



Center for Comparative and International Studies (CCIS) - Annual Report 2022

Qendra për Studime të Krahasuara dhe Ndërkombëtare (QSKN)

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1. Introduction

Mission & Focus Areas

CCIS is dedicated to advancing sustainable development, good governance, youth engagement, human rights, and social innovation across Albania and the Western Balkans. Our work emphasizes creating impactful and research-driven initiatives that strengthen civil society, foster interdisciplinary cooperation, and promote regional collaboration for meaningful change.

2. Summary of Achievements in 2022

In 2022, CCIS launched multiple projects in partnership with national and international organizations, targeting diverse fields such as education, cultural heritage, youth advocacy, and community development. Through collaborative efforts and strategic programs, CCIS continued to address Albania's and the region's critical issues, fostering an environment of sustainable growth and social inclusion.

3. Project Overview

Project Name: *University to Society Innomediaries in Albania: Co-Production of Knowledge and Research that Matters*

Funding: Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education Program (European Union)

Lead Partner: Mesdheu Center

Partnership: 11 organizations from Albania, Italy, Serbia, and Germany, including universities, SMEs, start-ups, NGOs, CSOs, public bodies, and media

Duration: 2021-2023

Summary:

The higher education sector is crucial for Albania's development and its European integration. This project aims to establish an enabling higher education environment that facilitates university-society collaboration, generating knowledge and research applicable to local and European contexts. Through the Knowledge Transfer and Innovation Brokerage unit (USIA), higher education institutions (HEIs) in

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Albania will be linked to business, government, civil society, and media. This initiative also promotes best practices, a Quadruple Helix network, and online platforms for continuous collaboration.

Objectives:

1. **Strengthen HEI capacities** through USIA to support impactful knowledge co-production.
2. **Develop a Quadruple Helix Network** to foster collaboration between academia and external stakeholders.

CCIS Role: CCIS leads Work Package 7, focused on Quality Assurance, ensuring the project's success and alignment with Erasmus+ guidelines.

Project Name: CheeseCult - Cheese Route for Rural Tourism Development

Funding: Interreg IPA II Greece-Albania Programme 2014-2020 through European Union and National Funds of Greece and Albania

Lead partner: Department of Agriculture - University of Ioannina

Partners: Universities, agricultural organizations, local institutions from Greece and Albania

Objective: To leverage the dairy sector in cross-border regions for cultural heritage and rural tourism. Outputs include cheese analysis, GIS-based route mapping, and the establishment of training programs and exhibitions, supporting sustainable tourism.

CCIS Role: design and conduct research to capitalize the CB area's agri-food focus on dairy production in Albania South region, and incorporate it to local sustainable tourism on a viable development plan for the regions involved.

Duration: 2020-2022

Project Name: Youth involvement in a constructive dialogue: Communist Past in Contemporary Western Balkan" (YOU-WB)

Funding: Europe for Citizens Program

Lead partner: Center for Comparative and International studies

Partners: Center Science and Innovation for Development, Mesdheu Center, Center for Change Management (North Macedonia), PERIPLI (Italy), PSF (France)

Objective: Encourages youth dialogue on the communist past's impact on Western Balkan societies. Workshops have engaged youth, academics, and activists in discussions on the effects of Albania's communist history and transitional justice.

Duration: 2021-2022

Project Name: Citizen Engagement Days - Youth Policy in the Mediterranean

Event: AJCM Festival in Marseille

Lead partner: AJCM and Foundation of Mediterranean Citizens

Objective: Participation in lectures and debates on youth engagement in policy and decision-making in the Mediterranean. Topics included environmental policy, gender equality, and youth mobility.

CCIS role: CCIS - acting as Tirana Pole of FACM organize the festival day with youth in Albania

Duration: January-June 2022

Project Name: Women in STEM Empowerment

Partners: SCiDEV, NAW-STEM (Network of Albanian Women in STEM)

Objective: Promotes gender equality in STEM fields by supporting the inclusion and visibility of women through skills development and engagement initiatives.

CCIS role: work with women empowerment and we support partners like SCiDEV in their innovative endeavours.

Duration: May-June 2022

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Project Name: Prevention of social disintegration through art and crafts

Funding: Erasmus+ Key Activity 2 "Strategic Partnerships for adult education

Lead Partner: Bulgarskagordost Foundation, Bulgaria

Objective: Promotes social inclusion through arts and crafts by engaging women artisans from vulnerable communities in Albania in a program that encourages creativity and non-formal learning.

CCIS role: A selected group of women artisans from Albania, part of women entrepreneur group supported during many years from CCIS and SHPGAZ, participated in the short-term training on methods and techniques of art and crafts, suitable for non-formal learning, social activation and social inclusion

Duration: 2021-2022

Project Name: We SIGN for JOBS - Employment for Deaf Youth

Funding: USA Embassy - Democracy Commission Small Grants Program

Lead partner: Center for comparative and international Studies

Partners: ANAD

Objective: Advocacy and employment support for the deaf community in Albania, targeting 120-150 youth across 12 districts. CCIS and ANAD are working to simplify employment processes and foster business partnerships for concrete employment outcomes.

Duration: 2021-2022

Project Name: E-Integrity: Digital Communication in E-Democracy

Event: Integrity Week in Albania 2022

Objective: Promotes digital communication as a tool for democratic engagement and accountability. A roundtable discussion was held with students and civil society on the role of ICT in enhancing civic participation.

CCIS role: facilitation of one of the working groups

Project Name: From word to action – Activism for youth work through innovation and creativity”

Funding: National Youth Agency, Albania

Lead Partner: SCiDEV

Partners: CCIS and ESN

Objective: Empowers youth in Tirana, Korça, and Shkodra to engage in community advocacy and innovation through capacity-building workshops and a strategic communication campaign.

CCIS role: engage young people in a “Word to Action” campaign to solve concrete problems of their community with a focus on youth work by advocating local institutions, raising public awareness, and creating models of integrity through the application of knowledge from the training program.

Duration: 2021- 2022

Project Name: Youth Forum: Youth Initiatives for Improved Interurban Transportation in Tirana

Event: Youth Forum on Interurban Transportation

Objective: This youth forum brought together stakeholders and youth activists to discuss and advocate for improved interurban transportation solutions in Tirana. The initiative aims to foster youth involvement in local government decision-making and address specific transportation challenges faced by the community.

CCIS role: community advocacy the presentation of the youth initiative

Duration: May 2022

Project Name: Culture of Memory and the European Future of Albanian Youth

Funding: National Youth Congress, in partnership with the Municipality of Tirana

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Program Affiliation: Tirana European Youth Capital 2022

Lead partner: Center for Comparative and International Studies (CCIS)

Objectives: Promote dialogue among youth activists at the national and regional levels on the legacy of communist regimes in the Western Balkans. Facilitate reflection spaces on historical events through a culture of memory. Highlight the EU's role in developing a common European identity.

Duration: 2022-2023

4. Impact

Beneficiaries:

In 2022, CCIS's initiatives reached a diverse range of participants, including youth, women artisans, deaf youth, and academia-industry stakeholders. Over 500 individuals benefited directly from CCIS's activities, gaining skills, employment opportunities, or platforms for community advocacy.

Notable Results:

- Created pathways for youth-led community advocacy and employment.
- Enhanced public engagement in democratic processes through digital platforms.
- Supported the professional inclusion of deaf youth, with 120-150 participants across Albania.
- Empowered women in STEM and artisan fields through dedicated training and networking.

5. Financial Summary

Funding Sources:

Major funding sources included Erasmus+, Interreg IPA, Europe for Citizens, and USA Embassy Democracy Commission, totaling approximately €100,000.

Fund Allocation:

- **Programs:** 75% (project activities, trainings, advocacy)
- **Operations:** 15% (administrative support, logistics)
- **Research & Development:** 10% (program enhancement, data analysis)

6. Challenges & Next Steps

Challenges:

- Navigating financial and logistical constraints in rural outreach.
- Sustaining youth engagement in a rapidly shifting digital environment.
- Ensuring broad community participation amidst limited resources.

Focus Areas for Next Year:

- Expand participatory governance research and digital democracy initiatives.
- Further youth-led entrepreneurship and innovation programs.
- Strengthen cross-border cooperation for sustainable development and tourism.
- Address emerging human rights issues linked to technology and climate change.

7. Acknowledgments

Special thanks to our funders, partners, and supporters, including the Erasmus+ Program, Interreg IPA, Europe for Citizens, USA Embassy, and the National Youth Congress, whose support has been vital in achieving our mission.

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