



2021 CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION SUSTAINABILITY INDEX

MONTENEGRO
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For Montenegro

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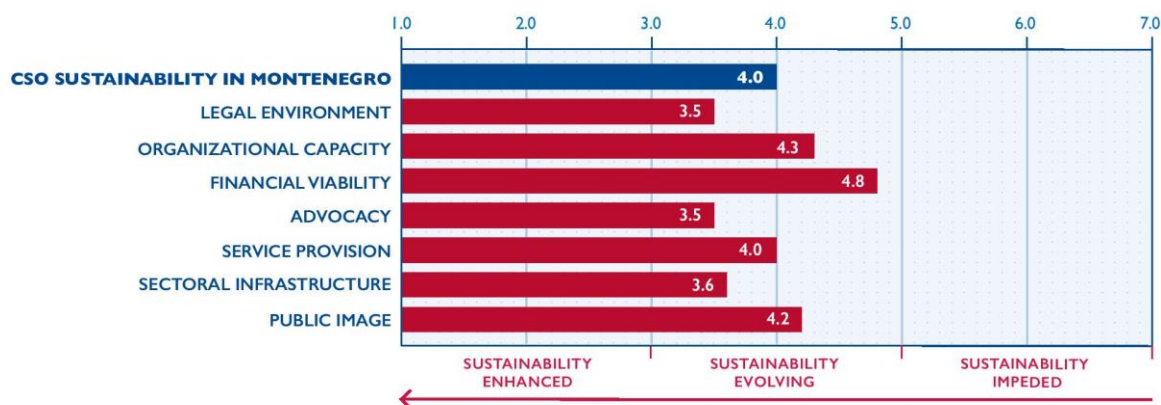
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OVERALL CSO SUSTAINABILITY: 4.0



A deepening political crisis plagued Montenegro in 2021. Conflict between the government and the majority coalition in parliament delayed the adoption of new legislation, stalling reform processes and making it virtually impossible for CSOs to engage in advocacy and watchdog efforts. Ethnic tensions were also prominent, culminating in September 2021 when a group of citizens opposed the anointment of Joanikije II of the Serbian Orthodox Church as the new Metropolitan of Montenegro. The government's response and clashes between police and protesters brought Montenegro to the verge of civil conflict.

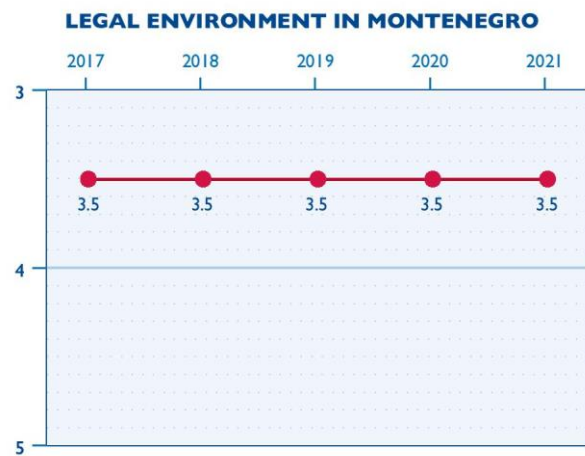
Montenegro's European Union (EU) accession process largely stagnated in 2021. Although the government prepared special action plans to address recommendations from a recent European Commission report, it has not prioritized EU integration.

Montenegro continued to navigate challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, including vaccine supplies. Several protective measures were in place at the start of 2021, including a ban on public gatherings and the closure of intercity traffic on certain days. These measures were eased as COVID-19 cases dropped and, by the summer, most restrictions had been lifted, with the exception of a requirement to have a health certificate showing that you had been vaccinated, tested negative, or recently recovered from the virus to enter restaurants and shopping malls. Montenegro's vaccination campaign began in February 2021 and about 45 percent of the population was fully vaccinated by the end of the year.

Key legislative initiatives to improve the enabling environment for CSOs were not adopted in 2021, despite government promises to prioritize its strategic partnership with the sector. Significant delays in government financing of CSO projects and programs jeopardized the sustainability of social services that are not provided by state institutions themselves. CSOs continued to serve as constructive critics of the government and to respond to threats to democracy but were falsely accused by public officials of being motivated by improper political agendas, conducting flawed surveys, and working to advance foreign interests in Montenegro. Despite these challenges, overall CSO sustainability remained unchanged in 2021, with no changes in scores in any dimension of sustainability.

The law recognizes two forms of non-governmental organizations (NGOs): non-governmental associations and non-governmental foundations. According to the Ministry of Public Administration, Digital Society and Media (MPA), 6,426 NGOs are registered in Montenegro, including 6,062 associations, 120 foreign NGOs, and 244 foundations. In 2021, 389 new NGOs were registered and 21 were deleted from the Registry. The largest number of registered NGOs is active in the fields of culture, education, protection of human and minority rights, social services, and health care.

LEGAL ENVIRONMENT: 3.5



The legal framework governing CSOs in Montenegro did not change significantly in 2021.

CSOs in Montenegro continue to be governed by the Law on Non-Governmental Organizations (hereinafter the Law on NGOs), which clearly defines rules for the establishment, registration, legal capacity, financing, and other aspects of CSO activities. This law does not apply to trade unions, political parties, religious communities, or organizations established by the state. In 2020, MPA initiated a process to analyze the implementation of the Law on NGOs and identify needed amendments and formed a working group of government officials and three CSO representatives to contribute to the analysis. However, the analysis was not completed in 2021 and, as of March 2022, the working group had only held three

preparatory meeting and announced a public debate.

CSOs do not encounter significant barriers to registration. Three persons are required to register a non-governmental association, at least one of whom must have a domicile, residence, or seat of office in Montenegro. A minor who is at least fourteen years of age may serve as a founder of a non-governmental association with their legal guardian's consent. A non-governmental foundation may be established by one or more persons, regardless of their residence, domicile, or seat of office. A foundation can also be established according to a will. A foreign NGO may operate in Montenegro after registering its representative office. MPA may refuse to register a CSO if its statutory objectives conflict with Montenegro's Constitution or laws.

MPA maintains the [e-register of NGOs](#) and regularly publishes information on active and deleted CSOs based on e-register data. However, the e-register contains only basic information on CSOs. To better serve as an information resource for CSOs and other stakeholders, the e-register would need to include data on CSOs' statutes, contact information, and management.

Although a new Strategy for Cooperation between State Administration Bodies and NGOs for 2022 to 2026 (hereinafter referred to as the Strategy 2022) was due in 2021, it was still in draft form at the end of the year, with public debates organized only in 2022. Two CSO representatives are participating in the working group preparing Strategy 2022. The Strategy will present strategic and operational priorities for government actions to address key challenges to the CSO sector including: inadequate government support for CSO sector development; lack of an efficient online procedure for CSO registration; the insufficient planning framework for government cooperation with the CSO sector; excessive licensing requirements for social protection CSOs; and the inadequate normative framework for volunteering.

Despite government statements about the importance of strategic partnership with civil society, tensions continued to arise when CSOs criticized official policies during the year. For example, after the Network for the Affirmation of the Non-Governmental Sector (MANS) called for an investigation into oil exploration concessions on Montenegro's coast, the Minister of Capital Investments suggested that the MANS campaign was motivated by improper political and personal considerations. Similarly, when the Center for Civic Education (CCE) published a public opinion poll evaluating the government's performance, the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports issued an official statement insulting CCE's director and accusing CCE of conducting false research.

At the start of the year, the pandemic-related ban on public gatherings remained in place. However, the ban was frequently violated during local election campaigns in spring 2021 without any consequences. By the summer, the government ended the ban and instead issued guidelines instructing participants in public gatherings to maintain a safe distance and requiring them to have health certificates.

The right to peaceful protest is generally protected in Montenegro. However, the anointment of Joanikije II of the Serbian Orthodox Church as the new Metropolitan of Montenegro resulted in violent clashes between protesters and the police. While Eastern Orthodoxy is the dominant religion in Montenegro, many accuse the Serbian

Orthodox Church of serving Serbian interests. Ethnic tensions were further inflamed by the decision to hold the inauguration at a Serbian Orthodox Church monastery in the town of Cetinje, the former capital and a symbol of Montenegro's struggle for sovereignty and independence. On the day of the inauguration, protesters blocked access to the city, resulting in a police siege and dozens of injuries in conflicts between police and protesters.

The Law on Corporate Income Tax recognizes donations to registered NGOs as tax-deductible expenses up to 3.5 percent of total revenue for the year. Only donations that support the causes envisaged by the law qualify for those benefits. The Law on Personal Income Tax recognizes donations as deductible expenses up to a maximum of 3 percent of the donor's gross annual income. For projects funded by the EU, all expenditures above EUR 50 are exempt from value-added tax (VAT). In 2021, the government adopted the economic program Europe Now!. While this program increased the minimum average wage and decreased the tax rate on full-time employees, it raised the income tax rate for temporary engagements from 9 percent to 15 percent. As many CSOs use temporary contracts to engage employees, this increases the tax burden on them.

CSOs generally do not pay income tax as they are established to perform nonprofit activities. Under the Law on NGOs, CSOs may perform economic activities set out in their statutes and obtain income up to EUR 4,000 in a given year or 20 percent of total revenue for the previous year. Any income that exceeds this limit must be paid into the state budget.

No lawyers or CSOs are specialized on providing legal assistance to CSOs in Montenegro.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: 4.3

Organizational capacity within the CSO sector did not change notably in 2021 and continued to be impacted by challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic. During the year, many organizations focused on completing project activities from 2020, especially those requiring in-person activities, such as the provision of services, training seminars, and conferences. Smaller CSOs continued to hold online activities, while some larger CSOs organized hybrid events with limited in-person attendees and online streaming.

Although constituency building remains a challenge for many CSOs, some organizations have managed to establish close connections with their target groups. For example, CSOs that provide social services have developed mechanisms to communicate with and engage their clients in their activities. Most often, these are CSOs focused on specific problems and target groups, such as parents, children with disabilities, the LGBTQI population, and people with disabilities. In 2021, environmental CSOs worked closely with local constituents to organize protests against hydropower plant projects, as well as air pollution in Pljevlja, a city in northern Montenegro.

According to the Law on NGOs, a non-governmental association must have an assembly and an authorized representative, while a non-governmental foundation must establish a board of directors and have an authorized representative. A CSO's statute may also provide for other types of governing bodies. Most CSOs in Montenegro have a president and an executive director who manage the organization.

Most CSOs are small local organizations with limited human and financial resources that mainly conduct project-based planning. Larger CSOs implement strategic planning for periods of up to two years.

According to the draft of Strategy 2022, Montenegrin CSOs employed 1,458 people at the start of 2021. Nearly 47 percent were employed in CSOs in Podgorica, highlighting the pronounced disparity in CSOs' geographic distribution. CSOs are subject to the Labor Law if they employ full-time staff. A fixed-term contract can last for a maximum of thirty-six months, after which the employee receives a permanent contract, which imposes additional obligations on the employer, such as the payment of severance pay in case of termination. The Labor Law provides an exception in the case of project-based employment, which allows CSOs to engage staff on fixed-term contracts

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY IN MONTENEGRO

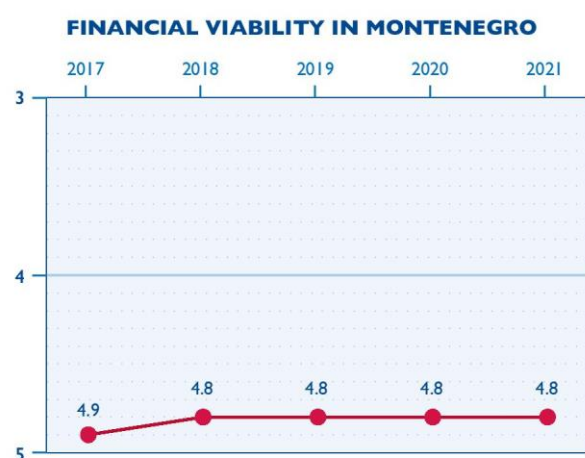


for more than thirty-six months. In 2021, the government continued to implement the Professional Training Program for Higher Education Students, which enables CSOs to hire trainees, albeit for a limited period.

According to the Charities Aid Foundation's *World Giving Report 2021*, 11 percent of Montenegrins reported volunteering. The proposed Law on Volunteering, which had been pending since 2019, was withdrawn from parliamentary consideration in 2021. The draft of Strategy 2022 envisages reforming Montenegro's legislative framework on volunteering to improve the normative framework and incentivize the development of the volunteer sector.

Although most CSOs are equipped with basic information and communication technology (ICT), larger CSOs with more resources were better able to adapt to the "new ways of working" during the pandemic, such as remote work, video meetings, online seminars, and livestreaming of events. Some CSOs still do not have websites, and they communicate exclusively through social media networks.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY: 4.8



The financial viability of CSOs did not change significantly in 2021.

The draft of Strategy 2022 states that CSOs obtained EUR 34.7 million in revenue in 2020. Approximately 85 percent of registered CSOs reported annual income below EUR 5,000 and only 3.5 percent of CSOs had more than EUR 50,000 in revenue. Only nine CSOs had more than EUR 500,000 in turnover, seven of which were based in Podgorica.

Throughout the pandemic, donors—both foreign and government—have approved adjustments to CSOs' plans and activities based on the rapidly changing situation. For example, some donors approved no-cost extensions to give grantees more flexibility amid the challenging circumstances of the public health emergency.

According to the Law on NGOs as amended in 2017, the state must allocate at least 0.5 percent of its annual budget to fund NGOs: 0.3 percent for NGO projects and programs in areas of public interest; 0.1 percent for protection of persons with disabilities; and 0.1 percent to co-finance NGO projects and programs supported by the EU. According to preliminary MPA data, government ministries launched open calls for funding proposals in all programmed areas in 2021. However, by the end of the year, the government had distributed only EUR 2,621,539.87 for public interest projects and programs, 70.6 percent of the total funds (EUR 3,713,205.40) allocated for this purpose. The total amount allocated for co-financing of EU projects (EUR 928,301.25) was distributed to twenty-five CSOs.

CSOs' access to government funding was hindered by several factors in 2021. A four-month delay in the adoption of the state budget delayed ministries' calls for proposals and decisions on project financing. The largest number of open calls was announced in October and November 2021, well after the legal deadline of March 1. Government ministries do not have a legal obligation to make funding decisions by a specific date. This uncertainty complicates the process of planning and implementing CSO project activities. In addition, the number of independent evaluators dropped from forty in 2018 to thirty in 2020, undermining the project proposal review process. According to an MPA study on the financing of NGOs, key challenges in the financing process include complicated funding procedures, uneven funding patterns, favoritism toward more established NGOs, inadequate procedures for choosing independent evaluators, and inconsistent open call publicity materials.

At the beginning of 2021, MPA initiated a new process to determine priority areas of public interest and funding levels for these areas. As noted by the government, this process could not start before the March 1, 2021, statutory deadline due to the delay in passing the new state budget.

International funding sources are crucial for Montenegrin CSOs' functioning and sustainability. Among the most important are EU funding sources, including the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), Europe for Citizens, Creative Europe, Erasmus +, and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). Significant non-EU donors include the Balkan Trust for Democracy (BTD), the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as well as foreign embassies. Developing effective project proposals for these donors often requires significant human and logistical resources that only well-established CSOs possess. If less established CSOs engage in projects supported with these funds it is generally through re-granting schemes. Foreign funding levels did not change notably in 2021.

Local CSOs still have weak financial viability and rely on funding from local governments. Local government support for CSOs continues to be characterized by a lack of relevant data and a non-transparent allocation process.

According to the *Report on the State of Philanthropy in Montenegro*, developed by Catalyst Balkans in cooperation with the CSO Fund for Active Citizenship (fAKT), the total value of donations in 2021 was EUR 12,871,934.52¹. Catalyst Balkan's data on COVID-19 donations show that in the period from March 2020 to February 2021, the value of donations per capita in Montenegro was EUR 15.7, which is significantly higher than that in other countries in the region². CSOs rarely use innovative ICT approaches to raise funds and there are no significant examples of Montenegrin CSOs using crowdfunding platforms in 2021.

In 2021, fAKT continued to award the Iskra philanthropy award to companies, associations, and individuals. Among others, the award was given to the informal association Nine Good Women for its work with sick children and medical staff in COVID-19 centers, and the support it provided in Croatia after the devastating earthquake near Petrinja in the last days of 2020. Slobodanka and Momcilo Pajovic, private donors from the United States, received an award for their donation to fight the pandemic.

CSOs are subject to the same financial reporting requirements as private companies. Audits are not required for all CSO projects, although all EU-funded projects over EUR 60,000 are subject to audits. Capacities for quality financial management vary within the CSO sector. Smaller organizations may not have dedicated staff and accountants to perform financial management tasks, while larger CSOs are able to hire financial managers.

ADVOCACY: 3.5

CSO advocacy remained largely unchanged in 2021. Political tensions between the government and the ruling majority in parliament continued to impede reform initiatives and prevented substantial consultations and collaboration between CSOs and policymakers.

The Decree on the Election of NGO Representatives to the Working Bodies of State Administration Bodies and the Conduct of Public Debates in the Preparation of Laws and Strategies (hereinafter, the Decree) prescribes the participation of the civil sector in government working bodies on new legislation and public policy. According to the Report on the Implementation of the Decree in 2020, the most recent information available, the government held public hearings for only twenty-one out of the forty draft laws it prepared and initial public consultations were conducted for only three laws. Similarly, the government held initial public consultations for only one out of eight strategies and conducted public debates on only two strategies. For four strategies and one



¹ This data includes all individual donations, not just those to CSOs.

² The value of donations per capita in other countries of the region include: EUR 10.7 in North Macedonia, EUR 6.3 in Serbia, EUR 6.2 in Croatia, EUR 6 in BiH, EUR 2.8 in Kosovo, and EUR 1.1 in Albania.

program, the government held neither public consultation procedures nor public debates. Additionally, most ministries did not publish lists of laws to be considered in public debates, despite the legal obligation to do so.

Ministries regularly publish calls for CSOs to participate in working groups for the preparation of laws, regulations, and strategic documents. However, according to the Report on the Implementation of the Decree, CSOs were not invited to participate in working groups related to key laws drafted in 2020, such as the Law on Administrative Disputes and the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination.

The draft version of Strategy 2022 states that the e-Participation and e-Petition portals are rarely used. For instance, only one comment was submitted through the e-Participation portal from 2019 to 2020. Furthermore, while fifty-eight petitions were submitted on the e-Petition portal between December 2020 and December 2021, the majority were not discussed within the relevant ministries and citizens did not receive feedback on their petitions. In some cases, government ministries provided justification for rejecting e-petitions that did not conform to the e-Petition portal's rules.

According to a 2021 report by the Centre for Development of Non-Governmental Organizations (CRNVO), fifty-four CSO representatives participated in twenty-five parliamentary committee sessions in 2020. The majority (twenty-nine) of these participated in the Committee on Human Rights and Freedoms.

CSO representatives served on the new National Council for the Fight against High-Level Corruption, which the new government established in 2021 to address the most serious cases of corruption. Stevo Muk of Institute Alternative was elected as a member of the National Council and Vanja Čalović of MANS headed the National Council's team of experts. Under amendments to the Law on State Prosecutor's Office, CSOs are now allotted a representative on the Prosecutorial Council, which oversees the appointment and functioning of state prosecutors.

In September 2021, Dragan Koprivica of the Center for Democratic Transition resigned his membership in the Council of the Statistical System because Council members were given inadequate time to cast their votes on a draft law on Montenegro's census. A group of CSOs also launched an initiative to exclude categories such as ethnicity, religion, and mother tongue from future censuses, in part to comply with EU accession requirements. According to the report on the public debate for this law, the proposal was not accepted, although the law is not yet under parliamentary consideration.

CSOs reported that it is often difficult to perform their watchdog functions because of problems with accessing public information, including the low response rates by the government and state-owned enterprises to information requests. According to the Agency for Personal Data Protection and Free Access to Information, out of a total of 4,805 requests sent to authorities in 2020, the Agency received 3,000 complaints, indicating underlying problems in the actions of first-instance bodies.

CSOs participate in public consultations organized by local governments, but active participation of CSOs in local decision making remains limited. According to a CRNVO report on cooperation between NGOs and local self-governments in 2020, the main barriers to CSOs' access to local decision-making processes included lack of transparency, irregular updating of municipal websites, irregular meetings of municipal representatives with local CSOs, and insufficient visibility of designated government contacts for CSOs. The report shows that in 2020, twenty CSO representatives were elected to eighteen working groups formed by local self-governments to prepare normative acts or design projects and programs; however, there was a lack of transparency in the election processes for these CSO representatives.

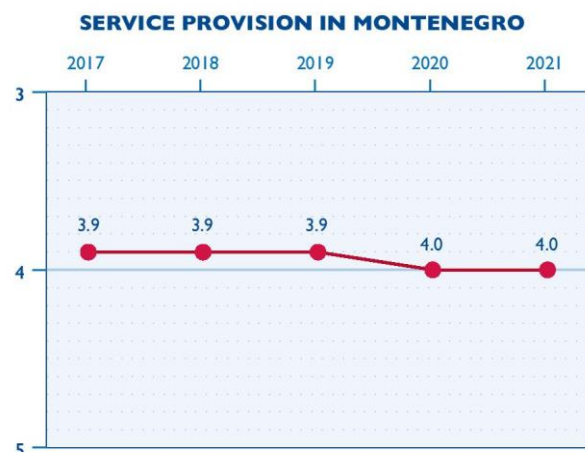
In December 2021, the government agreed to compensate individuals who had been included on public self-isolation lists during the pandemic, in response to a legal process initiated by CSOs. The Center for Democratic Transition, Media Institute of Montenegro, and Atlantic Council of Montenegro conducted research and regularly published reports to counter pandemic-related disinformation.

After the adoption of the Law on Life Partnership of Persons of the Same Sex in July 2020, the first same-sex marriage in Montenegro was held in July 2021, when the law took effect. CSOs focused on LGBTQI issues have provided funding to support the law's full implementation. Additionally, five CSOs launched the Platform for Joint Action to support the advancement of the human rights of LGBTQI persons.

The Council for Cooperation between State Administration Bodies and CSOs monitors the implementation of the Strategy for Improving the Stimulating Environment for CSO Activities and gives opinions on draft regulations and other documents related to the work and development of CSOs. Along with MPA, the Council is a key

government body involved in strengthening strategic cooperation with CSOs. However, the Council has been largely inactive since October 2020 and it held only one session in 2021.

SERVICE PROVISION: 4.0



CSO service provision did not change notably in 2021. Among the most common services provided by CSOs are legal aid, psychological services, consumer protection, whistleblower protection, social and child protection, assistance to persons with disabilities, education, and health care.

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to negatively impact the provision of services by CSOs in 2021. Many smaller CSOs continued to suspend or limit in-person activities and work with beneficiaries. Some CSOs, such as Safe Women's House, provided counseling and legal assistance to survivors of gender-based violence through online video calls. The number of gender-based violence cases reported to the Safe Women's House decreased in 2021 compared to 2020 but was still 30 percent higher

than in 2019.

CSOs must obtain licenses to provide some services, including community support services, such as day care, home help, and personal assistance, accommodation services, and advisory, therapeutic, and socio-educational services. Procedures to obtain a license are demanding, time-consuming, and expensive, posing a significant obstacle to CSOs, as noted in the draft of Strategy 2022. Additionally, several laws and ministries regulate service provision and licensing in different specialized areas, increasing the regulatory burden. The Strategy 2022 draft envisages analyzing and reforming existing licensing procedures.

Currently, the government does not conduct multi-year planning to support service delivery by CSOs, which limits the CSO sector's strategic development and sustainability. As noted in the Strategy 2022 draft, this particularly impacts service provision to populations with long-term needs, such as people with disabilities, as CSOs working in these areas do not have guaranteed government support to sustain their activities. Importantly, several CSOs provide services that the state is unable to provide; for example, most social protection services are provided exclusively by CSOs. However, the financial sustainability of these activities depends on donor support, which is very limited. Government ministries are not required to consistently fund services they have licensed, so service continuity often depends on the personal commitment of CSO employees.

Social entrepreneurship is nascent in Montenegro. CRNVO maintains a [website](#) to promote successful examples of existing social enterprises and their products. Work centers and supervised workplaces for people with disabilities are considered social enterprises. The Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities regulates their establishment and activities, as well as subsidies for employers of persons with disabilities. Social enterprises face significant financial challenges and often rely on grants to supplement their income. Over the past ten years, several CSOs have recommended public policy reforms, such as a special law on social entrepreneurship, to address this challenge. In 2019, the Institute for Entrepreneurship and Economic Development proposed that the government define "social entrepreneurship" in the Companies Act to legally recognize and facilitate support for the social enterprise sector, however this has not happened yet. The draft of Strategy 2022 fails to address social entrepreneurship apart from noting that the prior strategy's recommendations in this area were not implemented.

SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE: 3.6

The infrastructure supporting the CSO sector remained largely unchanged in 2021.

CRNVO continued to manage the Resource Center, an EU-funded initiative that works to strengthen the managerial and technical capacities of CSOs, as well as cooperation between CSOs, local and national authorities, and the academic community. The Resource Center aims to make its services accessible to CSOs throughout Montenegro through a national center in Podgorica, four local resource centers, and a Mobile Resource Center that conducts regular outreach in other cities.

fAKT is the only domestic foundation that awards grants to CSOs. In 2021, fAKT awarded grants for nine projects with a total value of EUR 18,205. Funds for these grants are provided by BTD and USAID.

CSOs participate in several national coalitions. Prominent examples include Together Towards the Goal with 100 member organizations and Open Platform with around 30 members; however these coalitions do not actively engage in joint activities. Instead, CSOs most frequently collaborate on an ad hoc and informal basis to address issues of concern when they arise. Montenegrin anti-corruption CSOs regularly participate in regional coalitions and networks on good governance and the fight against corruption, such as Southeast Europe Leadership for Development and Integrity (SELDI), Accountability, Technology and Institutional Openness in South East Europe (Action SEE), and Western Balkan Civil Society Empowerment for a Reformed Public Administration (Weber).

In 2021, trainings, conferences, and seminars were impacted by frequent changes in national COVID-19 measures. Many trainings were organized online due to restrictions on in-person participation. Some trainings and seminars were held both online and in person, though this hybrid approach was not common. The Resource Center organized a training series for small and medium-sized CSOs on communication strategies, human resources, strategic planning, advocacy, and financial management.

In 2021, cross-sectoral cooperation remained very limited. Beyond several existing CSO-media partnerships, there were few examples of such cooperation. A rare exception was collaboration between the NGO Urban Garden and Podgorica's municipal government to build Montenegro's first urban garden.

SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN MONTENEGRO



PUBLIC IMAGE: 4.2

The CSO sector's public image remained essentially unchanged in 2021.

Montenegro's political crisis spurred increased participation of CSO representatives in the media, with CSO representatives participating in numerous televised debates on the crisis with nationwide coverage.

Public opinion polls suggest a trend of declining trust in CSOs among Montenegro's citizens. According to polls from the Center for Democracy and Human Rights (CEDEM), 34 percent of survey respondents reported that they trust CSOs in December 2021, as compared to 39.3 percent in 2019 and 37.9 percent in 2020. Recent studies indicate that this may be part of a broader decline in public trust in institutions.

Several scandals involving CSOs received significant media coverage during the year. The alleged illegal distribution of Ministry of Health funding to certain CSOs for activities related to AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria became a major media controversy. The new government determined that the implicated CSOs received more than EUR 100,000 above the legal limit under the Law on NGOs. Significant media attention was also given to the government's licensing of and financial support for a social service and child protection CSO despite its director's criminal record.



A CRNVO survey on citizens' attitudes towards CSOs conducted in early 2021 indicates that some citizens perceive the terms "NGO" and "CSO" differently. Eighteen percent of respondents reported negative reactions to the term "NGO," while only 5 percent reacted negatively to the term "CSO." The public is strongly divided over the role of NGOs in society. While 45 percent of citizens think that NGOs work in the public interest, the same proportion of citizens think that NGOs work either in the interest of their leaders (19 percent), political parties (15 percent), foreign countries (7 percent), or the government (4 percent). Two-thirds of respondents believe that NGOs provide a good opportunity for citizens to self-organize to solve important social issues. The CRNVO survey also indicates that one out of every five citizens believe that

NGOs should be banned because they serve the interests of other states, though this is a decline in the percentage who reported believing this in 2019.

Although the business sector recognizes the important role CSOs play in the reform process, CSOs continued to struggle to establish strategic cooperation with the business sector in 2021. The government has declared its commitment to cooperating with NGOs; despite this, some institutions interpret CSO proposals and initiatives as criticism of their work.

CSOs rely heavily on social media to publicize their activities. CSOs generally do not have dedicated public relations or communications staff. In 2021, CSOs continued to embrace new forms of communication to present their work, including videos, infographics, and other materials designed to share on social networks. Larger CSOs have invested in video production to present their work and issues in an accessible way.

A significant number of CSOs publish annual reports on their websites, although some organizations do not have their own websites. Some CSOs also publish audit reports on their financial operations, although these are less common than annual reports.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed herein are those of the panelists and other project researchers and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or FHI 360.

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