

Newsletter



Central and Eastern Europe Citizen Network, Newsletter

Issue no. 5 – 6, March 2005

Central and Eastern Europe
Citizen Network

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Passing of our special friend and warrior

This past August, we received the terrible news that our very special friend and democracy fighter Victor Djorgov had tragically died. A year prior, Victor had a re-occurrence of a disease from ten years ago but we were all certain that he would soon be back with us. Earlier this year, it appeared that he would indeed recover. But then later in the spring, he got worse and never really recovered.

Victor was such a special person for many reasons. He was a strikingly handsome, strong and obviously talented young man. His wife and young daughter were the center of his life. Many of us will always remember when we would see him after some time how we would almost immediately get out his laptop computer and start showing his latest pictures.

But what we also knew about Victor was his passion for democracy and a warrior in fighting to ensure that citizens had their place in the new systems being set up throughout Central and Eastern Europe. His leadership with CEGA was obvious in the important work they continue to conduct across Bulgaria.

The CEE Citizens Network was one of the fortunate beneficiaries of Victor's special talents and energy. Shortly after it's founding, Victor joined the Coordinating Team and the Networks growth is attributable in part to him many contributions. The re-design of the web site was completely undertaken through his efforts. He was also one of the staunchest advocates in helping to move the Network to pro-activity. And these are but a few of his many contributions.

We will miss you Victor, our special friend and warrior.
Chuck Hirt

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The CEE Citizens Network & The International Association "Civitas Georgica"
are pleased to announce
The Representative Team Meeting of the CEE Citizens Network

Dear colleagues,

The CEE Citizens Network and the International Association "Civitas Georgica" have the pleasure to invite you to the Representative Team meeting of the CEE Citizens Network. The meeting will be held on April 1-2, 2005 in Tbilisi, Georgia.

The Representative Team meeting is important for member organizations to have the opportunity to share experiences and suggest ideas for the future development of the network. The working language of the meeting is English.

The meeting will be held in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, at the hotel "Iliani" (www.iliani.com)

The CEE Citizens Network has received a grant from the C.S. Mott Foundation. Thanks to that we are able to cover all your travel, accommodation and meals expenses. Regarding the visa issues, please send your requests to gmeskhidze@civitas.ge in order to receive the invitation letters those who need visas to enter Georgia. Most of you can get visa on Georgian border.

For any further information or assistance please do not hesitate to contact us.

International Association "Civitas Georgica"

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Looking forward to see you all in Georgia.
Giorgi Meskhidze

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The CEE CN Conference in Belgrade, May, 2005

One of the main events organized every two years by the CEE CN is a conference with international participation. This year, the event will take place in Belgrade, between the 12th and the 15th of May.

The delegation from each country represented in the network will include 3 civic activists, 1 representative of local authority, CEE CN representative and one staff person of each member organization within the country.



About 25 US participants, 25 participants from Serbia, donors and special guests such as a EU councilor etc, will also attend the conference. We are still looking for funding possibilities so if you have some idea, please let me know

If you would like to attend this event, please get in touch with the NGO that represents your country within the CEE CN (all contact information are available at www.ceecn.net) or with Anna Karailieva which is the CEE CN coordinator (anna@ceecn.net)

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Best Practice Database initiated by the CEE CN

The Central and Eastern Europe Citizen Network (CEE CN) is a coalition of NGO's from the Central and Eastern part of Europe. This informal structure, soon to become formal, brings together over 20 NGO's from 16 countries.

The mission of the CEE Citizen Network is to promote citizen participation in CEE and provide opportunity for grassroots initiatives to learn and exchange experiences and ideas.

During its last events, the members of the network agreed to create a system that will allow **better exchange of the information** regarding the NGO's specific activities in the field of citizen participation. Thus, we decided to create a **data-base with best practice examples** that will be available on the internet, on the CEE CN website (www.ceecn.net) in the 2nd semester of 2005.

After the creation of the database, we plan to award prizes to those NGO's in the Central and Eastern Europe region that best implemented various types of projects in the field of citizen participation.

That is why we are asking you to **participate along with us in the creation and development of this Best Practice database**. We would like your organization to send us a material about one of your citizen participation success stories that will include the following topics:

- 1. Description of the environment /background / framework*
- 2. Objectives and activities*
- 3. Description of the implementation*
- 4. Impact, results and lessons learned*
- 5. Contact information.*

This material should be in **English** and should not be more than **3 pages long** (Microsoft Word, Times New Roman, 12p). If you want to send us more than one best practice example, we would be more than happy to include all your material in the database.



The best practice examples should be sent as soon as possible through email on the following e-mail address (cee_cn_database@yahoo.com) or to the representative of the CEE Citizen Network from your country.

We strongly believe that you will join us in creating this best practice database, in order to better exchange information and ideas throughout the region.

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Presentation of CEE Citizens Network on the Public Participation Conference in Berlin

The coordinator of the Network, Anna Karailieva, was invited by European Academy of the Urban Environment from Berlin to present CEE Citizens Network in their conference on Public participation in urban development in the enlarged EU. The conference was supported by the European Commission and took place in Berlin on November 3-4, 2004. Participants to the conference have had a chance to hear presentations and consequently discuss on the following topics: *Europe for its citizens, Cooperative urban development and Public participation – implementation in everyday life*. The title of Anna's presentation was "*CEE Citizens Network and its work in supporting committed citizens in public participation*". She focused on the main activities of the Network as well as on the Pro-active agenda as the work plan of the Network for the next two years. During work in the working groups' participant discussed the decision making processes in urban development and formulated public participation strategies answering questions such as:

- How does one develop a public participation project from an idea to practical implementation?
- What framework conditions need to be present to successfully build up a culture of public participation (at local and national level)?
- How does one win over political figures and members of administrative bodies for public participation processes?

As a follow-up from the conference it is planned to produce a publication on CD and hopefully it will be posted on CEE CN web site.

Anna Karailieva

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News from Center for Civil Initiatives, Zagreb, Croatia

What is new in the NGO sector in Croatia:

During the months of October and November 600 NGO activists and representatives of local self-government from all over Croatia attended seminars in 5 target places in order to get training in applying for the EU CARDS program in social service delivery. There were 22 trainers, Croatian NGO trainers and NGO leaders that were prepared for this task by the PLS Ramboll management, a Danish consultant organization. This is the first intent in Croatia to educate larger group of interested activists in submitting proposal to the European Union CARDS program. The National Foundation recognized the need for such training programs for Development of Civil Society and the foundation would be delivering grants in social service delivery after the completion of application procedure. First participants' impressions from the seminars include confusion, overwhelming information, and fear from log-frame matrix and budget. However, most of participants believe that recognizing a problem that they have represents a higher level of understanding and knowledge than being ignorant as they were before the training. Center for Civil Initiatives has its representatives among the training group as well

What is new in the region of Banovina where CCI operates:

For the past year CCI runs the program of New Democratic Approaches in decision Making Processes in Banovina. Through this program we assisted in four target municipalities in establishing and developing of Citizens Advisory Committees (CAC), informal body of elected and respected community members whose role is to monitor the work of local authorities and private sector, listens to the community voices, conducts needs assessments, recognizes problems and looks for solutions and finally negotiates with local government implementation of community projects.

During November in three municipalities Citizens Advisory Committees initiated installation of «Citizens' mail box», a mail box in which citizens are invited to put suggestions, comments, gratitude, critiques during the month. At the end of the month CAC members open the mailbox, read the citizens contributions and respond at the Public Board in the City Hall. This helps citizens to be informed about various community issues and be more engaged in solving problems and influencing the decision-making processes

Coordination of Towns and Municipalities in Banovina:

The town of Petrinja in which CCI runs its branch office recently invited other 6 towns and 14 municipalities within the County to join the informal Coordination of Towns and Municipalities with the main purpose of joint planning for economic development of the region and joint regional suggestions to the national government. This Coordination would also have a lobbying role for changes of rules and regulations that considers areas of special state concern such as Banovina. The town of Petrinja would have a role of leader of this Coordination and the role of creating Rules of Coordination through cooperation with CCI and our branch office led by Drago Vrucinic.

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Projects of the Hungarian Association for Community Development

Building Civil Society in Europe Through Community Development

International Conference, Budapest, 25-28 March 2004

One hundred and thirty community workers, researchers, donors and policy-makers, and representatives from government, civil society organisations and community groups, from 33 countries across the European Union and beyond, met March 25-28 2004 at an international conference, to prepare for the accession of ten new countries to the EU. The conference - focused on *building civil society in Europe through community development* - was sponsored by the International Association for Community Development, the Combined European Bureau for Social Development, and the Hungarian Association for Community Development under the patronage of the President of Hungary.

Delegates attending the March 2004 Budapest conference, representing civil society organisations, governments, donor agencies and community groups, acknowledge the priority now being given by the European Union to strengthen civil society and emphasise the important role which community development can play in supporting that process and protecting the human rights of all. They request the EU, national, regional and local governments - as appropriate - to commit themselves actively to build a socially and economically inclusive, diverse, environmentally sustainable and socially just society, and to ensure the structures, policies and mechanisms are in place to support dialogue between the EU and members states on the one hand and civil society on the other. This will require both moral and practical support for community participation, and appropriate legal, institutional and material conditions, but with specific support for community development itself.

A key conference objective was to agree a common statement on community development in Europe, to be directed to the EU, national governments and other key stakeholders.

1st Interdisciplinary Summer Camp in Kunbabony 11-15 August 2004

Developing Community Involvement

The 1st Interdisciplinary Summer University was organized by the Hungarian Association for Community Development, the Civil College Foundation and the Hungarian Institute for Culture between 11 –15 August 2004 in Kunbáony, Hungary.

The goal of the Summer Camp was to initiate dialogue about possible interdisciplinary roles and opportunities for cooperation among different professional fields. Hence, our first meeting focused on the opportunities of developing community involvement, mobilizing citizens and involving local residents into decision-making. These are issues that serve as basic conditions for democracy, and that, at present, are the most important priorities in European Union programmes



The following professional fields were addressed: Cultural management, Development work (regional development, community development, technical development professions), Social work, and Environmental conservation.

The Summer University was implemented as a summer camp where, besides learning and exchanging experiences, participants were given the opportunity to get to know each, relax and make new friends. Hence, activities such as musical/dance programmes, watching videos, collective campfires and cooking were organized alongside the formal lectures and workshops.

We set a tent for each professional field in the yard of the Civil College, and the representatives of the professions initiated workshop activities on a daily basis.

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OPEN SPACE CONFERENCE: "How can we organise co-operation and participation for tomorrow's cities and regions today?"
Berlin, 2 - 3 June 2005

Dear Sir or Madam,
Dear colleagues,

We would like to invite you to the open space conference on co-operative urban and regional development on June 2nd and 3rd 2005 in Berlin. This conference is the jointly organised by Büro Blau, Berlin, the European Academy of the Urban Environment and others.

The event deals with the question:

"How can we organise co-operation and participation for tomorrow's cities and regions today?"

Many European cities and regions are experiencing great challenges at present. Demographic changes, decrease in population and migration, international competitiveness of locations and the effects of the climate change are some of the developments, which will increasingly alter the life in our communities. What can instruments of co-operation and participation offer already today in order to stay able to act against this background?

Are you a local player in a town or a region? Decision-maker from economy, politics, administration or non-governmental organizations? Scientist, consultant or planner from Germany or another European country? – Then you are right at this conference!



The one and half day conference offers an information pool and a platform for the exchange of knowledge, in order to profit mutually from good experiences, to learn from mistakes and to win new impulses for your own work. It gathers experts from various disciplines, who offer answers to burning questions, are prepared to enter the dialogue between colleagues and enrich personal networks. The open space method provides room for a creative working atmosphere, in which new co-operation and new ideas for projects can develop. We use this method in order to promote the exchange of experiences beyond the boundaries and limits of countries, professions and hierarchies.

The event takes place at the Elias parish hall in Berlin-Prenzlauer Berg. A reduced conference fee of 100,- Euro is payable for registrations and payments until March 31st 2005 (price for an early booking). The standard price for a registration after this date is 120,- Euro. The conference fee includes food and beverages consumed during the conference. Presumably, for a total of 18 participants from the new EU Member States (or the Candidate countries) the European Academy for Urban Environment (EAUE) can make a contribution towards the expenses for participation and travelling. Further information and a registration form you can find under www.bueroblau.de/os2005/invitate.html.

We would be happy to welcome you in Berlin on June 2nd!

With kind regards,

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*If you want to learn more about CEE CN and its activities, please visit us at www.ceecn.net
The opinions stated in the articles belong entirely to their authors. You can contact us at catalinfraneulea@yahoo.com*