



ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2025



Belgrade, April 2026

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ABBREVIATIONS:

- PS – Partners for Democratic Change Serbia (Partners Serbia)
- ADR – Alternative Dispute Resolution
- CSO(s) – Civil society organization(s)
- PDP Law – Law on Personal Data Protection
- USAID – United States Agency for International Development
- DEU – Delegation of the European Union to Serbia
- BTM – Balkan Trust for Democracy
- FOSS – Open Society Foundation Serbia
- Commissioner – Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection
- ROL – Rule of Law
- UNCAC – United Nations Convention Against Corruption
- NED – National Endowment for Democracy
- CSRA – Civil Society Resilience Strengthening Activity
- OSCE – Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
- DFF – Digital Freedom Fund
- BIRN Serbia – Balkan Investigative Reporting Network Serbia
- CHRIS Serbia - The Network of the Committees for Human Rights in Serbia CHRIS
- UNESCO - The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
- WG – Working Group
- PW – Privacy Week
- BOS – Belgrade Open School
- DSA – Digital Services Act

2025 – A REFLECTION ON THE YEAR BEHIND US



In 2025, the environment for civil society organizations in Serbia has continued to deteriorate, marked by the increased use of SLAPPs to silence activists, persistent media narratives portraying civil society actors as “foreign agents” and “domestic traitors,” and multiple instances of spyware being deployed against activists, investigative journalists, even local farmers who dare to speak out against systemic injustice.

At the same time, the closure of USAID programs, which has been one of the largest donors not only to Partners Serbia, but to other civil society organizations has further contributed to the shrinking civic space and directly affected the work of activists. As a result, we were required to adapt our operational model, including restructuring our team and relocating our office, in order to sustain our activities under these significantly changed circumstances.

In addition, political and social events in the region and in Serbia, from the falling of a concrete canopy that killed 15 people to the student-led protests for accountability and against corruption that started in November 2024, affected the overall stability of the country and citizens’ trust in institutions and their integrity. The protests continued all throughout 2025, which resulted in one of the biggest protests in the history of the country, on 15 March 2025 in Belgrade. Several human rights groups and opposition actors suspected use of a “sonic weapon” during the protest, with over 3000 testimonies gathered from citizens who were present at the protest, that described a strong “sonic impact.” The Serbian government denied using any sonic weapon and possessing such devices, but later acknowledged owning LRAD (Long-Range Acoustic Devices).

From the beginning of 2026, Partners Serbia have decided to move office, from Svetozara Markovica 60, to Kralja Milana 10, and will be sharing this space with colleagues from Civil Rights Defenders.



Throughout 2025, Partners Serbia continued to develop and implement several projects and initiatives, through different capacity building, research and advocacy activities, in the areas of rule of law (ROL), good governance, human rights and democratization.

Partners Serbia also continued providing free legal support and advice to citizens, activists and CSOs, primarily in area of access to information of public importance, personal data protection and anti-SLAPP, which have become more prevalent in the last couple of years.

All activities have been implemented thanks to donor support or from Partners Serbia's existing resources.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, the hybrid way of working continued throughout 2025. This method has allowed Partners Serbia to organize some meetings online, which proved to be effective in implementing some project activities.

Despite the discontinuation of support from a number of U.S.-based donors, which inevitably affected the organization's operations, we successfully maintained sustainability and stability throughout the year. During 2025, the team at Partners Serbia was reduced by one colleague following the closure of USAID, which had been one of our major donors for years. This significantly impacted the organization's work over the year; however, it also provided valuable lessons, helping us strengthen our resilience and adaptability to change.

ABOUT US

In 2008, the idea of establishing Partners for Democratic Changes Serbia (Partners Serbia) was born. It seemed that the biggest challenge was how to develop an organization that, in terms of program areas and work methodology, would manage to stand out among a number of civil society organizations that have been active and recognizable in Serbia and the region for years. According to the understanding of many, the key moment for the creation of civil sector organizations in Serbia passed immediately after the democratic changes, so the establishment of a completely new organization, without a recognized identity and history in Serbia, seemed like an impossible mission. Unlike others, we considered that the moment was right, because we considered many of the topics that our organization wanted to open up and devote themselves to be important for the further democratic development of the country, the improvement of the protection of human rights, and above all, for the establishment of a legal state and the rule of law.

Partners Serbia was founded within the project "Partners for Sustainable Leadership" supported by the "General Electric" Foundation and with the help of the organization Partners for Democratic Change (today Partners Global) based in Washington DC (USA). The goal of our work is to improve civil society and institutional development in Serbia and the region, strengthen local capacities, utilize the knowledge of domestic experts, and gain insight from the experiences of comparative practices.

During almost 18 years of our work, we have progressed our expertise in the field of rule of law, democracy and human rights development, civil society advancement, peaceful conflict resolution and change management. We have continued to offer solutions and programs tailored to local institutions and communities. We are especially proud that some of the social topics gained importance thanks to



our contribution. Thus, we are among the first organizations that are active in the field of peaceful dispute resolution, with special emphasis on the need for a wider use of mediation as a mechanism suitable for not only solving the current dispute or conflict, but also building wider social cohesion and a culture of dialogue important for post-conflict societies like ours. Also, our pioneering work in the field of privacy protection has been recognized by numerous institutions, commercial entities and citizens, who see us as a natural partner in this area.

We implemented around 60 projects that have involved over 12,000 participants. We created and distributed numerous publications and analyses, developed unique methodologies for creating sustainable online learning programs and organized numerous conferences, debates, forums, workshops, and trainings. In the first ten years, we initiated and helped establish the first Centre for peaceful settlement of disputes in the local community in Serbia and the region, the office of the Free Legal Aid Service in the Municipality of Bujanovac, as well as the Bar Academy of the Bar Association of Serbia. More recently, in cooperation with the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Protection of Personal Data, in 2010 we initiated the beginning of marking the International Day of Personal Data Protection in Serbia. Aware of the importance of the existence of professional and stable organizations for the development of civil society in the country, we supported the establishment and improvement of the internal capacities of other citizens' associations, such as the National Association of Mediators of Serbia, the Association of Local Ombudspersons of Serbia, the Network of Inspectors of Serbia, and in the course of our work we achieved cooperation or partnerships with over 70 organizations from all over the country and region.

We are the first organization in Serbia accredited by the Ministry of Justice for conducting basic and specialized training for mediators. We also have accreditation from the Ministry of State Administration and Local Self-Government for conducting training for employees and representatives of local governments.

Today, the Partners Serbia team consists of **10 members**, ready to respond to all upcoming challenges, who are determined and capable of completing all future tasks and plans.

In 2025, more than 25 civil society organizations in Serbia, including Partners Serbia have decided to completely suspend cooperation with the legislative and executive authorities. The main reasons for this moratorium include pressure on activists, demands related to the fulfillment of the students' protest demands, as well as calls for the withdrawal of controversial amendments to criminal legislation.

Our activities are also aimed at strengthening the capacities of other organizations and institutions for the expertise that we have developed over the years. Through partnerships, networks and joint initiatives, we achieve successful cooperation with a number of civil society organizations in Serbia and the region.

VALUES AND WORK

The work of the organization is based on the values shared by all team members.

Values:

- Ethics/Integrity - we adhere to high ethical standards in our work and respect our established system of moral values (both as individuals and as an organization)



- Innovation - we find new ways and content to get closer to target groups and contribute to the development of democracy in our society
- Responsibility - we take responsibility for the activities we carry out and for spreading the adopted moral values in society
- Respect for diversity - we are able to hear and appreciate different views and to accept those who think differently, as well as to understand the needs and views of other groups
- Solidarity - we understand other people's needs and problems and are ready to step out of our comfort zone to help others
- Principledness - we do not deviate from our positions even when obstacles appear



Way we work:

- Professionalism - we believe that to achieve excellence in the work we strive for, constant work on strengthening the individual and team competencies of employees is important. Partners' work is based on the principles of ethics that we incorporated into the Code of Ethics and other internal acts of the organization.
- Openness - we are open to cooperation with other organizations/bodies and individuals whose goal is the permanent development of democratic relations in society, respect for individual and collective rights.
- Transparency - everything we do is available to the public.
- Democracy - we give all employees opportunities to participate in decisions concerning our organization.
- Equality (+tolerance) - we treat employees and associates equally, taking into account the differences that exist among all of us.
- Participation and giving opportunities - we are ready to participate in the projects and activities of other organizations, as well as to include them in ours; our initiatives and projects always involve an invitation for the active participation of all interested parties.
- Teamwork - the project way of working implies that we are all involved from idea to realization in accordance with our affinities and abilities.
- Innovation and creativity - we encourage the development and application of new methodologies in our work and follow trends.



NEW STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The new Strategic Framework of Partners Serbia has been established in 2023 and remains unchanged throughout 2025 as well.

IF-THEN (Theory of Change)

If Serbian institutions are able to protect citizens' fundamental rights and citizens take part in processes pertinent for their rights and interests, *and*

If Serbian society is able to anticipate, prepare and adapt to promises and perils of the rapid technological enhancement, *and* **If** citizens and social groups in Serbia address their differences through dialogue and peaceful resolution of conflicts,

Then Serbia will be a more fair/just, peaceful and resilient society, able to contribute to the stability of the region as a member of the European Union.

PATHWAYS

Pathway 1: Serbia in EU: fundamentals first

- Rule of law
- Fundamental rights
- Resilient civil society
- Democratic institutions, good governance, separation of powers

Pathway 2: Digitalized World: the future is now

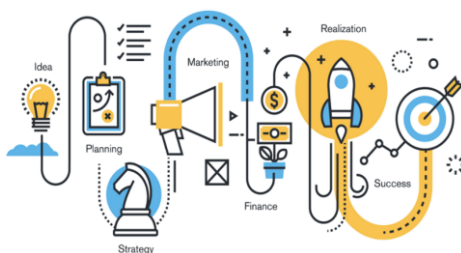
- Digital safety and security
- Digital transparency and accountability
- Democracy and citizens' participation in the digital environment
- Human rights in the digital environment

Pathway 3: Peaceful Societies/ Communities

- Dialogue in society and culture of tolerance
- ADR
- Peaceful conflict management



PROJECTS



The projects that have been implemented during the course of 2025:

- **Enhancing Transparency and Public Participation in Open Government Reforms**, supported by Belgrade Open School (BOS) and Delegation of the EU to Serbia
- **Ensuring Transparency in the Security Sector**, supported by the OSCE and Swedish Embassy to Serbia
- **Beyond Clicks: Redefining Serbian Media Business Models for Privacy Compliance**, supported by OSCE and Swedish Embassy
- **Preventing Unlawful Biometric Surveillance in Serbian Healthcare and Education Institutions**, supported by Digital Freedom Fund (DFF)
- **Growth and Digital Rights: Ensuring the Integration of the Western Balkans into the Digital Single Market**, supported by Open Society Foundation Western Balkan. The project has been implemented with the support from partners: Metamorphosis foundation (North Macedonia), Institute for Democracy and Mediation (Albania), NVO 35 mm (Montenegro), Why not? (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Women in Tech (Kosovo)
- **Serbian Anti-SLAPP Initiative**, supported by the Delegation of the EU in Serbia, in consortium with Balkan Investigative Network Serbia (BIRN Serbia) and The Network of the Committees for Human Rights in Serbia CHRIS (CHRIS Network)
- **Strengthening the Anti-SLAPP Protection in Serbia**, supported by Balkan Trust for Democracy
- **Surveillance and Censorship in the Western Balkans**, supported by Balkan Investigative Reporting Network
- **Leveraging Technology to Promote Institutional Accountability and Transparency** supported by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). This project is led by the Center for Democratic Transition (Montenegro) in partnership with the Metamorphosis Foundation (North Macedonia), Citizens Association Why Not? (Bosnia and Herzegovina), and Partners Serbia.
- **Conducting comprehensive gap analysis and developing economy-specific roadmap for the implementation of the Digital Services Act (DSA) and Digital Markets Act (DMA) in WB6**, supported by Regional Cooperation Council Secretariat (RCC)

Within the previously mentioned projects, Partners Serbia team completed several activities, presented below:

- Organized the fifth annual Privacy Week, a multi-stakeholder event which lasted for 3 days, to mark International Data Protection Day. The event was centered around discussions on privacy and data protection issues with experts from the civil, private, and public sector. PW was aimed at

promoting privacy and personal data protection standards in all spheres of life, as well as creating a network of people from the civil, public and private sectors who understand the importance of these topics. Around 80 people were present at the event.

- Held their Annual Privacy School, an online school on privacy related issues which was attended by 52 participants who successfully completed the course and its 9 lectures.
- Developed a comprehensive analysis on SLAPP proceedings to support improvement of SLAPP-related legal framework and implementation of the existing legal framework.
- Provided legal support to victims of SLAPPs, silencing, intimidation, and harassment has also been provided. Around 20 activists were provided legal assistance.
- Produced a documentary on SLAPP proceedings in Serbia and how they are being used to silence critics, together with colleagues from BIRN Serbia.
- Partners Serbia, BIRN Serbia and CHRIS Network organized 11 local debates throughout Serbia where the documentary was presented to the public, with over 200 participants total.
- After the completion of the local debates, the documentary on SLAPP lawsuits, developed by BIRN Serbia, was published on Youtube and currently has over 500 thousand views, which contributed to a broader discussion on the importance of protection of journalists and activists from SLAPP lawsuits.
- Organized an International anti-SLAPP conference in May 2025, with around 80 participants.
- Organized 4 round-tables on SLAPP proceedings in Belgrade, Nis, Kragujevac and Novi Sad.
- Organized six regional workshops as an integral part of the broader initiative “Building Trust in Media in South-East Europe: Support to Journalism as a Public Good,” implemented by UNESCO with the support of the European Union. Partners Serbia followed the overall timeline and structure pre-established by UNESCO and collaborated closely with the UNESCO team to organize workshops in six target beneficiaries—one per location: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo* (under UNSCR 1244, dated 1999), Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. A total of six national workshops were conducted in Sarajevo, Podgorica, Pristina, Skopje, Tirana, and Belgrade between 16 and 27 June 2025. In total, approximately 170 participants took part in these events, representing governmental institutions, civil society organizations, media, and international organizations.
- Organized an online course on Data Protection responsibilities, for 7 participants.
- Held a workshop for representatives of institutions, as well as a roundtable for relevant stakeholders, focusing on aligning Serbia with the provisions of the DSA (Digital Services Act).
- Produced an analysis on the use of cookies by the media, and an analysis was written on the relationship between disinformation and digital rights.
- Submitted their comments on the drafts of the Criminal Procedure Code and the Criminal Code, as well as other relevant legislation in the field of human rights, transparency, accountability and privacy.
- Developed the analysis WB6 countries’ preparations for alignment with the DSA and DMA, along with a proposed roadmap for alignment in accordance with human rights standards. (planned to be published in 2026)

- produced two annual reports assessing the openness and transparency of the executive and legislative branches of government in Serbia. This core activity, conducted annually, aims to support evidence-based advocacy for enhancing transparency standards in public institutions.
- submitted 112 FOI requests.
- continued to actively participate in policy change processes (e.g., working groups, public consultation processes, public hearings, and public debates) related to improving the level of transparency and openness of public institutions in Serbia, including Fifth Open Government Partnership Action Plan, The Draft Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance
- became a member of the newly established Inter-sectoral Working Group for Monitoring the Reform Agenda of the Republic of Serbia, created to support and oversee the implementation of the Reform Agenda. Within this framework, Partners Serbia also assumed the role of coordinator of the Digitalization sub-group.
- On 30 September 2025, Partners Serbia held a public panel discussion titled “Freedom of Access to Information in Serbia and the Region” in Belgrade. The event brought together (25) experts, journalists, civil society representatives, and institutional actors to discuss current trends, key challenges, and regional perspectives on transparency and access to information.
- organized a roundtable titled “Secrecy and the Right to Access Information of Public Importance: Legal Framework and Practice”, held on 16 December 2025 at the premises of the OSCE Mission to Serbia in Belgrade, which gathered 30 participants.
- organized our annual public campaign to mark the International Day for Universal Access to Information and to foster an open debate on transparency-related issues within the public sector. Partners Serbia issued a public statement and published 2 articles, in order to promote the right of access to information of public importance and raising awareness of transparency challenges.
- published several other articles and news related to transparency, accountability, and public administration reform.
- provided legal support in 4 cases in the domain of FOI.
- launched the FOI Open Resource Platform. To date, the FOI platform contains 115 FOI requests and 112 responses from respective public institutions.

COOPERATION AND NETWORKING

As a part of the ACTION SEE regional network, Partners Serbia, together with the organizations “Zasto ne?”, “Center for Democratic Transition” and “Metamorphosis Foundations” conducted a series of activities, including annual regional monitoring of the openness of public institutions (the Regional Openness Index), advocacy activities for the improvement of openness of public institutions in the region, and several public events, including Conference “Transparency of public institutions”, held in Montenegro.

From 2024, Partners Serbia have been a part of the Global Network Initiative (GNI). GNI is the leading multistakeholder forum for accountability, shared learning, and collective advocacy on government and company policies and practices at the intersection of technology and human rights.

In 2024, Partners Serbia joined the DSA Human Right Alliance - an informal network of organizations working on enabling the protection of human rights within the framework of Digital Services Act. As part of the alliance, Partners Serbia participated in the Digital Services Act Coordination conference in Brussels, organized in November 2025.

We also participated in a number of other conferences, such as the Internet Governance Forum (IGF).

As a part of our anti-SLAPP work, we joined the National Working Group on SLAPPs - the coalition of CSOs and media organizations addressing the raising issue of SLAPP cases against media and activists. Throughout the year, several meetings of the WG have been organized.

Partners Serbia also participated in DISICON 9 and the Internet Freedom Meet in Pristina, in November of 2025, as well as Ignita forum, in Prizren.

Our colleague Kristina Obrenovic also participated in the International Visitor Leadership Programme (IVLP), focused on transparency and accountability of public institutions.

In May, we also participated in a conference in Podgorica, organized by colleagues from NVO 35mm and NVO TACSO where we discussed the digital divide in the Western Balkan.

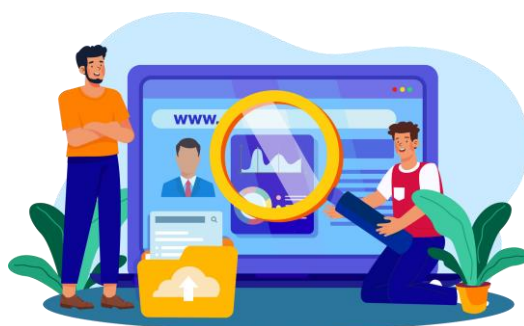
We also continued our cooperation with academia. We continued working with the Faculty of Law, University of Belgrade, with organizing the mediation clinic for law students.

Our cooperation with institutions in Serbia was impacted by the overall political climate in the society. We also maintained cooperation with judicial institutions, working on issues of transparency of judiciary.

Partners Serbia also cooperated with several civil society organizations through the participation in other consultative processes and advocacy activities.

Partners Serbia actively supported the work of different CSOs through participation in lecturers at their trainings and workshops, participation in different conferences, provision of know-how in the field of access to information of public importance and personal data protection etc.

MEDIA VISIBILITY



During 2025, Partners Serbia were present in different forms of media, both in daily newspaper, and in different TV programmes to reach as many people as possible and discuss privacy related issues and promote important project activities and research findings. They were also in contact with a PR agency to maximize the reach of their publications, TV and radio guest appearances.

During the year, Partners Serbia had a total of 26 TV and radio appearances. A total combined reach of all our appearances in 2025 was 38.759.284.

Partners Serbia were especially active during their Privacy Week conference which was organized in January 2025, during which an entire media campaign was implemented.

In order to mark the International Day for Universal Access to Information and to foster an open debate on transparency-related issues within the public sector, Partners Serbia launched a public campaign with a reach of 93,120 people, calculated by the PR agency engaged by Partners Serbia, using average viewership and readership metrics for the included media sources.

SERVICES

In 2025, Partners Serbia continued to provide services to the business sector and civil society. The organization delivered mediation services in the field of dispute resolution. During the reporting period, two basic trainings and one specialized training on workplace mobbing were conducted, as well as a training on personal data protection. In total, more than 20 participants successfully completed the trainings.

EMPLOYEES

Partners Serbia team is made up of 10 full-time members. Their team consisted of Ana Toskic Cvetinovic (Executive Director), Blazo Nedic (President of the Managing Board), Uros Misljenovic (Program Officer), Ana Desic (Financial and Compliance Officer), Nastasija Stojanovic (Projects and Communications Coordinator), Kristina Obrenovic (Researcher and Project Coordinator), Damjan Mileusnic (Researcher and Project Coordinator), Milica Andric (Training and Capacity Building Coordinator), Milica Tasic (Attorney-at-Law – Legal Advisor) and Ana Krstic (Projects and Communication's Associate).

One of the colleagues of many years returned to the United States, but PS continued their cooperation with her. During 2025, the team of Partners Serbia was reduced by one colleague following the closure of USAID, which had been one of our major donors for years. This significantly impacted the organization's work over the year, however, it also provided valuable lessons, helping us strengthen our resilience and adaptability to change.

FINANCES



All financial reports from Partners Serbia have been submitted in accordance with the Serbian laws.

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The main sources of funding in 2025 were:

- The European Union
- Balkan Trust for Democracy
- OSCE
- Swedish Embassy
- Digital Freedom Fund
- Open Society Foundation Western Balkan
- UNESCO
- National Endowment for Democracy
- Balkan Investigative Reporting Network
- Regional Cooperation Council Secretariat (RCC)

