, 12 final and draft strategic plans were developed as well as 4 advocacy plans.

As part of capacity building efforts, two basic trainings for small and newly established CSOs were held in Belgrade. Based on the needs assessment, the program was designed to address the needs and offer basic knowledge and skills relevant for organizational development in the fields of financial management, administrative management, HR management and PR. Besides, RC organized a training on

monitoring and evaluation targeting mid-developed and developed CSOs. It also organized training on community organization directed to CSOs that are already experienced in advocacy offering different approaches to community organizing methodology. The four trainings have built the capacities of 73 CSOs from different parts of Serbia. Assistance was also provided to Resource centre for research support. RC experts led the process of strategic planning that included the workshop and the mentorship process in the development of the document.

After twelve edition of “Review on potential domestic and foreign funding opportunities”, RC launched the online Guide for CSOs funding opportunities in partnership with the Office for cooperation for CSOs and Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit of the Government of the Republic of Serbia. The online platform offers information on present donors as well as individual open calls and is searchable by different criteria. The application was very well received among the CSO community. It received more than 1000 visits since its launching in July. In order to provide information relevant to administrative and financial management of CSOs, RC experts designed the “Manual for practical financial and administrative management of CSOs”. This manual for CSOs is based on the experience gained from the provision of assistance through HD and TA services and is designed to provide CSOs with practical instructions and advice. It is published in electronic form on RC’s websites and social networks.

Resource Center was involved in the process of strengthening the capacities of the civil society to engage the development of cooperation policy influencing on national and EU levels through the project “Western Balkan CSOs for Global Development” aimed at strengthening Western Balkans’ civil society and their involvement in efforts towards global poverty eradication and global justice. In 2017, two meetings were organized in order to mobilize and encourage CSOs to work together to raise public awareness in EU candidate countries about the need for education development

and engagement in the international development agenda.

Within the project “CSOs, development cooperation and dialogue”, an event was organized with the aim of presenting the benefits of developing cooperation and gathering stakeholders. The objective was also to advocate the inclusion of local CSOs in national processes related to development policies and legal framework, and to foster dialogue with state representatives. Also, CI together with the project partner CI developed Serbia Country Paper that provides an overview of Serbian civil society involvement in developing cooperation. Also CI contributed to two more policy briefs developed under the projects “Fostering an enabling environment for civil society contribution to global development” and “Meaningful involvement of CSOs in SDGs - Are western Balkans falling behind?”

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

CI continued to implement the Youth-Build program. It changed in 2017 to try to answer the challenges met in the youth employment. All changes were led and monitored closely together with YouthBuild International.

During 2017, 30 young people passed the training program after 22 days of training. The number of implemented community initiatives within the YouthBuild program is presented in the table below:

COMMUNITY INITIATIVES IN NUMBERS

- 30 supported projects of formal and informal groups in two grant rounds
- At least 159 volunteers participated in the implementation of the projects
- 33 % of supported projects are implemented in rural areas
- 72 % of supported projects are led by young people (aged 15 to 30)

The details of the YB programs are as follows:

Firstly, as a part of the Youth Build program from June 2016 to the end of March 2017, with the support of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, CI conducted programs that aimed at increasing employability and employment of deprived young people in southern Serbia and Sandzak (mainly Albanian and Roma population, with around 50% of women participants). Moreover, the aim was to establish a mechanism for continuous support in developing business skills and increasing the competitiveness of young people in the labor market.

Secondly, young people started mapping the needs of local employers, resulting in the publication “Analysis of Needs of the Youth and the Labor Market in South and Southwest Serbia.” The purpose of this document is to provide an overview and analysis of the existing needs of young unemployed people and the labor market with the objective of forecasting needs in the field of employment, future competencies, forecasting future trends and needs for skills, supply, and demand.

Lastly, in the final phase of the project, a group of participants, with the support of CI, formed Business Info Centers, which function as educational centers for young people in order to develop and improve business skills and knowledge, as well as the model of cross-sectorial cooperation and support to the development of local enterprises.

CI partnered up with Obrenovac Youth Fund (OYF) and successfully completed the YB program Fund for neighborhood initiatives in December 2017. Over the last six months, playgrounds for children, sports fields, a theater festival and educational workshops for children were organized. In the meantime, on December 5th, during the International Day of Volunteers, a contract was signed with groups whose ideas are selected on the contest of the Youth Fund. Young people in formal and informal groups will implement their initiatives in the field of sports, culture, and arrangement of public areas by the end of March, while the OYF team will monitor their flow and provide the necessary support.

At the end of the year, the Foundation organized the New Year's OYF Market, an event that emerged from the idea of boosting community interaction through fun, cultural and entrepreneurial events. It is a unique local fair, which aims at promoting and supporting small creative entrepreneurial initiatives. After the announced public invitation, 48 exhibitors applied, including designers, handicraft producers and people who are engaged in creative crafts.

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

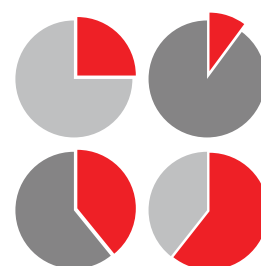
During 2017, CI continued to provide support to the Government office for cooperation with civil society. As it is stated within the 2nd Action plan for the Open Government Partnership in Serbia, CI supported Government Office's trainings for CSOs in Serbia regarding full implementation of the Government Guidelines for inclusion of CSOs in decision making processes. A total of 4 trainings and more than 50 CSOs took part in these events, created and implemented with joint efforts of the Office and CI.

Also, CI is member of the national consortium for the distribution of GGF funds in Serbia. We were actively advocating for the technical assistance to the Office throughout this opportunity. Together with the Office representatives, CI developed the concept for the support and it is expected that this support should be established after March 2018. CI will manage this TA program.

As a member of the Inter-sectorial working group for the 2nd Action plan for the Open Government Partnership in Serbia, together with the Ministry for the state administration and local self-government, CI organized three presentations of the adopted Action plan to the local self governments and local CSOs in

Subotica, Zajecar and Belgrade. Taking into consideration that AP predicts significant obligations for the LSGs, this activity was very important for all local actors.

Strengthening the Ombudsman's capacity
Since 2015, Civic Initiatives, as a part of the Human right House Belgrade, together with the Ombudsman, have been implementing a project aimed at contributing and improving legal framework for the protection of human rights in accordance with relevant international standards and legal acquisitions of the European Union. Within the project, civil society organizations and scientific research institutes are engaged to provide the Ombudsperson institution with analysis of laws and by-laws, as well as analyses of the situation in the field of human rights. These documents will be the basis for further legislative initiatives of this institution, but also for launching a broader professional dialogue on legal regulations in the field of human rights protection. In 2017, fifteen analyses were developed. The project is funded by the Embassy of Great Britain in Serbia and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and it will last until the end of February 2018.





STRATEGIC AREA 2:

Influencing the development and
implementation of public policies
at all levels

During 2017, Civic Initiatives remained focused on the Public Policy Program and on the monitoring and analyzing of state actions toward legislation and policy implementation in the area of civic participation. Civic Initiatives maintained its approach of inclusiveness and strong networking in order to ensure 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 legislation and practice.

2.1. Networking of CSOs

Civic Initiatives maintained its membership and active roles 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 the SECO group for media and culture and in National Association of Youth Work Practitioners (NAPOR).

In 2017, Bojana Selakovic, Program director of Civic Initiatives has been elected to the Board member in the Balkan Civil Society Development Network and is actively involved in all strategic activities of the BCSDN.

During 2017, CI actively strengthened its relations with the CIVICUS network. CI became a voting member organization as well as participated in the Civil Society Week 2017 in Fiji. As follow-up of these activities, CI is preparing an application for hosting the next CSW in Belgrade together with BCSDN and numerous local partners from Serbia. CI believes that this

could be a good opportunity for the whole Serbian civil society in terms of promotion of activities as well as a higher visibility of challenges and concerns. It will mobilize all possible local and regional resources.

Civic Initiatives, which is the leading organization in the framework of the SECO mechanism for civil society, media and culture, successfully coordinated visibility actions for the whole network as well as strongly advocated the influence of the SECO mechanism on the Government, particularly the Ministry for European integrations.

In 2017, CI continued monitoring and advocating for enabling environment for civil society in Serbia, within the BCSDN network. CI published the 4th 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 an important tool in the monitoring progress of state/CSOs relations, implemented by the EU DG Enlargement. This action also allowed the participation of CI representatives in numerous regional and EU level conferences and meetings to address our comments and inputs on the current situation and way forward for civil society to relevant EU structures/DG Enlargement. The results of the monitoring will be included in the Country Report for Serbia that will be presented in March 2018.

HRHouse and its five CSOs members continued to successfully work in its common space, and this since November 2014. In 2015, HRHouse was lead and administered by CI with full participation of other members. HRH, with the CI's 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 of the EU integration process (EU Convention Network). During 2017, HRHouse conference space was strongly recognized by Serbian CSOs and used for numerous events, conferences, seminars etc.

Together with the partner organization Integra (Kosovo) and Youth Initiatives for Human Rights, CI organized the 4th edition of “Mirdita, dobar dan” festival with the goal of establishing new ties between Serbia and Kosovo thanks to 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 Festival consisted of various cultural and public events presenting life in Prishtina. Over 1000 people attended different events of the festival.

2.2. Enabling environment for CSO development

In 2017, Civic Initiatives continued to advocate for changes in legal framework regarding the development of CSO and to create a 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 the 2nd Monitoring report for Serbia. The recommendations from this report regarding the civil society/state relations will be included in the Country report 2018 as it is stated.

During 2017, CI advocated for a higher level of citizens’ participation in Serbia throughout Inter-sectorial working group for the 2nd Action plan for the Public Administration Process in Serbia. CI were selected after an open call and advocated for the changes Law on referendum and citizens initiatives. Our proposal is adopted in current Draft of the Action plan and it is expected to be involved in final Draft during 2018.

In 2017, we made permanent advocacy efforts on local level regarding full implementation of the Government Regulation on transparent state funding and Guidelines for the inclusion of CSOs in the regulation adoption process, as well as full implementation of recommendations of Independent institutions. These activities were part of our different events and programs, they aimed at strengthening capacities of local CSOs to advocate full implementation of the Government documents on local level. Also, in the second half of 2017, CI participated in the process of the changes the mentioned Regulation aimed on further strengthening transparency of the public funding distribution. These were long-term changes, CI aim in terms enabling environment for civil society. Together with the Government Office for cooperation with civil society, CI organized public consultations with more than 100 CSOs.

At the end of 2017, CI conducted and publicized the first Research on Economic Activities of the Civil Society Organizations in order to promote this type of financial sustainability and increase challenges both in legal framework and in practice. Findings and recommendations will be used for further advocacy efforts in this area.

2.3. Reform of educational system

A focus on Civic Education remained a top priority for CI during the year of 2017, although the Ministry of education did not show any political will to cooperate with the civil society in general. This Ministry became closed to civil society organizations after the excess related to sexual education in primary and pre-schools initiated by Incest Trauma Center. In cooperation with the SIDA office in Serbia and the CRD office in Serbia, we started to develop a methodology for the research on Civic education impacts. The research will be conducted during 2018. In addition, since December 2017, CI is implementing the project aimed at developing

capacity building in civic education with high school teachers in Nis. The focus will be on deliberation as an educational method in high schools.

Furthermore, during 2017, CI actively supported and provided technical assistance to active school and university professors in their organization and efforts against the Ministry of education with issues related to the set of new educational laws adopted in a non-transparent process. The group of professors, with CI's support, gathered 1900 professors to sign the petition in November and December 2017. They also organized four mutual meetings and held a press conference.

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

During 2017, CI continued to deal with the pressing needs to address the issues of freedom of expression and of the media within and 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 the following: 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 to lead an Inter-sectorial group for freedom of expression and the media within National EU Convention. A continuous work of the Inter-sectorial Group brings together academia, media and civil society working together on the freedom of expression and media freedom issues. In December 2017, the On-line platform for following the situation within EU Chapters 5, 8, 10, 23, 28 and 32 was set up within the Inter-sectorial Group. The methodology of following different chapters is innovative and was not done by any civil society in countries that entered the EU in previous decades.

By building the position within the media sector, Civic initiatives succeeded in fostering the development and establishment of the Group for Media Freedom in September 2017. At this point, CI is giving administrative, logistical and technical support for the Group. In September, the Group for Media Freedom was composed of more than 200 media networks, organizations and associations, and supported by more than 2000 individuals. We succeeded in making media freedom a priority in public debates in Serbia, it also received international attention. Recently EFJ responded to our appeal and did a study visit in Serbia. Here are their recommendations: <https://europeanjournalists.org/blog/2018/01/25/joint-mission-to-serbia-our-recommendations/>

Representatives of the Group for Media Freedom met with Serbian Prime Minister Ana Brnabić on 14th November 2017. They submitted a list of demands (Annex 1) which, if implemented, would strengthen the position of journalists and the media, encourage social dialogue and strengthen democratic processes. Although the Prime Minister and representatives of the Government of Serbia publicly committed themselves to responding to the requests within two weeks, as well as continuing talks, the Group received an answer at the end of December 2017. The response was technical and did not give concrete answers, neither did it present the untruthful facts. Even the FOI Commissioner reacted on some statements by giving a public release saying that answers were not relaying to the fact he is possessing.

The Group had ten different actions in four months (joint action to darken the screens of free media, street actions, etc.).



