



Center for Sustainable
Communities Development

CENTER FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES DEVELOPMENT

ACTIVITY REPORT 2025

INTRODUCTION

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

37B, Parchevich Str., Sofia 1000, Bulgaria

tel/fax: +359 2 986 47 10

e-mail: office@cscd-bg.org; gpf.bulgaria@gmail.com

web: www.cscd-bg.org



2025 ACTIVITIES

In 2025, the CSCD activities 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 approach to project work was feminist, taking into account gender discrimination and applying intersectional analysis.

REPORT ON PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED

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 was implemented 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 receiving a positive impact was 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 were reaching a wide audience.

Within the project: more than 150 Roma youth aged 11-20 participated in local activities and informal training on anti-discriminatory practices; 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; setting up was an **editorial office and running a web radio** - "amoRadio" in the premises of the High School in Medkovetz village; exchange of experiences with peers from Italy, Belgium and Romania was done at a meeting in Sibiu, Romania. "Our" web radio became part of the European Roma web radio!

Year 2025 was the year of finalization of the project activities and the reporting.

1. A Gender equality-oriented Web-Radio Handbook was produced.

This document serves as a *handbook* to guide other teams in replicating the Amoradio experience, providing guidelines and practical tools for creating and managing a web radio. Various aspects were explored, with a particular focus on the BRLOGIC platform, which enabled efficient and professional online radio management. The management of playlists, the radio's editorial structure, scheduling, planning, and promotional initiatives to increase visibility (such as the presence on digital platforms like RadioGarden and Spotify), along with active social media engagement, were discussed. Finally, the issue of copyright was addressed, ensuring that all works used were properly protected and compensated.

2. A "Toolkit for young agents of change against gender stereotypes" was produced and translated in Bulgarian

Starting from the daily challenges and obstacles faced by the Roma community in Italy, Romania, Bulgaria, and Belgium within a society that structurally excludes them, the Toolkit aims to demonstrate how young people, especially those from vulnerable contexts, can transform into true agents of change when supported and empowered.

Within the Toolkit, you will find a concrete example of this European journey: the creation of *AmoRadio*, a radio initiative that adopted an innovative and participatory approach. This experience not only allowed participants to explore topics often perceived as distant from their lived realities but also integrated a gender perspective at every stage, empowering them to discover and develop their practical skills through a pathway of empowerment, equality, and personal growth.



Designed as a resource for young people, educators, and society at large, the Toolkit provides a synthesis of the most effective practices experimented with by each partner, the result of continuous work in which they evaluated what worked and what needed improvement.

The best practices gathered offer tangible proof that it is possible to address complex issues such as gender equality and empowerment, creating spaces of awareness that effectively engage the target groups. The aim is to demonstrate that by providing adequate tools and adopting a participatory approach, even the most challenging contexts can become fertile ground for personal and collective growth. The Toolkit aspires to be an inspiring guide, encouraging the replication and further development of these achievements in future educational initiatives.

The fact that the European Commission transferred the final balance amount to the partners as early as 2025 speaks to the successful implementation of the two-year project.

Fairness and Intersectional Non-Discrimination in Human Recommendation (FINDHR) Project

December 2024 - 2025

DONOR: European Commission; Horizon Europe Programme

Total Project Cost: 10,000 euros

IMPLEMENTER: WIDE+ Network

Project objectives: preventing, detecting, and mitigating intersectional gendered discrimination in Algorithmic hiring. Provide suggestions and proposals from underrepresented groups in online hiring to concretely address anti-discrimination in algorithmic hiring.

Project activities:

1. **Participate in a Research; producing a National report**– Jivka Marinova hired for the purpose
2. **Provide a training and feedback round with the participants of the PAR sessions.**

CSCD organized five Focus group discussions, each lasting for about 3 hours, with 28 participants in total. The 4th and 5th Focus groups were united in the National research report.



Focus group participants

The main approach in the selection of participants in the focus groups, according to the signed Memorandum with WIDE+, was inviting people who have at least some experiences with online job applications. The inclusion of representatives of marginalized groups was also encouraged where possible.

The Focus groups were homogenous inside, but very different among them.

CSCD conducted a brief survey of peer feminist organizations regarding the availability and willingness of their members to participate in such research. This first step showed that the problem was rather unknown and the awareness and sensitivity to online hiring issues of mainstream feminist NGO activists was quite low.

In the first group discussion took part women working in the NGO sector with high educational qualification, significant experience and high sensitivity on the subject of gender discrimination and intersectional discrimination. CSCD defined the next focus groups to be 2) young women and girls (potentially discriminated on age and gender) who are studying at university or are at the beginning of their working career, especially if they do not live in the capital city of Sofia where everything moves at a different speed, 3) Ukrainian women refugees from the war who undoubtedly have been discriminated in different ways and 4+5) young professional women without feminist background in order to be able to compare their application experiences and feelings with the professional women from the first group.

Challenges

The only challenge the team had, was related to the lack of knowledge of English and/or Bulgarian languages of the Ukrainian group, but this was overcome by switching to Russian, which was spoken by both leaders Jivka and Stanimira.

Conclusions

- Although the connectivity to the Internet is universal and at a very high level (especially by means of mobile devices) the problem of algorithmic hiring is rather unknown by the general public and the awareness and sensitivity to online hiring issues of all participants, including mainstream feminist NGO activists are quite low;
- Most participants were hearing and realizing for the first time that their online applications were probably being assessed and selected at least at the first level by a machine;
- In Pernik, one participant was surprised by the fact that she had unnecessarily prepared her CV too interactively with photos and decorations;
- When Ukrainian participants realized that most probably their applications were evaluated by machine, they understood that the discrimination they felt was not oriented towards them as migrants, but was structural and technical. Some of them even thought that the machine could not read PDF files.

37B, Parchevich Str., Sofia 1000, Bulgaria

tel/fax: +359 2 986 47 10

e-mail: office@cscd-bg.org; gpf.bulgaria@gmail.com

web: www.cscd-bg.org



- All participants stressed that their participation in the focus group was very interesting and most of all – insightful and useful, because they learned their mistakes as well as many new things that will help them to improve their online job application in the future.
- All participants expressed their willingness to participate in follow-up training on the topic.

Recommendation to the research methodology: it is better the visioning exercise to be performed by the participants after the discussion on the topic because their understanding of the example becomes much better and their answers are more substantial.

<https://wideplus.org/2026/04/15/new-publication-participatory-action-research-in-europe-around-algorithmic-tools-in-hiring-processes/>

STRAND: INVESTING IN YOUTH

GSEF Global Forum in Bordeaux - 2025

Initiative title: *YOUNG-STEP UP “Youth Strengthening Transnational Engagement and Participation in Europe”*

Duration: 9 months (June 2025 – February 2026)

Organizer: GSEF, France

Partners: 9 partners from different EU countries with diverse geographic coverage, approaches and expertise in the field of social and solidarity economy (SSE) – Greece, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Moldova, Bulgaria, Belgium, Poland, Spain

Mobility: 7 days in Bordeaux, France (26th October – 1st November)

The main objective is to mobilize and empower young Europeans so that they actively participate in the Global Forum on SSE as legitimate actors of societal, economic and environmental transformations, while co-constructing a European advocacy for the promotion of the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE).

Specific objectives

❖ **Ensure inclusive representation of young Europeans:** Mobilize young people from diverse backgrounds (geographical, social, cultural) and prepare them to contribute to the Global Forum through participatory workshops and intercultural exchanges.

❖ **Strengthen their civic and professional skills:** Support the development of essential skills (critical thinking, leadership, advocacy, project management) through experiential learning. Promote peer learning and collaboration to equip youth to become agents of change in their local communities.

37B, Parchevich Str., Sofia 1000, Bulgaria

tel/fax: +359 2 986 47 10

e-mail: office@cscd-bg.org; gpf.bulgaria@gmail.com

web: www.cscd-bg.org



❖ **Co-construct a European advocacy for SSE:** Develop a collective advocacy document based on a broad youth consultation, to be presented to international decision-makers during the Global Forum on SSE in Bordeaux, and subsequently relayed to local, national and European institutions.

❖ **Inspire and support young people to raise awareness among their peers for concrete action:** Enable them to discover innovative solutions and draw inspiration from international experiences to launch local initiatives aligned with their priorities and realities.

❖ **Ensure the sustainability of the project's impact:** Promote and disseminate the results within their communities through formats designed and adapted by and for young people, in order to foster their initiatives and the continuity of actions.

Main Deliverables:

- One European Youth Advocacy Document on SSE, co-constructed by young participants, which contributed to the “International Youth Declaration – BordeauxGSEF2025”.
- Multimedia productions created by and for young people (videos, podcasts, interviews), widely disseminated through both physical and digital channels.
- Practical guides and reports shared with local and European communities, before and after the event, to raise awareness and disseminate the outcomes of the activities.
- A strengthened community of young people and youth stakeholders connected to the GSEF SSE Youth Hub.

Participants from Bulgaria - CSCD decided to invest in six young people from the International Youth Center-Pernik (IYC-Pernik) to participate in drafting the advocacy declaration in Bordeaux!

These are young people with whom the CSCD has been partnering for several years and who have proven themselves to be ambitious, serious, and knowledgeable: Katrin Milenova Petkova – a Group Leader, Kostadin Stoyanov Petelov, Dragomir Rosenov Vasilev, Viktoria Borislavova Popova, Nikolay Petrov Petrov, Viktoria Zdravkova Mitova

Before the trip to Bordeaux, Stanimira Hadjimitova held a training session for the team on topics related to the social and solidarity economy to prepare them for meaningful participation.

After their return, on Thursday, November 13, 2025, an informational event was held at the International Youth Center – Pernik (IYC-Pernik) with the participation of the six young people who took part in the Global Social and Solidarity Economy Forum [Bordeaux GSEF 2025](#).

Katrin Petkova, the group leader, Kostadin Petelov, Dragomir Vasilev, Victoria Popova, Nikolay Petrov, and Victoria Mitova presented slides about their work during the large-scale event, which included six different sections with twelve workshops and about 6,000 participants from all continents! The working group in which Drago participated sparked interest. It discussed cooperatives as an opportunity for socially oriented business, based on an example of a cooperative store in Belgium. Tino participated in a workshop in which a French musician taught them how to express their emotions with words in songs, after which he took

37B, Parchevich Str., Sofia 1000, Bulgaria

tel/fax: +359 2 986 47 10

e-mail: office@cscd-bg.org; gpf.bulgaria@gmail.com

web: www.cscd-bg.org



part in a radio seminar on diversity and possible discrimination on its basis. This was followed by numerous questions from the audience.

The meeting was opened by Radost Radanova, Director of IYC- Pernik, who highlighted the long-standing partnership with the Center for Sustainable Communities Development (CSCD) on various projects. The Chair of the CSCD Board of Trustees, Stanimira Hadjimitova, thanked the young people for their successful participation and wished them to be at the forefront again in two years' time, when the next Forum will be organized. The event ended with a fire show in the courtyard of the IYC-Pernik.





STRAND: DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

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 gender 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 in 2025 included:

Second Face to Face Multiplier Event: “Presentation of Tools: gender and climate justice in adult education”

Objectives: to promote the project results – mainly the Trainers Resource bank and the E-Learning Tool- so that other Civil society representatives and similar change makers will use them.

Target Group: CSCD as an organizer invited representatives of CSOs that are working on gender equality and environmental issues, educators and academia, youth. They were informed about the whole project results and more particularly familiarized with the tools developed.

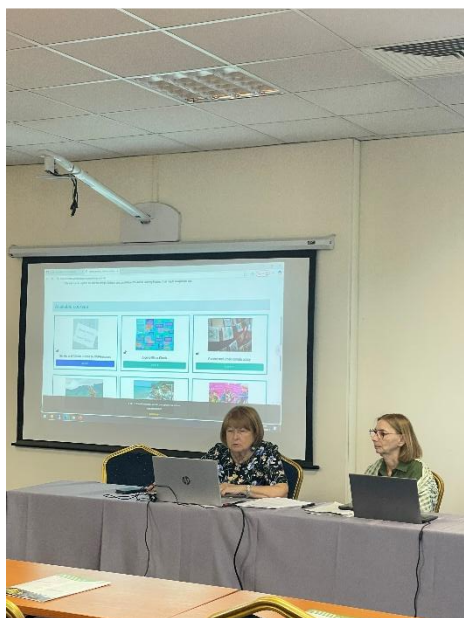
The Event took part on September 25th, 2025 in Sofia, HEMUS Hotel, Preslav Hall and was moderated by Jivka Marinova from GERT Foundation.

PARTICIPANTS: 22 people took part in the Event: 2 men and 20 women. One Professor from Sofia University, 3 business representatives, and 18 NGO representatives.

The first three presentations were done by the CSCD staff and were dedicated to the CopGendered project results: Recognition from context: project CopGendered – St. Hadjimitova; E-Learning Tool Presentation - St. Hadjimitova; Trainers Resource Bank Presentation – Nanci Borissova.



After that, the floor was given to an outside eco-expert - Blajka Trepertanova, who presented the impact of climate change in an attractive way, focusing on everyone's personal responsibility for reducing CO2 when working or doing our everyday home duties - "Living with 2 tonnes of CO2 - What, Why and How".





After the coffee break, the group was divided into two subgroups and, under the guidance of Nancy Borisova, Jivka Marinova, and Stanimira Hadjimitova, the participants actively engaged in two practical exercises, from the Trainers Resource Bank.

The event finished with an open debate on how the outcomes can be used, where and by whom. It was strongly mentioned that the topic is not very popular in the country, especially when looking at the climate change influence from gender equality perspective. That's why, in order to ensure successful advocacy activities on the issue it was recommended both eco- and gender equality- NGOs to start working together! At the same time some participants expressed visions that any advocacy activities focused on the tools to become part of the education system - for the moment will not be possible, as a result of the church and right wing political parties' influence in the last number of years. As CSCD is a cofounder of the Bulgarian Platform on International Development, their representative pointed that the tools will be very useful for the work of the respective members.

That was the last event to be organized by CSCD before final project reporting.

NETWORKING

In 2025, the CSCD actively participated in the work of the Bulgarian Council on Gender Equality, WIDE+ Network and the Bulgarian Platform on International Development

FUNDING IN 2025

The projects implemented in 2025 were funded by the following DONORS:

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

Revenue from non-profit activities is as follows:

Financial proceeds from projects and programmes: 87,000 BGN

Financial proceeds from unconditional donations: 12,000 BGN

Total revenue for 2025: 99,000 BGN



CONCLUSIONS

2025 was a difficult year for CSCD! There were numerous project proposals prepared by CSCD and different partners, which were not financed by the European Commission.

The office's expenses were covered by the small reserve fund.

Following the notification received at the end of 2025 regarding two projects approved for funding by the European Commission, the Board decided CSCD to apply for administrative support from the Bulgarian Fund for Women to cover only the office's expenses.

Stanimira Hadjimitova, CSCD Board Chair

April, 2026

Stanimira Hadjimitova