

za sve građanske inicijative sa malim



nema kraja, 25 godina GI, 2021.

Civic Initiatives

Program Report 2021

Belgrade, December 2021.

INTRODUCTION

During 2021, civil society in Serbia continued to face restrictions of the fundamental rights related to civic activism: the freedoms of expression, association and assembly. Usurpation of civic and especially media space, and the lack of freedom of information disabled a good quality and objective informing of citizens with the aim to discourage them from taking part in the decision-making process more actively.

Throughout 2021, Civic Initiatives directed its activities to monitor the environment of the civil society organizations and motivating civic activism through two programs: Opening the System and Active Citizenship.

Additionally, during 2021, Civic Initiatives marked a 25 year anniversary with a series of events dedicated to the celebration of all civic initiatives and all active citizens.

CIVIC INITIATIVES PROGRAMS

1. OPENING UP THE SYSTEM

Freedoms of Expression, Association and Assembly

During 2021, **23 reports on violation of fundamental human rights in Serbia** were published – [*Three freedoms in focus*](#). To the date stated, 138 instances of violation of rights were documented, out of which 76 were in the freedom of expression domain, 36 in the freedom of association domain and 26 in the freedom of assembly domain. Out of the overall number of documented violations, 32 cases referred to physical assaults, 43 to verbal assaults and 63 referred to various types of pressure.

Civic Initiatives coordinate the Three Freedoms platform consisting of 20 civil society organizations. Throughout the year, the platform monitored, documented and reacted to the instances of fundamental rights violations (the freedoms of expression, association and assembly). In July, together with Belgrade Centre for Human Rights and The Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights (YUCOM), also members of the platform, Civic Initiatives sent a written report on the occasion of the 50th session of the United Nations Human Rights Committee entitled "Human Rights Protection in the Context of Peaceful Protests in Crisis Situation".

The following annual reports were also published: [*"2020 Report on monitoring stimulating surroundings for civil society development"*](#) and [*"Citizen associations: Narrowing the civil society organizations' workspace in 2020 Serbia"*](#).

Boycotting the Process of Creation of the Strategy for Enabling Environment for CS Development

In March 2021, organizations gathered around the Three Freedoms platform, with the support of the Civic society coordination, began **the boycott of the creation of the Strategy for Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development**, by sending a [memo](#) to the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue and the Government of the Republic of Serbia, stating that they would not be taking part in working on this document until certain demands are met, specifically, those relating to the attacks on civil society and independent media and those relating to establishing responsibility in the case named “The list”. This decision caused an intense reaction from the institutions, and pressure was applied on the Platform member organizations which had supported this joint action, both by the government and the international community, to get involved in the process. After frequent official and unofficial invitations to get involved in the consultation process for the creation of the Strategy, as well as the pressure of the international community, in July we used an opportunity to [remind](#) the public that the intolerant atmosphere towards civil society which had influenced our decision to refuse to take part in the process, did not change, stressing that civil society organizations on more than one occasion asked for the dialogue with those in charge in order to urgently solve the demands sent to the Ministry, which however, proclaimed itself incompetent to deal with pressure and assaults on civil society organizations. Afterwards, on August 23rd, another advocacy action was undertaken with this aim, on the occasion of the meeting entitled “The Culture of Dialogue in the Media – Civil Society and the Media” in The Palace of Serbia, which coincided with the beginning of another defamation campaign aimed at the civil sector and independent media in pro-government tabloids. During the meeting, the president of the Independent Journalists’ Association of Serbia, Željko Bodrožić, read out an [open letter](#) to the minister Gordana Čomić, signed by 79 civil society organizations, asking the minister to urgently focus on putting an end to such assaults, instead of initiating processes which did not deliver any evident results so far.

Coalition “Openly about Calls”

During 2021, owing to the initiative started by Civic Initiatives and BIRN, the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, a coalition called “Openly about Calls” was formed. It consists of 15 civil society organizations and its aim is advocating for the improvement of public policies in the domain of public calls intended for civil society organizations’ funding and procedures for its implementation. The coalition’s work is coordinated by Civic Initiatives. In the current year only, the coalition has identified **at least 10 open calls** conducted in an irregular manner, and by which **at least 845.5 millions of dinars** were awarded to civil society organizations. In July, Civic Initiatives team created an analysis for the coalition entitled [“Open Call Co-financing of Projects of Public Interest: Analysis of the Legal Framework in Media, Civil Society, Culture and Youth Sectors”](#), as well as the Analysis of the Key Interested Parties and Processes of Significance for Open Call Financing, which represent a platform for further advocacy. One of the key activities of the Coalition is a timely reaction to the irregular manners of open call conducting, based on member and citizen’s reports. This is how through mutual advocacy [actions](#) directed at the Ministry of Environmental Protection and the public, the coalition managed to **protect 12,182,000 dinars from misuse**, [identifying organizations](#) which the Ministry had awarded the funds to at the open call, and which did not meet prescribed formal conditions. The coalition actions directed at [Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography](#) are ongoing, due to the series of open calls in which the amount of **450,000,000 dinars** was distributed to a small group of controversial and questionable organizations which had previously obtained funds at an annulled open call of the Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veteran and Social policy from 2014 – the finding established through a research conducted by the Civic Initiatives at that time.

“The List” Case

The activities of the informal coalition of organizations, coordinated by Civic Initiatives, which were targeted last year in July in the case “The list” continued. As a result of the initiative we started, before the UN Special procedures, Council of Europe body in charge [MONEYVAL](#) in its plenary session, sent out a warning to member states, including Serbia, not to abuse the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) with the aim to prevent legitimate activities of the civil sector. In June, “The List” coalition and “Three Freedoms” platform launched **an action of boycotting the process of civil society participation in the process of working on the creation of the National Terrorist Financing Risk Assessment**, pointing out to the fact that the institutions in charge simulate consultations with civil society organizations in the preparation of this document, and demanded for this process to be stopped until steps are undertaken to establish responsibility for overstepping jurisdiction in “The List” case. Within the coalition, a more specific working group was established, working on **the alternative “shadow” terrorist financing risk assessment when it comes to non-governmental organizations** and the results of this analysis will serve as the foundations for further advocacy in this domain.

In August, professional media and civil society organizations in Serbia, once again became the targets of a defamation campaign, when a pro-governmental tabloid “Srpski telegraf” published an eight page supplement dedicated to their financing, entitled “Western Mouthpieces Awarded Millions”, in which it threatened to “reveal” their ties to the White House, the State Department and the CIA. All civil society organizations and the media targeted by the before-mentioned supplement were also on the “List” which was published in 2020, and an informal coalition issued a **mutual reaction** again this time. Taking into account the fact that there is doubt that the published information was “leaked” from the Unit for the Money Laundering Prevention, the **targeted civil society organizations filed a criminal complaint** against person unknown employed at the Unit, as well as against “Srpski telegraf” editor in chief, Milan Lađević, for the disclosure of trade secrets and violation of the Data Secrecy Law.

Inter-sector Group for the Freedom of Expression and Media (National Convention on European Union in Serbia)

Civic Initiatives coordinate Inter-sector Working Group for the Freedom of Expression and Media of the National Convention on European Union in Serbia. Through the group’s work, intense monitoring of the freedom of expression and media within negotiating chapters 5, 8, 10, 23, 28 and 32 continued. Recommendations for the Annual book of the National Convention on EU in Serbia recommendations as well as two analysis were created: [„Freedom of Expression and Media Freedoms in Serbia in the 2020 EU Integrations Process“](#) and [“Analysis of the Government’s Working Groups within Freedom of Expression and Media“](#). Owing to the Civic Initiatives’ initiative, together with the Working group for Chapter 23 and the Coalition for the Freedom of Media, comments on the alterations of the Criminal Code in the domain of journalist protection were created.

Journalist Safety and Protection

Throughout 2021, Civic Initiatives conducted activities for implementation of journalist protection. As part of **the application of mechanisms of legal aid for journalists** exposed to physical assaults, political pressure and intimidation, as well as SLAPP suits, Civic Initiatives, together with media and journalist associations, coordinated the entire process. A reaction team within the organizations was formed, with the aim to reach media and individual media workers who had been exposed to assaults and intimidation. The team provided legal consultations and directed them to relevant institutions and partner organizations. The result of this activity is that the communication and cooperation between various actors in the civil sector active on the issues of journalist safety were improved, by forming the **Legal Aid Mechanism (LAM) Coalition (Civic Initiatives, the Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia, the Independent Journalists' Association of Vojvodina, Local Press, and Slavko Ćuruvija Foundation)**, which represents a new level of partnership between these organizations, as well as cooperation and exchange of information on the topics. The continuation of mutually coordinated activities on the matters is expected in the future as well. LAM partners prepared and delivered regular reports on legal aid provided, with detailed information on the current suits, as well as new cases and instances of threats and assaults on journalists. As a result of this coordinated action, Civic Initiatives collected and created a mutual data base on assaults on journalists, the most extensive so far, containing **142 recorded cases** processed by LAM partners, and **the overall number of over 170 journalists provided with aid with the help of this mechanism**. Besides the cases solved in coordination with LAM partners, Civic Initiatives team continued to provide legal aid to individual journalists through cooperation with their legal representatives. This was particularly the case with local media with whom Civic Initiatives already have an established partnership through Media Shelters.

As part of these activities, Civic Initiatives launched and took part in a dozen of campaigns related to journalist and media protection, through intense advocacy and support to independent media and journalists under attack, **in over 20 press releases, mutual statements, debates and panel discussions**. Additionally, monitoring and documenting assaults on journalists and media continued through **the Freedom of the Media Matrix** as well, where, since the year's beginning, **close to 500 titles and news pieces on the assaults on journalists and various examples of freedom of expression violations were reported on**. Apart from these articles, **authors' articles by 17 journalists from the local media and media shelters on the cases of assaults on journalists were published**. Additionally, A Guide to Journalists Safety and Protection was created and published.

Legal framework

In June 2021, Civic Initiatives reacted to **the Draft of the Amendments to the Civil Procedure Law**, which contained a series of unacceptable solutions, to which Civic Initiatives pointed to in the analysis entitled [“The Amendments to the Civil Procedure Law: Consequences to the Media Modeled on the 90s”](#) and [“The Amendments to the Civil Procedure Law: Efficiency at the Expense of Justice”](#). With the Civic Initiatives' coordination, more than 80 civil society organizations sent an appeal to the Ministry of Justice, asking for the immediate withdrawal of the proposed Draft, due to its numerous failures, both in the manner of its creation, as well as in the draft whose legal solutions are not in line with the rule of law. After the public pressure, disputable provisions of the law were withdrawn and the agreement was reached between Bar Association of Serbia and the Ministry of Justice.

Together with other civil society organizations, Civic Initiatives actively advocated for the alterations of the Draft law on the Referendum and People's Initiative and its adjustment to international standards, firstly by sending out [comments](#) during the public discussion, and afterwards through a series of online meetings with the Venice commission, and by sending written comments to the Commission which they used in drafting their own recommendations. Bearing in mind that the proposer did not apply the civil society and the Venice commission recommendations in their entirety, Civic Initiatives together with other civil society organizations launched a petition ["Referendum According to Citizens' Needs"](#). Demands made by civil society organizations were supported in this way by 68,000 citizens whose signatures were handed over to the Serbian Parliament on November 24th.

As the coordinators of the Inter-sector Working Group for the Freedom of Expression and Media of the National Convention on European Union in Serbia, Civic Initiatives conducted advocacy activities in relation to the planned **alterations of the Criminal Code whose aim is to improve legal protection of journalists**. Civic Initiatives, in their comments to the proposed Draft pointed out to the fact that the planned solutions were vague and inadequate, and that they represented a potential threat to the achieved level of human rights in the domain of freedom of expression. Together with the Working group for the Chapter 23 of the National Convention on European Union in Serbia, Civic Initiatives sent a memo to the Ministry of Justice, demanding that the public discussion be prolonged, a demand which was accepted in the end. However, as it was ascertained after the consultations with the journalist associations that further work on the Draft was required and, on December 2nd, both Working groups sent out another demand to the Ministry, asking that the work on these changes be stopped immediately, and to approach them as part of the other planned alterations of the Criminal Code during 2022.

Other important laws due to which Civic Initiatives conducted advocacy actions throughout 2021, as part of the National Convention on European Union in Serbia, "Three freedoms" platform, the Coalition for Free Access to Information and as part of other mutual actions of the civil society are the withdrawn **Law on Internal Affairs, Law on Free Access to Information, Law on Expropriation, Law on Protection from Noise Pollution in the Environment, Regulation on Scientific Researches Relevant for Defense of the Country** and others.

Working groups

Civic Initiatives, as the member of **the Working group for the creation of the Draft Law on Volunteering and the Working group for the Creation of the Draft Law on Social Entrepreneurship**, took active participation in the defining of the proposal for the legal solutions in these domains, in order to satisfy the interests and needs of civil society organizations, beneficiaries and volunteers in the best possible manner. The public discussion on Draft Law on Social Entrepreneurship lasted until December 16th and the Draft contains proposals given and/or supported by the Civic Initiatives. Moreover, Civic Initiatives, as the member of **the Inter-ministerial Working group of the Partnership for Open Government and the Working Group for the Public Administration Reform**, took part in monitoring of Action plans from these domains. Civic Initiatives sent comments to the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, as the organ in charge of conducting the Initiative Open Government Partnership, on the Report on Results after Six Months of Conducting of the Open Government Partnership Action plan for the Period of 2020-22 (January – June 2021), expressing concern due to the very low level of transparency and participation in fulfilling certain obligations.

Networks

Civic Initiatives are the member of the following formal and informal national/regional/international networks/coalitions and platforms: **Human Rights House, Three Freedoms platform, WEBER, CIVICUS, the National Convention on European Union in Serbia, Inter-sector Working Group for the Freedom of Expression and Media, Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN), the Coalition for Free Access to Information of Public Importance, National Association of Youth Workers (NAPOR), National Youth Council of Serbia (KOMS), SeConS Development Initiative Group, Serbian Philanthropy Forum, Openly about Public Calls, Freedom of Media Group, “The List” Case Group, Get Vaccinated Initiative, AGNA group (Affinity Group of National Associations).**

2. ACTIVE CITIZENS

Civic Initiatives Resource Center

Resource Center activities, in the context of the pandemic, are adjusted to the new living and working conditions. Part of the workshops were conducted online, while in the second half of the year conditions improved so that meeting in person was possible, with respect to particular measures. Resource Center directed its activities towards the creation of new trainings satisfying the organizations’ needs, such as organizational resilience in the conditions of shrinking space for civil society work. During 2021, over 20 workshops and 5 info sessions were held, and over 200 HD services were provided. Civic Initiatives directly provided 46 grants to civil society, with 30 more grants are provided by Civic Initiatives consortium partners.

Together for Active Civil Society (ACT) program, which started in October 2019, consists of three components: institutional strengthening of civil society, networking, and cooperation with local self-governments. This program functions within the Civic Initiatives Resource. Within this project, Resource Center additionally mentors organizations which successfully completed their projects, as well as those whose capacities are lower and need additional support.

In 2020, together with consortium partners, Calls for support to organizations were created and conducted: institutional support, public advocacy on the local level, strengthening local communities and network advocacy. Moreover, a Call for urgent COVID support was conducted. Civic Initiatives took part in the all stages of selection of organizations for financial and organizational support in all Calls, and are especially responsible for 30 winners of institutional support and their organizational development. In October, capacity building of these organizations continued, through a second year of implementing of their projects. Apart from monitoring their program activities, we are providing support with the aim of strengthening their organizational capacities. With external mentor support, organizations are working on fulfilling defined measures from individual development plans. In September, external evaluation of organizations’ work and progress was conducted, and organizations’ improvement was positively evaluated, as well as the cooperation with Civic Initiatives.

As part of the grant scheme for urgent COVID support, Civic Initiatives are following the implementation of 16 projects by organizations and the media. The duration of this grant scheme is from 6 to 12 months.

Furthermore, as part of this grant scheme a network of 170 organizations, media and media associations called “Get vaccinated!” was founded. It conducted 6 advocacy actions and campaigns on social media and traditional media. Within this network, training dedicated to media workers on how to responsibly and transparently report on the pandemic was held. Additionally, in cooperation with other

organizations, a set of recommendations for the improvement of health education of youth, as well as the set of recommendations for the increase of the number of vaccinated people were created.

In December, a new COVID grant scheme as part of the ACT program was approved, focusing on public advocacy.

Civic Initiatives are a partner of the organization Caritas Serbia, directed at advancing capacities and expertise of civil society organizations in the domain of social inclusion of people with disabilities and the process of deinstitutionalization, to influence the decision making processes and the improvement of social policies by participating in decision making processes. As part of the regular activities, a series of meetings with institutions in charge and other organizations were held on the improvement of the framework and influence the implementation of the Mental Health Program. In this year, financial support was awarded to organizations working in the field of mental health.

Civic Initiatives are a partner on an international project whose objective is building organizations' capacities through a learning platform. Partners on this project are 7 civil society organizations and other legal subjects from EU countries working on the creation and building of the civil society organizations' capacities and expertise in a particular field (for example, fundraising, networking, advocacy, managing volunteers, social entrepreneurship, etc). Moreover, the idea is to create conducive environment for learning, where each partner would share the best practice and strategies. This year, Civic Initiatives had the opportunity to present their experience at a meeting in Bulgaria. The second mutual meeting, in Italy, was held as a hybrid, due to a deteriorated epidemiological situation in Serbia.

As part of this Program, Civic Initiatives are conducting a project focusing on the building of capacities of the victims' family associations: Strengthening inclusive voices of victims, transforming the narrative. This project is mutually conducted by the Dutch organization PAX, International centre for transitional justice (ICTJ), INTEGRA and the The New social initiative (NSI) from Kosovo, Peace action form North Macedonia, and Civic Initiatives from Serbia. Consortium works with victim groups in Kosovo, Serbia and North Macedonia, on strengthening (institutional) capacities, improvement of their Initiatives' and projects' quality and the creation of more meaningful relations between different victim groups, at the same time connecting them with young activists and artists.

Furthermore, together with other Resource Centers in the region of the Western Balkans, Civic Initiatives as the national Resource Center, are conducting a project on COVID-19 pandemic's influence on various aspects of civil society and society as a whole. In each country, six case studies are being prepared; the studies will provide an insight and a review of the COVID-19 influence, government institutions' measures, the most endangered sectors of society, target groups, etc. Case studies will serve as the basis for motivating the discussions on regional forums, as well as for the creation of documents with recommendations on public policies.

Support to Environmental Activism

Civic initiatives (CI) have been supporting CSOs and informal groups of activists dealing with environmental issues since 2018, when the residents of mountain villages in Eastern Serbia began to protest against the systemic construction of small hydropower plants, which lead to the destruction of both the riverbed and wildlife, disrupting the groundwater regime and weakening the abundance of springs. Civic Initiatives provided support to environmental groups through capacity building, mentorship and networking support.

The construction of these small hydropower plants inspired a wave of civic activism throughout Serbia. CSOs, activists, and locals in the affected areas and a large number of citizens united in the fight and stopped the destruction of rivers. Environmental awareness among people across Serbia has increased and culminated in large-scale environmental protests, concerning not only rivers but also air and land and the struggle to preserve and defend these fundamental rights and rule of law in this area.

The protests that have been held in Serbia since the end of November 2021 are the most massive in the last 20 years, and for the first time they have included the simultaneous blockades of many important roads (including the highway). This type of protest activity takes place just before the elections in April 2022, marked as extremely important, because they can change the balance of political forces in Serbia. Since the beginning of the protest, the state has applied the mass punishment of protest participants by abusing the Traffic Law for the first time in the last 20 years. According to the Law on Public Assembly, protesters cannot be punished for exercising their right to free assembly. The [Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association](#) also highlighted recommendations that **among other things, States should amend laws criminalizing road blocking as a form of peaceful protest.**

In spite of these recommendations, we witnessed a massive and simultaneous reaction of the police in all the towns where the blockades were organized. There was a clear need to provide mechanisms to reach as many citizens as possible who need legal assistance due to their participation in the roadblocks. This type of support was extremely important for encouraging citizens to participate in public gatherings and not be afraid to publicly express their concerns, including disagreement with the Government or institutions. **Civic Initiatives gathered more than 600 fines and supported citizens to either pay the fines or to ask for court ruling on the issue. Civic Initiatives also formed the legal network throughout Serbia, providing legal support on the cases.**

Media shelters

With the aim of building a sustainable mechanism of protection and a safe space for the defence of freedom of media, the media team continued implementing the project **Media Shelters** in 2021, through providing support to created media shelters (groups of media and organizations) on the local level, in order to contribute to the preservation of priority values – integrity, freedom and responsibility, but also in order to strengthen their independence and a mutual fight for media freedoms and rights.

After opening a Media Shelter in Vranje, and another one in Kragujevac in 2020, in 2021 new shelters were formed, one by one, in other towns as well – **Niš, Čačak, Valjevo, Užice and Novi Pazar.**

In each of these towns, civil society organizations and the media, defenders of human rights and freedom of information in their towns, gathered at the shelters. In Čačak, Media Shelter consists of Centre for monitoring and activism CEMA, portal ObjektivNo1, Ozon Press, Radio Ozon FM, newspaper Čačanske novine, Epicentar Press, Info lider, N2, and Radio Klik FM 032; in Kragujevac, the shelter consists of Šumadija Center for Civic Activism Res Publica, Glas Šumadije, Radio Zlatousti, newspaper Kragujevačke and podcast Iz glave; in Vranje, the leader is information portal of the non-governmental sector Info Vranjske, in Niš, City Smart (City Radio), in Novi Pazar, Radio Sto plus and portal A1, in Užice, Radio Luna (Ram network), and in Valjevo, Portal Dijalog. Civic Initiatives also have conversations about opening shelters in **Pančevo, Preševo, Bujanovac, Zaječar and Šabac.** In the next year, the plan is to extend conversations with the local media and organizations to other towns as well, firstly in Vojvodina, and then in the towns in other regions. Media Shelters did a large number of online and in person events and street actions related to freedom of the media and journalists' protection.

Additionally, throughout the year, a considerable number of individual and group meetings and visits to the local media were held and undertaken, with the aim to communicate with them on the topics of ongoing activities, plans and ad hoc problems they are faced with in the best possible way, and in this way provide them with timely help or support. During these meetings, their needs for increasing capacities were identified, and in accordance with that, **3 trainings were organized and conducted – trainings on finance management and administration, writing and conducting projects** (from the initial idea to the final reporting), as well as on internal organizational strengthening through **a training on internal policies and the theory of change**. All the trainings were given the highest possible marks by the participants.

During a two day event in October called “There is No End”, members of Media Shelters had the opportunity to talk about mutual topics and burning problems in their own local environments, but also to exchange experience and form mutual bonds. At one of these meetings, they also discussed the possibilities and **forms of cooperation with FoNet**. Additionally, it was recognized that media do not have sufficient information and facts about what goes on in the field when it comes to ecological and environmental problems. As a considerable number of small environmental hot spots have been identified recently, **a meeting with environmental organizations was organized**, with the aim to map the problems and define and set the answers and solutions.

During the year, **an extensive research on the condition of the local media** was conducted. One town was taken as an example, as the matrix for future deep research of local media with the aim to map their problems, the way of functioning and to seek the best mode for advance of their work and the power of the local voice.

The Youth and Civic education

Throughout the last year, Civic Initiatives positioned itself in working with youth in the south of Serbia as part of the ALVED project activities, using Youth Build methodology. In the initial questionnaire on the needs of the youth, **over 420 responses** were received. Serbian, Albanian and Roma youth took part in the questionnaire. **Twenty-six trainings were organized in total**. The topics of the training varied, in keeping with the needs and wishes of the youth – from creative skills (photography, video editing), language (Serbian language and English language courses) and professional (entrepreneurship, business communication). Alongside strengthening and increasing capacities, the activities of mobilizing youth were also organized: those that implied their networking and inclusion in the local problem solving processes. Thirty-two actions of mobilizations were organized in total. The strategy of mobilization entailed a total participation of youth, where they propose possible solutions, organize themselves and conduct the actions, with our support. The most successful actions dealt with the process of creation of the strategy and action plan for youth in Vranje, setting up Solidarity Hubs in 4 municipalities in the South – places where citizens can leave food and other necessities for socially disadvantaged people – and doing numerous environmental actions. **One hundred and fifty youth** took part in the mobilization actions.

When it comes to civic education lessons, Civic Initiatives started applying new methodologies, developed by a Czech organization, People in Need, which entails the use of documentary films in education. Two trainings were held on this methodology for teachers in Serbian and Albanian languages. **Thirty-four teachers** took the training, after which they held classes with their pupils, using and applying this methodology in teaching. In agreement with People in Need, Civic Initiatives will continue using this methodology through educating and training teachers all around Serbia.

Civic Initiatives started holding workshops for teachers called “An Open Classroom”. The aim of these workshops is to improve teachers’ competence in planning classes and teaching, as well as to master adequate methodological tools for the implementation of the teaching plan and program with full inclusion of all pupils.

In cooperation with the Institute for the advancement of education and upbringing and Teachers’ Union of Serbia, Civic Initiatives created a training on civic education for teachers, as well as the plan for advocacy campaigns directed at the faculties for teacher education, with the aim to improve the subject program of Civic Education at the faculties for teacher education and faculties of pedagogy, where this subject can be found, either as a mandatory or optional subject.

Platform “The Land for Us”

Civic Initiatives promoted and started using an innovative participatory platform for citizens’ participation, which can be used for different processes of public consultations: collecting ideas, voting, discussions, surveys, questionnaires, exchange of opinions, action planning and all the rest entailing citizens’ participation. The idea is to hear the voice of the citizens and to create space where they would be able to present problems, propose solutions and initiatives and to discuss about various social issues.

The platform was launched at the end of the year and up until now, it has had **465 registered users**. Besides the citizens who can present proposals and problems, the platform can be used by organizations for communication and inclusion of citizens. More than 300 local self-governments in the world have already used this platform for communication with their fellow citizens. Additionally, the platform can be used by municipalities in order to connect with citizens and hear them and their ideas out, and to make decisions based on the real needs of the citizens. For the purpose of public discussions, the platform has already been used by the municipalities of Bujanovac, Vranje and Lebane.

“Miljenko Dereta” event space

Over the year, “**Miljenko Dereta**” venue continued to develop into a multifunctional space for all citizens, associations, informal groups, and activists, in keeping with the plans and programs of Civic Initiatives. A conference hall, gallery, studio and a community cafe are technically equipped and are used for all types of meetings, recordings, debates, conferences, trainings and other types of online and offline events.

Holding events in the venue (**online, offline and hybrid**) has gradually increased with the easing of the epidemiological situation and respecting of the recommended measures. Throughout the year, **around 100 events of different format were held there, with more than 2,300 participants**.

Civic Initiatives’ 25th anniversary

This year, Civic Initiatives marked the 25th anniversary since the foundation. Bearing in mind the social atmosphere and the increase of the number of incidents involving the violations of human rights in Serbia, our anniversary was marked by celebrating all civic initiatives, all those active and those fighting for a better society.

The anniversary was marked with a series of events whose aim was to show that there are people in Serbia with consciousness and responsibility, that there are citizens who are fighting for the respect of human rights through their work, that there are activists in this country who due to the work they are

doing, risk their own existence and safety. The events were organized in cooperation with the New Optimism movement.

The first in the series of events “Od(Ustani) Srbijo”, was held on October 5th, in Miljenko Dereta event space and Dorćol Platz. We dedicated this event to reminiscing about the beginnings of the democratic changes in Serbia and a conversation on how after so many years we are still faced with similar problems: broken institutions, limiting the freedom of media, unbridgeable social divisions. At Dorćol Platz venue, a video to the song [Vostani Srbije](#) (Rise up Serbia) done in a new arrangement by Nadežda Milenković and Milutin Petrović was launched – as an expression of gratitude and a motivation to all citizens and their initiatives.

Another activity which launched the celebration of the anniversary was an exhibition called *Faces of Activism* – a presentation of photographs of activists from all around Serbia. With this exhibition, which was turned into a permanent exhibit in “Miljenko Dereta” event space in Belgrade, CI presented activists’ stories and all those who work towards a better society in different ways and through different domains, thus giving face to activism in Serbia.

The exhibition has 150 photographs at the moment, and the collecting of photographs is an ongoing process.

After October 5th, there were events in Novi Sad, Pančevo and Tavankut, discussions and networking with activists on the local level, as well as the exchange of experience on the topic of obstacles and possibilities of activism.

The campaign culminated on the Human rights day, on December 10th, with organising a protest meeting called “For our Rights” on the Plato square in front of the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. On Human Rights Day this year, we decided to stress the constant violations of human rights in all domains in an adequate manner – in the street. Many citizens, activists who point to problems in their environments took part in the protest. The activists from all around Serbia fighting for the rule of law, protection of the environment, women rights, building of peace, freedom of information, improved healthcare and economic and social rights, were given commendations for their immeasurable contributions to the defense and preservation of these rights.