

## Main Points

People-to-People Programme Event/Regional Event Number 159

“Contemporary Dynamics in Information Sharing” on August 8, 2023, Via Zoom, 13:00 – 15:30

### Session I: Utilisation of Digital Platforms for Information Sharing

- social media empowers CSOs, enabling effective engagement, mission sharing, and audience connection; digital strategies must align with target preferences and schedules while addressing disinformation challenges.
- CSOs face challenges in effectively communicating and using digital platforms, requiring a strategic approach to engage supporters through techniques like supporter funnels, differentiating between intent and interruption marketing on platforms like Google and Facebook, and benefiting from organisations who may help them improve online presence and self-promotion.

### Session II: Impact of Social Media on CSOs and their Operating Environment

- Through-Newsletter-Communication plays a crucial role in cultivating a supporter funnel and helping CSOs raise awareness and make a meaningful impact through strategic content publication timing.
- Effectively address attacks and disinformation on social media by seeking allies, creating partnerships, and aligning efforts with relevant stakeholders, to combat malicious online activities and protect their reputation and mission.

### Session III: Building and Managing CSOs' Reputations in the Digital World

- Focus to remain on proactive transparency and rebranding of the civil society sector, presenting annual reports and impact in accessible language, educating the community about the role of CSOs and countering negative perceptions, building a community of supporters to provide defence against attacks, and responding to negative comments with education and open conversation rather than confrontation.
- Addressing the enduring negative sentiment and distrust directed toward the civil society sector proves to be a formidable task, despite ongoing endeavours to alter perceptions and enhance public education. It remains particularly difficult for smaller CSOs to prioritise effective communication and allocate resources for dedicated and trained personnel, especially in situations where sustainability is a pressing concern.
- Civil society organizations (CSOs) in Montenegro often face attacks due to shifting political dynamics, and while online tools offer opportunities to reach citizens and shape opinions, challenges remain in rebranding and creating a positive image for CSOs. The community's understanding of CSOs' roles and distinctions between different types of organizations is limited, and there is a perception that CSOs should operate with limited funding and resources. Education of the community, effective communication strategies, and the use of digital tools are crucial for improving the perception and visibility of CSOs.



- Peer-to-peer communication and leveraging social media influencers have a significant impact on fundraising campaigns for CSOs, enhancing understanding, support, and rebranding efforts within the sector, while also holding potential for future educational and promotional initiatives.



## Recommendations and Potential Next Steps

Based on the notes from the sessions, there are some recommendations and potential next steps for CSOs (Civil Society Organizations) that can be considered:

### Session I: Utilization of Digital Platforms for Information Sharing

1. Development of a Comprehensive Digital Communication Strategy: CSOs should create a well-defined strategy for their digital communication efforts. This includes understanding the target audience, tailoring messages to their interests, and selecting appropriate platforms for engagement.
2. Platform-Specific Approach: Recognize that different social media platforms have distinct user behaviours and peak usage times. CSOs should adapt their content and posting schedules accordingly to maximize impact on each platform.
3. Consistent Posting Schedule: Establish a consistent posting schedule on social media platforms to keep the audience engaged and informed. Use analytics to identify optimal posting times.
4. Influence Affiliated Groups: Sharing content in relevant affiliated groups can significantly increase reach and engagement. Identify and participate in groups related to the CSO's mission for broader exposure.
5. Combat Disinformation: Develop a strategy to combat disinformation and fake news. Monitor online conversations, and promptly address false claims, in a way to engage in constructive dialogue to offer accurate information.
6. Work with Allies: Collaborate with like-minded organisations and allies to counter disinformation campaigns. Building a network of support can help amplify accurate information and protect against attacks.
7. Educate and Engage: Focus on educating the public about CSOs' activities and impact. Use easy-to-understand language to explain the sector's role and value to society.

### Session II: Impact of Social Media on CSOs and Their Operating Environment



1. Newsletters: Utilise newsletters as a powerful communication tool for engaging with supporters and donors. Share valuable information and impact stories to cultivate a durable connection.
2. Media Campaigns: Consider media campaigns for fundraising and community engagement. While social media is essential for the awareness phase, newsletters, and media campaigns can drive deeper engagement and donations.
3. Develop Supporter Funnels: Understand supporter journeys on different platforms and create strategic funnels to engage potential supporters.
4. Community Building: Create a community of supporters who can defend the CSO against attacks. Positive interactions and open conversations can help change perceptions and mitigate negative sentiment.

### **Session III: Building and Managing CSOs' Reputations in the Digital World**

1. Proactive Transparency: Embrace proactive transparency by sharing annual reports and explaining the impact of CSOs' work in accessible language. This can help build trust and improve public perception.
2. Rebranding: Focus on rebranding the civil society sector to counter negative connotations. Use positive narratives and stories to showcase the positive impact of CSOs.
3. Education and Advocacy: Continuously educate the public about the role and importance of CSOs. Address misconceptions and advocate for fair compensation for professionals within the sector.
4. Peer-to-Peer Communication: Leverage peer-to-peer communication and social media influencers to amplify the CSO's message and engage a wider audience.
5. Resilience Against Attacks: Develop strategies to handle online attacks and harassment effectively. Respond with explanations and education rather than aggressive counterattacks.
6. Collaboration and Networking: Establish partnerships with other organizations and allies to collectively combat disinformation and protect against online attacks.
7. Skill Development: Offer training and support for CSOs, especially smaller ones, to improve their digital communication skills and effectively manage their online presence.

These recommendations, if considered, should be tailored to the specific goals, resources, and audience of each CSO. Adapting and implementing a comprehensive digital communication strategy may help CSOs effectively share their mission, engage supporters, and counter challenges in the digital world.