Balkan Civic Practices

THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE EU INTEGRATION AND DEMOCRATIZATION

Process in the Balkans

Balkan Civic Practices | **#1**

The Role of Civil Society in the EU Integration and Democratization Process in the Balkans

FORWARD

Dear readers,

Balkan Civic Practices are initiated and published by Balkan Civic Society Development Network and the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (MCIC).

Balkan Civic Society Development Network is a network of 11 civil society and ecumenical organizations from Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro (including Kosovo). The networking began in 2001 whereas the network itself was established in 2003. MCIC is a member organization as well as the host of networks' Secretariat. The goal of the network is to strengthen civil society through development of indigenous concepts and practices as well as build capacity of civic society actors in the Balkans.

Balkan Civic Practices represent a result of the quest for our own, "indigenous" understanding of the civic society. The search for indigenous concepts and practices of the civic society was instigated by the view that civil society organizations (CSOs) and initiatives are beneficial only if they are owned by domestic stakeholders and are well established in the society.

As an inspiration to Balkan Civic Practices, MCIC publishes its own publication Civic Practices that addresses the same set of issues in the Macedoniaan context. Goals of Balkan Civic Practices are to encourage and support the exchange of experience, best practices and meaningful information regarding questions on regional civic society development, as well as issues related to every society in the country of the region individually.

Balkan Civic Practices are to be published periodically, once to twice a year. Every issue is to contain articles on a focus theme and related topics of interest to civil society in the Balkans accompanied by a workshop where same issues are to be discussed. The selection of topics will be made by the network. In the future, attention will

be paid to publishing articles in regional languages, the author's mother tongue and in English language. This as well, is one step towards developing "indigenousness", to which our network aims.

This publication presents the first issue of Balkan Civic Practices and is published under the title "The Role of Civil Society in EU Integration and Democratization Process in the Balkans". Under the same titile, this issue was discussed in the framework of a regional workshop organized by Association of Protestant Development Organizations (APRODEV) from Brussels, Belgium and MCIC between 22nd and 23rd July, 2004 in Skopje, Macedonia. Thus, this publication is to enable access to presentations and issues discussed at the workshop as well as to its recommendations to other CSOs and the wider public in the region. With this, the publication will build on and further contribute to strengthening partnership formed between civil society actors vis-à-vis their Governments and EU institutions at the workshop.

Saso Klekovski
Executive Director
Macedonian Center for International Cooperation

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The Future of the Balkans within the EU and the Role of Civil Society in the Democratization Process

Interaction between the European institutions and society takes various forms. Primarily through the European Parliament as the elected representative of the citizens of Europe , than through the institutionalised advisory bodies of the EU (Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions), based on their role according to the Treaties and through less formalised direct contacts with interested parties.

In this context, civil society organisations play an important role as facilitators of a broad policy dialogue. For this reason, the White Paper on European Governance stressed the importance of involving these organisations in its consultation processes with the following statement:

> Civil society plays an important role in giving voice to the concerns of the citizens and delivering services that meet people's needs. Civil society increasingly sees Europe as offering a good platform to change policy orientations and society. It is a real chance to get citizens more actively involved in achieving the Union's objectives and to offer them a structured channel for feedback, criticism and protest.

The Commission particularly encourages a coherent approach to representation of civil society organisations at European level. This specific role of civil society organisations in modern democracies is closely linked to the fundamental right of citizens to form associations in order to pursue a common purpose, as highlighted in Article 12 of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights.

The right of citizens to form associations to pursue a common purpose is a fundamental freedom in a democracy which forms the bases of the liberty, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law – as principles which are common to the EU Member States.

In EU, civil society organisations play an important role as facilitators of a broad policy dialogue.

The EC encourages a coherent approach to representation of civil society organisations at European level through European associations and networks.

Over the last decades, partnership between the European Commission and NGOs has expanded on all fronts. This intensification has covered a range of issues, from policy dialogue and policy delivery, to project and programme management, both within the EU and in its partner countries.

Increasingly, NGOs are recognised as a significant component of civil society and as providing valuable support for a democratic system of government.

As the European Commission has acquired additional responsibilities in a number of new policy areas, this has been matched by an ever-increasing number of NGOs operating within and outside Europe and a widening in the scope of their work. This trend can be seen in the increasing number of national NGOs creating or joining European associations and networks.

With the enlargement of the EU and the increased public scrutiny of EU affairs there is no reason to believe that this process will slow down.

Over 1.000 million Euro a year is allocated to NGO projects directly by the EC.

The Commission's current practice clearly proves its willingness to maintain and strengthen its partnership with NGOs. At present it is estimated that over 1,000 million Euro a year is allocated to NGO projects directly by the Commission. The major part of this assistance is in the field of external relations for development co-operation, human rights, democracy programmes, and, in particular, humanitarian aid.

Developing and consolidating democracy is also the Community's general policy objective in its co-operation with developing countries and goes therefore far beyond the enlargement process. Partnerships with local NGOs in developing countries are particularly significant in this regard.

The role of NGOs is crucial in representing the views of specific groups of citizens and issues to the European institutions.

The role of NGOs is crucial in representing the views to the European institutions of specific groups of citizens (such as people with disabilities, ethnic minorities) or on specific issues (such as the environment, animal welfare, world trade). In particular, many NGOs have an ability to reach the poorest and most disadvantaged

and to provide a voice for those not sufficiently heard through other channels.

In the European context, NGOs perform this role not only in relation to the Commission, but also to the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the Council. Their involvement in policy shaping and policy implementation helps to win public acceptance for the EU. In some cases, they can act as a balance to the activities and opinions of other interests in society.

The specific expertise that NGOs can contribute to policy discussions, through their links at local, regional, national and European level, can provide expert input for EU policymaking. In particular, they can provide feedback on the success or otherwise of specific policies thereby contributing to the Commission's task of defining and implementing policies by fully taking into account its overall public policy responsibility.

The contribution of NGOs is particularly important in tackling social exclusion and discrimination, protecting the natural environment, and the provision of humanitarian and development aid. The expertise and dedication of NGO staff and their willingness to work under difficult operational conditions mean that NGOs are vital partners for the Commission both within the EU and beyond.

By encouraging national NGOs to work together to achieve common goals, the European NGO networks are making an important contribution to the formation of a "European public opinion" usually seen as a pre-requisite to the establishment of a true European political entity. At the same time this also contributes to promoting European integration in a practical way and often at grassroots level.

Therefore, strengthening the relationship between the Commission and NGOs can help both parties to be more successful in achieving their respective goals. At the same time, the Commission will need to recognise and support the development and independence of the NGO sector.

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Common determination of the peoples in the Europe to come together in a Union has become the driving force for peace, democracy, stability and prosperity on our continent. The ambitious process of overcoming the legacy and division of the Europe today marks an unprecedented and historic milestone in completing this process with accession of the 10 new countries.

According to the so-called Copenhagen criteria, membership in the EU requires that the candidate country has achieved stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities.

The European perspective of Western Balkan countries is confirmed and in this effort NGOs can make important contribution through development of democracy and civil society.

Further, the European perspective of the five countries of the Western Balkans is confirmed and the European Union's determination to support efforts of the potential candidates to move closer to the European Union is enforced. In this respect, the NGOs can make an important contribution thought development of democracy and civil society in the country.

The EC Delegation in Skopje in line with the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) is closely following with great interest the developments in the Economic and Social sector but also it is very much interested in supporting the process of strengthening the civil society, including NGOs, in order to provide an improved forum for the dialogue with the European citizens.

Development of global citizen commitment encouraging individuals to reflect on their rights responsibilities and their capacity to influence changes, among other factors appears as key element that needs appropriate attention and support.

The role of civl society organizations has to be encouraged and better valued.

The understanding about the role that civil society organizations can play in building democracy, promoting pluralism, improving justice, fighting poverty, correcting and complementing the state, has to be encouraged. More widely, it should be underlined that the firm establishment of the rule of law is a process in which civil society as a whole must play a part and, therefore the work of NGOs needs to be better valued.

The Stabilisation and Association process remains the policy framework to help the countries along the way and is recognised

and supported by the whole of the international community and by the countries of the region. It is an entry strategy introducing European values, principles and standards in the region, which in due course will gain them entry into the European Union.

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Elvis Ali

CARDS Programme for fYR Macedonia and Civil Society

National CARDS Assistance to fYR Macedonia

The programming context of the National CARDS Assistance to fYR Macedonia consists of Stabilization and Association Process, Country Strategic Papers (CSP) and Multi-Indicative Programme (MIP).

The Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) between the EU and the fYR Macedonia was signed in April 2001 and entered into force on April 1, 2004. This is the first SAA to enter into force. The Agreement sets ambitious objectives and provides the framework for an intensive dialogue at political and technical levels, s.c. Stabilization and Association Process. Among the identified areas of cooperation is also democracy and rule of law, which envelops the programms for improvement of inter-ethnic relations and support to civil society.

Both CSP and MIP are framed within the Stabilization and Association Process as a more specific plan of action for each country and within the framework of EU multi-year planning.

CSP for fYR Macedonia sets a strategic framework for the period 2002-2006 in the form of long-term objectives and priority fields of action for the provision of CARDS assistance in the country. On the other hand, MIP describes sectors and planned interventions to which EU assistance for the fYR of Macedonia in the period 2002-2004 will be directed as well as the expected results and indicators of achievement.

The programming context of the National CARDS Assistance to fYR Macedonia consists of Stabilization and Association Process, Country Strategic Papers and Multi-Indicative Programme.

National CARDS Assistance to
fYR Macedonia 2002 – 2004

Between 2002 and 2004, activities in the area of inter-ethnic relations and civil society are being supported with a package of 3 million Euro funds each year.

CARDS assistance for 2002-2004 amounts to 135 million Euros. Activities supporting the inter-ethnic relations and civil society are framed within the support to democracy and rule of law in the country. Between 2002 and 2004, these activities are being supported with a package of 3 million Euro funds each year. Supplementary to these, regional CARDS funds also support the activities ranging within the scope of support to civil society.

	2002	2003	2004	Total
I. DEMOCRACY AND RULE OF LAW	**3**	**3**	**3**	**9**
1.1 Inter-ethnic relations and civil society	3	3	3	9
II. ECONOMIC AND SOCI AL DEVELOPMENT	**25.5**	**20**	**22.5**	**68**
2.1 Private and financial sector (incl.App. to Intern. Market)	2	3	4.5	9.5
2.2 Trade	4	4	4	12
2.3 Development of local infrastructure	14	9	8.5	31.5
2.4 Social cohesion	2.5	1	2.5	6
2.5 Tempus	3	3	3	9
III. JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS	**5.2**	**12.5**	**17**	**34.7**
3.1 Reform of the judiciary	0	2.5	1.5	4
3.2 Integrated Border Management (regional funding)	2.2	6	11.5	19.7
3.3 Immigration and asylum	2	1	0	3
3.4 Fight against crime	1	3	4	8
IV. ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**
4.1 Environment	0	1	2	3
V. RUNNING COSTS EAR	**5**	**5**	**3.5**	**13.5**
VI. RESERVE	**1.8**	**2**	**3**	**6.8**
TOTAL ALLOCATION	**40.5**	**43.5**	**51**	**135**

Democracy and the Rule of Law:
Recent Highlights in fYR Macedonia

At the policy level, support to the decentralisation process through a local government development programme has been given to the Government. In the framework of these efforts, an action plan for decentralisation of key ministries has been developed and is now in place.

At the municipal level, support has been given to municipalities through pilot projects targeting institutional capacity. CARDS support has also lead to improvement of local infrastructure.

At the grass-roots level, five projects including promotion of inter-ethnic co-operation, civil society development (NGOs Support Centres Project), local media, higher education institutions and youth groups involved in implementation projects, have been supported.

EU support to fYR of Macedonia is at both policy, municipal and grass-root level.

Inter-ethnic Relations and Civil Society:
Projects and Activities

Improving inter-ethnic relations and supporting civil society are the two main fields identified within the scope of democracy and rule of law priorities. Country strategy evaluation in 2001 made two important recommendations that frame activities being targeted within this priority area. Namely, the Evaluation recommended that the EU focuses on support to CSOs, ethnic reconciliation and support the role of CSO in maintaining the quality of governance.

Support to activities in the area of inter-ethnic relations and civil society is also defined by the following specific MIP objectives for 2002-2004:

Within the specific MIP objectives for 2002-2004 EU support goes to activities that promote buoyant and free civil society, increase tolerance toward minorities and active participation of civil society in the policy setting and decision-making process.

- To promote the development of a buoyant and free civil society in favour of inter-ethnic dialogue and reconciliation;
- To increase tolerance toward minorities;
- To increase the active participation of civil society in the policy setting and decision-making process.

CARDS 2002 provided 3 million Euro to support activities in the area of inter-ethnic relations and civil society. An assessment study on inter-ethnic relations was conducted within the scope of this support. A local call for proposals on promotion of inter-ethnic relations resulted in support of 5 projects. European Agency of Reconstruction also provided co-financing for setting up of 8 NGO resource centres and financially supported the NGO fair in 2002 and 2003.

The following are some other inter-ethnic relations and civil society projects supported by CARDS 2002:

- Pages of Mutual Understanding
- The Triangle — Three Universities Responding to Ethnic Divides
- Citizenship through Theatre
- Children's Puppet Theatre
- Community Development through the Improvement of Inter-ethnic Relations and Reconciliation

By focusing shortly on the project Support of Civil Society-Strengthening NGOs also supported by CARDS 2002, I would like to demonstrate how these funds are being specifically targeted at improving inter-ethnic relations and support to civil society. The overall objective of this project is to establish NGO support centres in socially and economically deprived areas in Macedonia. The specific goals of this project are:

CARDS support has among other lead to creation of 8 NGO support centres and training of 600 minority youth for the Civil Service.

- To support the development of civil society organisations;
- To encourage regional NGO networking;
- To enhance communication and cooperation between NGOs and municipalities;
- To strengthen the skills of CSOs for lobbying, advocacy building, volunteerism and sustainability.

In the course of this project 8 NGO support centres were established.

CARDS 2003 also provided 3 million Euro to support activities and projects within the scope of inter-ethnic and civil society priorities. Two calls have already been launched to support the promotion of inter-ethnic relations through organizing a public information campaign for youth on tolerance and developing of extra-curricular activities for ethnically mixed groups of school children. Two calls are also expected to target the development civil society through support of a CSO platform for national networking, lobbying and advocacy-building and capacity-building for selected CSOs.

CARDS 2004 will provide 3 million Euro with the aim of underpinning the implementation of the Framework Agreement by assisting with the use of languages (mainly) in the courts and public prosecutor's

office. These funds will also be targeted at further support of the participation of minority groups in the civil service and improvement of the co-operation between minority communities and the municipalities they live in. Finally, CARDS 2004 will assist in improving the relationship and co-operation between the civil society and the Macedonian Government through supporting the set up of a civil society unit within the Government.

Additionally, a project supporting equitable representation of non-majority communities in the Civil Service has been supported out of CARDS 2002 reserve fund of 2 million Euro. The main purpose of this project is to address current imbalances in the representation of non-majority communities in the Civil Service and to improve their employment opportunities. In the course of the project, 600 youths are being trained to a standard whereby they can obtain a Public Administration Certificate and secure posts in the Civil Service. As part of this project, an organisational, logistical and educational (such as Curriculum and training) framework of the PACE Training Programme is to be established.

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Saso Klekovski

The Role of Civil Society in the Balkans: Present, Future and the Experience of Macedonia

The civil society in Macedonia is not a phenomena related to post-socialistic transition. However, the transition brought inclusion of wider spectres and more pluralism into civil society. Many organisations, such as women, youth or disability organizations, have their roots in first years after the Second Wolrd War. These, as well as sports, cultural and professional organisations formed the civil society in the socialist period. End of 1980's brought establishment of first environmental organisations, while the start of 1990's brought first human rights, minority, cultural and humanitarian organisations into the spectre. Presently, there about 5,300 registered organisations in Macedonia, including sports and professional associations.

Looking present and future through the experience of Macedonia must include looking at key achievements of the civil society in Macedonia, and their basis, on one hand, and future challenges with obstacles to be overcomed by the civil society, on the other.

Key Achievements of the Civil Society in Macedonia

Civil society in Macedonia is characterized by areas with key achievements, however, also areas with less or with very marginal achievements. Among those with key achievements are:

- advocacy for rights of marginalised groups;
- development of policy dialogue;
- influence on social agenda.

These achievements are mostly associated with organizations that work with women, youth, pensioners, disabled, children and Roma. While these relate mostly to first and second area of achievements,

The civil society in Macedonia is not a phenomena related to post-socialistic transition, however, this brought inclusion of wider spectres and more pluralism in civil society.

Areas of key achievements by civil society in Macedonia are: advocacy for rights of marginalised groups, development of policy dialogue and influence on social agenda.

the third, i.e. influence on social agenda, also relates to the work on human rights.

Here are several illustrations of these achievements:
Pensioners, i.e. Union of Associations of Pensioners in Macedonia, were very efficient in advocating for rights of pensioners, in particular, those related to the increase of pension and their health care services. During 1995 and 2002, the s.c. "8 %" is the most known case, in which pensioners succeeded in forcing the Government to raise pensions for 8% as result of increase in average salary.

Women were very successful in advocating for the right to participate in the political life or better health care protection. First informal Macedonian Women Lobby brought together women NGO's, politicians, officials and academics. They succeeded in advocating for change in the election law, which included gender quota of 30%, first for the Parliamentary (2002) and later for Local elections (2004). Organization ESE (Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of Women) was successful in promoting legal sanctions of domestic violence. Further on, women were not only able to resist possible reductions of health (and social) care protection (such as reduction of maternity leave), but also to bring about improvements such as in the case of free examinations for breast cancer prevention achieved in 2003.

Children organisation First children Embassy – Megasi was able to put the issue of domestic violence of children on the political agenda. Between 2002 and 2004, organisation for disabled persons Polio Plus was very successful in building awareness on issue of physical access for people with disability.

Most of the mentioned examples were related to capability of CSOs to enter into policy dialogue with the Government. The area were this was not the case, but where nevertheless CSOs' managed to influence the society agenda is human rights. In 2003, under the auspices of the UN Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights Police-Civil Society working group was established. The working group is making very slow progress and needed considerable amount of time to build confidence between participants in the group.

Additionally, on the side of lesser or marginal achivements, civil society in Macedonia was less successful in providing services to marginalised groups, except in emergency aid periods. Even today, provision of social services for the poor and marginalised groups is still not sustainable outside big emergencies, due the dependency on funds from foreign donors. That is why, most cases of service provision failed after foreign donors' withdrawal. Exception are only very rare cases of revised service provision based on membership fees such as in the case of solidarity support for funerals within the Association of Pensioners or the case of international exchange for students.

During big emergencies such as Kosovo (1999) or Macedonian crises (2001), Eli Hilal, a Muslim humanitarian organization or Roma NGO's, were extremely important in service provision for refugees, IDP's and social cases. Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, with the support of EU funding, financed 12 projects of services for social prevention. Most of the project were successful in innovating, but were not sustained (with exception of one) after the funding ended.

Similar, civil society has made marginal achievements in keeping the Government and private sector responsible and accountable. Even in cases of success stories, individual responsibility was watered down. The only exception that can be mentioned in this is the area of environment, were there is constant pressure from CSOs on both the Government and private sector. The case of pollution in the city of Veles is the most important battleground for the civil society in enforcing social responsibility presently.

The Basis for the Achievements of Civil Society

The basis for the achievements of civil society in Macedonao are:

- based on constituencies;
- based on value of peace and tolerance;
- focused on 3C — communication, coordination, cooperation.

The key achievements in most of the cases are related to CSOs based on constituencies. While women CSO are the ones with highest

Civil society in Macedonia has made small or marginalized achievements in service provision (save of emergency periods) and keeping the Government and the private sector accountable.

The basis for the achievements in Macedonia is civil society that is based on constituencies, value of peace and tolerance and focused on 3C — communication, coordination, cooperation.

number of members, the gender agenda is getting ever wider support with women and the general population. Same is with the Association of Pensioners, most probably the largest CSO in Macedonia (with about 210.000 members — more than 10% of the total Macedonian population).

The civil sector in Macedonia is strongly based on value and commitment to peace. This is influenced by long history of wars in Macedonia (such as Balkan Wars, First and Second World War) and the fact that war was the largest threat for Macedonia in the 1990's with raging conflicts in neighbouring Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. This commitment is all the more important as even the civil sector was ethnically based (i.e. most of the CSOs follow ethnic divisions). However, relations between CSOs on inter-ethnic basis did exist. This formed the basis for first cases of ethnically-mixed organisations to emerge and existing ones to be moving into similar direction.

The period of transition in the history of civil society in Macedonia had very string focus on 3C – communication, coordination, cooperation. In many areas, more permanent 3C-structures such as national or umbrella organisations exist. Again, this is the case with pensioners (Union of Association of Pensioners in Macedonia), women (Union of Women's Organisations in Macedonia, Macedonian Women Lobby), environment (Environmental Movement of Macedonia) and disabled (Community of Organisations for Disabled of Macedonia, Inter-party Parliamentarian Lobby Group).

Big crises also lead to ad hoc coalitions or networks. The formation of Committee for Peace and Civic Initiatives was reaction to war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the National Humanitarian Coordinations were reaction to Kosovo and Macedonia crises, coalition "It's enough" ("Dosta e" in Macedonian) was reaction to growing dissatisfaction with the Government in the crisis period 2001-2002.

Civil society in Macedonia is based on local social and foreign financial capital.

In 2001, the largest civil society 3C event was started: NGO Fair — Forum of the Civil Society in Macedonia. The last 3rd NGO Fair organized in 2003 brought together more than 200 participating NGO's, organization of more than 50 forums, panels and presentations and over 10,000 visitors. This success lead to the establishment of

Macedonian Civic Platform with more than 30 leading CSOs in the country as its members.

Thus, one of the main conclusions that can be drawn is that key achievements of civil society in Macedonia were based on the combination of local social capital and (foreign) financial capital.

The Future Challenges for Civil Society

In short, future challenges for the civil society in Macedonia lies in:

- "indigenisation";
- definition of its own role;
- cooperation with other sectors in society.

Before going into details on each dimension, it must be stressed that the entry point for overcoming the above challenges will have to be the practise of what one is preaching. If paraphrased: "Don't ask what the Government, the EU and the private sector can do for us (i.e. civil society), but what we can do for ourselves."

Recent research on corporate social responsibility shown that legal and fiscal regulations are only placed on third place as an obstacle for private sector support to the civil society, after perceived lack of results and transparency of civil society. That is why the first step is in "indigenisation", i.e. rooting the civil society into the society, through demonstrating its results, transparency and accountability. Demonstrating results is of key importance in gaining public support. Now, these results can also be made comparable with the Government and the private sector. Furthermore, transparency and accountability, not only to donors, but to the general public should be in process of constant improvement. There is need to overcome reluctance among CSOs in explaining why this is important as well as building capacities in this area.

Secondly, this process has to be followed by an understanding of the role of civil society. CSO have to formulate what are their comparative advantages (i.e. kind of unique sales points) such as innovation, flexibility and efficiency in mobilizing of social capital. This will inevitably mean strategic orientation towards advocacy. While this should not mean exclusion of provision of basic (social)

Future challenges for the civil society lay in "indigenisation", definition of its own role and cooperation with other sectors in society.

services, it will mean focus on achieving access through the s.c. rights-based approach.

In the Macedonian context, advocacy without services is like software without hardware.

In this approach, the State or the private sector are responsible for service provision and CSOs for advocacy through research, policy dialogue, monitoring and awareness-building. Of course, this approach should not mean exclusion of service provision in case where this is serving the purpose of exploring alternatives and innovation. Still, service provision can be crucial for advocacy. In the Macedonian context, advocacy without services is like software without hardware. In such cases, CSOs can have the role of "ice breakers" and "gap fillers". Thus, the latter will not mean permanent involvement in service provision, but accepting it up to the point when the Government could take it over.

Finally, civil society in Macedonia was good in 3C or building the social capital. With confidence and self-confidence on the rise, civil society should look towards cooperation with other sectors of society, i.e. private sector (through public-private partnerships), the Government and the European Union.

In the future, the civil society should work on overcoming barriers in developing substantive dialogue with the Government, its institutionalisation and move towards structured dialogue.

To sum up, civil society should work on overcoming barriers in developing substantive dialogue with the Government, its institutionalisation and move towards structured dialogue.

EU will become future major supporter of civil society in Macedonia (and for that matter in the Balkan region). Here, two issues will be of importance. The first is access of CSO to EU institutions, which should be based on special focus approach (i.e. separate budget for civil society) or mainstreaming, or most probably in combination of both. The second is in realization that existing instruments and mechanisms (such as CARDS) are not adequate to support the real needs CSOs have.

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Carolyn Boyd

The Development of Civil Society and Challenges for the Future: Lessons Learnt from the Region

There is an old well known proverb which says «There is my truth, there is your truth and there is their truth». No matter what we comment on or observe, what we see and how we experience it will be different from the person standing beside you or across the room from you. In this short presentation, I would like to share some of my observations of civil society development and its challenges as I have personally experienced it in my II years of work in the region. There may be parts you will not agree with, but I hope we will be able to identify a common thread which runs through all our experiences and at the end of the day find unity in our voices in order that we better work together to address future challenges and help those who are most vulnerable.

The Ecumenical Women's Solidarity Fund (EWSF) was initiated by the World Council of Churches in 1993 as a response to the crimes being committed against women in the war which was then raging in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although the Fund has been based in Croatia, it has been responsible for supporting approximately 400 self-help initiatives with women and children in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Macedonia, as well as in Croatia. This support is almost always channelled through local NGOs, or citizens groups.

Before I speak in more detail about the NGO and civil sector, I think it is important to put this sector into the context in which it has and continues to develop. Yes, like many of the other states which have now entered as new members of the EU, society here has had to deal with the collapse of socialist structures and the development of a society based on capitalist values in which everyone is viewed equally in the open market and where often the most vulnerable members of the community are overlooked and forgotten. And yes, there are issues common to those new member

The environment in which NGOs and local partners in the Balkans work is not only one which has fought with the rebuilding of an economy, but the rebuilding of a destroyed social and material infrastructure as well as with communities, which have been torn apart.

states here in the countries of Western Balkans. However, without stating the blatantly obvious, it is vital to mention that within this political transition there is one major difference and that is that the majority of countries we are working in were ravaged by war. The environment in which our NGOs and local partners are working in to build a stable civil and democratic society is not only one which has fought with the rebuilding of an economy, but the rebuilding of a destroyed social and material infrastructure as well as with communities which have been torn apart.

The war context made the situation fragile and unpredictable and many NGOs had no direct experience, formal training and no long-term strategy.

When I began working in the region in 1992, it was quite clear that the NGO scene was a new one. The war context made the situation fragile and unpredictable and many NGOs were founded by groups of people desperately seeking ways to address the needs they saw around them. Almost all had no direct experience, no formal training in this specific field, and no long-term strategy.

Many foreign organisations flooded into the region bringing with them a seemingly endless source of finances and resources. Many of these new and inexperienced NGOs found themselves making the rapid jump from implementing a small project to larger programmes as need and funding dictated. The issues they were dealing with were new as were many of the responsibilities including decision-making and funding issues. Yet, within the context of the pressing needs around them, they quickly gained a unique portfolio of experience directly related to the needs of the community they were working with.

Local NGOs created a seemingly alternative approach that was not based on the more usual state initiatives as was the case in the former system.

If I can take a few steps back before I begin to move forward, as this new awareness grew in the early 1990's and more and more civil groups sprung up, they created a seemingly alternative approach that was not based on the more usual state initiatives as was the case in the former system. For many, and in this I include the media, non governmental organisations or initiatives were sometimes presented as "anti governmental" organisations and as such the climate was difficult to work in.

During this early period, foreign agencies and organisations poured into the region. Most took on local staff but the main positions were held by ex-patriots. This was a double edged sword: on the one hand they brought know-how, resources, pre-planned strategies

and an abundance of money which was used to set up countless projects and local groups. On the other hand, very few of these local groups had any insight into the financial planning of their umbrella organisations and donors, and against the chaotic backdrop of war, nobody I assume thought too much about the future, and in this I include many of the international organisations. The focus was on those in need and the momentum of the situation spurred on local groups and many new local NGOs and citizens groups were established. Many of these groups focused their activities on very specific fields and I have to say did some remarkable work.

During the early period foreign agencies and organisations poured into the region and created a double-edged sword: abundance of resources and know-how but little long-term strategy and local capacities.

Some of the foreign agencies who imported programme models from their experience in other parts of the globe were now in partnership with strong local NGOs, strong in the sense of the implementation and relationship with the target groups. However the main positions, the decision-makers, the strategic planners continued to be ex-patriot staff. These agencies in many ways used the strengths of their local partners to implement their own programmes, and this is quite fine, but there were few genuine attempts to work on their structure and training. To use the phrase of the day, no one really addressed the capacity of their local partners.

Shifts in the political scene took place, the focus of the conflict also shifted, the media focus on the region shifted and, as to be expected. Then followed an exodus of these foreign organisations leaving many of new NGOs with the responsibility of running programmes on their own, but without the training, experience and resources needed. So when the ex-patriot staff left, often the local staff remaining in the organisation lacked the tools and know-how to continue running their initiative at a similar pace.

Shifts in the political scene, the conflict and the media away from the region was followed by an exodus of foreign organisations leaving many of new NGOs with the responsibility of running programmes on their own, but without the training, experience and resources needed.

Many groups disappeared, many struggled for a period and then disbanded. Those NGOs which have survived have done so on the merit of strong programmes and a good network, through which they have been able to share information and promote themselves, not only within their own country but beyond and across Europe. Also, where they had the support of good, forward thinking back donors, they have been able to invest time in staff training and are now in a position where they can implement projects and civil initiatives with the highest degree of professionalism.

With local partners who have been able to successfully develop a relationship with their government institutions they have acknowledged that the strength of this has been more efficiency in bringing about positive change in their local communities and easier problem solving.

While improved effectiveness, legitimacy, visibility and financial support are key positive experiences in working with government institutions, problems arise due to frequent changes in personnel.

Cooperation with government bodies in many ways gives NGOs "legitimacy", greater visibility and often increases their opportunities for financial support. However, problems often arise when a good relationship is struck up with a government minister who is then changed. This is very frequent as personnel are often moved about government departments.

Often, the civic players can identify issues and needs that the government structures are either not fully aware of, do not have the structures to address or focus on them, or even have chosen not to address for political reasons. In this case, NGOs can raise these issues onto a higher platform. In the new democratic societies we are living in the region, the civil sector is vital in the development of democracy. Two examples of this would be women's groups who lobbied on behalf of women victims of violence and brought about change in criminal law procedures in two countries in the region.

People have confidence and trust in civic initiatives, as beneficiaries are not isolated and intimidated by heavy bureaucratic structures, have access and contributory role. They are brought into the process and have an element of ownership in the activities taking place in their community.

Civil initiatives have been working with the people through unparalleled times and are still present. People have confidence and trust in them, they (the beneficiaries) are not isolated and intimidated by heavy bureaucratic structures, they have access, a contributory role, they are brought into the process and have an element of ownership in the activities taking place in their community. This cannot always be said of State programmes. Often, NGOs are able to bring about cross-border projects, bring people together across the religious and ethnic divide because of their flexibility, grassroots approach, ability to listen closely to the needs, an acute awareness of where the people are at, to feel when the time is right, with the impartiality that the Government cannot offer nor, I am sad to say, the churches.

Over the past 10 years, perhaps more, these civil groups have more or less been sustained by foreign donors. I am not saying that Local Governments were not interested, quite simply the local economies were broken and State budgets could not make a serious

contribution. Now we are in the post-emergency phase. In order for civil groups to work there has to be support from the State which has to create a suitable climate, one which encourages and supports the development of civil initiatives and one which also acknowledges the specialised contribution which this sector offers.

My recent experience in Croatia is a positive one. There is increasing support from the State as well as recognition of civil sector initiatives.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina the picture is quite different. And again it is important to remember the events which tore the country apart and continuing presence of the bureaucratically unmanageable Republic of Srpska and Federation, the backdrop against which the local partners must work.

I will share one example of a local EWSF partner working in a district which straddles the two entities.

This local NGO received permission to implement two health projects from the Canton Ministry for Health and by doing so this project's health programme was incorporated into the State Health system. However, in reality this meant very little and was a political move so as not to allow the NGO to form a parallel institution which would badly reflect on the State's inability to provide health care for returnees and the domicile population in the district.

The number of people receiving health care from the project is 20.000. Out of this number 40% are returnees. In many ways this project was instrumental in supporting returnees to the area. Yet, the project receives no support from the State.

When the NGO approached the Ministry to request customs and tax exemption to bring in second hand medical equipment, which was in very good condition from Croatia, they were denied.

When Christian Aid donated a 4 wheel drive vehicle to the project when it shut down its Bihac office, not only had they to pay for new registration but they had to export it and re-import it into another Canton despite the fact the vehicle was only moved from one side of the same country to the other.

> **Now we are in the post-emergency phase and State support must come in form of a suitable climate, which encourages and supports the development of civil initiatives and acknowledges the specialised contribution which this sector offers.**

What are the problems faced by civil sector groups when working with European or international institutions?

Cooperation with the more powerful gives excellent results because here NGOs are specialised in highly specific fields and are able to dedicate their time and energies to very specific elements in the development of civil society while larger institutions do not have the time or personnel to give to these types of activities. However, the weaknesses of cooperation with such institutions lie mainly in their huge bureaucratic apparatus, which diminishes the efficiency of joint projects as well as communication. Institutions are also in a position of power which very often manifests itself in taking away the decision-making from the local partner and dictating the pace of communication.

The main weaknesses of cooperation with international and EU institutions lie mainly in their huge bureaucratic apparatus, which diminishes the efficiency of joint projects as well as communication.

What are the difficulties in long-term sustainability of civil sector groups?

- They are usually understaffed and working with restricted funds, surviving from project to project and are unable to engage enough experts for certain fields such as proposal writing, fundraising etc.;
- Another problem is often language barriers;
- Lack of knowledge of the donor community and understanding of the donors mentality, methods and values;
- And for many, the initial problem is an entry point to international institutions.

What would help create a better climate for civil, non governmental and non-profit making groups?

- Sponsorship of incentives for private business and companies to support civil initiatives;
- Greater visible presence in public life, good contact with other NGOs, i.e. a strong active network;
- Having donors, who closely follow and understand the partners' activities;
- Moral and practical support of the churches;
- Easier access to EU structures;

- Forum which would allow regional partners to be consulted on issues and would dictate EU policy regarding civil society development;
- Free exchange of experience, information and good working practices;
- Donors who are willing to assist the local partners in approaching other donors and developing relations with the private sector;
- Joint initiatives that would work over the wider region.

The local agencies represented round the table and the many others they work with have different and unique experiences to share. They have made a remarkable yet understated contribution so far, survived almost a decade of war, collapsing ideologies, international sanctions, economic isolation, continued simmering ethnic tensions … and I am sure will survive European integration … and perhaps bring a positive witness from the Balkans to the European table!

The author is Programme Coordinator of
Ecumenical Women's Solidarity Fund.

Cvjetana Plavsa-Matic

From Vision to Change:
The Croatian Experience

The Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs in Croatia was established on October 1, 1998. Activities that were undertaken in the framework of this Office were: trust-building between the Government and NGOs, financial support to NGOs, information-sharing through the Newsletter "LINK", coordination, development of legal framework and education.

In 2001, a new model was developed for support of civil society development, which consisted of an Office, Council for Civil Society Development and National Foundation for Civil Society Development (the National Foundation).
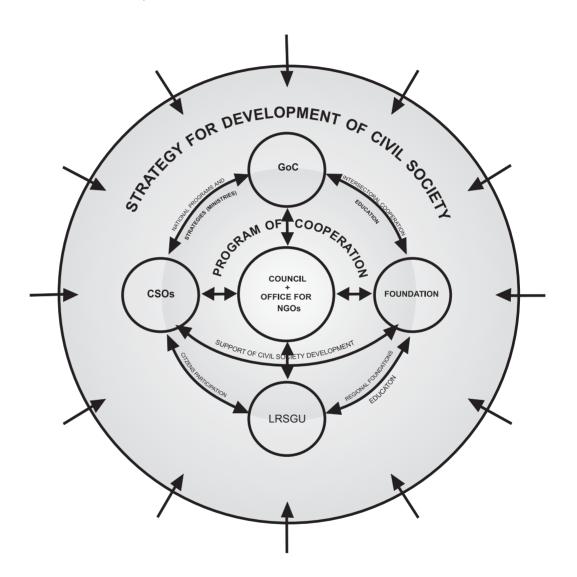
The first step in implementing this initiative and the vision, on which this was based, was made possible through the public discussion on the draft Law on Lottery in the Croatian Parliament. In the debate, 50% of money to be allotted to the State by the lottery gains was requested to be given in financial support of the establishment of the National Foundation and the activities of NGOs in the country. These resources made possible the building of a national infrastructure for further development of civil society in Croatia.

The second step were concrete actions that lead to the implementation of the above vision. Namely, on October 3, 2001, the Croatian Government made a decision to financially support civil society in the country through introduction of a 3-year contracts for service delivery by NGOs and establish a public foundation for its management. On April 18, 2002, the Government decided to introduce a new organizational structure for further development of NGOs. The new model consisted of a strategy for development of civil society and program of cooperation between the Government,

In 2001, a new model was developed for support of civil society development, which consisted of an Office, Council for Civil Society Development and National Foundation for Civil Society Development.

On April 18, 2002, the Government introduced a new organizational structure for further development of NGOs that consisted of a strategy for development of civil society and program of cooperation between the Government, LRSGU, NGOs and the National Foundation.

Local and Regional Self-Government Units (LRSGU), NGOs and the National Foundation. In this model, the Office, Council for Civil Society Development and National Foundation would play a central role in coordinating all actors and activities in the field (see below).

Meaning of abbreviations:

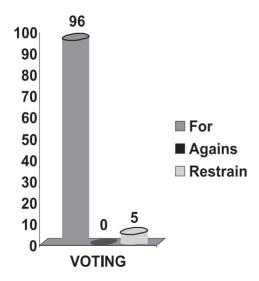**CSOs** = civil society organizations

GoC = Government of the Republic of Croatia

LRSGU = Local and Regional Self-Government Units

Further necessary changes in the legal framework that made pos-
sible the realization of this project in Croatia were:

- On July 2002, the Croatian Parliament passed the Law on Lottery,
  which included 50% of gains transferred to the State to be
  allocated in support of civil society;
- On February 27, 2003, the Law on the National Foundation and
  Code of good practices for financing programms and projects of
  NGOs from the State budget was drafted;
- On July 10, 2003, the Government adopted draft Law on the
  National Foundation and Code of good practices and both were
  sent into the parliamentary procedure;
- On July 16, 2003, first discussion on the Law on the National
  Foundation and Code of good practice was held in Parliamentary
  Committees.

The third and final step was taken on October 16, 2003, when
the Croatian Parliament finally passed the Law on the National
Foundation for Civil Society Development with 96 votes for, none
against and 5 restrained.

**On October 16, 2003,
the Parliament passed
the Law on the National
Foundation for Civil Society
Development in Croatia.**

Following this decision, the Government appointed 9 members
of Management Board and a temporary director of the National
Foundation.

The Management Board consists of the Government, LRSGU and CSO representatives. These are:

- The Government: dr. Zdenko Franic, Deputy Minister of Science and Technology, dr. Vesna Vasicek, State Treasurer-Ministry of Finance, Ms. Marija Pejcinovic Buric, Assistant to the Minister for European Institutions;
- LRSGU: Prof. Vesna Zec, City of Split;
- CSOs: dr. Mirjana Krizmanic (Zagreb), dr. Katerina Kruhonja (Osijek), Mladen Ivanovic (Zagreb), Goran Beus Richembergh (Zagreb), Teodor Celakoski (Zagreb).

The main purpose of the National Foundation is promotion and development of civil society in Croatia through expert and financial support to programmes that encourage:

- Sustainability of the non-for-profit sector;
- Cross-sectoral cooperation;
- Civil initiatives;
- Philanthropy;
- Voluntarism;
- Democratic institutions in society.

Programms of the National Foundation are:

- Education — development of human resources;
- Research;
- Campaigns;
- Evaluation services;
- ICT;
- International cooperation;
- Cross-sectoral cooperation;
- Publications and communication.

The main beneficiaries of the National Foundation's grants and programme activities are: associations, foundations, other non-for-profit organizations, local communities and civic initiatives.

The main bodies of the National Foundation are: Management Board, the Director, Programme Committee, Regional Committees, CARDS Steering Committee, Council for Strategic Investments in the Sector and other ad-hoc bodies.

Financial framework of the National Foundation consists of:

- Funds from lottery and other games on chance, which is 14% of 50% requested through the Law on Lottery. In 2003, this was approximately 13 million. Kuna;
- Endowment, which amounts to 2 million Kuna annually;
- CARDS funds: 1,5 Million Euro from CARDS 2002 (starting from January 19, 2004); 1,5 Million Euro from CARDS 2003 (confirmed) and 3,5 Million Euro from CARDS 2004 (confirmed);
- DFID, which sponsors the National Foundation with 250.000 Pounds for 2004 and 2005.

The author is the Director of the National Foundation for Civil Society Development in Croatia.

Elena Grozdanova

Gender and Development of Civil Society Actors in Macedonia

Achieving equality between women and men is an integral part of the democratic process. As such, it is essential that actions be taken to ensure the participation of all members of a society in political life, including women and men from different professions. Insofar as democracy must be aware of both genders as a condition for securing social justice, the competency, skills and creativity of women can no longer be ignored.

Therefore, in accepting the National Action Plan for Gender Equality, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia has obligated itself to fully implement processes that will lead to the full participation of women in decision-making capacities across all spheres of public life.

Working together with joint action group of women from Macedonia, the Republic of Macedonia has already realized many goals of the National Action Plan for Gender Equality, especially in improving women's representation in government and decision-making spheres. The women of this action group, themselves coming from diverse professional backgrounds (such as NGOs, political parties, the government, the media, Parliament, municipal Governments, labour unions and women's studies) dedicated themselves to creating a joint strategy for gender equality on a national level in order to coordinate the individual projects of various organizations, to establish a mutual support network, and to encourage volunteers to take part. The Government of the Republic of Macedonia has fully supported the activities of these women's NGOs and of the Macedonian Women's Lobby, in all of their efforts in this field.

Indeed, in the past several years, women in the Republic of Macedonia have accomplished much. In the 2000 local elections, three women were elected to the position of mayor for the first time

Macedonian Government has obligated itself to fully implement processes that will lead to the full participation of women in decision-making through the National Action Plan for Gender Equality.

in the country's history, and 164 women were elected to municipal councils across the country's 124 municipalities. In addition, a change in the parliamentary election law that raised the gender quota on candidate lists to 30%, and the formation of the Club of Women MPs, raised the number of women parliamentarians from 6.6% to 18.3% in 2002. Now, organized groups of women politicians exist in almost all political parties in Macedonia as part of their organizational structures. These successes have significantly increased the visibility of women in public life, and inspired many women, especially young women, to join political parties, seek promotions with party structures as well as in the private sector, and to become more active in civil society.

Significantly, and especially in a country such as Macedonia, which recently suffered an armed conflict, women from ethnic minorities have also shown great interest in getting involved in professional and public life and have expressed the need for the strengthening of women's positions within rural areas. Successes in this field can be attributed to the activities of various women's organizations. Numerous projects sponsored by NGOs (such as "Women Can Do It 1 and 2") have worked to educate women voters and train young women within political parties in order to develop skills and knowledge essential for active participation in politics.[1] In addition, several projects have been undertaken to strengthen the economic position of women in Macedonia and to address conflict prevention and resolution strategies.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Affair's Unit for Promotion of Gender Equality and the Macedonian Women's Lobby have supported many of these projects. In addition, while some of these activities were realized with donor support, many relied solely on volunteers (such as the initiative to establish a 30% gender quote for parliamentary candidate lists).

In addition, the Gender Task Force (GTF) of the South Eastern Europe Stability Pact has exerted a great influence on these initiatives. It also should be mentioned that experts from the Council of Europe provided assistance, especially through their presentation of

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[1] Latest statistics indicate that women comprise 40% of party members in urban areas and 10-20% or party membership in rural areas.

positive experiences from European countries in increasing women's representation in political and public life, as well as, through series of seminars which they organized in Macedonia. By a more direct means, these initiatives for the promotion of the women's movement and the development of democracy in Macedonia owe much to the constant financial help and support offered by GTF and the Council of Europe. Their support has lead to the realization of the following projects:

- "New Strategies for Gender Equality in the Republic of Macedonia." A Council of Europe sponsored project carried out in December 2000, which identified changes within the legal code for the election of representatives as a means to increase women's representation in political life;
- "Women Can Do It 2." A training seminar for young women in politics, supported by the GTF and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. The project included 200 women from 10 political parties in the Republic of Macedonia;
- "Roma Women Can Do It." This ongoing GTF project aims at training Roma women across the region in strategies to increase their political participation. The Republic of Macedonia is a regional coordinator of this project because of its past efforts to empower Roma women. Macedonia is also the only country in the region to have a Roma woman sitting on a city council;
- "Women Mayor's Link". This project, begun in 2002 and supported by contributions from the governments of Germany and Austria as well as GTF, has helped to establish 12 national networks of women mayors across South Eastern Europe (SEE). It has also assisted in the preparation of some 50 small project proposals on issues such as women's employment and entrepreneurship, violence against women, and the inclusion of young women in public and political life.

Indeed, the positive reactions voiced during the Council of Europe's 5th Ministerial Conference on "The Role of Women in the Prevention of Conflicts" and "The Peaceful Resolution of Conflict Situations", held in January 2003 in Skopje, inspired organizers to challenge themselves even further.

Initiatives for the promotion of the women's movement and the development of democracy in Macedonia owe much to the constant financial help and support offered by GTF and the Council of Europe.

Other achievements include:

- In March 2003, SEE Women's Parliament Caucus was launched in Macedonia with the support of the SEE Stability Pact. This regional project provides the women MPs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Montenegro with an opportunity to meet and exchange experiences and skills for dealing with women's issues. As part of this project, on March 7th, the Club of Women MPs was promoted within the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia. The Club of Women MPs provides a neutral setting in which women representatives from all political parties can meet to cooperate and coordinate their activities in order to promote legislative solutions for women's issues. Already, the Club has initiated a number of projects that have been making a positive impact on the country's political scene;

- In May 2003, the 7th Regional Meeting of the Stability Pact GTF was held in the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia. Representatives from the Government, Parliament, and the NGO sector were invited to attend along with members of GTF Focal Points, the GTF Advisory Board in addition to representatives of other international organizations and several women's issues experts;

- The project "Strengthening Women on the Local Level" was carried out by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affair's Unit for Promotion of Gender Equality in collaboration with Union of Women Organizations in Macedonia from 2002 to 2003. The project successfully re-established commissions on gender equality within the municipal councils of Bitola, Tetovo, Struga, Probistip and Kocani.

Following upon these successes, women's organizations will continue to draw upon these confirmed working models in order to fully realize the joint strategic plan for women's empowerment in the Republic of Macedonia.

The author is Head of Unit for Promotion of Gender Equality in the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, Macedonia.

Dusko Radosavljevic

Activities for the Development of Non-profit Sector: The Vojvodina Experience

Vojvodina: General Information

Vojvodina is an autonomous province (the province) situated in the west of the Republic of Serbia. It had a high level of autonomy, almost the same to that of the federal units, i.e. federal republics in SFR of Yugoslavia, until 1988. In that year, its status was limited and with constitutional changes of 1990, Vojvodina was left only a particular kind of autonomy, s.c. "front autonomy". After the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) took power in 2000, Vojvodina authorities initiated the transfer of some of its past powers back to its institutions. Regardless of considerable obstruction on the part of the central Government, this initiative resulted in the s. c. "Omnibus" Law (Law on Transferring of Some Powers to the Authorities of Autonomous Province), which enabled transfer of around 200 powers to Vojvodina authorities.

According to the census carried out in 2000, Vojvodina has a population of 2.027.000. The capital city of the province is Novi Sad and has 300.000 inhabitance. Bigger cities in Vojvodina are Zrenjanin and Subotica with over 1.000 inhabitance. Vojvodina consists of three sub-regions: Srem, Banat and Backa. There are 26 nations and 30 religious communities present in Vojvodina, among them Serbs, Hungarians, Croats, Slovaks, Romanians, Rusinians, Roma, Czech, Ukrainians, Macedonians, Germans, Bunjevians, Yugoslavs, Vojvodinians and many others.

Out of 11 National Councils formed in Serbia and Montenegro, 9 of them have their seat in Vojvodina (i.e. Hungarian, Croatian, Slovak, Romanian, Rusinian, Bunjevian, Ukrainian, Czechs and interesting enough, Greek National Council). Formation of Macedonian National Council is currently in process. Six different languages are being used in the work of institutions in Vojvodina: Serbian, Hungarian,

Slovak, Rusinian, Romanian, and Croatian. There are also plans for introduction of Roma language as a working language. Education of members of national communities is provided in their native language, beginning from pre-school to including undergraduate education.

Vojvodina is a member of Euro-region "Danube-Krish-Morish-Tisa" (DKMT), which consists of four municipalities in Hungary, Romania and whole territory of Vojvodina. Currently, the province is making an effort to become a member of Euro-region "Danube-Sava-Danube" (including regions from Hungary, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina). In the year 2000, the Executive Council of Vojvodina decided to introduce the institution of ombudsman as a guarantor and protector of human and citizens' rights of all people in Vojvodina.

Socio-economic Situation

The gross national product (GNP) in Vojvodina was over 3.000 Dollars per capita, while in 2003 this had dropped to 1.500 Dollars per capita. During the 14 years long authoritarian regime of Slobodan Milosevic, over 20 milliard Dollars were extracted from Vojvodina. Its economy was used for buying social peace in the country and acted as a part of the war machine. This policy also included war destruction, ethnic cleansing and produced overall impoverishment of people, thousands of displaced, refuge and prosecuted persons and thousands of destroyed houses. As a result, there are today between 200.000 to 250.000 refugees in Vojvodina. These brought about radical changes in the national, educational, age, demographic, and economic structure of Vojvodina that today pose a huge challenge ahead for the province and its institutions in creating a workable development policy.

Non-profit Sector:
Actors and Activities of the Government of Vojvodina

There are over 10.000 organizations and citizens' associations in Vojvodina. According to data of the Centre of the Development of Non-profit Sector from Novi Sad, 500 of them are s.c. "new" organization and are registered at the federal Ministry of Law and later at the Ministry for Human Rights. The main difference

There are over 10.000 organizations and citizens' associations in Vojvodina, 500 of them are s.c. "new" organization. These were organized as a counter-balance, alternative and defence of basic rights denied under the Milosevic regime.

between the s.c. "old" and "new" organizations is in the way of their formal registration. The "old" organizations were registered in the local branches of Ministry for Internal Affairs, mainly during the period of socialism and were included in the budget for support of socio-political communities under the socialist system. The "new" organizations were registered at the federal level in Ministry for Justice due to the systematic obstruction of registration by authorities at the local level with the purpose to deny them their work permit. These organizations were mainly organized as a counter-balance, alternative and defence of basic rights denied under the authoritarian regime of Slobodan Milosevic. Naturally, there was no financial support envisaged for later organizations in the State budget.

After the fall of Milosevic, the Executive Council, acting as the Government of the province, decided to cease financial support to all organizations from the budget starting with the fiscal year 2001. Instead, all organizations were annually invited to submit proposals under public announcements by the Executive Council. In 2001, 30.000 Euro, in 2002 40.000 Euro and in 2003 50.000 Euro were contracted to organizations in the non-profit sector for their activities. In 2004, 70.000 Euro support for grants and 50.000 Euros for functioning of the Fund for Development of the Non-profit sector was contracted.

During 2001 and 2002, the Executive Council developed a different approach to cooperation with the non-profit sector. In the framework of preparation for the participation at the Donor Conference of the Stability Pact for SEE, held in Bucharest in 2001, the Government of Vojvodina facilitated cooperation between Local Self-Governments Units and non-profit organizations which resulted in preparation of 246 projects for the Conference. In the same way started the cooperation on activities related to Vojvodina's participation in Euro-region "Danube-Krish-Morish-Tisa (DKMT), including large number of regions from Europe and the Republic of China. These activities resulted in the award of title "European Region 2005" to Vojvodina.

In 2002, preparations started for the formation of the Fund for Development of Non-profit Sector and one member of the Executive Council became responsible for the area of non-profit sector. From

Since 2001, organizations are annually invited to submit proposals under public announcements by the Executive Council.

the very beginning, authorities in Vojvodina had a positive attitude towards cooperation with NGOs. This is complemented by the fact that now over 100 non-governmental organizations cooperate with the Executive Council's Secretariats in different fields of their work.

A big step has been made towards non-interference of the Executive Council as a political subject in decisions of the Fund for Development of Non-profit Sector in terms of its programme and funding. None of the members in its Executive Board is a politician. As a result, Government's policy in the area of non-profit sector has changed in whole from 2001 until today.

Objectives of the Fund for Development of Non-profit Sector

Based on principles of equality, effectiveness and development the Fund for Development of Non-profit Sector of Vojvodina participates in the realization of the following programs and projects:

- Strengthening initiatives for social change, spreading culture of peace, strengthening social solidarity and respect for differences;
- Information-documentary programs (information collection and distribution, formation of database with information important for the non-profit organizations, publication of database bulletin, development of internal presentation of the non-profit sector in Vojvodina, facilitation in communication and establishment of contacts);
- Training and education programs — organization of the non-profit sector (organization of professional and educational meetings, round tables, seminars, public discussions, publication of brochures and guidelines useful for improvement of work in NGOs);
- Programs in advocacy and direct assistance in the work of NGOs (representation of the non-profit sector in society, support and promotion of the work and importance of the non-profit sector, direct help, advice, information and facilitation in establishment of contacts);
- Programs for development of volunteer centres (introduction of new people in the work of non-profit sector and projects in the local communities, spreading of the volunteer centre network

in Vojvodina, development of stock exchange of volunteers through database on volunteer needs and information on citizens who want to become engaged as volunteers);

- Public relations programs (representation of non-profit sector interests in public and development of activities in relation to the media and public accountability, help to media in their work with the non-profit sector, daily e-news about the work of the non-profit sector);
- Legal counselling programs (giving legal advice to the citizens and non-profit organizations on establishment, registration, advocacy for changes to existing laws on establishment and registration of domestic and foreign non-profit organizations in Vojvodina, analysis and advocacy on existing tax legislation);
- Research programs (development and support to scientific-research work in the non-profit sector in Vojvodina);
- Other activities related to the promotion of the non-profit sector in Vojvodina.

Problems in Cooperation between the Government of Vojvodina and the Non-profit Sector

- Poverty in Vojvodina and Serbia caused by long policy isolation, wars in Serbia and in its neighbourhood, policy of intolerance and xenophobia as an aggravating factor in planning and execution of social activities;
- Problematic legitimacy of representatives of some structures in the non-profit sector, especially the ones, who perceive their work as "missionary" or expect special privileges having in mind their "emancipators role" or argument of the "public good";
- Political instability in the province and the country;
- Unbalanced development of organizations in the non-profit sector in Vojvodina. Organizations are usually concentrated in urban areas, but rarely in the undeveloped rural areas;
- Insufficient knowledge about the importance of the work of non-profit organizations in local communities. This is especially noticeable in small, undeveloped and rural areas;
- Inter-ethnic tensions;
- Exclusivity of donor's needs. International donors often pay little attention to the need for equal distribution of material and other kinds of help through out the province, thus excluding

Main problems in partnership are: poverty, policy of intolerance and xenophobia, legitimacy, instability, unbalanced development, insufficient knowledge, inter-ethnic tensions, exclusivity of donor's needs and rejection of partnership.

undeveloped areas, whereas including only parts with stable "civil-social" relations and organizations;

- Selfishness and isolation, rejection of partnership. Several organizations reject any kind of relation with the Government of Vojvodina, based on arguments that such cooperation is inappropriate and that their projects can not be comprehended by politicians.

Instead of a Conclusion

During the last four years, the Government of Vojvodina has done more than could be realistically expected for the development of a productive partnership with the non-profit organizations, having in mind problems related to transition of Vojvodina and the Republic of Serbia. The future will confirm our good start. It is certain that the already achieved results can be improved with greater interaction between non-profit organizations and the Government of Vojvodina. And only in this way, together, not one by the other or one against each other.

The author is the Vice President of the Executive Council of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, Serbia and Montenegro.

Elizabeta Buova

Promoting the Role of Civil Society Actors:Lessons Learnt in Macedonia

To a layman or an indifferent spectator, the topic of civil society and its promotion is predominantly a question addressed only to people in the NGO community. However, the truth, even for uninterested parties, is quite to the contrary. Increasingly, for governmental agencies, and the public administration in general, awareness of the role of the civil society is on the rise, and, in many respects, it is an imminent concern in this era of constant social, political and economic changes, that is the time in which we currently live.

In what follows, I will give a short introduction to what has been the situation between the civil society sector and governmental organizations in Macedonia up to the present, and a breakdown of what is needed and what we plan to do in the future. I will focus on two key aspects: the global situation, regarding governmental policies and positions in general, and the European integration process and its connection to the involvement and cooperation of civil society actors.

For governmental agencies, and the public administration in general, awareness of the role of the civil society is on the rise.

The Status of Civil Society and the NGO Sector in Macedonia

I believe that the situation in Macedonia in regard to the development of civil society is the same or similar to that of the other countries of South Eastern Europe.

There are about 6000 officially registered NGOs in Macedonia, of which half are active, and this number alone gives an initial idea of the development of civil society in the country. The majority of these organizations focus on human rights issues, the support and stimulus of ethnic co-existence, promotion of democratic values, gender issues, and other more specialized issues. There are a small

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number of NGOs that have been in existence for several decades and are related to specific professions. In addition, there is a very small number of NGOs that work on the improvement of social dialogue, the protection of worker's rights, and the improvement and upgrading of professional standards. Yet, at the same time, it should be noted that there is a division line among a significant portion of the functioning NGOs along ethnic affiliation.

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Furthermore, it should be noted that the situation of civil society, and more precisely of the NGO sector mirrors the general economic environment in the country. Specifically, given high unemployment rates, many people seeking work view NGOs first and foremost as an attractive employment opportunity, despite the fact that this area was not initially viewed as an intended career path.

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In addition, the almost exclusive dependence of NGOs on foreign donations and assistance often hampers their own development and financial security.

Cooperation with the Government and Establishing a Social Dialogue

Within the previous socialist system of Macedonia, there already existed means for civil society groups to participate in the legislative work of the Government and to influence the system, the State and its economy. This practice continues until present day. Namely, in the law-making procedure (which usually takes place in two phases) it is foreseen to have a public debate on the proposed text of a given law in its second phase. Such debates provided NGOs a stage on which they took, and still can take, an active role in the law-making. However, in the past 14 years, the practice has slowly been waning. NGOs have shown a general lack of interest in engaging in this proactive approach, and the tendency of governmental bodies is to pass laws in one phase in response to the obligations and the tempo of transition and reforms, a factor related to the transposition of EU legislation into Macedonian law.

In the past 14 years, the practice of NGOs participation in the law-making procedure has been waning.

Nonetheless, many NGOs that focus on very specific interests, like those involved in environment issues and some in the area of economy (such as SMEs), continue to have a very active attitude

toward such participation. However, this is an exception to the rule.

The State of Play

Given this situation, the key lesson learned by state actors is that cooperation between the civil sector and the Government, its bodies and agencies has fallen to a very low level, and is both inconsistent and unfocused. It is thus understood in specific terms that:

- The input of civil society is needed in all respects of the operation of the State, and, especially, in the creation of the legal system and state policy;
- Cooperation with NGOs is needed to encourage an "informal opposition and corrective" of the Government;
- And, NGOs are key to the development of sustainable networks by which public opinion can be brought to bear on government policies and the legislative process.

In turn, the civil society sector has learned the lessons that:

- Its greatest weakness is in regard to the sustainability of NGO activities, participation, and even existence;
- And, that it is important to avoid dropping the "n" in the orientation of NGOs, by which they frequently become politicized governmental representatives outside the three pillars of power, an all too common occurrence in young and fragile democracies.

Thus, the overall lesson is that the development of the NGO sector, in strong cooperation with the State (though this should not be misconstrued), is necessary to strengthen the civil model of governance and the civic model of state.

Already, the Government extends a hand to the NGO sector through the annual practice of issuing calls for support for the operation of NGOs in Macedonia. However, by itself, this practice is insufficient on the part of the Government and state bodies.

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Thus, as amendments are being prepared for the 1998 law on foundations and civic organizations, it is crucial that efforts be made to improve the functioning of the civil society sector and its cooperation with the State.

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia has worked for some time now on the development of a new, broader framework for NGO-state cooperation in order to expand the democratic spirit and increase transparency, to fill in the gaps of the present situation, to diversify the forms of cooperation, and to foster a feeling of a joint responsibility with the civil sector for the development of the whole community and environment in which we live.

Sector for European Integration has promoted the idea among governmental bodies to devise concrete structures for cooperation with NGOs with the aim to formulate a consistent approach to their cooperation.

The Sector for European Integration (SEI), a governmental body situated in the General Secretariat of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, which is entrusted with the task of directing and coordinating Macedonia's European integration process, has promoted the idea among governmental bodies to devise concrete structures to facilitate cooperation between the Government and representatives of civil society. This initiative aims to formulate consistent approaches to NGO-State cooperation, and to popularize these channels among and between the Governmental and civil agents.

SEI has also initiated creation of an office for the facilitation of the cooperation between the Government and the civil sector in the country.

Specifically, the SEI initiative calls for the creation of an office for the facilitation of the cooperation between the Government and the civil sector in the Republic of Macedonia. This office shall start as a moderate effort but with well understood goals. Already, several donors informed of this initiative have pledged funds to support its work and activities. The European Commission has offered to support the establishing of the office through its CARDS funds. International and European Center for Non-profit Law, given their vast and considerable experience, shall support the formulation of the mission statement of this office and has offered its assistance and expertise in the creation of a strategy for cooperation of the Government with the civil society. Open Society Institute Macedonia has offered significant logistical and technical support for the office's first year of operation, and several others organizations have voiced their support of this project through other means.

In its line of work and its contacts and cooperation, the SEI also secures some of the access to projects like the one entitled "1% for Philanthropy", by which the financing of the civil society and the involvement of the economic operators is boosted.

Indeed, as cooperation between civil society and the Government is called for in the EU's Copenhagen criteria, by the regular Stabilization and Association Process Progress Reports, and by the European Partnership, the new instrument of the EU for the acceleration and facilitation of Macedonia's accession to the EU, there has been a great impetus for the Government and its agencies to pursue and deepen this cooperation, while also making it more coherent.

The European Integration Aspect

Overall then, the progress made in the European integration process in the Republic of Macedonia has significantly contributed to cooperation between civil society and the state in this respect. However, in order to increase understanding about this process, it should be reiterated again and again that the European integration process is not a project of a limited duration, and it is not an affair only of the Government or of some single body within the state structures. It is a process that calls for a complete transformation of the system and therefore affects every possible segment of life, for the state and its citizens alike!

The better this message is understood, the better the implementation of this process will be. This is a venture that the Government cannot do by itself. The involvement of the citizens, and especially of their representatives from the civil society, is of utmost importance.

SEI has thus developed a fruitful cooperation with a significant number of NGOs with a European integration orientation. Approximately 50 NGOs in Macedonia have included EU and European integration activities within their mission statements. Many events have been organized in cooperation with NGOs, such as the two Forums for the Accelerated Integration of Republic of Macedonia into EU in cooperation with the European Movement of

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Republic of Macedonia during European Week, and the Shuman Day celebrations.

SEI also takes steps to include NGO representatives in the training activities that it coordinates and organizes in relation to the EU and the European integration process in addition to events of related interest.

Also, given both its competences and its coordination role, it should be noted that SEI has actively participated in the creation of the projects sponsored by the European Commission's CARDS allocations in 2003 and 2004 and other bilateral donors that address the development of the civil society sector and the process of democratization. Several of these activities represent an exemplary model of cooperation:

- European Integration Training Centre (a TEMPUS funded project);
- The public call for support of NGOs in specific projects and activities related to the European integration process (GTZ);
- AISEC — an intern exchange program.

The Republic of Macedonia's application for EU membership and its preparation for the steps known to follow on the road to the EU will thus inevitably shift State-civil society cooperation from a level of awareness- and capacity-building to deeper and more specialized levels of cooperation, as all parties involved pursue the shared aim of successful integration into EU.

The author is Head of the Institution Building Unit, Sector for European Integration, Government of the Republic of Macedonia.

> **SEI has actively participated in the creation of projects sponsored by CARDS allocations in 2003 and 2004 and other bilateral donors that address the development of the civil society sector and the process of democratization.**

> **On the road to European integration, a shift in State-civil society cooperation from a level of awareness- and capacity-building to deeper and more specialized levels of cooperation is expected.**

Natasha Pepivani

Social Dialogue with Civil Society Actors: Lessons Learnt in Albania

After 1990, important changes in the political, economic and social-cultural life in Albania brought numerous social problems. These changes were accompanied by the first forms of social organizations that worked to protect the rights and interests of the individual, and to counterbalance some of the shortcomings that emerged in the country's new system of the government and its functional implementation.

The establishment of these first organizations, which addressed a variety of issues (such as human rights, youth, women, political prisoners, people with disability), and their activities, were essential factors that stimulated the democratization process in Albania. These civil society organizations made important contributions to advocating for underrepresented social groups, protecting their rights, and increasing awareness both at the levels of public opinion and decision-making levels.

The establishment of civil society organizations and their activities were essential factors that stimulated the democratization process in Albania.

The opening of Albania and the interest of the international community to support the development of democracy, the market economy, and the enrichment of socio-cultural life in Albania, lead to the arrival of many international organizations in the country, including several United Nations agencies. These organizations and other powerful donors supported Albanian organizations with funds, capacity buildings programs, training, working models, expertise etc..

With their philosophy, NGOs changed the mentality of the citizens and stimulated them to undertake initiatives useful for themselves and community.

The Albanian Constitution, in Article 46, guarantees the right of citizens to organize. However, the empowerment of non-profit

organizations and the increase of their role in the Albanian society made evident the need for legal improvements.

Thus, on May 2001 at the request of the civil society sector, and supported by the political will of Albanian Government, the Albanian Parliament adopted three important laws:

- Law, No. 8788, May 7, 2001, "For Non-profit Organizations";
- Law, No. 8789, May 7, 2001, "For the Registration of NGOs";
- Law, No. 8781, May 7, 2001, "For Some Additions and Amendments of the Civil Code of Republic of Albania".

These laws were drafted in cooperation with the civil society sector and with the technical assistance of international organizations.

The role of civil society is also visible in the country's process of European integration and democratization:

Laws concerning work of NGOs adopted in May 2001 were developed with the help of civil society and technical assistance of international organizations.

Partnerships between government and civil society. Non-profit organizations, as part of civil society, are appreciated for their contribution in helping social groups in need. Their principle of work is to deal with issues in which the state structures cannot intervene due to scarce financial resources and current policy restrictions.

Non-profit organizations are appreciated for their contribution in helping social groups in need, for which the structures have scarce financial resources and current policy restrictions.

Government structures are aware of the contribution of NGOs in different fields, such as in efforts undertaken to represent social groups and to bring their voice to decision-making levels, in addition to preparing recommendations for and cooperating in the drafting and implementation of certain policies. In this regard, there are many good examples of NGO participation in drafting strategies, such as the National Strategy for Economic and Social Development and the National Strategy against Trafficking, as well as the Strategy for the Roma Community, People with Disabilities and other. The role of NGOs is essential for the implementation of these strategies, thus making them real partners of government structures.

Monitoring. Another element of this partnership is the work of NGOs to monitor the implementation of the legal framework, improvements done on existing laws, the ratification of international treaties, the

fulfilment of governmental responsibilities, and other important issues. As result of NGO pressure, the sensitivity of the Government has increased, and many actions have been undertaken to protect special groups in need.

Representation. Ensuring the participation of citizens is another responsibility of NGOs. This participation is ensured by conducting social debates and translating the needs, priorities, ideas, and opinions of these communities into concrete recommendations for the decision-making processes and policies that affect their lives.

Constructive opponent. Lobbying for different issues, such as those regarding human rights, disabilities, women, children, and so on, has been fruitful endeavour on the part of NGOs. Many legal improvements have been accomplished and awareness raised.

Civil society as source of expertise. From 1990 up to now, NGOs have gained much experience, such as the management of funds and the creation of new models of social services. The financial resources used by NGOs for the implementation of their programs represent valuable investments in social field and complement the expenditures of the state budget. In addition, there are a considerable number of people employed in the non-profit sector, often with good wages.

Indeed, a variety of NGO efforts, from capacity-building and the training of their staff, through academic and practical strategizing, to cooperation and exchanges with international partners, have created a set of elite leaders and professionals within civil society.

This workshop provides concrete guidelines for the partnership between Governments and civil society. The exchanges of such information and models between the countries of the region will further the efforts of the entire region to join the European Union.

The advancement of strategies for the empowerment and further development of civil society will thus be a necessary tool to ensure the success of Balkan countries in European integration.

The author is Chief of Sector of Relations with NGOs in Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Albania.

NGOs bring the voice to decision-making levels and monitor the implementation of legal framework.

Civil society is also important as constructive opponent to the official policies and a source of expertise on specific issues.

Workshop Recommendations

To make a reality of the common vision for an enlarged, integrated and stable Europe the participants made the following recommendations:

For all stakeholders:

All actors to promote the concept of active citizenship, which involves rights and responsibilities and values such as tolerance, respect for the marginalized and for diversity.

Improve mutual communication, coordination and cooperation.

Make a concerted effort, to resolve long-standing problems of displacement of persons in the region, using all available means.

Develop and implement joint policies and strategies in poverty reduction. Priorities include measures to combat unemployment, strengthening rural development, health and social services, especially for vulnerable groups.

Address low governance standards in the region through recognition of the need for transparency, capacity-building, supervision and civic education.

Adopt the EU White Paper on Governance as the common standard for Governments and CSOs in the region.

Strengthen human resources and capacities in Governments and CSOs to better understand and take advantage of policies and fundraising opportunities within the EU.

Make best use of the deconcentration (of EU functions from Brussels to EC Delegations) to close the gaps between EC policies and practice at national and regional levels.

The EC and Governments recognize the significant contribution that religious communities give to building peoples' identities and perspectives, positively and negatively.

We recommend that all actors open up for more constructive interaction with religious communities to assist them to develop and play a constructive role in the development of civil society as one of many partners.

For Governments:

Make space for CSOs to assist the Government in fulfilling its duty to provide services, combining the governmental strength of continuity with CSO skills in innovation.

Formalize the relationship with CSOs through special agreements for strategic partnership with clear terms of reference stating clear commitments to be fulfilled for both parties.

Establish clear guidelines and criteria for the disbursal of local government resources to CSOs.

Appoint at least one liaison person at Local Government level to strengthen the relation between the Local Government and CSOs.

Promote inter-ethnic awareness raising activities through CSOs.

Guarantee a level playing field for service providers, whether from civil society or the public sector.

Ensure coherence between government budgets and government social policy priorities.

For the European Commission:

The EU response to civil society sustainability and social transformation processes requires longer time spans than allowed in existing EU support instruments, such as CARDS. The EC should revise the approach of these instruments so that they can finance medium- term transformation processes.

Put EU policies on the strengthening of civil society into practice within indicative plans as well as regional approaches.

Include three cross-cutting issues in the design of accession assistance: gender policy, capacity-building and civil society strengthening.

Avoid premature disruption of on-going processes for the resolution of refugees and IDPs problems. This entails provision of (additional) support to Governments for integration programmes, on the understanding of positive commitment by Governments, including indicators of achievement.

A general shift from the focus on technical integration to prioritise social and cultural integration. This requires small, longer term grant facilities for institutional development.

Ensure that all reconstruction activities integrate both social and infrastructural objectives.

Encourage and support CSO cross-border cooperation as a means of creating the climate for better cooperation between Governments.

Encourage civic education programmes to improve Government and general public understanding of the identity, role and tasks of CSOs.

For Civil Society:

Improve professionalism and standards of accountability. Pay attention to demonstrating effective performance.

Build on the credibility gained through concrete work with vulnerable groups in order to give weight to advocacy messages.

Be more open to cooperation between CSOs, developing coalitions to influence national Governments and EC policies.

Strengthen and broaden the constituency base in order to give added legitimacy to civil society influencing of policy makers.

Mainstream peace-building within all CSO activities, strengthening networks and alliances to span ethnic divides.

Skopje, 23rd July, 2004.

Workshop Agenda
The Role of Civil Society in the EU Integration and Democratization Process in the Balkans
22-23 July 2004, Skopje

Thursday July 22, 2004

9:00 **<u>Opening by the organizers</u>:**

Rob van Drimmelen
General Secretary - APRODEV

Jørgen Thomsen
Programme Coordinator - DanChurchAid

Saso Klekovski
Executive Director - Macedonian Center for International Cooperation

9:30 **<u>Opening address</u>:**

"The Future of the Balkans within the EU and the Role of Civil Society in the Democratization Process"

Ambassador Donato Chiarini
Head of EC Delegation to Macedonia -EC Delegation to Macedonia

"EU-funded Ethnic Relations Programmes in Macedonia Managed by EAR"

Elvis Ali
Assistant to Civil Society Programme Manager-European Agency for Reconstruction, Macedonia

10:15 Questions of clarifications

10:30 Coffee break

11:00 <u>**Working Groups:**</u>
"Key Challenges and Opportunities Facing the Balkans in Relation to the EU"

13:00 Lunch

14:30 <u>**Speaker:**</u>
"The Role of Civil Society in the Balkans: Present and Future, the Experience in Macedonia"
Saso Klekovski
Executive Director – Macedonia Center for International Cooperation

<u>**Speaker:**</u>
"Enhancing the Role of Civil Society: The Experience of Croatia"
Cvjetana Plavsa-Matic
Director – National Foundation for the Development of the Civil Sector

15:00 <u>**Working Groups:**</u>
"Civil Society Actors and Civic Role"

16:00 Coffee break

16:30 <u>**Working Groups:**</u>
"Civil Society Actors and Civic Role" (continued)

18:00 <u>**Conclusions**</u>

19:30 Dinner in a traditional local restaurant

Friday July 23, 2004

8:45 **<u>Presentation of the working day</u>**

    <u>Speaker:</u>
"The Role of Civil Society in the Balkans: Present and Future, Lesson Learnt from the Region"
        Carolyn Boyd
        Project Manager - Ecumenical Women Solidarity Fund

    <u>Speaker:</u>
"Gender and Development of the Civil Society Actors in Macedonia"
        Elena Grozdanova
        Head of Gender Unit -Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Macedonia

9:30 **<u>Questions for clarification</u>**

9:45 **<u>Working Groups:</u>**
    "Triangular Relation:
    Civil Society Actors, EU and National Governments"

11:00 Coffee break

11:30 **<u>Speaker</u>**
    "Promoting the Development of Civil Society
    Actors: The Vojvodina Experience"
        Dusko Radosavljevic
        Vice President - Executive Council of the Province of Vojvodina

    <u>Speaker</u>
"Cooperation With the Civil Society on the Refugee Issue in Serbia"
        Petar Ladjevic
        Expert – Serbian Commissariat for Refugees

12:00 Questions for clarification

12:15 <u>**Plenary Debate on the Triangular Relationship**</u>

13:00-14:00   Lunch

<u>**Speaker:**</u>
"Promoting the Role of Civil Society Actors: Lessons
Learnt in Macedonia"
> **Elizabeta Buova**
> *Head of the Institution Building Unit-*
> *Sector for European Integration, Government of the Republic of*
> *Macedonia*

<u>**Speaker:**</u>
"Social Dialogue With Civil Society Actors: Lessons
Learnt in Albania"
> **Natasha Pepivani**
> *Chief of Relations with NGOs Sector*
> *Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of Albania*

14:30 Questions for clarification

14:45 <u>**Working Groups:**</u>
> "Open Debate on Sustainable Development Issues for Civil
> Society Actors in the Balkans"

16:30 Coffee break

17:00 Plenary and Summing Up of Conclusions

19:00 Dinner

Balkan Civil Society Development Network is a network of 11 civil society and ecumenical organizations from 7 countries and territories in the Balkan region (Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro and Kosovo).
Balkan Network's members are: Albanian Civil Society Foundation, Diaconia Agapes, Macedonian Center for International Cooperation, Women's Alliance for Development, Pokrov Foundation, Opportunity Associates Romania, AIDRom, Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization, NIT, EOS and We Are With You.

Background

Balkan Network was initiated in 2001 as Capacity Building Hub Programme, a part of a larger initiative called the WCC South-East Europe Ecumenical Partnership. By bringing together churches, ecumenical and civil society organizations, this initiative aimed at promoting their co-ordination and co-operation. The Capacity-Building Hub Programme focused on strengthening individual/staff and organizational capacities and skills of involved agencies.
The initial pilot programme ran from 2001 to 2003, in which 5 country visits and accompanying reports, 3 partnership meetings, 5 trainings, 7 exchange and consultancy visits were held and web training-directory and addressbook were published. Thus, Balkan Civil Society Development Network was launched in December 2003 as a result of successful cooperation in strengthening capacities of partner organizations.

Vision

Balkan Network is committed to sustainable peace and stability, prosperity, harmony of societies in the Balkan region. It is comprised of and devoted to the following values:

- Respect of the universal human rights and of the rights of all citizens;
- Men and women of all nationalities, religions and cultures;
- Development of a pluralistic and participative democracy;
- Socio-economic development and cultural prosperity;
- Social cohesion, integration and harmony;
- Care for the environment and for sustainable development;
- Social justice and equality;
- Respect for differences and non-violence.

Mission

Balkan Network's mission is to strenghten civil society through developing indiginious civil society concepts, practices and empowering civil society actors.

Goals and objectives

1. To increase communication with civil society actors in the region as a basis for bi/multilateral cooperation;
2. To increase mobilization of resources and support;
3. To increase knowledge and skills as a base for higher quality of our work;
4. To increase promotion of intercultural exchange and culture of resource-sharing as a base for efficient/effective network.

Activities

In the period 2003-2004, activities were directed at strengthening individual/staff and organizational capacities and skills of partner organizations through tailor-made packages of trainings, exchange and consultancies. As a result of these, a joint pool of trainers and courses has been established and capacities of all partners have been strengthened through exchange of best practices and information.

While maintaining focus on individual/staff and organizational strengthening, network's activities in the period 2004-2006 are to focus on thematic cooperation through 3 common priority themes (EU funding, lobbying and advocacy; training and consultancy standards and ethics, resource mobilization) and specific themes (e.g. women and anti-trafficking; corporate social responsibility and anti-corruption; decentralization; diaconal practices). This

cooperation is to entail trainings, exchanges/exposures, workshops, publications and WG as task forces on specific issues with the aim to strengthen capacities and skills as well as cooperation, exchange of information and platform of action on these areas. Additionally, activities are to be performed, which will promote intercultural and resource-sharing such as civil society dictionary, case study exchange, regional visits.

Structure

Balkan Network consists of partner organizations, which are equal in their rights and duties as members of the network. Principle of cooperation, partnership, tolerance, dialogue and respect for others are the main working principles in the network. This consists of the Steering Group, Core Group, Working Groups and Secretariat.

The Steering Group is composed of directors or senior representatives of partner organizations and meets on annual meetings (each spring) to discuss the management and strategy of the work. Principle of rotating Chairperson is applied to each meeting.

The Core Group consists of contact persons from partner organizations and meets on annual meetings (each autumn) to coordinate concrete activities.

Working Groups are thematic mechanisms for cooperation on specific issues and themes. Each partner can initiate, lead and join any Working Group.

The Secretariat, which is currently situated in Macedonian Center for International Cooperation in Skopje, Macedonia, manages the daily functioning and coordination of the network.