

The civil society in the region is young, alive and diverse. After the break-up of Yugoslavia and the fall of the totalitarian regime in Albania, dozen thousands organizations emerged in response to the new needs in the redefined role of the state and the other actors in the newly established democracies. However, the still fragile security and political situation and the poor economic development in many of these countries did not provide favorable conditions for the activity of these organizations.

The civil society was weak in providing timely and effective response to the needs of the target groups. The civil society organizations are dependant on the funds and capacities of the donors that are withdrawing from the region, making it difficult to these organizations to provide long-term support for their effective and sustainable activity. The systematic development of the civil society and its role, particularly in the public sector, remains a priority need. The cooperation between the public institutions and civil society organizations is mainly based on ad-hoc rather than systematic partnerships. There are other problematic areas such as the unfavorable legal framework, bad capacities for cooperation with the media as significant actor and channel of communication with the public.

The networking, exchange of information, experiences, advocacy and lobbying as well as the other types of cross-sector and cross-border cooperation are weak. In a situation when the financial assistance is reduced, the civil society organizations are competing among themselves. The existing cross-border cooperation is limited and divided among the same donors, methodologies and sectors. The networking with the civil society organizations and the networks from outside the region are also weak, particularly with those from the EU countries (with exception of the donor relations). The existing attempts for networking such as the BCSDN are successful in connecting and establishing cooperation among the civil society organizations, which should be further enhanced for bridging the joint problems of these organizations in the region. The existing networks and partnerships prove that the positive examples and practices may enhance the influence of the civil society organizations on the local, national and regional level.

The project purpose is to provide support to the coordination and implementation of project activities of the partner organizations from Albania, Belgium, Slovenia and Serbia.

The target group is consisted of the BCSDN members (ACSF, DA – Albania, MCIC – Macedonia, PF, WAD – Bulgaria, NIT, EOS – Croatia, EHO – Serbia, AIDRom, OAR – Romania, WAWS – Kosovo, CRNVO – Montenegro) and other relevant civil society

organizations/ networks.

The activities were implemented in Brussels (Belgium), Ljubljana (Slovenia), Novi Sad (Serbia), Skopje (Macedonia) and Tirana (Albania).

All activities were realized as part of the EU-funded project "Partnership in Action – Strengthening BCSDN", having four components:

- coordination and consultation on the implementation of activities among MCIC, DA, EHO, ECAS and CNVOS;
- coordination and communication of DA and EHO with the participants from their regions;
- preparation and implementation of activities that fell under DA, EHO, ECAS and CNVOS (the activities were part of other projects foreseen with the program);
- reporting on the implementation of project activities to MCIC.