



Activity Report

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Social
Contract
Institute

This report covers Social Contract Institute's (SCI) activity from July 16 2015 to December 31 2017. It was prepared by SCI staff and was reviewed and approved by SCI Board.

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Message from the Board Chair



Dear SCI partners, supporters and friends,

More than a quarter of a century has passed since the beginning of the profound political, economic, social, and cultural transformations that followed the overthrow of the authoritarian regimes and paved the way to democracy and market economy in Albania, the Balkans, and Eastern Europe. But, differently from what we dreamed in the early 1990s, the path leading to the consolidation of democracy, rule of law, establishment of a functioning state, harmonized economic development, gender equality, and social inclusion of vulnerable groups, turned out to be neither a one-way, nor a simple path. Rule of law remains a major challenge for Albania and our region. Inequality in the benefits of economic growth that the market economy brings, as well as the inefficiency of public services cause increasing inequality and major social problems. Strengthening good governance that starts with the uncompromising fight against corruption, is still a multifaceted challenge facing Albanian society and the Western Balkans. Planning and managing growth in a way that does not hurt future life opportunities and development - what is called 'sustainable development' - is still

more of a goal than a reality in our region. These challenges loom large. But so do the desire and commitment of women and men, young and old, in urban and rural areas, to strengthen the democratic state, increase wellbeing, and guarantee the implementation of rights and justice in the countries where we live. Civil society, including non-profit and non-governmental organizations, has an extremely important role to play in realizing these aspirations of citizens. With this conviction rooted in many years of activism and extensive professional experience, we founded in 2015 the Social Contract Institute (SCI) with the desire and commitment to contribute to strengthening the rule of law, expanding civic participation in public life and decision-making, as well as sustainable development in Albania and the Western Balkans. The report we present here will inform you about SCI's first steps in all these directions. This report testifies to SCI's commitment to transparency, and the spirit of cooperation as core values of civil society organizations. We heartily thank you for your contribution to SCI's work and invite you to join us in our ongoing initiatives.

Warm greetings,
Andrea Lako

Mission and Values

SCI contributes to strengthen democratic practices and institutions through civic engagement, participation in the formulation and implementation of national and local policies, and promotion of regional cooperation for a sustainable development, based on justice and equal opportunities.

SCI fulfills this aim through research, surveys, public information and education, exchange of experience and information, partnerships and networking, grant-making, capacity development for public, private, and non-profit institutions, and advocacy.

To achieve its purpose, SCI applies methodologies that ensure professionalism and sustainability of its interventions and undertakes programs and projects at the local, national, and international level, taking into consideration also the following:

SCI works to increase citizens' participation in the debate and decision-making on local and national public policies, to increase the effectiveness of citizens' participation in decision-making and citizen participation in the formulation of public policies by conveying community needs and ideas.

SCI believes in and is led by common values shared by its Board and Staff.

We:

- Believe in SCI's mission;
- Promote progressive practices, programs, and policies;
- Are committed to gender equality and social inclusion;
- Respect and value people engaged in the organization;
- Are professionals in our work;
- Are open to diversity of ideas, positions, and collaborators;
- Pay special attention to youth, women, and girls engagement;
- Treat people with fairness and dignity;
- Solidarize with citizens and people in need;
- Are creative in our activity;
- Are cooperative, without asking for protagonism;
- Promote voluntarism.

SCI's activity prioritizes:

- 1 Civic engagement
- 2 Formulation and Implementation of National and Local Policies
- 3 Regional Cooperation

Rule of Law and Good Governance Program

During **March 2016 - March 2017**, SCI was a partner to IDRA in implementing the **Corruption Proofing of Legislation Project**. SCI assisted IDRA to recruit legal experts that were trained on corruption proofing techniques; assisted IDRA to organize their training; and organized the launching event for the project. In **March 2017**, SCI organized the event where IDRA launched the online platform containing the legal acts reviewed by the corruption proofing experts trained by this project.

During June **2016 - April 2017**, SCI contributed to the implementation of the second phase of **STAR 2** program to monitor the implementation of the **Administrative and Territorial Reform (ATR)** in Albania. SCI's Program Manager conducted qualitative research and organized focus groups with municipalities' employees and community members in five municipalities. Upon completion of the field work, SCI submitted individual reports for each municipality on the municipality's work in terms of efficiency, transparency, rule of law, accountability, and citizens' participation. SCI presented and discussed the reports with stakeholders in each municipality.





of interim evaluation of judges and prosecutors; and the establishment of the structures for the vetting process.

Since May 2017, SCI is part of the National Working Group (NWG) on Monitoring Public Administration Reform, as a component of the regional WeBER platform (simultaneously under implementation in Western Balkans) led by IDM in Albania. During May – December 2017, SCI contributed to the activities and position papers developed by NWG.

Since **December 2016**, SCI is part of the **Justice for All Coalition in Albania**, comprised of leading human rights organizations and networks in the country. **The Coalition** contributes to establish a transparent, independent, efficient, and trustworthy judiciary. **The Coalition's** work is supported by the **USAID mission** and **EU mission** in Albania. SCI's Legal Expert Vjollca Meçaj played a leading role in preparing and presenting



the Coalition's recommendations at the public consultation tables organized by the **Parliamentary Committee on Legal Issues, Human Rights, and Public Administration**, as well as in developing Coalition's positions and public statements related to key issues such as justice reform; the process

Civic Engagement Program

In **January 2016**, SCI in cooperation with the **Ministry of Social Welfare of Albania**, the Kosova President's Office, and the Center for Openness and Dialogue (COD) at the Albanian Prime Minister's Office organized the screening of the documentary film "Thinking of

you" on women victims' of violence during the war in Kosova, with the participation of representatives of the groups that represent these women and the President of the Republic of Kosova, **Mrs. Atifete Jahjaga**.



In **March 2016**, SCI in cooperation with the **Faculty of History and Philology of Tirana University** and the **Oral History Project in Kosova** organized a daylong Seminar on Oral History in Tirana with the participation of well-known international experts such as Professor Alessandro Portelli, the leading Italian expert on oral history, and several other illustrious experts from Germany, Serbia, and Kosova, including Robert Elsie, a prolific researcher of Albanian history, culture, and language, and Sonja Biserko, the Director of Serbian Helsinki Committee.



Tuesday, March 29, 2016

SEMINAR ON ORAL HISTORY

Place: Hall #324, Faculty of History and Philology, Rruga e Elbasanit, Tirana

The Speakers:

Alessandro Portelli is Professor Emeritus of American Literature at the University of La Sapienza in Rome, and visiting professor at the Oral History Program of Columbia University. He has been a recipient of several awards, more recently the prestigious Dan David Prize at Tel Aviv University, which recognized him as "the world's leading practitioner of oral history."

Robert Elsie is a writer and a linguist with an encyclopedic knowledge and a wealth of published work on Albanian culture, literature and history. Since the 1990s he has offered, through his ever-expanding websites a wide spectrum of historical texts and documents of Albanian history.

Sonja Biserko is the founder and president of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia. She has

Program

Moderator: Anna Di Lello, Kosovo Oral History Initiative

09:30 – 11:00

Alessandro Portelli: The Art of the Interview and Interpretation of Interviews (in English)

11:30 – 13:00

Robert Elsie: The Tradition of Orality in in South East Europe (in Albanian)

14:30 – 16:00

Sonja Biserko and Arbana Dushi: A Conversation on the Practice of Interviews and the Production of National Memory in South East Europe (in Albanian and English)

During **May 2017 – January 2018**, SCI implemented the project Improving the quality of life of poor and unemployed women and their contribution in the family and in the community. The project was funded by the **Albanian Agency for the Support of CSOs (AMSHC)** and it contributed to: (i) equip women and girls with knowledge and skills that enable them to exercise their rights; and (ii) improve access to health services and legal aid for women and girls in need.

The project worked with poor and unemployed women and girls, municipal institutions, and CSOs in seven municipalities of Gjirokastra district. SCI: (i) produced two educational brochures with useful information on women's legal right related to marriage and key information on women's health issues; (ii) held 17 educational workshops on legal rights and women's health issues with the participation of 146 women and girls; (iii) organized 2 training workshops with 36 local officials that address concerns of poor and unemployed women and girls in Gjirokastra district; (iv) produced 4 podcasts with useful information on women's legal right related to marriage and key information on women's health issues; and (v) held a roundtable on supporting

poor and unemployed Women with the participation of members of the Parliament that represent Gjirokastra district, municipal officials from seven municipalities, and CSOs from the district. As a follow up to the project, SCI provided support to several poor and unemployed women that participated project activities, and helped them to address specific concerns.



During **May 2017 – December 2017**, SCI was engaged as partner to AWEN in implementing the project Expanding and improving access to justice for vulnerable individuals and groups such as Roma, women, children, people with disabilities, victims of trafficking and violence, and LGBTI, a project funded by USAID's JUST II project. SCI's Legal Expert, Vjollca Meçaj, served as a lead facilitator and trainers in the following activities:

- *Informative and education workshops for disadvantaged groups on their rights with regard to access to justice;*
- *Training of trainers with law experts working for AWEN member organizations;*
- *Educational sessions with law students in Tirana; and*
- *TV programs on local TV stations focusing on access to justice for vulnerable groups.*

During 2016 – 2017, SCI participated in several initiatives by civil society actors in Albania to raise awareness or protesting against human rights violation, including women and children's rights. In July 2016, SCI took part in public gathering by CSOs demanding that members of the Parliament approve the law on vetting of prosecutors and judges as part of the justice system report in Albania (the so-called 'vetting law'). While in December 2016, SCI was part of a group of CSOs

that issued a public statement to demand that Constitutional Court withholds the 'vetting law'.

In **September 2017**, SCI established an ad-hoc CSO Organizing Group comprised of 13 CSOs and co-organized a protest against gender-based violence in Albania, urged by the disturbing number of tragic events resulting in women's killing by their husbands or ex-husbands. More than 300 citizens, members of the Parliament, artists, and journalists participated at this protest.

In **September – November 2017**, SCI contributed to develop the recommendations regarding the 2018 budget for the Ministry of Education and Sports and the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, presented to the Ministry during a public hearing.

In **2016 and 2017**, SCI played an active role in its capacity as a member of the Steering Committee that organized the 2nd and 3rd Annual Fundraising Gala Dinner to benefit the Shelter for LGBTI Persons in Albania, events that generated respectively 19,000 USD in 2016 and 23,000 USD in 2017.

Sustainable Development Program

In **January 2016**, SCI contributed to moderate sessions at Tirana Smart City Conference organized by Tirana municipality.

In **March 2016**, SCI in cooperation with COD in Tirana organized a panel presentation and discussion on “Sustainability and the Future of Cities” with three professors from the Institute for Sustainable Development (ISU) at Arizona State University (ASU) and the Belgian architect, Johan Anrys, and with the participation of students of architecture from various public and private universities.



In **June 2016**, SCI helped organize and moderated two conferences featuring illustrious speakers from the US, Italy, and South East Europe, including Professor Thomas Pogge of the US-based Yale University. The events were part of the festival Terra Madre Balkans 2016 Putting Farmers First, organized by Slow Food International. 350 delegates from 13 countries participated at this festival.



During 2016, SCI provided technical support to ASU’s ISU experts in their work to develop the urban development plan of Shkodra municipality and in developing a proposal on sustainable tourism in Albania.





In **March 2017**, SCI in cooperation with the UN Mission in Albania launched a public education initiative on the UN Sustainable Development Goals targeting university and high school students throughout the country. The first session was organized at “Luigj Gurakuqi” Shkodra University, which will be followed by other sessions in public universities.



Organizational Development

SCI's registration at Tirana District Court was completed on **July 16, 2015**, following the foundation act of the organization that was signed on June 12, 2015. SCI's registration with the National Registration Center was completed on **December 23, 2015**.

Albina Joga served as SCI's Executive Director from **July 2015 to February 2018**. In February 2016, SCI hired Olda Ceta as full-time Program Manager and engaged Lidra Elezi as part-time Finance Manager. In March 2018, Olda Ceta was promoted to SCI Program Director with the attributes of SCI's executive director. In January 2017, SCI hired Vjollca Meçaj as Legal Expert, who also serves as SCI's representative at the "Justice for all Coalition" in Albania.

With support by **EastWest Management Institute**, Inc. (EWMI), SCI developed and put in place efficient management and financial management systems, including those related to human resources, information management, and monitoring and evaluation. Since the beginning, SCI has also benefited from the technical assistance of a pro-bono Senior Adviser provided by EWMI. In 2017, SCI became beneficiary organization for USAID/Albanian capacity development program implemented by the **Albanian National Training, Technical Assistance, and Resource Center** (ANTTARC).

During 2016 – 2017, SCI's Program Manager completed the 6-month training course on Nonprofit Management provided by Partners Albania and attended several training workshops on project management, monitoring of public administration, etc., provided by various international and Albanian agencies and organizations.

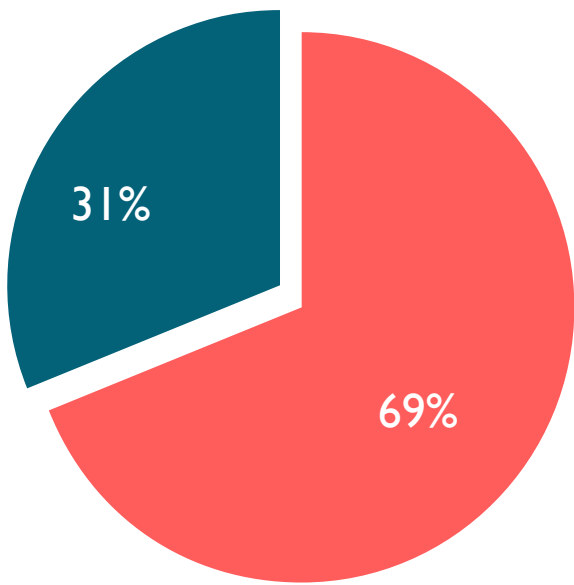
On **April 26, 2016**, SCI held the first meeting of SCI's Board that took the following key decisions: (i) approval of SCI Employee Manual; (ii) approval of SCI's Organizational Chart; and (iii) election of Mr. Andrea Lako as SCI Board Chair.

On **September 22, 2017**, SCI's Board at their regular meeting, decided to make the following changes: (i) change the name of the Center from "South East Europe Social Contract Institute" to "Social Contract Institute"; (ii) change SCI's legal seat address to the current SCI office address; and (iii) establish SCI's Advisory Committee, based on article 9.2 of SCI Statute, comprised of leading Albanian and international experts and leaders from private, academic, civil society, and media sectors that work on issues that fall within the priority areas for SCI's work. These changes were approved by Tirana District Court on February 2018.

SCI is a member of **Justice for All Coalition in Albania** and a member of the **National Working Group** (NWG) on Monitoring Public Administration Reform. In **February - March 2017**, SCI Program Manager took part in the exchange visits of Albanian civil society organizations (CSOs) and public officials to Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia) organized by the NWG on Monitoring of Public Administration Reform.

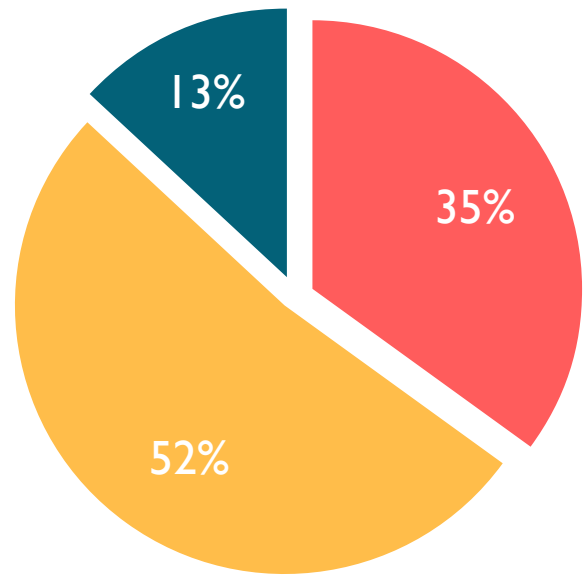
SCI cooperates with a wide variety of CSOs in the country and South East Europe, including the Institute for Development Research Alternatives (IDRA), Albanian Women Empowerment Network (AWEN), the Gender Alliance for Development Center (GADC), the Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM), the Alliance for LGBTI Rights, and the Shelter for LGBTI Persons in Albania; and several CSOs in Montenegro, Kosovo, Serbia, and Macedonia. Internationally, SCI has also established strategic partnerships with EWMI and the Institute for Sustainable Development at Arizona State University.

Financial Data



Budget for 2016
32,127 USD

- ▶ Sustainable Development
- ▶ Rule of Law



Budget for 2017
49,047 USD

- ▶ Civic Engagement
- ▶ Rule of Law
- ▶ Other Activities



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