



Narrative report for 2022

Civic Initiatives

INTRODUCTION

During 2022, civil society in Serbia continued to face restrictions on fundamental rights related to civic activism: freedom of expression, association and assembly. The threat to freedom of assembly culminated with the authorities' attempt to ban Belgrade's first staging of the EuroPride rally. In addition to this announced ban, protests on environmental issues have faced restrictions and environmental defenders face judicial harassment through SLAPPs (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation). These are the reasons why Serbia has been added to the [CIVICUS watchlist](#) of countries that have seen a rapid decline in civic freedoms.

Throughout 2022, Civic Initiatives directed its activities to monitor the environment of the civil society organizations and motivating activism through two programs: Opening the System and Active Citizenship.

During 2022, Civic Initiatives has worked closely with over **500 activist initiatives** across Serbia.

CIVIC INITIATIVES PROGRAMS

1. OPENING UP THE SYSTEM

Freedoms of Expression, Association and Assembly

In the period of January – November, Civic Initiatives **published 19 “Three Freedoms Under the Magnifying Glass” by-weekly reports**, a reporting process that monitors the state of the freedom of expression, assembly, and association in Serbia. Additionally, **16 “Elections Under the Magnifying Glass” reports** have been published in the period of mid-February to the end of March, covering violations of human rights and basic freedoms during the pre-election campaign period ahead of election day on 3 April 2022.

By December 31 2022, 131 individual cases of human rights and basic freedoms violations had been documented through the “Three Freedoms Under the Magnifying Glass” reports, from which 85 referred to the freedom of expression, 30 to freedom of association and 16 that of assembly. From 131 cases, 33 were physical attacks, 40 were verbal attacks, and 58 were cases of pressure. Additional 84 cases have been documented through the “Elections Under the Magnifying Glass” reports, which represents a significant increase compared to the 131 recorded cases in 2021.

Civic Initiatives coordinated the **Three Freedoms Platform** (hereby: the Platform) that gathers more than 20 civil society organizations whose scope of work is connected to the three basic freedoms: the freedom of expression, association, and assembly. During 2022, the Platform monitored, documented, and reacted to 7 separate instances of basic freedoms and human rights violations.

Serbia has been added to the **CIVICUS Monitor Watchlist** over authorities' attempts to ban the EuroPride March in September 2022. Before and after the Watchlist update, Civic Initiatives have been actively communicating with CIVICUS on regular updates regarding civic space developments in Serbia.

Reports that have been published in 2022 include: [Citizen's Associations: Shrinking Civic Space 2021](#), [Elections Under the Magnifying Glass 2022: Civil Society for Fair Elections](#), [Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development - Country Brief for Serbia 2021](#).

CI became member of the **Platform of Organizations for Cooperation with United Nations Human Rights Mechanisms** founded by civil society organizations, which have significant experience based on reporting before UN human rights mechanisms, which recognize the need and importance of a continuous and evidence-based reporting process to these bodies, as and monitoring the implementation of the recommendations that the mechanisms send to the Republic of Serbia. As part of the Platform, Civic Initiatives participated in the preparation of contributions for the Republic of Serbia's Fourth cycle of reporting on the implementation of the International Covenant on Political and Civic Rights.

Prevention of money laundering and financing of terrorism

Work continued on the Shadow National Risk Assessment, which is being conducted in accordance with the methodology provided by expert Ben Evans and Greenacre Associates. So far, CI completed an analysis of existing Serbian legislation against the Interpretative Note for R8, as well as an overview of NPO self-regulatory measures - both currently existing and those in development. Additionally, five focus groups were conducted with different types of NPOs (informal groups, humanitarian NPOs, NPOs working with refugees, as well as two focus groups with NPOs from areas identified as higher risk for FT - Sandžak and the Preševo valley). Furthermore, a phone survey was conducted to assess the self-perception of NPOs of their risk for AML/CFT abuse, awareness of government measures to combat ML/TF and their impact on the sector. In the reporting period, the survey was completed, the data collated and a draft analysis based on the survey results was produced in August. The finalized report with recommendations will be completed in the next period based on this draft and additional desk research.

In terms of **multi-stakeholder dialogue**, in March, **a meeting was held between CI and the Council of Europe in Serbia**, to discuss potential cooperation between CI and the NPO sector more broadly with the government in the implementation of the newest Action Plan for the Prevention of AML/FT, which had just been adopted. During the meeting, the modality of this cooperation was discussed, in light of the "List" case and its fallout. It was proposed that CoE facilitate dialogue between CI and other supervisory bodies apart from the FIU (Tax and Administrative Inspectorates).

In terms of producing **training material on FATF standards and best practices**, CI has been piloting an approach where an introductory segment on the bases of the international framework for AML/CFT and its impact on NPOs is included in existing training on financial and administrative management. This is a result of feedback from previous training modules that were wholly centered on AML/CFT, where NPOs reported feeling they were too advanced, and that they had trouble understanding the relevance of AML/CFT to their daily operations. **In June, CI held an info session on transparent budgeting and reporting practices in NPOs, which contained a segment about FATF, R8 and how the global AML/CFT framework influences domestic legislation.** Since CI are implementing a project (Civil Society Resilience Activity in Serbia) where one of the components is mapping 30 NPOs with varying geographic distribution and capacity levels, and develop tailor-made training for them on different subjects, including financial and administrative management, the idea is to use the foundational assessment of these NPOs, which is currently in progress, to develop different training on FATF standards and best practices that would be adapted to their different levels of capacity. Additionally, educational leaflets (on the global AML/CFT framework, national AML/CFT framework and inspection bodies and what NPOs can do to manage their

compliance) are being developed based on existing ECNL and Global Coalition materials. In addition to being distributed through our network and to NPOs that take part in the training, the materials (or a version of them) could be made available on the neprofitne.rs platform, which is being developed through the CSRA project, and which is envisioned as a self-regulation resource hub for NPOs in Serbia.

The Council for Cooperation with Civil Society

CI actively participated in the formation of the **Council for Cooperation with Civil Society**. After several meetings with the Ministry for the Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue, CI were facilitating and providing technical assistance for the consultative process within the civil sector in order to find and propose the best model for the functioning of the Council. **74 CSOs were actively participating in this consultation process.** At the beginning of October, a joint written proposal was sent to the Ministry, which resulted from a process of several months of consultations with interested civil society organizations. This proposal contained the mandate and structure of the Council as well as the method of electing Council members. CI are expecting the next meeting to be organized by the Ministry.

SLAPP lawsuits

CI became a member of the **CASE coalition - "Coalition Against SLAPPs in Europe"**. In this way, CI became a national focal point for Serbia. CI participated in the first anti-slap conference held on October 20 in Strasbourg as well as in the coalition meeting on October 21. CI plan to continue working on close monitoring of SLAPP lawsuits and establishing a national coalition whose members will be interested civil society organizations, journalistic and media associations.

Legal framework

During the reporting period CI efforts were aimed to monitor and provide contribution to creation and adoption of legal solutions that would support CSOs work, their involvement in its implementation, as well as to prevent the adoption of legal solutions aimed at narrowing the space for CSOs operations. Also, it is important to emphasize that 2022 was an election year in which local, parliamentary and presidential elections were held, which slowed down or stopped many legislative processes.

CI gave inputs on new **Government Action Plan for the Prevention of Money Laundering and Countering Terrorist Financing for 2022-2024**. CI also attended Global expert Hub on this topic in October in Paris.

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**. This process was started at the end of 2021, but consultations with interested civil society organizations and journalist and media associations continued during 2022.

Working groups

CI actively participated in WG work and public debate on **the draft Law on Social Entrepreneurship** that lasted until the middle of December 2021. and the draft itself contained proposals made and/or supported by CI. Creation of this document presented significant progress – it was a constructive process which included active CSO involvement. While previous drafts of the Law did not recognize the specific legal nature of social enterprises established by CSOs, the final draft represents a significant improvement in this regard. The Law was adopted in the beginning of February 2022 and set the legal framework for the social entrepreneurship sector which gathers around 500 companies.

Work on the draft **Law on Volunteering** was continued in 2022, after it was put up for public debate in 2021. CI actively participated in this Working Group. However, the process of drafting the new Law has been criticised as not sufficiently transparent and participative, with certain solutions being introduced without previous consultation with civil society representatives in the Working Group for Drafting the Law, in order to hasten the process of the Law's adoption. Although one WG meeting was held during the 2022, work on this document is not completed yet.

CI continued to participate in processes in the field of **Public Administration Reform**. In April and July 2022, CI participated in two meetings of the National Working Group for Monitoring the Public Administration Reform, and in May, in the Open Meeting of the Special Inter-Ministerial Working Group for the Realization of Participation of the Republic of Serbia in the Open Government Partnership Initiative and the Second Meeting of the Inter-Ministerial project group for professional affairs in the coordination and monitoring of the implementation process of the Public Administration Reform Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2021 - 2025. As part of the WeBER 2.0 project, CI contributed to the PAR Sectoral Mainstreaming research process in the environmental and climate action policy sector. Due to CI's involvement in the OGP process, CI also took part in the 2022 OGP Europe Regional Meeting in October 2022.

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), CASE coalition, Platform of Organizations for Cooperation with United Nations Human Rights Mechanisms.**

2. ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

Civic Initiatives Resource Center

During 2022, the activities of the Resource Center took place according to plan. As in previous years, the focus was on capacity-building programs, primarily trainings, workshops and information sessions for CSOs. Trainings continued to be conducted in a hybrid mode, in person and online, depending on needs and possibilities. In order to strengthen capacities as efficiently as possible, services were adapted to the degree of development of organizations, and the emphasis was on a flexible approach, as the most appropriate for responding to the real needs of CSOs at different levels of development. In the period between 2020-2022, there was a significant increase in informal groups in Serbia that began to organize and reach out to the Resource Center for support, therefore, tailor-made trainings were organized for them in response to their specific needs.

Since the beginning of 2022, a total of **14 trainings** have been held for over **400 participants**.

As for the Info sessions and TA (technical assistance) sessions, RC provided technical assistance services to newly established local organizations. Having in mind the needs of the CSOs, TA and Info sessions are conducted in order to assure the organization was given the necessary and most important information. When HD services are not informative enough for the CSOs, TA sessions cover the topics and questions. Info sessions were one of the most important services Resource Center had for other CSOs. RC together with local partners **conducted 9 info sessions.**

MOOC trainings

In addition to traditional in-person and online capacity-building courses, RC also prepared a series of online courses, bearing in mind the increasing popularity of distance learning, the flexibility it brings and the possibility for the individual to determine the pace that suits him/her. The pre-recorded courses cover the most important areas of an association's work, and the idea of these courses is to enable the viewer to master these topics as best as possible from their home and improve the work of their association. In addition to the videos, the viewers can also download additional materials that would help them to further improve their knowledge on the topic. List of topics covered by the videos:

- Strategic planning
- Project proposal writing
- Financial and administrative management
- Human resources
- Types of association budgets
- Public advocacy
- Strategic communication
- Digital communications
- Media relations
- Crowdfunding

The videos were published on Resource Center's website, and social media and sent out through RC's weekly Newsletter. The cumulative reach is more than 15.000 people.

“Pračka” conference

RC together with EU TACSO 3 organized the fifth edition of the “Pračka” conference, as a regional P2P event, from 20-21 April 2022 in Belgrade. The conference is dedicated to the trends in communication and this edition was focused on the need to improve the communication efforts of CSOs, learn and share examples of good practice. The two-day event brought together various representatives from CSOs, media and marketing professionals. The event provided a platform for learning and sharing experiences between participants.

Donor's forum

RC organized Donor's forum, which took place on May 19th, 2022, at Space "Miljenko Dereta" in Belgrade. The topic of this year's forum was "Effective Support to Civil Society". During this one-day event, the participants had a chance to meet various donors, network, exchange ideas and future plans, as well as highlight some of the important topics related to donors - CSOs relationship. The participants in the Forum all agreed that these kinds of conferences that bring together CSO representatives and the donor community are needed and crucial in order for these two "sides" to be able to cooperate better and understand each other's needs and points of view. It was also concluded that these types of events should become a regular networking activity, thus strengthening the relationships between the two communities. Some of the conclusions made during the Donor's forum 2022 were that there must be mutual trust, both trust of organizations in donors and trust of donors in organizations; organizations need more direct communication between organizations and donors, but also that a structured dialogue is needed – for donors to be open to change and to monitor organizations and the state of the society, to be more flexible and to make better use of networking potential; large, multilateral donors, such as the EU and others, need to have greater regranting, as this provides an opportunity to support more organizations, and greater distribution of existing funds and resources; the organizations can communicate the way they want to frame things, with an understanding of the funding framework that comes from the particular governments' thinking, but they have the ability and should be mission-oriented and driven, not only in what they try to address but also in the way they try to address it. Representatives of the donor community at this forum had the opportunity to hear the challenges of civil society and draw conclusions relevant to planning their future actions.

During 2022, further tailor-made capacity building and mentoring support for 30 CSOs, selected to implement **ACT institutional grants (IGs)**, was continued. Training for Diversification of sources of funds was organized for IGs, presenting the first opportunity since the beginning of the projects' implementation to meet all grantees in person for both CI, mentors, and grantees themselves and it was a combination of work and networking. Within the three days of training, with almost 60 representatives of grantees, CI staff, and mentors, a fundraising event was organized, as a part of the exercise, ending with almost **80.000,00 dinars** gathered for a cause, all participants voted for: funds for the treatment of a sick girl from Irig (a small municipality near Novi Sad). Some of the IGs followed up on the knowledge and skills received during this training by organizing their own fundraising events. Also, two CSOs (CK 13 and Patrija, both from Novi Sad) organized a joint fundraising event combining their resources. Selected grantees also had an online advocacy training, basic and advanced, mixed with new Covid grantees. Additional mentors' support was provided to IGs in creating policies and practices for engaging citizens to their actions, as well as in creating Fundraising strategies or frameworks for diversification of sources of funding.

Regular field visits to IGs were organized by CI staff with the aim to provide them support and assistance in preparing financial reports and fulfilling obligations from the contracts signed.

During the whole implementation period, 6 selected mentors held regular online and in-person meetings to discuss modalities of mentors' support for 2022, and share experience in work with IGs lessons learned. Furthermore, mentors were involved in the process of re-defining the Matrix of Quality Assurance

Standards (that was piloted during the work with IG and IGs projects implementation) based on experience gained and lessons learned.

Results of two years of supporting selected CSOs in their organizational development and IGs implementation (01 October 2020 - 30 September 2022) were presented at the final event organized on October 30th in Belgrade. **30 CSOs** were supported with totally of 77.317.633,96 RSD (cca 880 thousand EUR) to operate in eight different areas (international cooperation, development and housing, health, environment, education and research, law, advocacy and politics, Philanthropic intermediaries and voluntarism promotion, social services providing). More than 150 strategic, operational and governing documents were developed/improved and adopted (Strategic plan and associated action plan, Communication strategy, Fundraising strategy, Association branding plan, Plan to build a base of support, Improvement of the Rulebook on the work of the association, Capacity development plan for members, Rulebook on job systematization and internal organization, Funding diversification plan, Digital communication development strategy, Code of Ethics, Public advocacy plan). Supported CSOs launched 78 advocacy initiatives in total, and 26 of them provided a total of 105,434 services, and involved **136,726 citizens** in trainings, workshops, debates and other public events they've organized. Aimed to achieve self-sustainability and financial diversification IGs reached generated income from the sale of goods and services in the amount of 197,893,955.26 RSD (cca 1,6 million of EUR) and from crowdfunding in the amount of 6,520,173 RSD (cca 55,000 EUR).

At the end of 2022, 16 CSOs, previously supported through IG, applied for additional mentoring support so that they could continue with organizational development and implement ideas and activities planned within the strategic, action and management documents developed during the implementation of the IG project. By the end of June 2023, they will, with the support of mentors, implement plans in the area of diversification of funding sources (7 CSOs), organizational strategy (3 CSOs), programs and service development (3 CSOs), public advocacy (2 CSOs) and human resources management (1 CSO).

ACT Constituency Building by strengthening CSO network and support to joint advocacy actions in this reporting period was focused on the consequences that COVID-19 pandemic has on the activists' mental health. To do this, we created a campaign called "**Let's support each other**". This campaign activities by now included having **meetings with 8 CSOs** that work on the mental health topic with different target groups in order to upgrade the existing network. By now, we supported the logistics and visibility of **the Mental Health Festival** in Belgrade (10th September - 29th October). Mental health experts did **an outdoor workshop** on burnout and stress for activists in Reva, Krnjaca in Belgrade with more than 20 participants. CI initiated writing the **shadow reports** for the **Mental Health Protection Program's Action plan** while mentoring the individuals from CSOs creating the reports. The results of this shadow report were presented at a round table organized at the end of December 2022 in the Republic Secretariat for Public Policies (RSJP). The round table was attended by representatives of competent institutions and interested parties for the implementation of measures from this action plan: the Ministry of Health, the Institute for Public Health Batut and representatives of the Movement for Mental Health. Psychological Innovation Network and one external expert Aurelija Đan wrote a **holistic research on the activists' mental health** in Serbia - "[Can you hear it? Can you feel it?](#)". This research was presented to the public

at an event in December 2022. CI also supported the theater play called ***On the edge*** done by Reflector theater on the topic of suicide among teenagers in Vranje, Bujanovac and Lebane for highschool students with therapy sessions following the play for more than 200 teachers and students. CI experts did **4 workshops for youth with 104 secondary school students** in the south of Serbia - municipalities of Vranje, Bujanovac and Lebane (one of them was done by working with KOMS - umbrella youth organization in Serbia). CI created a **special communication strategy** for all the activities, **created 2 and shot 6 videos in total** - interviews with activists on their mental health in order to raise awareness.

Support to environmental activists

In 2022, CI continued to provide support to environmental activists and citizens who received misdemeanor charges as a result of environmental protests.

Civic Initiatives first provided mechanisms to reach as many citizens as possible who needed legal assistance due to participation in roadblocks. This was done through mapping and direct contact with all groups and organizations that were involved in organizing more than 70 road blockades throughout Serbia. CI staff members operating in the field had communication with all political parties, local civil society organizations and informal groups. They passed on the information to the citizens to contact us. CI communicated through Viber groups, social networks, Twitter spaces dealt with blockages, but we also had several media announcements. CI refunded fines for **253 people**. According to the supervision carried out by the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Protection of Personal Data, and the data submitted by the Ministry of Interior, **1,993 misdemeanor** warrants were issued/procedures initiated. It should be borne in mind that the total number is certainly significantly higher - the surveillance was carried out and fines are still coming to citizens, and that number of under 2,000 does not include the proceedings initiated against the alleged organizers under the Law on Public Assembly. According to the information from the citizens who contacted CI, several dozens of proceedings have been initiated against the organizers. According to the data of the Commissioner for Information, there were just under 2,000 issued orders/initiated proceedings in the territory of the whole of Serbia. 17% (340 from 1993) of all procedures/orders were issued in Belgrade.

Citizens who received misdemeanor fines contacted us until August of this year. At the same time, we continued to monitor all initiated court proceedings. Based on the support and visibility we achieved, we conducted a crowdfunding campaign through which we secured additional funds from citizens' donations for the next period. The slogan we used in this campaign was: freedom in Serbia must be paid for. In July, we organized a press conference where we announced information about the acquittals. According to the lawyers with whom we were in contact, acquittals were handed down in over 60 cases from a dozen cities, and the judges confirmed what we said from the beginning - that the right to protest is guaranteed by the Constitution, and that the police violated it by prosecuting activists and threatening by illegally recording meetings. In the coming period, CI will continue to monitor the number of acquittals.

Along with the violation reports, we provided support to environmental organizations.

Together with the association "**Defend the Forests of Fruska Gora**" we worked on formulating a statement and raising awareness about the problem of forest cutting on Fruska Gora. During field visits, networking was done with environmental activists from all over Serbia in order to put stronger pressure on decision

makers. An awareness raising campaign was carried out on the recognized problem at the local level. A series of mentoring trainings on community gathering was held.

Let's defend Mount Babu, Plana and Lesje

Activists were provided support in organizing, networking, strengthening their own capacities and public advocacy. The problems faced by the locals caused by the operation of the illegal quarry have been identified. They were supported during the creation and submission of a citizens' initiative for the suspension of quarry operations. We gave them greater visibility on social networks and in the media.

We do not give Jadar

The association "Ne damo Jadar" submitted a citizens' initiative proposing that the Assembly amend its decision allowing Rio Tinto's lithium mine to open to Jadar area. In the previous period, the Association worked on a strong advocacy campaign to change the law on expropriation.

Guards of Kablar

Guards of Kablar are an informal association created due to problems related to the initiative urbanization of the Ovčar-Kablar gorge, with a special emphasis on the construction of a viewpoint on Kablar, which this association opposes. As a result of the launched petition and advocacy campaign "Save Kablar", representatives of the association had a series of meetings with representatives of institutions and the Prime Minister of Serbia. We worked with activists on networking and formalizing the initiative.

The Fortress Movement

The Fortress movement has been fighting for three years together with the inhabitants of the surrounding villages in Smederevo for the reduction of air pollution caused by the operation of the Smederevo Ironworks. They reached out to institutions, submitted applications for inspection supervision, but also criminal applications against the Chinese HBIS company and responsible persons, and organized a series of protests. In cooperation with the organization NEA they advocated for respect for environmental standards in the work of Železara Smederevo, in order to protect the health of the population, which is threatened by the work of this company. They were supported in the creation of petitions and advocacy campaigns aimed at the institutions.

A specific approach was used with these initiatives and the focus was not on the process of transforming them into formal organizations, unless it was assessed that they had the capacity and will to do so. They were provided with ad hoc support, in accordance with current needs, which were most often supported in advocacy processes and strengthening of the support base.

Civic initiatives have implemented the grant scheme Support to advocacy initiatives for mitigating the effects of the Covid19 pandemic. Within this grant seed, 7 organizations were supported, whose projects lasted up to 6 months. A large number of organizations through their projects dealt with mental health, which inspired the creation of the Network for Mental Health, due to the needs of organizations and activists.

In February, the five-year USAID Civil Society Resilience Strengthening activity in Serbia (CSRS) was launched. Civic initiatives, as one of the partners in the consortium, will work on strengthening the ability of civil society organizations to respond to new and emerging civic spaces challenges, as well as on

improving the enabling environment for civil society. Strengthening the capacity of CSOs will focus on developing and strengthening knowledge, skills, and mindsets, as well as providing sophisticated tools for CSOs. Using R+ as a framework, CSRS will implement a comprehensive resiliency and capacity-building process combining formal training, ad hoc tailored (legal, technical, and financial) support, peer learning and coaching, and facilitated engagement, reflection, and planning spaces for different civil society actors. Through a cascading model based on 25 Resiliency Nodes around the country, the program will ensure a broad reach, engaging with traditional and non-traditional actors from the sector. So far, 28 CSOs across Serbia have already been selected as Resiliency Nodes. Civic initiatives, as part of their scope of work, are also working on the development of Neprofitne.rs. This platform provides transparent data on the work and finances of associations and foundations. The idea is to improve the existing platform with new functions and content that will respond more effectively to the needs of CSOs.

Regarding improving the enabling environment for civil society, the goal is to gradually restart dialogue between government and civic actors and ensure that civil society is included in decision-making processes. The project consortium provides technical advice for government institutions to improve their processes for civil society consultation and support the development of a comprehensive civil society agenda to guide future engagement efforts with the government. CSRS program will also facilitate ad hoc multi-stakeholder dialogue spaces on issues of common interest.

As part of the Capacity Building Program, Civic Initiatives have also continued focusing on the building of capacities of the victims' family associations, through a project *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 New social initiative (NSI) from Kosovo, Peace Action from 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.

The activities conducted in 2022 include:

Development of an assessment report on the position and needs of victims' groups in the region

There is no recent comprehensive research on the position and needs of victims in Serbia. Available research explores only partial aspects, such as the need for victims to receive official recognition in the form of reparations, or the experiences of victims testifying in court. Therefore, one of the first activities on this project was the development of an advanced assessment through which many formal and informal victim groups and grassroots civil society organizations working with victims were identified, assessed and mapped in Serbia.

The process of developing this report involved in-depth interviews with members of various victims' groups, associations of families of victims and civil society organizations working with victims with the

goal of producing a comprehensive research on the position and needs of victims in Serbia, but also in Kosovo and North Macedonia. The report was launched on December 2nd, 2022.

Organization of a tailor-made capacity building program of victims' groups

Findings of the report provided a good understanding on the position and needs of these associations, and it served as a baseline for developing a tailor-made training program for strengthening institutional capacities of these groups. The program consisted of five 3-day training sessions, each focusing on a specific topic important for the further development of these groups.

Grant scheme for victims' groups

After completing the tailor-made training program for strengthening institutional capacities of victims' groups, the grant scheme call was launched, as an additional means of support to these groups.

The grants lasted for a period of six months, and all were finished by the end of October.

During this period, the victims' organizations actively worked on organizing different events and implementing their initiatives on the local level. Several panel discussions, a formal academy, panel discussion and documentary film screenings have been organized by the groups.

The goal of these events was to raise the public awareness about the issues of the missing and kidnapped people, as well as connecting different victims' led initiatives. Also, the victim organizations have prepared and printed their newsletters and magazines which have been presented and distributed during these events.

One of the important initiatives and activities jointly organized by the victim groups from Kosovo and from Serbia, was the marking of The International Day of the Disappeared. This day was marked with two joint press conferences, one held in Belgrade and one in Prishtina. The first press conference was held in Belgrade on August 26, while the second was in Prishtina on August 29. Victims' organizations' representatives from Kosovo and Serbia traveled to Belgrade and Prishtina and attended the press conferences together. The events were covered by the media in Serbia, informing the public about what has been achieved so far when it comes to the issue of missing and kidnapped persons, but also being made aware that the cooperation between victims' organizations from both sides is necessary for raising awareness and further advocating for the solution of this issue.

Regional and national artistic productions

For transitional justice to play a significant role in democratization and peacebuilding, it needs to go beyond the traditional, top-down, legal approach to justice and also focus on the measures that are more restorative and engage the wider community, such as art and memorialization. A number of artistic productions have been developed in cooperation with the victims' groups.

First such regional activity was the exhibition "All our tears", which was organized as an introduction to the yearly festival "Miredita, good day" at Endžio Hub (NGO Hub) in Belgrade, from May 25 to June 1,

2022. This unique exhibition was dedicated to the stories of victims of wars in the region. The goal of the installation was to acquaint the general public with their stories and make a plea for support for the victims and other affected groups in the region in their pursuit of truth and justice.

The exhibition consisted of 34 original photographs, taken by four photographers in various places in Serbia, Kosovo, and North Macedonia. The photographers who participated in the exhibition were Atdhe Mulla (Kosovo), Nake Batev and Arbnora Memeti (North Macedonia), and Borislav Pešić Blagoja (Serbia) who also was the curator of the exhibition in Belgrade.

The stories that the photos featured in this exhibition aim to represent showcase several aspects of the wars in the former Yugoslavia - family photos of missing persons, sites of atrocities, mass graves, internally displaced people, and memorials, but also the lingering consequences of the conflict that are still felt today, showing all the tragedy and complexity of the war. The process of creation was done in cooperation with associations of families of the missing and deceased from Serbia and Kosovo, as well as families of deceased civilians and IDPs from North Macedonia, with the aim to open space for new opportunities and joint initiatives when it comes to building peace and reconciliation in the region.

The exhibition in Belgrade was opened by an introductory speech of the president of one of the victims' organizations included in the project, who sent out a message of peace and reconciliation, in the name of all the victims.

After the opening in Belgrade, the exhibition traveled to Skopje, North Macedonia, in October, where it was opened by Mr. Stevo Pendarovski, the President of North Macedonia. The exhibition also traveled to Prishtina, Kosovo, and was opened December 10 on Human Rights Day, featuring opening speeches by victim groups' representatives from Kosovo and Serbia.

In parallel, as a national artistic production, Civic Initiatives opened a call for young artists from Serbia and the region to submit a conceptual solution for the memorial dedicated to all the victims of the wars in former Yugoslavia, to be placed in Serbia. Given that no such memorial exists in Serbia at the moment, having the proposals of such a memorial chosen by the victims' families and announced publicly would help amplify the victims' requests in a new and innovative way. It would also be a significant tool in their advocacy efforts and a considerable push to decision-makers to focus on these issues. A moving exhibition of all received proposals will be organized as an advocacy tool and to raise awareness about this topic.

Grant scheme for youth groups

Young activists are also going to be supported through a granting scheme for victims and youth groups through which they can employ the activities that respond to victim's needs -conducting research, non-formal education activities, training and lectures, open talks and round tables, arts and media, informal truth finding and documentation, memorialization, storytelling, local advocacy. Through coaching and mentoring and a tailored-made capacity building program, CI will support the youth groups in the implementation of their activities. The grant scheme for youth groups launches in April 2023.

Regional meetings of the victims' groups

The first regional meeting of all victims and youth groups (from Serbia, Kosovo and North Macedonia) was organized in Skopje in early December, in order to foster exchange and build bridges between the diverse victim and youth groups from the three countries.

This meeting was dedicated to the Assessment report's findings and the opportunities for advocacy of victims' groups that can be leveraged from them.

Media Shelters

In the course of 2022, Civic initiatives have continued to work with local media outlets, media organizations and civil society media, all gathered under the auspices of the Press Hubs, through either direct activities or mentorship support, with the aim to continue to build sustainable mechanisms of media to fulfill their main role in the society, as well as to strengthen their independence and editorial policy so that they increase their relevance and presence in the life of their local community. For that purpose, CI media team has held a series of strategic meetings to define objectives for assistance to the Press Hubs in line with the specific characteristics and demands of the individual local community they operate in, as well as communicate with them the direction of the planned activities. As Press Hubs considerably differ in organizational strength, capacities and size, their unique approach is to gather around one mutual concept – to create space for joint and independent action of local media, CSOs and citizens to increase the quality of public information in local communities in Serbia. The vision behind it is to open Press Hubs more towards the citizens/the community and improve those processes on a local level. As a result of the strategic meetings of the CI team, the goals have been defined to provide press hubs with the assistance to connect to two groups of direct actors and stakeholders – civil sector and citizens, but also to journalists, media from other local communities, institutions on local and national level (LSG, health and social protection, judiciary, police, education, business sector...) – in activities that will contribute to better mutual understanding and meeting the needs of local journalists, media, CSOs and citizens, in their best interest.

The activities carried out 2022 have been directed to meet those objectives – strengthening the infrastructure of the media in Vranje, Presevo, Bujanovac, Novi Pazar, Uzice, Valjevo, Cacak, Kragujevac, Nis, Zajecar, Pancevo and Sabac, to support independent public information in their local communities, building networks of media and journalists with a local community they operate in (building a community – in particular, with the civil sector, CSOs and citizens), as well as to cooperate and build networks with other media and journalists within the specific community or other cities and towns in Serbia. Furthermore, CI has been providing support and protection to Press Hubs and other local media outlets and media practitioners in cases of various pressures, threats and violations, through a sustainable mechanism of protection and safety of journalists and with urgent response and assistance needed (Info Vranjske in Vranje, Glas Zajecara in Zajecar, Jug Press from Leskovac, Podrinske daily and TV Sabac from Sabac, Pancevo Siti in Pancevo).

Throughout the year, CI media team has held over **30 meetings** with local media and organizations, including individual and joint discussions and consultations and/or direct field visits to local Press Hubs. Regular communication with the Press Hubs is crucial for acquiring insight into their daily problems, operations, and plans for development so that the assistance provided is timely and the best fitting. The meetings also served to identify their needs for capacity building and define activities for further strengthening their administrative, managerial, business, production and promotional capacities, through direct mentorship, expert support, networking, ad hoc and legal assistance, participation in development processes through fundraising and so on. With that regard, a capacity building activities were organized

for Press Hubs: in addition to strengthening organizations' internal capacities (a two-day live workshop in Belgrade), media and organizations were also provided with direct, in-house tailor-made assistance of mentors that worked with them on individual issues (in Vranje, Presevo, Kragujevac, Zajecar, Novi Pazar) – media and digital literacy for young future journalists, mobilization of the community, organizational building and development, strategic planning, mobile journalism, writing project proposals, project and financial management and digital marketing.

Another form of direct assistance to media and organizations in press hubs has been designed and implemented through direct engagement of young volunteers – high school seniors and tertiary students – willing to learn about journalism and media, work in newsrooms or in the media environment, on one hand, and offer their social media skills and perspective to media on the other. One such pilot project was implemented with the representatives of youth, young students and influencers in their community and local media in Southern Serbia, in Lebane (Leskovac), Vranje, Bujanovac and Presevo. This was a result of previous discussions and meetings with the media in these towns, where it was recognized that they were lacking young journalists, their social media skills and influence on digital platforms, as well as their perspective in the reporting about and for the youth. For that reason, in April 2022, a call for application was published for young volunteers in these environments and, after a large number of applications, **8 volunteers** were selected and included in the program of working with local media. The first round of the internship was carried out in the period of 2 months – in June and July, however, where it was needed, the 2 months internship was rearranged for later (Presevo). During the internship, young journalists volunteers were working on daily topics with the editors, writing articles and reports, reporting from the field, but also shared their knowledge in handling their social networks. They created their own stories for digital platforms, used MoJo for reporting and creating content engaging and relevant for their audience and participated in the mentorship program with mentors provided by the Civic Initiatives on media and digital literacy and mobile journalism. Press hubs also served as a media center for information of citizens during the elections in April.

2022 has been a very productive year for the Press Hubs, in community engagement activities in particular, with over **20 public events** and actions organized with and for citizens and with the assistance of the Civic Initiatives. The Press Hub in Vranje is a stellar example, as it has carried out numerous public awareness events, round tables, discussions, trainings, festivals and conferences, on topics of the utmost importance for the local community – festival of the democracy for citizens – activism and democracy, festival Free zone, media and literature on the same task, youth and media/digital literacy, youth festival **Fake Legit**, youth conference – youth and public information, problem of co-financing of media projects in the public information, etc. The latter has been recognized as a crucial survival issue for many independent media, so many other press hubs have also chosen this topic to be publicly discussed with the citizens and relevant local stakeholders in public events – Čacak, Novi Pazar, Kragujevac, Valjevo. Other hubs organized local actions for citizens, such as safety of journalists in local community, meetings with representatives of CSOs and independent media to exchange ideas, public and internal gatherings around the common topics – corruption, young artists and media, youth school of journalism (Pancevo), problem of tabloid reporting (Nis) and fundraising opportunities for local media – program of the Creative Europe for media projects (Valjevo). Finally, the Novi Pazar Press Hub organized the visiting performance of the play “Editor” by the Reflector Theater from Belgrade, which was well received as the turnout was really notable for this town.

In the last quarter of the year, CI media team organized a conference in Belgrade to mark the broadcasting of the **100th episode** of the podcast “Van centra”, called SAGA (Assembly of Civic Activism) and used this milestone to invite media, journalists, civil society organizations and all interested citizens to take part in

sharing experiences of various local actors from different local communities and discuss local problems and citizens' participation and activism. This was the opportunity for the media from the press hubs to build their networks with representatives of CSOs in their local communities and establish cooperation in reporting on issues of utmost importance for their community and the citizens.

The Youth and Civic education

Civic education program kept doing its main activities during the reporting period. CI produced 100 news articles on our website and social media (Instagram - 776 followers, Facebook - 5355 followers), distributed 18 newsletter (currently 1427 recipients), developed and shared teaching materials and lesson plans (28 documents with lesson plans for elementary and secondary school teachers published on our website). Also, a campaign was initiated for introducing CE on faculties that educate future elementary school teachers (2 trainings for Faculty of pedagogy in Jagodina and Vranje for around 60 students in 2022). We did a needs assessment survey for teachers, OWIS teacher training for using documentaries in school for Civic education teachers. OWIS (One World in Schools) is an education program relying on the use of the audiovisuals/documentaries in education, and throughout this year, it received considerable attention in the sense of involving different kinds of cooperation and various types of local partners. In 2022, another 12 teachers successfully completed OWIS training, and with them the number of those using this methodology increased to 47, in 16 schools in Vranje, Bujanovac, Lebane and Preševo. Three initiatives derived from the OWIS methodology demonstrate the impact of promoting active citizenship among young people: the visit of young people to the Reception Center in Presevo, the promotion of preventive health care and cooperation between communities in Bujanovac, as well as the creation of a safe space for discussion about mental health through the theatrical play "On the Cliff" - Association of citizens "Budi" ("Be"). These accomplishments exemplify the effectiveness of the OWIS approach in fostering an engaged and informed citizens.

We've licensed three new OWIS documentaries, accompanied by comprehensive ToT materials that include lesson plans and exercises for each documentary. These latest additions to our collection are "Listen", which deals with the theme of social cohesion, "Betka and Talking Heads", which explores multigenerational dialogue and volunteering, and "Hello Salaam", which examines topics such as migration, diversity and intercultural dialogue.

A panel discussion called Lessons learned was held - the topic was the school year 2021/22 with teachers and students. CI team members participated in the online Summit on education held in Bosnia and Herzegovina where we presented our Civic education program. We took part in the coalition for the UPR mechanism on youth rights initiated by the Belgrade center for human rights.

Several activities to promote youth mobilization were undertaken such as: one humanitarian action in Vranje, an activity in the municipality of Bujanovac as part of the global campaign "billion rising" advocating on behalf of women and girls in Bujanovac and worldwide, empowering them and calling for an end of violence and gender inequality. An activity in the municipality of Vranje in regard to earth day and yet another activity in the municipality of Bujanovac in regard to World Health Day. Under the "Perspectives of the south" – a series of writing and publications aiming the promotion of young activists from south Serbia. We have come up with 9 stories of activists, giving a closer overview about youth activism, youth movements and potential recommendations on the effective ways for the young people to mobilize over their local level issues and elsewhere. As an overriding objective of our youth work in the south of Serbia, is also the promotion of inter-ethnic cooperation. Therefore, besides the joint activities on a regular basis in our target multiethnic municipalities, we have had the opportunity to enable

participation of young people in two youth activism exchange visits between youth from Serbia and Kosovo. The two exchange visits have taken place in Belgrade and Prishtina, being a joint activity with our partner organization Peer Educators Network-Kosovo. The festival Miredita Dobar dan, was yet another important event that young people from target municipalities in the south of Serbia had the opportunity to be part of and therefore engage in public debates and get knowledge on relevant topics that otherwise tend to enrich the regional perspectives and therefore foster the regional cooperation and the peacebuilding.

Platform "The Land for Us"

CI's online community engagement platform remains to be an important tool and opportunity for organizations to reach and involve more people through their campaigns and actions. Since the beginning of the year, three new projects have been launched on the platform, on the topics of including citizens in the process of creating a social work website in Bujanovac, the initiative to introduce clear criteria for employment in schools and the inclusion of young people in decision-making processes.

The plan is to offer this platform to environmental informal groups and activists throughout Serbia so that they can use it for networking activities, information exchange, and easier organization of field actions, forums and similar events. There are a total of 520 registered users.

Space Miljenko Dereta

During this year, the "Miljenko Dereta" space continued to develop into a multifunctional space for all citizens, associations, informal groups, activists, in accordance with the plans and programs of the GI.

The conference hall, gallery area, studio and community cafe are fully equipped technically and are used for all kinds of meetings, recordings, debates, panel events, conferences, trainings and other types of online and offline events.

After the reconstruction, the first floor is fully functional and is used for all kinds of events from offline to hybrid.

Over 350 events of various formats were held during the year with more than 9,000 participants.

Right to the City, Nurdor, Center for Political Emancipation, German Serbian Chamber of Commerce, BeFem, Center for Moms, Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Ćuruvija Foundation, NINS, Labris, YIHR, are some of the organizations that organized their events in Prostor this year .