



Center for Sustainable
Communities Development

CENTER FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES DEVELOPMENT

ACTIVITY REPORT 2023

INTRODUCTION

CENTER FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES DEVELOPMENT (CSCD) is an NGO registered in 1995 in public benefit and works for to achieve *de facto* equality between women and men in Bulgaria, Europe and globally, as well as to raise the awareness of our citizens on EU development policies.

The Foundation has the following **objectives**:

1. Protection of human rights and promotion of social integration and personal realization of women in Bulgaria.
2. Building in the Republic of Bulgaria a balanced society based on: real equality of the individual, without any form of discrimination based on gender; respect for human dignity of each individual and for his/her fundamental human rights and freedoms; the guarantee of equal opportunities for the expression of the individual people in the individual, family, political, economic, social, cultural-educational and other spheres of public life; the equal representation of different ethnic groups and of men and women in the public and private sectors.
3. Advocacy for a lasting entry into Bulgarian society and anchoring in Bulgarian legislation of the common human values and the generally accepted international standards.
4. Protection by all permissible means and mechanisms of the human person as the highest value of civilization and the special role of women in the development of society.

Our values are equality, respect, fairness, transparency and accountability.

CSCD is an associate member of the Bulgarian National Council for Gender Equality at the Council of Ministers; a member of the global WIDE+ network and a co-founder of the Bulgarian Platform for International Development (BPID).

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2023 ACTIVITIES

In 2023, the CSCD activities again included the development, organization and implementation of projects to build a balanced society in Bulgaria in specific areas, through participation in international consortia, the partnership with which is a result of many years of hard and successful work of the team.

The areas of activity in this period are traditional: women's economic empowerment, with a focus on women survivors of intimate partner violence; combating various forms of violence against women and girls; combating gender stereotypes; developing sustainable communities through investment in young xopa 18-29 years old.

REPORT ON PROJECTS

STRAND: COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

„From Individual IPV's Empowerment to Community Activation”

WEGO – 3 Project

Проект „WEGO 3 - от индивидуално овластяване на преживели насилие от интимния партньор към ангажиране на обществото”

(2021 – 2023)

<https://www.wegoproject.eu/>

DONOR: European Commission

IMPLEMENTER: Consortium with ACTIONAID INTERNATIONAL ITALIA ONLUS as lead partner - AAIT, Italy

Total project cost: 102,174. 30 euro

Objectives: Increasing the capacity of local networks of diverse institutional actors to support the socio-economic independence of survivors of intimate partner violence through the development

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and implementation of gender-responsive policies.

The activities for economic empowerment of women survivors of intimate partner violence were oriented towards three target groups:

- **crisis centres** and other social service providers for victims of intimate partner violence - to increase their capacity to work effectively and their influence on the policy-making on the issue
- **business companies** - to increase the number of business companies supporting the Territorial Protocol elaborated within the WEGO 1 and 2 projects and motivating them to implement concrete support measures
- **state and municipal institutions** – for developing and implementing relevant policies, such as: work-life balance; retraining and employment; housing; and supporting children's attendance at nurseries and schools.

Project results:

1. Conducted a survey in crisis centers/social service providers and analyzed the information about the existing gaps in the policies and support measures implemented at national and local level for victims of intimate partner violence and the necessary changes
2. In 3 crisis centres/social service providers for victims of intimate partner violence, 15 social workers received training on a) Women's labor rights 2) the Methodology of focus group work 3) Methodology of organizing a "policy laboratory".
3. Representatives of business companies, trade unions, job placement agencies, and training centers have increased their understanding and support testing supportive measures for the economic empowerment of victims of intimate partner violence through participation in meetings (10 meetings), training (50 people), exchange of experiences and familiarization with tools and videos developed on the topic (500 people).
4. Two business companies have signed a Protocol of Commitment
5. Built local/national supportive ecosystems for policy changes.
6. Advocacy at national and EU level for policy changes - a policy paper with recommendations for improvement of policies and laws was disseminated at 10 meetings with politicians and decision makers; Bulgarian participation in an International Final Conference in Brussels for sharing experiences and results.

The project was successfully reported in March 2023.

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STRAND: DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

**Project “RAISE Youth - Rural Action for Innovative and Sustainable
Entrepreneurship for Youth”**

Проект RAISE YOUTH - Младежта в действие

(2018 - 2024 г.)

<https://cscd-bg.org/bg/proekti/proekt-raise-youth>

DONOR: EEA and Norway Grants Fund for Youth Employment

Total project cost: 914,162.16 euro

IMPLEMENTER: A consortium with GTF - Initiative for Sustainable Growth (Croatia) as a lead organisation and partners from Bulgaria /CSCD/, Croatia and Spain.

In Bulgaria, the project was implemented mainly in the Pernik region, in the municipalities of Pernik, Tran, Breznik, Radomir, Zemen and Kovachevtsi, with young people aged 18-29 who are neither in education nor employment (NEETs).

After the second extension, the project effectively ended on 31 January 2024.

The year 2023 was very important for the CSCD team to build an institutional infrastructure that would contribute to the sustainability of the results achieved after the end of the project.

The last reporting period was also used to conduct the last training, farmers markets and complete the greenhouse construction.

Given the above, the following activities and results can be considered as major achievements for the reporting period:

1. Registered local tourist cooperative "Tourism West of Sofia"
2. Registered NGO in Radomir – “EcoEthnoArt” Foundation by two participants in the training and activities of the project.
3. Registered in September 2023 Foundation in public benefit “Regional Youth Centre – Breznik”. The local team already had their first activities as associate partner in EU projects. In January 2024 they started their first independent project funded by Minority Rights Group International. The office equipment was donated by CSCD. The embroidery club "RAISE Graovo" continued to work at the foundation.

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4. Mobile travel app. travelsofiawest.eu is in operation

5. In 2023, a Tourist Chatbot with Artificial Intelligence for Pernik city - <https://pernik.umen.site>, developed by Elitsa Stoilova - UMNI.bg with the implementer company "Graosoft" of the youth Alex Milchov in cooperation with volunteers from the International Youth Center - Pernik, was created and started working.

6. A greenhouse type "Aeroponic" was built in the village of Nepraznetsi, 10 km from the town of Breznik. The location, agreed and negotiated with the local landowner Anton Petrov - who is also chairman of the registered tourist cooperative "Tourism West of Sofia", is on the main road leading to the most famous monastery in the area - the Gigintci Monastery. This ensures future interest in this demonstration centre for innovative agriculture. The process itself proved difficult and required patience and perseverance, as well as new builders for the Bulgaria.



7. Working apiary with 18 hives;

8. Crowdsourcing platform start-bg.eu

Thanks to the support provided by the project partner from Croatia - Factory, a lot of information and instructions were translated by the CSCD team into Bulgarian, domain and hosting were selected and prepaid.

9. During the last period **two important international events** took place, in which people from the Bulgarian project team participated.

The first of them was the Fifth Annual Thematic Seminar of the EEA Regional Funds and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism, which took place in Warsaw with the participation of the

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project coordinator Stanimira Hadjimitova. This was an inspiring participation that brought knowledge of the work carried out by the donor supported organisations, but also an opportunity to compare the approaches, activities and results used by the CSCD with those of many colleagues in South East Europe. The meeting also provided new ideas on how to build on the project - which activities should be continued and what new ones should be included so that what has been achieved becomes sustainable.

The second international event was the final conference of the RAISE Youth project, organised by the lead partner GTF-ISG in Gospic, Croatia from 5-8 December 2023. The Bulgarian delegation included the project coordinator Stanimira Hadjimitova, the deputy mayor of Breznik Maria Dobrevska, the coordinator of the RAISE Youth Centre in Breznik Desislava Alexandrova and the president of the tourist cooperative Anton Petrov. After the video congratulations from the donor, from the director of the Fund, Gian Luca Bombarda, from the programme manager Malgorzata Novak and from the deputy governor of Lika County, Jasna Brkljadic, we participated in an exchange of success stories from our projects together with the partners from Spain and Croatia. We also met with young Croatian entrepreneurs trained by the project and got to know their production. The next day we visited Perusic, where colleagues from RAISE Demo Center Croatia have organized an experimental field with permaculture farming. Of special interest to us was their aeroponic greenhouse.



10. CSCD also produced 4 promotional videos for the success of the project participants:
<https://cscd-bg.org/bg/proekti/proekt-raise-youth/uspeshnite-istorii-na-raise-youth-vasilen-vasilev-pchelarstvo-kato-mechta-i-prizvanie>

10. Conducted trainings:

a/ 5 trainings on "Youth Entrepreneurship" with 60 participants (43 women + 17 men), aged 18-29 from Pernik and Radomir.

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b/ 25 January 2024 - Training Seminar "The Green Deal, Just Transition and the Agricultural Sector - Cooperation versus Opposition" in Blagoevgrad

Participants: 68 people, including 46 students from the Vocational School of Tourism and Light Industry and Southwest University - Blagoevgrad. The good contacts established between the CSCD, the Federation of Independent Trade Unions in Agriculture (FITU) and the local authorities in Blagoevgrad made it possible to hold this serious training seminar on agriculture.

c/ 27 January 2024 - Personal branding training, conducted online through Platform Teams, with participants from Southwest Bulgaria, aged 18-29 - 62 people



11. During the 11th reporting period, 4 farmers' markets were held and the RAISE Graovo embroidery workshop was in regular operation.





12. On July 6, 2023 in Pernik was held a Round table on "Perspectives for tourism development in Pernik region", organized by the CSCD, the Municipality of Pernik and the International Youth Center - Pernik (IYCP), with 78 participants.

The concept included the presentation of practical information on the development of tourism in the municipalities of Pernik and Radomir and the results achieved by the RAISE youth project, as well as a theoretical part dedicated to digital marketing and branding in tourism, presented by prominent experts. Representatives of local authorities from Pernik, Breznik, Radomir, and Zemen, businesses from the region, NGOs and community centres took part in the discussion. Students from the last years of 2 high schools (for foreign languages and tourism) from Pernik presented interesting course work. The demonstration of the tourism chatbot with artificial intelligence for Pernik, called "Struma", presented by the team from MIKC and Alex Milchov - an intern of the RAISE youth project, led by Elitsa Stoilova from UMNI Solutions, attracted the most interest.

CONCLUSION: The implementation of the project was successful, including the financial part. Despite the fact that as a precondition every 6 months the implementation was reported after an audit by a Bulgarian company - ANDA Consulting, after which the amount spent was reimbursed by the donor, the Managing Authority of the whole Fund - ECORIS Co. from Poland triggered an additional international audit of the overall project implementation. To our pride, the audit was successful without remarks and the last payment was received in June 2024. The excellent work of the accountant Diana Kovandjieva contributed to this result.



“Partnership for sustainable integration of refugees” project

Проект «Партньорство за устойчиво приобщаване на бежанци »

(01.09.2022 г. – 31.08.2023 г.)

DONOR: EEA and Norway Grants, Active Citizens Fund

Total project cost: 17,067.00 EURO

IMPLEMENTER: CSCD

PARTNER: Bulgarian School of Politics

In 2022, CSCD started working for the first time with the target group of refugees.

A small project was awarded and implemented in partnership with the Bulgarian School of Politics.

Objectives:

- To improve the understanding of the needs of the current wave of refugees to support their inclusion in the existing institutional framework in Bulgaria
- To transfer experiences between refugees who have walked the path of integration in the country and newcomers, supporting joint exchanges
- To construct a Refugee Advocacy Board to build on existing experiences and offer a new approach - through training and active participation in public processes
- To build capacity to work with institutions.

In the framework of the main activity - Constructing a Refugee Advocacy Board, a Board of 15 people was formed, including 8 women and 7 men from Afghanistan, Ukraine, Syria, Yemen, Iran, Kuwait.. A number of trainings of the Board members were held, as well as presentations of the results to journalists.

“Recovering Inclusion through Creativity after Pandemic” project

Проект ReCap

(2022 – 2024)

DONOR: European Commission; Erasmus + Programme

Total Project Cost: €23,769.00

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IMPLEMENTER: consortium of 10 European partner organizations with ALDA France as lead partner

Objective of the project: to support the active involvement and civic participation of young people aged 14-29 from the municipalities of Breznik and Radomir in Pernik region, through non-formal educational activities, with a special focus on young people with fewer opportunities, such as girls, NEETs (young people who neither study nor work), with migrant background, representatives of minorities. With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, these people have been further marginalised from the community. Therefore, there is a need to re-create a strong social structure that allows these youth to safely share their feelings and challenges in the public space without being judged.

Within the project the following **activities** were carried out:

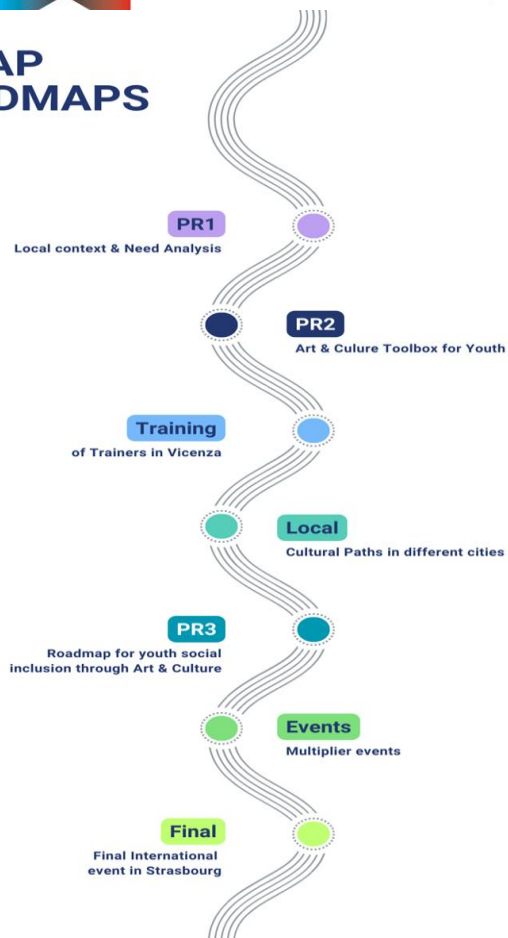
- Needs analysis of the youth generated by the pandemic COVID-19.
- Two young women from Radomir developed a creative toolbox to overcome the impact of the pandemic, which included different artistic and cultural methods, presented and discussed at a 10-day international training in Italy in June 2023.

<https://cscd-bg.org/bg/proekti/proekt-recap/sbornik-s-tvorcheski-instrumenti-za-mladezhki-rabotnitsi>

- Selection of 15 young people from the two municipalities who, in the period September - December 2023, got acquainted with the creative tools and evaluated the possibility of their subsequent application in different institutions working with young people - schools, youth clubs and centres, etc.
- A "Roadmap for social inclusion of young people through art and culture in a post-panic context" was developed.
- The "Roadmap" was presented to the local community in the town of Breznik in December 2023, at a special event.



RECAP ROADMAPS



23 young people aged 15-29 from the town of Breznik participated in the process of developing the Road Map.

General description.

Breznik is a small town where there is still a patriarchal influence and it affects both the educational process and the socialization and activity of young people. For this reason, such activities can have a serious positive impact on youth development.

Period of activity: September - November 2023

Number of sessions: 5

Duration: 15 hours (3 hours per session)

Achievements:

- Participants freely expressed their thoughts and feelings

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- Applying creative methods sparked interest and reduced stress and tension
- Participants were able to use art and creativity to convey their feelings and emotions creatively in a diverse group. They improved their social skills by working in smaller groups and doing creative activities together

Closing event:

The final event took place at the Breznik Community Centre in December 2023 and was attended by 27 students from the "Vasil Levski" High School in Breznik, 23 of whom were active participants in the 5 artistic workshops; 10 teachers and the headmistress of the high school; representatives of the local government, doctors, social workers, the secretary of the community centre. Attendees were introduced through a multimedia presentation to the artistic tools used in the 5 sessions with the young people. Youth who participated in the Roadmap activities received certificates for successful and active participation in the project, and through a raffle, each received a voucher of varying value to purchase a prize from the local bookstore.

STRAND: WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND COMBATING STEREOTYPES

GEAR Project

Проект: Ромската интеграция в контекста на равнопоставеността на жените и момичетата
(2023 – 2025)

DONOR: European Commission (CERV-2022-GE)

Total project cost: 75.488,50 EUR

IMPLEMENTER: consortium with lead partner Arci Solidarietà Onlus, Italy.

In Bulgaria the project is implementing in Montana region.

Objective: to increase the competence and knowledge of young people of Roma origin and experts working with young people of Roma origin on gender equality issues as a prerequisite for the effective inclusion of Roma in development processes and for overcoming exclusion and discrimination against them.



The main tool for impact is training and putting into practice the acquired skills for online content creation. By Roma youth themselves maintaining **web radio**, the issues that concern today's young people are now reaching a wide audience.

Within the project:

1. More than 150 Roma youth aged 11-20 participated in local activities and informal training on anti-discriminatory practices.
2. Over 20 of them continued their training as "leaders of change" on the following topics. "Media communication - online and offline"; gender equality; running web radio
3. Setting up an **editorial office and running a web radio** - "amoRadio"
4. Exchanging experiences in 2024 with peers from Italy, Belgium and Romania at a meeting in Sibiu, Romania. "Our" web radio became part of the European Roma web radio!
5. Teachers, youth, health mediators from the public and private sector working with young people of Roma origin will have access to training and materials developed within the project in 2024.

**COPGENDERED Project
(2022-2025)**

<https://wideplus.org/gendercop>

DONOR: European Commission; Erasmus+ Programme

Total Project Cost: 35,400.00 euro

IMPLEMENTER: consortium with WIDE+ as lead partner

The COPGENDERED project contributes to two cross-cutting aspects of the Erasmus+ programme: combating climate change and promoting inclusion and diversity.

Project objective: to create **tools** for learning on the issue of the interconnectedness of the climate crisis with gender inequality.

Project activities include:

- Production and printing of an **Information Kit** on the link between gender equality and climate justice in seven languages (English, German, Bulgarian, Danish, Spanish, French

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- and Swedish) on the topics: Introductory Module; Mobility/Sustainable Transport; Extractivism and Women's Activism against Socio-Environmental Exploitation; Energy - sustainable production, inclusive access and feminist perspectives on climate policy and LGBTQI and climate justice.
- An **Online Hub for trainers** with training methods for adults and institutions on Gender and Climate Justice is to be created, with materials in the national languages of the participating organisations and English (German, Bulgarian, Danish, Spanish, French and Swedish).
- An **Online Platform** for one-to-one training on Gender and Climate Justice will be developed in English.

FUNDING IN 2023

The projects implemented in 2023 are funded by the following DONORS:

the European Commission, CERV-2022-GE, Erasmus+ Programmes,

EEA and Norway Grants, Active Citizens Fund

EEA and Norway Grants, Fund for Youth Employment

Revenue from non-profit activities is as follows:

Financial proceeds from projects and programmes: 470,000 BGN

Financial proceeds from unconditional donations: 23,000 BGN

Total revenue for 2023: 493,000 BGN

Revenue growth compared to 2022: 7%



CONCLUSION

The year 2023 was another successful year for the CSCD!

The activity was completed and 3 projects were successfully reported. Work on the remaining two is ongoing.

The team has partner calls and is involved in writing project proposals to the EC for additional sustainability and development.

Unfortunately, without core funding for the team and office, ensuring sustainability is very difficult.

In this aspect, the celebration of 30 years of the Foundation's existence and activity, which anniversary will be in May 2025, is an outstanding achievement and a cause for well-deserved pride and celebration!

Stanimira Hadjimitova, CSCD Director

August-September, 2024

Stanimira Hadjimitova