

The Balkan region, including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Serbia (including Kosovo), Montenegro and Macedonia, in the past ten years was in a situation of destabilization and transition. The domestic and international efforts have significantly contributed for overcoming this period. However, despite these efforts, the situation is still delicate.

The civil society remains weak for providing timely and effective response to the needs of the target groups. The systematic development of the civil society and its role, particularly in the public sector, remains poor. The cooperation between the public institutions and civil society organizations cannot guarantee unbiased allocation of roles and resources. The capacities of the civil society organizations for cooperation with the media, as significant actor and channel of communication with the public, are bad. The networking, exchange of information, experiences, advocacy and lobbying as well as the other types of cross-sector and cross-border cooperation are not strong, mainly on ad-hoc level. The attempts for cooperation and coordination are seen with mistrust. 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 project purpose was to strengthen the individual and organizational capacities of the BCSDN members for bridging the financial restrictions through improved skills and knowledge on the methods and techniques in fund raising.

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 information gained and the skills acquired through the on-the-job training and help-desk (in the EU part) the participating organizations have improved access to EU institutions, processes, financial opportunities and networks. The help-desk (in the part on public dialogue) resulted in improved information and skills for influencing the relevant policies and strategies for the work of civil society organizations.

The project was comprised of two activities. The first was on-the-job training implemented within the existing activity of ECAS in Brussels. There was an open call to the members and the civil society organizations in the region with defined criteria. Five candidates (one from each country) were selected and stayed in ECAS for one month. The duration of the training was from March to December according to the following schedule: Macedonia – March; Albania – September; Bosnia and Herzegovina – October; Serbia – November and Croatia – December. The reports of all candidates are posted on the web sites of BSCDN and ECAS.

The second activity was establishment and running of Help-Desk by ECAS (for EU) and CNVOS (for civil dialogue). The Bureau was promoted by the civil society organizations in the region through the BSCDN web site, bulletin and weekly alerts. In addition, the participants at the training organized within the other projects were contacted individually about the possibilities offered by the help-desk. ECAS and CNVOS have prepared sample questions and answers, which were posted on BSCDN's web sites.