



Balkan Civic Practices

BALKAN
CIVIL
SOCIETY
DEVELOPMENT
NETWORK

In partnership with



MEDIA RELATIONS - Guide for Civil Society Organisations





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Balkan Civic Practices | # 4

Media Relations - Guide for Civil Society Organisations



Partnership in Action - Strengthening Balkan
Civil Society Development Network
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Introduction

Civil society organisations (CSOs) have more or less diverse experiences with media and journalists, our various activities, projects and efforts are often ignored, poorly understood or falsely presented. As could be deduced from numerous discussions with various CSOs from Slovenia and the Western Balkan countries, many have similar remarks, complaints and fears about the media. To name only a few:

- *The media don't care about work and good intentions of CSOs. They just look for sensations.*
- *The journalists do not have enough knowledge to cover certain CSO issues. They often cover our issues in a superficial way, with incomplete information, mistakes and also with a certain political bias.*
- *We have no time and money for working with the media.*
- *We have sent so many notices to the media, but they either don't publish them or take a piece of information from them.*
- *We have organised a press conference, but nobody came.*
- *Journalists call only when they need something or when they have a bad news about us.*
- *We simply don't respond to journalists' calls and questions. Their only intention is to bother us or to present us in a bad light.*
- *We don't need the media, we just work in our field as well as we can.*

This textbook attempts to address most common questions, doubts and misconceptions about the media, while communicating and working with them. It is based on notes prepared for the workshops on Media relations for CSOs held in Tirana (Albania), 8-10 February 2007 and in Novi Sad (Serbia), 1-3 March 2007. Thus, the textbook includes valuable feedbacks, rich experience and illustrative case studies given by the participants of the workshops in the Western Balkan countries. Although this textbook should serve to CSOs in the region as a “first aid” and a basic equipment for their media work, it does not pretend to offer a universal recipe or a magical formula, for how to come on the first newspaper pages or among the first minutes of the main television news. When working towards efficient and qualitative media relations, CSOs in the region should rely on creativity, innovation, flexibility, openness and enthusiasm, all of which is already prove by their projects, initiatives, everyday work and efforts.

The introductory chapter talks about the relevance of media and media relations for CSOs. The second chapter introduces specific character and functioning of the media – their logic, rules and ways. The third chapter gives suggestions on how to communicate with the media and organise CSOs media work. It presents some tools and techniques of media relations – press release, press conference, interview and media events.

1.1 WHY THE MEDIA ARE IMPORTANT FOR THE CSOS

We live in an era of mass media. Some call it “media reality”. From the media we get to know most about the world in which we live in. Many events are noticed only when they are recorded and published by the media.

Civil society organisations in their various fields of work and social action are closely connected to the media and, somehow, in specific interdependent relation to them. Media reports are an important source of information for CSOs about, what is going on in their field and in other relevant fields (internationally, domestically, professionally etc.). On the other hand, the media are also the key means for making CSOs voices heard, enabling the information about the CSOs’ work, about our positions on certain issues; and about our

events and how this can reach broader publics. Through the media CSOs build bridges to their stakeholders, members, supporters, clients, donors, government, and influential people.

At the same time, the media represent unique public fora as they offer space and time for public debates, confrontation of different views and politics. Media representatives, journalists, editors and columnists are influential opinion makers as they take their own positions on certain issues advocated by the CSOs. Therefore, media can be potential allies or opponents to CSOs, helping or obstructing CSOs when trying to convince and mobilise broader publics.

When we think about the importance of media for CSOs, we should consider media primarily as:

- *Key information-communication channels*
- *Important special publics and fora*
- *Relevant social actors*
- *Partners and potential allies*

1.2 WHAT ARE MEDIA RELATIONS

Media relations consist of numerous activities through which organisations and their representatives communicate with the media, inform, convince, discuss, and negotiate with journalists and editors, respond to media reports, questions and initiatives, indirectly address specific media readers and viewers, and exert public pressure on relevant actors and institutions.

Cases of intensive, one-way sending of press releases to media or declining communication in case of unpleasant media questions do not fall within such a definition of media relations. Similarly, any ad-hoc communication, such as “having a coffee” with the journalist, does not mean that we have truly built media relations. Media relations grow through long-term processes of exchanging messages and news, of continuous professional cooperation, of following common aims and mutual interests, of respecting the “rules of the games”. CSOs and the media build their partnership on the basis of trust and understanding, positive experience, common beliefs and values, vision and culture.

Accordingly, CSOs shouldn't measure our success merely by noting whether or not media have published positive news about us. We should have a positive, constructive and proactive approach towards the media and work towards fair, trustworthy, and consistent cooperation and partnership with the media. Thus, it is of crucial importance that the CSOs prepare, plan, think in advance about how to work with the media, so as to bring added value to our projects.

All in all, we have to understand that media relations are:

- *An open ended, two way flow of information*
- *Strategic, systematic, efficient and responsible communication*
- *A long-term, dynamic relationship*

Knowing and understanding the media

2.1 WHAT AND WHO ARE MEDIA AND JOURNALISTS

With media relations, like in any partner relationship, it is essential that we first attempt to get to know our partner as well as we can, in order to understand his/her actions and be able to respond appropriately.

Put in simple words, media are organisations, companies, which among others produce news and news stories. One of the most important, although not the only, media activity is journalism. This is a professional activity of collecting, selecting, checking, analysing, interpreting and organising information (writing, editing etc.), as well as distributing news stories. A basic aim and obligation of journalism is to provide truthful and unbiased reporting in public interest, giving voice to all sides involved and showing a particular issue.

Journalism is not advertising - otherwise also an important media activity - which contrary to journalism, deals with paid information, media space and time to the advantage of specific clients who paid for their media advertisements. Journalism is also not literature in which individual, subjective, author's views are presented, often just fiction.

Journalists are people who have journalism as a job, a profession, even a life-style and they do not do it as their hobby, it is not only their caprice and they do not have primarily vicious intentions. Their basic aim is not to bother people and write bad stories about them, but rather to gather, check, select, organise, analyse and interpret information, which they receive from various sources. News or news stories become a concrete and useable product (“truth”) only, when they are properly edited, technically prepared, placed within the whole media product (newspaper, radio or TV programme), and at the end, published and delivered to the media public. Not to mention that it has to be read and viewed by many...

Media-journalistic activity is primarily defined by its informational function that is, to inform about the most important events, and to cover the news. Media and journalism have also other important functions: to influence public opinion, raise public awareness, mobilise, educate and to a large extent, also entertain people. In the context of such functions, media, journalists and editors think, evaluate and prioritise what is worthy of covering and publishing. Therefore, the question of **what is newsworthy** represents the main lead and a key to success when dealing with the media.

What is an event?

- Everything that happens
- Everything we know that happened
- Everything that was not planned to happen but came about as a surprise
- Everything that is truly important

However, not every event is news! News is not everything that happens. An event happens and can become news if the media report about it. Journalists have to notice it, know about it, cover it and make a news story about it. How and why this happens?

What are the criteria to choose an event and make it news, what is newsworthy?

- Something that is happening or has recently happened (today, yesterday)
- Something based on current and actual facts
- Something relevant for a larger group of people
- Something different, new, unexpected
- Something interesting, entertaining, and attracting a lot of attention and popularity

Journalists usually look for stories that are relevant at present time and in a concrete environment, that describe interesting or even tragic life stories, that include conflicts and accidents, that are accompanied by well known personalities and that are in one way or another different, unusual, not everyday stories. To this end, one quotes a cliché example of news: a man biting a dog and not more commonly, a dog biting a man. From our point of view, an even better news story, with a positive spin, would be if a dog would save a man.

Last but not least, journalists build their stories on credible, trustworthy sources of information and speakers. CSOs should take this into account, provide for such speakers and be aware that the information passed to the media will be independently checked with other people.

Besides informative, opinion-making, educational and entertaining functions, media are also characterised by:

- **Media technology**, i.e. a process specific for each media, which is needed for the production and distribution of the news and through which news become available products.
- **Media organisation**, i.e. institutionalised ways of operation and division of tasks within media houses where news stories and media products go through different hierarchical structures of editors, news desks, technical departments, etc..

- **Media people** are journalists, editors, columnists, photographers, camera people, technical staff, owners, and news sources, working together in the media.

When working with the media one should take into account all four basic media parameters – function, technology, organisation and people. It is important always to respect and know the answers to the following questions:

- *What is the deadline for certain news story?*
- *Whom/where to call for certain news?*

2.2 HOW DO DIFFERENT MEDIA WORK

Although various media have common characteristics, they differ among themselves, they cover events and prepare news stories in different ways with regards to the time interval, the area of coverage, the topics covered, the formats of news stories and finally, the diverse effects of the published or aired news stories. In the first place, CSOs should analyse how different media (national vs. regional and local, print vs. broadcasting, popular vs. qualitative and specialised) cover CSOs and their work. Furthermore, CSOs should also think how the current situation can be improved and how the gap between today's media reality and its desires, aims and expectations can be narrowed.

Therefore, here we will look into characteristics of different media and try to uncover their potential added value, also by means of the following table:

Table 1: **Characteristics of different media**

	TIME	AREA	TOPICS	FORMATS	EFFECTS
PRESS AGENCY	non-stop, 24 ^h	national; international	diverse	short news	main information service
DAILY NEWSPAPERS	daily	regional, national, international	diverse	photo-news, interviews, articles, editorials	most readers
MAGAZINES	periodical	specific target groups	specific topics	longer stories - features	attractive to readers
RADIO	live	local, regional, international	diverse	must tell, not show; limited time	listening all day
TELEVISION	evening news	local, national, international	diverse	must show, not tell; limited time	most convincing to people
INTERNET	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	direct access, attractive, innovative, interactive, popular, inexpensive

Press agencies cover news non-stop, in 24-hour cycles; they have national and international areas of coverage, they cover diverse topics, but mainly in the formats of short news, background stories and news interviews, with explicit sources of information (i.e. with full names and functions of people and organisations).

They provide efficient announcements and reviews of the most important events and, as such, they are the main information services for many other media, which follow the news from press agencies.

Daily newspapers come out in daily editions (some in two: morning and evening editions), with special supplements on certain days. They cover regional, national and international news, with news stories organised in order of their importance and their focus in different fields (politics, foreign affairs, culture, sports, accidents and crime etc.) on different newspaper pages or sections. Moreover, news stories appear in diverse formats (photo-news, interviews, articles, editorials, columns etc..)

Most of the population still read at least one daily newspaper, although, mostly “tabloids” or “yellow press” with scandals, popular stories, big front page titles and colourful photos. News stories published on the first (and on the last) pages of daily newspapers, in particular photo-news, draw a lot of attention and are generally perceived as very important.

Magazines come out in periodical editions (weeklies, fortnightlies, monthlies etc.) and are aimed at specific target publics (women, experts, political parties, interest groups, etc.). They cover specialised topics and have longer stories (articles, features, interviews, opinion pieces etc.).

Their news stories provide more in-depth and extensive coverage, showing and explaining specific problems and dimensions of problems, they are also more reader oriented. For readers magazines are usually more attractive also because of many colourful photos and quality print.

Radio always attempts to follow the news “on the ground”, to be in the midst of happening and to provide live coverage. It has news show on the hour or at certain time of the day. It can cover inter-

national, national and local news. Voice is the only tool of a radio journalist (*“radio must tell, it cannot show”*) and news stories are usually time limited (i.e. 10 sec to 2 min).

People listen to radio during the whole day, while doing their daily tasks, as well as work and in their cars. Radio is the first on the scene to cover the news live, other media usually follow. Radio has also an impressive mobilising effects, particularly during the time of wars and natural disasters.

Television covers news in daily circles, intended for the main evening or hourly news. The area of coverage and also topics covered differ, depending on whether news is produced for the national public services, commercial TV stations, local cable programmes or international satellite networks. Television exists only with good, live images, realistic shots from the field, and with statements made by people involved (*“showing not telling”*). News stories are short (10 sec to 2 min), only illustrating and emphasizing particular issues covered, but not being able to go in- depth of any complex and problematic issues.

The general public, however, still considers television to be the most influential and convincing media. The main evening news still have the highest ratings, and people began to watch more and more talk shows with exciting, confrontational debates with well-known actors involved (*“infotainment”*). Television, therefore, to a large extent still sets (national) priorities in public discourse and opinion.

Internet is a very important new media, surpassing all of the above-noted media parameters, with no time, area, topic, format and effect limits imposed. Its added value is immense: it provides direct access to information and documents, it enables more attractive, innovative and visualised presentations of contents, as well as it allows interaction and involvement of the public (e-mail, polls, chat rooms, forums, blogging). In fact, it actually allows everyone to become a journalist or an editor, and therefore, it enables CSOs to create and develop with support of our public, efficient, free of charge web pages.

CASE STUDY 1

Balkan Civil Society Development Network at www.balkancsd.net

This is a good example of how CSOs from different Western Balkan countries have developed their own media. As it looks now, the web page is intended primarily for internal exchange of information within the network, including internal databases for member CSOs. Nevertheless, it has a large potential to become the main portal allowing easy access to many CSOs in the region. In order, to open it up to other interested publics, primarily potential donors and the media, one should work on making the web page more transparent and attractive.

Here are some suggestions how to do it:

- The basic presentation of the network should be seen at the very top of the page; it should be clear and concise, stressing its importance for the region, with relevant examples of projects and activities;
- News should be up-to-date, presenting most current and interesting developments in the CSO sector in a short, visually attractive way, including appeals, invitations to participate and contribute, maybe with occasional public polls and competitions;
- There should be a separate Press room, with all necessary information for the media (i.e. identity card of the network and of the member CSOs, contact persons for media relations, announcements of future events, press releases, speeches, audiovisual material etc.)

Efficient tools, functioning as extensions of the web page, are e-mail alerts and newsletters, which should be sent out, on a regular basis, to all stakeholders of the network and involved CSOs.

To sum up, one cannot classify media into more or less important, they complement each other in their diverse effects and can contribute to presenting wholesome picture about CSO with different news stories. One should thus strive to deal with all media as equal, at the same time respecting their diversity, special needs and effects and work towards special opportunities and advantages with each of them. Because visual images are also very influential means of communicating information, we should treat media people, photographers and cameramen included, with special attention and care.

Working with the media

3.1 HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE MEDIA

Our communication with the media should be always based on professional, cooperative and polite attitude towards the media and the journalists. As we already stressed, it is important to know and understand your partner, as well as to keep in mind the following:

- *Media/journalists' need for a news and news stories*
- *Deadlines for certain news stories*
- *Journalists' and editors' correct names and positions*

When communicating with the media, we follow certain unwritten “*rules of the game*” which should always be set in advance. However, “silent” upholding to the rules largely depends on the quality of relations and the level of trust between a CSO and an individual journalist. As professional communicators, in most cases, we talk to the journalist “**on the record**”. This means that we are well aware, and also agree, that the information passed to the journalist in such a conversation could be published as such, and that we will be quoted as a source with full name and position. On the other hand, we will rarely use “**off the record**” in our media communication, rather in exceptional cases, since journalists obeying such an agreement cannot publish the information presented and are actually left without a news story. We can help a journalist with “**background information**” which will not be directly published (i.e. with

explicit quotes, but can rather direct a journalist how to build on his/her story, it can disclose how to further search and check additional information, how to ask questions and look for quotes with some other people and organisation, etc..

There are different ways of communicating with the media: phone calls, written communication (including e-mails), on the spot at media covered events, personal communication. As in all professional communication, one has to find a proper combination of formal and informal ways and opportunities with each individual journalist or editor. Here try to develop a distinct, personal note, be communicative, persistent, correct and reasonable, try to sell your story, but never be annoying, bad-tempered or aggressive. Always keep in mind that you are building a long-term, balanced relationship with an individual journalist and media. As in every relationship there are ups and downs, good and bad days. So, we simply must not take things too personally.

Never lie to journalists! If you tell a lie you will be caught sooner or later, and the journalist will never trust you again! Better say, "I don't know, I will check and call you back later when I get the information required". Prepare in advance for a brief introduction of yourself, of your organisation, of a project, an initiative or an issue, you want to present to the journalist. Always remember what message you want to convey and why, and attempt to target your communication. Also, be prepared for an on-the-record conversation with the journalist in whatever circumstances.

3.2 HOW TO EFFICIENTLY ORGANISE MEDIA RELATIONS

Any organised work with the media starts off with the self-questioning of each CSO: *Who are we? What is our mission? How do we wish to influence the world around us? What do we want to communicate?* While answering such questions, we can better understand ourselves, define our identity, clear out our aims and expectations. Starting with ourselves allows us also to efficiently prepare and organise our media relations.

Therefore, the first step should be to prepare our **identity card**, i.e. basic presentation of the organisation, vision, description of activi-

ties and projects, contacts, visual presentation (logo of the organisation, relevant photos), etc., all of which can be sent or passed to the media at any time. This could be upgraded for specific media events by means of the so-called **press kit**, which includes current information and press releases, background material about projects, our photos. etc..

While focusing on our organisation, we should at the same time follow developments in relevant environments, also in the media. We should observe which media cover our organisation, projects, initiatives and issues, how news stories about us are prepared and placed within the media, what emphasis is given and in which context. Here we should also consider where – in which media, on which pages, on which programmes – we want to appear, or be presented, what kind of news stories we can offer, what media stories trigger our response, etc.. For a better review we should file relevant media publications in forms of **press clippings**, and store them to our **media archive** (including photo, audio and TV material, media questions). This will not only allow feedback on our actions, analysis and evaluation of our media work, but it will also encourage pro-active and positive responses, as well as planning and adjusting of our media tactics.

For efficient media communication and work we need a **media adrema**, i.e. a list of journalists and editors who have already covered us or who are important for our organisation. This list should include up-dated information with exact names, positions, addresses, contact numbers and e-mails. Thus, it is very important to follow current changes in the media, new employments of journalists and editors, and to maintain updated and precise media adrema, which we check and use frequently. We can also keep separate adremas of relevant journalists and editors of the most important media (i.e. as a phone book, for e-mail posting purposes etc.), or classify them according to the field they cover (i.e. foreign affairs, social affairs and health, culture, education etc.).

On the other side, we should designate and name **spokesperson(s)**, i.e. a person responsible for media relations and available for media calls, questions, quotes and interviews; people, project managers, experts at the organisation who are willing and competent to talk to media on certain issues and projects. Once we publicly

announce a person as a spokesperson or a contact person for additional information on a project, he or she should be always open to the media, having accessible contact numbers and e-mails, and be prepared for on-the-record conversation with them. In any case, our organisation should communicate with unitary messages, harmonised voice and image, to be clear, well understood, taken into account and respected.

While having all the necessary tools for efficient organisation of media relations, one should consistently perform additional activities for efficient work with the media.

With respect to this do not forget to:

- ***Look and follow the media:*** who covers us and in what way, what topics are relevant, interesting, and newsworthy for the media;
- ***Talk among yourselves, coordinate, brainstorm*** in a larger team: talk about how to present a certain issue so as to make it well understood by the media and by the general public, what media questions can be expected, how to plan for certain media events etc.;
- ***Plan and think strategically:*** “What to say to whom on what occasion with what intention and what effect?”
- ***Evaluate:*** sit back at the end of a project, a media event or an interview, reflect on your mistakes and achievements, what answers have been responded to, which information have been missed by the media, try to make further improvements.

3.3 TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES OF MEDIA RELATIONS

Here we will present certain forms of media communication, that follow basic journalistic rules and are adapted to forms of news stories and news events. As they are well accepted by journalists and the media, they allow the CSOs to be most efficient in their communication with the media and in getting their messages published as intended.

Press release

This is a written news story, respecting basic news criteria. It has to be informative, interesting, short, simple, concise and prepared to be published as such. It should respond to four questions which are basic for any media news (*4W*): *Who, What, Where, When*. As one works in the interest of a particular organisation, one should also try to show a bit of *How and Why*. A press release has a *structure of an inverted pyramid*, this means that the most important facts are stated right at the beginning, in the first sentence or paragraph (so-called “*lead*”), then the facts follow as to their importance priority, not chronologically. A press release can also include interesting quotes by key actors whereby one should keep them short and most illustrative. The title (5-7 striking words) should emphasise, the “news”, the gist of information and attempt to attract reader’s attention.

At the top, a press release should include the place and date of publication, as well as the organisation’s identification (also visual, i.e. in a form of the organisation’s logo). At the bottom of the release the contact person’s data for any further questions should be listed. A press release should not exceed the length of maximum one page (30 lines, 1,5 paragraph space). In most cases, press releases can be immediately published as such (“*for immediate release*”). However, in exceptional cases, we can give it to the media in advance before an event, speech, launch of a report actually happens, and ask the media to wait with the publication until certain acceptable time (“*embargo*”).

CASE STUDY 2

Example of a bad press release

INVITATION

Our organization was founded in 1992. We had a lot of success since then. We helped many people during that time. Why don't you join us?!

We want to celebrate with you and invite you for a press conference at our premises (Ljubljanska 8).

Please come and support us.

Thank you very much.

Yours sincerely,

SF team

Here are some of the most common mistakes in writing press releases:

- stating facts chronologically, not starting off with the most important data; forgetting what news is (i.e. what was said or concluded, what are the results and impacts, not merely that "a press conference was held");
- using strong adjectives instead of giving real facts and numbers (do not say many, a lot, very successful, but say how many, state what the achievements are);
- omitting the title, date and location of the press release;
- hiding important information in the third or following paragraphs (i.e. well known personalities chairing an event);
- directly, personally addressing the journalist (i.e. one should not use Dear, Yours, Thank you, Sincerely, etc.);
- using abbreviations, not clearly stating the contact person and the organisation.

CASE STUDY 3

Example of a good press release

Ljubljana, 8 February 2007

Media notice/invitation

15 YEARS OF CARE FOR ELDERLY IN NEED

Slovene philanthropy has since its foundation in 1992, developed successful programmes for help elderly living home alone and without relatives. Last year more than 350 volunteers from 50 Slovene schools visited 722 people at their homes.

On the occasion of our 15 anniversary, volunteers, teachers and coordinators of voluntary work from all over Slovenia will meet at a Slovene forum to discuss cases of good practices and their experiences.

The Slovene forum will take place on

**Thursday, 15 February, beginning at 9 AM,
at Ljubljanska 8, Ljubljana
Conference Room, First Floor**

Open to the media, kindly invited!

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Apart from its classical form, press release can come out also in other forms, as a press statement, media notice/invitation and right to reply.

Press statement is a written position on a particular issue, also an open letter, which was prepared in advance read in front of the cameras (its length is in accordance with the media space available – approx. 20 sec of spoken words).

Media notice/invitation gives technical information about a media event, attempting to provide brief answers to basic 4W and lure media to the event with a bit of Why.

Right to reply responds to published information, which refers to the organisation but is based on false or untrue facts. Corrections should be precise, clear, and short, with no comments on or insults of the journalist and his/her (style of) writing.

Press release can be distributed by means of a media adrema (by mail, e-mail or fax), respecting deadlines for certain news stories, as well as for the expressed interest of an individual journalist or media for our news story. Press release can be included in a press kit and used at media events and other occasions. Nevertheless, merely distributing a press release does not guarantee that it will be published. Filing our press release to 50 or more media addresses does not mean anything, if it is neither read nor published. Often journalists will use it as an introduction, a background or for setting the context; for a news story journalists require a live communication, interpretation of the news sent, as well as further direction. Therefore, we should always follow up with a phone call, trying to make more out of our press release and respond to individual interests, and possible questions of a journalist writing the news story.

Press conference

This is a staged media event, with a speaker(s) conveying a message(s) and answering to media questions, on the record (with direct quotes). In a current explosion of press conference, CSOs should reconsider why one wants to organise a press conferences. The proper reasons for such a decision are:

1. The information you want to communicate is so complex a dialogue is required to clarify it.
2. You intentionally want to dramatize your news announcement.

Therefore, it is important to choose a proper moment/opportunity for the press conference (for example at the launch or at the end of an important project, with remarkable achievement, visit, results, in crisis situation etc.). In addition, good and interesting subjects, messages, speakers, even a well-chosen location of the press conference will attract media's attention. Above all, one should strive not to waste reporters' time and be always prepared for potential questions.

A media briefing is as efficient (or even more so) as a press conference, although it is often understated and ignored way of media communication. This is an organised, but more informal meeting and conversation with a reporter or a group of reporters for background information (no direct quotes). By these means we can introduce new issues, present new information, new experts and their opinions; clarify, interpret, elaborate on issues/projects in progress; update reporters, help them prepare their news stories, give them ideas; get acquainted with them through face-to-face communication, keep the communication open, etc..

We should plan and prepare for a press conference carefully and well in advance. Organisational activities should follow these steps:

AT LEAST ONE WEEK BEFORE THE CONFERENCE

- Check, pick and reserve a convenient date and time; try not to overlap with similar media events and other relevant media happening;
- Check, pick and reserve a proper location and room, at an accessible location, meeting technical requirements (i.e. with sufficient seats, electricity, outlets for TV lights, microphones, loudspeakers, speakers' podium or a table, place or a stand for TV cameras, a stand for dictaphones, a projector, a computer, a video camera, etc.);
- Prepare and send a media notice/invitation, clearly stating where and when the conference will take place, who the speakers will be, what the main topic and issues are, why the journalists should be interested to attend, who the contact person is for further information and questions;

- Prepare press kits, including the identity card of the organisation, materials concerning the topic of the press conference, a list of names and positions of the speakers, photo material etc..

AT LEAST A DAY BEFORE

- Coordinate and set a scenario for the press conference, i.e. time- and content-line of speakers (maximum 2-3);
- Anticipate media questions, brainstorm in a larger team;
- Check attendance of invited journalists and media by phone;
- Update press kits;
- Make final arrangements in the conference room, in particular provide for good photo opportunities: sitting arrangement for speakers and journalists, name tags for speakers, background (logo, colour, flags, flowers), refreshments (usually served before the conference).

THAT MORNING

- Make final calls to news desks;
- Check the conference room thoroughly;
- Rehearse the press conference.

DURING THE PRESS CONFERENCE

- Circulate an attendance list and make sure that the present journalists give their data;
- Distribute press kits;
- Greet the journalists, make introductory words and short presentation of the speakers;
- Speakers continue with short statements, then media questions follow;
- Focus on the topic chosen for the press conference, don't try to elaborate about broad problematic of the organisation and its field of action;
- Talk loud and clear, sit up straight, look toward the audience, make eye contact, try to appear nice for the photo and TV cameras ;
- Watch the time: 30-45 minutes, including questions!
- Always allow enough time for questions, which should be well organised: journalists raise their hands, a moderator gives the

floor to them one by one, journalists first introduce themselves and their media, tells for whom the question is intended and then poses a short and concise question; one can answer to each question separately or in a group;

- Tape the conference (audio, video) and make photos for the media archive and subsequent evaluation;
- Thank media politely for attending the conference, say goodbye and invite journalists to further communication.

AFTER THE PRESS CONFERENCE

- Keep on talking to the present journalists;
- Organise individual interviews if requested;
- Call key reporters who did not attend, send them press kits (a press release or a transcript of the press conference), summarise the main issues raised at the press conference;
- monitor and tape the coverage, file the material for media archive (clippings, recordings, photos), analyse!

CASE STUDY 4

Example of a successful press conference

Launching of a campaign against violence against women by Association for emancipation, solidarity and equality of women in Macedonia (ESE)

Each year in the period of “International 16 days of activism for combating violence against women” the Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of Women of the Republic of Macedonia (ESE) organizes public campaigns about domestic violence. The last two campaigns were initiated jointly with relevant CSOs active in the field, as well as with governmental ministries and institutions responsible for the legal regulation of the problem in 2004. Traditionally, the launch of each campaign was introduced by a major press conference. In 2006 the ESE and Akcija Zdruzenska (partner organisation) used a different approach for organising a press conference: it took place in a café in the city centre of Skopje, at the weekend (on Saturday). The choice of such uncommon location and time, on one hand, allowed for more informal atmosphere and easier accessibility and, on the other, it decreased the risk of parallel events taking place, it provoked media interest and assured journalists’ attendance.

Taking into consideration that the media and their audience are more attracted by human stories, they also prepared a video clip (to be shown for the first time and, as such, announced in the media notice/invitation) of a victim of domestic violence, in which she was talking about her experience with violent behaviour of her husband. Besides this, they used most up-to-date and, alarming data gathered from research about the prevalence of domestic violence in Macedonia, which were interpreted in simple words and by means of understandable illustrations. Representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and from the Ministry of Interior were invited to participate at the press conference. During the campaign policemen and social workers distributed materials to citizens, whereby they expressed their will and readiness to deal with the problem and support the victims of domestic violence.

Five national TV stations covered the press conference, and the video clip with the victim was broadcasted on both programmes of the Macedonian television, in Macedonian and in Albanian languages. After the press conference the print media that did not attend received a well prepared press release and, consequently, four major daily newspaper published information about the campaign on the following Monday. In addition, three radio stations requested an interview on the subject and reported about the campaign.

Interview

This is a one-to one, on the record conversation for the media. A journalist can either use it as a method of acquiring information and publish some quotes, or publish it as whole with questions and answers. When we arrange for an interview, we should be clear about what we want to achieve by it. Do we want to inform, pass on new information? Or do we want to clarify badly and wrongly understood matters in our field? Maybe we simply want to make an appearance in order so that the public will recognise us, give a face to our organisation and content to what we are doing?

In any case, if we agree for an interview, we must be ready to speak on the record, meaning that everything we say during the interview can be published. Therefore, we have to prepare for the interview, knowing exactly what our mission and, current priorities are as well as what is the main message that we want to deliver during the interview. Before the interview, one should prepare **a basic statement about the organisation or the project presented (1-2 sentences, maximum 20 sec. in length) and three most important points one wants to make (“islands of safety”)**. Furthermore, one should think about the media audience addressed by the interview (i.e. general or specific, like: children, women, elderly, experts etc.). We should adapt our messages, language and style of communication to the audience. In addition, we should inquire about the specific characteristics of the media outlet for which we are giving the interview: Will it be an interview for the print media? If it is for television, will it be live or recorded? Will we sit with the journalist face to face or will we talk to him via phone or satellite?

During the interview, you should follow some simple, but very important rules:

- **Be prepared**
- **Control the situation**
- **Be confident**
- **Tell the truth**

As it is in our best interest to carry out a quality interview, technically and content wise, we should carefully check and take care of the following:

- Keep track of media requests and find proper timing for the interview, even by giving initiative when we have something important, interesting, and newsworthy to tell;
- Check on the journalist, the media outlet (audience, circulation/ratings, topics), the programme or show, section or supplement, who has already had interviews with the same media;
- Check the media expectations: Why have I been chosen? Am I the right speaker for the interview?
- Ask and agree on the form (live or taped, alone or in a panel), length and the main focus (topics) of the interview, but never demand questions in advance!
- Talk to the journalist before the interview and try to help him or her with the preparation, send him/her the speaker's biography (getting the names and functions right!), your organisation's identity card, other information or background material, you can also discretely give some suggestions to the journalist;
- Anticipate issues and open questions, that might be discussed, as well as the journalist's attitude towards the topic or your organisation, his/her style of doing the interviews;
- Check the photo-op during the interview and what sort of photos would be preferred (a portrait, a relaxed or dynamic photo, a picture in the office or outside, on the field);
- Choose a proper location for the interview: noise free, isolated room, with informal sitting arrangement, refreshments served before the interview;
- Record the interview;
- We can agree on *authorisation* of the interview, but we should never demand it; in case the journalist agrees, he/she will send us the transcript of the interview before its publication, so we can review and correct our answers if there are some mistakes, but we should never correct titles, subtitles, introduction, ques-

tions, structure or style of the interview, as these are the responsibility of the journalist and of the editor;

- Check the publication of the interview (When? How? In what context? With what effect?), make a press clipping and store it in the media archive;
- Do not forget about the follow-up, keep on communicating with the journalist.

In cases of television interviews, we should pay special attention to the following:

1. Dress conservatively, comfortably, and neatly. Wear solid colours, light, but not white, flashy or shiny fabric, do not wear too much jewellery or makeup. Check yourself in the mirror before going (hair, tie).
2. Take care of your background, because viewers might be distracted by it and will not pay attention to what you are saying. If you are not in the studio, just stand in front of a simple white wall, possibly with a logo of your organisation, never have a door, window or people talking behind your back.
3. Don't debate formally and score on the basis of arguing points won or lost, rather try to be persuasive about the issues and appear as a likeable and trustworthy person.
4. Have an outline of your main points in front of you.
5. Be simple, clear, and direct. Keep your answers short (maximum 20 sec. long, in so-called "*sound-bites*").
6. Do not use professional jargon, use as few numbers and statistics as possible, define technical terms as simply as possible, use commonly used words, vivid language and colourful illustrations.
7. Don't be passive or overly polite. Be enthusiastic and energetic, but above all, be yourself and behave naturally.
8. Always tell the truth. Better say, "I don't know".
9. If you don't hear or understand a question, ask the interviewer to repeat it.
10. Always assume the microphone or camera is on. Never say anything you don't want to be heard on television.

Here are some other general suggestions and practical advice on how to react in certain situations during the on-air interview in a television studio:

STARTING AN INTERVIEW, FIRST FEW MINUTES IN THE STUDIO

- Appear ahead of the scheduled time for the interview;
- Allow enough time and attention for technical preparations: lights, camera, microphone, sitting arrangements;
- Sit comfortably in your chair, neither too tensely nor too relaxed;
- Do not worry about the camera, always look directly at the interviewer; except in case of satellite interviews: in this case imagine the camera is the face of the interviewer;
- Repeat the basic statement about your organisation/project and 3 most important points you want to make (“islands of safety”).

IF THE INTERVIEWER KEEPS MOVING AWAY FROM THE POINTS YOU WANT TO MAKE

- use the so-called “bridges” and get back to your points:

Let me add...

I am often asked...

That may be true up to the point, but...

That's not my area of expertise but I do know that...

It seems that the most important issue is...

Let me clarify...

This reminds me of...

This is a part of a larger picture...

IF THE REPORTER ASKS A QUESTION YOU DON'T WANT TO ANSWER

- Try not to avoid;
- Say you cannot answer;
- Use your “islands of safety”.

IF THE REPORTER ASKS NEGATIVE QUESTIONS

- Never repeat the negative;
- Stay positive and in control, do not get insulted or angry, the journalist often already knows the answer, but he/she is simply checking your reactions;
- Correct any misinformation quickly;
- Don't answer with false information;
- In certain cases you can be really direct, insist on your answer and turn the question back to the journalist, but be careful not to receive negative reaction:

“We are doing the best we can. What would you suggest to do about it?”

“I am sorry, I do not understand your anger. All I am trying to do is to respond.”

“I am answering your question, but probably I am not giving you the answer you want.”

“I do not think that you are really hearing what I am saying.”

IF THERE IS LONG SILENCE

- Do not worry or be afraid of the silence, the report is responsible for time and dialogue!
- Try to avoid fillers: *hm, ahm, well, you know.*

IF YOU ARE ASKED TO ADD MORE THAN YOU WANT TO SAY

- Go back to your “islands of safety”;
- Repeat and elaborate on different stories and illustrations.

IF YOU DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION

- Say it directly: *I am sorry, I don't have that information, but I'll be happy to get back to you with it.*
- Always really get back with the information!

Media events

These are organised, greater events, attractive to the media and also covered by them. Media events are, for example, conferences, festivals, round tables, protests, demonstrations, international visits, etc..

Before we start preparations and organisational activities for such a complex event, we should thoroughly consider how we will attract the media and how we will meet their basic needs for news stories. Here we should keep in mind the newsworthiness criteria and try to organise a media event which will be different, fresh, innovative, creative. Maybe we can open new questions, reflect on current problems from a different angle, involve well-known personalities, include human stories. Most importantly, it should be our priority to provide good photo and TV material!

CASE STUDY 5

Example of good media event

Case of Visa Regime Campaign by The Citizens' Pact for South Eastern Europe

The aim of the campaign in 2005 was to bring visa regime issue to the agenda of the mainstream media in the European Union and Western Balkans. European public at the time was still terrified by the famous "Polish plumber": EU enlargement to 10 new countries brought millions of workers from Central and Eastern European countries to the West, and politicians were using and misusing this fact heavily. Media were very cautious about any issue related to the possible new migration to the EU countries. On the other hand, media in the Western Balkan countries were generally not interested in this issue, considering it too long-term and insufficient for fresh and attractive news.

After careful research, the Citizens' Pact for South Eastern Europe realised that they need to produce something that would be news by itself, but closely related to the visa regime issue. They were discussing how the visa regime issue might be made interesting for anyone, even for those who were not (directly or at all) affected by it. During many discussions they have noticed that almost everybody had an interesting, humorous story from a visa regime queue, either one's own or of one's friends or relatives. So, they decided to publish a book entitled "The Best Stories from the Visa Queues". In order to keep the media interested they first announced a competition for the best stories and then chose the best stories and published the book.

Competition itself reached significant media attention in the region and it was covered by most mainstream media in Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina. After the book was published in December 2005, it received coverage in some prominent European media like the BBC, Der Standard, MTV Europe. The book turned to be a very powerful tool in connecting people who could help, so the Citizens' Pact for South Eastern Europe succeeded promoting the book, and thereby, the visa issue in the European Parliament in March 2006.

From the early beginning of our organisational activities we should prepare a **media “friendly” programme**, which would enable journalists to directly attend and follow our event and consequently, report better about it. We should plan photo opportunities (so-called *photo-ops*), press statements, press briefings, press conferences. We should also take into account that media work under deadlines, thus we should allow enough time for them to work (they will spend time to get to the location, attend the media event, press conference etc, take the interviews, still they will have to get back and finish their news stories on time).

We should also decide on the **“regime” for the media** in advance: will the media be allowed to attend freely during the whole time (*“open for public”*) or will there be restrictions at some points (*“closed to public”*) or will they require special press *accreditations*, meaning that they will have to register their names in advance. In case of any restrictions on the spot, we should pay special attention to inform the journalists fully and on time, not to make them feel that we are hiding something from them or that they are excluded for certain reasons. Such negative presumptions would most certainly reflect in the published news stories.

At the scene of the media event we should secure adequate **working conditions for the media**: we can anticipate what technical requirements will certain media have (i.e. sound system, lights, electricity plugs and wires, podium for photographers and TV cameramen, satellite dish and links, parking for special media vans). If necessary, we should allocate also provide for a room, a place, maybe a couple of computers, for journalists to be able to work on the spot. We should also plan a place for briefings, press conference or interviews when scheduled. It is very important to have a special person in charge of communicating with the media, and that journalists recognise him/her in order to address any sort of technical or content questions and requirements to him/her. Other team members should have clear division of tasks and should coordinate tasks throughout the event so as not to provoke uncontrolled situations or double work on the spot.

As in the case of a press conference, we should plan and prepare for a media event carefully and well in advance. Organisational activities should take the following steps:

BEFORE THE MEDIA EVENT

- Prepare and send a media notice/invitation, including a detailed programme of the event, exact directions how to get to the location, instructions about the media regime and accreditations, and, most importantly, a contact person for further information;
- Help journalists prepare for the event and the topic: organise a media briefing, invite experts, give background information, pass on material in advance, give suggestions and ideas for stories; you can also provide for transportation of journalists to the location and from/to the locations of the event;
- Plan for an info-point, working place and a place for a press conference, briefings or interviews; check for technical requirements of the media!
- Always check the location well in advance, try to be on the spot at least one hour before the event starts just to make sure that everything is well prepared, in case you lack something or something does not work, you still have time to get it or to correct it!

DURING THE MEDIA EVENT

- At the info-point check the attendance of journalists;
- Be in touch with the journalists during the whole time, provide for on-the-spot briefings and interviews, photo and TV opportunities (particularly with handshakes, openings of new premises, giving out awards and any other dynamic happenings on the ground);
- Provide for an in-doors media production: have your own photographer/cameraman, prepare a leaflet or a publication about the event, have an updated web page.

AFTER THE MEDIA EVENT

- Keep communicating with the journalists present at the event, try to create stories for individual media;
- Call up the media and journalists who did not attend, send them your press release and other materials about the event, summarise on the event, offer to have interviews about the topic, try to give journalists ideas and suggestions for their stories;
- Monitor and tape the coverage, file the material for media archive (clippings, recordings, photos), analyse!

Conclusion and check-up lists

The basic aim of this textbook was to bring media closer to the representatives of CSOs in the Western Balkans and to enable them to work efficiently with media, hand in hand. However, each CSO should know its relevant stakeholders in its own countries and local communities, including media, journalists, photo reports, and editors, and take their specific characteristics and logic of functioning into account.

With regards to media work and communication, participants of the regional media workshops themselves offered some important advise:

- *If you can't find a solution to your problem, try to change the angle. "Do it again", but with new decisions and improved actions on the basis of experience and gained knowledge.*
- *You may think that public is wrong having no interest in what you consider important, but it won't help you any to judge it. Try to present your problem in a more attractive way, try to pack rather unattractive project objective in a more attractive one.*
- *Don't be afraid to admit your own mistakes. The sooner you admit them the better you can correct them!*

Here, we provide additional support for everyday media operations by CSOs and their efficient media relations: the included practical

check-up lists can be photocopied and used at each media communication and for media projects. We also give suggestions for further readings on the topic of media relations and some useful links on regional media databases and information concerning media in the Western Balkans.

CHECH-UP LISTS

4.1 Media call

Date: _____ Time: _____

Name of the caller: _____

Phone: _____

Media House: _____ Address: _____

Questions, requests, other issues:

Deadline: _____

Received by: _____

Answered by: _____

4.2 Press conference

Date and location: _____

Topic: _____

Speakers: _____

Moderator: _____

Responsible for organisation: _____

At least a week before:

- Date, time
- Location, room
- Media notice/invitation
- Press kits

At least a day before:

- Scenario
- Check the attendance
- Press kits - final version!
- Final arrangements in the room

That morning:

- Last media calls
- Check the room
- Practice

During the press conference:

- Distribution of press kits
- List of attendance
- Introduction
- Media questions
- Record and take photos
- Say thank you and goodbye, keep on communicating

After the press conference:

- Individual interviews
- Call the journalists not present
- Press clippings, media archive

Media questions, requests, other:

4.3 List of attendance

Press conference, organiser, topic, date and location

	Name	Media House	Address	Phone	E-mail
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					
10.					
11.					
12.					

4.4 Interview for print media

Date: _____ Time: _____ Length: _____

Place: _____ By phone: _____ Written: _____

Topic: _____

Media house, section: _____

Journalist: _____

Phone: _____

Remarks: _____

Speaker: _____

Preparation for the journalist: _____

Sent materials: _____

Responsible: _____

Photographer: _____

Date of publication: _____ Published: _____ Clipping: _____

4.5 Television interview

TV station:

Programme, show:

Date: _____ Time: _____ Length: _____

Live: _____ Recorded: _____ Arrival: _____

Location: _____

Topic: _____

Journalist: _____

Phone: _____

Remarks: _____

Speaker: _____

Other speakers: _____

On air-expected date: _____ Real date: _____ Media archive: _____

4.6 Media events

Media event: _____

Date: _____

Location: _____

Responsible for organisation: _____

Responsible for media: _____

Regime for media:

Open for public: _____ Closed for public: _____ Accreditations: _____

Before the media event:

- Media notice/invitation
- Media briefing, press kits
- Plan for infopoint, place for journalists and briefings, technical requirements
- Check location in advance!

During the media event:

- Check attendance
- Communicate, communicate, communicate!
- Interviews on the spot
- In-house media production

After the media event:

- Call the journalists not present
- Press clippings, media archive
- Keep on communicating!

4.7 Media programme

Photo-ops

Time: _____ Location: _____

Press statements

Time _____ Location: _____

Speakers: _____

Remarks: _____

Press conference

Time _____ Location: _____ Speakers: _____

Remarks: _____

Working conditions for the media:

Technical requirements:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Info-point: _____

Working place: _____

Briefing place: _____

Transportation: _____

Further readings and useful links

Carol Fennelly: *Managing Media. A Guide for Activists.* The Community for Creative Non-Violence.

Available at: <http://tenant.net/Organize/media.html>

Sarah Silver: *A Media Relations Handbook for Non-governmental Organisations.* New York/London, 2003, Independent Journalism Foundation and the Media Diversity Institute.

Available at:

www.ilga-europe.org/content/download/1622/10119/file/Media%20Relations%20Guide.pdf

NetNovinar.org, educational and information portal for journalism in the Western Balkans:

<http://www.netnovinar.org/netnovinar/compiled/p511.htm>

The South East European Network for Professionalization of the Media (SEENPM) involving 18 member media centers from the region:

<http://www.seenpm.org/index.php?nav=front.php>

Media Center, Belgrade, a multimedia organisation in the South Eastern Europe providing full-scale services in the media sphere, founded by the Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia in 1994:

<http://www.mediacenter.org.yu/code/navigate.asp?Id=14>

B92, founded in 1989 as a youth radio broadcasting to Belgrade audiences, provides also a national television network, a website and an internet providing service, with strong commitment to responsible journalism and positive social change:

<http://www.b92.net/link/>

Balcan.org, web-portal for exchange of information among CSOs from Slovenia and the Western Balkan countries, prepared by CNVOS – Centre for Information Service, Co-operation and Development of NGOs (Slovenia):

<http://www.balcan.org/>

Graganski svet (Civic World), a web portal providing news from the CSOs in the Western Balkans, prepared by Macedonian Center for International Cooperation:

<http://www.graganskisvet.org.mk>; <http://www.civicworld.org.mk>

About the Author

Kristina Plavšak Krajnc, M.I.A. graduated in journalism at University of Ljubljana in 1994. In 1996 she obtained her Master of International Affairs degree from the School of International and Public Affairs at the Columbia University in New York.

She worked as a press secretary to the Prime Minister of Republic of Slovenia (1996-2000) and as a teaching assistant and research fellow in political communication and public diplomacy at the Faculty of Social Sciences in Ljubljana (2000-2004). Since 2000 she is the founding member and the director of a non-governmental organisation Media Forum, Center for Public Communication, Ljubljana. Currently she is advisor to the President of Republic of Slovenia, on cooperation with the non-governmental organisations.

MACEDONIAN CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION (MCIC)

MISSION

MCIC is a civic society organization which believes in peace, harmony and prosperity of Macedonia and the Balkans, based on the universal principles of civic society and participatory democracy, good governance, equitable social and economical development, interdependency and cultural diversity.

The goal of MCIC is to encourage and lead the changes in solving the social challenges using innovations and establishing alternative models and including them in the main flow.

For the implementation of its goals and tasks, MCIC mobilizes and organizes human resources, financial and material assets, both in the country and abroad.

GOALS AND METHODS

Long-term goals of MCIC are:

- An even and sustainable economic development leading to a social cohesion and to a decrease of poverty through rural and regional development, employment, entrepreneurship, education and access to public services;
- A diversified and deep-rooted civic society promoting the inclusion of a number of interest groups that affect the main streams of social life;
- A righteous and democratic society based on the principles of good governance, decentralized system of management and a high degree of trust;
- An accepted cultural diversity, interdependence and dialogue, reflecting in every segment of public life;
- Established partnerships for the development and a strengthened social capital.

MCIC implements its activities through:

- Representation;
- Development of capacities;
- Networking and partnership;
- Co-financing;
- Information – public relations.

CENTRE FOR INFORMATION SERVICE, CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF NGOS (CNVOS)

Centre for Information Service, Co-operation and Development of NGOs was established in early 2001 as an independent, non-profit and non-governmental organisation. The aim of CNVOS' 27 founding organisations was to empower NGOs in Slovenia, promote their role as important parts of civil society, and ensure the realisation of their objectives.

CNVOS's main objectives are to:

- Encourage networking within the NGO sector and support established networks;
- Ensure communication between the Government and NGOs at the national, regional and local level;
- Foster cooperation among NGOs at the local, national and international level;
- Collect and spread relevant information for NGOs;
- Increase public awareness about the significance of NGOs and civil society in Slovenia;
- Ensure effective lobbying and improve the legal, financial and societal position of NGOs in Slovenia.

CNVOS's guidelines for realising its objectives are to:

- Encourage and support the development of NGOs in Slovenia;
- Advance cooperation and networking among NGOs;
- Encourage cooperation between NGOs and governmental bodies, local authorities, etc.;
- Promote voluntary work and solidarity;
- Analyse and address the needs of target groups;
- Share information, knowledge and experience;
- Ensure effective lobbying.

Since its establishment, over 250 organisations have already joined CNVOS. The Centre thus welcomes all NGOs interested in active cooperation, creative implementation and effective realisation of the CNVOS objectives to join its network.

More information: www.cnvos.si, info@cnvos.si or + 386 (0) 1 542 14 22.

BALKAN CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT NETWORK (BCSDN)

Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN) is an informal network of 12 civil society and ecumenical organizations from 8 countries and territories in the Balkan region (Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia (incl Kosovo), Slovenia).

BCSDN members are: Albanian Civil Society Foundation, Diaconia Agapes, Macedonian Center for International Cooperation, Women's Alliance for Development, Pokrov Foundation, Opportunity Associates Romania, AIDRom, CRNVO, Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization, NIT/Cenzura, EOS and CNVOS.

VISION

Sustainable peace, harmony and prosperity of societies in the Balkan region.

MISSION

Empowering civil society through sharing and developing local practices, concepts and strengthening 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.

STRUCTURE

BCSDN 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.

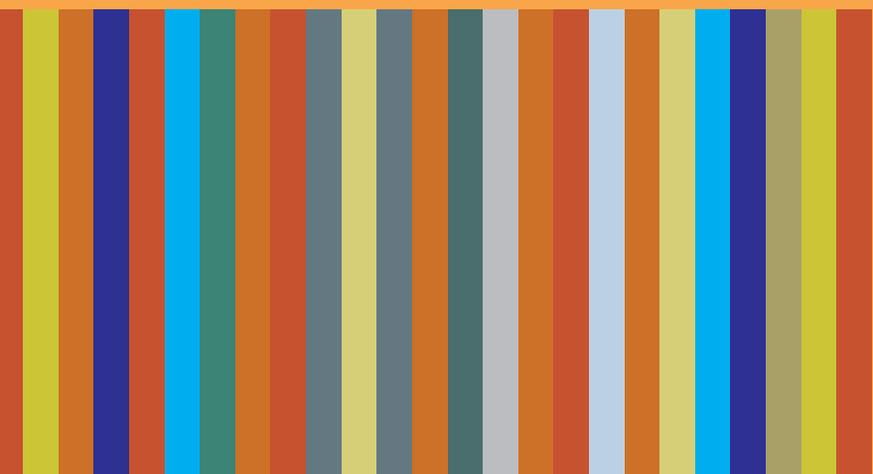
Working Groups are thematic mechanisms for cooperation on specific issues and themes. Each partner can initiate, lead and join any Working Group.

The Secretariat, which is currently situated in the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation in Skopje, Macedonia, manages the daily functioning and coordination of the 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 2004-2007 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 entails trainings, exchanges/exposures, workshops, publications and Working Groups. Additionally, activities are to be performed, which will promote intercultural and resource-sharing such as civil society dictionary, case study exchange, regional visits.



Partnership in Action -
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