

# A STEP CLOSER TO A MORE JUST SOCIETY

2025 Annual Report





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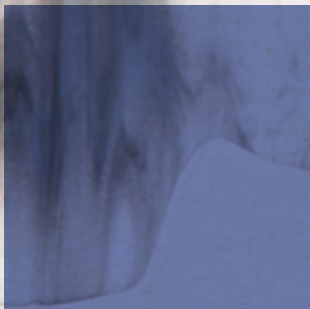
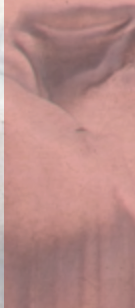
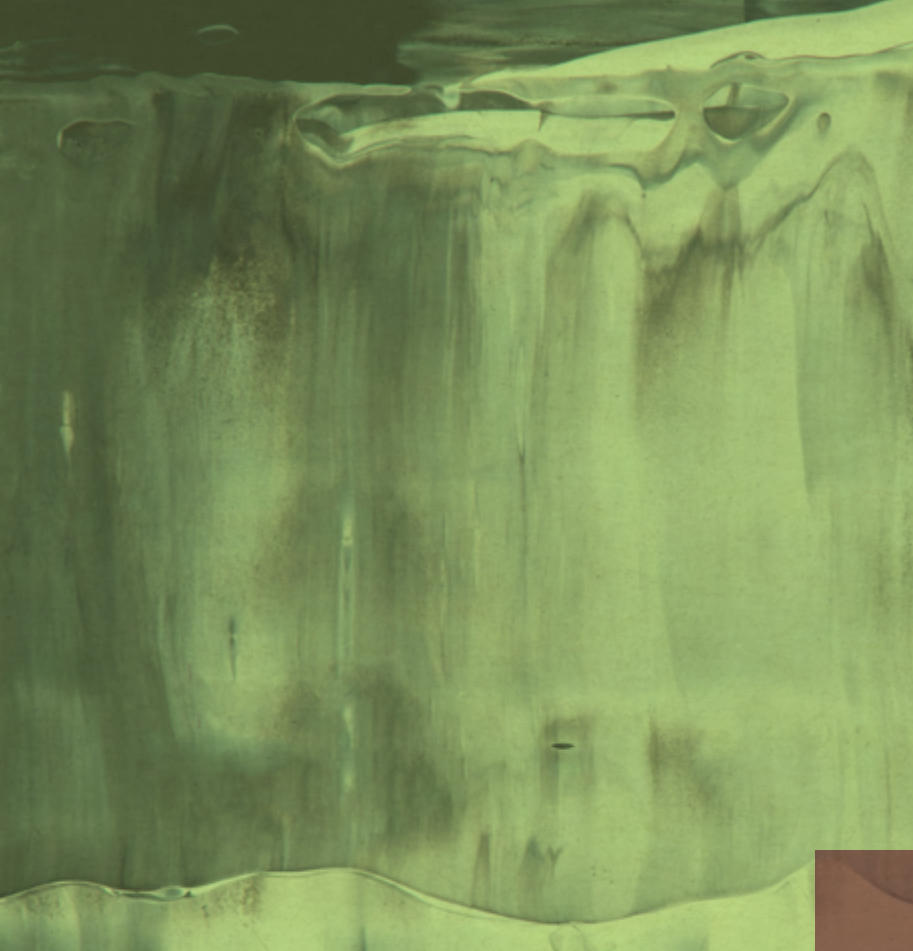
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**Milan Radović**  
*Program Director*

*Dear colleagues, partners and friends,*

Intensive work, complex challenges, and tangible results marked the year 2025. In a context characterised by persistent institutional weaknesses, heightened security and social tensions, and increased migration flows, we continued to act consistently and strategically to protect human rights, strengthen democratic standards, and promote systemic reforms. Our activities included the provision of legal aid to migrants, refugees, and stateless persons, monitoring the work of the police and the judiciary, conducting analytical and advocacy work in the field of security, as well as providing continuous support to women in politics, young people, and minority communities in exercising their rights.

We are particularly proud that our programmes have had a visible impact on strengthening legal certainty for the most vulnerable groups, advancing public debate on gender equality, increasing women's participation in decision-making processes, and contributing to the development of more sustainable mechanisms for youth engagement in public policymaking. At the same time, through a comprehensive approach to working with Roma and Egyptian communities, we have further contributed to their increased visibility and stronger advocacy for full and equal participation in public life. These results confirm that a combination of fieldwork, legal expertise, and institutional dialogue can produce concrete and measurable progress.


Nevertheless, 2025 clearly demonstrated that individual achievements are not sufficient without deep and sustainable institutional reforms. Limited efficiency of the judiciary, selective application of the law, and ongoing challenges in protecting the rights of persons deprived of liberty point to the need for stronger inter-institutional cooperation and consistent implementation of international standards. In this context, the role of civil society organisations becomes even more significant- as a corrective, a partner, and an initiator of reform processes.

Our mission remains clearly focused on strengthening democracy, protecting human rights, and promoting the values on which the European Union is founded- namely the rule of law, institutional accountability, equality, and the dignity of every individual. By educating future political and social actors in line with European standards and promoting sustainable development and the green transition, we seek to contribute to Montenegro's long-term alignment with contemporary democratic practices.

We believe that building a just and inclusive society is a process that requires persistence, partnership, and principled action. I would like to express my gratitude to our team, partners, and donors for their trust and commitment. In the years ahead, we will continue to act responsibly and decisively, guided by the conviction that democratic values and human rights are the foundation of a stable and European Montenegro.



# TOWARDS **MORE JUST** AND DEMOCRATICALLY CONSOLIDATED **MONTENEGRO**



Across the world, democracy is facing increasing pressure. Principles that were once taken for granted - such as the rule of law, independent institutions, and the protection of fundamental human rights are now increasingly being challenged by political polarisation, shrinking civic space, and declining public trust. Europe, long seen as a stronghold of democratic values, is not immune to these trends. Questions around judicial independence, equality before the law, and meaningful citizen participation have become central to today's political landscape.

In this context, the protection of human rights and the pursuit of justice are no longer abstract ideals, but practical and urgent priorities. For countries such as Montenegro, where democratic consolidation is still an ongoing process, strong institutions, informed and empowered citizens, and sustained investment in human rights-based approaches and political education are essential for building a resilient and inclusive democratic society.

The role of civil society is particularly important in such circumstances. At times when institutions are under pressure, continuous civic engagement, principled advocacy, and political education give real meaning to democratic values, going beyond formal frameworks and legal provisions. In Montenegro, where progress continues alongside persistent challenges in human

rights protection, access to justice, and public trust in institutions, these efforts are especially relevant.

Strengthening democratic culture, therefore, requires a balanced approach: advancing justice and human rights through concrete action, while also investing in the education and empowerment of future decision-makers. This approach has shaped the organisation's work over the past year. It has been at the core of its mission since its establishment, guiding its ongoing efforts to promote human rights, justice, and democratic values toward a more resilient and democratic Montenegrin society.








# HUMAN RIGHTS AND JUSTICE PROGRAMME



## PROGRAMME OVERVIEW



In 2025, the Civic Alliance's Human Rights and Justice Programme continued to operate in a context marked by complex institutional challenges and growing expectations linked to Montenegro's EU integration process. The focus of our work remained on the effective protection of human rights, strengthening the rule of law, and improving institutional accountability, alongside continuous support to individuals whose rights were at risk.

To improve human rights protection and reinforce the rule of law, Civic Alliance continued to provide free legal aid to socially vulnerable individuals, persons without adequate documentation to regularise their legal status in Montenegro, and members of the Roma and Egyptian communities. At the same time, we worked on raising awareness of gender equality, addressing impunity for police torture, strengthening the capacities of judicial institutions, and improving policies in the areas of asylum and migration. Particular attention throughout the year was given to issues of transitional justice and institutional responsibility, including through various commemorative activities. In addition, through a range of project activities, we continued to support the inclusion of minority communities and promote their culture and identity.

Although certain improvements have been recorded, the judiciary's functioning remains affected by structural weaknesses. A shortage of judges and prosecutors, limited institutional capacities, and lengthy court proceedings continue to impact the exercise of citizens' rights and public trust in the legal system. A particular challenge remains the appointment of judges to the Constitutional Court of Montenegro, whose efficiency directly affects the protection of human rights.

The European Commission's annual report confirms that Montenegro remains at a moderate-to-good level of preparedness in the area of fundamental rights. While progress has been noted, particularly in the legal framework and institutional reforms, including anti-discrimination policies and institutional strengthening, the gap between legislation and its effective implementation remains significant. Limited system efficiency, uneven protection of vulnerable groups, and restricted access to justice remain key challenges requiring a more consistent and substantive response.

It is particularly concerning that a significant number of cases before the European Court of Human Rights involve alleged violations of the right to a fair trial due to the excessive length of proceedings, particularly before the Constitutional Court of Montenegro. Such practices undermine individual rights and create long-term legal and financial consequences for the state, further weakening public trust in institutions.

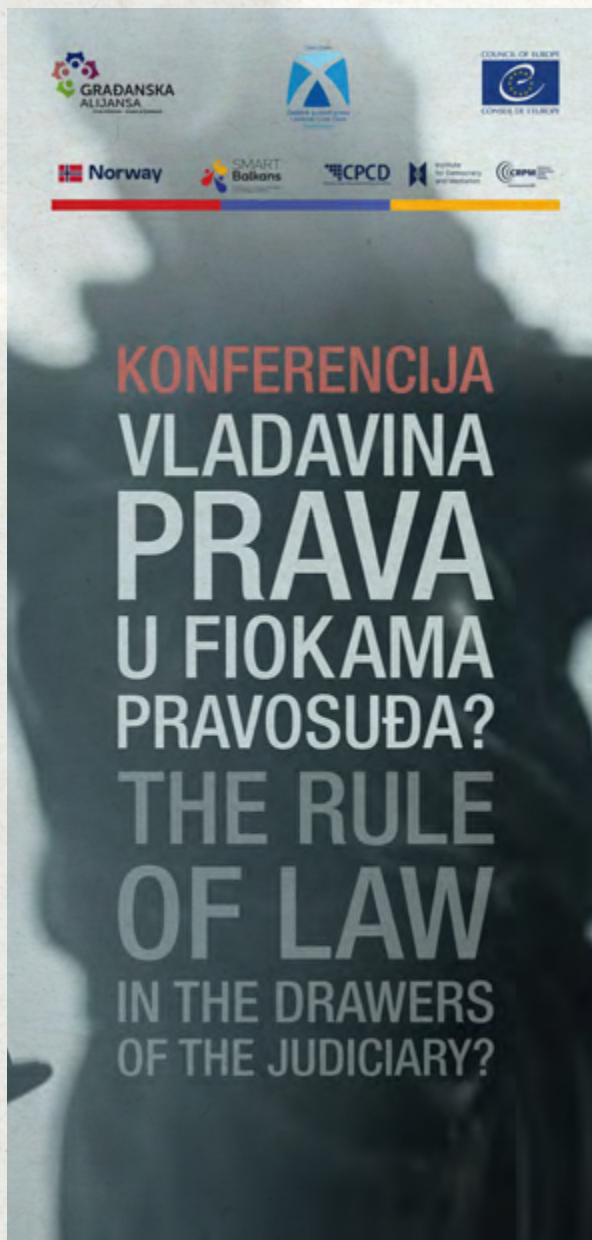
An independent and professional judiciary, strong and accountable institutions, and the consistent application of the law in the interests of all citizens remain the foundation of effective human rights protection. Without these, the rule of law and European standards risk remaining largely formal, without real impact in practice.



# JUDICIARY AND ANTI-CORRUPTION EFFORTS

One of the central events marking Human Rights Day this year was the conference “**The rule of law in the drawers of the judiciary**”, which provided a space for an open and substantive discussion on one of the most sensitive issues in contemporary society- the functioning of the judicial system.

The conference was opened by the President of Montenegro, Jakov Milatović. At the same time, introductory remarks by representatives of national institutions and international partners further emphasised the importance of the rule of law as a cornerstone of democratic governance and human rights protection.





The panel discussions focused on the state of the Montenegrin judiciary, with particular attention to the length of court proceedings and their impact on citizens. Representatives of the executive and legislative branches, along with members of the judiciary and the prosecution, exchanged views and experiences, opening a constructive discussion on the causes of existing challenges and possible directions for reform.

The conference was not intended only as a space for exchanging knowledge, but also as an opportunity to identify practical solutions that could improve the protection of rights and help rebuild public trust in the judicial system. In this context, particular attention was paid to proposed amendments to criminal procedure legislation, which was seen as a key area for improving both the efficiency and fairness of proceedings.

In modern legal systems, any discussion on changes to criminal procedure law inevitably raises the question of how to balance the protection of individual rights with the state's duty to respond effectively to the most complex forms of crime. Within this balance, pre-trial detention remains a particularly sensitive issue, as it represents both a serious restriction of personal liberty and an important tool for ensuring that criminal proceedings are conducted effectively. For this reason, any changes in this area require careful consideration of their legal, institutional, and wider social implications.

***“The issue of amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code is closely linked to the principles of a fair trial and the protection of fundamental human rights, while at the same time reflecting the need to safeguard national security and ensure the effective prosecution of serious criminal offences”<sup>1</sup>***

This complexity was at the heart of the Civic Alliance conference **“Extended Pre-Trial Detention: Mutual Accusations without an Adequate Solution”**, where the proposed amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code were analysed<sup>2</sup> with a particular focus on proposals to extend the maximum duration of detention from the filing of the indictment to the delivery of a first-instance judgment.

1 Conclusions from the conference “Extended Pre-Trial Detention: Mutual Accusations without an Adequate Solution”, Podgorica, 6 February 2025, <https://gamn.org/neophodna-izrada-novog-zakonika-o-krivicnom-postupku-uskladenog-s-pravnim-tekovinama-evropske-unije/>

2 “Extended Pre-Trial Detention: Mutual Accusations without an Adequate Solution”, Podgorica, January 2025, <https://gamn.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Analiza-produzeni-pritvor.pdf>





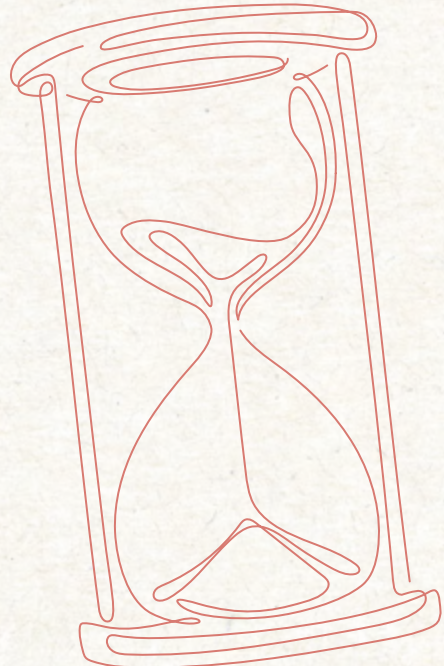
The discussion highlighted structural weaknesses in Montenegro's judicial system and underscored the need for ongoing reforms and regional cooperation to enhance court efficiency and accountability, engaging policymakers and judicial officials.

In such circumstances, it was emphasised that systemic inefficiency cannot and should not be used as a justification for prolonged pre-trial detention. Instead, the legislative and executive branches need to ensure the necessary legal and institutional conditions for real accountability and for the development of the judiciary in line with the standards of modern Western democracies.





From the prosecution's perspective, the fight against organised crime has changed significantly over the past two decades. This underscores the importance of strengthening institutional cooperation and communication among all actors, fostering a shared commitment to effective prosecution and rebuilding public trust in judicial institutions. The proposed amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code were therefore not seen as an isolated intervention, but as part of a broader and more comprehensive reform of criminal procedure legislation, reflecting the view that the current framework no longer meets the needs of practice.



With the aim of strengthening institutional capacities and aligning judicial practice with modern European standards, Civic Alliance continued its intensive work throughout 2025 to enhance the knowledge and skills of judicial office holders. Through the regional project **“Strengthening Regional Judicial Cooperation in the Western Balkans for the Efficient Conduct of Proceedings before the Court of Justice of the European Union and the Application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights”**, the organisation contributes to the long-term development of judicial capacities in the context of European integration and the increasingly complex requirements arising from the application of EU law.

The project implementation began on 1 October 2024 and will run until 31 March 2027, bringing together judicial actors from Montenegro, Serbia, North Macedonia, and Albania. The initiative aims to support judges and prosecutors through research, expert publications, and educational activities, enabling them to better understand the mechanisms of EU law and its practical application within national judicial systems.

During 2025, one of the project’s key results was the completion of two strategic documents of particular importance for judicial practice in EU candidate countries. The documents *“Guidelines for Conducting Proceedings before the Court of Justice of the European Union for New Member States”* and *“Challenges for New Member States in the Application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights”* were prepared by Dr Sanja Grbović, Professor at the University of Montenegro, and Dr Miloš Vukčević, Professor at the University Mediteran and a lawyer with extensive experience. Their work combines academic knowledge with practical insight, offering clear, useful guidance for judges and prosecutors handling cases involving EU law.

The findings were also presented at a regional conference in Skopje, where Civic Alliance, together with partner organisations, shared the authors’ work with colleagues and institutional representatives from across the region. The conference provided a space for exchanging experiences, reviewing the results achieved, and planning next steps, including further training activities in 2026 with the support of international experts who will continue to strengthen the capacities of judges and prosecutors in the field of EU law.



An important part of the project is the cooperation established with the Judicial and Prosecutorial Training Centre of Montenegro, recognised as a key partner in the professional development of judges and prosecutors. Its role in assessing training needs, designing programmes, and delivering training activities will be particularly important in the next phase of the project, when the developed guidelines start to be applied in practice through targeted training.





These organisations are conducting research into how corruption is perceived and its forms and mechanisms within the education system, to identify key challenges and propose concrete policy recommendations. This approach allows the fight against corruption to be viewed from the perspective of local communities and citizens, while relying on empirical data and evidence-based analysis. At the same time, the project contributes to strengthening the capacities of smaller civil society organisations to engage in a sustained and effective manner with issues of transparency, accountability, and integrity in education.

In the area of anti-corruption, Civic Alliance continued throughout 2025 to systematically address the issue of identifying corruption, with a particular focus on the education sector, through the project **“A society against corruption in Montenegro”**, implemented in partnership with the BIRN hub. Although the project was temporarily paused at one stage, activities resumed in the second half of 2025, reaffirming Civic Alliance’s ongoing commitment to tackling corruption and strengthening accountability in areas of particular public importance.

As the project continued, greater attention was paid to corruption in education, recognised as an area with long-term and systemic consequences for society. At this stage, Civic Alliance plays an important role in coordinating and communicating with local civil society organisations implementing sub-granted projects, which are conducting research and developing policy papers based on public opinion surveys. These include the Monitoring Group from Ulcinj, the Master for European Policies, and CEGAS.



The project “**Strengthening Regional Cooperation in Combating Illegal Migration through the Prevention of Cybercrime in the Western Balkans (STEP BY STEP)**”, implemented from May 2024 to July 2025, focused on one of today’s more complex security challenges - the misuse of digital technologies in migrant smuggling, as well as the lack of a coordinated regional response to these developments.

Recognising the need for stronger cooperation between institutions and civil society, the project brought together organisations and experts from across the Western Balkans, along with partners from the European Union, to strengthen capacities to detect and combat digitally facilitated migrant smuggling while protecting migrants’ rights.



In 2025, Civic Alliance participated in organising a regional training in Sarajevo, bringing together representatives of ministries of interior, prosecution offices, and civil society organisations from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Montenegro. The training provided an important space for exchanging practical experience from both institutional and fieldwork, while also helping build trust and partnerships that are essential for an effective response to migrant smuggling.

One of the project's most important contributions was a regional study conducted across the three countries, which offered valuable insights into how information and communication technologies are used in migrant smuggling and highlighted existing legal and institutional gaps. The findings served as the basis for concrete recommendations to improve policies, legislation, and inter-institutional cooperation at the regional level.

The project was rounded off with a final regional conference held in Sarajevo in June 2025, which brought together key stakeholders from across the Western Balkans to reflect on next steps. Through a series of thematic sessions, participants discussed institutional responses, digital risks, and ways to improve data sharing, leaving a solid foundation for more coordinated and long-term regional cooperation.

Overall, the project strengthened the capacities of both civil society organisations and institutions, improved regional partnerships, and created space for a more effective and accountable response to contemporary security challenges linked to migration.





**MONITORING VISITS TO  
POLICE CUSTODY  
FACILITIES  
ACROSS MONTENEGRO**

In 2025, Civic Alliance continued to carry out civilian oversight of police conduct towards persons deprived of liberty, reaffirming its role as an organisation that consistently monitors, documents, and publicly advocates for higher human rights standards in the security sector<sup>1</sup>. As part of its regular monitoring activities, between March and May 2025, the Civic Alliance team conducted eight unannounced visits to police custody facilities across Montenegro - in Rožaje, Berane, Nikšić, Pljevlja, Bijelo Polje, Cetinje, Budva, and Bar - ensuring a representative overview of detention conditions.

The monitoring focused on assessing infrastructure and hygiene conditions, technical equipment, the functioning of video surveillance, record-keeping practices, and respect for basic procedural rights. During these visits, the team noted examples of good institutional cooperation but also identified several structural and logistical challenges that, in some municipalities, still point to uneven conditions and the need for further investment to meet standards for humane treatment.

Among all the facilities visited, the Bijelo Polje Security Department, which serves as the seat of the “North” Regional Security Centre, stood out as a location where detention conditions fell below international minimum standards -particularly in terms of hygiene, ventilation, and access to water - raising concerns about potential human rights violations and risks to the well-being of detainees.

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1 Monitoring report on conditions in Police custody facilities in Montenegro, Podgorica, June 2025, <https://gamn.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/monitoring-176x250-1.pdf>

Each visit, including conversations with persons deprived of liberty, informed the development of concrete recommendations and advocacy efforts. In this context, Civic Alliance formally presented its monitoring report at a session of the Parliament’s Committee on Human Rights and Freedoms, calling on the authorities - based on documented findings - to take the detention facilities in Bijelo Polje out of use until they are fully brought in line with required standards, and to ensure appropriate, humane, and safe conditions for detainees.

This cycle of activities once again showed that civilian oversight, when grounded in a clear mandate, professional approach, and institutional dialogue, can have a tangible impact on improving the system.





## ACCESS TO **JUSTICE** AND FREE **LEGAL AID**

Since 2018, Civic Alliance has been implementing the project “**Free legal aid for forcibly displaced and stateless persons**” in phases, to provide free legal, administrative, and financial support to these groups. Its work mainly focuses on resolving status issues, helping people obtain necessary documents, accessing social protection, and better understanding their rights. The organisation has also carried out a detailed analysis of the legal framework and provides support throughout the entire process - from preparing documentation to representing beneficiaries before the relevant authorities - for people within the system of international and temporary protection in Montenegro. In addition, it supports their integration after they obtain status and assists individuals at risk of statelessness, contributing to better protection of stateless persons.

In 2025, Civic Alliance supported 1,533 individuals (note: figures are preliminary) who expressed the intention to apply for asylum in Montenegro. In line with standard procedures, and after they arrived in the country, detailed interviews were conducted to collect information on their country of origin, reasons for leaving, migration routes, the difficulties they faced along the way, and their treatment upon entering Montenegro. All individuals were also informed about their rights.

During the same year, 180 beneficiaries were supported in procedures for obtaining international protection, with a total of 945 services provided. This support included preparing documentation, providing legal representation, and assisting with gathering evidence. It also involved three preparatory meetings with each beneficiary ahead of their interview before the Asylum Directorate, as well as drafting appeals against negative decisions of the Directorate or rulings of the Administrative Court.

When it comes to access to economic and social rights, Civic Alliance supported 50 individuals in the process of obtaining international protection (67 services provided) and 43 individuals who had already been granted international or subsidiary protection (254 services). The organisation's legal team assisted them by preparing legal documents - written submissions, requests, and follow-ups - representing them before relevant institutions, and providing legal advice related to the rights guaranteed under the Law on International and Temporary Protection of Foreigners.

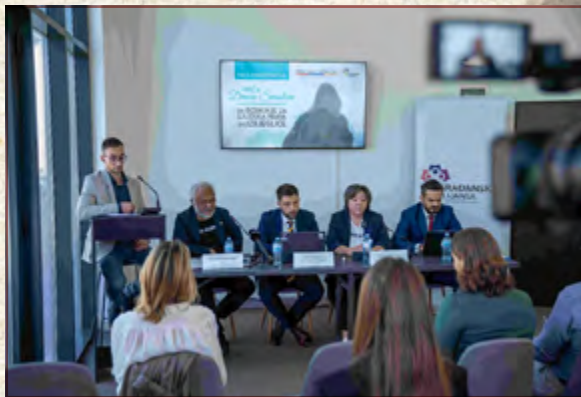
In January 2025, the Administrative Court of Montenegro, for the first time since the asylum system was established in the country, issued a decision on the merits granting international protection. Civic Alliance welcomed this as an important step forward in developing case law in the field of asylum and human rights, highlighting its importance for strengthening legal certainty and bringing practice closer to the standards of democratic societies.



# THE STORY OF *Dinara Smailova*

## FROM HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER TO REFUGEE

The importance of consistent and responsible protection of the rights of migrants and asylum seekers is also reflected in the case of **Dinara Smailova**, a women's rights activist from Kazakhstan who applied for international protection in Montenegro. To raise awareness and draw the attention of state institutions to her case, Civic Alliance organised a press conference titled "**Dinara Smailova's Story - From Human Rights Defender to Refugee**". It was emphasised that her case should serve as a warning to state authorities that there is no room for misapplication of the law or a careless approach in such situations, as such failures can result in serious injustice - and even lead to torture or loss of life.





When working with persons at risk of statelessness, the project's legal advisors provide legal counselling, support with administrative procedures, and oversee the allocation of financial assistance for obtaining the necessary personal documentation. This enables beneficiaries to secure a stable legal status in Montenegro, including temporary or permanent residence, identity documents, citizenship, and similar rights. A particularly important step forward was made this year when, with the support of Civic Alliance, a passport was issued for a stateless person for the first time, marking a significant milestone in ensuring the fundamental rights of stateless individuals. Considerable effort is also invested throughout these procedures in raising awareness among beneficiaries.

Civic Alliance supported 288 individuals, providing 587 legal services and collecting 368 documents to help them resolve their legal status.

As part of its broader work to protect migrants' rights and strengthen security mechanisms, Civic Alliance also achieved concrete results through projects that address current migration challenges. The focus was particularly on strengthening regional cooperation, building institutional capacities, and responding to emerging security risks - especially those linked to the misuse of digital technologies. The key results of one such project, which helped improve regional practices and policies in migration and security, are outlined below.

During 2025, Civic Alliance also supported Ukrainian refugees in applying for temporary protection and accessing the rights that come with that status. Assistance was provided to 1,104 individuals applying for or extending temporary protection, while 341 beneficiaries received support in accessing their rights after obtaining status, through a total of 2,407 services. In addition to helping with status extensions and new applications, the Civic Alliance team provided on-the-ground support, legal assistance, and representation before relevant authorities and institutions. The organisation also followed procedures related to the exercise of legally guaranteed rights, including preparing written submissions and filing complaints and legal actions before competent state bodies and courts.

It is also worth noting that in 2025, Civic Alliance implemented the project **“Bridges of Belonging: Empowering Ukrainian Families in Montenegro”**, carried out from June to December. The project was designed as a comprehensive response to the needs of Ukrainian families who, due to the prolonged armed conflict, have found temporary or longer-term stay in Montenegro.

Based on the real challenges these families face in everyday life, the project focused on overcoming language barriers, improving access to rights, strengthening their sense of legal security, and providing psycho-social support. Special attention was paid to **women and children, who are the most vulnerable groups**. Through carefully designed activities, beneficiaries received practical, accessible, and tailored support.

One of the key components of the project was **Montenegrin language learning**, organised through regular classes for both children and adults. The classes were mainly held in the Bar, in cooperation with the European House and the Ukrainian Centre, and proved to be very useful in everyday communication, helping people interact more independently with institutions and supporting children’s integration into the education system. Parents, in particular, highlighted the positive impact these activities had on their children’s confidence and sense of security at school.

Alongside language support, the project also provided **continuous, individualised legal assistance** through established contact points in Bar, Podgorica, and Herceg Novi. Beneficiaries received support with residence issues, access to healthcare and social protection, education, employment, and other administrative procedures, which significantly reduced their sense of legal uncertainty and insecurity.



**Educational workshops** were another important part of the project, covering topics such as access to rights, psychosocial well-being, gender-based violence, prevention of human trafficking, and the protection of children's rights. The workshops were organised in an interactive format, allowing participants to share experiences and engage directly with experts, helping them better recognise risks and utilise available protection mechanisms.

Additional support was provided through the **development and distribution of informational brochures in Ukrainian, Montenegrin, and English**, making it easier for beneficiaries to access clear and reliable information.



Through cultural and community activities - including visits to cultural and historical sites and events marking Human Rights Day dedicated to children from Ukraine -the project further strengthened **the sense of belonging, connection, and mutual understanding between beneficiaries and the host community**. These activities created a safe and welcoming space where both children and parents could connect with the local community and feel like an active part of it.



Overall, the “Bridges of Belonging” project delivered clear and lasting results in strengthening the integration of Ukrainian families, improving their legal security, language skills, and social inclusion. By combining direct support, education, and cooperation with relevant institutions, the project laid solid foundations for longer-term integration and more active participation of Ukrainian refugees in social life in Montenegro.

# WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND WOMEN IN POLITICS

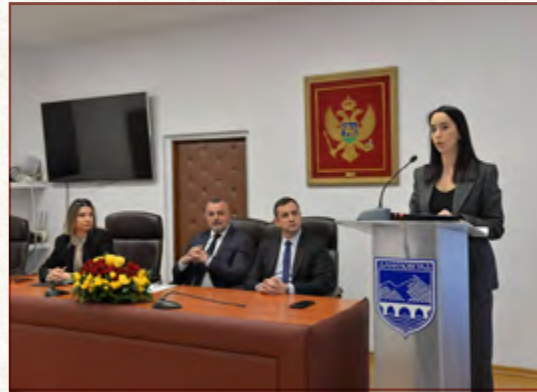
During the reporting period, Civic Alliance worked consistently to improve the position of women in politics and decision-making processes, based on the belief that without real gender balance, there can be no democratic, accountable, and inclusive society. Our activities focused both on 'shedding light on the deeply rooted barriers women face and on creating concrete opportunities for greater visibility, cooperation, and meaningful political participation.

The research component of this work was marked by a pilot study on women's participation in local politics in Montenegro<sup>1</sup>, which showed that discrimination against women in politics remains widespread and is clearly recognised by women politicians themselves. It also highlighted that legal mechanisms such as quotas are often reduced in practice to a mere formality. Most respondents stated that women are only partially involved, or not involved at all, in key decision-making, while there is also a strong perception of deliberate gender bias within political parties. Although women in politics demonstrate a high level of confidence and professional capacity, the political system still fails to recognise and value their potential on an equal footing. This research marked an important step forward in documenting systemic inequalities based on evidence and provided a strong foundation for further advocacy efforts by Civic Alliance.

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<sup>1</sup> Women's participation in local politics in Montenegro: An empirical analysis of the attitudes and experiences of female councillors, Podgorica, November 2025, <https://gamn.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Ucesce-zena-u-lokalnoj-politici-Crne-Gore-%E2%80%93-empirijska-analiza-stavova-i-iskustava-odbornica.pdf>





Alongside the research, Civic Alliance continued to strengthen women's political position at the local level by supporting the establishment of Women Councillors' Clubs. During the year, the fifteenth Women Councillors' Club in Montenegro was established in Danilovgrad.

These clubs serve as cross-party platforms where women councillors, regardless of their political affiliation, work together in the interest of their local communities. Through cooperation and networking, they are given space to propose policies, share experiences, and strengthen their influence within local assemblies, contributing to more inclusive and accountable decision-making.



A significant segment of our work was dedicated to improving the legal and institutional framework. Civic Alliance has fully supported an initiative to increase the quota for women's representation on electoral lists from 30% to 40%, noting that, even after more than a decade, Montenegro still struggles to implement the existing legal requirements consistently. Through public statements and engagement with relevant institutions, it was emphasised that quotas alone are not enough unless they are accompanied by mechanisms that ensure women's meaningful participation in decision-making, as well as their protection from political, psychological, and online violence. Throughout the year, Civic Alliance also continuously highlighted the rise in online violence against women in politics and public life, stressing the responsibility of political parties and institutions to create a safer environment.

The central event in this area was the national conference "The power of decision-making without gender balance", which brought together representatives of the highest state institutions, the legislature, and civil society. At the conference, an analysis of women's representation on the boards of state-owned enterprises<sup>1</sup> was presented, highlighting a significant lack of gender balance in decision-making structures and the risk that Montenegro may fail to meet its obligations under relevant EU directives. Through open dialogue with key stakeholders, it was clearly underlined that gender equality is not a matter of form or external pressure, but a prerequisite for good governance, economic development, and successful European integration.



1 Decision-Making without Balance: Where Are Women on the Boards of State-Owned Enterprises?, Podgorica, June 2025, <https://gamn.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Analiza-Moc-odlucivanja-bez-ravnoteze.pdf>

Overall, Civic Alliance's work on women's rights and women's participation in politics during the year contributed to a stronger and more informed public debate on gender equality. By combining research, local networking, public events, and legislative advocacy, Civic Alliance continued to create space where women are not only formally present in politics but recognised as equal and influential participants in decision-making processes.



# YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The project “Youth Promise for Peace”, implemented by Civic Alliance through the RYCOgnizing YPS grant scheme, with support from German Cooperation and implemented by RYCO, represents an important step towards institutionalising the UN Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) Agenda in Montenegro. The project highlights the important role of young people as active participants in social processes, whose voices are increasingly recognised as essential in shaping sustainable peace policies and strengthening social cohesion.

One of the project’s most significant achievements so far has been the establishment of the National YPS Coalition by Civic Alliance. This coalition brings together young people, civil society organisations, and institutional representatives, creating a platform for dialogue and joint action. The formalisation of cooperation through memorandums with local governments and relevant institutions provides a solid framework and long-term support for youth initiatives, positioning the YPS agenda as an integral part of both local and national policies.



Implementation to date in the municipalities of Ulcinj and Nikšić has shown how important direct dialogue between young people and local institutions is for understanding their needs and challenges. These meetings helped identify concrete opportunities for the active involvement of young people in decision-making and peacebuilding processes, while also strengthening a shared sense of responsibility for community development. In the coming year, visits to additional municipalities, including Pljevlja, Cetinje/Podgorica, and Rožaje, are planned.



A particularly important moment in the project so far was the three-day joint event of the Schools of Political Studies, which brought together young leaders from Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Organised in cooperation between the Schools of Political Studies of Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the event gathered mayors and deputy mayors, as well as councillors, who spent three days in Budva discussing the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda.





Through an intensive programme, participants strengthened their skills in democratic participation, prevention of radicalisation, combating hate speech, and promoting intercultural cooperation. The focus on the practical application of the YPS agenda, through dialogue and joint initiatives, further strengthened the network of young leaders and reinforced cooperation between Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina, laying the groundwork for sustainable change and the long-term implementation of YPS principles. The results so far clearly show that when young people are given the space, support, and the right tools to act, they can become drivers of change and builders of peace.



The project **“Together for strengthening a culture of tolerance and equality”**, implemented from January to October 2025 with the support of the Fund for the protection and realisation of minority rights of Montenegro, focused on something that is often taken for granted, but rarely built in a systematic way - **genuine encounters between young people and open dialogue among different communities.**



Through an exchange between young people from **Rožaje and Herceg Novi**, the project allowed participants to step outside their local environments and learn about the cultural, historical, and social specifics of another community. Cultural visits, joint tours, educational sessions, and informal gatherings allowed participants to explore interculturality, tolerance, and equality not only in theory, but through direct experience and personal interaction.

**Cultural evenings dedicated to dialogue and intercultural exchange** proved particularly valuable. During these events, young people, together with representatives of local institutions and experts in the fields of culture and social sciences, engaged in open discussions on the role of youth in building a society based on mutual respect and solidarity. These encounters showed that differences are not a barrier, but an opportunity for learning, understanding, and connection.

A total of **24 young people** took part directly in the project activities, while around **50 participants** were involved through the broader programme. The results are reflected in increased awareness among young people, stronger mutual trust, and the establishment of lasting connections between educational institutions and local actors from Rožaje and Herceg Novi. At the same time, the project strengthened cooperation between the two municipalities and demonstrated that young people can be active drivers of positive social change.



In addition, the project “**Minority rights through the lens of youth**”, launched at the end of July 2025 with the support of the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro, was designed as a space where young people can explore and present the richness of minority communities through creative work. Over the course of its ten-month implementation, the project combines photography and documentary video with themes of identity, everyday life, and intercultural dialogue, offering young people an opportunity to become active promoters of minority rights and visibility through visual storytelling.





From the very beginning, the project brought together ten young participants from different parts of Montenegro, whose diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds represent one of its key strengths. This diversity naturally created space for exchanging experiences, exploring different perspectives, and building mutual trust, laying a solid foundation for both fieldwork and creative collaboration.



An educational workshop in Ulcinj marked the second month of implementation, focused on photography and mobile video production. During the workshop, participants gained practical skills in visual storytelling and documenting the everyday lives of minority communities. Through a combination of theory, hands-on exercises, and ongoing mentoring, they were prepared for the next phase of the project- conducting independent research and creating their own visual stories.



The workshop was led by experts in interculturalism and visual arts, who introduced participants to both the broader social context and the technical aspects of working with a camera. A particularly valuable part of the programme was a session with film director Danilo Perišić, who will continue to support participants as a mentor during their fieldwork and the process of documenting authentic stories of minority communities.

In the next phase, participants will conduct fieldwork to collect visual materials and testimonies from members of diverse minority communities, documenting their life stories, everyday challenges, and cultural specificities. These materials will be presented through local exhibitions and public screenings in two Montenegrin municipalities, in the north and the south, creating space for dialogue with local communities and the wider public.



## RE COMMUNITY

The project “REal inclusion: through education and understanding to visibility, the realisation of rights and participation of the Roma and Egyptian community in public life” was an important initiative aimed at improving the position of Roma and Egyptian communities in Montenegro, while also responding to the real needs and everyday challenges they face in accessing rights, gaining visibility, and participating in public life.

From the outset, the project was designed as a comprehensive approach that combined education, media engagement, and the promotion of the culture and identity of Roma and Egyptian communities. Rather than focusing on short-term or isolated interventions, the activities aimed to create long-term change in public perceptions and reduce discrimination, while taking into account Montenegro’s strategic frameworks in the areas of minority rights and social inclusion. Through this approach, the project offered concrete recommendations and practical tools to strengthen participation and encourage more active involvement of the RE community in social processes.



One segment of the project called on journalists to report on the everyday lives of Roma and Egyptian communities. The call generated significant interest within the media community, with applications coming from most major newsrooms in Montenegro. The awarded stories not only documented the challenges faced by the RE community but also offered a more responsible and human-centred approach to reporting, helping to break down stereotypes and foster greater empathy among the public. The top three awards were presented to Aneta Đurović (Radio Free Europe), Petra Marković (RTV Nikšić), and Svetlana Čorić (RTCG), whose work demonstrated how professional journalism can be a strong ally in promoting inclusion and respect for human rights.



On the occasion of International Roma Day, Civic Alliance conducted an analysis titled **“Life in the ruins of unfulfilled promises – an analysis of the position of Roma in Montenegro”**<sup>1</sup>, to assess the actual social position of this community and identify the key challenges they face. The analysis covered demographic aspects and the situation in education, employment, healthcare, and housing, with a particular focus on the institutional response to issues affecting Roma communities. Special attention was given to concrete examples illustrating systemic shortcomings, including the 2024 fire in a Roma settlement in Bar, which highlighted gaps in both the timely response of institutions and the long-term handling of crises.

The findings show that Roma in Montenegro continue to face various forms of social exclusion, discrimination, and limited access to basic rights and public services. The analysis, therefore, concludes with a set of recommendations addressed to relevant institutions and organisations working with Roma communities, aimed at reducing discrimination, strengthening social inclusion, and developing sustainable policies that can lead to real improvements in their living conditions.

Key recommendations include stronger institutional action to address adequate housing and respond to crises, improving measures to support the inclusion of Roma children in the education system and prevent early school leaving, and developing policies that promote greater economic inclusion and employment opportunities. The importance of consistently addressing discrimination, improving access to healthcare, and strengthening cooperation between state institutions, local authorities, and civil society organisations was also emphasised to ensure long-term, sustainable improvements in the quality of life for Roma communities.

1 Life in the Ruins of Unfulfilled Promises: An Analysis of the Situation of Roma and Egyptian Women and Men in Montenegro, Podgorica, April 2025, <https://gamn.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/analiza-medjunarodni-dan-roma.pdf>



# DEALING WITH THE PAST AND RECONCILIATION

Dealing with the past remains one of the most sensitive yet most important issues in contemporary Montenegrin society. At a time when war crimes are increasingly being downplayed and historical revisionism often replaces facts, Civic Alliance continued throughout the year to advocate for a culture of remembrance based on truth, accountability, and respect for victims.

Remembering individuals such as Admiral Vladimir Barović and Toma Buzov is essential to this process, as their actions show that even in the most difficult moments of war, humanity and moral choice remained possible. Through public initiatives and advocacy for commemorative practices, Civic Alliance emphasised that genuine reconciliation cannot be built on forgetting or selective memory, but only on acknowledging crimes and showing empathy for victims.





In this context, Civic Alliance's activities focused on documenting war crimes, preserving memory, and promoting individual accountability as a foundation of transitional justice. The initiative to establish the "Tomo Buzov" award represents both a strong symbolic gesture and a socially responsible step towards institutionalising a culture of remembrance. The proposal to present the award annually on the anniversary of the abduction of passengers from the Belgrade-Bar train aims to serve as a lasting reminder of the crime in Štrpci, while also promoting the values of courage, solidarity, and resistance to injustice. Through these initiatives, Civic Alliance continued to create space for dialogue about the past, guided by the belief that only a society willing to confront its own legacy can build the conditions for lasting peace, trust, and a more just future.



# NEDELJA POSVEĆENA MEĐUNARODNOM DANU LJUDSKIH PRAVA

COMMEMORATION OF INTERNATIONAL  
HUMAN RIGHTS DAY 2025

5-7. decembar

Lokalno liderstvo  
i angažman mladih  
za bezbjedniju  
budućnost



8. decembar



OSNIVANJE ŽENSKOG  
ODBORNIČKOG KLUBA  
U OPŠTINI  
DANILOVGRAD

9. decembar



ZAJEDNO  
ZA DJEČIJA  
PRAVA

Susret i razgovori  
sa djecom iz Ukrajine

10. decembar

KONFERENCIJA  
VLADAVINA  
PRAVA  
U FIOKAMA  
PRAVOSUĐA?

11. decembar

Učešće  
žena  
u lokalnoj  
politici  
Crne Gore

Predstavljanje empirijske analize  
stavova i iskustava odbornica

13. decembar

Humanitarna  
fudbalska  
utakmica





**SCHOOL OF  
POLITICAL  
STUDIES**



## PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

The School of Political Studies is one of the core programmes of Civic Alliance, established to systematically strengthen the knowledge, skills, and values of those actively involved in political and public life, as well as those preparing for such roles. Its vision is to contribute to the development of a responsible, competent, and forward-looking political and social elite capable of understanding the complexity of democratic processes, acting independently, and driving positive change in society.

As a form of non-formal education, the School provides participants with a space to exchange experiences, gain both practical and theoretical knowledge, and develop critical thinking, while strongly promoting democratic principles, a culture of dialogue, and respect for the core values on which democratic societies are built. Particular emphasis is placed on reforms, the quality of political and party work, and understanding the EU integration process. In this way, the School contributes to strengthening the capacities of key actors and supports Montenegro on its path towards EU membership.

# 23



## generacija



## ŠKOLE POLITIČKIH STUDIJA



## EDUCATING FUTURE LEADERS

Each generation of the School of Political Studies brings together around 25 participants from different sectors of Montenegrin society, including political parties, civil society organisations, the media, and the public sector. Participants range from emerging young leaders to individuals in mid- and senior-level positions, creating a diverse group that fosters meaningful discussions and knowledge exchange.

The School of Political Studies of Montenegro concluded the activities of its 22nd generation on 4 June 2025 with a conference titled **“Is the path from reality to a green future a long one?”** The conference focused on Montenegro’s green transition, highlighting that the path towards a sustainable future requires the involvement of a wide range of actors, including public institutions, the private sector, local communities, civil society, and individual citizens. The current, 23rd generation includes 31 participants, confirming the School’s continued and important role as a platform for those committed to strengthening and promoting democratic values and principles in Montenegro.



Building on this understanding of young people as future drivers of change, the School continued to provide a structured educational platform within the 23rd generation. Particular emphasis was placed on empowering participants through thematic modules that enable them to gain knowledge and skills through direct interaction with decision-makers and experts.

In this context, the first module of the 23rd generation was organised under the title “The European Union in practice: What really awaits us?”, and was held from 26 to 28 September 2025 in Podgorica and Ulcinj.

The module opened at Europe House with introductory remarks by representatives of the organisers and relevant institutions, followed by a panel discussion with senior government officials, diplomats, and experts. The discussion focused on key reforms, the importance of EU membership, and its impact on the development of institutions, the economy, and society as a whole.



On the second day of the programme, thematic lectures were delivered by university professors, providing a broader perspective on the EU integration process, with a particular focus on EU financial instruments, the country's institutional preparedness, and the experiences of countries that have already gone through the accession process. On the final day, in Ulcinj, a panel discussion was held on the current state of the negotiation process, bringing together representatives of the Government, the judiciary, and civil society. The discussion addressed both the progress achieved and the ongoing challenges related to strengthening administrative capacities, implementing reforms, and building public trust in the EU integration process.



The importance of the module lies in the fact that it created space for a meaningful discussion on what the European path actually means in practice. It highlighted that, while the integration process is complex and demanding, it also represents an important opportunity for Montenegro's development. It was concluded that the successful continuation of this process requires the active involvement of all sectors of society, a genuine commitment to reforms, and a clear vision of Montenegro's role as a future member state - one that not only benefits from membership, but also actively contributes to shaping common European policies.

The second module of the School of Political Studies focused on the position of minority communities, with particular attention to Roma and Egyptian communities. Through interactive lectures, participants gained a better understanding of institutional discrimination, social exclusion, and the specific challenges faced by the RE community.



This kind of exchange of knowledge and experience helped build mutual trust and understanding, which are key to achieving long-term and sustainable social inclusion.



# WORLD FORUM FOR DEMOCRACY 2025



The School of Political Studies traditionally organises annual study visits to the World Forum for Democracy in Strasbourg. This year's Forum took place from 5 to 7 November and was attended by participants of the 23rd generation of the School of Political Studies.

This year's Forum focused on how quality journalism, culture, and civic engagement can strengthen democratic resilience. Participants had the opportunity to hear different perspectives and take part in discussions on supporting independent media, promoting and protecting artistic freedom, and building public trust through active citizen participation and deliberative democratic practices.

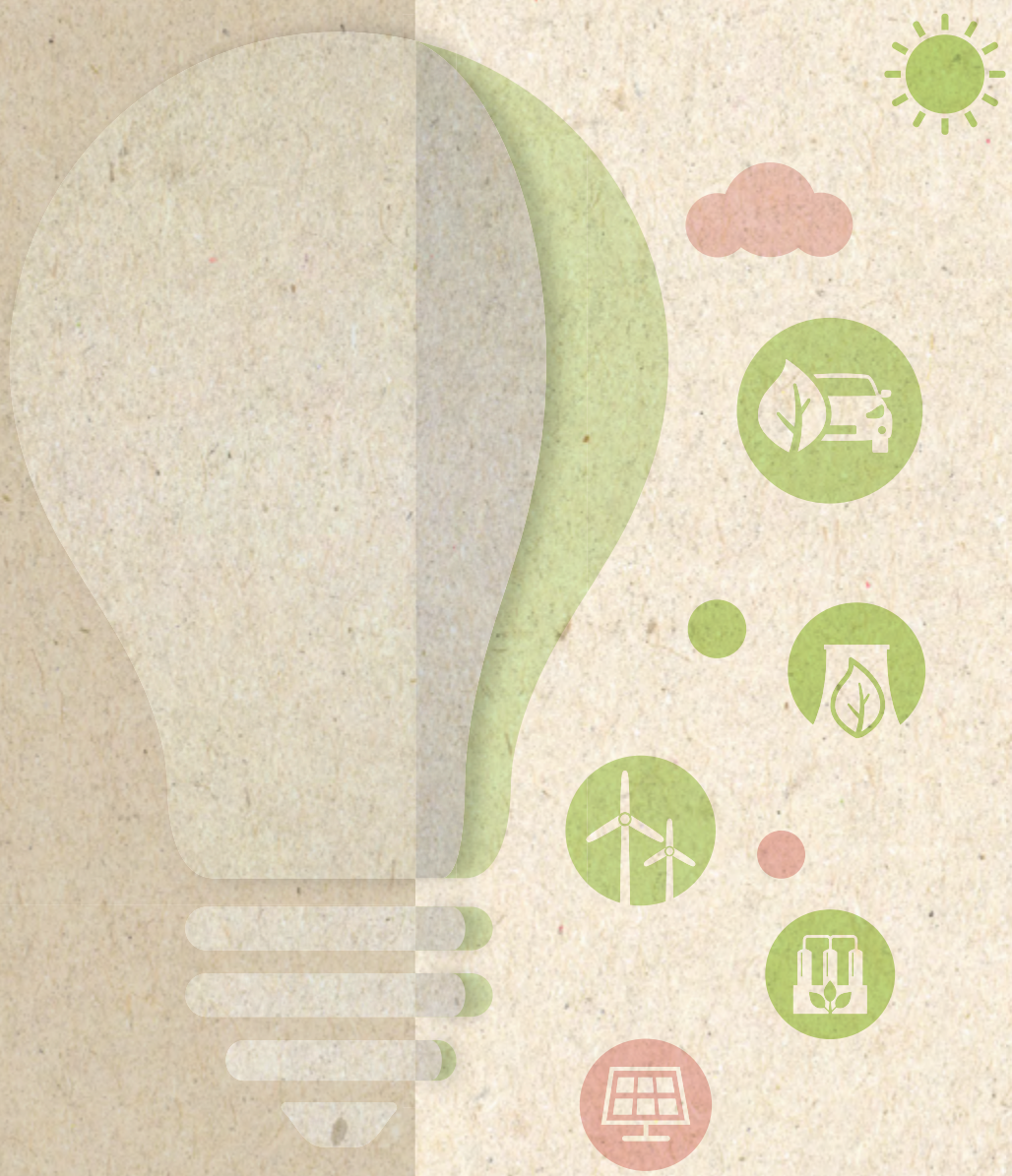
On the second day of the Forum, participants attended sessions highlighting innovative youth initiatives, the impact of artificial intelligence on democratic processes, the role of culture and the arts in promoting democratic values, and new approaches to civic education and participation.

During their stay in Strasbourg, the group also visited the European Court of Human Rights, where they met with the Vice-President of the Court, Ivana Jelić. She spoke about current challenges in the field of human rights, the Court's case law, and its broader role in upholding democratic standards across Europe.

The delegation also met with Montenegro's Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe, Ambassador Božidarka Krunić, who introduced them to the mission's priorities, ongoing activities within the Council of Europe, and key processes in which Montenegro is actively involved.



# CONTRIBUTION TO THE GREEN AGENDA



The project “Strengthening the capacity of the Green Parliamentary Group in Montenegro for Sustainable Energy and Urban Mobility” focused on enhancing the role of the Green Parliamentary Group (GPG), which was formally established in this parliamentary term in Montenegro’s Parliament.

Through the project, the GPG’s institutional capacities were strengthened, enabling it to act as a relevant stakeholder in advancing the EU’s energy and transport agenda in Montenegro. Particular attention was paid to improving MPs’ knowledge of decarbonisation, sustainable energy, and urban mobility, and to encouraging concrete parliamentary and public initiatives aligned with the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, with a strong emphasis on regional cooperation.



From January to May 2025, the School of Political Studies actively supported the work and visibility of the Green Parliamentary Group (GPG) through a series of high-level meetings, capacity-building activities, and regional exchanges. A particularly notable activity was the monitoring of a meeting between GPG members and the Director of the Transport Community Secretariat, held on 29 May 2025 at the Parliament of Montenegro.

In addition, on 14 April 2025, a national meeting of the Parliamentary Committee on Economy, Finance and Budget was organised with the Director of the Energy Community Secretariat, contributing to a more substantive dialogue on sustainable energy policies and Montenegro’s regional obligations.

Strengthening regional cooperation remained one of the key pillars of the project. Members of the Green Parliamentary Group (GPG) from Montenegro actively took part in two important regional events: a regional meeting of green parliamentary groups from the Western Balkans and the Transport Community, held on 23 April 2025 in Skopje, as well as the Final Conference of Green Parliamentary Groups of the Western Balkans, held on 16 May 2025 in Podgorica.

These events provided an opportunity for Members of Parliament from Montenegro to exchange experiences, align policy priorities, and further strengthen regional cooperation in sustainable energy and urban mobility. In addition, a study visit to Slovenia was organised from 7 to 9 April 2025, as a continuation of the established bilateral cooperation with the Green Club of Bosnia and Herzegovina. During the visit, examples of good practice in the energy sector were presented.

Further activities focused on connecting Members of Parliament and future leaders with institutions promoting environmentally sustainable development. On 17 March 2025, representatives of the Green Parliamentary Group and participants of the 22nd generation of the School of Political Studies visited national institutions with a strong environmental focus, contributing to a better understanding of how these policies are implemented in practice beyond the parliamentary framework.

By the end of the reporting period, the Green Parliamentary Group had brought together 25 MPs from different political parties, demonstrating strong cross-party commitment to sustainability, energy transition, and green urban mobility in Montenegro.

In addition to the programme activities of the School of Political Studies outlined above, it is also important to highlight the project **“Innovative Actions for a Green Future”**. Its implementation included a series of interconnected activities aimed at improving knowledge, raising public awareness, and encouraging dialogue on waste management and environmental protection in Montenegro.

Through research, public events, the production of educational content, and cooperation with institutions, experts, and the private sector, the project made a concrete contribution to a better understanding of environmental challenges and possible solutions. Particular emphasis was placed on developing expert analyses that provide a strong foundation for public policies and future initiatives in this area.

During the first quarter, a comprehensive analysis of new technologies in Waste Management was prepared, examining modern solutions from the region and across Europe and assessing their applicability in the local context. The document resulted in concrete recommendations for improving the waste management system and was subsequently technically finalised, publicly presented, and promoted through the media, social networks, and professional events.



At the same time, a **comparative analysis of public awareness of environmental issues from 1994 to 2024<sup>1</sup>** was also developed. Drawing on long-term public opinion research and relevant literature, the analysis provided valuable insight into how society's relationship with environmental protection has evolved. The document was actively shared with institutions and decision-makers, further encouraging public debate on the importance of environmental responsibility.

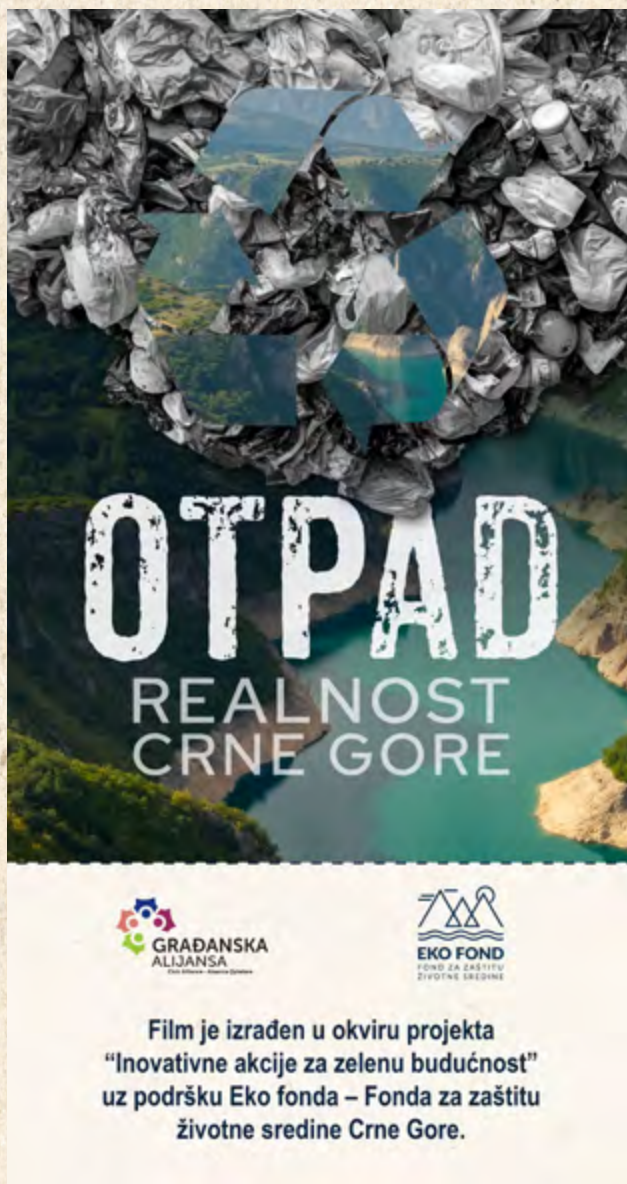


1 Montenegro as an Ecological State: 30 Years of (Un)Changed Awareness, Podgorica, May 2025, <https://gamn.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Crna-Gora-ekoloska-drzava-analiza-web.pdf>

An important part of the project focused on bringing environmental issues closer to the wider public through visually engaging and educational content. In this context, field research was conducted and a documentary film, “Waste: The Reality of Montenegro”<sup>2</sup>, was produced, highlighting the state of illegal landfills across the country.

Through authentic footage and interviews with citizens, experts, and institutional representatives, the film illustrates the scale of the problem and its impact on everyday life, aiming to raise awareness and encourage public engagement. The production was carried out professionally, with the film premiering at a public event and further promoted through digital channels.

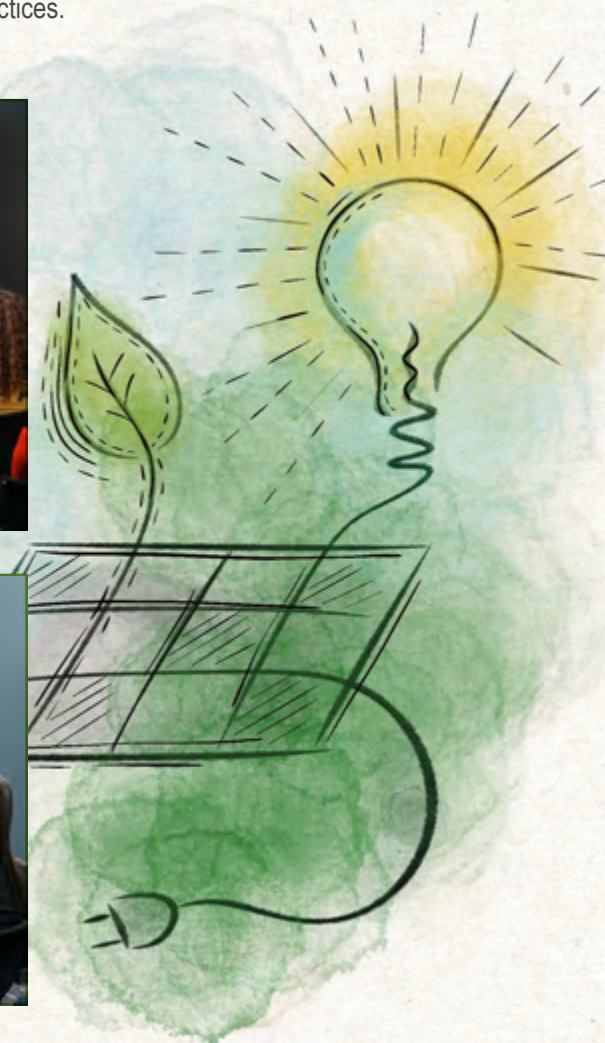
In addition to highlighting the challenges, the project also presented positive examples from practice. Through interviews with representatives from companies across sectors - including agriculture, hospitality, and telecommunications - various models of sustainable waste management, recycling, and resource efficiency were showcased. These materials were developed into video content and published on the organisation’s digital platforms, serving as both an educational tool and a source of inspiration for other stakeholders, particularly in the private sector.



2 Waste: The Reality of Montenegro, May 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qn2XH0xLxdw>

Another key contribution of the project was strengthening dialogue among relevant stakeholders. Two roundtable discussions were organised, bringing together representatives of national and local institutions, political actors, experts, activists, and civil society organisations.

Through structured discussions, field visits, and the exchange of experiences, space was created for open dialogue on the challenges of implementing green policies, improving waste management systems, and strengthening political accountability in this area. The conclusions and recommendations from these meetings further enriched the analyses produced within the project and helped shape concrete proposals to improve current practices.





The project was concluded with the conference “Is the Path from Reality to a Green Future a Long One?”, where it was emphasised that a successful green transition requires the joint effort of all actors- institutions, citizens, civil society, and the media. It was also noted that, with political courage, knowledge, and consistency from those leading the process, Montenegro could reach concrete green European standards within the next decade.

Overall, the project contributed to raising awareness, strengthening cooperation, and promoting sustainable waste management solutions through a combination of research, public campaigns, educational content, and dialogue with key stakeholders. Its systematic approach and diverse set of activities created a solid foundation for further promoting environmental values and improving environmental protection policies in Montenegro.



## IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND LESSONS LEARNED

The results achieved in 2025 confirm that targeted, long-term interventions, grounded in fieldwork, legal expertise, and direct engagement with communities, can have a visible and measurable impact. Through continuous support to migrants, refugees, stateless persons, and other vulnerable groups, as well as through analytical and advocacy work in the areas of justice and security, it has once again been demonstrated that civil society organisations play an indispensable role in identifying systemic weaknesses and driving reform processes. At the same time, experience shows that individual successes, however important, cannot replace the need for deeper, consistent, and sustainable institutional change.

In this context, particular attention was paid to improving women's position in politics and decision-making processes. Based on the understanding that there can be no democratic, accountable, and inclusive society without real gender balance, the work focused on identifying and addressing deeply rooted barriers faced by women- from stereotypes and informal discrimination to limited access to networks of power and resources. At the same time, concrete support mechanisms were developed to increase women's visibility, strengthen networking, and enable more active participation in decision-making. While these efforts helped empower women to engage more confidently in public and political life, they also highlighted the need for broader systemic change that goes beyond individual initiatives.

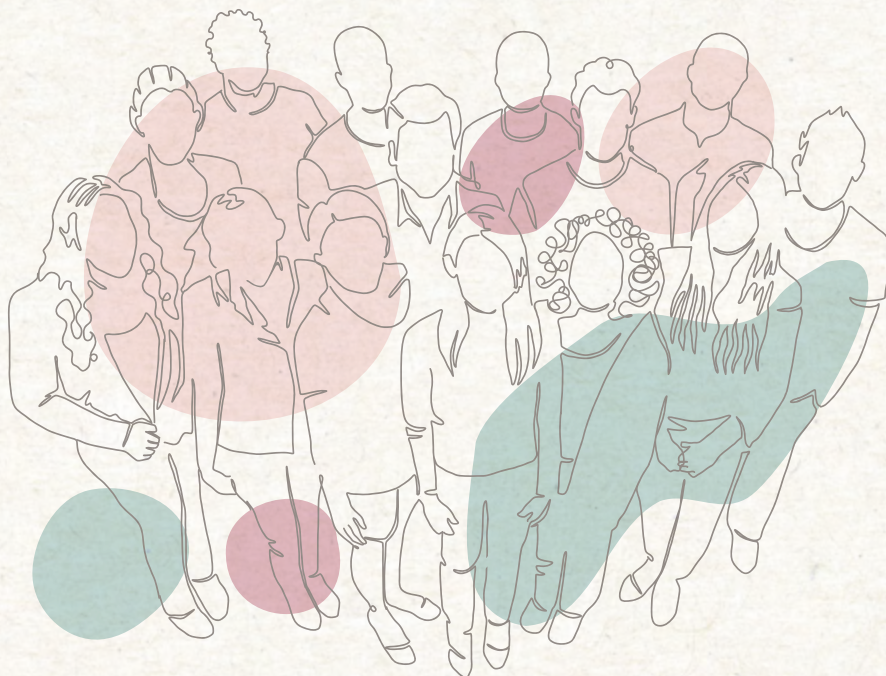
One of the key and long-standing challenges remains the judicial system's insufficient efficiency, as well as weak coordination between the judiciary and the police in law enforcement. These issues stem not only from institutional practice but also from shortcomings in the legislative framework, which further complicate the consistent application of the law in line with fair-trial standards and human rights protections. Lengthy proceedings, inconsistent case law, and the excessive use of restrictive measures, such as detention, point to the need for systemic solutions rather than fragmented and ad hoc interventions.

These challenges are particularly evident in the protection of the rights of persons deprived of liberty. In 2025, visits to police detention facilities across Montenegro revealed a significant gap between the legal framework and the reality on the ground. In many cases, material and hygiene conditions, available space, and access to necessities fell below international minimum standards. These findings serve as a reminder that deprivation of liberty does not mean deprivation of dignity and that detainees retain their fundamental rights. The lack of adequate conditions is not only an institutional shortcoming but also a serious risk of systemic human rights violations, making it essential to take urgent steps to ensure humane and dignified detention conditions.



At the same time, considerable attention was devoted to empowering young people as active participants in social processes, whose voices are increasingly important in shaping sustainable peace policies and strengthening social cohesion. Faced with limited opportunities for participation and underdeveloped institutional mechanisms for involvement in decision-making, young people often remain on the margins of political processes. Through the creation of sustainable platforms for dialogue between youth, civil society organisations, and institutional representatives, as well as through formalised cooperation with local authorities, a more stable framework for long-term support to youth initiatives has been established. This has gradually enabled the integration of youth priorities into local and national policies, representing an important step towards a more inclusive and participatory model of governance.

The issue of minority rights further reflects broader challenges in ensuring equality and non-discrimination in practice. Members of minority and marginalised communities continue to face disproportionate administrative barriers, uneven application of laws, and limited access to justice. Particular attention was paid to improving the position of Roma and Egyptian communities through a comprehensive approach that combined education, media visibility, and the promotion of cultural identity. Rather than short-term or fragmented measures, the focus was on long-term change in public perception and on reducing discrimination, while relying on existing strategic frameworks in minority policy and social inclusion. This approach contributed to greater visibility of these communities and stronger advocacy for their full participation in public life.



The current global context, marked by armed conflicts and prolonged crises, has further intensified migration flows and the need for effective protection of refugees and asylum seekers. In this context, Civic Alliance made significant efforts in 2025 to provide free legal aid and representation before state authorities, to protect the rights of individuals seeking safety in Montenegro. The focus was on resolving status issues, obtaining documentation, accessing social protection, and ensuring that beneficiaries are well informed about their rights and obligations.

Through individual consultations, legal counselling, and representation in international protection procedures, particular attention was given to strengthening legal certainty at the most sensitive stages of the process. This approach ensured that the rights of asylum seekers and refugees were not treated merely as formalities, but were addressed in substance, in line with international standards and principles of humanity.

The case of Dinara Smailova, a women's rights activist from Kazakhstan, clearly illustrates the importance of these protection mechanisms. Her exposure to politically motivated persecution, following years of work in protecting women from violence, shows how easily procedural errors, weak institutional cooperation, and inadequate handling can put an individual's life and freedom at risk. This case once again confirms that the protection of migrants and asylum seekers cannot be reduced to an administrative process, but must be treated as a responsible, carefully managed state policy, supported by strong oversight and an active role for civil society.






All of these lessons highlight that improving human rights in Montenegro requires action at multiple levels- normative, institutional, and practical. Strengthening inter-institutional cooperation, improving legislation, ensuring consistent application of international standards, and providing continuous training for judicial and police officials, as well as for future political actors in line with European democratic values, remain essential for building a system in which human dignity is truly protected.

In this sense, additional efforts to develop political culture and promote the principles of sustainable development also help raise awareness of the importance of the green transition as an integral part of modern public policies. Without such a comprehensive approach, individual progress will not be sufficient to address the complex challenges facing contemporary society.



# OUTLOOK






In 2026, strategic priorities will focus on strengthening the rule of law, improving the protection of human rights, and further supporting vulnerable groups, with particular attention to migrants, asylum seekers, and stateless persons. Emerging challenges, including growing security threats, the digitalisation of crime, and increasing social polarization, require responses that are both flexible and carefully considered, without undermining core democratic values.

At the same time, these developments create opportunities to strengthen regional cooperation, develop innovative mechanisms to protect rights, and foster closer links among institutions, the education system, and civil society. Our commitment to human rights, democracy, and education remains at the core of our work, guided by the belief that long-term stability and security can only be built on respect for human dignity and equality.





*Finally, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to all partners, donors, institutions, and supporters who recognised the importance of joint action and supported our work throughout 2025. We are especially grateful to the participants and beneficiaries of our programmes, whose experiences and trust have been the driving force behind our activities, as well as to our staff and collaborators, whose knowledge, dedication, and professionalism made these results possible. Together, we will continue working towards building a society based on justice, solidarity, and respect for human rights.*

Civic Alliance's  
total income and  
expenses in 2025  
amounted to

**€ 512.137,57**



# BOARDS AND MEMBERSHIPS IN COUNCILS

Throughout 2025, we continued to monitor the work of the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights and Freedoms and other parliamentary committees.

Representatives of Civic Alliance actively participated in the work of various working groups, councils, agencies, and boards, contributing significantly to the development and implementation of public policies in key areas. Their engagement helped improve coordination and regulatory frameworks, particularly in areas related to human rights and European integration.

**Aleksandra Dubak** is a member of the Ethics Committee of the Ministry of Interior.

**Pavle Čupić**, who was appointed President of the Council of the Agency for the Prevention of Corruption (APC) in August 2024, also served as a member of the Council for the Rule of Law during 2025. The work of this body includes monitoring the implementation of obligations under negotiation in Chapters 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights) and 24 (Justice, Freedom and Security) within Montenegro's EU accession process.

**Milena Vujović** is a member of the Negotiating Working Group for the preparation and conduct of Montenegro's EU accession negotiations for Chapter 24 (Justice, Freedom and Security). She also participates in the work of the Working Group drafting the Law on the Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms of Montenegro, as well as the Working Group drafting the Rulebook on the method for maintaining a special register of reported discrimination cases.

**Petar Vukčević** is a member of the Ethics Committee of the Customs Administration.

Through their engagement in these working groups and government bodies, representatives of Civic Alliance actively contribute to improving the human rights framework and strengthening institutional capacity. Their consistent work also supports the acceleration of Montenegro's EU accession process.

## DONORS

- Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Montenegro
- Rockefeller Brothers Fund
- Fund for the Protection and Realisation of Minority Rights of Montenegro
- Environmental Protection Fund (Eco-Fund)
- Ministry of Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro
- Ministry of Public Administration of Montenegro
- Ministry of European Affairs of Montenegro
- Ministry of Sports and Youth of Montenegro
- U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL)
- Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO)
- Council of Europe
- Save the Children
- Smart Balkans

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Pavle Ćupić, *Programme Coordinator*

Ivan Radulović, *Programme Coordinator*

Danijela Darmanović, *Communications Coordinator*

Aleksandra Dubak, *Project Coordinator*

Milena Vujović, *Project Coordinator*

Jelena Ristović, *Project Coordinator*

Jelena Ristić, *Office Manager*

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