



20 YEARS | BCNL

OUR MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

»» We have improved the **environment for civil society organizations and citizen participation**

We succeeded in contributing to **the amendments made to over 20 laws** and other legislative acts and strategic documents which are relevant to civil society organizations. Here are the most important ones:

»» **Measures against Money Laundering Act and Measures against the Financing of Terrorism Act** amended in 2018: the 2018 amendments alleviated the administrative burden on NPLE as obliged entities under these two laws;



»» **Non-Profit Legal Entities Act amended in 2006 and 2016:** as a result of the amended 2016 Act, the registration of NPLEs was transferred to the Registry Agency, and thus the state officially committed to ensuring a consistent policy for the development of the civic sector by approving a *Strategy for the Development of Civil Society Organizations* and establishing a *Council for Civil Society Development and a Civic Initiative Fund*;

»» **A package of tax exemptions for NPLEs** and their donors approved in 2001, 2007, 2008, and 2012;

»» **Social Assistance Act and Regulation for Its Application** amended in 2002 and 2003, and *Social Services Act* passed in 2018: the changes introduced in the social laws allowed NPLEs to act as social service providers and take part in the development of the social system in Bulgaria;

»» UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities ratified in 2012, the **Concept for changing the paradigm of legal capacity for people with disabilities** approved later on, and the *People with Disabilities Act* amended in 2018: the new regulation has allowed people with disabilities to exercise their rights in person and has ensured their access to court procedures;

»» **Law on Legislative Acts**

amended in 2016: the changes extended the time limit for public consultations from 14 to 30 days; introduced the requirement for ex-ante and ex-post assessment of the impact of the relevant law; and the requirement for a reasoned response to proposals made by citizens and organizations in the consultation procedure;

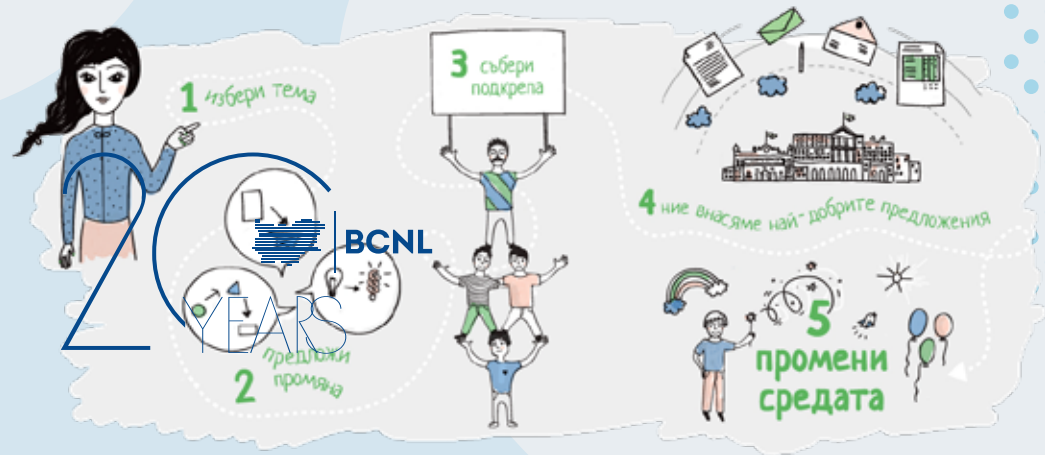
»» **Agreement between Sofia Municipality and over 30 organizations working in the social area**

a procedure for involving civil society organizations in the bodies and activities for protection against disasters in Montana Municipality – we designed specific mechanisms for interaction between NGOs and the local authorities;

»» Other special laws, regulations and ordinances relevant to NGO activities – we took part in over **35 working groups** with the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education and Science, etc.

»» **Ordinance on the Minimum Standards for Public Consultations at the Local Level in Sofia Municipality, in Lovech municipality**

and other municipalities;



We were not alone along the way forward in our success stories. We created the space **Our Voice** and

conducted a series of campaigns to collect proposals from citizens on various topics of public relevance.



»» We have improved the capacity of civil society organizations

How did we achieve this?

- » We provided consultations and support to over **5,700** citizens and organizations;
- » We trained over **1,000** organizations with representatives in more than **300** trainings on developing the capacity of CSOs;
- » We developed the knowledge and skills of over **200** participants in the **9** editions of the NGO Summer School;
- » We attracted over **120** volunteers in support of CSOs;

» Our trainings were on a broad variety of topics, with a strong practical focus;

requirements for the registration and re-registration of non-profit legal entities; taxation; advocacy; fund-raising; generating and managing mission-related economic activities; personal data protection; implementing the requirements applicable to obliged entities under the Measures against Money Laundering Act and the Measures against the Financing of Terrorism Act; contracting social services; public-private partnerships; communication

and working with the media; writing opinions; organizing pilot programs; protection of children's rights; rights of persons with disabilities, etc.





»» We have trained the organizations to be financially sustainable and independent

- ▶ We made over 100 analyses and proposals for changes, the most significant of them being the **analyses** related to the taxation regimes in Bulgaria and other countries, the publications **“Financial management of NGOs, Questions and Answers, 2015”** и **“Economic Activity of NPLEs, Questions and Answers, 2011”**, the analysis **“What and how does the state finance, applying the state aid regime”**, **research** on the donation culture in Bulgaria and practices in other countries, etc.;
- ▶ Since 2012 we have prepared the annual **Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index in Bulgaria**;
- ▶ We supported the establishment of the unique **Club of Fundraisers in Bulgaria**, which has served as a fund-raising platform in Bulgaria for the last four years, and initiated one of the most inspiring sector campaigns for fund-raising **Bulgaria donates**;
- ▶ In the course of several years, we supported **foundations, associations and community centers with small grants** which they used to organize campaigns for raising funds from individual and corporate donors;
- ▶ Together with our partners from Vivacom, we created a **Regional Grant program** whose seventh edition was launched in late 2021. Over the years the program has awarded grants in the amount of **382,420 BGN for 82 project ideas of 77 civil society organizations.**



The Program in figures:

The program with crucial contribution for this success was **“Entrepreneurship of Not-for-Profit Organizations”** – it became one of our best performing programs with 10 editions so far. Our entrepreneurship program trained 180 civil society organizations who received more than 1,500 hours of training and mentorship; we provided financial support in the amount of 300,000 BGN to 35 business initiatives; and over the years we became the **driving force** for the important process of developing ever more independent and financially sustainable organizations. This program has yielded examples which we use as **our strongest arguments in the dialogue with the state** on the need for a policy aimed at promoting the development of social entrepreneurship.

- **An online platform for goods and services with a cause - www.DarPazar.bg - uniting a community of 34 social enterprises which are actively involved in developing entrepreneurship;**
- **Over 100 jobs created, including for persons from vulnerable groups;**
- **Over 1,500 new business clients attracted.**
- **A documentary: “Social Entrepreneurship or Business with a Cause”;**
- **Over 300 volunteers attracted for the activity of the social enterprises;**
- **Over 500 persons, who are direct users of the activity of the social enterprises, have been through the Program;**

10 years ago, when the Program started, we would hear voices saying: “This is not for us” **and** “If we were able to be entrepreneurs, we wouldn’t be working for NGOs and wouldn’t dedicate ourselves to causes.” **It took us a lot of energy to convince people that this is just a different way to deliver on our missions through real results which are closer and more visible for people in their everyday life, and thus attract like-minded individuals and tell our stories.**

Today we hear voices saying: “I have never imagined that we would get that far, that we would be so successful, and that we would thus be in a better position to help the people for whom we exist” **and** “It is very difficult, but it is also very exciting, as you gradually become aware of your self-reliance, of things being under your control, and this is freedom. Freedom to make choices and to know that you are the driving force of change and you are achieving it – step by step, now at this very moment.”



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»» We have reached out to new **audiences** inside and outside the NGO sector and have broadened the scope of **like-minded persons**

We started various initiatives which allowed us to have discussions, to experiment and practice the exercise of civil rights with a variety of audiences:

- In 2010, together with the Program and Analytical Center for European Law PACEL we created the first ever Information **Portal for NGOs** in Bulgaria, which is the largest platform and media channel of civil society organizations;
- We created **a chatbot** via Viber dedicated to the right of association, peaceful assembly and digital democracy - with over **2,500 subscribers**;
- Together with colleagues of ours, journalists, we developed over **40 video products** which tell the story about NGO activity;
- Just during the last one year we told more than **100 stories of civil society organizations** which are read in various online media and social networks;
- We set up **2 hubs** with over **280 students** and young people, and over the last 4 years we have supported the only **Legal Clinic for legal capacity and equal participation**;
- We organized **7 outdoor exhibitions** at central locations which were viewed by citizens and guests of Sofia;
- We organized over **15 festivals**, bazars, processions and outdoor events with a variety of audiences; We established the creative competition **Civic Alarm Clock**.
- In four years we have attracted more than **360 authors** of photography, illustrations and texts who speak about the right of association, the right of peaceful assembly, and the freedom of speech;
- Only in 2020 we reached out to more than **700,000 persons** in the social media;
- Over these **20 years** we have consolidated **our partnership** with 6 large companies and organizations, and have also created new partnerships.



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Thank you!