

## ANNUAL REPORT

# 2023

JANUARY 1 – DECEMBER 31, 2023



January 2024

## IN BRIEF

2023 is the 19th year in the operation of the Center for Civil Communications (CCC) and the first year of the implementation of the new five-year Strategic Plan (2023-2027).

This year also continued the dynamic work from previous years, which the following summarized results speak for:

- » **15** researches have been conducted and published;
- » **7** open databases have been developed and published;
- » More than **1,100** tenders were monitored in depth;
- » **19** trainings, conferences, workshops and debates were organized with more than **400** stakeholders from the country and the Western Balkan region;
- » A survey was conducted with **331** companies about their participation in public procurement;
- » **12** publications (reports, analyzes and public policy documents) were published and distributed in 1,100 copies, also available in electronic form;
- » The reports, recommendations, research and manuals of CCC have been downloaded **127,390** times from the website [www.ccc.org.mk](http://www.ccc.org.mk);
- » **873,806** people were reached by the posts of CCC on social networks;
- » The main website of CCC [www.ccc.org.mk](http://www.ccc.org.mk) has been visited **63,212** times;
- » **583** media articles based on our activities and the results of their implementation were published in a large number of media in the country;
- » A **hundred** concrete measures have been recommended for more transparent operation and for reducing the space for corruption.

In 2023, the regular monitoring of public procurement in the country continued, which CCC has been conducting for 15 consecutive years, by detecting and pointing out the weaknesses and problems in the public procurement system and by proposing measures to reduce the opportunities for abuses and the space for corruption. As a result of this activity, transparency and accountability in the spending of public money through tenders, as well as the legal framework in the area of public procurement, have been significantly improved.

The proven methodology according to which CCC implements the monitoring of public procurements is the basis for implementing similar activities at the regional level, that is, within the "Balkan Tender Watch" project for monitoring public procurements in the countries of the Western Balkans.

In the sphere of public procurement, simultaneously with the activities at the systemic level, CCC also implements activities to determine transparency, accountability and integrity in public procurement at the institutional level. This year, these aspects were researched and analyzed in the municipalities and in the public enterprises founded by the municipalities.

In the other main area of action – the field of improving the capacities of journalists and the media, significant activities continued in 2023 to strengthen investigative journalism and cooperation between the media and non-governmental organizations in the realization of their joint social role. Regular assistance to journalists in their investigations of corruption and spending of public money continued.

CCC this year also conducted a number of researches on important phenomena, issues and areas for further use by journalists and non-governmental organizations, which are published in an open format on the web portal [www.opendata.mk](http://www.opendata.mk), which enables their further use by all interested parties.

During 2023, the new five-year Strategic Plan for operations (2023-2027) was developed and adopted.

The activities of CCC in 2023 were carried out within five projects, financially supported by: the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, USAID, the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Open Society Foundation - Macedonia, which are carried out independently or in partnership with other non-governmental organizations from the country and from the Western Balkans region.

More detailed information about the projects, implementation, activities, results, achievements, donors and partners of CCC can be obtained on our website [www.ccc.org.mk](http://www.ccc.org.mk).

## ABOUT US

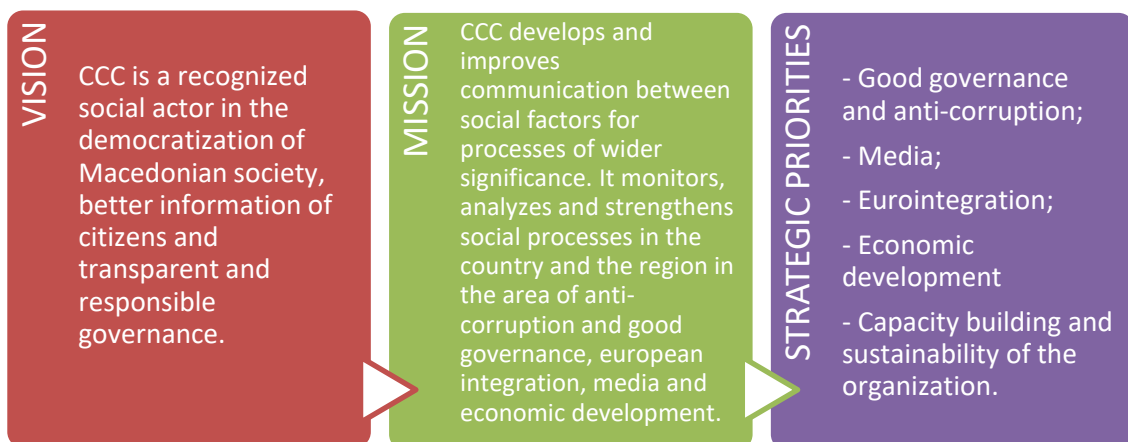
The Center for Civil Communications (CCC) was founded in April 2005 as a non-governmental, non-profit and non-partisan association of citizens. In its actions so far, CCC focuses its work on two groups of interrelated activities: (1) monitoring of state institutions and, based on that, recommending measures and policies to improve operations and reduce the space for corruption and (2) promotion the ability of journalists and the special role of the media and non-governmental organizations in the fight against corruption and increasing the transparency, responsibility and accountability of state institutions.

In this direction, CCC has so far developed and proposed several hundred specific recommendations for taking measures to improve the regulation and practice in the direction of more transparent, more accountable and more responsible operation of the central and local authorities, has trained more than five hundred journalists from the national and local media for research and reporting on corruption and representatives of civil society organizations, and has produced, conducted and published more than two hundred research studies, analyzes and manuals.

Representatives of CCC regularly participate in workshops and in expert groups for creating strategies and measures to fight against corruption and on other issues from CCC's areas of activity.

The activities of CCC are aimed at employees of state institutions and bodies at central and local level, at journalists, businesspersons and their associations, at representatives of non-governmental organizations, as well as at citizens at local and central level, as end users of the results of the operation of the organization.

The staff of CCC in 2023 included seven employees and several permanent collaborators – experts from CCC's fields of activity. The management and leadership bodies of CCC include the Assembly of the association as the highest authority, the Executive Board and the president of the association.



## PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

### MONITORING OF PUBLIC PROCUREMENT (2008-2024), IN 2023 FINANCIALLY SUPPORTED BY THE OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATION - MACEDONIA

Through direct monitoring of public procurement, weaknesses in the implementation of tenders are detected and specific measures are recommended to overcome the problems and the irrational spending of public money, as well as to narrow the space for corruption.



During 2023:

- » 148 tenders conducted by state institutions at the national and local level were directly monitored;
- » The regular [no. 38<sup>th</sup> report from the monitoring of public procurement](#) was published with an overview of the situation, detected weaknesses and scope for abuse and corruption in public procurement, and no. 39<sup>th</sup> report was also prepared;
- » The Index of Rationality no. 20 in which the prices at which five identical products and services were purchased from 28 different institutions are compared was prepared;
- » A series of concrete measures that should be taken to improve the system of public procurement in the country are recommended, either for changes in the regulation or for the way of conducting public procurement;
- » An analysis of the appeal procedures in public procurement was made;
- » A survey of public opinion was conducted among companies participating in public procurement procedures to assess their experience of participating in tenders.

In addition to the activities related to the monitoring of public procurement, within the framework of this organizational support, the following activities were carried out:

- » Research was conducted and a ranking of 97 institutions (Government, line ministries and municipalities and the City of Skopje) was conducted according to the level of [Active Transparency](#), which became the main criterion for measuring the transparency

of state institutions in the country so that the information from active transparency have become mandatory for publication in the new Law on Free Access to Public Information, in the Government Transparency Strategy (2019-2021), as well as in the Open Government Partnership Action Plans 2018-2020 and 2021-2023.

- » The special website for a simplified presentation of the active transparency of the institutions [www.aktivnatransparentnost.mk](http://www.aktivnatransparentnost.mk) has been updated with the latest data from the survey for 2023.
- » Four researches were conducted and published on important issues for the life and work of citizens, followed by open data bases on the web portal [www.opendata.mk](http://www.opendata.mk) as a platform on which the researches and databases created by CCC are published, in order to be more accessible and easier to understand by a wider circle of citizens.
- » A special database with all public procurements of the municipalities for 2022 has been created and published, with a visual display of the data for each municipality and the possibility to review and search by municipality and by company.
- » Investigative journalists have been assisted during their research and reporting on corruption and the spending of public money.

## SAFEGUARDS AGAINST CORRUPTION (2021-2024) – PROJECT WITHIN THE MATRA PROGRAM WITH FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS

The project includes activities to reduce corruption and the abuse of public funds of local governments by increasing the transparency, accountability and integrity of local institutions and implementing the measures provided for in the National Strategy for the Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interest 2021-2025.



During 2023:

- » At eight trainings, more than 140 representatives of micro, small and medium enterprises learned how to perform more successfully in public procurement in order to increase competition and reduce the possibility of corruption.
- » A [public policy document](#) was created that summarizes the risks of corruption and the recommendations for overcoming them determined through monitoring of public procurement of municipalities and local public enterprises conducted on the basis of a unified methodology by 8 local non-governmental organizations in Bitola, Kichevo, Kumanovo, Negotino, Strumica, Tetovo, Chair and Shtip.
- » A public debate was held to improve the cooperation of all stakeholders in the fight against corruption at the local level, which was discussed by 29 representatives of the local media, civil society organizations and the local government.
- » A workshop was held for 17 representatives of journalists and CSOs to encourage cooperation for better quality research.
- » A training and workshop organized for 24 representatives of local partner CSOs to strengthen their capacities to play a greater role as a factor in the fight against corruption at the local level.
- » A [research report](#) was prepared and published to map the state of affairs in the sports facilities in the municipalities.
- » A [research report](#) was prepared and published on the payment from budget item 463 - Transfers to non-governmental organizations.
- » Five research stories were published by journalists from local media in the municipalities of Kumanovo, Strumica, Tetovo, Chair and Shtip dedicated to the

transparency, accountability and integrity of the authorities, as well as the problems caused by corruption in local environments





## BALKAN TENDER WATCH (2023-2024) – REGIONAL PROJECT FUNDED BY OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATION – MACEDONIA

The project reveals the vulnerable points of corruption in the public procurement systems of the Western Balkan countries through comparative monitoring and analysis based on pre-established and verified methodology and consultation with stakeholders, thus providing timely and comprehensive information and analysis on the state of public procurement and proposes recommendations for changes in public procurement systems that contribute to the reduction of corruption in public procurement in the Western Balkans.



During 2023:

- » The methodology and benchmarking tool for assessing corruption in public procurement and the fight against it have been revised;
- » There were conducted: in-depth research to assess the readiness of public procurement systems in each of the six countries of the Western Balkans to detect, process and sanction corruption in public procurement; direct and in-depth monitoring of more than 100 tenders to locate the vulnerable points of corruption in each of the phases of the public procurement cycle; research of the the response of institutions in ensuring integrity and fighting corruption in public procurement.
- » The [comparative evaluation report on the assessment of the state of affairs in public procurement in all the countries of the Western Balkans](#) was prepared and published, with recommendations for action for each country from the Western Balkans;
- » A regional conference with more than 80 participants was organized as a forum for the presentation of research and the state of affairs in public procurement in the Western Balkan countries, discussion and exchange of opinions about the generators of corruption and ways of improving the situation;
- » "Shadow reports" have been prepared on the state of public procurement for each of the six countries in the Western Balkans.

The project is implemented in partnership with the NGO Affirmation Network - MANS (Montenegro), Center for Applied European Studies - CPES (Serbia), Enterprise Development Agency - EDA (Bosnia and Herzegovina), FOL Movement (Kosovo) and Center Respublica (Albania).



## EFFECTS OF THE FINANCIAL AND ENERGY CRISIS ON POLITICS AND CITIZENS (2023) – A PROJECT WITHIN THE CIVICA MOBILITAS PROGRAM, A PROJECT OF THE SWISS AGENCY FOR DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION (SDC)

The project contributes to a more efficient and rational use of budget funds by the Government and the municipalities in order for them to respond to the real needs of the citizens, by reducing the negative effects on the lives of the citizens that occurred as a result of the impact of the financial and energy crisis on the budget expenditures of the state and the municipalities.

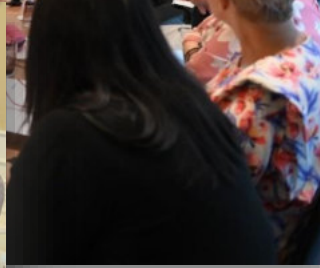
During 2023:

» The segments/areas of the budget expenditures where the most unfavorable impacts caused by the financial and energy crisis at the [central](#) and [local](#) level are perceived from the citizens' point of view were detected: renovation of health facilities, purchase of medical equipment, construction of kindergartens and homes for the elderly, construction of roads, reconstruction of student dormitories, as well as projects for the improvement of the environment, where 220 million euros have been cut, in the crisis year 2022.

» For the first time, the complex and unclear budget items and figures behind which irrational decisions and policies that harm the citizens are hidden have been brought to light. They located, quantified and revealed the specific amounts and names of the unrealized projects that the authorities at the central local level never communicated with the citizens and the general public. In this way, the budget and public spending were connected to citizens and their lives, and terms such as "capital expenditures", "projects", "transfers" etc. which are a regular narrative of the authorities behind which the essence and impact on the citizens is hidden were demystified.

» With the implications of crises on policies and citizens and with specific recommendations for future action, the general and professional public, as well as decision makers and policy makers, are familiar, through intensive advocacy, during the project and after its completion. Created prerequisites for using the recommendations and for overcoming the located weaknesses during the next creation of policies and budgets.





## CITIZENS AGAINST CORRUPTION, USAID PROJECT (2023-2028)

The project increases the engagement and cooperation of citizens, civil society, the media and the private sector in the fight against corruption to improve the government's response and effectiveness in dealing with corruption in all sectors at the national and local level.



During 2023:

- » A methodology for assessing the anti-corruption performance of institutions in public procurement was developed, as well as a methodology for implementing "citizen oversight" over public procurement in the country.
- » A comprehensive survey of public procurement for 2022 was conducted on all 100 institutions from the first line of executive power – the Government, ministries, government secretariats and municipalities, which were ranked against 32 anti-corruption performances.
- » An analysis and ranking of the 100 institutions were discussed with 40 representatives of the involved parties during the Open Anti-Corruption Forum organized on the occasion of the International Anti-Corruption Day.
- » Representatives of CCC participated in a series of workshops for amending and supplementing the National Strategy for the Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interest,

organized by the State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption, in the segment of public procurement, business sector, state and public enterprises.

» CCC participated in the 10th conference of the signatory parties of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), which was held in December 2023 in Atlanta, USA, contributing to the adoption of a number of significant resolutions for better implementation of the UNCAC.

» CCC participated with its representative and with proposals in the development of the Government Transparency Strategy 2023-2026 and the National Action Plan for Open Government Partnership 2024-2026.

The project is implemented by the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (MCIS) in partnership with the Center for Civic Communications (CCC), the Institute for Democracy Societas Civilis, Skopje (IDSCS), the Chamber of Commerce of North Macedonia (SKNM), 360 Degrees, Investigative Reporting Lab (IRL) and Balkan Investigative Reporters Network, Macedonia (BIRN).



FORUM'S KEY SESSION WITH DEPUTY PRIME-MINISTER, GRKOVSKA, HEAD OF ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMISSION, IVANOVSKA, CHIEF AUDITOR, ACEVSKI, CCC PRESIDENT, FILKOV, AND 'CITIZENS AGAINST CORRUPTION' ACTIVITY CHIEF OF PARTY, KAMILOVSKA TRPOVSKA

