

ST Strategy 2024-28

Organization: CDN
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Agenda item: 3. Organisational and Internal Documents

Motion text

1 VISION

2 ...Eastern Europe that is peaceful, inclusive, social, and sustainable. Eastern
3 Europe with multiparty democracy in which young people with progressive values
4 are relevant and actively engaged in civil society, politics, and decision-
5 making processes at all levels of governance.

6 MISSION

7 Our mission is to empower and support young progressive changemakers in Eastern
8 Europe, enabling them to increase their political relevance and impact. With our
9 activities and events, that include trainings, seminars, conferences, as well as
10 leveraging digital tools, platforms, and resources, we strive to equip them with
11 the necessary skills and knowledge to lead the change for more just, open, and
12 sustainable societies.

13 BACKGROUND

14 External

15 We embark this strategy period in a very different reality. The unprovoked,
16 illegal, full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation has turned the
17 world upside down and had immense complications for the globe and especially for
18 our region. Meantime, we are witnessing rise of populism and authoritarianism,
19 democratic backsliding, deliberate weakening of the institutions, attempts of
20 state capture, attacks on civil liberties, civil society, and independent media.
21 Consequently, it is increasingly difficult to be young, green, progressive, and
22 democrat in this restrictive context where activism and engagement in politics
23 is becoming more and more challenging, exhausting, and dangerous.

24 In opposition to this, we are also witnessing a growing movement actively
25 fighting to counter and challenge backlash on democracy. Young activists play a
26 vital role in this movements of resisting authoritarianism and advocating for
27 progressive policies.

28 Young people are an integral building block of the diverse coalition that drives
29 the Green and Progressive political movement in Europe. However, the gap between
30 West and East and North and South of Europe in terms of success of
31 Green/Progressive parties remain wide. While Western European Green parties have
32 made significant strides in gaining political representation and influence, the

33 same progress has been slower to materialise in the Eastern European context.
34 Nevertheless, recent years have seen the emergence of progressive political
35 movements in the region with increasing influence on the forefront for the fight
36 for democracy, equality, and sustainability.

37 Internal

38 Over the past three years, CDN has seen notable changes and developments. We
39 have worked diligently to enhance our operations by professionalising our work,
40 better organising tasks and responsibilities within the Executive Committee
41 (EC), balancing workload, and improving working conditions for staff.

42 Furthermore, we have updated our Statutes, transitioning partner organisations
43 into Member Organisations (MOs), a move aimed at fostering inclusivity, and
44 creating a more cohesive network. This shift maintains primary focus on non-EU
45 member countries while encouraging greater participation from Eastern European
46 countries within the EU. Simultaneously, we are striving to reach and include
47 more independent progressive activists, young politicians as well as relevant
48 organisations.

49 Given the restrictive nature of governments in specific Eastern European
50 countries, some of our Member Organisations face significant challenges in
51 becoming more politically engaged and operating effectively within their
52 respective nations. In recent years, numerous activists have had to relocate due
53 to these constraints. MOs that collaborate closely with local communities in
54 their respective countries constantly contend with the looming threat of
55 government intervention and limitations, stemming from the intensified scrutiny
56 on activists and NGO activities.

57 Process

58 This is the context in which this four-year strategy is being developed and
59 drafted. The process formally started at 2023 General Assembly (GA) in Warsaw
60 that included Strategic Planning Meeting (SPM) that aimed to extract ideas and
61 guidelines for the next years of operation. The event brought together
62 21 delegates from 13 Member Organisations. The SPM was led by external facilitator
63 who conducted four sessions with the aim to gather input from delegates
64 representing MOs. Sessions included SWOT analysis, understanding people,
65 political priorities, as well as resources, and action areas.

66 Taking the report from SPM into account, the Secretary General led the process
67 and together with an EC representative worked on the initial draft, which was
68 subsequently reviewed and approved by the entire Executive Committee. In the
69 second phase¹, the draft was shared with MOs and Partners with a survey to
70 gather feedback, guiding further revisions. Simultaneously, Secretary General
71 organised several meetings with stakeholders including in-person feedback
72 session during Study Session in Budapest attended by 10 participants. Based on
73 the input, Secretary General and a designated EC member further refined the
74 strategy. Finally, the Strategy Paper underwent the process of review,
75 amendments, and final adoption by Member Organisations during the 2024 General
76 Assembly.

77 SWOT LANDSCAPE

78 Leveraging Strengths: Sustaining and Amplifying Impact

79 CDN, as an organisation, possesses certain strengths that should be harnessed
80 and expanded upon to achieve its mission and vision effectively. These
81 strengths, rooted in the organisation's values and operational practices,
82 include a solid reputation built on trust, a commitment to inclusiveness, and
83 the promotion of intersectionality. CDN's diversity, both culturally and
84 geographically, adds significant value, enhancing its ability to adapt to
85 different contexts within the Eastern Europe. Furthermore, the organisation's
86 dedication to democratic principles and quality work, underpinned by a well-
87 structured network, empowers its members, and provides space for knowledge and
88 experience sharing.

89 Addressing Weaknesses: Strengthening the Foundation

90 Despite its notable strengths, CDN has encountered specific challenges over the
91 past few years. Some of MOs have exhibited instability and inactivity within the
92 network, and in their local initiatives. Motivation levels among MOs and
93 activists associated with CDN have been inconsistent. The secretariat has faced
94 recurring challenges stemming from relatively poor working conditions and issues
95 with staff well-being, along with difficulties arising from inadequate internal
96 communication tools and task division. These challenges are compounded by
97 several weaknesses, including high turnover of staff, limited impact assessment,
98 reluctance towards innovation, difficulty to reach new audiences, insignificant
99 political influence, insufficient knowledge transfer, a dearth of comprehensive
100 policies, and an absence of a dedicated social media presence. Addressing these
101 challenges and weaknesses is essential for CDN's continued growth and impact in
102 the region.

103 Using Opportunities: Embracing Strategic Advantages

104 CDN's strategic planning capitalises on emerging opportunities in the political
105 and organisational landscape. We are witnessing growing engagement of youth in
106 politics even though the methods are different from traditional ways such as
107 party or organisational membership. At the same time, there is rising Green
108 movement in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) as well as increased focus from the
109 wider Green movement in the region with aim to support progressives on the
110 ground. CDN, with its established presence and expertise, is uniquely positioned
111 to seize this moment. CDN should explore extensive partnership opportunities,
112 foster sustainable collaborations, and facilitate the exchange of experiences
113 and ideas with partners. Furthermore, embracing intersectionality and digital
114 technologies can enhance CDN's influence and reach.

115 Mitigating Threats: Safeguarding Organisational Resilience

116 To secure its future, CDN must address potential threats that could interrupt
117 its mission. These are the potential threats to successful achievement of the
118 mission: consolidation of far-right, authoritarian, and populist governments in

119 the region that create hostile environment for progressive activists; shrinking
120 space for civil society; all these accompanied with economic challenges that
121 result in demoralisation and high level of brain drain of CDN's primary target
122 group; Besides, visa and border restrictions hindering in-person events.

123 **STRATEGIC GOALS:**

124 1. Empower Progressive Changemakers

125 ...and equip activists and leaders with necessary capacities to actively engage
126 in political processes; Provide comprehensive training, political education,
127 opportunities for knowledge exchange, and utilise digital tools to foster their
128 growth, reach, and impact.

129 2. Strengthen the Network

130 ...and connect further with the existing Member Organisation as well as welcome
131 new ones. Moreover, prioritise intra-organisational growth and
132 professionalisation of CDN to enable greater and more sustainable impact.

133 3. Bring Eastern European Perspective

134 ...and cultivate a strong understanding of regional dynamics and political
135 developments in Eastern Europe. Position CDN as influential source and a
136 reference point within Green and Progressive European circles.

137 **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:**

138 1. We will Empower progressive changemakers by:

- 139 1. Developing and implementing effective training events to enhance
140 their capacities;
- 141 2. Strengthening theoretical knowledge in key subject areas (such as
142 the climate crisis, security, social justice, democracy) by
143 organising educational events such as seminars, conferences, Study
144 Sessions, as well as knowledge-sharing outputs such as publications,
145 podcasts and recordings;
- 146 3. Design and implement tailored mentoring year-long projects with
147 series of in-person and digital meetings focusing on key areas of
148 impactful and sustainable organisation.
- 149 4. Elevating attention towards 1. young members within political
150 parties who are not necessarily involved in youth wings; 2.
151 progressive activists who are not part of member organisations;
- 152 5. Collaborating with professional organisations, companies, experts,
153 and academics to support preparatory teams in creating relevant and

154 high-quality content for activities as well as deliver at least 1/4
155 of sessions during the events.

156 Overarching approach:

- 157 • Promoting Inclusivity: Ensure that all our activities are inclusive and
158 accessible to a diverse range of participants. Implement measures to
159 accommodate different backgrounds and ensure safe space;
- 160 • Ensuring intersectional approach: embed an intersectional approach into
161 all our initiatives, recognising the interconnectedness of environmental
162 issues with social justice concerns, as well as acknowledging the complex
163 interplay of personal characteristics such as race, gender, sexuality,
164 class, and ability;

165 2. We will Strengthen the Network by:

- 166 1. Evaluations and annual membership survey to gather feedback and
167 ensure relevance of upcoming activities;
- 168 2. Expanding Network Membership, particularly in countries where we
169 currently lack representation. Additionally, giving special
170 attention to the independent activists and young members of
171 progressive political parties;
- 172 3. Focusing on further Professionalisation of the organisation: improve
173 internal management, governance processes, policies, transfer of
174 knowledge and documenting.
- 175 4. Diversifying Funding Sources: Develop a fundraising strategy to
176 maximise support from Green foundations while actively seeking new
177 funding sources. Concurrently, increase attention towards small-
178 donor donations and launch fundraising campaigns.
- 179 5. Developing well-being-oriented Human Resource policies, fostering
180 skill and knowledge development, and enhancing the working
181 conditions and retention of staff and the Executive Committee;
- 182 6. Organising productive and well-planned Executive Committee Meetings
183 and invigorating General Assemblies;
- 184 7. Enhancing communication channels and strategies, including the use
185 of digital platforms and social media, to effectively disseminate
186 information, statements, share success stories, and mobilise for
187 collective actions and campaigns.

188 3. We will Bring Eastern European Perspective by:

- 189 1. Strengthening Partnerships with Progressive and Green Stakeholders:
190 Foster ongoing and extended collaborations with partner
191 organisations like Federation of Young European Greens, as well as

192 European Green Party, Green European Foundation, and Heinrich Boell
193 Offices in the region.

194 2. Increasing political communication on Eastern Europe issues and
195 developments: publishing statements and opinion pieces by Executive
196 Committee Members, Secretary General, and other relevant
197 individuals, organising webinars, providing input to other Green and
198 Progressive actors;

199 3. (Re)Introducing and maintaining Newsletter to share important
200 updates, insights, and perspectives from Eastern Europe. Highlight
201 the contributions of Member Organisations and other progressive
202 forces from the region, actively engage with them to gather input
203 and provide informed contributions on key regional and political
204 developments.

205 **BOLSTERING OUR CAPACITY FOR EFFECTIVE STRATEGY** 206 **DELIVERY**

207 To ensure our ability to execute the strategy effectively, we recognise the
208 importance of building organisational capacities which are essential not only
209 for our strategic success but also for achieving our goals. Consequently, we
210 have identified following four priorities:

211 **Internal Management:**

- 212 • Develop a comprehensive governance handbook that outlines roles,
213 responsibilities, and decision-making processes for the Executive
214 Committee, office as well as for temporary structures (such as Presidency,
215 Prep Teams);
- 216 • Improve delegation order and reinforce in practice;
- 217 • Develop transfer document for each staff position (replacing of single
218 document for whole staff);
- 219 • Optimise office structure and positions, ensuring more efficient task
220 allocation and defined responsibilities:
 - 221 ◦ In case of financial possibilities, prioritise the following new
222 staff positions for: 1. Finances and Admin 2. Communications

223 **Communications:**

- 224 • Utilise digital organising tools such as petitions and establish
225 newsletter using 'Action Network' platform (transfer data from all other

226 sources). Initially, to be distributed quarterly, with the goal of
227 transitioning to a monthly basis;

- 228 • Targeted social media presence and increased political communication;
- 229 • Improve internal communications by unifying communications channels;

230 Human Resources:

- 231 • Revise contracts to ensure their legal compliance and practical
232 applicability;
- 233 • Prioritise office well-being and professional growth;
- 234 • Update guide for onboarding and offboarding procedure;
- 235 • Establish a systematic performance assessment process, including regular
236 evaluations and feedback sessions;

237 Finances:

- 238 • Reinforce intra-organisational financial procedures and rules;
- 239 • Strengthen fundraising efforts to diversify income streams by applying a
240 minimum of two grants from sources beyond our existing partners. However,
241 ensuring that any new projects do not overburden existing staff;
- 242 • Facilitate sub-granting possibilities to member organisations;

243 IMPLEMENTING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

244 To bring our vision and mission to life, CDN is led by its Executive Committee
245 and Secretary General, elected by member organisations at our annual General
246 Assembly. The daily operations are carried out by staff, based in Belgrade,
247 under the responsibility of the Secretary General. Our guiding document, the
248 Political Platform, adopted by member organisations at the General Assembly,
249 outlines our political positions and values. While Internal Rules of Procedure
250 regulates framework of our operations. In addition, Safe Space Policy provides
251 practical guidelines for ensuring inclusive and safe environment during our
252 activities as well as general work.

253 Implementing

254 Central to our implementation strategy are the Annual Activity Plans that are
255 developed and presented by the Executive Committee to be adopted at the General
256 Assembly. They serve as a roadmap for the year ahead, outlining specific
257 initiatives and activities aligned with our strategic objectives. Developed
258 through inclusive and democratic processes, these plans provide detailed
259 guidance for action, defining objectives, and timelines.

260 In coordination with our Annual Activity Plans, Executive Committee presents a
261 Financial Plan which is subsequently adopted at the General Assembly. This plan

262 is designed to efficiently allocate resources in alignment with our strategic
263 objectives and initiatives, ensuring the availability of the financial support
264 required to achieve strategic objectives.

265 Monitoring and Evaluation

266 The fulfilment of Strategic Plan is monitored by the Executive Committee under
267 the guidance of Secretary General. They identify and track Key Performance
268 Indicators (KPIs) directly linked to our strategic objectives. These KPIs
269 undergo an annual review to assess their progress and effectiveness in advancing
270 our strategic priorities.

271 As part of the monitoring process, progress reports related to the Annual
272 Activity and Financial Plans are presented at the General Assembly. These
273 reports offer a comprehensive overview of each initiative, highlighting
274 achievements, challenges, and areas for adjustment, while also showcasing their
275 alignment with our strategic objectives and progress toward fulfilment.

276 CDN values feedback from participants of our events, Member Organisations,
277 partners, and other stakeholders. We actively seek input through surveys,
278 consultations, and feedback mechanisms to gain diverse perspectives on our work.
279 This continuous feedback loop helps us identify areas for improvement, refine
280 our strategies, and enhance the impact of our initiatives.

281 The strategy will undergo a mid-term assessment at the two-year mark to evaluate
282 its relevance, progress, and effectiveness in advancing our strategic
283 priorities. The review process will be led by Secretary General and involve
284 analysing feedback from conducted activities, interviews with several
285 participants, stakeholders, selected Member Organisations, and partners. Based
286 on the feedback, the Executive Committee should discuss amendments to the
287 Strategy to be proposed at the 2026 General Assembly.