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# THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE ACTIVITIES OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN ALBANIA

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## **Abstract**

Since COVID-19 emerged, it has crucially influenced and has been influenced by health and public affairs in many countries of the World. Health system, economy, education, democracy, media, conspiracy theories, culture, tourism, Civil Society, welfare system are all sectors affected by the pandemic crisis due to the necessary measures of social distancing applied by governments.

Among them are the Civil Society Organizations (CSO), the performance of which is influenced by a number of features and steps, such as the restrictions of CSO staff movement, the fulfillment of activities and field researches, the loss of funding and the reorientation of their operations.

The main aim of this paper is to develop a more comprehensive and analytical thought about the impact of COVID-19 on Albanian Civil Society Organizations. We seek to provide a clear understanding of the situation due to the methodology of the present research based on a representative sample of 32 CSO all over Albania. The detailed answers of the questionnaire and the conclusions that will be drawn in this paper will help not only help understanding CSO's in Albania during the pandemic, but also the questions of democracy and political culture in regard with the overall impact of COVID-19.

**Keywords:** *conspiracy theories, cyber-democracy, international partners, pandemic measures*

## **Introduction**

Since COVID-19 emerged, it has crucially influenced and has been influenced by health and public affairs in many countries of the World. Health system, economy, education, democracy, media, conspiracy theories, culture, tourism, Civil Society, welfare system are all sectors affected by the pandemic crisis due to the necessary measures of social distancing applied by governments.

Among them is the Civil Society Organizations (CSO), the performance of which is shaped by a number of features and steps, such as the restrictions of CSO staff movement, the fulfillment of activities and field researches, the loss of funding and the reorientation of their operations. This is at least, what happened with African CSO in 2020, investigated by Epic Africa Creating Agency and African NGOs (EpicAfrica and AfricanNGOs, 2020).

Based on the preliminary works, this study's aim is to develop a more comprehensive and analytical thought about the impact of COVID-19 on Albanian Civil Society Organizations. Furthermore, we seek to provide a clear understanding of the situation and the usage of the resources mobilized by the Albanian government's Coronavirus measures regarding the operation of Civil Society Organizations.

The research methodology of this study is based on a representative sample of Civil Society Organizations all over Albania. The larger number of organizations taking part in this study compared with the previous researches, as well as the large geographical distribution of the sample in all parts of the county, is the key factor we use to explain the overall impact of COVID-19 and the suggestions expressed by CSO representatives.

This article is organized as follows. Firstly, it provides the empirical and theoretical background on what is a civil society, and the Albanian Civil Society Organizations situation facing the Pandemic. Secondly, we explain the methodology used in the study. Thirdly, we discuss the impact of COVID-19 to the Albanian Civil Society Organizations' activity, the consequences, and the measures that the Albanian CSO's have taken to face the situation. And in conclusion, we discuss the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, the current situation and the future of the Albanian CSO's.

## **1. Civil Society and Civil Society Organizations**

There are many definitions of civil society. Commonly, civil society refers to the social organizations that occupy the space between the state and the household, enabling people to coordinate their resources, the management of those resources and activities (Layton, 2006, pp.11).

According to Senyo Adjoboloso citing Hegel's point of view, the existence of civil society itself is representative of a space that modern subjectivity can emerge. Furthermore, all the moral principles, norms and freedoms are defined within the connotation of liberty and within space. Thus, civil society is a sphere of recognition. (Adjoboloso 2006, 59). As a result, following Hegel's way of thinking, civil society became increasingly linked with political participation and parliamentarism. (Bechelt, et al. 2014, 15). In other words, it promoted democracy as a combination of different social logics.

In addition, Ghanshyam Shah refers to civil society as an autonomous space, separated from society and the State's influence. That is possible, because civil society is an analytical site concerned mostly with the common good and the collective interests are primary and exert the most power. However, for Shah, the primary task for the civil society is to watch over the functions and behavior of the state and it has to respond or in worst case, take up arms if the state violates the liberty of the citizens, or imposes restrictions on individual autonomy. (Shah 2019, 15 & 18).

One, according to Alexis de Tocqueville, could enter voluntarily and freely into civil society, as long as one together with the others wants to pursue their interests collectively. Moreover, the organization that is a product of such cooperation is "non-state" and "non-profit", completely different from the market structure and the influence of the state. Thus, as a result, it makes civil society and its "successor" organization a "third sector". (Hunter, et. al. 2007, xii).

In continuation of Tocqueville's idea of civil society, the state and the civil society are two distinct spheres. The state, mostly referred to the government, is a sphere that is characterized by a set of norms, seldom private. However, the civil society's norms are exclusively

private; it is a sphere of freedom for the individuals that decide to be part of it, to shape their ideas, to articulate their purpose of joining and to be part of the internal structure of the civil society. Thus, civil society should be completely separated from the state.

As one can see from the definitions mentioned above, there exists a strong case of rejection of the idea that civil society should not work with the state and that civil society is different from the state. However, a question should be raised, whether civil society, its institutions and organizations should play a role in the state's politics and affairs. In order to differentiate between civil and political organizations, it is necessary to mention that Civil Society Organizations need to uphold a level of autonomy which will guarantee the good management of their plans and resources (Layton 2006, 16-17), and therefore, as a consequence, will ensure potentially the advancement of their members' interests and secure a channel of dialogue between the organizations and the state.

Historically, a Civil Society Organization was either supportive or were the opposition of the ruling government in a state by undermining the decisions and the unity of the state. The latter happened in Luansha, a mining town in Zambia, where a library association funded by foreign missionaries provided the local community with the momentum and resources to challenge the authority of the town's leaders and turn the town and the surrounding region into a "Welfare Society". (Layton, op. Cit.). In this example, the mentioned civil society organization surpassed the sphere of private affairs and it included in it the activities that were guided by solidarity. They were motivated by higher values, human rights, peace, and recognition of differences between the citizens albeit being social or economic ones, tolerance, etc.

However, the agenda of Civil Society Organizations trying to undermine the decisions of the state can and will bring new problems on the public agenda. By publicly denouncing the bad politics and policies made by the politicians, in a provocative and verbal manner, it will strip the objects of attack from any basic values. (Dvornik 2009, 112-113). Therefore, the extreme adversary stance of the CSO will in turn have a mirror effect on the desired outcome and it will, as a consequence, hamper their future work will be hampered. This was the case in the Yugoslavian state during the 80s and 90s. The ethnic

communities there created fault lines which created new threats of the state breaking down that eventually the creation of the successor states and the dissolution of Yugoslavia. (Layton, Ibid.).

In regard to Civil Society Organizations that are supportive of the ruling government, it is worthy to note that those CSOs are contracted by the state to carry out governmental functions or are engaged in activities in the trading activities associated with the private sphere. According to Jonathan Garton citing The United Nations System of National Accounts, the majority of the non-profit institutions (including CSOs) are likely to provide non-marketable goods or services to other institutions either for free or at an insignificant price. (Garton 2009, 21 & 32). Though, this does not mean that the CSOs don't receive funding on a collective or individual basis from various sources that include foreign investments in the form of a grant and private donations. It is necessary to note that a professional Civil Society Organization with a strong organization and capacity is the primary choice for the donors. Often, organizations that show nationalist tendency, veteran groups and other types that do not replicate the liberal and democratic practices are ignored and marginalized by donors and foreign investors. (Bechelt, Ibid., 153-154).

One of the most important functions and roles of the Civil Society and its Organizations are the facilitation of pluralism and the involvement of the citizens in the society. This function is, according to Jonathan Garton, the most attractive in regard to freedom to politically express (Garton, Ibid., 74). By providing groups that are considered minority or people without any representation, marginalized, an opportunity of representation of their interests, the CSOs enable them to play an active role in the civic and political affairs of the state, for example, the case of the mining town in Zambia mentioned earlier. The creation of many interest groups with diverse interests encourages the citizens to partake and become affiliates with not just one, but many different groups. In a manner of speaking, this means the discouragement of the polarization of interest groups with different ideologies.

Another important role of Civil Society is the facilitation of self-determination. There are many different ways that the Civil Society Organizations can contribute: i) by being an outlet of altruism, for



example, a charity based CSO, focused on philanthropic ideals; ii) by being the means of mutual support, thus the desire to support its members, as an opposite of altruism; iii) by enabling ideological expression, by providing platforms for ideological expression. (Garton, *Ibid.*, 76).

## **2. Albanian CSOs and COVID-19**

Like many countries, Albania was caught unprepared concerning COVID-19 and its challenges, while the pandemic remains the focal point of daily life and in the discourse among politicians, public opinion, media, and Civil Society actors. COVID-19 and its multilevel impact on Albanian society was investigated by Albanian researchers during the time of the pandemic. We could mention two of them.

In the first study, conducted by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy in November 2020, was examined the role played by civil society and media toward the crisis management in Albania, concretely the pandemic of COVID-19 and the consequences left by the powerful earthquake of November 2019. According to the research, the majority of CSO activities were postponed or carried out online, because of the anti-Covid measures applied by the Albanian government, although the latter failed to provide them essential financial support. The conclusions were based on the interviews conducted by the representatives of six CSO and seven interviewers from the media sector. (Bino, et al. 2020, 17, 70-79).

The second work is the Policy Brief of the Institute for Political Studies in Albania, published also in November 2020, where is emphasized the CSO capacity to adapt their operations into the new circumstances of social distance, by providing means of physical and online democratic surveillance. (Institute for Political Studies 2020, 3). Such was the campaign organized by the Albanian CSO “Alliance for the Protection of the Theatre” for 27 consecutive months against the demolition of the National Theatre building in Tirana. (Brahaj, et al. 2020).

According to research conducted in the Western Balkans about the impact of COVID-19 on CSO, it is shown that CSOs have contributed through civic activism in filling the gap of democratic deficiency left

by governments during the pandemic. This was done by monitoring the transparency and accountability of governments' measures related to COVID-19, such as the restriction of movement or medical supplies, as well as the behavior that governments have demonstrated toward political opposition and Civil Society in their domestic political debate. In these circumstances, CSO has provided social support to marginalized social groups, although not represented enough in consultations that governments might develop with social partners and actors. When it comes to anti-Covid action plans, CSOs have not received any financial help from governments in order to face the short-term problems dealing with the pandemic (Neshikj, et al. 2020).

### **3. Methodology**

The study is based on a structured questionnaire in Albanian language, composed of 33 questions and organized in five chapters: I) General information about your organization - 6 questions, II) The impact of COVID-19 on the activity of your organization - 12 questions, III) More specific questions on the impact of COVID-19 on your organization - 2 questions, IV) Measures taken to face the situation – 11 questions, V) New opportunities – 2 questions.

The questionnaire was created in the platform Google Forms and sent online by us, through email to 35 CSO in different cities and regions of Albania. The sample of the survey is representative, not only with regard to the geographical and demographic distribution, but also according to the diversity of their scopes.

Furthermore, before sending the questionnaire by email, the authors of the research have contacted the representatives of the selected CSO with Skype and other means of telecommunication, where they have informed them about the survey. Data gathering and interpretation is applied carefully by all the authors, and the exchange of their views contributes to limiting any subjectiveness.

## **4. Data collection and interpretation: The impact of COVID-19 on CSOs**

### *4.1. General information*

We got responses from 32 organizations (out of 35 in total) in north, center and south part of Albania (more than 91% responded), which compose a representative sample, if we take into account the distribution of population in Albania.

The majority of CSO taken part in the present research are small Non-Governmental Organizations, whose organizational structure is based mainly in Tirana and in other large cities of the center part of Albania. These organizations cover multiple action areas and have rich experiences of implemented projects, funded by national, European and international partners.

More concretely, 22 CSO or 68.8% of the total number of respondents have their headquarters in the center Albania, including the capital city of Tirana, together with Durrës and Elbasan, where is concentrated the majority part of the Albanian population, specifically 51.5% of the total population; 7 CSO or 21.9% of the respondents come from cities that belong to the south part of Albania, like Vlorë, Berat, Fier, Korçë, Gjirokastër, where lives 30.4% of the population; and finally, 3 CSO or 9.4% of the respondents come from regions of northern Albania, like Shkodër, Lezhë, Dibër, Kukës, which have 18.1% of the Albanian population (INSTAT, 2020).

The CSO were selected randomly according to the country's geographical regions from the official website of the Agency for the Support of Civil Society in Albania (Agjencia për Mbështetjen e Shoqërisë Civile - AMSHC).<sup>1</sup>

In the first question about the name of the organization, 31 of 32 respondents answered correctly, while one of them preferred to remain anonymous. In the case that someone would make any allegation about a potential fear of the anonymous respondent toward the government, the overall results show that this supposed fear is totally isolated.

In the second question about the type of the organization, more than a half of the respondents (53.1%) represent Non-Governmental Organizations, while the other half is divided into Think Tanks (15.6% of the respondents), Nonprofit organizations (12.5%), Civil Society Organizations (9.4%), Social organizations (3.1%) and Community based organizations (3.1%).

The CSO that took part in this survey cover multiple action areas, such as:

- i) democracy, governance and the rule of law (43.8%)
- ii) youth and youth policies (43.8%)
- iii) economic development (43.8%)
- iv) green policies and the environment (31.3%)
- v) education (18.8%)
- vi) human rights (18.8%)
- vii) protection of children and persons with disabilities (18.8%)
- viii) gender equality and women's rights (15.6%)
- ix) security, radicalism and extremism (9.4%).

All CSO have small staff composed by 1 to maximum 25 employees, a fact that demonstrates about the nature of small-sized CSO prevailing in Albania. We had added on purpose three other alternatives about the number of staff that Albanian CSO may have, concretely ii) 25-50 people, iii) 50-75 people and iv) 75-100 people, but no one from the respondents chose them.

#### *4.2. COVID-19 impact*

According to 31 of 32 respondents, or 96.9%, the activities of Albanian CSO have been affected by COVID-19. COVID-19 has also become an obstacle for the implementation of CSO activities, which are postponed according to 87.6% of the respondents. In fact, 6.3% declared to have increased their activities during the period of the pandemic, preferring to see the latter as an opportunity to accomplish a better operational performance.

71.8% of CSO believe that COVID-19 has influenced their staff, while the opposite opinion is expressed by 28.1%.

The main consequence of COVID-19 is the restriction of staff movements and field research according to 75% of the respondents, followed by the reduction of personal contacts (53.1%) and advocacy activities (50%) with target groups and community. In the opinion of 37.5%, CSO staff were committed to work from home, although not excluding the possibility of reducing staff members and their associates according to 25% of the respondents.

Besides staff movement, a second consequence is the financial side of CSOs, that is the loss of funds or budget allocation (46.9%), the reduction or cancellation of projects (40.6%) and the increase in costs (31.3%).

It is important to note, that according to 18.8% of the CSO think that they have lost their impact on society, being more vulnerable in controlling government activities. Therefore, they would prefer to apply other innovative ways of working under the new conditions imposed by the pandemic (28.1% of CSO).

When it comes to the most frequent activities implemented by CSO during the pandemic, they have been respectively:

- i) face-to-face and online trainings (59.4%)
- ii) advocacy and organizing awareness campaigns (50%)
- iii) capacity building (46.9%)
- iv) exchange of information (43.8%)
- v) research studies (43.8%)
- vi) field research (37.5%)
- vii) monitoring government activities and fund coordination (6.3%).

The frequent use of digital platforms by Albanian CSO during the pandemic, mainly in the form of online trainings and webinars, lead to the enrichment of traditional and in-person communication. It should be mentioned that many surveys, including the present research, were conducted, promoted and filled out online.

According to 75% of the respondents, staff movement and face-to-face contact have both been significantly reduced. On the other hand, 25% believe that only face-to-face contacts were reduced because of COVID-19, but not staff movements, which has continued normally.

Despite contagion risks and the restrictions of movement applied by many governments – including the Albanian one – only 25% of CSO would prefer to implement their activities online. In contrast, 31.3% of them would choose face-to-face contacts, whereas 40.6% would apply both ways. 3.1% of the respondents suggest other methods, such as holding the meetings in large spaces or open air, in respect to the rules of social distance.

As to online communication, it is precisely the crucial result of COVID-19 in public and private sectors, including CSO. This fact is also accepted by 90.7% of the respondents in the present survey, where they mention in particular online training. 34.4% of them claim that all types of communication had totally continued online, through numerous digital platforms. Only 9.4% declared to have continued communication face-to-face, as before the pandemic of COVID-19.

### *4.3. Civil Society Organization's finances*

According to 78.2% of the respondents, the financial of their CSO have been affected by COVID-19, seriously or partly. 68.8% declared to have recorded losses of their finances, up to significant losses according to 25% of them. On the other hand, 31.2% of the respondents refuse to accept any negative impact of COVID-19 to CSO finances. By this part, 3.1% report an increase in the revenue of their organizations during the pandemic of COVID-19.

Funds earned during the pandemic are mainly provided by sources, such as:

- i) other countries (37.5%)
- ii) individual donors (18.8%)
- iii) government and its agencies (12.5%)
- iv) private sector (9.4%).

The CSO have also rich experience of implementing projects by themselves, in cooperation with national and international actors. More concretely:

- i) the great part of their projects, according to 65.6% of the respondents, were carried through the funds of the European Union, while 46.9% of CSO declared to have implemented projects financially supported by international organizations and by independent funders, such as Friedrich Ebert Foundation (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung FES), Swiss Agency, Norwegian Embassy, etc.
- ii) The same percentage of the respondents, specifically 46.9%, have implemented self-funded projects, together with projects funded by Open Society Foundation for Albania, national sources, and the United Nations, chosen respectively by 28.1%, 25% and 21.9% of the respondents. In other words, the major funding partner of Albanian CSO and their activities have been shown to be international actors, including E.U. and embassies of different European countries. Furthermore, organizations like Open Society Foundation for Albania and Friedrich-Ebert- Stiftung Tirana have had a positive impact on the operation and effectiveness of Albanian CSO.
- iii) The other half of the respondents, precisely 50%, has provided other revenue sources, not mentioned in this questionnaire.

To specify more the politics that the affected CSO would potentially follow, in order to balance their own financial conditions and cut expenses:

- i) 62.5% of the responded would prefer to reduce the number of trips
- ii) 59.4% would reduce the plan of activities
- iii) 43.8% would promote and encourage volunteer work
- iv) 12.5% would reduce the staff
- v) 12.5% would suspense CSO activities
- vi) 9.4% would move on to freezing salaries and opening new jobs in staff.

More specific questions on the impact of COVID-19

COVID-19 has also influenced the performance of CSO with regard to public opinion, according to 65.6% of the respondents, who believe that their work has become more or less recognized due to the circumstances of the pandemic. More concretely, 12.5% believe that the hard work of CSO during the pandemic has led the organizations to be known and more appreciated by the general public opinion. In contrast, 53.1% declare that the pandemic has weakened the recognition of CSO performance, due to the reduced face-to-face contacts. On the other hand, 34.4% of CSO do not believe that their performance has been seriously affected by COVID-19.

When CSO representatives were invited to describe the role of political polarization on their operational performance, 56.3% of them declared that the performance of CSO had become more beneficial and would serve as a pole of attraction for Civil Society contacts and activation. In contrast, 43.8% believe that the activity of their organizations was weakened due to the extreme political polarization during the pandemic period.

## **5. Measures taken to face the situation**

### *5.1. CSOs and Albanian government and major foreign actors*

81.3% of CSO consider that the Albanian government has taken no action to protect CSO from the multiple risks presented by the pandemic of COVID-19. On the other hand, 18.7% claim to have been supported, thoroughly or partly, by the anti-Covid measures taken by the government, such as frequent contacts with CSO and recommendations.

Almost all CSO (96.9%) that were part of the present questionnaire consider themselves not to have been included into any financial Anti-Covid package allocated by the Albanian government, nor have

they personally benefited as organizations with any financial assistance during the pandemic. Only a marginalized percentage of the respondents (1 CSO or 3.1% of the sample) claims to have been supported financially by the Albanian government.

59.4% of CSO describe their cooperation in a positive manner with local institutions, such as municipalities or specific directories. Almost the other half of the respondents (40.6%) believe they had not had any experience of cooperation with local institutions.

A similar opinion prevails with regard to Albanian Ombudsman (Avokat i popullit), where 84.4% of CSO haven't had any experience of cooperation, in contrary to 15.6% who describes as correct their relations with Albanian public advocate. Despite the lack of cooperation with crucial actors, such as government, self-governing power and public advocate, the majority of CSO (87.5%) do not express any major complaints about the freedom of speech during the pandemic. Unlike, 12.5% claim that their CSO freedom of speech had been weakened importantly, as a consequence of COVID-19.

When it comes to political representation of CSO, or in other words how efficiently is the voice of CSO heard by the political power and political elites, only 6.2% of the respondents claim to have felt the improvement of their political representation during the pandemic. In contrast, the overwhelming majority of CSO (93.8%) believe that their political representation has remained stagnant, like what was happening before COVID-19 (62.5%), or at worst has weakened further during the pandemic (31.3%).

Another negative impact of COVID-19 on CSO concerns the latter's cooperation with other countries' organizations, international and regional actors, as well as the European Union. So, only 9.4% of the respondents believe that their relations with such actors and institutions have been importantly improved during the pandemic, including their CSO participation in E.U. projects. The overwhelming majority of the respondents (90.7%) consider this sort of cooperation to be stagnant, or at worst declining.

### *5.2. Relationship with Media*

CSO cooperation with media is critical, not only to the coverage of activities, but also to democratic information and emancipation of citizens. Such an indicator that shows how fragile democracy is in the



times of digital information has to do with the spread of conspiracy theories, a common phenomenon during the pandemic of COVID-19. Only 25% of the respondents believe that their relations with media have been improved during the pandemic, whereas 75% consider these relations to have remained stagnant (according to 46.9%) or declined (28.1%). Additionally, 87.5% of CSO have not conducted any specific research or organized any activity with regard to conspiracy theories and their dimensions. This means, among other things, that CSO themselves – or supported by other actors – have not undertaken any initiative that might serve for the potential filtration of fake news and conspiracy theories.

## **6. New opportunities for the CSOs**

Asked about what new opportunities COVID-19 might have opened up to Albanian CSO, it was found that:

- i) Acceleration of digital transformation (78.1%) and reorientation of activities (59.4%) are perceived as the two main novelties.
- ii) Other minor opportunities perceived by Albanian CSO are the exploitation of internal financing opportunities (12.5%), strengthening the credibility in civil society (9.4%), increasing CSO impact on society (9.4%), and strengthening CSO advocacy (6.3%).
- iii) Finally, a moderate majority of 65.6% of CSO feel optimistic about the future of Civil Society in Albania, in contrast to 34.4% who express their pessimism and skepticism about the perspective of Albanian Civil Society and CSO.

## **Conclusion**

This study showed that COVID-19 Pandemic has had, among other things, a negative impact on the organizational, operational and financial dimensions of Albanian CSOs. Based on the results of the study, the direct and indirect consequences are:

- i) the restrictions in staff movements,
- ii) the postponement or cutting of projects and other activities, in particular of face- to-face activities,
- iii) the losses in CSO finances and the delays in funds allocation,

iv) the consolidation of online meetings and training as the main channel of communication.

Even though CSO's work was apparent and more recognizable to public opinion and might also offer a more reliable role to Albanian society, described by the extreme polarization, they still remain weak. This can be illustrated with the duality of the results when the CSOs were asked about the role of political polarization in their operational performance.

Political polarization is not the only element/consequence that the Albanian CSOs are vulnerable and weak. The vulnerability of Albanian CSO can also be explained by the passive role that the Albanian government and other institutions in Albania applied with regard to CSOs during the pandemic, for example their exclusion in any anti-Covid package or supported financially by the government. Furthermore, there was no attempt to improve the relations of CSOs with local institutions, media and Ombudsman. Likewise, COVID-19 had a negative impact on the cooperation of CSO with the European Union, international organizations and other countries' agencies. Joint projects and activities with these actors have remained on paper or their implementation has temporarily stopped.

Based on the results and answers taken from the data gathering, it can be concluded that there exists an awkward situation concerning democracy, even though the freedom of speech remains consolidated in its great part. There exists a fundamental conflict about the relationship between the Civil Society Organizations that are trying to implement and push for an agenda that is based on liberal discourse and includes representative democracy and in the other hand a balkanized government engaged in practices that are not fully understandable and transformable by the society and the Organizations themselves. This problem shall take a longer time to be fully resolved institutionally in Albania. This refers to the weak representation that the CSOs have in the political processes that limited the impact that their recommendations have to political elites. Additionally, it seems that the spread of conspiracy theories has increased during the pandemic, with CSO not to have contributed enough in filtering the fake news and disinformation and the real news. In other words, the CSOs, either by themselves or supported by other actors, have not undertaken any initiative that might serve for

the potential filtration of fake news and conspiracy theories. Online communication and acceleration of digital transformation in general appear to continue to be the main challenges faced by CSO the day after COVID-19.

Despite the difficulties mentioned above, Albanian Civil Society Organizations are optimistic about the perspective of Civil Society in their country.

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