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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

USAID Civic Engagement Project in Macedonia (CEP)

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 CEPMACEDONIA

e-Newsletter

WELCOME TO THE SECOND EDITION OF USAID'S CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROJECT (CEP) NEWSLETTER. THIS EDITION COVERS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES WE HAVE COMPLETED IN THE PAST SIX MONTHS, MARKING THE FIRST YEAR OF CEP'S IMPLEMENTATION.

THE RESULTS THAT WE HAVE CHOSEN TO SHARE WITH YOU ARE JUST A FEW FROM THE MANY ACTIVITIES WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED DURING THIS PERIOD. WE HOPE THAT YOU WILL FIND THESE STORIES INSPIRING, AND THAT YOU WILL SHARE THEM WITH YOUR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS.

A Note

Whenever somebody asks me to explain CEP's Linking, Engagement, Advocacy, Development Macedonia (LEAD MK) Program, I find joy in describing the complexity and uniqueness of this program. It is not a program that can be described in just a few sentences. The LEAD MK program gives young people the opportunity to experience real engagement in society. Through participation in the LEAD MK program, young people become agents of change. With youth comes energy, innovation,

and optimism – if they are provided with a supportive environment. CEP's LEAD MK program provides exactly that – opportunities for young people who want to make a difference! As J.K. Rowling has said, *"We do not need magic to change the world, we carry all the power we need inside ourselves already: we have the power to imagine better"*.

In this edition, you will read about what we have accomplished through the first generation of LEAD MK fellows, and by the time you read this, we will be in the process of assisting the second generation of LEAD MK fellows with their own initiatives.



Martin Miloshevski, USAID's CEP Program Manager within the National Youth Council of Macedonia (NYCM)

PROGRAM NEWS

Grants under CEP

We received many responses to our calls for grant applications, so our activities were aimed at preparing the required documents to award 17 grants of which: two were awarded

to CSO alliances as partnership grants; six to CSOs as strategic support grants; six to youth CSOs as youth engagement support grants, and three grants were awarded to CSOs to implement rapid response interventions. In addition, three in-kind grants were awarded to CEP's Youth Civic Engagement Award Winners and 11 small-scale projects under CEP LEAD

MK program were implemented by 16 fellows. These grants total more than US \$1 million, and support civil society organizations, CSO alliances, and young people to engage with the government in policy discussions and community development. We are proud to be able to support the work of the organizations and individuals listed in the tables below.

Editor's Note

We would like to hear your thoughts and suggestions about this newsletter and CEP's work. Please send us your feedback any time by writing to: cepmk@ewmi.org and follow us at <https://www.facebook.com/CEPMacedonia/>

NAME OF THE GRANTEE	PROJECT NAME
Financial Accountability and Transparency in Macedonia - FISCAS, Skopje	“My Money, My Responsibility”: Participative Budgeting in the Municipalities in Macedonia
Platform of Civil Society Organizations for Fight Against Corruption, Skopje	Strengthening CSOs Platform in the Fight Against Corruption
Association FORUM Center for Strategic Research and Documentation, Skopje	Active Citizens for Good Governance
Reactor - Research in Action, Skopje	Mobilizing for Gender Equality
Public - Association for Research, Communications and Development, Skopje	SEs Connecting the Dots: Economic Growth, Community Development and Social Inclusion
Coalition of Youth Organizations SEGA, Prilep	Strengthening Youth Engagement in Local Communities
Association for Education MLADIINFO INTERNATIONAL, Skopje	Youth Banks Network Macedonia
Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of women - ESE, Skopje	Paths to Justice for Women Victims of Domestic Violence
Scout Association of Macedonia, Skopje	Youth Engagement through Scouting
Association for Democratic Advancement – “Democracy Lab”, Tetovo	ImpACT
Dyslexia Association Einstein Skopje	Info Wall for Dyslexia
Association Youth Alliance – Krushevo, Krushevo	Youth Friendly City
Association Youth Empowerment Platform, Gostivar	TechUP
Association LEAD – Leaders for Education, Activism and Development, Skopje	MyVoice
CIVIL - Center for Freedom, Skopje	#FREE ELECTIONS 2017 - Special Elections Monitoring Project
Association for Promotion and Development of an Inclusive Society INKLUZIVA, Kumanovo	Political Participation of Persons with Disabilities
Association for Culture and Development of Creative Industries KULT - TRANZEN Strumica	Participatory Cultural Policies: a New Model of Governance in Culture

You will have an opportunity to learn more about the 11 small-scale projects implemented by the first generation of CEP fellows as well as the Youth Civic Engagement Award Winners and their experiences in the paragraphs below.

The recipients of all CEP grants were publicly promoted at CEP’s Grants Promotional Event organized by the CEP team on September 14, 2017 in front of other CSOs, youth, informal groups, the donor community, and media representatives. At the event, USAID Country Representative David

Atteberry, welcomed the participants and emphasized, “I look forward to seeing how these citizen-led projects will link civil society with the public, private sector, and government and lead to stronger public policies and actions that will benefit communities around Macedonia”.

At the event, CEP presented and distributed a flyer of CEP’s 2017/2018 grant timeline indicating all CEP grant opportunities for the upcoming year. For more information, please read the “Upcoming Activities” section below.

Here are some of the tangible results achieved by our grantees:



David Atteberry, USAID Country Representative in Macedonia

COMPONENTS HIGHLIGHTS

Linking, Engagement, Advocacy, Development Macedonia (LEAD MK) Program

In April 2017, CEP selected 17 LEAD MK fellows between the ages of 18 and 25 years, and conducted a seven-day LEAD MK Academy, led by international expert Craig A. Bowman. At the Academy, participants worked together across disciplines to define and help solve difficult and pressing issues. Five CEP-selected mentors from across the country provided hands-on support and mentorship to fellows

during the small-scale project-planning phase and during the implementation of 11 projects. The projects were focused on a wide range of issues such as cultural diversity, promotion of EU values, LGBTI rights, youth entrepreneurship, gender equality, local community activism, labor rights, and young leaders. The table below lists the individual and group projects completed by LEAD MK fellows.

“Thank you for this amazing opportunity that showed me a new way of working, and for the experience that made me grow into a strong individual,” said Dimitar Vrgleski, LEAD MK fellow from Prilep.

Murat Mislimi	Safe-Space in Youth Organizations regarding Gender/Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation
Adelina Ajdari	Building Skills of Youth on Entrepreneurship and Innovative Business Ideas
Stefan Petrovski	Addressing Discrimination and Social Exclusion of Marginalized Groups in Macedonia - "These Are Our Stories: The Unheard Voices"
Ivana Atanasovska	Raising Awareness for Labor Rights among Youth
Jovana Madjovska	Boys Engage
Blerina Pollozhani	Multiculturalism in My Community
Bora Dauti	Youth Engagement through IT Education
Dimitar Vrgleski	Creative Youth Engagement
Oliver Vasevski	Summer Aspire Program in Makedonska Kamenica
Group 1: Eva Jovanova, Samet Shabani, Kristijan Fidanovski, and Gordana Kolova	Summer School on EU Values: Promoting Youth Dialogue in Macedonia
Group 2: Vladimir Kostovski, Angela Nikolicj, and Pavel Papadimitrov	Youth Leader

Annual Youth Civic Engagement Award (YCEA)

In June 2017, CEP organized its first open air YCEA event and recognized three winners for their outstanding contributions to youth activism in 2016. CEP YCEA includes two categories: **individual and informal groups**. Aleksandar Matovski and Antonio Gjorgevski, both from Skopje, were awarded the YCEA in the individual category. Aleksandar is a young poet and activist who, through his social engagement, improves the social status of people with Down Syndrome. Antonio is a young chef who, through his engagement with the platform coolinari.mk, promotes vocational training among youth and the importance of having practical skills to increase youth employability in Macedonia.

Cultural Youth Action from Krushevo was the winner of the informal group category. The group was recognized for its work on raising awareness among young people in Krushevo about their responsibilities to preserve



"I am Cako" event organized by Aleksandar Matovski

cultural heritage through creative and innovative activities. Each of the winners was awarded with an in-kind

grant as listed in the table below to support their future work. The next YCEA event is planned for June 2018.

YCEA WINNER	PROJECT NAME
Informal Group - Cultural Youth Action Krushevo	Cultural Youth Action
Aleksandar Matovski	Be Aware and Take Care of Young People with Disabilities
Antonio Gjorgevski	Youth Activism A la Carte - by Chef Antonio

STRATEGIC SUPPORT TO THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE

On August 25, 2017, USAID's Civic Engagement Project's Chief of Party Ana Drakic and the Minister of Culture Robert Alagjovzovski signed a Letter of Intent (LoI) for Strategic

Cooperation. The LoI stipulates a mutual commitment to working together to develop programs that promote and enhance civic participation in strategic documents related to culture and to incorporate public input in key Ministry initiatives, such as the draft 2018-2022 National Cultural Strategy and the 2018 Annual Plan on Culture. Below you can find more on the very first Policy Forum we organized with the support from the Ministry in September, 2017.



Signing the Letter of Intent for Strategic Support by the Minister of Culture and the Chief of Party of USAID's Civic Engagement Project

CSO Week

CEP's first Annual CSO Week took place during the week of 11-17 September 2017. CEP designed this innovative activity with the aim of promoting and celebrating the achievements of citizens and CSOs and to provide a venue for national CSOs and CSO alliances, including youth CSOs, to present and discuss their work with citizens and encourage them to participate in CEP-supported initiatives. The activities included coordinated events in 12 different cities in Skopje, Strumica, Tetovo, Lipkovo, Kavadarci, Struga, Delcevo, Sveti Nikole, Bitola, Krusevo, Gostivar, and Kicevo. In order to organize this activity successfully, CEP worked in partnership with 17 different CSOs across the country, and involved more than 1,400 citizens and representatives from the private sector, government, and academia that participated in 21 different events such as debates, a youth camp, exhibitions, CSO anniversaries, international conferences, open-air promotional events, concerts and a policy forum.



"How to Bring Culture Closer to Every Citizen" - Policy Forum

The Policy Forum was called "How to Bring Culture Closer to Every Citizen" and was focused on the first draft of the National Strategy on Cultural Development in the Republic of Macedonia 2018–2022 and the announcement of an extensive process of participatory public debates with key interested parties. The Minister of Culture Robert Alagjovzovski officially opened the Policy Forum. Zlatko Teodosievski, Representative of the Working Group

at the Ministry, presented the draft strategy and facilitated a discussion on it. In addition, Teodor Celakoski, Cultural Worker from Croatia, presented his experience in participative processes in creating cultural policies. The Policy Forum gathered representatives from relevant institutions at the central and local government levels, CSOs, media, individual artists, and cultural workers. During the upcoming year, CEP plans to organize three additional forums.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

For the first time, blind and visually impaired people voted independently

In September 2017, CEP awarded the Association for Promotion and Development of an Inclusive Society INKLUZIVA, from Kumanovo, a rapid response grant to implement **Political Participation of Persons with Disabilities Project**. With this 3-month initiative, Inkluziva enabled the increased political participation of persons with disabilities in Macedonia, by providing trainings on the new voting procedures and helping blind and visually impaired people in the Republic of Macedonia practice voting using the Braille alphabet. The organization held seven training

workshops in Skopje, Kumanovo, Shtip, Veles, Bitola, Tetovo, and Strumica, with a total of 103 participation. Inkluziva also organized informational workshops in seven municipalities for 115 people with different types of disabilities.

"I know Braille, I learned it in the first grade. The ability to vote by myself helps me feel self-sufficient. However, I would not have been able to vote by myself if I hadn't gone through the training provided by Inkluziva. The training helped me get familiar with the ballot in Braille," said Milica Trpevska from Tetovo.



Milica Trpevska, a blind person from, after successfully and independently completed the voting process using the ballot in Braille.

Citizens' participation in decision-making – a cornerstone of building a democratic decentralized society

The participation of citizens in decision-making processes is a key element of local democracy. It increases transparency and makes local government officials more accountable for their decisions. To support this

value, in October 2017, CEP awarded a rapid response grant to the Association for Culture and Development of Creative Industries – KULT – TRANZEN. Through their Participatory Cultural Policies: A New Model of Governance

in Culture Project, KULT – TRANZEN contributed to the strengthening of cultural development at the national and local levels through effective and efficient planning of cultural policies and programs. To achieve this, the grantee

organized eight public debates on the draft National Strategy for Cultural Development in cultural institutions in Skopje, Strumica, Tetovo, Struga, Kumanovo, Shtip, Kavadarci, and Prilep. Almost 300 artists, culture experts, researchers, and other interested citizens participated in these debates, and shared their thoughts and views on how the draft strategy can be improved. After obtaining citizens' feedback, the grantee in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture organized a final

public debate on December 27, 2017 in the Museum of Contemporary Art in Skopje and presented the revised draft strategy and the first draft of the Cultural Development Action Plan for 2018. Nearly 100 representatives of relevant arts and culture public and private institutions, CSOs, media, and cultural institutions participated and provided their feedback on the two documents. The final version of the strategy is expected to be adopted in February, 2018.



Center for Culture "Marko Cepenkov", Prilep

Policy Forum: Integrated Approach For Air Quality Protection - Improving the Cooperation among the Central Government, Local Government and Civil Society Organizations

To encourage dialogue between government institutions and other relevant stakeholders on strategic issues in Macedonia and encourage a shared sense of responsibility for achieving long-term results, CEP held its second policy forum discussion on December 14, 2017 on air quality protection in cooperation with the Ministry of Environmental and Physical Planning. Nearly eighty representatives from civil society organizations, local and central government institutions, academia, international organizations, and the media participated in the event, providing their perspectives on an integrated approach to solving the problem of air pollution. USAID General Development Office Director Edward Gonzalez, Deputy

Minister of Environmental Protection and Physical Planning Jani Makraduli, Mayor of Skopje Petre Shilegov, and CEP Chief of Party Ana Drakic, gave opening remarks emphasizing the importance of transparency and stakeholder participation in the policy formulation process. Representatives from various sectors – civil society organizations (Ana Colovic-Leshoska, Eco-svest CSO), local authorities (Natasha Petrovska, Mayor of the Municipality of Bitola), and central institutions (Miroslav Bogdanovski, Acting Director of the State Inspectorate for Environment) -- presented ideas from their perspectives on improving cooperation for air quality protection. Participants had an opportunity to discuss the proposed approaches to solving the problem of air pollution and

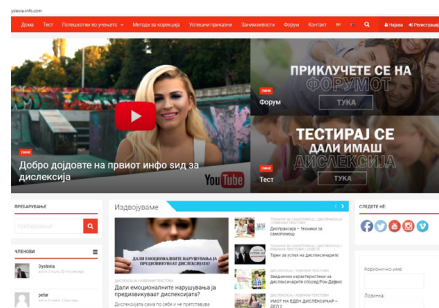


Media Statements by Edward Gonzalez, USAID General Development Office Director (first from the left), Jani Makraduli, Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Physical Planning (in the middle) and Petre Shilegov, Mayor of Skopje (on right)

create synergies for developing and implementing the next steps towards the shared goal of protecting air quality.

"Info Wall for Dyslexia" helps to overcome learning difficulties

CEP awarded Dyslexia Association "Einstein" with a youth engagement support grant to implement the "Info Wall for Dyslexia" project with the goal of increasing awareness about the advantages and disadvantages of learning disabilities such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia. Through this project, the grantee identified how learning disabilities affect individuals and based on this knowledge developed an "Info Wall for Dyslexia" through which people can find different approaches to dealing with learning disabilities. Interactive presentations on these disabilities were shown to more than 600 scholars and 50 representatives of school



management in 15 high schools in the country. Moreover, to ensure increased participation of local government in improving learning conditions for students with learning difficulties, the grantee worked together with representatives from Skopje, Ohrid, Struga, Kriva Palanka, Veles, Kumanovo,

Kochani, Kavadarci, Strumica, Prilep, and Shtip municipalities, as well as with high school principals from these municipalities.

To help students and parents understand dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia and dysgraphia, the grantee developed educational flyers in local languages, which were distributed to over 6,000 students. Building upon these experiences, the grantee will hold a close-out public event in February 2018 at which it will present a set of specific recommendations for improvement of learning conditions in schools, which will encourage a more favorable environment for students with learning difficulties.

Transforming Civic Engagement Ideas Into Action

Aiming to achieve increased and sustained youth engagement in Macedonia, CEP awarded **Association for Democracy Advancement – Democracy Lab** a youth engagement support grant to implement the “ImpACT” project. The project takes an innovative approach to empowering youth civic engagement through the use of technology and collaboration with CSOs throughout Macedonia. Through this project, the grantee created an e-toolkit that serves as a one-stop-shop for youth community efforts. The platform offers resources and tools ranging from webinars on project design management, volunteer opportunity maps, and different project ideas, in both Macedonian and Albanian languages. The project ideas are organized according to the 6 United Nations Sustainable Development Goal categories: health, environment, education, poverty and hunger, human rights, and community building. Moreover, the grantee in cooperation with four partner organizations (Youth Center Kreative – Kavadarci, Youth Development Organization Faktor –



Keep Gostivar Clean action

Kichevo, Association Aurora – Tetovo and Youth Empowerment Platform – Gostivar) held 16 public meetings with the participation of over 300 young people to discuss community needs in their hometowns. Based on these discussions, project proposals were designed and representatives of **Democracy Lab** assisted youth groups with project development, financial management, and youth outreach to

implement specific community actions. The following are just a few of the 20 successfully implemented actions in Kavadarci, Gostivar, Kichevo and Tetovo: “Keep Gostivar Clean”; “All We Need is Love”; “Film festival”; “Food Drive”; “Mural Project”; and “End Poverty Now”. Through these actions, 1,675 young people participated in different community actions and activities.

Upcoming Activities

- In March 2018, CEP will announce the recipients of strategic support grants of up to \$120,000 per grant.
- In March 2018, CEP will publically announce the names of the six youth CSOs that were awarded with youth engagement support grants, up to \$15,000 per grant.
- In March 2018, CEP will issue a call for nominations for the second Youth Civic Engagement Award.
- In May 2018, CEP will award two partnership grants (PG), up to \$120,000 per grant, as a response to the second PG call for applications issued in January 2018.
- In June 2018, CEP will organize its second CSO Week and the Youth Civic Engagement Award event.
- By June 2018, CEP aims to award up to 3 rapid response grants for an average of \$7,500 per grant, for project activities up to six months.

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