



European Training Foundation

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS AND HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

Report Country Serbia

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FOREWORD

The voice and action of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in non-formal and informal learning supports young and adult people to access lifelong learning and contribute to attaining a quality education for all, as described by Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4).

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the CSOs are revisiting their activities in non-formal and informal learning and support to employment as a way forward in the new reality. Fast-moving global developments and Covid-19 disruptions have forced CSOs to rapidly adapt their services to stay closer than ever to local beneficiaries, and often to innovate.

These are among the overall conclusions of the ETF survey on the response to Covid19 by CSOs that act on human capital development (HCD), specifically non-formal and informal learning and support to employment. The ETF survey was conducted in 2020, building on previous work in this sector. It covered six countries: Albania, Jordan, Serbia, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

The ETF survey results feed the reflection about the role of CSOs as a mediator between public authorities and citizens. They provide relevant input in national and local policy dialogue as monitors, advocates and partners, although often they are merely consulted with limited effect on the policy decisions. Together, CSOs and institutional bodies could do more to promote HCD in changing societies and ensure that learning is effectively accessible, and that no one is left behind.

The objective of the survey was to appraise the CSOs' operational capacity in HCD, and their dynamics and resilience in the context of the pandemic crisis. For example, the survey appraised CSOs' proactivity vs reactivity in a time of emergency, their capacity to mobilise resources (human, financial), innovation and anticipation context, organisational learning capacity, complementarity concerning the action of local and national governments, and plans for the future.

Regarding the CSOs work in HCD, the survey focussed on:

- Skills development through non-formal and informal learning of young and adult people;
- Employment-related services that support the learning-employment link;
- Awareness-raising and advocacy on skills development and employment;
- Knowledge creation, utilisation and exchange on skills development and employment.

The Serbia Country report provides the results of the ETF survey on CSOs that implement HCD-related activities in the country. It draws a portrait of the CSOs that in Serbia contribute to HCD, including the challenges and opportunities they face.

The report starts with an introduction of the study's objectives, methodology and the CSOs country policy framework. Chapter 1 provides the profile of the CSOs that took part in the survey. Chapter 2 presents the findings related to the CSOs response to the Covid-19 pandemic effects on HCD. The report analyses the CSOs and Stakeholders and policy dialogue in Chapter 3 and the potential for future contributions to HCD in Chapter 4. The findings of interviews with a small group of CSOs beneficiaries are presented in Chapter 5. Finally, Chapter 6 structures the conclusions around key issues

and presents recommendations about the CSOs' current engagement, role, and potential for the future in the HCD sector.

The author of this report is Aleksandra Calosevic, who has carried out the survey in Serbia. The concept, design, and methodology of the survey is the ETF team's responsibility, namely the team of experts, Siria Taurelli (coordinator), Margareta Nikolovska, Stylianos Karagiannis, Ian Cumming, and Nadezda Solodjankina. The ETF has also prepared a summary of the main findings across all 6 countries that participated in the survey to overview their commonalities and differences, which can be found in the ETF Open Space. The aim is to draw general conclusions and support mutual learning and allow a joint reflection on the conditions that enable CSOs to be active in designing, implementing, monitoring, and assessing policies on HCD.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CIVICUS - World Alliance for Citizen Participation

COVID 19 - Coronavirus Disease of 2019

CSO – Civil Society Organization

EC – European Commission

EU – European Union

FB - Facebook

HCD – Human Capital Development

LLF – Life-long Learning

MOOC - Massive Open Online Course

SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals

INTRODUCTION

Serbia has a long-standing tradition of civil society practices, that can mostly be traced back to late 19th century¹. Post WW2 period (of Yugoslavia) was marked with civil society ethos functioning within the strict boundaries of the predominant ideological context. After the collapse of real-socialism, CSOs advocating for democratic political culture have also emerged, many of which functioned in detrimental conflict with the state, during the 90's turbulent years. The legal framework currently governing CSOs is centred around several laws, governing the sphere of associations, endowments and foundations; volunteering, adult education, youth and financing of programs of public interest. The fact that '*a national strategy and action plan to help create a positive environment for CSOs have still not been adopted*' and that '*the enabling environment for the development and financing of civil society still needs to be established*' is mentioned in the last EC Progress report². Law on public procurement in the country allows for the procurement of services in education and vocational training areas from, inter alia, CSOs. The Law on budget provides for the allocation of funds for CSOs activities in the sphere of youth employment. Adult education law recognises CSOs as adult education providers, provided they are registered for such activities and acquire a status of a 'publicly recognised adult education provider'. National employment action plans also foresee involvement of CSOs in implementation. With the formation of the recent Government (2020) and launch of a new Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue, previously established Office for Cooperation with Civil Society, a main focal point for ensuring cooperation between the civil society sector and government was closed, which caused concerns in the sector³.

As per the latest data⁴, there is over 32,000 associations (in additional to 900 foundations) registered in the country, two thirds of which were registered in the last decade. Half of these CSOs are operating without any income and/or turnover. Some 32% of registered CSOs are working in the area of research and education and 34% in the area of non-institutionalised learning and additional education/training. Most (3 quarters) believe that their influence in both local and national public policy making is minimal. Sustainability of services remains an issue. Many CSOs (around 30%) believe that education is one of the most challenging problems in the country. It is likely that around 8,000 people are working in the sector⁵. According to some authors, the sector is currently, undergoing some important trajectory changes⁶ which relate to a transition to services provision, instead of pursuit of socio-political change. The level of citizens' confidence in civil society organizations is still limited, as CSOs are perceived as not making an impact on the daily life of citizens.

According to the Law on Adult Education, adult education is part of the Serbian education system and its purpose is to provide adults with continuous acquisition of competences and qualifications that are crucial for their employment, professional development and socially responsible behaviour. Formal Adult

¹ Further details can be found in

https://www.undp.org/content/dam/serbia/Publications%20and%20reports/English/UNDP_SRB_Civil_Society_in_Serbia_-_Suppressed_during_the_1990s_-_Gaining_Legitimacy_and_Recognition_after_2000_-_CIVICUS_Civil_Society_Index_Report_for_Serbia.pdf. Some of the early CSOs include for example Society for Support of Serbian Literature (established 1881), Workers Alliance (established 1903), Hevra Kadisa (established 1729), Society of Serbian Youth (established 1847).

² Report available at https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/serbia_report_2020.pdf

³ See, for example <https://www.gradjanske.org/en/civil-society-concerned-about-the-abolition-of-the-office-for-cooperation-with-civil-society/>

⁴ Data and further details can be found in https://act.org.rs/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/CSO-Sector-in-Serbia-2019_Summary_WEB.pdf

⁵ Source available at https://monitoringmatrix.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Serbia_English_CMV-2019-CIVIC_INITIATIVES.pdf

⁶ See for example <https://www.secons.net/files/publications/75-publication.pdf>

education is based on the approved national curricula within the primary and secondary education systems, with two types of programmes: general formal education, which aims to raise achievement in basic skills, and vocational formal education, aiming to acquire a recognised qualification during adulthood. Non-formal adult education is defined as an organized adult learning process through specially developed programmes for the acquisition of knowledge and skills required for professional development as a prerequisite condition for successful employment and participation in society.

There are 3 types of institutions that may implement adult education and training programmes:

- General and vocational education schools, (regular schools, schools specialised for adult learning)
- Public service operators (founded by the Government and/or local authorities, for example, National Employment Serbia, Centres for the Professional Development of Adults)
- Publicly recognised training providers (may include nongovernmental organisations, associations, open universities, career centres, consulting and training centres, private schools or any other licenced provider)

Licensed training providers are approved by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, and they need to fulfil adult education standards as prescribed by the Law on Adult Education. When such standards are met, the provider receives a 5 year renewable license. Currently the register of 'publicly recognised adult education providers'⁷ includes 262 entries, of which around 15 are related to associations/foundations, i.e. CSOs. It is also worth noting that, as EC reports, lifelong learning participation is far below the national and EU targets in the country⁸.

According to study participants who took part at the validation meeting in December 2020, the system of non-formal education in Serbia is still not at a high level and very few organizations are involved in non-formal education, mostly because of unstable sources of funding, but also as the system of accreditation is difficult. The outdated system of formal education affects the development of the system of non-formal education. Employers still insist on formal education, although non-formal education is perhaps even better tailored to their needs. Similarly, to other country's experiences, marginal groups see their chance in non-formal education to improve their lives, which is of utmost importance for the social equality quality of the LLF.

⁷ Serbian 'javno priznati organizator aktivnosti obrazovanja odraslih (JPOA)', register is available at <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/SPISAK-JPOA-OO-za-SAJT-262.xls>, (accessed November 2020).

⁸ Report available at https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/serbia_report_2020.pdf

CHAPTER 1 ORGANISATIONAL BACKGROUNDS

Database and CSOs who took part in the survey

For the purposes of this survey a database of 31 CSOs active in the area of lifelong learning in Serbian was developed. This database includes a mix of CSOs working at transnational, national and local level and a mix of CSOs active in research and policy analysis and those providing direct services to the beneficiaries, including training and learning related activities to groups such as migrants, refugees, IDPs, youth and/or people with disabilities. The surveyed CSOs are diverse as per their area of activity, years of establishment, mission grasp and interests. They include CSOs who are membership based and advocate for a certain group in need (i.e. Multiple sclerosis association Pčinja district Vranje, Childs' heart; working with people with physical/intellectual disability); non-membership based CSOs who work to support local development (i.e. Association for development of creativity Aleksinac; Citizen Association for Development and Cooperation, Educational Center Krusevac, Timok Club Knjazevac, Association of citizens 'Refresh'); foundations (Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation); CSOs working at national level on longer term with diverse programmes, including re-granting for grassroots (Group 484, Belgrade Open School); CSOs working on national level and serving as a 'voice' of overall CS sector (Civic Initiatives); social partners (Union on employers); CSOs mainly working in business support and support to employment/employability (Business Development Center Kragujevac, Business Innovation Programs Serbia) and CSOs working mainly on career guidance and counselling (Euro guidance Serbia). The CSOs who took part in the survey are presented in Annex 1 (CSO database), and total 15.

Findings

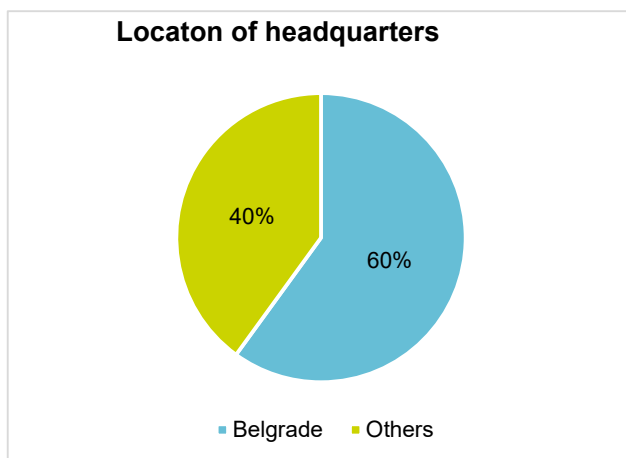


Figure 1 Location of HQ among surveyed CSOs

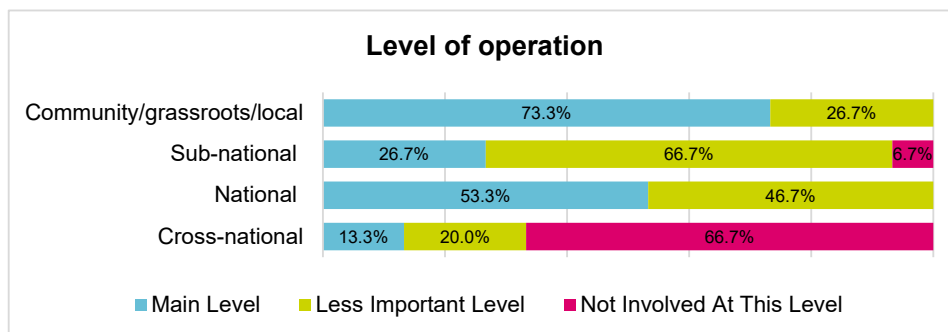
As per the results retrieved, the largest number of organizations surveyed are in the capital city (60%). This largely reflects the picture of overall CSO ethos in Serbia, as well as the fact that quarter of the population of Serbia resides in Belgrade.

Majority of the CSOs surveyed do not have any additional offices apart from their headquarters (80%). Again, this reflects the overall sector situation, where CSOs are not known for having vast resources, such as branch and/or field offices and where the civil society activity is largely localised.

Further research in the area also reveals that regarding office premises, 68% of CSOs rent and only 12% own the premises they work at⁹⁹. This is also linked to generally perceived weaker financial capacity among the CSO sector.

⁹⁹⁹ See <http://tacso.eu/publication-list/needs-assessment-report-serbia-updated-2016/>

Most surveyed CSOs operate at the local, grassroots level (73,3%). Most also do not operate at



transnational level (66.7%). Around a half of the CSOs operate at the national level (53,3%). The picture revealing is that more the

Figure 2 Operation base

CSOs actions are localised, less chances there are that they would enter the transnational/international arena and/or activity. Around one third (26,7%) of the surveyed CSOs operate at sub-national level. There seems to be a vast potential for many surveyed CSOs to enter international/national fields of work, offer their knowledge and learn from peers and/or take part in the global international civil society activities. However, it should also be noted that 73% of CSOs participate in one or more networks, and 26% manage a civil society network in Serbia.

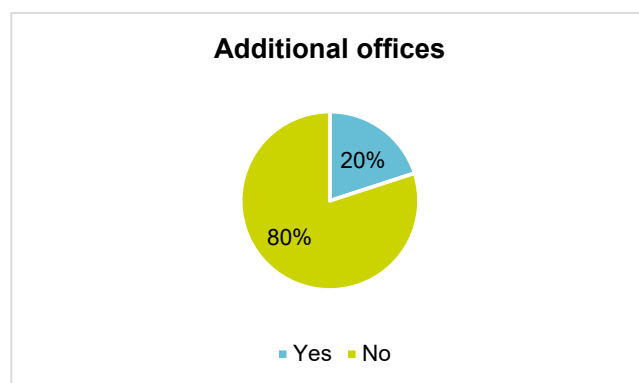


Figure 3 Existence of additional offices

Use of social media among CSOs is widespread. All organizations have a Facebook profile and almost all have an internet web page (93.3%), while most also have an Instagram profile (80%). There seems to be less use of LinkedIn (46.7%)

and Twitter (53.3%). Tik Tok, being a relatively recently launched social media platform

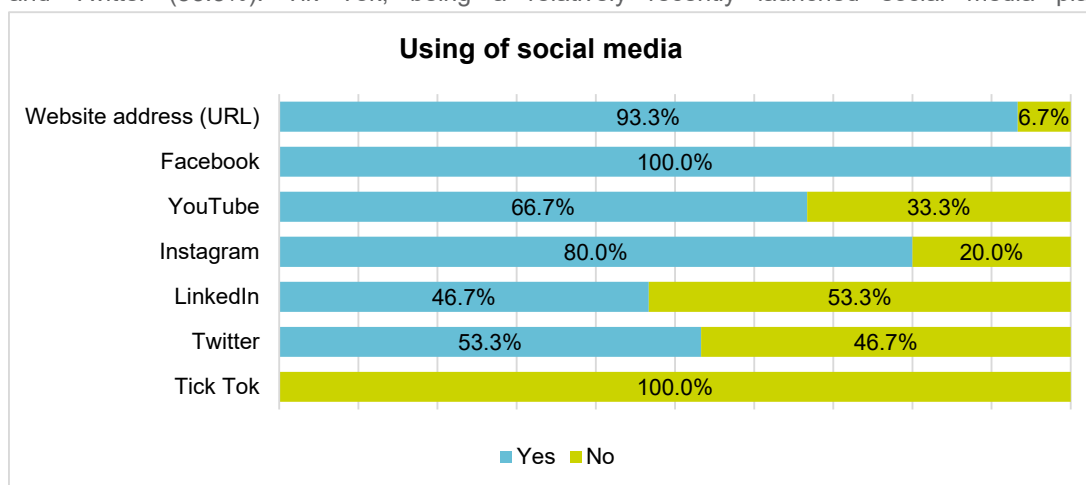


Figure 4 Use of social media

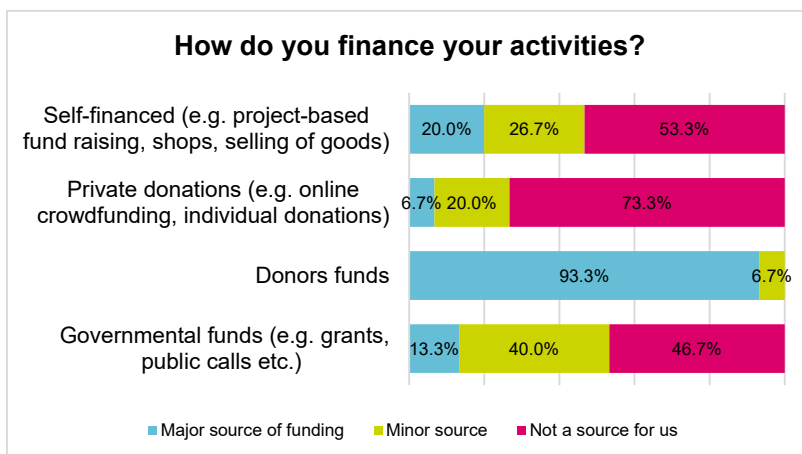


Figure 5 Source of funding of activities

is not used at all. The author has conducted, in addition to the survey, a brief content observation on most webpages and FB profiles of the observed CSOs. Most content there is self-centered, apart from the few CSOs who also act as information providers to the sector/membership in overall (being either representative or umbrella organizations/coalitions). In many cases, the content is in Serbian language only. The positive side of FB profiles (in particular) is that they are used as an outreach channel to target groups and as dissemination tool. In fact, some final beneficiaries (see Chapter 5 for more details) have learned about the training and skills development opportunities via FB profiles. Youtube channels exist (in 66,7%) but they are not very frequently used and mainly reveal videos related to project activities, such as info sessions, presentations etc. In some cases webpages simple reveal the organisational background, contact data, missions and visions and not much other information. In come cases, the CSOs use their webpages to present their donor funded projects and related activities. Social media has become important during the COVID 19 crisis, as Chapter 2 reveals, bringing more digital civic engagement into the civil society arena.

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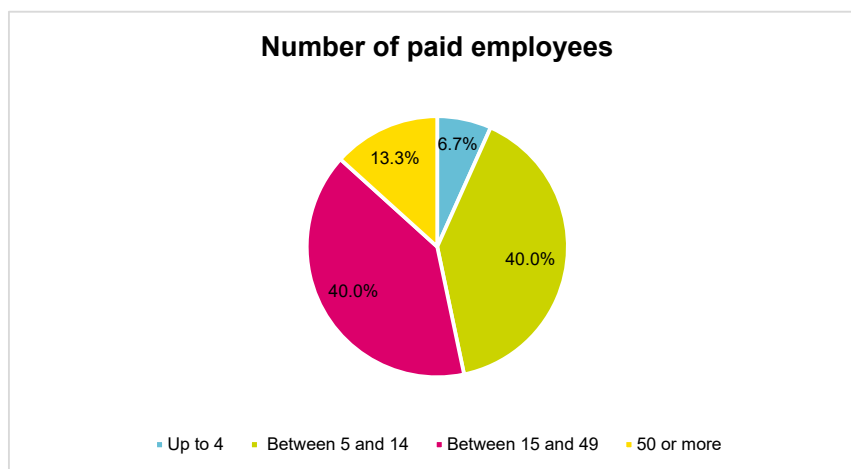


Figure 6 Number of paid employees

In terms of staff paid, 40% of surveyed CSOs have between 5 and 14 staff and 40% have between 15 and 59 employees. This picture shows a strong divergence of the sample from the overall CSO sector comparable on staff. Inter alia recent research, for example, concludes that only 0.5% of total CSOs in the sector have had 10+ employees in 2013 and

as high as 80% not a single employee¹⁰.

Surveyed CSOs seem to be largely donor driven, as major source of funding for them are donor funds (in 93,3%). Some government funds are also used (in 13% of cases). In total, 20% of CSOs have also indicated self-funding as the major financing source. Private funding is the main source of funding for

¹⁰ Ibid

only 6,7% of the observed CSOs. Again, this picture shows a high degree of divergence from relevant data covering the overall CSO sector in Serbia, where recent report found that only 15% of CSOs are international donor funded and most in fact are self-financed (63%).¹¹

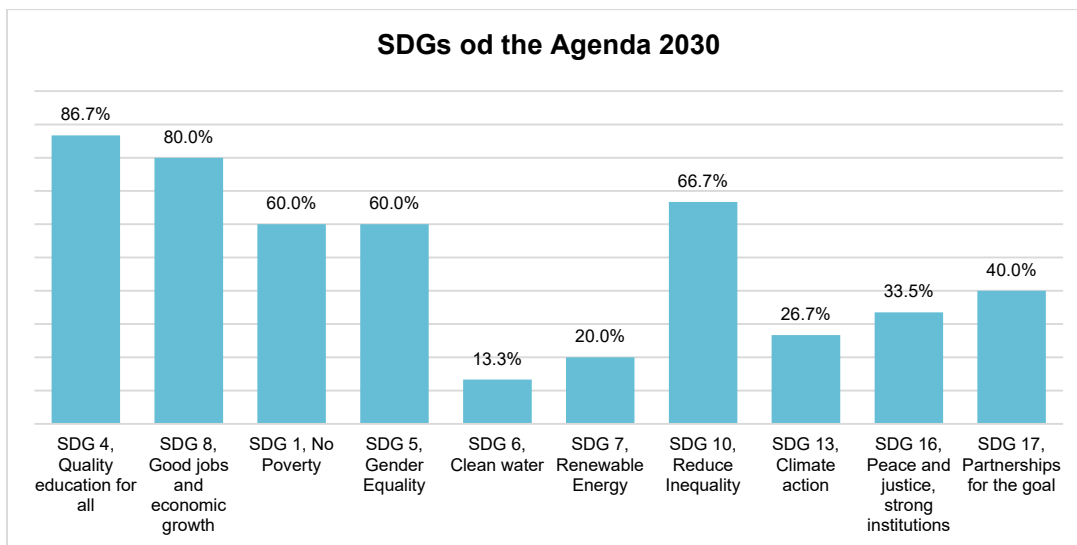


Figure 7 Presence of SDGs in work

Exploration on the pursuit of SDGs implementation in surveyed CSO work reveals that majority pursues SDG4 (Quality education for all) in their agenda and also SDG8 (Good jobs and economic growth). In total, 60% also pursue SDG1 (No poverty) and SDG5 (Gender equality) and 66,7% SDG10 (Reduce inequality). It seems that surveyed CSOs are least concerned with SDGs related to climate change and environmental protection, such as SDG 6 (Clean water) (13.3%), SDG 7 (Renewable energy) (20%) and SDG 13 (Climate action) (26,7%).

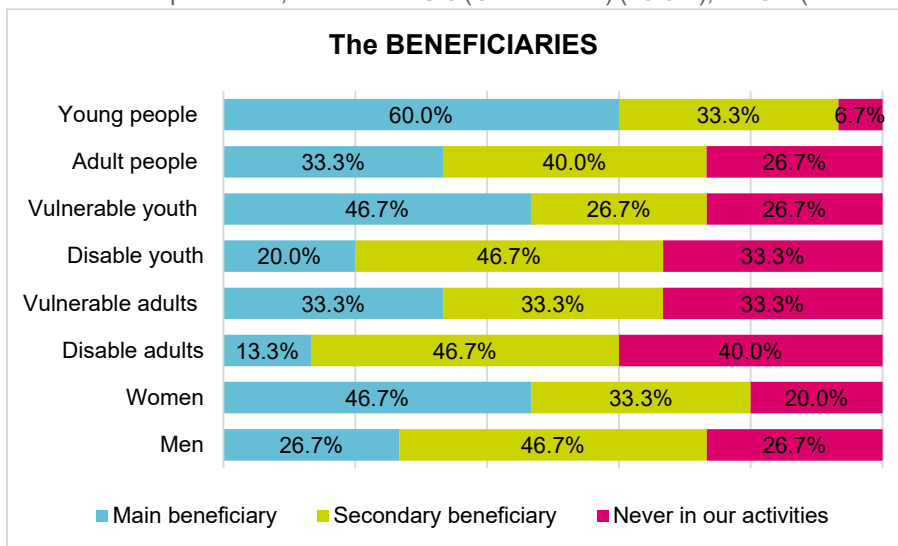


Figure 8 Beneficiary groups

As per the information received, related to the main beneficiary groups, most observed CSOs work with youth (60%), women (46%) and vulnerable youth (46%). It should also be noted that the least represented groups of beneficiaries are

adults and youth with disabilities (40% and 33,3% respectively) and vulnerable adults (33,3%). It seems

¹¹ See https://act.org.rs/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/CSO-Sector-in-Serbia-2019_Summary_WEB.pdf

most of the observed CSOs are youth centered. However, it should also be noted that some of the observed CSOs have mentioned that their main target groups are migrants, refugees and IDPs, which reflects a somewhat specific country situation.

In most cases, observed CSOs work to facilitate employment among their target groups (80%) and/or have preoccupied themselves with advocacy for community groups, advocacy for young people, self-employment support and identification of information on skills development (53,3% in all cases). The least represented activity is advocacy for adult people (20%) and strengthening the informal learning of adults (26.7%). This finding may be even more important compared to other recent research which found that the age group 55-64 is at higher risk of in-work poverty in Serbia¹², presenting perhaps the illustration that there is a gap in social protection policy in the country for this particular target group, including in the HCD area.

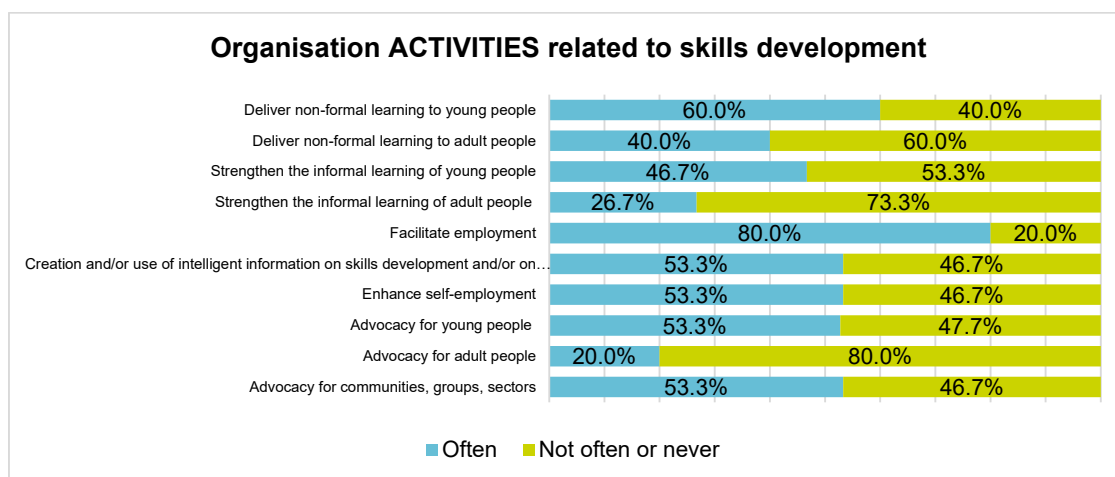


Figure 9 Types of activities related to skills development

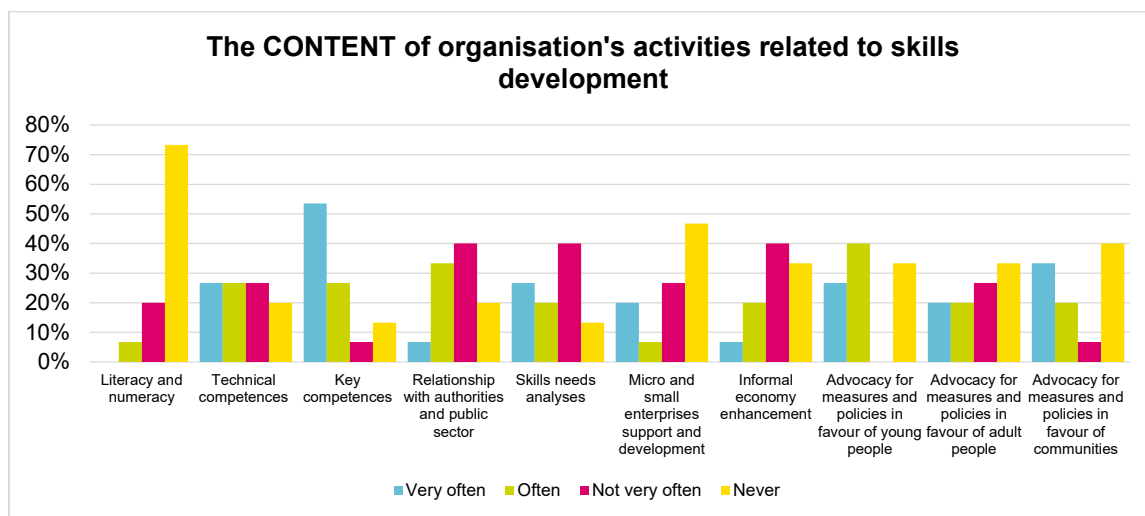


Figure 10 Content of activities related to skills development

¹² Please see <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=21094&langId=en>

In terms of content of CSOs activities related to skills development (through non-formal learning and informal learning, and services to employment) most often they comprise key competences (53,5 %) and least often (6.7%) relationships with authorities and public sector. Often (40% cases) work also comprises advocacy for youth. For over 70% CSOs the work never included actions related to literacy and numeracy.



Figure 11 Opinion on most effective ways to implement skills development

Surveyed CSOs believe that most effective ways to implement organisation's activities are non-formal training courses (66,7%), coaching and counselling people (46,7%), training/learning styles that are engaging and participatory (46,7%) and using a mix of traditional and digital training aids (40%). Using only traditional (non-digital or online) training aids and using only digital and online training aids is not considered very effective at all.

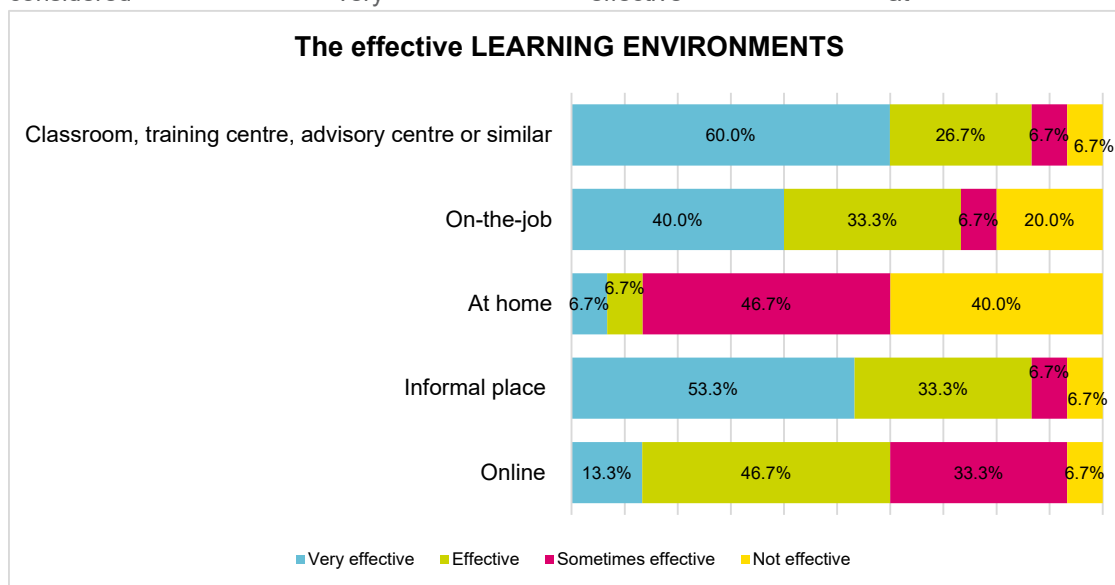


Figure 12 Opinion on most effective learning environment

According to the results of this survey, the most effective learning environments are classrooms and training centres (86.7%) and informal places (86.7%). The least effective is online training (13.4%). This finding may be of relevance for COVID-19 related situation, where due to the pandemics, many activities had to switch to virtual setting and may as well reflect current 'zoomification' of life.

To further analyse the data, data was accrued for two groups among participants, CSOs based in capital and CSOs based outside of capital to compare their indications on the number of staff ('1' up to 4, '2' between 5 and 14, '3' between 15 and 49, '4' 50 or more).

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances		
	<i>Capital based number of staff</i>	<i>Non capital based number of staff</i>
Mean	3	2
Variance	0,5	0,4
Observations	9	6
Pooled Variance	0,461538462	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	13	
t Stat	2,792848009	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0,007618432	
t Critical one-tail	1,770933396	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0,015236864	
t Critical two-tail	2,160368656	

Figure 13 T-test data comparing location of HQ and number of employees

A two-sample t-test was conducted to determine the effect of location base (capital based; non-capital based) for the number of staff they employ. There was a significant difference between the capital-based group and non-capital-based group; $t=2,793$, $df=13$, $p=0,0153$.

CHAPTER 2 COVID 19 EFFECTS AND RESILIENCE

COVID-19 has affected surveyed CSOs. Overall sector reports state that CSOs have faced many

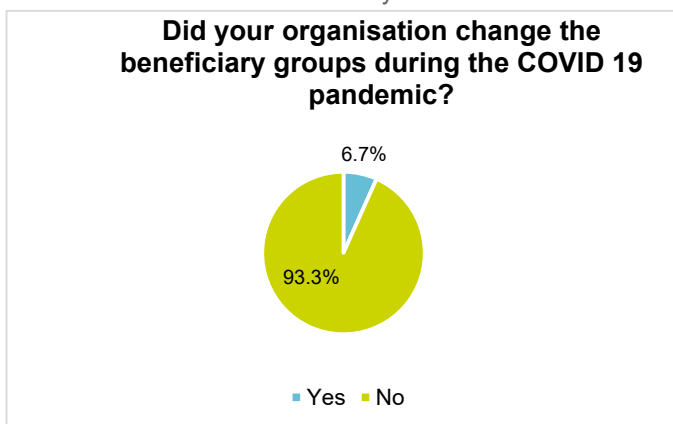


Figure 14 Change of activities due to COVID 19

19 pandemics (93,3%).

Less, but still a majority (73,3%) have also not changed their priorities. This presents the persistence to advocate and work to the benefit of usual target groups and maintain the overall CSOs missions which was not affected by the pandemics. Majority of CSOs report more frequent use of online tools (86,7%). Different online platforms were used more frequently to remain in contact with target groups/beneficiaries and to implement activities, whereas digital learning tools

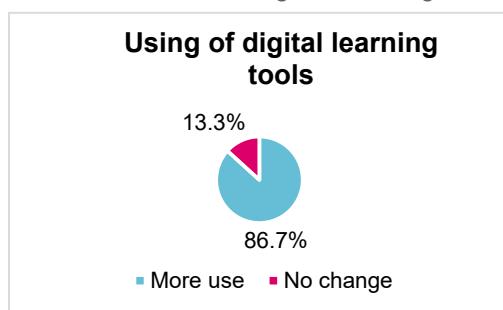


Figure 16 Increase of use of digital tools

difficulties in the conduct of their work, but however were of great assistance to, inter alia, vulnerable groups and that they have switched to online tools and tele-working to accommodate the needs, but also remained physically present in the field, in particular for humanitarian purposes.¹³ Civil society organisations in Serbia has not stopped working during the pandemic and have used their existing resources to mitigate the effects of the crisis, while most observed CSOs have not changed their beneficiaries groups as the result of COVID

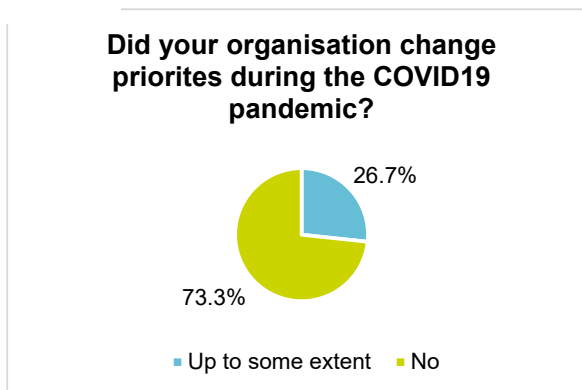


Figure 15 Change of priorities due to COVID 19

frequented conduct of trainings as well. The most used digital learning tools in this new digital civic engagements were synchronous video-communication tools, including Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp, Viber, Facebook live (86.7%) and social media, such as Facebook groups and YouTube channels (60%) The least used tools are learning management systems for MOOCs, Moodle for example (13.3%) and organisation's website (26.7%). CSOs have agreed that, while COVID 19 did entail the feeling of a global

¹³ See, for example <https://www.gradjanske.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Aktivnosti-OCD-kao-odgovor-na-Covid-19-finalni-izve%C5%A1taj-.pdf>

paralysis of public life, it also offered an opportunity for stimulation of creativity and finding new ways to

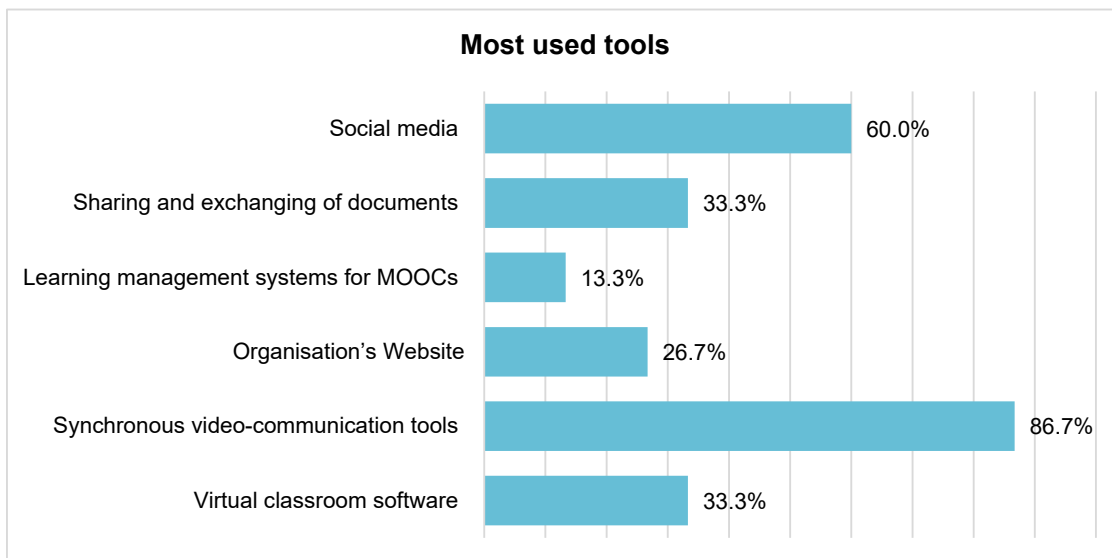


Figure 17 Most frequently digital tools used

cope and conduct activities and common work tasks.

Survey results also show that the most organisations did not change their priorities in activities and their

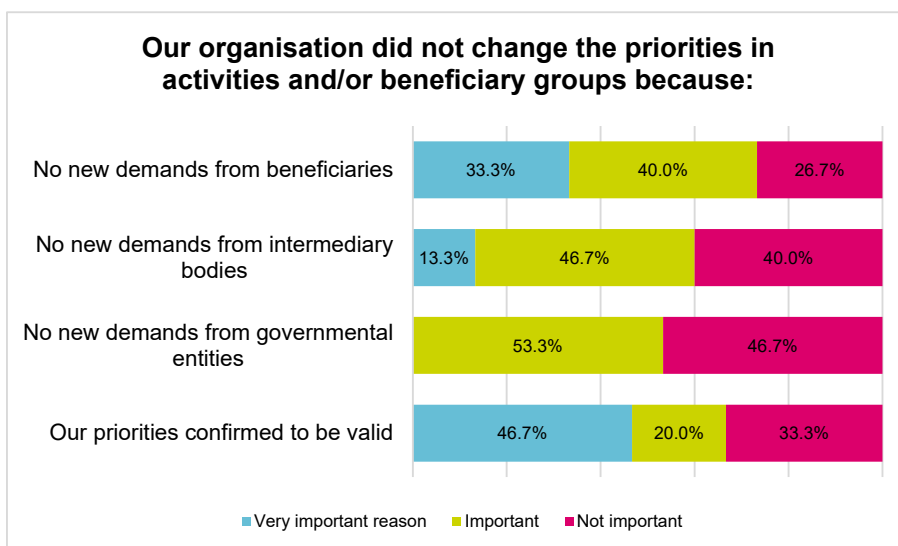


Figure 18 Most frequent reasons for changes due to COVID 19

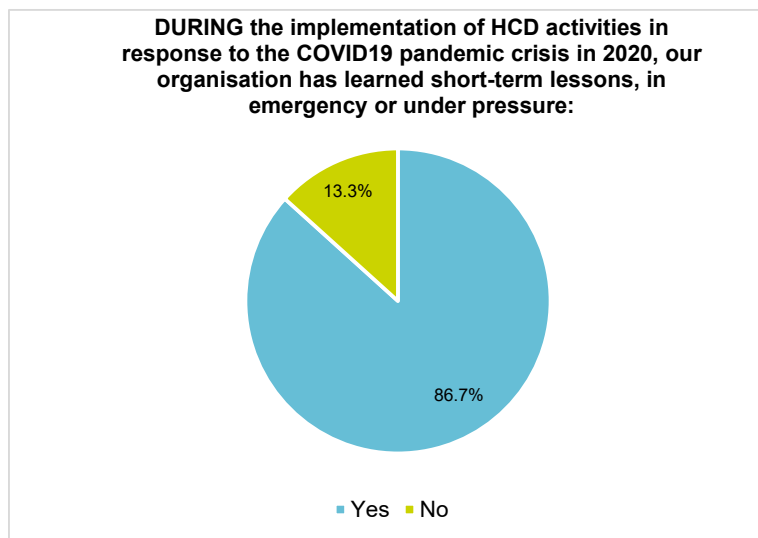
target group/beneficiaries as there were no new demands from beneficiaries (73.3% when combining answers 'very important' and 'important'). In total 53,3% consider that the change did not occur as there were no new demands from government, which may be interpreted also alongside

some of the recent criticism in the sector towards the government actions during the pandemics.¹⁴. Large

¹⁴ For example, CSO A 11 Initiative has recently come up with the report stating that 'Serbia is the only country in the region that has not introduced any special social policy measures towards the most vulnerable citizens during the state of emergency and the first wave of the corona crisis.', see <https://www.a11initiative.org/en/serbia-is-the-only-country-in-the-region-that-has-not-taken-special-measures-to-protect-the-poorest/>

number of the observed CSOs stated that the priority/target group change did not occur due to their 'priorities confirmed as still being valid' (46,7%).

As mentioned already, many observed CSOs are aware of the impact of COVID 19 on their operations. Many have seen this crisis also as a stimulus for learning and identification of lessons learnt. In that sense it is not surprising that majority has reported learning short term, but also long terms lessons as the result of pandemics.



According to the survey results, 86.7% of organisations have identified short-term lessons, in emergency or under the pressure, during the implementation of HCD activities, in response to the COVID19 pandemic crisis in 2020.

Most important short-term lessons that organisations learned in emergency or under pressure is to adapt the activity implementation and/or methods (84,6%) and to mobilise new resources, human or financial (61,5%). The least important is

Figure 19 Frequency of short term lessons learnt

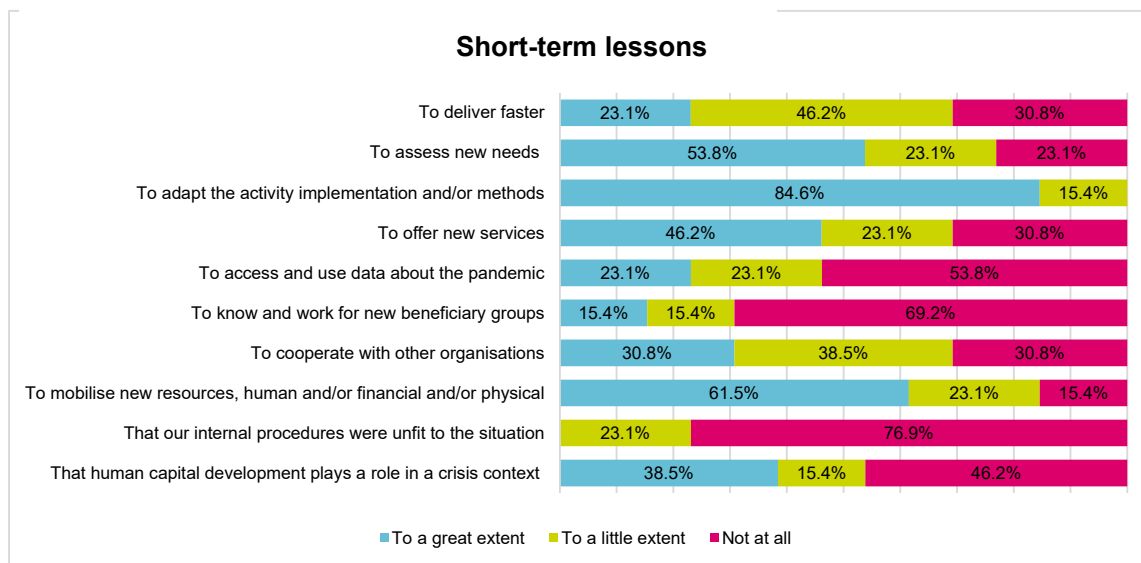


Figure 20 Types of short-term lessons learnt

that organisations internal procedures were unfit to the situation (none indicated that this was major short-term lesson).

Similarly, for short term learning, COVID 19 has also been a stimulant for long term learning. According to the survey results,73.3% of organisations has identified long-term, strategic or forward-looking lessons, in response to the COVID19 pandemic crisis. The most important forward lesson for all

observed organisation was to innovate their existing services (81,8%), but also to offer new services (45,5%) and attract additional funds (45,5%). The least important was to attract new and/or to re-train current staff members and/or volunteers (9.1%).

As attracting additional funds seems to be a moderate forward looking lessons it is also worth mentioning that in response to an open letter sent by CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation to donors and others who support the work of civil society, regarding civil society resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic, local CSOs also openly encouraged existing donors to adopt a more proactive and flexible approach¹⁵ where some of the donors followed with innovative responses. One of the surveyed CSOs also conducted work related to re-granting for CSOs, providing financial support to CSOs as a rapid response to the crisis.

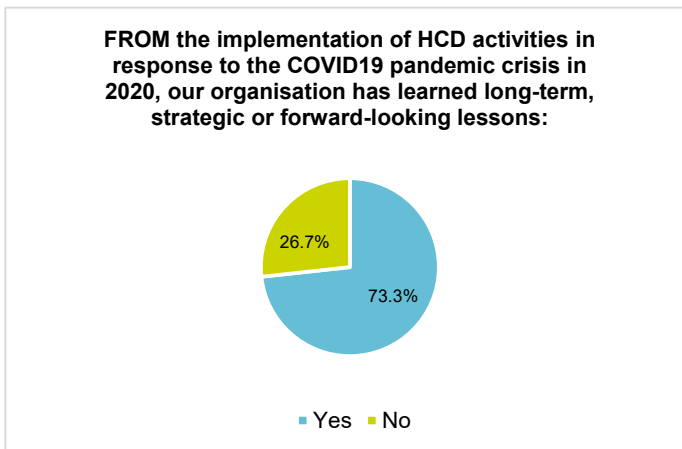


Figure 21 Frequency of long-term lessons learnt

Among the non-observed CSOs there was also plenty of forward thinking in relation to COVID-19, looking into issues such as the future of tele-working, for example¹⁶ and concluding that *'The directions of intervention refer to education / training of workers through adoption of digital skills, both through state programs and at*

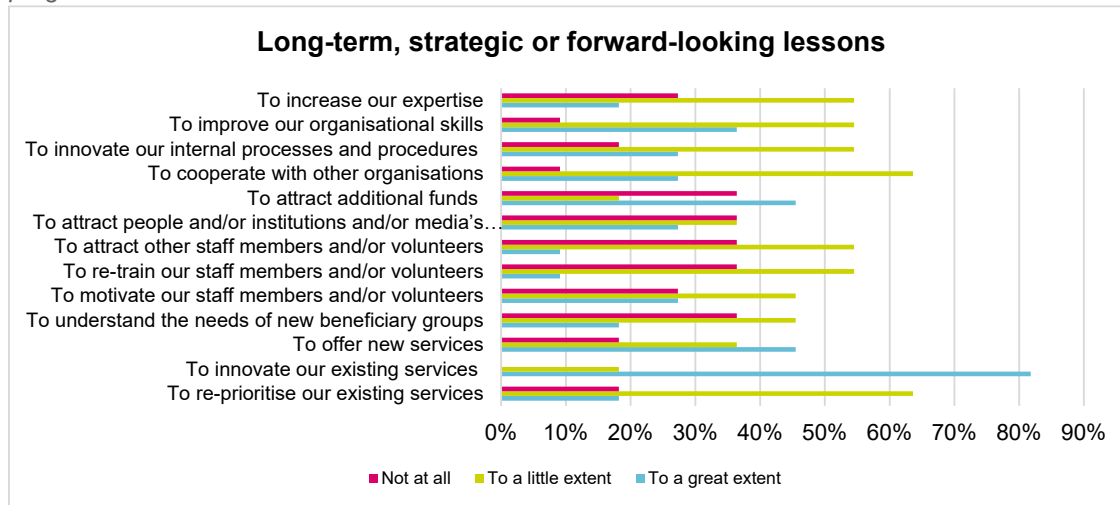


Figure 22 Types of long-term lessons learnt

the company levels.' (see Chapter 4 for more details of future contributions to HCD).

¹⁵ See <https://www.gradjanske.org/en/open-letter-donors-and-supporters-must-act-to-ensure-civil-society-resilience-against-covid-19-pandemic/>

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CHAPTER 3 STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT AND POLICY DIALOGUE

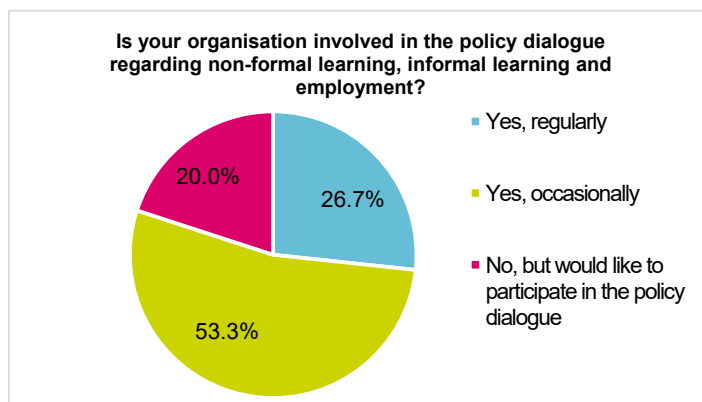


Figure 23 Frequency of involvement in policy dialogue

Stakeholders involvement and policy dialogue does not seem as the main field of activity for the surveyed CSOs, but however 26,7% of them are regularly involved in such activities and 53,3% occasionally. In total, 20% are not at all involved in policy dialogue regarding non-formal learning, informal learning and employment. This finding could be compared with some overall findings from recent research on the overall sector, where $\frac{3}{4}$ of the CSOs were of the opinion that their influence on the

creation of public policies, on both national and local level, is minimal, stating that *'higher impact requires greater involvement of citizens in CSO activities, greater visibility in the media, and better networking and cooperation with other similar organisations'*.¹⁷

Also, similar research conducted recently goes as far

as to state that *'the involvement of CSOs in decision-making has faced serious violations'*¹⁸. This may shed some light in some of the findings revealed in Chapter 4, where CSOs do not, to strong degree, view their ability to guarantee transparency of public consultation as a comparative advantage.

Main stakeholders identified by the surveyed CSOs include government institutions (75%), national employment agency (66,7%), employers (50%) and training providers (50%). Unfortunately, trade

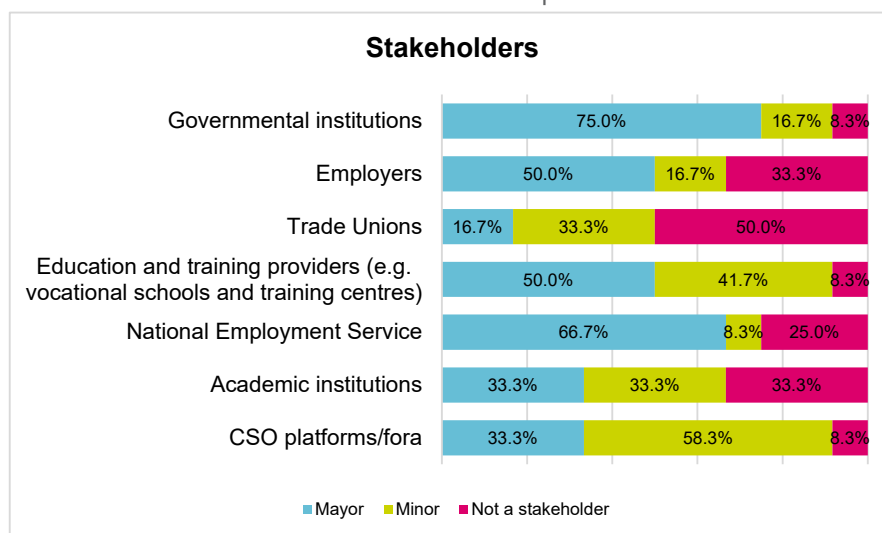


Figure 24 Most frequent stakeholders identified

¹⁷ See https://act.org.rs/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/CSO-Sector-in-Serbia-2019_Summary_WEB.pdf

¹⁸ See <http://tacso.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Regional-CS-Needs-Assessment-Report-2018-2019-final.pdf>

unions are perceived as a major stakeholder only by 16,7% of the surveyed CSOs and are not at all perceived as a stakeholder by half of the respondents (50%).

As per the survey results, 80% of observed organisations are regularly (40%) or occasionally (40%) connected with their stakeholders and/or report to them. Only 7% of the surveyed CSOs have stated that they are not at all interested in any linkages with the stakeholders listed and/or in reporting to them. The linkages with stakeholders are characterised by mainly analyses and research (75%) and advocacy (66.7%). The least important is reporting on the use of budget resources (16%) but also evaluation reporting (25%).

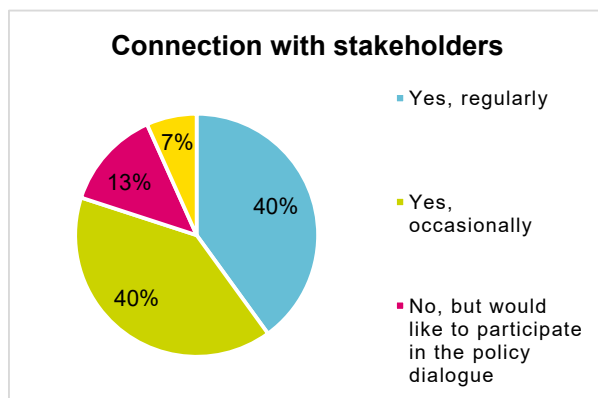


Figure 25 Connections with stakeholders

Finding related to evaluation could be related to an observation from the similar research, which grasped the overall sector, and which found that *'the vast majority of CSOs (89%) give high marks to their beneficiaries' satisfaction (although only 32% state that they have conducted formal evaluations of clients' satisfaction, and 42% do not evaluate their projects at all)*¹⁹.

Some of the observed CSOs, and also those long-listed in the CSO database prepared for the purposes of this research have indeed conducted/are conducting important research

related to COVID 19 and its effects on various spheres of life, including the research on effects of COVID 19 on labour sector in Serbia and its effects on businesses²⁰. Some of their findings have recently been disputed by the officials²¹.

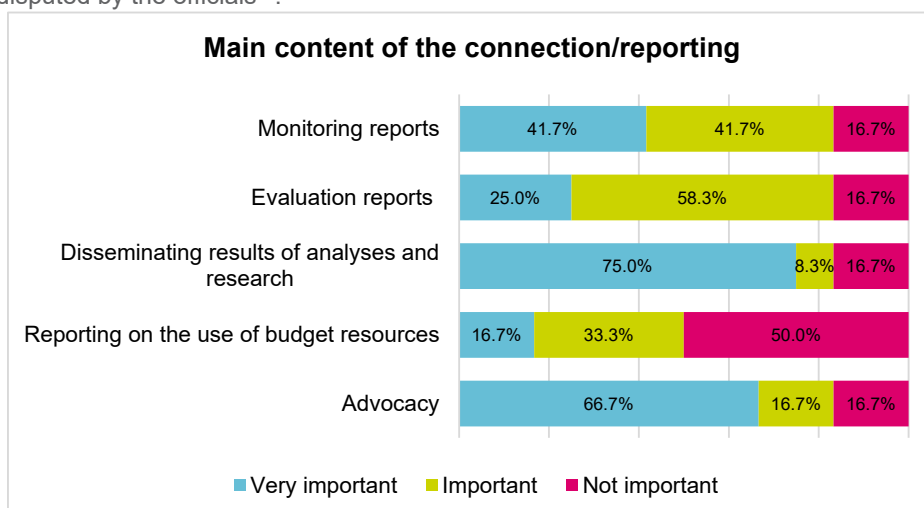


Figure 26 Main content of interactions with stakeholders

¹⁹ See https://act.org.rs/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/CSO-Sector-in-Serbia-2019_Summary_WEB.pdf

²⁰ See for example <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oxEISqLaUB8mibQV06xMZW77L5hrTurA/view> and <https://www.secons.net/files/SeConS-istrazivanje-Covid-19.pdf>

²¹ See for example <https://www.021.rs/story/BBC/243869/Posao-u-Srbiji-Zasto-su-istrazivanja-o-zaposlenosti-dala-razlicite-rezultate.html>

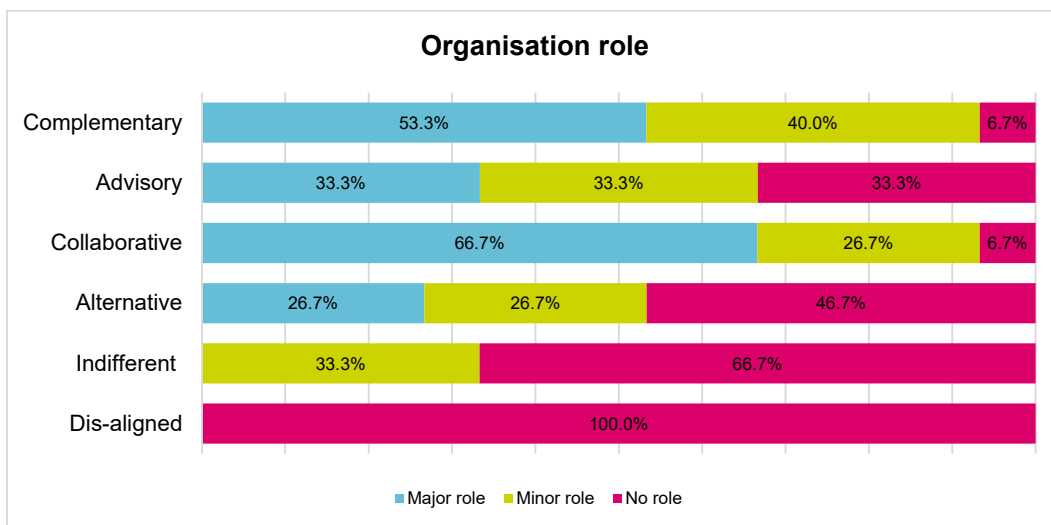


Figure 27 Views on organisational role

None of the observed CSOs sees their position towards the stakeholders as dis-aligned, while most see themselves as either complementary (53,3%) and/or collaborative (66,7%).

CHAPTER 4 FORWARD THINKING

CSOs could offer more in HCD in the future, as the findings from this chapter reveal. Observed CSOs believe that their major advantage in the future in their ability to detect needs of groups out of the formal learning and employment system, and bring their voice to the policy dialogue (60%), but also that they can provide innovative advice to shape HCD policies (53,3%). In addition, plenty also believe that their advantage lies in the fact that they can support effectiveness of education, training and other learning processes (53,3%). In total 60% of CSOs do not consider that their ability to evaluate independently HCD policies' outcomes is an advantage and as high as 66% that ability to guarantee transparency of public consultation is in fact their advantage.

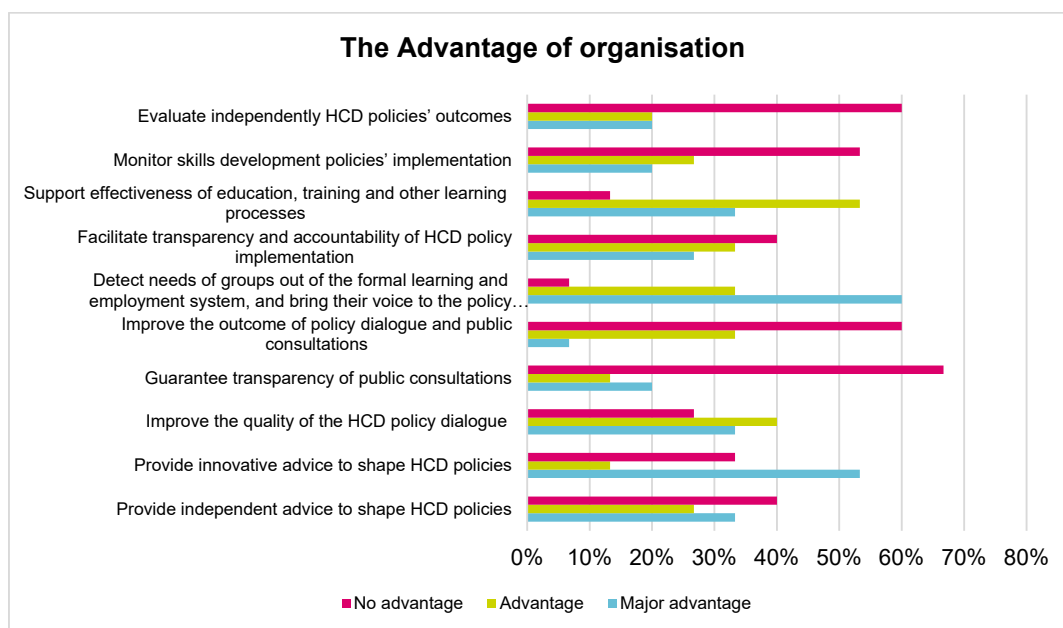


Figure 28 Identified advantages

In total 60% of the CSOs surveyed are planning to strengthen their contribution to HCD to some extent in the future, and 33% fully. Only 7% believe that conditions are not in favour for this pathway.

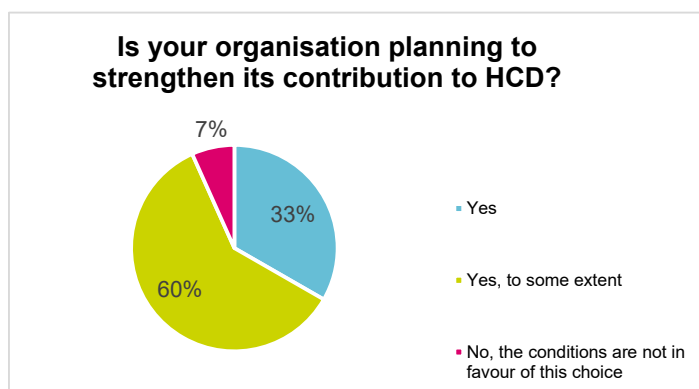


Figure 29 Plans for the future

Most important domains where CSOs believe HCD contributions can very likely be made are in the area of self-employment and entrepreneurship (57%), accessibility of formal, nonformal and informal learning (50%), using formal, nonformal and informal learning to support employment (50%). Contributions related to future of working and future of work are likely for 42,9% of observed CSOs, while inclusiveness of learning

opportunities in 50% cases, quality of learning opportunities in 57% cases and learning and employment needs of local communities in 50% cases.

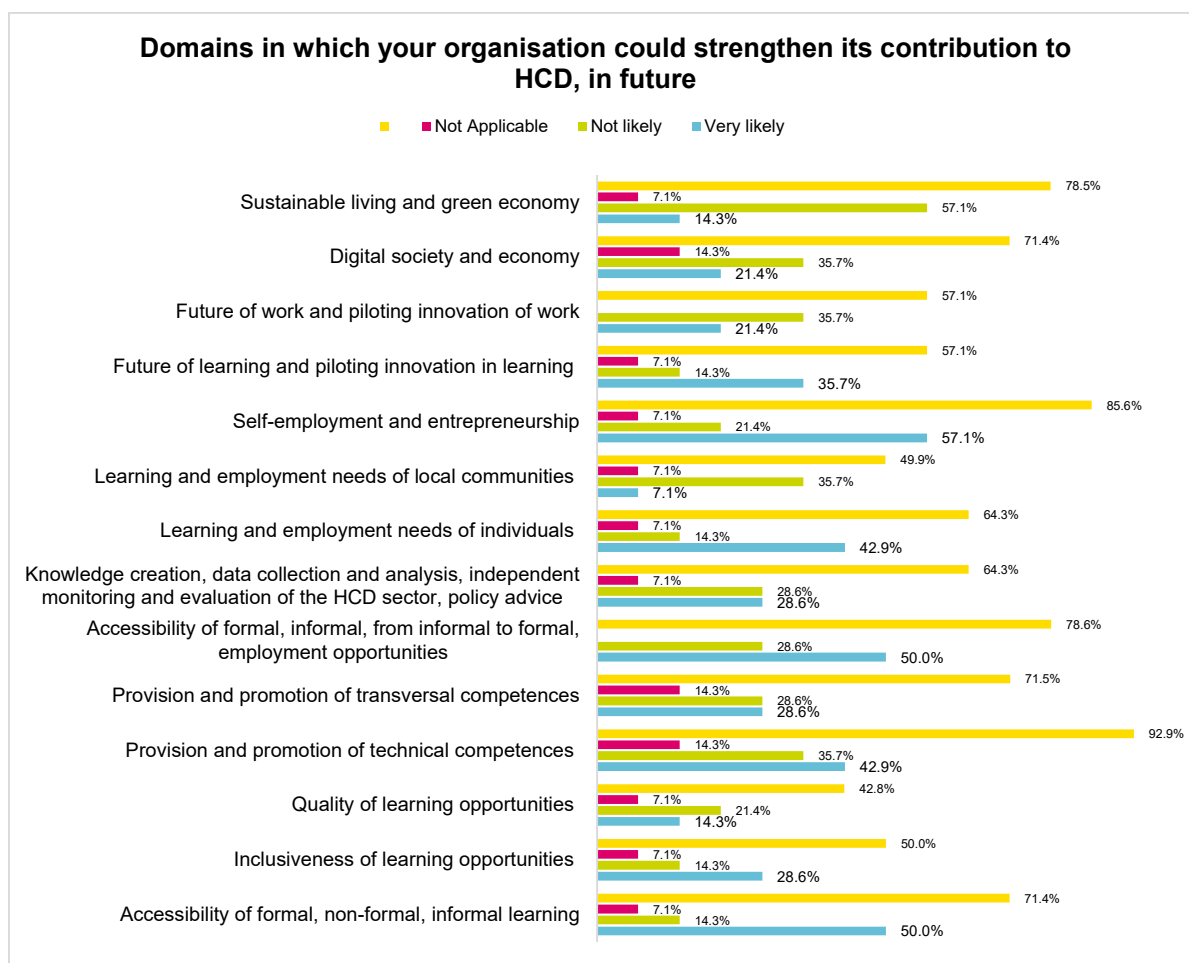


Figure 30 Domains of interest

Least likely seems to be any involvement in sustainable living and green economy, which is a result in full coherence with related findings presented in the Chapter 1 in reference to SDG pursuit.

CHAPTER 5 EFFECTIVENESS OF CSO'S WORK

Interviews with final beneficiaries

Final beneficiaries (five individuals) of two CSOs were individually interviewed to retrieve more information on the effectiveness and usefulness of the CSO work in HCD arena. The observations and statements made are presented in this Chapter. Table below presents some of the statements made by the interviewed individuals.

Table 1 Statements of beneficiaries

<p>Statements related to what respondents liked about the support received</p>	<p><i>'I was given the opportunity to participate in two trainings for free and that is phenomenal. The first tailoring training was nicely organized, and we had both theoretical and practical part, that is, while we were tailoring or sewing, we received answers to all questions and other information that the educator herself provided us. At the manicure training, each of us was able to try all the phases of preparation and processing of nails for gel polish and pouring. It meant a lot to me because I used to try it on the Internet myself, but it is much much more clear when it is shown to me on the spot and when they immediately tell me what is not done properly'</i></p>
	<p><i>'The fact that I was able to work even at home, which means a lot to people with our diagnosis. The income I make from selling decorative decoupage boxes is not great, but it helps me feel useful. It also meant a lot to me to spent time with people who have similar problems and who understand what I'm going through.'</i></p>
	<p><i>'I participated in a free training for a gerontological housewife and caregiver. We also had the medical part of the training. I received a certificate and it meant a lot to me, so much so that thanks to that training, I got a job in April in the middle of the COVID-19 crisis, at the Gerontology Centre, where I still work as a caregiver. I cannot say anything else but thanks'</i></p>
	<p><i>'What I liked the most was that this training encouraged me to develop skills and creativity that I didn't even know I had. I enjoyed and progressed so much that in the second round of training I was one of the lecturers, for which I was paid.'</i></p>
	<p><i>'I had great training. I liked that I went to a real big construction site and we were able to do various work there, including painting and masonry work.'</i></p>
	<p><i>'All was great, really all'</i></p>
<p>Statements on issues that could have been better</p>	<p><i>'There is always room for improvement, but I can't single out anything that I didn't like.'</i></p>
	<p><i>'The training was all aces. I have nothing to complain about.'</i></p>
	<p><i>'As far as I am concerned, the most important thing is that we have premises and supplies for work, I have no objections.'</i></p>
	<p><i>'Everything was great for me. Perhaps less focus of theory, although I've learned some important issues about safety at work.'</i></p>

Statements on thoughts or ideas on new trainings and services	<p><i>'During my training, I learned there will be another one organised, covering different topic and I asked if I can join, which was allowed, and I remain grateful for another chance I got. '</i></p>
	<p><i>'While we were at the initial training, I found out that a workshop for working on textiles was being prepared, so I joined there as well'</i></p>
	<p><i>'I went through another training for cooks through the same CSO, just so that I could somehow get a job.'</i></p>
	<p><i>'I made a lot of progress during the first round of training, so in the second round, when new beneficiaries applied, I was one of the trainers.'</i></p>
	<p><i>No, experience is, in my line of work, gained though time and more work. Currently, I either work alone or in teams, when someone asks for my support, so I am working in some way'</i></p>
Statements on ideas and insights related to further professional development and lifelong learning	<p><i>'I am currently with a baby and not thinking about any further improvements. But I have the opportunity to sew, I have the necessary equipment, I also have a father-in-law now who is a famous old tailor so he can advise me additionally but I still see myself more as a manicurist- I also have manicure equipment and I do pouring and gel polish on call but now to a lesser extent due to being a mother'</i></p>
	<p><i>'I am constantly improving my work through practice.'</i></p>
	<p><i>'I'm old anyway and I don't want to participate in trainings anymore. I think that a person improves while working. In the future, since I now have a permanent job, I want to work as good as I can, to never be late for work, and not to spend time on sick leave'.</i></p>
	<p><i>'I intend to continue practicing as long as my health condition allows. People with our diagnosis sometimes lose fine hand movements, which can interfere with the work of this type, but as long as I can, I will try to progress and improve.'</i></p>
	<p><i>"I finished construction training and I wanted to move abroad. I had a great practice during the training, and I also learned many things on my own. It's all in the experience. Now, during COVID 19, I am working as an assistant worker and I am also do houses painting on my own. I want to work, and I am sure that if I manage to go abroad and gain a lot of experience, I will become a real master.</i></p>
Statements on how respondents learned about support being offered, choices and ideas for further outreach	<p><i>'I was contacted by phone. They said that they had a number from a survey organised earlier. They also said that the training was targeting displaced people. We agreed on everything over the phone and I accepted. I have not heard of other organizations that do similar trainings in my city. Facebook is a good way to inform the unemployed about trainings.'</i></p>
	<p><i>'I found out about the training listening to local TV show, where one member of the association talked about the project. After that I joined the association and got involved'</i></p>
	<p><i>I heard in the city many nice stories on the association. They help people living in rural areas and the unemployed, and then I went to their office,</i></p>

	<p><i>introduced myself, they put me on the list and later invited me to go to training. After that training, I worked for several years as a gerontologic housewife on projects run by the association. A notice board could be placed in from of City Culture Hall so that people could become aware of programmes and get involved.</i></p> <p><i>'I found out about the association soon after I was diagnosed with MS and since then I have been a member'</i></p> <p><i>I found out about the training through the Municipality. I've got a phone number and called for details. I couldn't choose as there are no similar trainings offered where I live. Posters are the best, as people read them.</i></p>
Statements of quality of work of trainers	<p><i>'Uh that was fantastic. I have been working since then and I know that I once asked for training to be adjusted according to my shift, and they accommodated. My sister, who was pregnant at the time, also participated in the training. Everyone treated her like the queen. Of course, we all always had enough time to ask, to try how things are going, to correct mistakes. The best time was when we make exhibitions of our daily works at the end of the day.'</i></p> <p><i>'The lecturers were patient and correct. They also considered our health condition and accepted all suggestions.'</i></p> <p><i>'The training remained in my memory because it was done by wonderful women who passed on knowledge to us in a beautiful way and gave us various examples. We were always asked every day of the training what we expected from that day and in the end how satisfied we were with what we learned.'</i></p> <p><i>'I have only words of praise for the lecturers, who awakened in me creativity and love for this job. Following their example, I try to be like that when I am in the role of a lecturer.'</i></p> <p><i>'They didn't really address our specific needs. They did their job. The practical training was detailed, everything that was not clear they showed and explained.'</i></p>
Statements of evaluation practices	<p><i>'Yes, they asked us, we also did an evaluation questionnaire.'</i></p> <p><i>'At the end of the project, we received an evaluation questionnaire, where we presented our assessments and opinions.'</i></p> <p><i>I think we evaluated training following each day. This was done in a written form.</i></p> <p><i>'At the end of the project, all participants filled in evaluation questionnaires.'</i></p> <p><i>'Yes, we evaluated our training. I think that in the end we had a questionnaire where we evaluated what we liked and did not like, and we wrote suggestions for what else could be done.'</i></p>
Statements on advising a friend or	<p><i>Yes. They will get a chance for a new beginning, to start their own business, for example.</i></p>

relative to follow the same action	<i>Yes, of course, if they are interested in that kind of work.</i>
	<i>'I would recommend it to anyone who wants to do this line of work. It wasn't until I started working that I saw how good my training really was.'</i>
	<i>'I would like everyone in my environment to be healthy, but for people who have the same problem as us, this association is definitely a base where we spend time, learn, help and go through all the difficulties of life together, so I would recommend to everyone who has the same problem. to join.'</i>
	<i>'Absolutely yes, because in a short time you get the necessary knowledge and skills, you can go further alone, to become your own man.'</i>

None of the interviewed had paid for the services offered. Based on the statements presented, it can be concluded that:

- Respondents did find the support offered useful. For some it helped obtain immediate income, job and/or new vocation. However, in some cases the support is also linked with social needs, community inclusion and peer to peer support, which is beyond employment.
- No major ideas have emerged in terms of making the support even better, but it seems that offering multiple trainings is also useful.
- Learning by doing seems like a preferred way of self-development.
- Various channels of information were used to attract interest, working in collaboration with local authorities, social media, TV shows, word of mouth.
- Respondents do not have much choice in terms of HCD, which speaks of underdeveloped offer, linked with insufficient funding for these services.
- Quality of trainers was adequate, evaluation culture is in place and appreciation for the work done is confirmed as respondents are willing to recommend similar experiences to their close ones, without hesitation.

Promising practices and highlights

At the validation meeting held in December, where initial finding was discussed with participants, the following promising practices and contexts were noted:

- Social entrepreneurship and social business seem like an arena worthwhile exploring further,
- Introduction mentors/tutors in companies to support the job survival accompanied by on the job training and coaching adult unemployed helps develop self-confidence, initiative, mutual support, learning how to work with others, etc. elements that are of great significance to achieve success and sustainable employment.
- A distinction between the “employment” and “work” should be noted, while employment is often a means-to-an-end, the work itself provides with a sense of purpose and some CSOs are much more active in the area of providing beneficiaries an opportunity to practice meaningful work and not necessarily employment alone. For example, illustrations of ‘work’ which may not be

recognised as 'employment' include political or social activism, voluntary work,, self-employment (while legislation clearly distinguishes some forms of self-employment, it often fails to identify other forms; where simplest examples are craft workers, home-grown producers, entertainers)²².

²² Also please note that Serbian language does not make distinction between 'work' and 'labour', see more in Calosevic (2018).

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions

Conclusion 1. Serbia has a great potential for actively including CSOs in HCD policy implementation. Currently, there over 32,000 registered associations and over 900 foundations registered in the country, 32% of which work in education and research sector in Serbia and 34% of which are active in providing non-institutionalised learning and additional education/training. Around 8,000 people work in the civil society sphere. Similarly, to other country's experiences, marginal groups see their chance in non-formal education to improve their lives, which is of utmost importance for the social equality quality of the LLF practice. It is also worth noting that, as EC reports, lifelong learning participation is far below the national and EU targets in the country.

Conclusion 2. There is favourable institutional setting, but also obstacles and lack of belief in influence among CSOs. Law on public procurement in the country allows for the procurement of services in education and vocational training areas from, inter alia, CSOs. The Law on budget provides for the allocation of funds for CSOs activities in the sphere of youth employment. Adult education law recognises CSOs as adult education providers, provided they are registered for such activities and acquire a status of a 'publicly recognised adult education provider'. National employment action plans also foresee involvement of CSOs in implementation. However, currently CSOs are represented minimally (5%) in the national register of '*publicly recognised adult education providers*'. Furthermore, CSOs believe that the system of non-formal education in Serbia is still not at a high level and very few organizations are involved in non-formal education, mostly because of unstable sources of funding, but also as the system of accreditation is difficult and due to employers still preferring formal education. Also, in overall, CSOs in Serbia mostly do not believe that their influence in both local and national public policy making is effective and, thus, the level of citizens' confidence in civil society organizations is still limited.

Conclusion 3. Solid resources, localized presence, ability to attract funding, appropriate mission statements, focus on vulnerable. The largest number of organizations surveyed work base is Belgrade, the capital city (60%). Most surveyed CSOs also operate at the local, grassroots level (73,3%). Most observed CSOs work with youth (60%), women (46%) and vulnerable youth (46%), to facilitate employment among their target groups (80%). 73% of surveyed CSOs participate in one or more networks, and 26% manage a civil society network in Serbia. Use of social media among surveyed CSOs is widespread. Surveyed CSOs also believe that most effective ways to implement organization's activities are non-formal training courses (66,7%), coaching and counselling people (46,7%). The most effective learning environments viewed are classrooms and training centres (86.7%) and informal places (86.7%). 40% of surveyed CSOs have between 5 and 14 staff and 40% have between 15 and 59 employees, which suggests very strong resources. Surveyed CSOs also seem to be largely donor driven, as major source of funding for them are donor funds (in 93,3%). Statistical analysis reveals that capital based CSOs tend to employ more staff.

Conclusion 4. Resilience to COVID-19 is a contributing factor for CSOs. Surveyed CSOs mostly have not changed their beneficiary groups due to COVID 19 (93,3%), and majority (73,3%) have also not changed their priorities. Majority of surveyed CSOs report though more frequent use of online tools (86,7%) as a result of pandemics. Change in target groups/priorities did not occur as there were no new demands from beneficiaries in most cases (73.3%). In total 53,3% surveyed CSOs consider that the change did not occur as also there were no new demands from government. Most surveyed organisations have identified short-term and long-term, lessons, most frequently this was to adapt the activity implementation and/or methods (84,6%) (short term) and to innovate their existing services (81,8%), but also to offer new services (45,5%) and attract additional funds (45,5%). While COVID 19 did entail the feeling of a global paralysis of public life, it also offered an opportunity for stimulation of creativity and finding new ways to cope and conduct activities and common work tasks.

Conclusion 5. Some ambiguity is noted in relation to stakeholder involvement and policy dialogue. 26,7% of surveyed CSOs are regularly and 53,3% occasionally involved in stakeholder involvement and policy dialogue. Main stakeholders include government institutions (75%), national employment agency (66,7%), employers (50%) and training providers (50%). The linkages with stakeholders are characterised by mainly analyses and research (75%) and advocacy (66,7%). The least important is reporting on the use of budget resources (16%) but also evaluation reporting (25%). None of the observed CSOs sees their position towards the stakeholders as dis-aligned, while most see themselves as either complementary (53,3%) and/or collaborative (66,7%). There is interest, but also reluctance to engage in more advocacy. Surveyed CSOs do not, to strong degree, view their ability to guarantee transparency of public consultation as a comparative advantage in general.

Conclusion 6. There is widespread willingness to contribute to HCD policy and practice. In total, 93% of the CSOs surveyed are planning to strengthen their contribution to HCD. Observed CSOs believe that their major advantage is their ability to detect needs of groups out of the formal learning and employment system and bring their voice to the policy dialogue (60%). Most important domains where CSOs believe HCD contributions can very likely be made are in the area of self-employment and entrepreneurship (57%), accessibility of formal, nonformal and informal learning (50%) and using formal, nonformal and informal learning to support employment (50%). There is interest to engage further in areas of supporting entrepreneurship, self-employment, development of social businesses and entrepreneurship and transition from informal to formal employment.

Conclusion 7. The work undertaken serves the purpose and is impactful. Final beneficiaries who took part in surveyed CSOs activities did find the support offered useful. For some it helped obtain immediate income, job and/or new vocation. However, in some cases the support is also linked with social needs, community inclusion and peer to peer support, which is beyond employment. Learning by doing seems like a preferred way of self-development among final beneficiaries. Respondents do not have much choice in terms of HCD, which speaks of underdeveloped offer in the country, linked with insufficient funding for these services. Quality of trainers was adequate, evaluation culture is in place and appreciation for the work done is confirmed as respondents are willing to recommend similar experiences to their close ones, without hesitation.

Conclusion 8. There is room to make use of the evaluation culture, adopt more complex digital learning tools, cover adults as the target group, extend the service offer (not only training) and gain interest in environment. Surveyed CSOs are least concerned with SDGs related to climate change and environmental protection, such as SDG 6 (Clean water) (13,3%), SDG 7 (Renewable energy) (20%) and SDG 13 (Climate action) (26,7%). They also believe that, in the future, they will be least likely involved in sustainable living and green economy. The least represented groups of beneficiaries are adults and youth with disabilities (40% and 33,3% respectively) and vulnerable adults (33,3%). The least represented activity is also advocacy for adult people (20%) and strengthening the informal learning of adults (26,7%). The least effective training delivery, according to the surveyed CSOs views is online training (13,4%) and they are not widely using learning management systems for MOOCs, Moodle for example (13,3%). In stakeholder involvement, the least important is reporting on the use of budget resources (16%) but also evaluation reporting (25%).

Final conclusion. In overall, it can be concluded that CSOs effectively support human capital development in Serbia, i.e. development of skills, competences, knowledge and attitudes that support people's employment and realisation of their potential. However, there is still insufficient use of their potential. Based on what's learned CSOs can offer meaningful services to assist individual in finding sustainable employment and meaningful work. It seems that activities that promote cooperation with employers and work to facilitate employment of vulnerable groups may be particularly promising practices, emphasizing importance of both getting and keeping the job. It also seems that focus on social skills training within the vocational context reached results, which is in line with international research.²³

²³ Robert E. Drake et al, 2012, 'Individual Placement and Support: An Evidence-Based Approach to Supported Employment', Oxford University Press

Focus on basic social skills, those related to securing and keeping a job, and enhancing achievement of life and career goals should not be left behind in any future effective LLF policy.

Policy points

Full grasp of what lifelong learning is, and how both nonformal (and informal) and formal aspects of HCD are important, in reaching sustainable employment are still not mainstreamed across Serbia, in enforcement and practice spheres. This goes along with some of the findings of importance of embedding social inclusion goals in employment (and education) policies²⁴ across Western Balkans region. CSO sector in Serbia could help bridge this gap by offering their experiences and sharing their approaches to outreaching beneficiary groups, also with the support of ETF.

There seems to be a trend of prioritizing participation of formal adult training providers, which largely leaves CSOs in a policy and practical interregnum. Thus, current accreditation process, for CSOs, seems overly complex and overregulated with not much added value in terms of overall impact and quality resulting from it. Interactions among CSOs, policy makers and employers do not seem to lead to uptake of innovation, or initiatives to amend regulations, enforcement practices or similar. In addition, there also seems to be no effective platforms run nationally where stakeholders, including CSOs and public and private sector, could take part and contribute to policy making within the sphere on nonformal learning. ETF could help support this gap by launching community of practices and/or interest in the area.

In addition, while many CSOs are experienced in nonformal and informal training provision, and while evaluation of satisfaction among beneficiaries is widespread practice, there seems to be less emphasis on outcome evaluation. ETF could help bridge this gap by offering capacity building programmes through which effective outcome evaluation practices can be learned.

Finally, knowledge on importance of CSOs as actors and thus nonformal learning as social activity is not widespread among Serbian public, which is a future task worth pursuing for all the parties involved.

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²⁴ For example refer to Bartlett (2017), 'Agenda-setting for VET policy in the Western Balkans: employability versus social inclusion', available at http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/68873/1/Bartlett_Agenda-setting%20for%20VET_2017.pdf

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