

Gender Capacity Assessment of NGOs within Climate Promise Initiative in Montenegro

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Background

In 2021, as a part of preparations for the Third Biennial Report, the United Nations Development Program, in cooperation with the Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning and Urbanism of Montenegro agreed to develop the two assessments which will reflect the main characteristics and capacities of state and non-state actors to participate in creation, implementation and monitoring of the climate change policies and action through intersecting gender and climate change. The Ministry and UNDP also agreed to present the main findings and recommendations of both assessments at various stakeholders' meetings to ensure better exchange of information and expert inputs for an informed climate change planning and reporting.

The first assessment - Gender analysis for the Third Biennial Report is concentrating on assessing capacities of the national institutions dealing with climate change¹ to integrate gender equality considerations within climate change policies. The assessment has been conducted by the international gender consultant Olgica Apostolova and covered the five areas: a) policy alignment, b) institutional coordination, c) capacity building, d) sex-disaggregated data and gender information and e) dedicated financial resources.

The second assessment - Gender Capacity Assessment of Civil Society within Climate Promise Initiative in Montenegro is primarily focused on environmental/climate change NGOs on one, and NGOs working on protection and empowerment of women and marginalized groups on the other side. It was aimed at assessing their capacity to interlink the gender equality within the climate action, as well as to encourage them to contribute to adaptation and mitigation policies. The assessment has been developed by the national gender consultant Sanja Elezovic.

Gender responsible approach in climate policies in Montenegro

Montenegro ratified various international treaties in both gender and climate change areas², that promote a gender-sensitive approach and encourage the signatory countries to mainstream gender into national sustainable development and climate change policies. In October 2017, the Paris Agreement³ that obliges the signatories to consider different needs of women and men, their way of life and their ability to adapt to climate change when planning climate change adaptation measures, has been ratified. The Paris Agreement also

¹ Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning and Urbanism, but also Ministry of Economy, Capital Investments, Agriculture, Forestry and Waters, as well as relevant national institutions, like Environment Protection Agency, State Statistical Office etc.

² UN Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)² and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

³ <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>

stipulated necessity to set up the administrative capacities of States to define responses to climate change, which will be in line with the specific needs of women and men⁴.

National policies, like Gender Equality Law, stipulates an equal representation of women and men in all areas of public and private life, and calls for mainstreaming gender in all national policies. However, mainly due to the lack of institutional awareness and capacity to intersect the climate change and the gender equality, Montenegro does not have a dedicated policy or a decision related to gender mainstreaming in climate policies, actions and negotiations. Some positive developments happened in the period 2017-2020, when Montenegro participated in UNDP/UNEP Global Support Program (GSP) Pilot for 5 Balkan countries and Lebanon⁵ aiming at building capacities of pilot countries to integrate gender in the Monitoring, Reporting and Verification systems (MRV), following the main priorities of [UNFCCC Gender Action Plan](#).

As a result of this program, the two improvements have occurred:

1. Gender focal point for UNFCCC (representative of the Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning and Urbanism – MESPU⁶) has been nominated.
2. Non-formal Action Plan on priorities related to intersection of climate and gender equality policies has been reached between the representatives of the Ministry for Sustainable Development and Tourism (now the Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning and Urbanism) and the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights (coordinating institution for gender equality policies at the time of the above-mentioned project implementation).⁷ The Action Plan identified the three main objectives:
 - a) *Improvement of climate change legislation and policy documents (strategies and by-laws) by introducing a gender perspective, as well as to introduce climate change perspective in policy documents related to gender equality.*
 - b) *Strengthening of national institutions to mainstream gender into the climate change transparency framework.*
 - c) *Improvement of the system of collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data and gender data relevant for MRV and transparency.*

In 2021, in accordance with the objectives of the Action Plan, the following steps have been undertaken:

⁴ Articles 7.5 and 11.2 of the Paris Agreement

⁵ Gender Mainstreaming into Climate Transparency and Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) 2017-2020: Results of GSP Pilot in Western Balkan Countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia) and Lebanon. - Global Support Program, 2020, available online:

https://www.un-sp.org/sites/default/files/documentos/gender_mainstreaming_climate_transparency_mrv_gsp_pilot_western_balkan.pdf

⁶ Ms. Danijela Čabarkapa

⁷ From December 2020, gender equality policies are implemented by the Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights.

1. Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights in cooperation with OSCE Mission in Montenegro developed the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2025⁸ which incorporated operational goal, objectives and indicators related to climate change.
2. Ministry for Environment in cooperation with UNDP Montenegro took the following steps:
 - Gender-responsive goals and objectives, including gender sensitive communication have been set within the National Adaptation Plan that is to be developed in 2022.
 - Assessment of the capacities of institution to interlink gender and climate change has been undertaken. Within this assessment, the gender-relevant data gaps have been identified, and recommendations for improvement of gender statistics have been developed.
 - Assessment of capacities of NGOs to participate in gender-responsive Climate Promise initiative, with recommendations NGOs, media, university, local and national government and EU has been developed.
 - Trainings on gender equality and climate change for NGOs have been conducted to contribute to better understanding and raising capacities of NGOs on gender responsive climate policies.

Objective and methodology

The main objectives of this assessment were to:

1. Assess if and how Montenegrin NGOs understand and intersect gender and climate change through their programs and projects, and how they empower local women, men and vulnerable groups to participate in public policies;
2. Identify the entry points for participation of NGOs in gender-responsive climate action in the future
3. Develop recommendations for capacity building of NGOs to participate in adaptation and mitigation policies.

Assessment was conducted in the period July - September 2021. In order to gather relevant information and to understand how environment NGOs and women NGOs and groups in Montenegro comprehend the gender dimension of climate change, various methods were combined - desk research, on-line questionnaire for NGOs and interviews with prominent NGO leaders. On-line questionnaire was sent to 120 NGOs in August. Parallel to that, In

⁸ <https://www.gov.me/cyr/dokumenta/41e3ee6a-757a-4684-9763-9fee5e933afd>

August/September, several interviews with NGO representatives⁹ have been conducted to elaborate in a more detailed way the existing praxes of NGOs and lessons learned in this area, as well as to assess their interests for capacity building workshops on gender and climate change in October 2021 and beyond.

The role of NGOs in gender responsible climate action

Montenegro belongs to the South-Eastern Mediterranean; due to its geographical position, topography and socio-economic characteristics, the country is particularly exposed and vulnerable to the effects of climate change and hazards such as droughts, heavy rain and snowfall, floods, stormy winds, forest fires and heat waves. The climate change threats posed the whole complexity of environmental, economic, social, and political challenges. They negatively impact human rights and the basic existence of all citizens, but especially of those who are already deprived in terms of poor access to resources such as finance, information, technology, education, and independent income - women, vulnerable and marginalized groups. Also, due to their age, health status, social environment, access to services, place they live, etc., people are differently exposed to negative impacts of climate change in terms of health risks, ability to grow food, housing, safety and work. Having this in mind, it is clear that only solutions which are focused not only on scientific and economic, but also on people-centered, gender-aware social development can lead to sustainable resilience of the whole community. The first step towards it is to understand specific vulnerabilities¹⁰ of the particular social groups, but also to understand how their knowledge and skills can be utilized in development of climate solutions. To achieve this, it is necessary to collect and analyze sex-disaggregated data and gender information and to develop comprehensive gender analysis¹¹ to understand specific context and to ensure that gender responsive monitoring¹² is incorporated in each climate change program and project. It is also necessary to secure gender equality in decision making and in climate negotiations and to raise awareness of the impact of climate change on different social groups.

National and local governments, civil society (NGOs, media, Academia) and business community are the main stakeholders in creation, implementation and monitoring of climate policies. Although they have different roles in the process, their work should be mutually supportive and synergetic and all actors should build internal capacities in terms of

⁹ The list of interviews is available in Annex.

¹⁰ Vulnerability is best defined as a negative aggregate measure of human welfare that integrates environmental, social, economic and political exposure to a range of potential harmful effects.

¹¹ Gender analysis refers to systematic gathering and examination of information on gender differences and social relations in order to identify, understand and redress inequities based on gender

¹² Gender responsive monitoring is an ongoing systematic collection of data that allows tracking of progress against expected gender responsive results and indicators, like equal participation of women and men in decision-making and capacity building activities and equal share of benefits (financial programs, grants, loans, etc.)

knowledge and skills necessary to create, implement and monitor gender responsive climate policies. Montenegrin institutions have to create a suitable framework for transparent and inclusive decision making process, and some steps have been already taken in this direction, as presented in the previous chapter.

NGOs play a key role in ensuring that policy making and policy implementation incorporates gender just solution based on needs and voice of all social groups, especially those who are deprived and vulnerable. Contribution of NGOs can be recognized in the following areas:

- Researches and gender analyses developed by NGOs can provide valuable inputs to creation of national climate policies and actions through collection and dissemination of information on environmental challenges, as well as on the specific vulnerabilities of different social groups. Other civil society actors, like universities, also have a significant role to play in this respect.
- NGOs can also contribute to implementation of the climate actions and help building resilience of the local people to climate change. In this respect, the role of grass-root organizations, local activists, and especially local women leaders is of the immense importance. NGOs can significantly contribute to raising awareness and mobilize participation of individuals and social groups that are less represented in the decision-making - women, as well as vulnerable and marginalized people. Also, the other civil society actors, like media, have an important role in dissemination of information, public education, early warning, etc.
- Last but not least, NGOs are significant actor in gender responsive monitoring of the process of implementation of climate actions, as well as in the process of learning, exchange of best practices, etc.

Capacities of NGOs to participate in gender responsive climate action

a) Number, types and financing of NGOs

To understand the capacities of Montenegrin NGOs to become an active participant in the process of creation, implementation and monitoring of gender just climate action, it is necessary to understand how many NGOs actively work in areas covering these issues, which types of NGOs are present on the public scene and how their programs and projects related to environment and climate change are financed from the state budget.

According to the NGO register¹³ developed and maintained by the National Office for Cooperation with NGOs, there are 4366 registered NGOs in Montenegro. Out of this number,

¹³ nvoinfo.me

about 7% is registered in the area of human rights and gender equality, while about 8% is registered in the areas of sustainable development, environment protection and rural development, which in absolute numbers make about 654 NGOs. According to the NGO Centre for Development of NGOs, which serves as a resource center for non-governmental organizations for more than 20 years, out of all 4366 registered NGOs only 25 percent has regular activities, budget and staff, and regularly submit annual reports to the Tax Authority, which could lead us to the conclusion that in the above-mentioned areas only about 160 NGOs have regular activities. As concluded in the Country Paper on Montenegro¹⁴, "majority of Montenegrin NGOs are small, poorly resourced, municipally based organizations, dedicated to addressing issues in the immediate local community".

Most NGOs concentrate on service provision in the community in areas such as: protection of the rights of persons with disabilities; environmental protection; and culture and youth. A fewer number of NGOs deal with issues of good governance such as rule of law, transparency in decision-making process and the fight against corruption. At the national level, "there is a core of organizationally mature NGOs engaged mainly in advocacy, research and monitoring and capacity building in fields such as the fight against corruption, state administration, poverty reduction and human rights. This small number of professional organizations exists in the contrast to the majority of semiprofessional, mostly voluntary NGOs working at the local level, which mainly provide services to the local community or to their members"¹⁵.

In most of the countries, NGOs act as think tanks, service providers, and advocacy organizations; those types can also be recognized within the civil society sector in Montenegro; however, due to the various factors, including the lack of financial sustainability and the necessity to adapt to demands of donors, as well as by the necessity to multitask within the complexity of problems in the area they work in, some NGOs combine different functions in their programs, being an advocates and service providers at the same time, or working as a think-thanks, but also providing some sort of services to citizens. One of the characteristics of Montenegrin NGOs is that they still work in particular areas, or sectors, and very rarely apply inter-sectorial approach to problems. It is also partly driven by the demands of donors, but also by the fact that NGOs work in the context of existing national and local policies and institutions, which are also based on the sectorial, rather than on the inter-sectorial approach.

Funds for NGO programs related to environment and climate change, and programs related to gender equality, come from EU, international and bilateral donors, state budget, budget of municipalities and private donors. The EU funds has great potential for achieving visible and

¹⁴ The country paper has been developed by the Montenegrin NGO Center for Development of NGOs in 2017, as a part of the project "Western Balkan CSOs for Global Development" financed by the Austrian Development and HORIZONT3000 through its partner organizations. https://www.horizont3000.at/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/WB_CountryPaper_Montenegro.pdf

¹⁵ The Country Paper of Montenegro. - CRNVO, 2017

sustainable results in various areas of importance and which contribute to the content and quality of the EU integration process. Besides EU funds allocated for Montenegro, NGOs also participate as beneficiaries of projects in cross-border and transnational cooperation programs.

According to platform www.finansiranjenvo.me which publishes data on funded projects and programs of NGOs from the state budget, i.e. from the individual ministries, in 2020, environment and climate change projects were funded by the three institutions: Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism¹⁶ - 82,152.00 Euro, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry - 64,133.00 Euro and the Ministry of Transport and the projects - 40,777.00 Euro, which makes total of 187,062.00 Euro for projects that are to be realized in 2021. When it comes to the grants coming from the Ministry of Sustainable Development, NGOs complained about slow and delayed procedure of publishing the calls for financing of the projects, as well as the slow procedure of the project approval. As concluded in the Report¹⁷ of NGO Coalition 27, although in 2020 the public call was published in the first half of the year, the approval was delayed, and implementation of these projects started at the end of the year. Similar distribution of funds is present in the area of gender equality, where EU, international and bilateral donors finance the most of NGO projects. According to www.finansiranjenvo.me, in 2020, Ministry of Human and Minority Rights¹⁸ financed NGO programs for gender equality with 170,997.00 Euro.

b) Participation of NGOs in working groups for negotiations with EU and in implementation of the Green Agenda

Cooperation of NGOs and Government is regulated by the Law on NGOs, while the special Decree¹⁹ regulates the criteria and procedure for electing NGO representatives to the working group and other working bodies formed by ministries and administrative bodies for the preparation of laws and strategies. Accession negotiations with Montenegro were opened on June 29th, 2012, and the working groups for the preparation of negotiations also include representatives of NGOs active in that policy area. Although NGOs continue to be actively involved in the accession process, including in the different working groups on the negotiation chapters, some shortcomings are still present. As noticed by the European Commission, "in many cases, NGOs' participation in working groups remains a formality; the lack of timely

¹⁶ From December 2020, Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Urbanism

¹⁷ Progress of Montenegro 2020: Long travel to the EU Shadow report of the Coalition 27 for the Chapter 27 – Environment and Climate Change. - Coalition 27, BTĐ, Norwegian Embassy Belgrade, 2020
http://koalicija27.me/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Contribution-report_Montenegro-2020.pdf, Page 11

¹⁸ From December 2020, Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights

¹⁹ Decree on the Election of Representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations to the Working Bodies of State Administration Bodies and the Conduct of Public Hearings in the Preparation of Laws and Strategies ("Official Gazette. list CG "no. 41/18)

information, inclusion and openness to their recommendations prevents them from influencing the decision-making process."²⁰

For achieving the better synergetic effect, NGOs are gathering in coalitions and networks to multiply the pressure to the government to comply with UN and EU standards. Some of the most prominent networks/coalitions in the area of sustainable development, environment and climate change are:

- In 2016, an informal network of NGOs - Coalition 27 - have been established to serve as a platform for joint participation of civil society organizations in the process of adopting standards and values of the European Union in the field of environmental protection. The Coalition monitors the process of harmonization and implementation of policies in the accession negotiations of Montenegro with the EU, as well as proposing solutions that will contribute to the protection and improvement of the environment and the quality of life of citizens.²¹ This Coalition gathers 15 NGOs in total, out of which 14 work in the areas of sustainable development, environment protection, rural development, etc., while one NGO works in the area of anti-corruption.
- Network of non-governmental organizations "Natura 2000 Info Center" (N2IC), has been established in 2009 to Montenegrin environmental NGOs in order to take an active role in the preparation and implementation of Natura 2000 for the formation and management of European protected areas in Montenegro, consisting of 37 environmental NGOs from Montenegro.

In 2018, negotiations on the Chapter 27 - Environment and Climate Change were opened. Within this Chapter, Montenegro should align its environmental legislation to EU laws and standards in the following areas: climate change, water and air quality, waste management, nature protection, industrial pollution, chemicals, noise, and civil protection. In February 2020, the EU adopted a new enlargement methodology for the Western Balkans based on six thematic clusters that substitute the former negotiating chapters: Former chapter 27 on the environment and climate change, is now included in Cluster 4 (Green Agenda and Sustainable Connectivity), that encompass transport policy, energy, and trans-European networks.

The Green Agenda for the Western Balkans²², was introduced by the European Commission in October 2020, within the EC Economic and Investment plan. The Agenda aims to create stronger links and promote joint climate and environmental actions between the EU and the Western Balkans and to utilize the economic potential of green growth and circular economy

²⁰ European Commission: Montenegro Report 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/montenegro_report_2020.pdf, page 15

²¹ <https://koalicija27.me/>

²² https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/green_agenda_for_the_western_balkans_en.pdf

for the development of the region. It builds on the existing cooperation frameworks, i.e., the Stabilization and Association Process, and it focuses on five main policy areas: a) climate action; b) circular economy; c) biodiversity protection; d) air, water, and soil pollution; e) sustainable food system and rural areas. Although the Agenda doesn't directly mention gender aspect, it pledges for the "socially just and inclusive" transition to climate-neutrality. It also underlines that "energy poverty is the social dimension of energy transition that must be addressed for households that cannot afford key energy services to secure a basic standard of living and citizens buy-in". In its relations with the Western Balkans, neighborhood, and partner countries, «the EU will strengthen the links between biodiversity protection, gender, health, education and conflict sensitivity»; it will increase its support to phase-out harmful actions to biodiversity and it will promote stronger coalitions with civil society"²³

A group of NGOs from the Western Balkans, including the two Montenegrin organizations²⁴, (both of them being members of the national Coalition 27), were actively engaged in the process. In April 2020, NGO proposals on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans²⁵ was sent to the European Commission, with the proposals in the following areas: decarbonisation, circular economy, pollution, sustainable farming and rural areas development, biodiversity, and financing, including a potential Just Transition Fund). The group of NGOs underlines that civil society is ready to be a watchful but constructive partner to the EU and national governments in implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans in the following areas:

- Promoting the benefits of sustainable development to communities across the region, thus ensuring their support for the necessary measures;
- Providing NGO expertise on policy, law, science, communication and community engagement to governments open to partnerships;
- Raising awareness and encouraging debates on sustainable development policies with key stakeholders in the public, private and civil society sector, including engaging in dialogue with the European public banks to help to shape funding directions for future actions;
- Continuing NGO watchdog activities and ensuring that public interests are served and prioritized in political and financial decision-making, at program and project level.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Eco-team and Green Home

²⁵ <https://bankwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/NGO-paper-on-the-Green-Agenda-for-the-Western-Balkans.pdf>

c) Capacities of NGOs to mobilize local women, men and vulnerable groups in adaptation and mitigation policies

The level of public awareness on consequences of climate change in Montenegro is not at the satisfactory level and citizens are not aware, nor ready to participate in decision-making processes. As research of the NGO Coalition²⁶ 27 from April 2021 shows, less than a half of people (39,4%) believe that they can personally contribute to protection of nature. This is a serious alarm to decision-makers that additional efforts should be invested in mobilization of citizens to participate in adaptation and mitigation policies. The outreach of NGOs is also unsatisfactory - although citizens have trust in them, they are very rarely in contact with some of the NGOs. The Research on citizens' attitudes towards environmental problems developed in 2020 by NGO Center for Democracy and Human Rights (CEDEM) and Green Home,²⁷ showed that the majority of responders expresses only general concern for the future of the ecological environment and climate change, but the level of personal concern (implying personal responsibility and prudence due to possible risks), is as at a much lower level. Majority of citizens believe that the Government and its ministries are the most responsible when it comes to environmental protection and climate change.

When it comes to the role of NGOs, in the above-mentioned research, citizens recognized NGOs, media and international organizations as the best actors in protecting of the environment; the government and local government were rated less, while the worst rated were private companies, state-owned companies and the Parliament. Analysis of citizens' attitudes to NGOs, conducted in 2019 by the Center for Development of NGOs²⁸, once more proved that NGOs have great potential to be a bridge between citizens and national and local policies, but this potential is not properly utilized. More than a half of responders expressed their trust to NGOs, and the largest number of them consider NGOs as a good form of civic organizing; however, 83% of respondents have never been in contact with any NGO. According to the above mentioned research of Coalition 27 on ecological awareness of citizens of Montenegro, 35% of people think that there is no point for them to contribute (like, for example, to recycle waste) if other people are not ready to do so. This finding can be a valuable input to NGOs to work on raising public awareness about the role and the power of individual in protection of environment, as well as in adaptation and mitigation policies.

Although NGOs in Montenegro organize many activities aimed at public education and participation of citizens in local decision-making, their outreach remains insufficient. As noticed in the Report on implementation of Strategy for improving of the supportive

²⁶ <http://koalicija27.me/2021/07/16/istrazivanje-o-ekoloskoj-svijesti-gradjana-crne-gore/>

²⁷ <https://www.cedem.me/publikacije/istrazivanja/ostala-istrazivanja/send/31-ostala-istrazivanja/1979-stavovi-gradana-o-problemima-zastite-zivotne-sredine-2020>

²⁸ Analiza o stavovima građana o NVO-ima. - CRNVO, 2019, <https://crnvo.me/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Analiza-o-stavovima-gradana-o-nevladinim-organizacijama-u-Crnoj-Gori-u-2019.-godini.pdf>

environment for the activities of NGOs 2018-2020²⁹, only 183 NGOs keep their profile active at www.nvoinfo.me. Only 9% of all environmental NGOs have their official website, and 22.5% at one point opened an organization account on the social network Facebook (either as a profile, group, or page), which does not mean that they update it regularly. Less than a quarter of them enable modern two-way communication between themselves and the public³⁰. One of the reasons lies in the fact, that environmental NGOs are mostly think-tanks and advocacy organizations, and are not present as service providers. On the other hand, those NGOs are capable of mobilizing significant number of people for their advocacy campaigns, especially in cases when some of the natural resources are endangered. One of the most prominent examples is the campaign against building of a big hydro-electrical power central on the river Tara, that gathered more than 30 Montenegrin NGOs and 11 thousand citizens in 2004. In 2018 and 2019, several grass roots protests supported by NGOs, against ecological destruction of protected areas have occurred, including, among others, massive civic protests against building of military training camp at mountain Sinjajevina, destruction of pine forests in National Park Durmitor, as well as the protest against destruction of a centennial pine park in coastal city of Bar.

In Montenegro, one of the significant challenges to creation of participative and inclusive adaptation and mitigation policies is the fact that citizens show more reactive, than the proactive approach to national and local policies. At the same time, people are not adequately informed about possibilities to participate in public discussions. Research on participation of citizens at the local level issued in April 2021 and conducted by NGO Center for Development of NGOs³¹ showed that cumulatively, only 30% of citizens claim to be interested in the decision-making processes in their municipality - of which, 8.6% are very interested, while 22.1% are somewhat interested. Men (35.7%) are more interested in participating in these processes than women (26.2%). Furthermore, residents of the southern region (36.5%) show higher interest in this type of activism from the inhabitants of central (30.2%) and northern (26.8%) part of Montenegro. Also, the higher the educational level and income, the more interested the person is in participating in the decision-making process. Some of the lessons learned from previous NGO actions show that NGOs should be more present on the ground and dedicate more time to communication to local people. As one of the most prominent eco-activists from the northern region³² noticed, in the action "Let's Clean Montenegro" organized by several NGOs, significant number people from Plav and Rožaje participated in large numbers because they "were cordially invited and felt respected" by NGOs.

29 Report on the Strategy for improving the supportive environment for the activities of NGOs 2018-2020. - Ministry for Public Administration, Digital Society and Media, 2021. - <https://www.gov.me/cyr/dokumenta/ad0a0e26-3735-4a29-83f5-75d5142fd9db>

³⁰ Anđela Đurašković: Activities of the environmental NGOs in Montenegro in the field of biodiversity protection: Master thesis. - Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade, 2020

³¹ <https://crnvo.me/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Istrazivanje-o-gradanskoj-participaciji-u-lokalnim-samoupravama.pdf>

³² Aleksandar Dragičević

When it comes to public discussions, less than a fifth of respondents claim to be always, or most often informed about place, date and topic of public discussions, while more than one-third admit to rarely having this kind of information. Men (24.0%) more often than women (15.5%) claim to be always or most often informed about public discussions. While people older than 55 are less informed than other ages categories, people with higher incomes and level of education are in the lead. On the other side, citizens are ready to participate in the actions aimed at putting pressure on decision makers, like signing petitions, boycotts, strikes and demonstrations. Like in the case of pro-active participation, men participated more often than women in this kind of activities.

NGOs working on protection of rights of women and vulnerable groups are mostly service providers, although some of them combine think-tank, advocacy and service providing functions. The work of those NGOs is very much appreciated among the citizens - as elaborated in the research on citizens' attitudes to NGOs, citizens especially appreciate their work on protection of women from violence. Many of those NGOs provide services on the ground, and some of them offer an extended services to women living in remote areas³³. NGOs working on social integration of Roma and Egyptians at the local level, or those working on extending services and empowering marginalized groups, people of different gender orientation, people with disabilities, etc., are very valuable resource for spreading the knowledge about negative consequences of climate change, as well as for creation of an informed and evidence based policies for remediation of negative consequences of climate change, like disaster risk reduction, adaptation and mitigation. Based on the trust of their constituencies and local people, those organizations are capable of mobilizing people to participate in decision-making process, to share their knowledge, insights, and ideas, and to integrate it into programs aimed at building their resilience to climate change. However, those NGOs need to be properly educated on climate change policies and decision-making processes, and properly funded and equipped to mobilize people to participate in creation and implementation of climate actions. On the other side, skills of those NGOs need to be upgraded to become able to monitor gender responsiveness and proper implementation of principles of human rights and gender just transition through climate policies.

d) Other civil society actors

Other civil society actors, above all the media and University, are also of the high importance for raising awareness, knowledge and skills of people and raising the overall capacity of the society to become more resilient to climate change. However, many challenges are still present. Public Service - Program scheme of the Montenegrin public media service RTCG for 2020 does not recognize climate change as a separate issue. However, within the program scheme of the Redaction for Ecology the TV show "Ecovision" consisting of 22 episodes in 2020, covers the

³³ Like, for example, NGO SOS Helpline for women and children victims of violence

topics related to climate change like space planning, air quality, water quality, municipal waste, wastewater, biodiversity protection, as well as topics related to public administration capacities and financial capabilities of Montenegro to comply with requirements of the Chapter 27. The special TV show "NGO sector" covers activities of NGOs and represents a good source of information for citizens about various possibilities to participate in decision-making, as well as in monitoring of local and national policies.

When it comes to University of Montenegro, multi-disciplinary study program for Environment Protection on the Faculty of Metallurgy and Engineering is available for students of undergraduate and master studies. Designed as an applied type program, it prepares students to work on remediation of visible consequences of human technological activities. At the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, post-graduate studies on Ecological Engineering are dedicated to remediation of eco-systems. Several Memoranda of Cooperation signed by individual faculties and the Government of Montenegro open the possibilities for scientist and experts to participate in working groups for development of policies and strategies; however, this kind of cooperation remains on ad hoc and individual bases. University is open to cooperation with NGOs and students participate in various ecological actions organized by NGOs. Based on the Law on High Education³⁴ that introduces the concept of life-long learning, universities are encouraged to organize non-academic courses for general population. However, like in the case of participation in public policies and in civic activities, life-long learning is not enough utilized for raising the overall knowledge base, skills and resilience of Montenegrin community to the challenges of the present day.

e) NGO capacities - results of an online survey

In August 2021, an on-line questionnaire has been sent to over 120 NGOs dealing with issues related to climate change and environmental protection from one, and NGOs working on gender equality, protection and empowerment of women and vulnerable social groups on the other side. The questionnaire was designed to put more light on the following aspects:

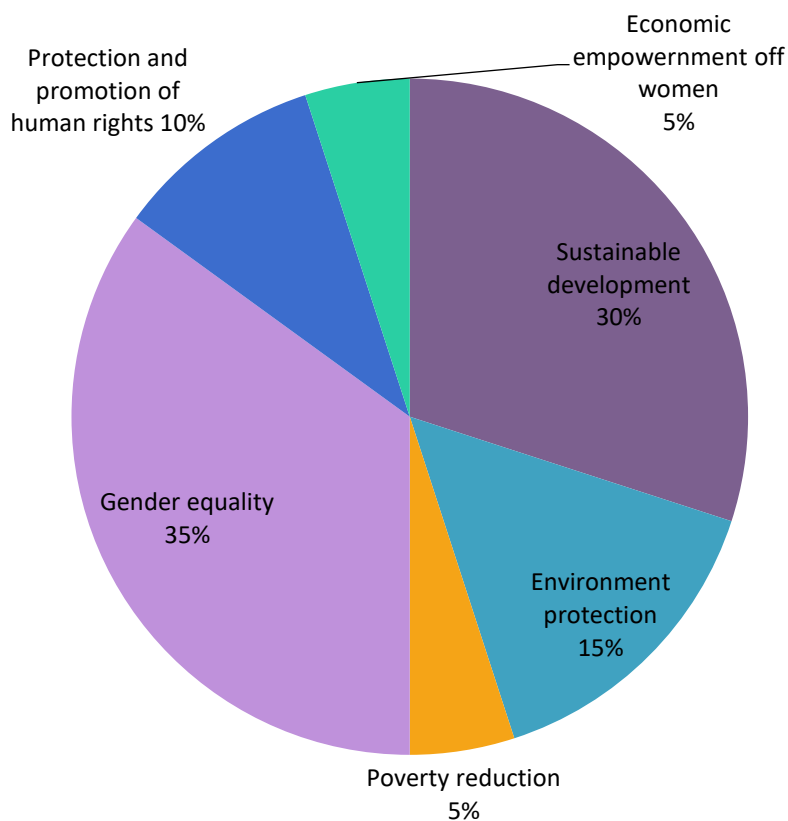
- Gender balance in organizations
- Comprehension of gender dimension of climate change
- Presence of gender equality in NGO programs
- Cooperation between environmental and gender equality/human rights NGOs
- Experience of gender/women/human rights NGOs with topics related to climate policies and vice versa
- Readiness of NGOs to build capacities to interlink gender and climate change

³⁴ Adopted in 2014, amended in 2017

- Capacities of NGOs to mobilize local women, men and vulnerable groups in adaptation and mitigation policies

Twenty one NGOs have sent their answers to the questionnaire: ANIMA, Center for women's and peace education, NGO Nature and Heritage, SOS Telephone for victims of violence, Eco-movement OZON, NGO Center for Rural Development, Eco-team, Center for feminist culture, Association of business women, Expeditio, Eco center Delfin, Women's action, NGO Roma heart, Association for protection of Durmitor, Ksenia, Montenegrin women's lobby, Association of Egyptians, Biciklo.me, Regional development agency for Bjelasica, Komovi and Prokletije, and the Women's safe house. Most of the responders are recognized as the most prominent ones in their respective area of work.

As illustrated in the chart below, 45% of the responders work in the areas related to climate change (30% in sustainable development and 15% in environment protection) and 55% in the area related to human rights and gender equality (35% gender equality, 5% economic empowerment of women, 10% protection of human and minority rights and 5% in poverty reduction).



f) Gender balance in organizations

In 65% of organizations, women make majority among employees, collaborators or volunteers. Gender parity exist in 33% of the responders, while 5% of them have more men in the organization.

g) Comprehension of gender dimension of climate change

NGOs were asked to self-evaluate their understanding of climate change, its consequences to certain social groups, as well as the ways NGOs could contribute to reducing negative effects of climate change. The cumulative results show that the percentage of NGOs that understand the causes of climate change (33%) is lower than the total number of NGOs working in the field of sustainable development, environmental protection, rural and regional development (45%). This points to the fact that the topic of climate change is insufficiently present not only in the work of NGOs, but also that it is insufficiently present as a topic to which NGOs should dedicate their efforts and engage in this area of public policy. The same can be concluded for NGOs working in the area of protection and empowerment of women, and marginalized groups (45% of all organizations participating in the questionnaire belong to this group), where understanding of gender related influences of climate change on women, men and marginalized groups is well understood only by 15% of all organizations.

	Yes	To certain extend	No
Causes of climate change	33,3%	57.1%	9.5%
Gender related influences of climate change on women, men and marginalized groups	15%	70.0%	15.0%
Ways in which individuals can contribute to reducing the negative effects of climate change	15.0%	70.0%	15.0%
Ways in which NGOs can contribute to reducing the negative effects of climate change	15.8%	68.4%	15.8%
Ways in which NGOs can contribute to development of climate change adaptation programs	21.1%	63.2%	15.8%

h) Presence of gender equality in NGO programs

Asked about presence of gender equality in their programs, 89% of organizations confirmed that this aspect is present, in the following areas:

	Percent
Through the balanced participation of men and women in consultations related to programs / projects	22.2%
Through the balanced participation of men and women in organizational activities	77.8%
Through providing equal benefits / benefits from the results of our programs / projects for men and women	44.4%
Through participation of gender expert in the planning phase of our programs/projects	11.1%
Through a monitoring process that ensures regular monitoring of the participation of men and women in our programs / projects and the benefits / benefits that they both achieve in that process	22.2%
Through gender study/assessment/analysis ³⁵	11.1%
None of the above	11.1%

i) Cooperation between environmental NGOs and gender equality/human rights NGOs

To understand whether and how the two types of NGOs cooperate through their programs, we asked organizations to explain their experiences in this respect so far.

Among organizations dealing with climate change (sustainable development and environment protection), 60% have cooperated with national, local, or foreign organizations dealing with gender equality, human and minority rights, as well as with those, working in the area of women's empowerments and poverty reduction. The examples included the following projects:

³⁵ NGO Expeditio: Research Gender and Space <https://issuu.com/expeditiokotor/docs/rod-i-prostor-integrisanje-principa>

1. School of ecologic activism, School of human ecology, Euroscop (leading organization: Eco-movement Ozon).
2. Building of walking paths, Capacity building for women for rural tourism business, training for women in souvenir crafts, roundtables on gender equality in rural development (leading organization: Regional development agency for Bjelasica, Prokletije and Komovi, in cooperation with UNDP Women's program).
3. History that doesn't exist: lives of women in the region of Boka Kotorska³⁶ (NGO Expeditio, in cooperation with NGO Center for feminist culture)
4. Participation of girls and women in Roma ball, Culture and tradition of Roma, Club for elders (NGO Roma Heart, in cooperation with IOM)
5. Economic empowerment of women (Association of business women, in cooperation with UNDP Women's program)

When it comes to organizations working in the area of gender equality and human rights, only two of them have some experience in working with local and national environmental NGOs. One women NGO was involved in advocacy for equal participation of women in decision-making on climate change at local and national levels, while the NGO that used to organize popular training program on gender equality and women's rights ("Woman's Studies") have included the topic of ecofeminism into the training.

One of the good examples of cooperation between the two types of organizations was mentioned in the interview with representative of NGO Expeditio. This organizations works in the area of sustainable development³⁷, implements gender responsive principles in each project and closely cooperates with NGOs working on empowerment of women. Some organizations, like Regional Development Agency for Bjelasica, Komovi and Prokletije, have extended experience in projects aimed at empowering rural women.

j) Experience of gender/women/human rights NGOs with topics related to climate policies and vice versa

Most of the organizations (62% of responders) haven't had an opportunity to get acquainted with national reports on climate changes (like BUR, National Communication, NDC). Also, only 29% of them have had an opportunity to participate in some of the educational programs on

³⁶ http://www.expeditio.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1227:izloba-istorija-koje-nema-2942014&catid=111&Itemid=544&lang=sr

³⁷ Expeditio mostly works in sustainable urban development and protection of natural and cultural heritage

climate change, which contained the topic related to gender aspects of climate change. Examples include the following educational programs:

Lecture on Ecofeminism within the educational program Women's studies
Project "Green economy"
Webinar Gender and Climate change, within the Gender Budget Watchdog Network
Camp for making of sustainable urban mobility plans (SUMP), GIZ
Preparation of the Third Biennial Update on Climate Change to the UNFCCC - Gender Dimension of Climate Change (Consultation of Stakeholders - December 2019)

k) Readiness of NGOs to build their capacities to interlink gender and climate change

Asked about their readiness to further build their capacities to interlink gender and climate change, 76% organizations responded positively and expressed an interest in doing so. Organizations are interested to learn about the following:

Raising public awareness of the link between climate change and gender equality, as well as the economic empowerment of women through a green economy
Ways of integrating issues into NGO programs and projects
All aspects related to the development of society, protection of ecology and preservation of health.
Green business
Climate change in urban areas
Cultural heritage and climate change
Better understanding of gender aspect of climate change
Ways in which NGOs can contribute to reducing the negative effects of climate change
Agriculture
Ways in which NGOs can contribute to reducing the negative effects of climate change

Our organization deals with gender equality and protection of human rights through a service for psychosocial and legal support to persons, primarily women and children, with experience of domestic violence. We would like to educate ourselves and contribute to addressing the impact of climate change on gender equality
Through recognizing the negative consequences of climate change in terms of increasing women's vulnerability
Support to marginalized groups
Resilience of women and youth to climate change
Improving gender equality through sustainable transport (walking, cycling and public transport)
Gender related influences of climate change on women, men and marginalized groups

Conclusions and recommendations

NGOs have an important role as stakeholders in formulation, implementation and monitoring of climate action. However, Montenegrin NGOs who were the subject of this assessment (environment/climate change/sustainable development from one, and gender equality/protection and empowerment of women, vulnerable and marginalized groups from the other side) are still not prepared to take this role.

Although some of environment/climate change/sustainable development NGOs integrate some of the gender considerations in their projects, it is obvious that this approach is more donor-driven, than based on their mission. On the other side, NGOs working on gender equality/ protection and empowerment of women, vulnerable and marginalized groups are even less able to incorporate environment/climate change considerations in their work.³⁸ When it comes to organizational culture, it is to be concluded that most of NGOs embrace gender equality as one of their organizational values.

Both types of NGOs still have a high level of expertise in their own areas, but rarely introduce inter-disciplinary approach. Some ad hoc cooperation between different types of organizations occurs, but there is a lack of genuine understanding how they could benefit

³⁸ The cumulative results show that the percentage of NGOs that understand the causes of climate change (33%) is lower than the total number of responding NGOs working in the field of environment/climate change/sustainable development (45%).

from each other's knowledge and how they can work together towards introduction of gender just climate solutions. Entry points for this type of synergetic work already exist - participation of NGOs in working groups for negotiations with EU, implementation of Green Agenda, as well as the process of creation, implementation and monitoring of mitigation and adaptation policies.

Only one third of responders understand causes and consequences of climate change; on the other hand, the positive attitude of both types of NGOs towards gender responsive climate policies, as well as their readiness to further build capacities to interlink gender and climate change is encouraging.

Capacities of NGOs in raising public awareness, mobilizing participation of local women, men and vulnerable groups in adaptation and mitigation policies are still insufficient. Only small percentage of NGOs have regular communication with citizens.

a) Recommendations for NGOs:

- NGOs should work on establishments of network of organizations, experts and activists working in the area of gender equality, protection and empowerment of women, people of other gender orientation, vulnerable and marginalized groups, and NGOs working in the area of environment protection, sustainable development, rural and regional development, etc., in order to join efforts, knowledge and skills to: a) raise awareness on gender responsiveness to climate change and the just transition; b) empower local women and men, vulnerable and marginalized groups, to actively contribute to mitigation and adaptation policies and plans; c) participate in implementation of climate action, and d) monitor gender-responsiveness and implementation of the just transition principle.
- Events and campaigns stimulating participation of local women and men, vulnerable and marginalized groups should be organized by local NGOs to inform people on consequences of climate change, but also to help them come up with ideas and solutions for adaptation and mitigation policies.
- NGOs should work on raising their capacities to mobilize local women and men, vulnerable and marginalized groups, to participate in climate-related decision-making process. Handbook on mechanisms of civic participation in decision-making on local and national levels³⁹ issued in 2020 by NGO Center for Development of NGOs can serve as a guidance regarding the procedures, means, types of participation, etc. However, a special guidance and training for NGOs and local governments for

³⁹ <https://crnvo.me/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Mehanizmi-gradanskog-ucesca-u-procesima-donosjenja-odluka-na-lokalnom-i-nacionalnom-nivou.pdf>

mobilization of women for civic participation, especially women from rural areas and marginalized communities in climate decision-making needs to be developed. Some general recommendations can be drawn from existing handbooks of UN agencies and programs⁴⁰, but it is necessary to integrate the local context and understanding of culture, customs, way of life and other features and nuances of the particular community or group. It is necessary for NGOs to raise capacities in the following areas: communication skills, development of needs assessments, conducting of individual interviews and focus groups, project writing, development of strategic plans, development of gender analysis, gender responsive budgets, indicators, reporting, monitoring and evaluation.

- Environment NGOs should work on raising the understanding how to apply the concept of Human Rights Based Approach to climate change and to understand why inter-section and gender equality are important for climate action (like, for example, how renewable energy can be a catalyst for women's empowerment and gender equality, economic empowerment of women, etc.). They should work on building their capacities to develop gender responsive projects, containing gender-relevant goals, activities, indicators and budget. Also, consultations with gender experts during the project implementation is highly desirable. Gender-responsive monitoring should become an integral part of the project cycle and environment NGOs should closely cooperate with NGOs working on protection of women and vulnerable groups in this area. It is necessary to develop gender-responsive indicators in accordance with good practices and existing UN handbooks⁴¹.
- NGOs working on protection of rights and empowerment of women, vulnerable and marginalized groups should work on raising understanding and knowledge about gender dimension of climate change, as well as about development of gender responsive project and monitoring frameworks and indicators.
- All NGOs should consult their target groups more often to ensure the inclusiveness and effectiveness of their projects. It is necessary to assess on regular bases the needs of people, as well as their knowledge and understanding of climate change. On the other hand, it is necessary to work with local women and men, vulnerable and marginalized groups to encourage them to be active participants in climate actions. NGOs should also help in assessing the potentials of local people to be agents of change and work on strengthening of their capacities to benefit from programs for adaptation and mitigation, green economy and just energy transition.

⁴⁰ <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/06/training-manual-on-gender-and-climate-resilience>

FAO: Field Level Handbook, <http://www.fao.org/3/ak214e/ak214e00.pdf>

⁴¹ Broad gender and environment indicators: <https://www.empowerforclimate.org/en/resources/m/a/i/mainstreaming-gender-in-environment-statistics-for-the-sdgs-and-beyond>

EmPower indicators on gender and climate change: <https://www.empowerforclimate.org/en/resources/i/n/t/integrating-gender-in-climate-change-and-disaster-related-statistics>

- NGOs should upgrade their communication with the general public through user-friendly websites, social networks, podcasts and other forms of communication.

b) Recommendations for other civil society actors

- Media, and especially public service, should work on production of contact programs dedicated to climate change adaptation, aimed at putting more light on specific vulnerabilities of women and men, children, and marginalized groups, depending on the place they live, their age, occupation, health condition, type of livelihoods, etc. It can imply discussions with experts, local people, filming of particular geographical areas, various kinds of research on the ground, etc. Individual redactions, like Ecology, Science and Education, and shows aimed at educating rural people and entrepreneurs⁴², as well as the show dedicated to activities of NGO sector have the great potential to educate public on climate change and the ways how citizens can actively participate in creation and implementation of climate change actions.
- Redaction for the school program for children should develop special tailor-made educational shows on climate change, aimed at introducing the climate-aware and nature-responsive culture.
- Universities could highly contribute to raising of knowledge base and skills to cope with negative consequences of climate change. In a sense of that, the existing potentials for cooperation with government (like, for example, participation of university representatives in working groups for development of climate policies), as well as potentials for raising public knowledge and understanding of negative consequences of climate change through non-formal programs for life-long learning, can be utilized.

d) Recommendations for national and local governments:

To employ all available national capacities and to achieve effective public participation and consultation in decision-making on climate change, consultations with civil society and other stakeholders in the process of legislative and strategic development needs to be improved. Government of Montenegro needs to concentrate its efforts in the following areas:

- Establishment of a more structured cooperation with civil society organizations in the working group for negotiation with EU through clear standard operation procedures regarding timely information, participative decision-making, and transparency of the process. In accordance with the new EU negotiation methodology, the new intersectional and inter-disciplinary approach is necessary. In a sense of that, capacity building is necessary for all members of working groups, including NGO

⁴² Shows "Agrosaznanje", "Biznis zona" and "Preduzetnik"

representatives, about inter-disciplinary and inter-sectorial issues like gender dimension of climate change, just transition, participation of local people in protection of biodiversity, etc. Representative of women/human rights NGOs should become a member of the working group for the Chapter 27 (i.e. Cluster 4)

- Reform of financing of NGO projects from the funds of sectorial ministries is needed. It is necessary to introduce more efficient mechanism for timely publishing of calls for proposals and decision-making on grant awards, in order to keep up with the dynamics of the negotiation process.
- In accordance with the Green Agenda, gender and climate justice should be recognized as a guiding principle in climate change action. To this aim, Ministry of Environment should develop clear guidelines how to create policies capable of meeting the needs of all social groups in Montenegro - women and men, children, vulnerable and marginalized groups. Ministry should work to increase a knowledge base on gender and climate to identify effective mitigation and adaptation options. One of the ideas is to establish multi-stakeholder climate change forum, where all stakeholders would be gathered to discuss on the best solutions.
- Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights, within its regular quarterly NGO forums, should dedicate at least 2 of those events to issues related to climate change adaptation and mitigation, such as the ways and techniques to secure more active mobilization of local women, men, people of different gender orientation, as well as vulnerable and marginalized groups to participate in creation and implementation of climate policies.
- Within the new Strategy for cooperation of the Government with NGOs, it is necessary to introduce mandatory financing of resource centers for NGOs at the local level, to secure permanent support to local NGOs, grass-root movements, and activists for their civic participation in local decision-making.
- Local governments should establish local councils for cooperation in climate-related issues, like disaster risk reduction, adaptation to climate change, development of local green businesses, introduction of green energy, etc. Local councils should be composed in accordance with demographic and social composition of the respective municipality in terms of age, education, health status, social environment, access to services, levels of exposure to climate change, etc., The local councils should include women and men, people of different gender orientation, vulnerable and marginalized groups.

e) Recommendations for donors:

- Within the implementation of the Green Agenda for Western Balkans, the part of finances dedicated to NGOs should be allocated to resource centers for NGOs, to strengthen their capacities to offer the trainings and advise for NGOs on topics related to climate change, gender responsive climate actions and just transition. Trainings

should cover different skills necessary to NGOs to communicate with citizens, to inform and mobilize them to be a part of local decision-making in all policy areas covered by the Green Agenda - climate action; circular economy; biodiversity protection; air, water, and soil pollution, as well as the sustainable food system and rural areas.

- In calls for proposals for financing of NGO projects within the Green Agenda, stricter requirements related to regular consultations of NGOs with target groups should be introduced, in order to enable the bottom-up approach. Also, stricter requirements related to gender dimension of projects, including existence of gender responsive goals, activities and indicators, as well as obligatory consultations with NGOs working on protection and empowerment of women and marginalized groups should be introduced, in order to enable just transition, gender responsiveness and participation of citizens in creation and implementation of policies.

Annex:

List of interviews:

1. Tanja Rajić, Expeditio
2. Jelena Krivčević, Regional Development Agency for Bjelasica, Komovi and Prokletije
3. Sonja Dragovic, Biciklo.me
4. Sanja Orlandić-Svrkota, Green Home
5. Ervina Dabižinović, Anima
6. Ana Novaković-Đurović, CRNVO (former Director)
7. Danijela Čabarkapa, UNFCCC gender focal point
8. Anđela Đurašković, Ekokorijen
9. dr Mira Vukčević, Tehnološko metalurški fakultet
10. Aleksandar Dragičević, Eco-activist
11. Goran Đurović, Civil society expert
12. Aleksandar Perović, OZON