



# **ANNUAL REPORT**

## **2025**

# foreword

2025



As one of the most demanding in Trag Foundation's recent history, 2025 was filled with events that represented a significant stress test for the organization itself, as well as for the civil society ecosystem in the region and beyond. The year was also marked by profound changes in the global and regional environment - increasing political pressures, the shrinking of civic space, and shifting donor priorities created a new reality in which civil society organizations must act faster, more flexibly, and with a considerably higher level of resilience. Their ability to preserve independence, continuity of work, and community trust has become one of the key questions for the stability of democratic societies.

We carried out a strategic pivot, focusing on resilience, responsiveness, and the protection of core civil society functions. The approach entails preserving the organizational core, strengthening governance systems, and developing more flexible programmatic instruments that enable timely support for organizations and activists under pressure.

At the same time, Trag continued to develop initiatives with the potential for long-term impact on the sector. The development of a Peer-to-Peer fundraising platform, the strengthening of protection systems, and the development of new co-financing models to support civic initiatives represent investments in the future infrastructure of civil society.

Our ability to respond to the challenges was made possible by the trust and support of our partners and donors. We extend special gratitude to the Oak Foundation, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the British Embassy, Peace Nexus, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Swiss Philanthropy Foundation, Guerrilla Foundation and the European Union for their continued support and commitment to strengthening civil society in Serbia.

In the period ahead, Trag Foundation will continue to develop a working model that combines financial discipline, risk management, and strategic investment in the sector's capacities. The priorities for the coming years will be preservation of civic space, development of local philanthropy, and strengthening of the resilience of civil society organizations in Serbia and the region.

Global and regional trends indicate that the challenges facing civil society in the period ahead will likely grow increasingly complex. The continuation of armed conflicts, the rising number of civilian casualties, climate and humanitarian crises, inflationary pressures, and the weakening of institutions that protect human rights and democratic values are creating an environment of prolonged uncertainty. Such processes must not discourage civil society from acting. On the contrary, they point to the need for new forms of solidarity, cooperation, and joint financing of initiatives that protect the public interest, human rights, and the dignity of citizens.

We remain committed to strengthening trust, solidarity, and civic participation in communities, developing local philanthropy, and supporting initiatives that drive positive social change.

Executive Director

*Milka Danjanović*

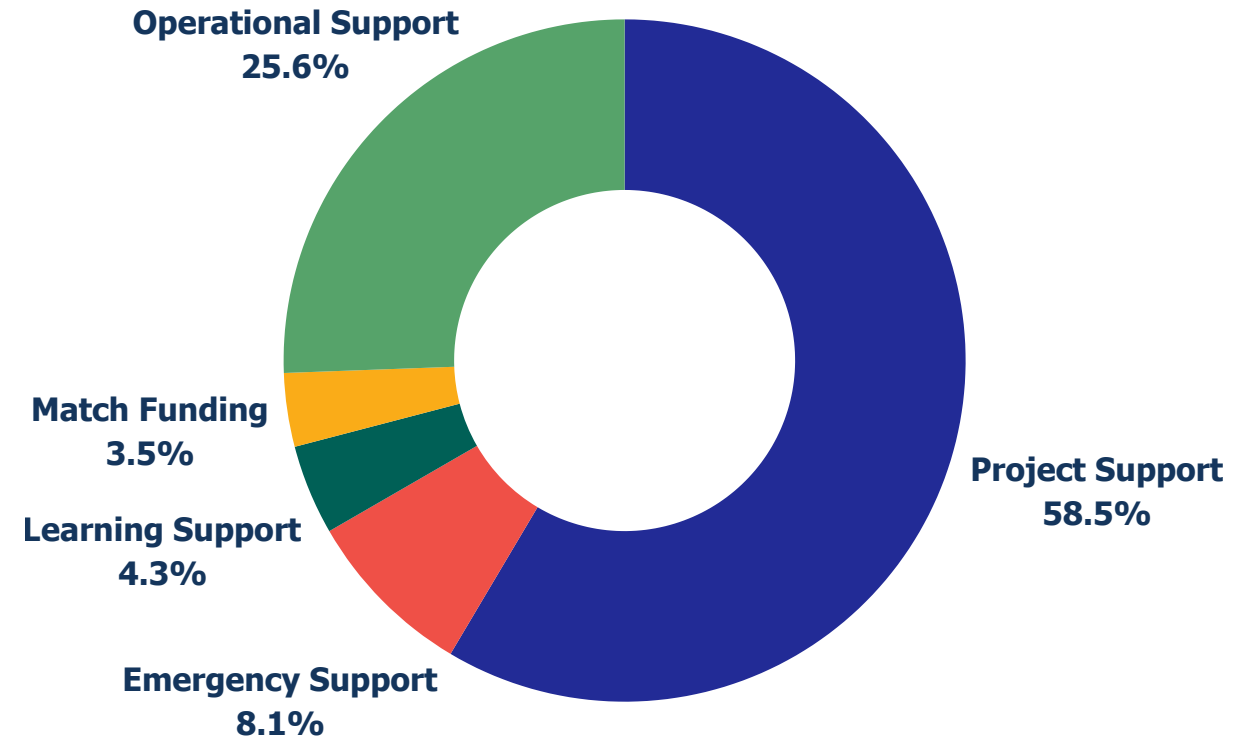
**264 projects were supported (135 new) with \$2,469,509**

**The largest share of projects were implemented in Šumadija and Western Serbia**

**The most represented themes were the prevention of domestic violence, solidarity economy, local community development, and youth wellbeing.**

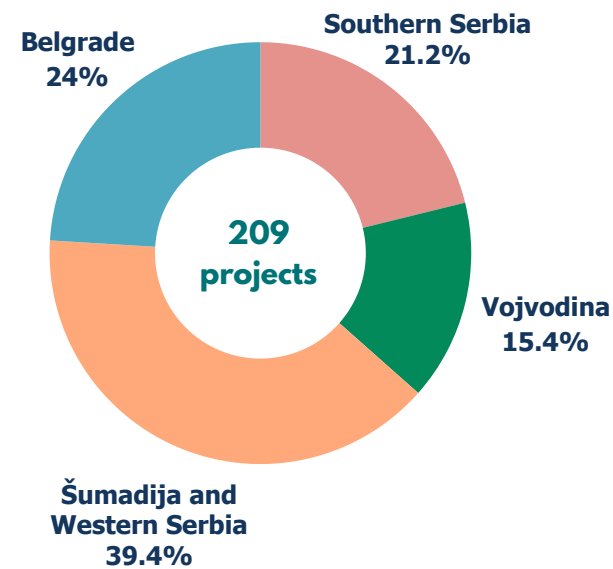
**The most common type of support was through project financing**

## SUPPORT STRUCTURE

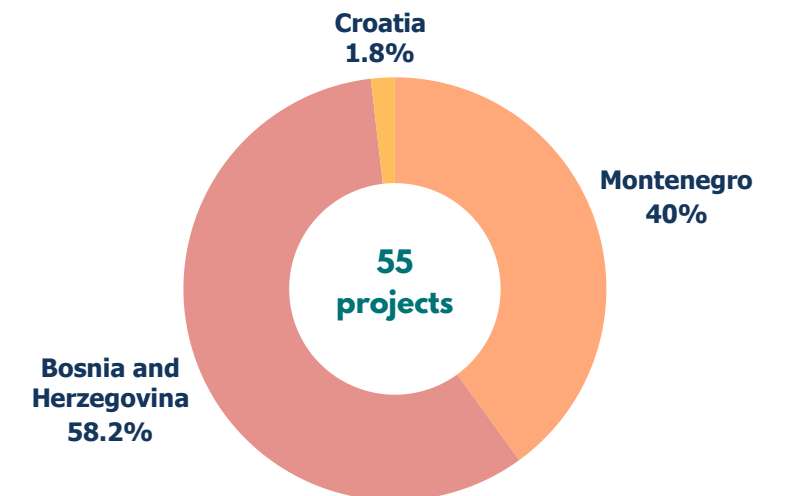


## TERRITORIAL DISTRIBUTION

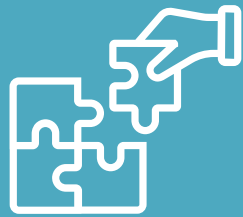
### SERBIA



### REGION



# CMVIC ACTIVISM PROGRAM



**We awarded 21 emergency grants totaling \$59,000.**



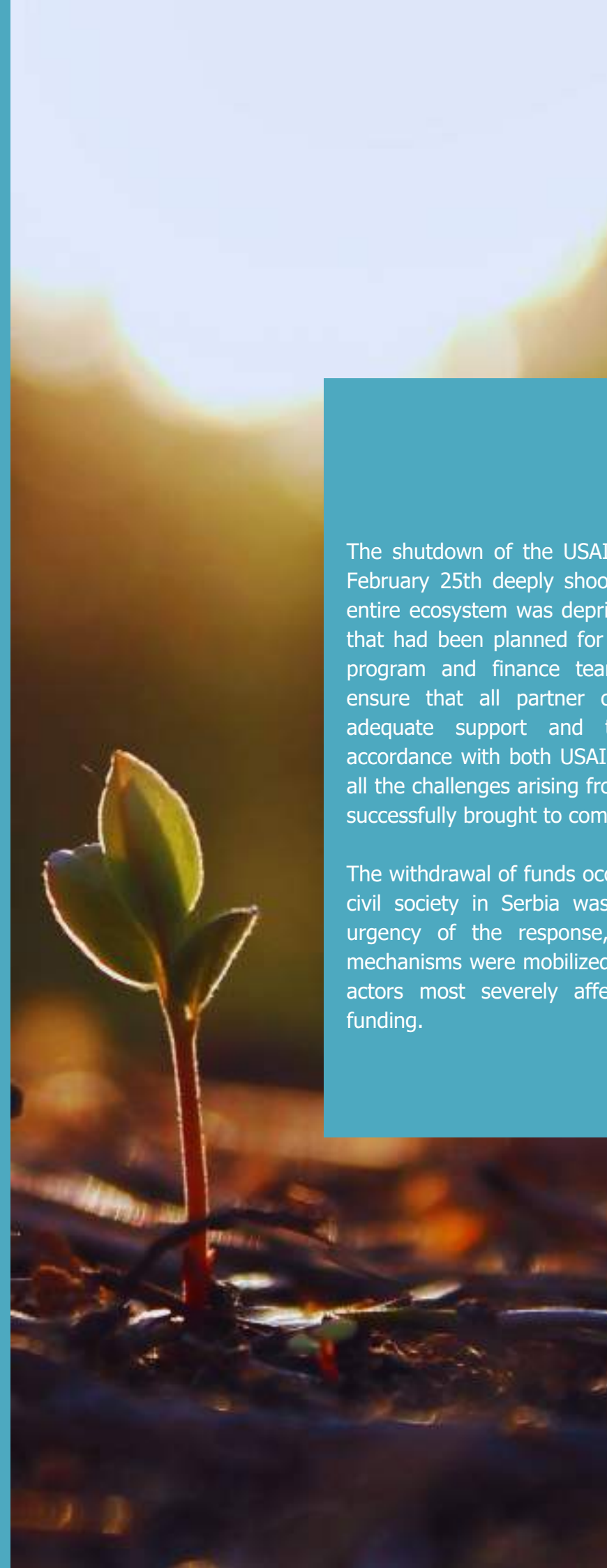
**We supported 25 advocacy initiatives in the area of social policy.**



**9 solidarity entrepreneurship initiatives were supported with \$45,000.**

The shutdown of the USAID funded Inspire2Action program on February 25th deeply shook Serbia's civil society sector, as the entire ecosystem was deprived of \$3.5 million in project funding that had been planned for 429 grants by the end of 2028. The program and finance teams invested extraordinary effort to ensure that all partner organizations and grantees received adequate support and that activities were concluded in accordance with both USAID and Trag Foundation rules. Despite all the challenges arising from the early closure, the program was successfully brought to completion.

The withdrawal of funds occurred at a moment when pressure on civil society in Serbia was already on the rise. Aware of the urgency of the response, alternative resources and support mechanisms were mobilized to provide targeted assistance to the actors most severely affected by the reduction in available funding.





## Emergency support for civil society



The narrowing of civic space, legal pressures, and financial challenges facing the sector demanded a swift and strategic response. In the first half of the year, a small emergency grants program was developed through the investment of Trag's own resources and contributions from several donors (Guerrilla Foundation, British Embassy, RBF) to cover the immediate operational needs of organizations that had suddenly found themselves without funding. Support also included crisis management mentoring, technical grants and capacity building for fundraising campaigns, as well as coverage of key operational costs.

As pressures grew, the program evolved into a broader emergency support mechanism addressing extraordinary situations, human rights violations, and various forms of political and institutional repression. Over the summer, the Civic Emergency Fund was formalized as a joint initiative of Peace Nexus, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Trag Foundation, and the Kosovo Civil Society Foundation (KCSF), with the aim of enabling rapid support to organizations whose safety or operations are at risk. The mechanism is intended for organizations in the Western Balkans region and in Croatia, and is based on a pooled donor fund that allows for flexible and rapid response in crisis situations. Support is available for legal assistance, digital or physical security measures, medical assistance, temporary relocation, or psychosocial support, depending on the urgency and nature of the threat.

The website [civcemergencyfund.com](http://civcemergencyfund.com) has been launched by the end of the year, providing information on selection criteria, the types of support available, and guidance for applicants. The portal includes an application submission system through which all interested parties can submit a request for assistance in a secure and structured manner. By the end of 2025, 21 emergency grants were awarded, supporting organizations facing various forms of pressure such as cyberattacks, physical security threats, SLAPP suits, and more.



## Act & Impact: Local action for civic initiatives

At the end of the year, Trag successfully applied for and secured three-year support under the EU Civil Society Facility program. Act & Impact: Local Action for Civic Initiatives (2026–2029) is a project with a total budget of €800,000 and is being implemented in partnership with the organizations Proaktiv from Niš, Svetionik from Novi Pazar, and Engineers of Environmental Protection from Novi Sad, with the aim of strengthening participatory democracy and civil society resilience in Serbia.

The project will combine capacity development and financial support in areas such as public advocacy, inclusive governance, citizen mobilization, fundraising, transparency, and accountability. Forty grants are planned over the next three years, and the project also includes public events, regional exchanges, and peer learning aimed at strengthening democratic participation in social life.

An additional innovation that the project will support is the digital fundraising platform Fandrejzing.rs. The purpose of the platform is to serve as a sustainable digital tool that enables rapid fundraising and long-term support for local initiatives. The platform will allow civil society organizations to increase the visibility of their campaigns and engage broader communities in times of social, environmental, or other emergencies.





# Balkan Green Ideas



This year, Trag organized another cycle of the National Forum for Green Ideas. The competition is dedicated to recognizing individuals or organizations that apply successful business practices, technologies, and knowledge to solve social problems in their communities. Fifteen applications were received, and the 11 best business ideas participated in a training on solidarity entrepreneurship. The goal of the training was to clarify the concepts of solidarity economy and define the social impact and economic sustainability of the submitted proposals. Following the training, 10 participants refined their final applications, which were forwarded to jury members. Prior to the final event, consultations were held with the finalists to support them in preparing their presentations before the jury and they received detailed guidance, presentation templates, and feedback on how to better present their ideas.

The National Forum for Green Ideas was held on September 4th, when the finalists presented their business plans to a jury composed of experts from the private sector, civil society, and academia:

- Vladimir Jovanović, SME SUPPORT
- Aleksandra Mirić, CSR Specialist, LIDL
- Milica Babić, Communications, CSR and Sustainability Consultant, OTP Bank
- Nikola Stanojević, Tender Manager at Startupblink, Innovation and Business Development Consultant at the Science Fund
- Ana Popović, Environmental Expert and Professor at the Polytechnic Academy of Applied Studies

Three innovative, sustainable entrepreneurial initiatives were selected as winners of the National Forum:

- **First prize - Citizens' Association "Mašta može svašta":** The Zelena Nit (Green Thread) initiative from Aleksinac combines ecological and social impact by reducing textile waste and creating employment opportunities for women from vulnerable groups. Through the collection, recycling, and redesign of used clothing into unique products, as well as repair services and educational workshops, the initiative promotes a local circular economy model, empowers women, and actively engages the community in sustainable practices.
- **Second prize - Citizens' Association Studenac:** Located in the Zlatibor region, this initiative revitalizes neglected rural resources and traditional knowledge of medicinal plants through the establishment of a herbal cooperative. It brings together women, youth, and older community members for the production of natural cosmetics, teas, and herbal preparations. The project supports ecological sustainability, intergenerational cooperation, and gender equality, while simultaneously creating sustainable income opportunities and strengthening the local green economy.
- **Third prize - Ride&Stride:** A mobile application that encourages employees to commute to work in a sustainable way — on foot, by bicycle, by public transport, or by carpooling — rewarding them with points that can be exchanged for eco-friendly products and services. The app connects colleagues traveling similar routes, facilitates ride-sharing, and promotes the widespread adoption of low-carbon mobility, contributing to reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, less traffic congestion, and stronger workplace communities.

The winners also participated in the Regional Forum for Green Ideas held in Ohrid in October, and the winning idea Ride&Stride from Serbia received a \$10,000 award in the Advanced Ideas category.



# Empower2Change

The three-year program supporting advocacy initiatives in the field of social policy was successfully brought to completion, with impactful advocacy outcomes and numerous recommendations for the development of social public policies. **Trag Foundation supported 35 organizations that implemented 43 advocacy initiatives, with a total value of €599,000. The program also supported 43 young researchers from university centers in Belgrade, Novi Sad, Niš, and Kragujevac, who developed 40 public policy analyses.** Within the program, 12 trainings in communications and public advocacy were conducted, along with 600 hours of mentoring.

The year began with the conference "Impulse of Change" at the European House in Belgrade, which opened space for cross-sector dialogue on systemic challenges and advocacy priorities in the areas of social protection, social entrepreneurship, and labor rights. A closed competition, "Champions of Change," was also initiated, through which three organizations were supported in implementing the final round of advocacy initiatives. Young researchers finalized their analyses and recommendations, which were published in the final publication "Together in Advocacy."

The project was closed with a final conference in September 2025, at which results and achievements were presented and awards were given to organizations that had achieved outstanding success within their initiatives.



Photo by: Nemanja Knežević



# Research and Empower

The Research and Empower program, implemented from 2022 to 2025, made a significant contribution to civil society development, **supporting 30 civil society organizations that have demonstrating an enhanced capacity to engage relevant institutions and mobilize citizens.** Grantees worked on issues of environmental protection, public service delivery, the rights of persons with disabilities, urban development, and youth participation, addressing both local authorities and national institutions. For example, the Alliance for Accessibility successfully advocated for amendments to the Road Traffic Safety Law, while the citizens' association Realno contributed to the formation of a working group at the Ministry of Labor focused on inclusive policy reform. Others, such as Novi Put and ZOO Planet, mobilized broad public support and secured improved environmental governance and animal welfare.

Ten of the supported organizations were directly affected by the suspension of USAID funding, given that the program operated on a co-financing model. In order to strengthen the sustainability and resilience of civil society affected by the donor withdrawal, Trag organized specialized crisis fundraising training, which will be discussed in subsequent sections of the report.

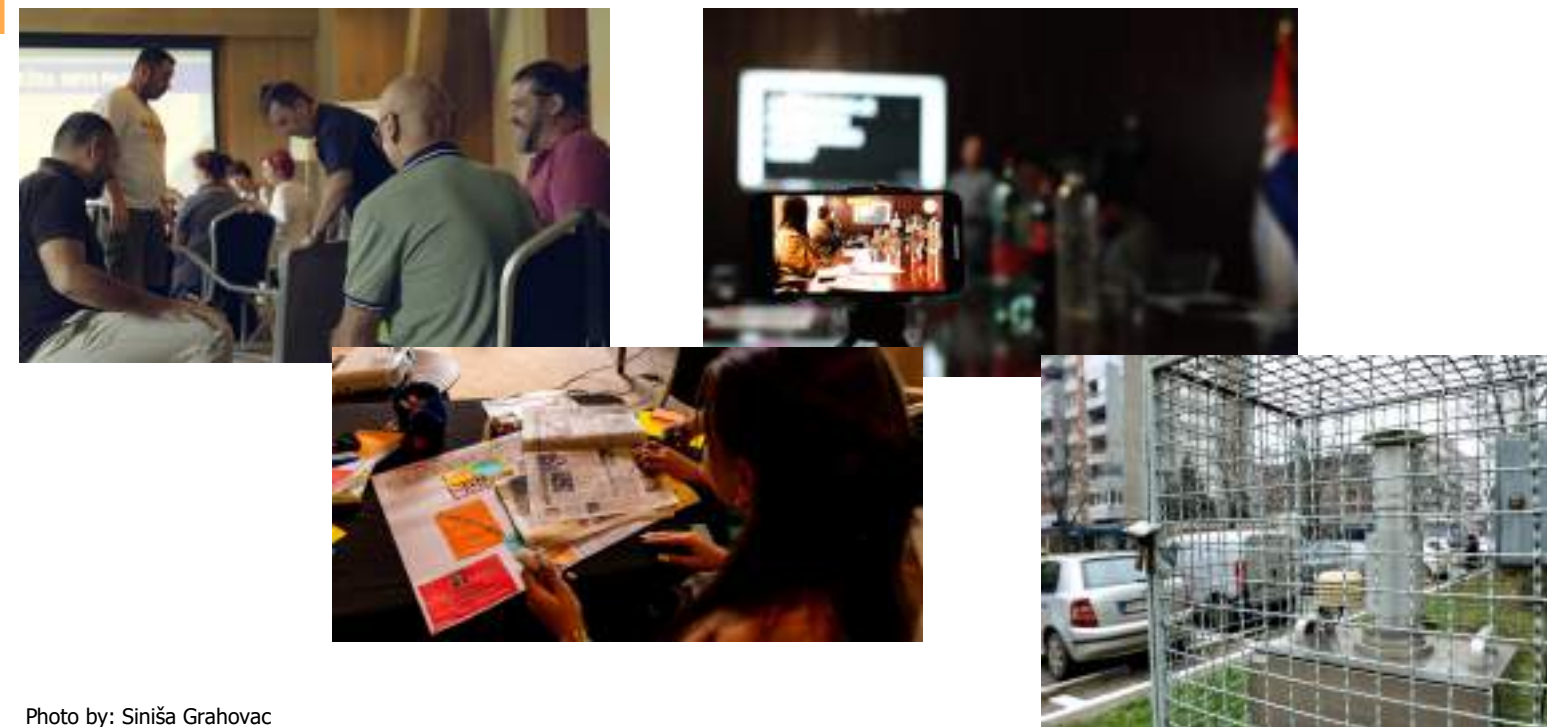


Photo by: Siniša Grahovac



## Council for Creating an Enabling Environment for Civil Society

In January, as student and social unrest intensified, numerous civil society organizations were subjected to intense pressure and threats. Council members from civil society organizations were calling on the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue to respond, demanding a proactive approach. Everything came to a head at the end of January when an NGO Academy workshop organized by ERSTE Stiftung in Belgrade resulted in the arrests, interrogations, and deportations of participants from neighboring countries, met with no response from the relevant ministries.

At that point, Council members from civil society organizations decided to freeze their membership in the Council until the circumstances that had jeopardized the functioning and work of civil society organizations were effectively resolved. The explicit expectation was that the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue would act within its mandate and competencies. As that response was not forthcoming, the work of the Council was suspended until further notice. Following individual meetings, Council members from civil society organizations submitted a comprehensive document to the competent ministry detailing the preconditions for resuming the Council's work. The Ministry has yet to respond to the submitted document, which is why the Council's activities are currently unable to resume.

# Ride & Stride: empowering companies and employees for sustainable commuting

At the regional Balkan Green Ideas competition, held in Ohrid, North Macedonia from 29 September to 3rd October, the startup Ride & Stride won USD 10,000, in addition to previously receiving the national Green Ideas award. This recognition supported the further development of an innovative solution addressing urban congestion, air pollution, and unsustainable commuting habits.

Ride & Stride has developed a mobile application that motivates employees to choose sustainable ways of commuting to work, including carpooling, public transport, cycling, and walking. Through gamification, leaderboards, and rewards, the app transforms everyday commuting into an engaging and socially positive habit. By encouraging shared rides and alternative transport options, the app directly contributes to reduced traffic congestion, lower emissions, and stronger social connections among employees.

Designed to serve both companies and employees, the app is used by enterprises located in busy urban centers as well as production facilities in suburban and rural areas. A dedicated carpool feature enables employees from rural communities to share rides along the same routes, improving access to work while reducing transport costs and environmental impact. Employees who opt for sustainable commuting can earn rewards such as discounts on bicycles, e-bikes, fitness equipment, sustainable cosmetics, and healthy food products provided by partner businesses.

As start-up co-founder Uroš Arsenijević said, everything started from their dissatisfaction with traffic jams and air pollution. They realized that the core problem was simply the excessive number of cars on the streets. For people to leave their cars at home, they need motivation and tangible value. Good intentions alone are not enough, there must be a business case and long-term incentives for everyone involved. This insight became the foundation of Ride & Stride.

The team developed a mobile solution for companies seeking to improve their social and environmental practices while offering meaningful benefits to employees. Now, Ride & Stride has grown beyond an application into a movement promoting responsible business behavior and healthier everyday choices. Through partnerships with companies, the startup is changing commuting habits and demonstrating that small, practical changes can generate significant benefits for communities. During 2025, the app was officially implemented in two companies in Serbia that will test the functionality of offered service packages. For 2026, Ride & Stride aims to acquire 22 new client companies through confirmed cold outreach model and by introducing competition between companies, using a product-led growth acquisition model.



# Support for the development of social entrepreneurship in local communities in Kragujevac

Putokaz Kragujevac is a local civil society organisation committed to inclusion and socio-economic development, with long-standing work focused on improving opportunities for people who face the greatest barriers in the labour market. Putokaz chose to tackle a challenge that is both practical and systemic: how to make social entrepreneurship in Kragujevac something that communities recognise, institutions support, and local policies actively develop, rather than leaving it to individual enthusiasm and short-lived projects.

They started by bringing the topic closer to citizens. Putokaz took social entrepreneurship out of meeting rooms and into everyday public space by showcasing social products and initiatives, opening conversations with passers-by, and demonstrating that social economy is not an abstract concept, but a model that can create jobs, dignity, and services where they are most needed. In parallel, they worked with schools and young people, using workshops to connect the idea of social entrepreneurship with values of solidarity, community responsibility, and local development.

At the same time, Putokaz patiently built alliances around a shared goal: a functioning local ecosystem for social entrepreneurship. They mapped initiatives and actors, convened conversations between institutions and civil society, and strengthened cooperation with partners who can support long-term development such as the business community and key local stakeholders. Step by step, these efforts created both the evidence and the momentum needed to move from awareness-raising to concrete institutional action.

That momentum resulted in a major turning point: the City established a Commission for the Development of Social Entrepreneurship, a formal mechanism that finally gave the topic a place within local governance. For Putokaz, this was not just an administrative milestone, but a structural shift: a space where responsibilities can be defined, priorities agreed, and support measures planned in a way that is predictable and sustainable.

From there, the work naturally moved toward long-term commitments. Putokaz helped anchor cooperation through a formal agreement with the local government, and contributed to the development of a local programme for social economy and social entrepreneurship, a framework designed to translate good intentions into real support, through measures that combine mentoring, partnership-building, and financial instruments. The City of Kragujevac is the first local self-government in Serbia to adopt a Programme for Social Entrepreneurship and Social Economy for the 2026–2028 period, with RSD 10 million allocated from the city budget to support the development of social entrepreneurship over the next three years. The programme's purpose is simple but powerful: to make it easier for social enterprises and solidarity-based initiatives to start, grow, and endure, especially those that create opportunities for vulnerable groups.

Putokaz's story is a good example of how change actually happens in local communities: it begins with visibility and trust, grows through coalition-building and evidence, and becomes lasting only once it is embedded into institutions and planning. By connecting citizens, young people, civil society and decision-makers around a shared agenda, Putokaz helped Kragujevac move closer to a model where social entrepreneurship is not the exception, but a supported part of local development.



Photo by: Nebojša Raus



# ISSUES AFFECTING WOMEN PROGRAM



**We have supported 40 women's organizations and networks with more than \$1.5 million.**



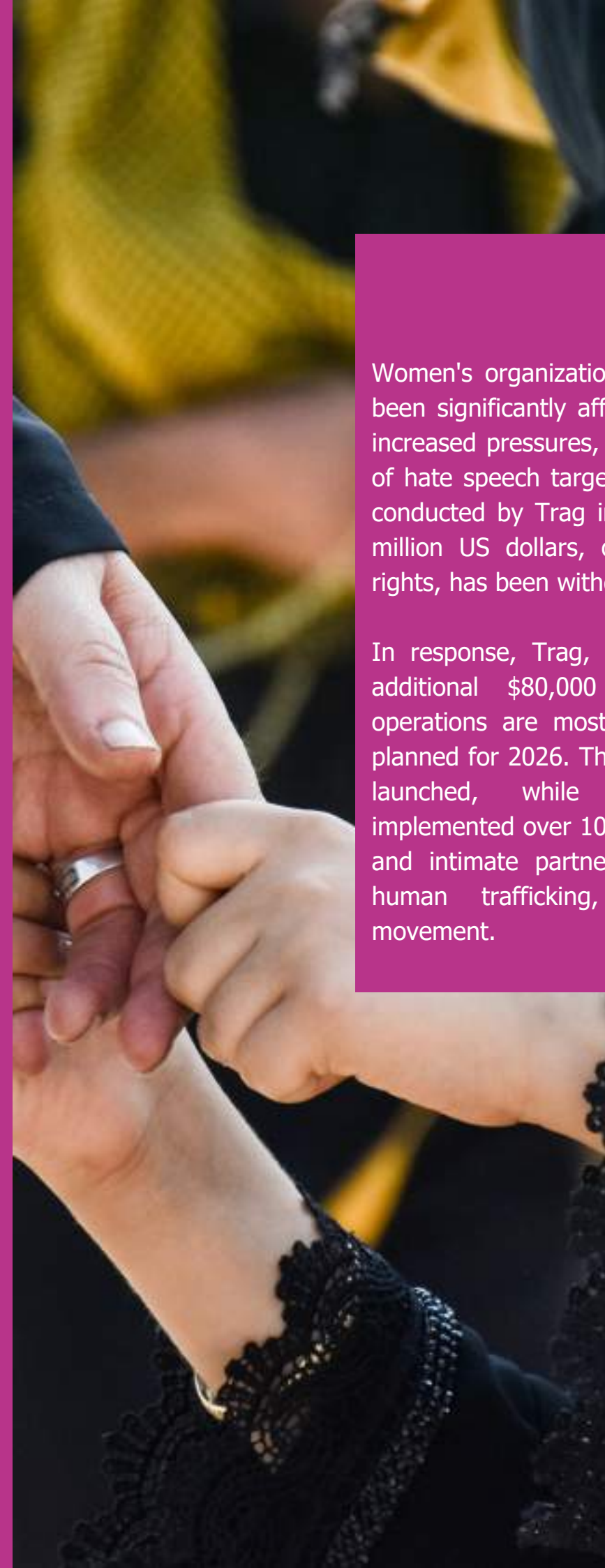
**Six organizations managing safe houses, primarily in Bosnia and Herzegovina, provided shelter for more than 270 women.**



**Supported organizations carried out more than 400 educational interventions.**

Women's organizations in Serbia and the region have been significantly affected by funding withdrawals and increased pressures, as well as the growing prevalence of hate speech targeting women in media. An analysis conducted by Trag indicates that approximately half a million US dollars, originally earmarked for women's rights, has been withdrawn.

In response, Trag, with donor support, allocated an additional \$80,000 for the organizations whose operations are most at risk, with further investment planned for 2026. The mobile application Združene was launched, while 40 supported organizations implemented over 100 projects in the areas of domestic and intimate partner violence prevention, combating human trafficking, and building the women's movement.





# Stronger Together



# Prevention of Psychological Violence

As part of efforts to foster an **intersectional approach toward vulnerable women** and with the aim of contributing to movement building, Trag organized a new round of the participatory program Stronger Together and developed a new grant scheme - the Multiple Discrimination Fund.

The Stronger Together call was open from February till March, receiving an outstanding number of 168 applications, out of which Trag program staff shortlisted 100. These were divided into 10 groups, with each organization evaluating nine projects from its group. The ten highest-scoring projects were then reviewed by a Selection Committee composed of representatives of large women's organizations that are not eligible to participate in the program. The Committee confirmed the community's decisions, and a total of **14 organizations were supported - 13 registered citizens' associations and one informal group. The supported projects address the prevention of domestic and partner violence, combating human trafficking, and strengthening the women's movement, with a focus on women facing multiple forms of discrimination and those operating in smaller communities outside major urban centers.**

**The Multiple Discrimination Fund was launched this year**, with a focus on organizations led by Roma women, women with disabilities, and LGBTQ groups, broadening the diversity and inclusivity of the portfolio. From January to October, Trag conducted a mapping process, including field visits, to identify suitable partner organizations. The process confirmed strong alignment with strategic priorities, but also highlighted capacity gaps, particularly among smaller organizations where institutional support could significantly strengthen sustainability and impact. As a result, eight organizations with proven track records, strong community trust, and readiness for institutional funding were selected and supported with a total of \$130,000.



Trag continued to develop the program created in 2024, **focusing on initiatives addressing various forms of psychological violence.** Projects supported included those of the SHARE Foundation, SOS Nikšić, Digital Network, and organizations in the institutional portfolio whose focus is the prevention of psychological violence. Support to organizations and networks across the region brought significant progress in the recognition, prevention of, and response to psychological violence against women and girls. Collective efforts strengthened institutional and professional capacities, particularly within healthcare, social protection, and justice systems, while women exposed to psychological violence gained access to information, counseling, and safe support services. The results confirm that strategic investment in local organizations, cross-sector collaboration, and regional networking contributes to sustainable, systemic change.

## Emergency Fund for Women's Organizations

Due to the withdrawal of major donors from the Western Balkans, particularly USAID, 2025 was a crisis year for many women's organizations in Trag Foundation's portfolio. A needs assessment was conducted with 40 organizations, which showed that \$498,377 in USAID funding had been withdrawn, most severely affecting 14 organizations in the portfolio. In response, and in agreement with the Oak Foundation, Trag provided \$80,000 in emergency support for the 9 organizations most severely affected by the crisis, with the aim of covering basic costs and planning fundraising strategies. This support enabled them to continue core activities, stabilize operations, and reduce immediate financial risks. Recognizing that this short-term intervention could only address urgent needs through the end of 2025, Trag, together with the Oak Foundation and with the support of the Swiss Philanthropy Fund, also created Emergency Fund II, intended for 2026. Building on lessons learned, this fund moves away from providing emergency relief toward a strategic approach aimed at strengthening long-term resilience through tailored capacity development, improved financial planning and risk management, and support for funding diversification and sustainable operations.



# Združene.org

The development and launch of the Združene.org mobile application represents a significant structural improvement that increases accessibility, visibility, and user engagement. The platform continued to function as a tool for strengthening the capacities and resilience of women's organizations across the region.

**Capacity development funds** enabled portfolio organizations to improve internal procedures, strategic planning, and fundraising capacities. The Care Fund was particularly effective in addressing burnout and heightened stress, while study visits and conference participation strengthened regional cooperation. The Self-Sustainability Fund supported three initiatives focused on preserving feminist and LGBTQ+ histories, maintaining key community services, and strengthening core organizational infrastructure. The Joint Proposal Writing Fund helped reduce inequalities between organizations of varying capacities by enabling regional collaboration and access to expert support for grant applications. Meanwhile, the Young Feminists Fund once again confirmed its role as a strategic investment in the future of the movement. Beyond skills development, the program strengthened intergenerational trust, leadership renewal, and the involvement of young feminists in organizational work.

**The Mobilization Fund** proved to be a responsive and effective tool for supporting urgent actions, with a clear trend toward collective initiatives outside major urban centers. A total of \$19,500 was awarded to eight initiatives covering a broad range of topics and approaches. The supported actions contributed to decentralized feminist organizing, work with marginalized groups, and resistance to nationalist and patriarchal narratives, particularly in Serbia, where reduced donor presence significantly increased reliance on flexible and rapid funding. Several projects focused on women's empowerment and increased visibility, such as the organization MIONA, which organized media performance and public communication trainings for women from rural areas, while ŽUKO focused on young women and female teachers in integrating gender equality perspectives into civic activism. Other initiatives addressed the prevention of gender-based violence: DIVA developed an educational program for Roma girls and their mothers aimed at preventing early marriages and violence, and the organization Romkinje sa sela organized bibliotherapy workshops for building self-confidence and emotional wellbeing among Roma women.





# Strengthening the Women's Movement Through Expert Support



FemNet

As a result of close cooperation and coordination with the Kvinna Till Kvinna Foundation, an expert support service for women's organizations was created. To deliver this service more effectively, Trag Foundation engaged the Gender Knowledge Hub (GKH) through a project grant to manage and implement activities.

GKH coordinated a shared pool of experts and facilitated access to databases available to organizations from both portfolios, ensuring that women's organizations benefit from guidance tailored to their needs. This cooperation framework was designed to strengthen organizational capacities in areas central to their missions, such as fundraising, proposal development, legal compliance, financial management, and digital security. Through this joint intervention, women's civil society organizations in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro gained access to tailored consultancy support. A total of \$24,000 was allocated for the initiative, with Trag Foundation contributing \$19,000 and the Kvinna Till Kvinna Foundation covering the remaining costs.

The program encompassed a total of 24 women's organizations with 70 targeted consultations designed as practical mentoring sessions focused on addressing immediate organizational challenges and simultaneously building capacity. As a result of this support, organizations strengthened legal compliance, financial planning, internal procedures, and digital security practices, and improved the quality of project design while increasing fundraising capacities aligned with feminist values.

In response to the narrowing of civic space, reduced donor funding, and growing political pressures on civil society across the Western Balkans, four women's funds — **the Kvinna Till Kvinna Foundation, Reconstruction Women Fund, Ecumenical Women's Initiative, and Trag Foundation** - formed an informal regional network called **FemNet**. By joining forces, they pooled resources, knowledge, and networks to strengthen cross-border solidarity and protect women's human rights, democracy, and equality in the region.

A joint event was organized and held in Bar from April 22 to 26, as part of the regional FemNet gathering. More than 80 women activists from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia participated, and the gathering aimed to strengthen cross-border solidarity and cooperation. Through plenary sessions, panel discussions, and small group sessions, participants engaged in in-depth discussions on how power structures function within movements, why climate justice is a feminist issue, and how care can be integrated into activism and labor rights. The event also addressed anti-racism, ecofeminism, and women's activism on the front lines of environmental protection, exploring shared challenges such as donor withdrawal and nationalist and anti-gender movements. The gathering highlighted the strength of informal collaboration, the urgency of uniting feminist and ecological struggles, and the importance of ensuring the wellbeing of activists alongside sustained political engagement. Following the successful event, the four foundations agreed to continue their collaboration under the name FemNet as a response to the narrowing of space for women's organizations, with the aim of sharing information and consolidating support.

In parallel, Trag advanced philanthropy development for women's rights by strengthening the corporate funding ecosystem in all three countries. Mapping of corporate donors and giving trends provided a foundation for targeted corporate engagement. Recognition of exemplary corporate and individual donors through national philanthropy awards increased the visibility and legitimacy of women's rights in the private sector and stimulated new interest in gender-focused giving. Regional knowledge exchange on corporate fundraising was further supported through a learning and "speed networking" event in Montenegro, where women's organizations from the portfolio shared practical experiences and fundraising strategies.

# New Life for the Moluhe Memorial Home in Tuzla

Ženska Vizija (Women's Vision) is a small, newly established organization from Tuzla, dedicated to three main areas of work: youth engagement, women's empowerment, and community development. Their core focus is on addressing psychological violence, recognizing signs of abuse, and promoting non-violent communication. In addition to empowering women, they are committed to fostering the development of their own local community, specifically, the Solana Local Community (MZ Solana) in [Tuzla](#).

Ženska Vizija has already conducted various activities in Tuzla and the surrounding areas, building a strong collaboration with local schools through a series of youth workshops. In mid-2024, they established a productive partnership with MZ Solana, the neighborhood where two of the organization's members, Amela and Mirela, grew up. This partnership proved fruitful: not only were they granted the opportunity to further develop their programs within the premises of the community center, but they were also allocated a dedicated room for the organization at a symbolic rent, with utilities covered.

The MZ Solana premises still echo the spirit of past decades, lined with books once found in every respectable Yugoslav household and bulletin boards displaying photographs from the 1980s. Alongside these nostalgic relics, however, the space had accumulated worn-out furniture and large, underused areas that were rarely cleaned properly. In response, the young members of Ženska Vizija organized several volunteer work actions to clean and declutter the space, paint the walls, and remove outdated furniture. They even undertook the difficult task of cleaning large, hard-to-reach exterior windows and fixed the lighting outside the entrance. Beyond the involvement of youth, women from the local community, many of whom participated in the organization's workshops - also joined in, alongside other community members. Once the space was cleaned and restored, the team set up the first active local community library in Tuzla, the MZ Solana Library. Located in the building's main hall, it features a cozy reading nook for exchanging ideas and engaging in conversations about books. Many citizens donated books, and the most touching contributions came from the youngest community members, children who practice traditional dance in the center's shared spaces.

The library was officially opened in September 2025, in the presence of the mayor of Tuzla, many interested citizens, and members of the media. This significant event marked a new beginning for a space that holds special emotional value for the community. Since then, the library has been actively used, and the members of the association Ženska vizija are already planning new activities and projects. Their wish is for the space to once again be lively and vibrant, just as it was when Amela and Mirela were growing up.



# Philanthropy

**3** New local foundations in Kragujevac, Kraljevo, and the Braničevo District.

**23** Local neighborhood initiatives supported with over 2 million RSD.

The Community Foundation Movement Building Program in Serbia achieved significant milestones in 2025 - the registration of new local foundations in Kraljevo, Kragujevac, the Braničevo District, and Sarajevo marked the culmination of a long-standing process of mentorship, capacity development, and support base building.

With strong engagement from existing local foundations and initiative groups, the continuation of the "Local foundations - Community has a say" project was secured, supported by a C.S. Mott Foundation grant of \$450,000 until 2028.



# Community Foundations in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina

Within the first grant rounds conducted in Kraljevo, the Braničevo District, and Kragujevac, initiative groups, with the support of Trag Foundation as fiscal agent, **invested \$19,811 in initiatives spanning the areas of public space revitalization, arts and culture, sports and recreation, health and animal welfare, and the inclusion of vulnerable groups.**

By the end of the year, all three initiative groups had met the requirements for registration and, with administrative, financial, and technical support, were officially registered. Together they raised over \$19,000 (which Trag matched), and redistributed \$19,811 in support of local initiatives. Following registration, institutional grants of \$15,000 were awarded to each newly established local foundation, aimed at supporting consolidation in their first year of operation, with additional funds also set aside for strategic planning sessions.

Two meetings were organized, bringing together representatives of initiative groups, registered local foundations, and Trag. Both gatherings provided a platform for knowledge exchange, sharing of experiences, and planning of next steps. Particular emphasis was placed on proactive governance structures, effective communication, local resource mobilization, and participatory regranting. Discussions were also held on movement-building benchmarks and strategies for establishing a formal network of local foundations by 2028.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Trag continued to support existing local foundations in Zenica, Bijeljina, and Sarajevo. In January, the Community Foundation Sarajevo was officially registered with the Ministry of Justice of Bosnia and Herzegovina, marking its formal transition into a phase of independent operation. Community Foundation Bijeljina oversaw the implementation of initiatives supported through its third public grant round. In April, they organized their traditional spring Easter Egg Hunt event, drawing over 700 visitors (including more than 300 children) and raising €1,075. In March, Community Foundation Zenica organized a donor iftar during Ramadan, bringing together more than 90 participants. This fundraising event attracted over 140 donors (including those unable to attend in person) and raised €1,534. In April, the foundation launched its third public grant round, receiving 33 applications, of which 10 were supported for a total value of €15,714.28.

## Infrastructure for the future

Trag Foundation was part of the organizing committee of the global conference "Infrastructure for the Future," held in Bucharest from April 7th to 10th. The conference brought together practitioners leading national and regional organizations that support local foundations operating in Europe, Africa, the Americas, and Oceania, as well as allies from the philanthropy and development sectors. The conference explored the building of local foundation movements from multiple perspectives. Marija Mitrović led a session on local foundation incubation, and Trag staff participated in several other sessions throughout the event.

Prior to the conference, Trag and Local Foundation Stara Pazova hosted 20 representatives of local foundation support organizations from Latin America, who participated in a study visit to local foundation movements in Hungary and Serbia before continuing on to Romania. During their visit to Serbia, the guests from Latin America had the opportunity to learn about Trag Foundation's experience and the implementation of the local foundation movement-building program in the Western Balkans, whose methodology has in the past been partially transferred and implemented in countries such as Colombia, Chile, and Peru.

In November, Trag representatives participated in a gathering organized by ECFI in Vienna. This event highlighted the key role of community foundation support organizations in maintaining the resilience of the philanthropic ecosystem. These organizations were described as the "plumbing" of the sector - quietly ensuring that local foundations can operate effectively even under challenging conditions, from combating disinformation and bridging urban-rural divides to engaging youth and building trust in divided communities. Participants shared practical examples from their countries and discussed the importance of foresight and future thinking in anticipating new risks and opportunities - from technological disruption to changing patterns of volunteering. The gathering underscored that, as new local foundations emerge across Europe, strong support infrastructure becomes essential for coherent, values-based growth, making local foundation support organizations central partners in sustaining the movement and enabling local foundations to remain pillars of democratic resilience.



Trag Foundation was part of the action research project "Rethinking Approaches to Building Community Foundation Movements in the Balkans," implemented in collaboration with the European Community Foundation Initiative (ECFI) and Konekt from Skopje, with support from the Porticus Foundation. From July to September, Marija Mitrović from Trag authored two national-level research studies for Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, documenting the development of community foundations through the lens of the 4C framework (Capacities, Capabilities, Credibility, Connections). This research included in-depth interviews with representative groups from local foundations. The research findings were used to inform the regional comparative analysis conducted by ECFI. Following the completion of the research, Trag Foundation and community foundations from Serbia attended a regional gathering in Skopje.

The open call for the advanced level of the program closed in January with 20 applications received, but the selection process was interrupted by the closure of the Inspire2Action project. Despite this, **Trag continued to support nine Sustainability Academy grantees, who together raised \$10,493 from individual donors and local businesses, as well as \$12,263 in in-kind contributions.** To preserve donor trust and ensure the completion of campaigns, Trag helped organizations communicate transparently and offered to cover unspent technical grant funds. Two organizations, working in the areas of education and mental health, decided to continue fundraising, revised their fundraising plans, and relaunched their campaigns in June. Both campaigns were successfully extended into January 2026, enabling the organizations to secure additional resources.

The Crisis Fundraising program was launched to enable grantees previously supported through various Trag programs to stabilize their operations through diversified fundraising. In March, seven organizations active in the areas of environmental protection, women's entrepreneurship, mental health, and community development participated in a two-day training in Belgrade. By the end of the year, four of the five supported organizations had completed their fundraising campaigns, while one extended its crowdfunding campaign into 2026. Through a combination of mentoring and technical grants of \$1,000 each, the program strengthened organizations' capacities in fundraising and financial sustainability. As a result, organizations secured resources for ongoing activities and increased their reliance on independent sources of funding.

By the end of the year, seven organizations supported through these two programs collectively raised more than \$39,000 in monetary donations from individuals and businesses, as well as more than \$8,000 in in-kind contributions.



## New stars on the community philanthropy stage: Serbia gets three new community foundations

As 2025 came to a close, the programme marked an important moment for community philanthropy in Serbia with the official establishment of three new community foundations in Kragujevac, Kraljevo, and the Braničevo District. In just one year, initiative groups in these communities grew into formally registered foundations, showing how much local energy, commitment, and readiness there is to support positive change close to home.

Even before becoming formal foundations, the groups were already active on the ground. They organised five small grant calls, mobilised local donors, and supported 22 community projects with a total value of USD 18,850. Through this early grantmaking, they tested their ideas, built trust with local communities, and showed that transparent, locally led philanthropy can work. Formal registration now gives them a stronger base to grow, reach more people, and continue building confidence among donors and citizens.

The teams in Kragujevac, Kraljevo, and the Braničevo District focused on understanding local needs, mobilising local resources, and encouraging civic engagement. Nearly USD 20,000 was raised locally and matched by the Trag Foundation, while neighbourhood projects supported through grants helped inspire communities to take a more active role in shaping solutions to local challenges. This process strengthened not only local initiatives, but also a sense of shared responsibility and collective action.

Each new foundation is now moving forward in its own way. The Community Foundation of Kragujevac is continuing to engage citizens and businesses through philanthropic events and by opening more space for civic ideas. The Community Foundation of Kraljevo is building on strong local partnerships and long-standing networks of people working to improve life in the city and surrounding areas. The foundation in the Braničevo District brings a regional approach, connecting several municipalities and ensuring that good ideas from smaller communities have the same chance to be supported as those from larger towns.

Together, these three foundations are becoming important local platforms for supporting community initiatives, mobilising donors, and strengthening trust. Alongside the community foundations already established in Niš, Pančevo, and Stara Pazova, they point to a growing movement of locally rooted philanthropy in Serbia, one that is increasingly driven by people who want to take an active role in improving their own communities.

# VIRTUS AWARD



The VIRTUS Award recognizes and highlights companies, organizations, and individuals who provide strategic, long-term support for community development, inspiring others to follow their example. This year it was awarded for the 18th time. The competition was announced in June, and businesses and individual philanthropists could be nominated for recognition of philanthropic initiatives carried out in 2024. The nominations were open for six weeks, from June to August, accompanied by a comprehensive digital campaign that reached more than 620,000 users. In September, a jury composed of academics, civil society representatives, and experts from the media and business sectors selected the winners, and awards were presented at a ceremony held at the Artget Gallery of the Belgrade Cultural Centre.

Seven VIRTUS awards were presented: five in the main categories and two special recognitions. **MK Group received the main award for corporate philanthropy for an investment of more than €25 million in the Palace of Science - the first center for scientific research and the popularization of science in Serbia and the largest of its kind in the region.** The main award for **individual philanthropy went to Srđan Budimčić from Irig, who donated more than 900 tons of food to socially vulnerable citizens** - both through the Vojvodina Food Bank and through his own personal engagement.

The complete list of winners and descriptions of their contributions are available on the VIRTUS award website.

## Who Are the True Philanthropists of Today?

Anja Arsić, a philologist and team leader in recruitment and selection in Belgrade, dedicates her time, resources, and energy every day to caring for abandoned animals and vulnerable members of her community. Since the age of 15, she has actively rescued and rehomed stray dogs and cats, and in the past year alone, she has provided shelter for 30 animals. To date, she has saved more than 200 pets from the streets of Belgrade, personally financing their vaccination, sterilization, medical treatment, food, and supplies with a total contribution exceeding half a million dinars.

Anja regularly organizes drives to collect clothing, food, and toys for children without parental care and for vulnerable Roma families in her neighborhood. She actively engages neighbors, friends, family, and colleagues, creating a network of more than 70 volunteers who share and amplify their care for the community through her initiatives. Her approach goes beyond simple giving - Anja connects people and resources to collectively address the needs of both animals and people in her community.

Anja is a winner of the VIRTUS Special Award for her contribution to animal protection and for fostering local activism in 2024. She is recognized for her ability to inspire both small and large actions, nurture every spark of activism, and provide attentive care for the community and each of its members. She leaves no one behind, supporting even the most vulnerable neighbors in challenging times and organizing initiatives to provide financial and material assistance. No one should face difficulties alone, because everything becomes easier when shared, and Anja, as a true philanthropist of today, understands this and practices it every day.

"Thank you for this recognition and for uncovering what often remains hidden. Today, I heard about many wonderful contributions, which gives me hope that true solidarity still exists among us. This award is an additional motivation for me to continue caring for abandoned animals and the community", Anja said upon receiving the award.



# Corporate partnerships

# Publications

## She's Next empowered by Visa

The three winners of the 2024 competition successfully implemented their entrepreneurial projects in the areas of healthy food, the production of toys that support early childhood development, and family friendly educational games. In October, a new program cycle was launched in partnership with the New Moment agency. From a total of 88 applications received, a Women's Council composed of experts in entrepreneurship selected seven finalists. They had the opportunity to present their ideas through pitch presentations before an audience and jury members at the final event held in Belgrade in November.

The jury selected three winners in the areas of healthy food production, wool processing and the preservation of traditional crafts, and the development of special education services and psychological support for children with developmental difficulties. Each winner will receive financial support of €3,000 for the realization of their entrepreneurial ideas during 2026.

## Generator EDU

In February, Trag took part in the eighth cycle of the OTP Bank program aimed at strengthening financial literacy among children and youth. Dragana Jovčić represented Trag Foundation on the jury and subsequently provided mentoring support to the finalists and winners.

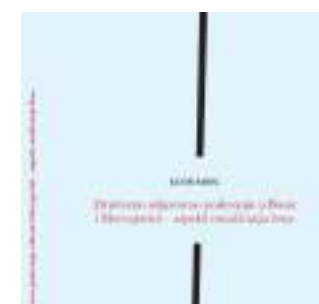
## UN Global Compact

Trag Foundation has been a member since 2008, and from 2018 to 2023 served as the Secretariat of the UN Global Compact network in Serbia. Since January 2024, the network has operated independently, and Trag continues to participate as an active member. In July, Ana Novaković joined the UN Global Compact Working Group on Sustainable Finance, which brings together banks, audit firms, companies, and civil society organizations. The group identified key priorities: building the capacity of small and medium-sized enterprises for sustainable operations, promoting green finance, and encouraging cross-sector collaboration through education and networking. Trag proposed extending these resources to social enterprises and civil society organizations with economic activities as well. In October, an engagement report for the period 2023–2024 was submitted.

In September, Ana Novaković was re-elected to the Board of Directors of the Serbian Philanthropy Forum. Throughout the year, she participated in the activities of the Corporate Social Responsibility Council of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia.



**Together in Advocacy, a collection of research paper abstracts, group of authors, young researchers who participated in the Empower2Change program**



**Corporate Social Responsibility in Bosnia and Herzegovina - Aspects of Women's Empowerment, Elvir Šahić, Jasmina Čaušević, and Berina Šahinović Hajrić**



**Strengthening Local Philanthropy in the Balkans - A Story of Resilience and Care, Jana Šarić and Amila Čitaković.**



**National Research Reports: Community Foundations in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Marija Mitrović**

# ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In 2025, Trag Foundation made significant improvements in strengthening its accountability and compliance framework. Key updates included advancement of a complaints mechanism, development of a Rulebook on Personal Data Protection and revision of the Safeguarding Policy. All compliance requirements were embedded into contracts with partners, grantees, and service providers. Internal grant management was also improved through expanded use of Monday.com for real-time tracking and reporting.

Trag Foundation received zero SEAH complaints in 2025, reflecting the Foundation's ongoing commitment to maintaining a safe and respectful environment for staff, partners, and grantees.

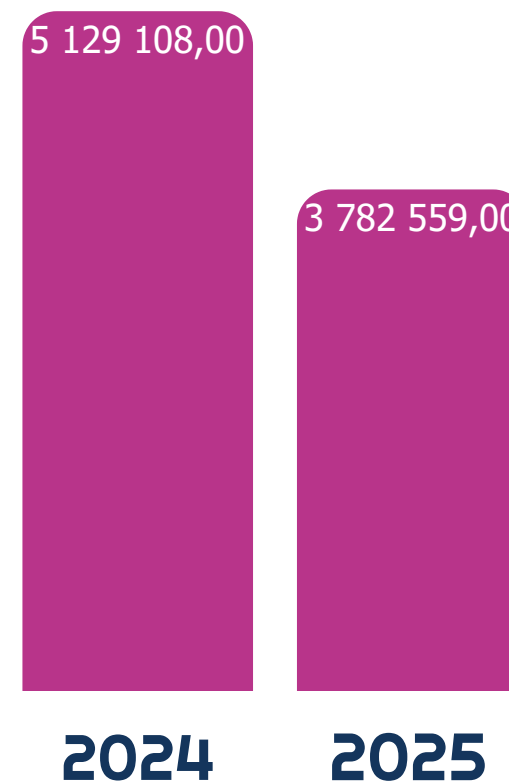
A major milestone was the introduction of an emergency grantmaking model, enabling rapid-response support including legal, medical, and digital security assistance for organizations and individuals at risk, while maintaining full compliance and accountability standards. Trag also reinforced its operational capacity across the Western Balkans, strengthening the legal and financial foundations for cross-border work. Looking ahead, Trag will focus on fully integrating emergency protocols into existing systems, implementing SEAH across all activities, expanding IT tool usage, and enhancing cross-departmental coordination to ensure swift, compliant crisis response

Trag accelerated fundraising and relationship management in the philanthropic, institutional, and corporate segments. The goal was twofold: to quickly recover a portion of the lost revenue and to restore medium-term predictability through multi-year agreements. This approach resulted in a strengthened, future-oriented funding base grounded in multi-year arrangements that reduce reliance on single-source revenue and ensure operational stability.

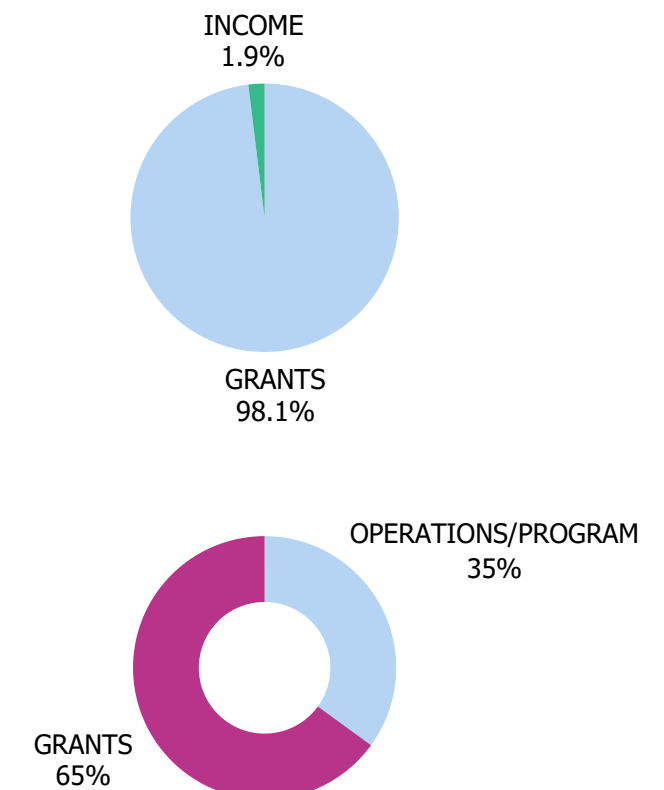
# FINANCIAL RESILIENCE

Trag Foundation operated in an exceptionally demanding financial and operational environment in 2025 due to donor withdrawal and mounting pressures on civil society. To protect the organization's core functions, priority was given to preserving the institutional core, stabilizing basic operational capacities, and gradually adapting the cost structure to the new financial framework. A set of measures have been implemented such as cost optimization and operational consolidation, aligned with revised programmatic priorities and reduced revenue predictability; programmatic redesign focusing on rapid response and support for civil society organizations affected by the narrowing of civic space; and strengthened compliance and due diligence, to reduce operational and reputational risks under conditions of heightened scrutiny and instability.

## ANNUAL BUDGET



## BUDGET STRUCTURE



# DONORS



