

CIVIL SOCIETY CLUSTER | Communities are Fortresses of Freedom! - Networking and empowering NGOs and communities online and offline

Mapping

General Overview

Bulgaria is an EU member state since 2007. It remains the poorest EU member state with lowest GDP. According to Eurostat about 40 % of the population lives in poverty or social exclusion which is the highest percentage in the EU.

The annual report “Sustainability Index of NGOs in Bulgaria in 2018¹” published by the Bulgarian Center for Not-for-Profit Law shows that at the end of 2017 there were almost 50,000 registered NGOs in Bulgaria. However, the National Statistical Institute reports that only about 13,500 NGOs have submitted annual reports. In 2017 there have been 400 new NGOs registered. The report says that: “There has been a slight deterioration in the sustainability of NGOs throughout the year. The decline in financial sustainability is due to the continued lack of funding opportunities for NGOs, and the deterioration of public prestige is the result of persistent negative campaigns against civil society organizations. The continued attacks on NGOs have forced them to start thinking about ways to counteract the negative rhetoric, which has led to a slight improvement in the sectoral infrastructure indicator. There was also a slight improvement in organizational capacity during the year, thanks to new social movements that attracted public attention and received public support.”

According to a survey commissioned by the Bulgarian Center for Not-for-Profit Law and conducted by Alpha Research in October 2018, only 9 % of people had contact with NGOs and only 3 % were members of NGOs. The survey also found that 60 % of respondents did not participate in any civic initiative (including donation) in the previous year.

¹ <http://bcnl.org/analyses/indeks-za-ustoychivost-na-nepravitelstvenite-organizatsii-npo-v-balgariya-za-2018-g.html>

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The report examines several indicators and monitors the progress Bulgaria is making:

- Legal framework – “The Bulgarian NGOs continue to enjoy freedom of association, expression and peaceful assembly. Although the outcome for the legal environment remains unchanged, in 2018 the sector is influenced by active legislative activity.”
- Organizational capacity – “Organizational capacity in the sector has improved slightly in 2018 thanks to new social movements that have attracted public attention and received public support throughout the year. Despite this positive trend, NGOs are still in a difficult period of development and many are struggling to survive. For example, according to the National Volunteer Alliance, 27 % of their members were not active.”
- Financial sustainability – “The financial sustainability of NGOs declines in 2018, largely due to the continued lack of funding opportunities. As there are almost no major donors in the country over the last few years, NGOs did not have access to regular funding and had long periods without funding, which forced some of them, especially smaller organizations, to cease operations.”
- Advocacy – “There are no significant changes in advocacy in 2018. Although the legislation provides for public consultation, there are cases where the government or MPs avoid holding them. Although public consultation on draft laws must take place before they are submitted to parliament, MEPs often make substantial changes to the texts between first and second reading, circumventing this requirement.”
- Service provision – “In 2018, there has been no significant change in the provision of services by NGOs. NGOs continue to offer a wide range of services in the areas of education, culture, social affairs and the environment. NGOs provide many services for free. Most NGO services are targeted at a much wider range of users than their members, although NGOs need to develop their marketing capacity, as they have traditionally accessed a small group of potential customers.”
- NGO infrastructure – “In 2018, there has been a slight improvement in the infrastructure of the NGO sector, as continued attacks on NGOs over the past few years have prompted organizations to start discussing how to counteract negative rhetoric. Existing NGO coalitions such as the

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National Children's Network, the Civic Involvement Forum and the Bulgarian Donor Forum continue to be the main source of expertise and support for capacity building in support of NGOs. These coalitions provide training, consultation and information to their members.”

- Public prestige – “In 2018, there is a moderate deterioration in the public image of the sector. The Foundation for Humanities and Social Research monitors anti-democratic propaganda in the media in 2017. According to their report, published in 2018, one of the leading propaganda messages is related to the corrupt elites in Bulgaria. The propaganda messages put together representatives of opposition political parties, businessmen and NGOs in a common group, all of whom are defined as "grantees", "sorosoids" and "puppets". Such propaganda aims to discredit any criticism or alternative ideas on the part of NGOs. The report also states that publications that propagate such propaganda "violate all standards of professional journalism". A survey conducted by the NGO Information Portal in September 2018 found that more than 46 per cent of the NGOs surveyed reported that their organizations had been hit very hard or badly by the anti-NGO campaign. At the same time, there are still media outlets presenting the views of NGOs and publishing positive reports and material on them. At the local level, the media are particularly open and active in seeking news from NGOs.”

This mapping will focus on the civil society structures that deal with migrant integration

International Organizations

UN Agency for Refugees Bulgaria

International Organization for Migration Bulgaria

Bulgarian Red Cross

Caritas

Non-Governmental Organizations

Bulgarian Council on Refugees and Migrants

Bulgarian Helsinki Committee

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Council on Refugee Women

Center Nadya

FAR – Foundation for Access to Rights

CVS Bulgaria

Multi Kulti Collective

Open Sofia Foundation

Refugee Support Group

Informal Groups

Artist Tree Sofia

Caritas Sofia volunteers and friends

Online Communities

Foreigners in Sofia and Friends

Creative – Sofia

Friends of the Refugees (Приятели на бежанците)

Expats / Foreigners in Sofia Bulgaria & Friends :D

Bulgarian & Expat Friends

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