



Association for Development
Initiatives –ZENITH
Gjuro Gjakovikj 72/2-16
1000 Skopje, Macedonia
zenith@zenith.org.mk
www.zenith.org.mk

Annual Report for 2016

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In 2016, the Association Zenith focused on three main actions, one funded by the European Union – “IPA 2 Mechanism for Civil Society Organizations”, another by CivicaMobilitas – “You can’t improve what you don’t measure: Innovative model for monitoring, evaluation and reporting for the civil society sector in Macedonia”, and the third one by Konrad Adenauer Stiftung on improving justice sector reform coordination mechanisms.

Zenith continued work on improving the coordination mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of justice sector reforms. It organized consultations with key justice sector institutions, namely, the Ministry of Justice, the Judicial Council, the Supreme Court and the Academy of Judges and Public Prosecutors in order to define the key aspects of functioning of the justice sector coordination mechanisms, as well as to gather input on the performance of Macedonia’s Justice Sector Reform Council. Based on this input, and the review of the draft Justice Sector Reform Strategy 2016–2020, the Association Zenith prepared a detailed description of the thematic areas and the research questions. This was further used by the Association Zenith and the engaged foreign experts from CEDEM and CeMI to research the topic with regard to relevant reform coordination mechanisms in Montenegro, Serbia and Croatia. The regional experiences were compiled in a policy paper that used the method of comparative analysis in order to put forward recommendations for improving Macedonia’s justice sector coordinative mechanisms. The policy paper, endorsed by the Ministry of Justice, was published in Macedonian and English language and distributed to relevant judicial institutions. Zenith also drafted guidelines on Rules of Procedure for the Justice Sector Reform Council, to assist in the streamlining of this crucial body for Justice Sector reforms. The

Zenith, in partnership with three other organizations (MCET, Reactor and Eko-Svest), started work on the IPA2CSO project funded by the Civil Society Facility and Media Programme of the EU. The implemented activities have increased the capacity of diverse CSOs (both national and grassroots) to participate via the IPA2CSO mechanism in consultative and policy advocacy processes, guided by the IPA II Indicative Country Strategy Paper 2014–2020. The CSO network has grown to involve 263 organizations in its activities, of which 217 are CSO member-organizations. The involved CSOs have gained diversified opportunities to participate effectively in civil and policy dialogue, strengthened their capacities for sectoral research, analysis, monitoring and advocacy, while also becoming better at networking, partnership and coalition building.

Project implementation has so far increased CSOs’ capacity to connect with stakeholders via sectoral input from the organized consultations. The IPA2CSO network and its members have provided relevant policy input based on evidence in the form of sectoral policy analyses which serve as a basis for the monitoring and advocacy efforts. Outreach and visibility activities have been initiated in this phase of project implementation in order to increase the awareness of the general public and other CSOs about the IPA2CSO network, its

activities and possibilities to influence decision-making as well as policies on local and national level.

Seven sectoral consultations have been undertaken in March 2016 in the sectors of: Democracy and Governance, Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights, Environment and Climate Action, Energy / Transport, Competitiveness and Innovation, Social Development, and, Agriculture and Rural Development.

Within the sector for Democracy and Governance, Zenith organized an initial sectoral consultation on 21.03.2016 at the EU Info Centre in Skopje, which aimed to discuss the policies, programs, challenges as well as priorities in this sector. Additional comments were received by e-mail. The findings regarding the subsector “Economic governance and public finance management” also include input from the workshop with civil society on the Open government partnership (group for “Efficient management with public resources”), held on 24.03.2016. The opinions and attitudes of involved CSOs were presented to relevant stakeholders, including the Delegation of the EU in Macedonia as input for the draft country report of the European Commission for 2016.

In the sector Competitiveness and innovation Zenith also organized a sectorial consultation, aimed to discuss the policies, programs, challenges as well as priorities in this sector. The consultation on this sector was conducted by e-mail, and the call for input was distributed via the database of CSO contacts of the IPA 2 mechanism, the TACSO office in Macedonia, and of the Secretariat of European Affairs; other contacts of CSOs working in this sector were also used. Due to the specificity of the sector, economic chambers were also contacted, in addition to citizen associations and foundations. As a result of the meeting, a document outlining main developments and challenges in the Sector was produced and shared with key stakeholders.

Zenith and IPA2CSO partners prepared and implemented the Sub-Granting Scheme for CSOs, designed for conducting sectoral analysis. The call was launched on 01.06.2016 and applications were accepted until 30.06.2016. 87 applications were received with this call, and 9 project proposals were supported.

The IPA 2 Mechanism for civil society organizations was actively involved and undertook extensive advocacy activities in the process of adoption of the National Action plan for Open Government Partnership 2016–2018. The efforts of the Association Zenith resulted with inclusion of the measure 5.4. in the National Action Plan adopted on a Government session. This measure specifies involving representatives of citizen associations and foundations, as well as other civil society organizations, in transparent and objective manner in the sector working groups for planning and programming of the IPA 2 assistance. This achievement is even more notable due to the fact that it is the first act adopted by the Government where the IPA 2 Mechanism is explicitly recognized as a civil society platform for policy dialogue with the Government, and is referenced as one of the implementers of the policy measure.

On June 30, 2016, in Skopje, the Association Zenith and the IPA 2 Mechanism for civil society organizations, in cooperation with the Ministry of information society and administration (MIOA), organized a public consultation to determine civil society priorities for the new Public Administration Reform Strategy for Macedonia (2017–2022). Attracting over 60 representatives of civil society, higher education institutions and the business community, the event aimed to identify key priorities, challenges and potential solutions. After the event, civil society organizations provided additional comments by e-mail. The Association Zenith prepared a report from the consultation which is structured according to the aforementioned topics. The report was shared with MIOA, the experts of Support for Improvement in Governance and Management (SIGMA) who lead the process of preparation of the strategy, the Delegation of the European Union in Macedonia and other development partners.

IPA2CSO has organised Annual Conference of IPA 2 Mechanism for Civil Society Organizations on 15-16 September 2016 in Hotel Holiday Inn, Skopje. The event gathered more than 140 representatives from civil society, media, government officials, EU delegation and other foreign missions. New sectoral representatives have been selected with a two-year mandate. Selected grantees of the sub-granting scheme have been promoted at the event, and sectoral consultations undertaken.

The workshop "Shaping EU Funds by Practicing Partnership Principle" was organised by IPA2CSO in Hotel Radika, Mavrovo from 28 to 29 November, 2016 with the newly selected sectoral representatives and grantees of the first sub-granting scheme and it consisted of training modules that apply to EU programmes development. It consisted of the following training modules:

- EU programmes development- from A to Z (Markus Trilling), During this session we present the basics around developing EU programmes on the EU level and the hierarchy of programming process, and discussed what is the best time to influence programming on EU and national level?
- Review of other regional financial initiatives (Western Balkans 6, Energy Community, CESEC) (Dragana Mileusnic)
- Partnership principle in decision making and Code of conduct (Markus Trilling)
- Minimum standards for ensuring transparency and public involvement in decision making (Markus Trilling/ Petko Kovachev)
- Case studies from the EU (Petko Kovachev), a selection of cases to illustrate good and bad examples from EU were presented.
- Sectoral programmes (Markus Trilling, Ana Colovic Lesoska)
- Monitoring EU funds- What's in it for CSOs? (Petko Kovachev)
- The situation in Macedonia- experiences from existing Monitoring Committee
- CSO members (Aleksandar Kolekeski, Ana Colovic Lesoska)

Zenith and IPA2CSO partners launched a call for preparing sectoral monitoring reports in order to ensure relevant and up-to-date policy input based on evidence. Up to 12 sectoral monitoring reports are planned to be completed in 2017.

On December 23, 2016, the IPA2CSO organized a series of eight capacity building sectoral workshops in Skopje under the common theme “Coalition Building”. Over 100 CSO representatives took part in the event. A representative of the Secretariat for European Affairs provided an update on the IPA 2 programming process at the plenary session. The breakout sectoral workshops presented the achievements of IPA2CSO in amending the IPA II Indicative Country Strategy Paper 2014–2020. CSOs shared their initiatives in each of the sectors, and short term sectoral actions plans were prepared that aim to conduct analyses and implement advocacy activities in each of the eight development sectors.

Zenith also started with implementation of the project “You can’t improve what you don’t measure: Innovative model for monitoring, evaluation and reporting for the civil society sector in Macedonia”, funded by the Civica Mobilitas programme. The aim of the project is to improve the dimensions of the Civil Society Index, especially the dimensions related to perception of the impact, level of organization and practicing of values. In the initial phase of the project, Zenith researched best international practices, methodologies and tools for monitoring, evaluation and reporting (MER). This research represents a basis for the further project activities. The development of a model for MER suitable for civil society organizations will lead towards enhanced capacities for systematic monitoring, evaluation and research of the CSOs in Macedonia. In the long term, this activity will contribute to improved overall management of the CSOs and increased capacities for mobilization of resources and constituencies for promoting societal changes.

Besides the research component implemented in 2016, Zenith also performed regular monitoring and evaluation of the Civica Mobilitas programme. This activity included comprehensive monitoring, evaluation and reporting on the organized events, forums and workshops by the programme. Along with the conclusions from each event, Zenith also devised recommendations for Civica Mobilitas for further improvements in the ways the events are planned, organized and monitored. Through the implementation of this project, Zenith cooperated with the other grantees of Civica Mobilitas. Certain areas and modalities for cooperation were determined on meetings with the organizations which are part of the Civica Mobilitas network. The established contacts with other CSOs will be utilized for better implementation of the envisaged activities and enhanced sustainability of the action.

Partnerships

In 2016, Zenith continued the cooperation with several development partners, including the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Office in Macedonia, the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Regional Rule of Law Programme in South-east Europe, the Delegation of the European Union in Macedonia, and the OSCE mission in Macedonia.

Zenith cooperated with a number of national institutions, including the Judicial council, the Supreme Court, the Administrative Court, the Higher Administrative Court, the Academy for judges and public prosecutors, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Information Science and Administration, and the Working Group for chapter 23 “Judiciary and Fundamental Rights”. Zenith also took part in the Public hearing of the National Integration Council of Parliament on "The role of civil society in the process of European integration of the Republic of Macedonia".

Zenith concluded Memorandums of Cooperation with the Centre for Research and Policy Making and the Center for Knowledge Management. A cooperation agreement was signed with the Association of Businesses and Consultants “Creation” on implementing the project *Civil society-business partnership: Developing innovative model for mobilization of financial resources* (CSO4B-DIM).

Internationally, Zenith continued cooperation with the Center for democracy and human rights - CEDEM Montenegro, Center for monitoring and research - CeMi Montenegro, and the Belgrade Open School from Serbia.

A partnership was launched with seven CSO from the Western Balkan accession countries on Mainstreaming the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs). The cooperation aims to strengthen corporate respect for human rights in the six Western Balkan accession countries through human rights due diligence and effective access to remedy in line with the UNGPs. In addition to Zenith, the partnership includes CSR Kosovo, CSR Albania, Smart Kolektiv from Serbia, Ekvilib Institute from Slovenia, CEDEM from Montenegro and Rights For All from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Zenith signed a Memorandum of cooperation with 21 CSOs from the Western Balkan on establishing the WeBER Platform – a regional consultation platform aiming to enable Civil Society Monitoring of Public Administration Reform. The main objectives of the WeBER Platform are: the creation of enabling conditions for the participation of CSOs in the monitoring of PAR, as well as, the launching and continuity of evidence-based dialogue among civil society, Western Balkan government representatives, and international and regional organisations and institutions, including the European Commission, the SIGMA programme of the OECD (Support for Improvement in Governance and Management), the Regional School for Public Administration (ReSPA) and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). Along with other CSO members of the platform Zenith took part in a workshop held in Montenegro on developing a joint PAR monitoring methodology. The methodology is expected to be finalized at the beginning of 2017. In addition to Zenith, the Platform also involves the European Policy Centre (CEP), Institute Alternative (IA), European Policy Institute (EPI – Skopje), Group for Legal and Political Studies (GLPS), Institute for Democracy

and Mediation (IDM), Foreign Policy Initiative BH (FPI BH), Agenda Institute, Albanian Institute of Science (AIS), Belgrade Open School, Centre for Change Management, Centre for Civic Education (CGO), Centre for Development of Non-profit Organisations (CRNVO), Centre for Investigative Reporting (CIN), Civic Initiatives, Community Development Institute (CDI), European Movement in Albania (EMA), European Movement in Serbia (EMinS), InicativapërProgres (INPO), Insituti GAP, Institute for Development Policy (INDEP), Transparency International Bosnia and Herzegovina (TI B&H).

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