

ANNUAL REPORT

2021

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Executive Summary

In 2021, Zajecar Initiative continued to learn from the implementation of its small grants programs, developing further own grantmaking capabilities and improving the structure of the programs. 16 associations and informal groups were supported in total in 2021. ZI is the biggest local grantmaking organization in Serbia today, demonstrating grantmaking capacity with more than \$250,000 granted to 200 projects. Besides Youth in Motion and ZIman Youth Fund, in 2021, ZI implemented new grant scheme RE:Covid, targeting specifically associations that are dealing with marginalized groups. Also, ZI continued its Vital Neighborhoods program, seeking to support residents of different neighborhoods in Zajecar to improve their community. Finally, ZI launched a new program, titled „GreenStock“. Through this program, Zajecar Initiative will support at least 5 CSOs and informal groups dealing with environment to implement mini projects in their local communities. In 2021, ZI implemented 3 targeted trainings with prospective applicants within the GreenStock program.

Zajecar Initiative intensified the series of public discussions streamed on the Facebook page of the Youth Center Zajecar. Due to measures related to COVID-19 pandemic, ZI was not able to have audience at these discussions. 28 streamed discussions were organized, attracting an extensive number of community members that have been watching these discussions on Facebook, participating with the comments that moderator was reading.

Government's measures related to COVID-19 pandemic majorly influenced the work of the Youth Center, again preventing ZI to start the winter season. Thus, ZI did not open the Youth Center following the end of summer season in September 2021. However, this summer season was on the best since the opening of the Center's summer garden in 2019. ZI organized more than 37 live events from June to September in the summer garden, including live performances some of the most famous bands in Serbia. One of the most important achievements of ZI in 2021 period is a further increase in the revenues of Youth Center's café during summer months, comparing to the previous summer season.

ZI finally launched the School Elections program after the school lockdown in the spring of 2020 that prevented the kick off of the program. Four highschools in total (Zajecar Gymnasium, Majdanpek Gymnasium, Economical School in Bor and Gymnasium in Cuprija) were supported through an open call to implement the elections for the Parliament President in their school.

Finally, Zajecar Initiative continued providing support to its Step Forward Community Foundation by building its technical capacities, assisting with program activities and sharing necessary resources with it. The Foundation established and successfully promoted the Urgent Community Fund. More than 250.000 RSD was raised within this fund in 2021, mainly through direct donations of individuals and companies, donation boxes and online donations.

Major Activities Implemented in 2021 and Achievements

Grantmaking

Youth in Motion program and Zlman Youth Fund

Priorities of the Youth in Motion program and Zlman Youth Fund did not undergo any changes comparing to the previous years.

Youth in Motion:

- Promotion of the democratic values and citizens' rights and freedoms among high-school students;
- Development of critical thinking of young people;
- Education of high-school students about democratic values, processes and institutions;
- Development of democratic culture and inclusive participation in high-schools;
- Enhancing youth activism and
- Raising awareness about specific problems and negative social phenomena in the community.

Zlman Youth Fund:

- Solving of concrete problems in a community, gathering other young people as activists;
- Pointing out community problems and negative phenomenon and promoting solutions;
- Enhancing youth activism and youth participation in a community related to the challenges that young people are facing with and
- Promotion of accountability and transparency at the local level.

The original deadline for the programs was extended to 15 January 2021, due to schools' lockdown. This year, Zajecar Initiative introduced on-line application forms available at Zlman's website (www.ziman.rs) for all programs. Application forms and the Guidelines for Applicants, including eligibility and selection criteria, and other useful information for both programs were also available at this website. ZI also sent a circular mail to all high-schools and organizations from the Timok region, inviting them to apply and providing relevant information about the programs. All major news Internet portals in Eastern Serbia published the information about these calls, while the calls were also distributed via relevant Facebook pages.

Youth in Motion

Due to strict Government's measures related to COVID-19 pandemic, ZI team did not organized live presentations of the programs. Instead, ZI has organized 2 online presentations.

By the deadline ZI received 4 project proposals from for the Youth in Motion program. Received application forms were fully completed.

Parliament	Project Title	Municipality
Biotechnology School "Šumatovac"	'The Parliament We Want'	Municipality of Aleksinac
Gymnasium 'Mile Arsenijevic Bandera'	Immunisation of Misinformation	Majdanpek
Gymnasium 'Bora Stankovic'	Facing Up!	Bor
Gymnasium	Youth is in Government	Zajecar

ZI team organized the online pre-selection meeting on 23 February 2021, instead of the seminar, as it was not possible to organize any live event in this period due to government's restrictions. Members of all parliaments that have applied, participated in this meeting. This meeting provided a space to members of the parliaments to present their projects and fine-tune their proposals according to the comments and ideas of other participants. 11 students participated in this online meeting. All submitted project proposals were approved by ZI team.

Brief Description of Supported Projects:

**Gymnasium "Bora Stanković", City of Bor
'Facing Up!'**

The Parliament of Gymnasium 'Bora Stankovic' from Bor sought to develop critical thinking of fellow students and enable them to learn more about politics and democracy. The parliament organized a simulation of a National Parliament's session on the basis of carefully designed scenario. Participating high-school students were divided into several mock political parties and were acting according to individual biographies that they received in advance. There were two moderators, who took care of the simulation's flow. This simulation was followed by a debating tournament that also involved students of other Bor high-schools. Teams of 4 students competed in debating skills and argumentation, focusing on burning social and political topics in the country and the region. The parliament designed Debating Rulebook that was available to all participating students.

**Biotechnology School 'Šumatovac'
'The Parliament We Want'**

The aim of this project was to encourage participation of students of the Biotechnology School from Aleksinac in Students Parliament and engage them in dealing with important issues concerning their position and quality of school life. Parliament members designed, filmed and edited a video that explained the importance of active participation of students, the roles of the parliament and the opportunity to get involved to high-school student in a creative way. The video was shared through Facebook and YouTube.

Gymnasium 'Mile Arsenijević – Bandera'

'Immunisation of Misinformation'

Members of the Gymnasium "Mile Arsenijević – Bandera" from Majdanpek sought to respond to the growing infodemic – spread of false or misleading information in digital and physical environments during COVID-19 outbreak, through a series of highly creative activities. This project aimed to educate citizens, particularly young people, to recognize fake information and to critically rethink and analyze information spread by various media outlets.

The project included three sets of activities: Prevention, Vaccination and Treatment. Through the prevention part, the parliament was making masks and visors that protect from misinformation and false news and delivering them to citizens. Through the Vaccination segment, the parliament was educating citizens about the phenomenon of infodemic and ways to protect themselves from it through lectures and workshops. Finally, the parliament used a theatre play - a cocktail of cultural and artistic vitamins – to treat those who have been already infected.

Gymnasium Zajecar *'Youth is in Government'*

Parliament of Zajecar Gymnasium designed and implemented an extensive simulation at the level of whole school related to the establishment of real government in the parliament. The parliament invited students to take one of many roles and participate in this simulation. According to the simulation scenario that has been drafted, there were five imaginary parties seeking to form a winning coalition and establish a government. Imaginary parties were of different ideologies and programs and were seeking to form a coalition with like-minded parties within this simulation. There were also several advisors and moderators that took care of simulation to run smoothly. Before taking part in this simulation, participants attended 3 workshops: 1) Political Parties and Ideologies; 2) Media Freedom and 3) Independent Judiciary. Participants were also invited to present their experience from this simulation by designing special posters that were delivered to all high-schools in Zajecar. With this project, Gymnasium parliament aimed to introduce fellow students with democratic processes in the country and encourage them to use their voting right when turn 18.

Zlman's Youth Fund

During the application period, Zajecar Initiative offered consultations to prospective applicants related to application procedures and documents. Consultations were provided to 7 organizations.

By the deadline for applications, Zajecar Initiative had received a total of 16 concept notes:

Organization	Project Title	Municipality
CSO 'REAB'	Demos - What are my Civil Rights and Duties?	Bor
Scouts Squad 'Đorđe Simeonović'	Return to Nature	Zajecar

Association of Roma Women 'Nada'	Distance - One on One Online	Aleksinac
Youth Center Bor	Democracy for You	Bor
CSO EDEN	Help, don't humiliate	Kladovo
CSO 'Children's Centre'	Test for Democracy – COVID19	Zaječar
Creative Studio 'Road Sign'	Release Your Voice	Kladovo
Creative Association 'Nego'	Look at the Future Responsibly 2	Negotin
Student Organization Paraćin	Engaged Youth Theatre Play and Discussion - In Good and Bad	Paracin
Timok Youth Center	Invisible City	Zajecar
Center for Creative Development	Let's put points over "I"	Knjazevac
Timok Culutral Club	Democratia	Zajecar
Association of Women 'Vredne Vlajne'	Think With Your Head	Rudna Glava (Majdanpek)
Web Team 030	Don't lie to me, man!	Bor
New Alternative	Filter Out the Noise	Boljevac
Association for Cerebral Palsy and Polio	We are Here, as Well – Promotion of the Participation of Young People with Disabilities in the Decision-Making Processes at the Local Level	Zajecar

Zajecar Initiative has shortlisted 12 project proposals in total and invited applicants to submit full project proposals, providing comments and recommendations for possible improvements. All shortlisted organizations have submitted the full proposals by 5 February 2021. Finally, ZI team have decided to support following 6 projects within ZIman Youth Fund edition 2020/21.

New Alternative ***'Filter Out the Noise'***

New Alternative sought to increase the level of media literacy and capacity of young people to recognize fake news and misinformation as well as to enable them to learn techniques that will help you avoid it. The primary target group of this project were high-school and university students.

During the period of three months, New Alternative organized two key set of activities: The School of Media Literacy and the Festival of Investigative and Socially-Engaged Documentary Film. These activities also helped participants to learn how to 'filter' information, i.e. to separate relevant, true and factual information from false and irrelevant and to understand the relevance of media freedom for a good society. Representatives of the CSO New Alternative believe that the problem of young people's apathy and their non-participation in the public sphere could be addressed by strengthening media literacy and creating greater "resistance" of young people to the inevitable media noise brought by commercial media and social networks.

Timok Youth Center ***'Invisible City'***

Timok Youth Center sought to address the problem of brain drain within this project - the mass departure of young people from smaller communities to live and work abroad, mainly caused by corruption, poverty and inability to find employment in their city and country. The project used arts to communicate these problems that seem invisible even to young people, particularly high-school students population. In this way, Timok Youth Center planned to raise visibility of brain drain and related problems not only to young people, but also to official institutions and to offer possible solutions.

The organization gathered 10 young people within this project, providing them space to present invisibility of poverty, invisibility of unemployment and invisibility of corruption through murals and canvases that were located across the city.

Center for Creative Development

Let's put points over "I"

Center for Creative Development aimed to encourage young people to present their needs and problems to decision makers and to participate in the decision-making processes. Through this project, the Center was working with a group of high-school students to raise visibility of their needs and influence local authorities to launch a process of developing and adopting new local youth strategy (the previous one has expired in 2015).

Through video content, that was designed and made by project participants and a series of streets actions, young people were able to express their views and key needs and issues they are facing with. Center for Creative Development also helped participants to draft a document with the most important recommendations for improving the quality of life of young people in Knjaževac and to submit it to the local authorities.

The Association for Cerebral Palsy and Polio of Zajecar

'We are Here, as Well – Promotion of the Participation of Young People with Disabilities in the Decision-Making Processes at the Local Level'

Young people are generally unfamiliar with the electoral process, not taking their right to vote and the possibility to engaged in local decision-making seriously. Especially young people with disabilities, as well as people with disabilities (PWDs) are not involved in the political life of the local community at all. There are no representatives of young people with disabilities in any political party or local government. A large number of PWDs do not even exercise their right to vote, and the parties do not take into account this group, which is estimated at about 12% of the total population.

This project focused on the inclusion of young people with disabilities in public and political life in their local community level and their engagement in the electoral process and civic actions.

The participants passed through a public advocacy training to acquire necessary skills that will help them to reach out to local authorities and political parties in order to present them problems of young people with disabilities. Following the training, participants

made and presented to local councilors and political parties a proposal on the establishment of a special body that would deal with the issues of people with disabilities.

On the other hand, project activities allowed young people gaining understanding of the voting process and the right to vote. The organization was using the interactive comics (electronic version for the visually impaired) that presented the electoral process through the eyes of young people, including the special conditions for people with disabilities (e.g. voting from home, the accessibility of the polling station etc.).

Web Team Bor 030

'Don't lie to me, man!'

The association Web Team "Bor 030" teamed up with CSO "NG media" from the municipality of Negotin to educate young people about misinformation, fake news, hasty media reactions, "click bait" (misleading) headlines and conspiracy theories. The digital age has brought the possibility that anyone who has access to the Internet can present any inaccurate and unfounded information and spread it rapidly to a large number of people. In the same time, these CSOs aimed to bring the concept of media closer to young people, to raise the level of understanding of the role of media and media culture, and to contribute to the development of media literacy.

Within this project, a group of young people, aged 15 to 30 from Bor and Negotin took part in a series of interactive workshops. Moreover, they had an opportunity to create own media content on various social topics such as problems faced by young people, youth and democracy, identification, rights and freedoms of citizens, etc. and to share it across various digital channels.

Student Organization Paraćin

'Engaged Youth Theatre Play and Discussion - In Good and Bad'

Student Organization Paraćin designed a theatre play in order to address the problem of gender inequality and the position of women in various aspects of public life and the ways in which they are treated, that can very often be of a misogynistic, sexist and discriminatory nature. COVID 19 pandemic has additionally contributed to the increase of these negative phenomenon.

There was a total of 6 performances in various municipalities/cities of the eastern and central Serbia during the project. After each performance, a panel discussion was organized that enabled audience to interact and participate. The project was primarily intended for young people up to the age of 35.

Re:COVID Program

Zajecar Initiative announced the call for proposals for the Re:COVID program on 15 September 2021. The aim of the program was to support CSOs from Zajecar to address the burning needs of various vulnerable groups in the community more effectively during the Covid-19 crisis. Within this program, up to \$2,500 from the project budget was available per project, for at least 3 projects. Projects had a maximum duration of 3 months. Submission of proposals was opened until 15 October 2022. Application forms

and the Guidelines for Applicants, including eligibility and selection criteria, as well as specific requirements and other useful information for both programs were available at Zajecar Initiative's website (http://www.zainicijativa.org/rs/novosti/10/2021/09/15/re_covid-konkurs---podrska-lokalnim-organizacijama-civilnog-drustva-iz-zajecara.html). ZI also sent a circular mail to all CSOs from Zajecar, inviting them to apply and providing relevant information regarding the program. All major Internet news portals from Zajecar published the information about these calls, while the calls were also distributed via relevant Facebook pages. Zajecar Initiative used sponsored posts on Facebook to additionally promote the call. Zajecar Initiative also made a short promotional video about the program. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZNPXg66nSyA>). This promotional video was distributed through Facebook and You Tube. By the deadline for applications, Zajecar Initiative had received a total of 5 project proposals. On 22 October, ZI team met and selected 3 proposals to be within the Re:COVID program: The Association for the Support to the People with Cerebral Palsy, CSO RIME and Association for Pregnant Women, Parents and Kids (TRK).

In order to strengthen fundraising and outreach skills of the awarded organizations to raise funds from individuals more effectively, "Re:COVID Program" allowed ZI subgrantees to plan and launch real crowdfunding campaigns, using the website of the Step Forward Foundation. Awarded organizations participated in three-module live training, aiming to assist them to develop capacities for planning and implementing fundraising/crowdfunding campaigns. The modules took place in the Zajecar Youth Center.

Awarded organizations have successfully completed their crowdfunding campaigns:

- The Association for the Support to the People with Cerebral Palsy collected 46,000 RSD to buy 30 New Year's packages for their members.
- RIME Citizens' Association sought to collect funds to purchase paper cutting machine for the work engagement of young people with mental disabilities. Although Rime did not raise all funds needed to buy this machine, Naša Kuća from Belgrade donated them a second-hand machine that beneficiaries of Rime started using during the project.
- Center for Pregnant Women, Parents and Kids (TRK) raised 36.000 RSD to purchase 50 hygiene packages and deliver them to pregnant women and young mothers. Originally, this association was raising funds for purchasing a separate washing machine for the Department of Gynecology of the Zajecar Health Center, but they change the aim of their Crowdfunding campaign after a misunderstanding with the Center's director.

Awarded projects were fully completed. Detailed description of implemented projects is available below.

Citizens' Association Rime – 'Youth work training'. CSO Rime aimed to promote an inclusive model of independent living for young people with mental disabilities in the community by providing a new type of support for their access to the labor market through social entrepreneurship. Rime actively involved 15 young people with mental disabilities and more than 50 of their parents in this project. This CSO organized 1-day

training titled 'Launching a solidarity cooperative', and a study visit to the social enterprise 'Our House from Belgrade, while participants were able to apply skills gained by using a paper cutting machine that was donated to Rime within the project. Finally, Rime also made a promotional movie about social entrepreneurship and promoted it across social networks.

The Association for the Support to the People with Cerebral Palsy (CDP) – 'Lend a Hand'. CDP sought to provide additional support to people with disabilities and their families from the city of Zajecar and nearby villages, during the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Activists of this association have established the Self-help Group that organized visits to its beneficiaries to deliver them hygiene packages and survey them about critical needs during COVID related crisis. They have also established the call center to respond to the urgent needs of association's beneficiaries and organized 2 meetings between beneficiaries and local health care workers.

Center for Pregnant Women, Parents and Kids (TRK) – 'For a safer pregnancy in the time of COVID-19'. The aim of the project was to increase the availability of verified information related to COVID-19 infection, which affect pregnant women and mothers, as well as to raise awareness of pregnant and lactating women about protection and vaccinations. TRK implemented 2 podcasts, involving experts in this area, extensive social media campaign and a series of street actions when its activists delivered info brochures and promotional packages to mothers.

Vital Neighborhoods Program

In 2021, ZI continued challenging citizens of Zajecar neighborhoods by inviting them to gather, present their idea and engage around specific local issues. The program and a public call were promoted through posters, leaflets, radio stations and social media. Promotional video and radio jingle were produced and distributed through the local radio stations and social media. Neighborhood groups were able to apply online by filling out a simple questionnaire. ZI team has selected three best ideas on the basis of their relevance for community. Selected groups had up to 900 euros (administered by ZI on a cost-reimbursable basis) to address identified issue(s).

The initiatives of citizens, supported through the Vital Neighborhood proved to be an effective vehicle for encouraging activism and participation of citizens. Firstly, these initiatives succeeded to involve significant number of residents (66) that actively participated in the implementation of planned activities. Further, supported initiatives additionally motivated citizens to be active in their local community – residents of the building in Bore Milica street that is next to the building, which residents have been supported to implement proposed initiative, launch own neighborhood action aimed to renovate building's surrounding, using own resources. Also, thanks to the media coverage of the supported initiatives, ZI office received calls from 7 citizens that expressed their interest to initiate similar actions in their neighborhoods.

Vital Neighborhood Program also proved to be very effective for engaging those people that traditional activities would not be able to reach out to. Simply, many people do not see themselves participating in other community initiatives, but are willing to engage in

their neighborhood. Such community experience is very important as it is able to encourage citizens to engage with other local issues as well.

GreenStock Program

Within the Greenstock Program, in 2021, a detailed mapping of citizen associations and informal groups from the area of Timočka Krajina that deal with the environment has been done. A total of 23 entities that deal directly with this topic have been identified, as well as their contacts. All associations and groups have been contacted by the Zajecar initiative. On that occasion, they were given basic information about the GreenStock - Green East project, as well as an invitation to participate in this project. Eleven associations and informal groups took part in this program.

During this program, in 2021, 3 one-day training sessions were held for representatives of participating citizens' associations and informal groups from Timočka Krajina. Thanks to the more favorable epidemiological situation, the trainings were conducted live. Each training lasted for 4 hours on average.

Training 1: Struggle for a better environment in local communities - legal framework

The first training was organized on December 11, 2021 in the premises of the Zaječar Youth Center. A total of 9 representatives from 6 associations/informal groups from Timočka Krajina participated. The training was conducted by lawyers Luka and Sreten Đorđević from the law office of the same name from Valjevo. The law office of Sreten Đorđević mainly represents clients in proceedings with an element of environmental protection. They also implement various projects aimed at training legal trainees in the field of environmental protection law and work to create the first generation of environmental lawyers in the Republic of Serbia. They cooperate with a large number of domestic and foreign non-governmental organizations that operate in the field of environmental protection and human rights.

On this occasion, Luka and Sreten Đorđević presented the most important processes with an element of environmental protection in which they participated, key legal mechanisms and steps in the fight for the environment, as well as various obstacles and challenges that individuals, groups and organizations may encounter during their activities in local communities.

The second part of the training was devoted to specific questions of the participants regarding their activities in the field of environmental protection. This part turned out to be the most important, especially due to the inability of the participants to find adequate legal advice and help and expertise in their communities.

Training 2: Activism on social networks

The second training session was organized on December 18, 2021, in the hall of the Srbija-Tis hotel in Zaječar. A total of 10 representatives from 8 associations/informal groups from Timočka Krajina participated. Ivan Bildi, one of the leading digital marketing experts in the country, who, in addition to actively working with the business sector, has rich experience

in working with activists and representatives of civil society organizations, appeared as a trainer.

The training mainly focused on the 2 social networks that the participants use the most - Facebook and Instagram, but YouTube and Tik Tok were also discussed. During the training, Ivan together with the participants analyzed the way in which the present associations and groups use social networks in their work, in order to then provide concrete advice and recommendations for improving their communication through digital channels and greater engagement of the citizens who follow them. Also, this was an opportunity for the participants to get answers to numerous questions regarding the use of the mentioned social networks.

Training 3: Coalition building and problem mapping

The third training was organized on December 25, 2021, also in the hall of the Srbija-Tis hotel in Zaječar. A total of 12 representatives from 10 associations/informal groups from Timočka Krajina participated. The trainer was a consultant from Belgrade, Igor Jojkić, who has extensive experience in the work and consulting of civil society organizations in the country, but also in the region.

During the first part of the training, the trainer went through the basic rules and steps in forming coalitions and partnerships with the participants. Then, possible concrete partnerships between organizations and informal groups participating in this project were identified based on similar problems they deal with, as well as geographical proximity.

In the second part of the training, the participants and the trainer looked at the topics and specific problems that the organizations and groups from which the participants come from deal with, as well as the methods for analyzing these problems. During the exercise, the participants used the problem tree method to analyze more deeply the environmental problems they are dealing with in their communities. As a result of this training segment, specific topics were identified that the participants would deal with in the upcoming mini-projects.

Democracy Governance

School Elections

Four school parliaments in total applied to receive support for organizing elections for the president of School Parliament in their school in 2021:

Parliament	Municipality
Gymnasium Ćuprija	Ćuprija
Gymnasium 'Mile Arsenijevic Bandera'	Majdanpek
High School of Economics and Trade	Bor
Gymnasium	Zajecar

ZI decided to support all parliaments that have applied for participation in the program. ZI invited school professors, who are in charge of student parliaments in their schools to attend a meeting that was held online of 24 February 2021. This meeting enabled ZI team and school professors to discuss and agree on key details related to organizing school elections: regulations, roles and timetable. Candidates for the Parliament President proved to be very creative and active during their campaigns. Before the start of the campaigns, candidates received the training in campaign planning. The campaigns in schools took part in April – May period. Following the end of this cycle of the program, ZI made a short documentary on implemented activities.

Democratic Youth Club

In 2021, Zajecar Initiative kicked off new youth-related program, titled “Democratic Youth Club”. So far, ZI organized 8 school presentations of the program (Zajecar, Knjazevac, Boljevac, Sokobanja, Bor, Negotin, Kladovo and Majdanpek) in order to invite students to apply for participation.

Citizens Forums

In 2021, ZI continued gathering citizens in Zajecar within the Citizens Forum that was established in 2020. Citizens Forum consists of the citizens of different backgrounds and professions that have demonstrated personal integrity in the community. The Forum aims to monitor the work of local government, benchmark it against agreed criteria contained in the Index of Democratic Local Governance (Local Democracy Index) and provide concrete and specific recommendations for more responsive, participatory and accountable local governance. Such recommendations are publicly promoted as well as directly sent to the City Council. In 2021, the Forum met 7 times and involved 9 people in total.

Public Discussions

In 2021, ZI organized 5 series of public discussions in its Youth Center. Because of the government’s COVID-19 related measures, these were only streamed to Youth Center’s Facebook page and held without audience.,

Vital Discussion Series

ZI continued implementing public debates involving citizens to discuss key community issues, as identified by the Vital Signs research. In 2021, Zajecar Initiative organized 4 public discussions in its Youth Center that were focused on Vital Signs themes / issues that proved to be the most relevant for the citizens. Discussions were moderated by Danijela Nedeljkovic, local journalist and lasted for 120 minutes at maximum, including at least 45 minutes of Q&A. These discussions dealt with following topics: Gitarijada Festival (11 November 2021, involving music critic Petar Janjatović), Stone Pit in Mali Izvor (1 December 2021, involving Slobodan Petrović, resident of Mali Izvor; Nebojša Milovanović, biologist and president of the association "Moja Resava", and Dušan Stojadinović, member of the Board of Directors of the "Moja Resava") association and traffic safety (15 December 2021, involving Goran Pujić – traffic engineer, traffic technical and court expert and Igor Velić - traffic engineer and president of the association "Sigurne Staze"). The final

vital discussion took place on 27 December 2021 under the name "A Year of Challenges", involving 2 famous political analysts – Boban Stojanović and Mija Lakićević.

Three special editions of the Vital Discussions were dedicated to the local elections in Zajecar that took place on March 28, 2021. Zajecar Initiative invited representatives of political parties' local branches to present their local policies and address questions of citizens. Discussions were held on 21, 23 and 24 March 2021. Also, ZI were covering the election night through a streamed discussion that had more than 4700 15-second views and total of 44.640 minutes watched! In peak, there was a maximum of 423 viewers, much more than any show broadcasted on local TV station. 203 questions were raised at this occasion through Facebook comments. The Election Night program included discussion with local journalists and live interviews with candidates, conducted in various parties' local headquarters. ZI believes that citizens have to be familiar with stands and policies of local parties and candidates in order to be able to make informed decisions in local elections.

Vital Discussions proved to be of significant importance for shedding a light on various local problems and raising their visibility. E.g. ZI invited citizens of the village Mali Izvor near Zajecar, that have been fighting against establishment of a stone pit in their village, to participate in the Vital Discussion organized on 1 December 2021. Representatives of the CSO My Resava from Despotovac that also seek to address the problem of a stone pit in their town, joined them on the stage. Following the debate, the initiative of Mali Izvor residents gained a lot of attention in Zajecar community, resulting in more significant media coverage, support of citizens through social media and the protest that was organized on January 29, 2022. What is important to underline, it seems that local authorities gave up the idea of establishing a stone pit in Mali Izvor village due to a public pressure. Similarly, the Vital Discussion about the increasing number of car accidents, that took place on 15 December, also brought this problem to the attention of Zajecar community. Goran Pujić and Igor Velić, traffic engineers that participated in this discussion, were invited by a number of local media outlets that speak about this local problem following the discussion.

Rascivijavanje Series

The third episode of "Rascivijavanje" series was titled "Youth Activism". It was organized on March 26, 2021 and hosted Slađana Stojanović, professor of philosophy, Nikola Trajković, youth activist and Nina Petrov, youth activist and founder of Youth Fight Club. In addition to presenting their experiences regarding youth activism, the guests discussed how important it is for society to pay attention to the needs, attitudes and wishes of young people, as well as to provide support for the development of their activism, and how much the institutions in Zaječar actually do this. The guests also invited young people to contribute in different ways to their own better position in the community and presented different ways in which young people can get involved. The episode lasted 90 minutes.

'Having coffee with...' Series

As part of a new series of the streamed discussions titled "Having coffee with...", editor and host Danijela Nedeljković hosted individuals who, in different ways, had a significant

impact on life and events in the Zaječar community. In addition to discussing the guests' social engagement and their contribution, special attention was paid to current events in the city and its surroundings. The episodes lasted an average of 60 minutes, and the guests were:

Episode 1 (February 4, 2021) - Božidar Andrejić, born in Zaječar, who worked at Omladinski novine, of which he was the editor-in-chief. He was also the editor of Borba and Naša Borba. He is one of the founders and the first director of the daily newspapers Danas. He was a member of the Presidency of the Association of Journalists of Serbia and is one of the founders of the Independent Association of Journalists of Serbia (NUNS).

Episode 2 (February 11, 2021) - Goran Petrunović, the first democratic president of the Zaječar municipality, after October 5, 2000.

Episode 3 (February 25, 2021) - Vlado Madžoski, journalist, correspondent of Danas newspaper and editor of the Timočka news agency - TINA.

Episode 4 (March 29, 2021) - Marija Sebić, activist, with a long experience working with young people in Zaječar, fighting for women's rights, and supporting marginalized groups.

Reverse Series

The idea behind the "Reverse" series was to gather relevant speakers to discuss the topics and current events of importance for Eastern Serbia. A total of 6 episodes were broadcasted during 2021:

Episode 1: "Faster Than Life" (January 27, 2021). Encouraged by the increase in the number of traffic accidents, as well as the nightly rampage of arrogant drivers, the representatives of the Zaječar Initiative have dedicated the first episode of the Reverse series to traffic safety. The guests were: Vesna Rakić, traffic engineer, lecturer at the driving school; Igor Velić, traffic engineer and president of the "Sigurne staze" association, Sandra Ivanović, president of the "Ložači" motorcycle club and Saša Filipović, representative of the Zaječar Police Department.

Episode 2: "Human Cruelty Without Punishment - Animal Abuse" (February 26, 2021). The case of abuse of a dog in the very center of Zaječar was the reason for this edition of the Reverse series. Miloš Đuričić from the association BETA Zaječar spoke about how frequent such cases are, why they happen and what the court outcomes are. Gordana Milinković Sekulić, prosecutor's assistant and spokesperson of the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office in Zaječar and Živorad Lukić, psychologist of the Neuro-Psychiatric Department of the Zaječar Hospital contributed to this discussion

Episode 3: "Children in the Social Welfare System" (March 25, 2021). The videos of the „abduction“ of children based on a court decision, which appeared on social networks, shocked the public and caused numerous controversies. This topic was discussed from the legal and psychological side by Jasmina Nikolić, clinical psychologist and court expert, and Marija Jovanović, lawyer, and expert in the field of family law.

The 4th episode of "Journalism in Eastern Serbia" (March 27, 2021) hosted journalist Katarina Čivljak Golubović and journalist Branko Pešić. During this edition of the Reverse series, there was a discussion about the position of journalists in Timok Krajina, the potential pressures they are exposed to, as well as the space for unbiased reporting.

Episode 5: "Pollution problem in Eastern Serbia - What do we breathe and drink?" (March 30, 2021). The last two episodes in this season of the Reverse series dealt with one of the most burning topics in Eastern Serbia - environmental pollution. Thus, in the fifth edition, guests were Dragan Ranđelović, president of the Association of Young Researchers Bor and Toplica Marjanović, president of the program council of this association. They devoted most of their time discussing the air pollution in Bor, caused by the Chinese owner of the Mining Company Bor.

Episode 6: "Pollution problem in Eastern Serbia - Rivers in pipes" (March 31, 2021). Vojkan Stanković, environmental activist and member of the Board of Directors of the Association of Local Communities of Stara Planina, Aleksandar Kulić - environmental activist and one of the initiators of the initiative "Let's defend the Zlotska Reka!" and Zoran Janković - president and founder of the ecological association "Eko East" Bor and member of the Board of Directors and founder of the Association "Čukaru Peki" spoke for the needs of the sixth edition of the Reverse series. The focus of this episode were the rivers in eastern Serbia, primarily the Zlotska and Brestovačka rivers, which are threatened by the expansion of the Bor mine, as well as the rivers of Stara planina, which are already well known due to the struggle of the locals against the construction of mini-hydroelectric plants.

The series "Reverse" is directed and edited by Danijela Nedeljković. Episodes lasted 90 minutes on average.

COVID Info 019 series

In 2021, within COVID Info 019 program, the Zaječar initiative was seeking to provide citizens with adequate information on various aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as help them to get answers to key concerns they have about this disease through a total of 10 streamed public discussions with local doctors and health care workers.

ZI also made and broadcasted 10 episodes of the Conspirator podcast about conspiracy theories and fake news related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Youth Center Zajecar

In 2021, like in previous year, Zajecar Initiative was not able to start the winter season in its Youth Center due to strict government's measures related to COVID-19 pandemics. However, the 2021 summer season was a real success. The season started in June and ended in September. Zajecar Initiative succeeded to organize 37 live events in this period, including the live gigs of such bands as Elektricni orgazam, Bjesovi, Kanda, Kodza i Nebojsa and Artal Lili. The quality program contributed to the increased revenues of the Youth Café. What is also important to mention, ZI significantly upgraded its sound equipment in the Youth Center.

Other Outreach Activities

Solidarity Stories in the Covid Times

Zajecar Initiative teamed up with the local news portal “Glas Zajecara” (Voice of Zajecar) to promote real stories about Zajecar citizens’ solidarity during COVID-19 pandemic. Following articles were published:

The first story was about Ukrainian girl, Irena Ivanov that started sewing masks and giving them for free when it was not possible to buy masks in pharmacies and stores - <https://www.glas-zajecara.com/price-o-solidarnosti-ukrajinka-irena-ivanova-pravila-i-poklanjala-zastitne-maske-kada-ih-nije-bilo/>

The second story introduced readers with two brothers from Zajecar, Nikola and Predrag Milosevic, who are also excellent musicians. Two of them organized live-streamed guitar performances from their home that were followed by more than 100 people at the very beginning of pandemics and social distancing, bringing people closer to each other - <https://www.glas-zajecara.com/price-o-solidarnosti-predrag-i-nikola-milosevic-bucko-muzicari-velikog-srca/>

The third story involved Ugljesa Djurickovic, lawyer from Zajecar that initiated “Panadjur – Zajecar Online Market”, a Facebook group that allowed agricultural producers to sell their goods online, after the green market was closed due to local government’s COVID-19 related measures - <https://www.glas-zajecara.com/price-o-solidarnosti-ugljesa-djurickovic-osnivac-zajecarske-onlajn-pijace/>

The fourth story was about representatives of Roma community from Zajecar that work in Germany and Austria that gathered and raised funds to buy food and hygiene products during COVID-19 crisis. 150 packages in total were delivered to economically endangered families in Zajecar - <https://www.glas-zajecara.com/price-o-solidarnosti-zahvaljujuci-akciji-roma-iz-austrije-i-nemacke-150-humanitarnih-paketa-podeljeno-je-najugrozenijim-zajecarcima/>

The fifth story was dedicated to the Urgent Community Fund, established by the Foundation Step Forward - <https://www.glas-zajecara.com/od-zajecaraca-za-zajecarce-fond-za-urgentnu-pomoc-u-zajednici/>

Also, 12 news articles and related videos about the work of local institutions during the pandemic were made and published on the Glas Zaječara portal.

Social Media Campaign for the Urgent Community Fund

Zajecar Initiative implemented social media campaign to promote the Urgent Community Fund, established by the Step Forward Community Foundation in early 2021, and raise its visibility among Zajecar citizens. The campaign included a series of sponsored posts about the Fund published on both ZI and Foundation’s Facebook pages, 3 short promotional videos, published on You tube and documentary about the Fund. The documentary included stories of people who actively contributed to the Urgent Community Fund, Fund’s beneficiaries and supporters, and interviews with the representatives of Zajecar

Initiative and the Foundation Step Forward
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JhgfcxatfpY>).

Vital Signs Documentary

Over the course of 2020, ZI has conducted another round of the bi-annual Vital Signs research, which included 10 themes: Education, Health, Crime and Safety, Local Economy, Housing, Labor and Employment, Social Care and Poverty, Arts and Culture, Environment, Demographic and Democratic Governance. Findings of the 2020 Vital Signs research indicate deterioration in many areas of citizens' life in Zajecar. In 2021, ZI will sought to promote the findings of the Vital Signs 2020 research among citizens by creating a short movie about the findings of the research and share it across digital channels. Also, ZI believes that this is the most effective way to draw attention of the local decision makers, both about key issues in the community and the report's findings. The documentary has been filming from april to November 2021 and it included interviews with representatives local CSOs, institutions, local experts and journalists and archive footages.