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STRATEGY PAPER 2022–24

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COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT NETWORK
Eastern Europe

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Strategy Paper 2022-24

This Strategy Document outlines CDN's core direction for the period 2022-24. It is a consolidated outcome of the Strategy Planning Meeting that gathered CDN Member and Partner Organisations in Ratomka, Belarus in March 2020. The document is complementary to CDN's Political Platform and aims at capturing the main objectives of the Network, bringing sharp focus to the work of CDN, and assisting the Executive Committee and Secretariat in developing and executing the work plans that are in line with the overall objectives. The document informs our Partners about the organisation's strategic goals and priorities for the next three years, describes the major areas of activities as well as proposes tools and mechanisms allowing the realization of the activities of CDN in the period of 2022-24.

1 Support MOs in the process of organisational management, enhancing democratic structures and political maturity

Support to its Member Organisations remains the keystone of CDN's mission. The work of CDN is directed towards supporting MOs in their organisational management, enhancement of democratic structures and political maturity.

CDN will support the further work towards increasing MOs' capacities for becoming youth advocacy organisations, capable of taking an active role in the political processes in their local/national context, being visible for the wider masses and referred to by diverse stakeholders. This will be done through political maturity raising at seminars, trainings, political conferences, and statutory meetings such as General Assembly, as well as direct support.

In parallel, CDN will be working on encouraging MOs to question their democratic structures, especially in relation to power dynamics, inclusion and ensuring the factual safe space. This will be achieved with specific trainings, but also through setting the example by continuous work on improving CDN's internal structures and mechanisms for cultivating safe spaces.

A big part of CDN's work remains cooperation as we see mutual support and exchange between MOs as a core catalyst for building a strong EE Green youth movement. CDN will continue to support exchange between MOs, not only through international and regional activities but also through supporting direct MO-MO cooperation. This will be done through mediation, advisory and financial support when possible. We believe this further supports building international solidarity and regional cooperation among members and partners. This being mentioned, CDN will keep fostering solidarity actions, joint campaigns and other activities directed towards MOs joint reaction and positioning in regards to regional political developments.

2 Topical diversity

CDN has always aimed for an inter-sectional approach towards the topics relevant to our member organisations. Such an approach enables us to meet the demands and needs in the region while being flexible with the topics our Member and Partners work on. Selection of topics and CDN's activities had always been a reflection of regional dynamics, challenges and needs of our MOs, Pos and youth in Eastern Europe.

In order to keep the network up to date with rapid political developments and challenges in Eastern Europe, and assess their implications on green youth organisations and their agendas, CDN aims at maintaining the principle of topical diversity of its activities. Taking into consideration the needs and topics of interest to our MOs and POs, we will strive to work on Sustainability, Climate Change, Gender, Digital Rights and Social Justice.

We will be keeping track of any arising needs in EE and incorporate them in our work, such as Peacebuilding and Democracy, as well as relevant topics deriving from the main focus areas (Food and Agriculture, Labor rights, Health, Education, Energy, etc.) while maintaining intersectional approach in our work.

CDN will actively collect feedback from MOs and POs, and analyse actual political situations in order to assess interest in the current topical framework and define any new focus areas in the network. Through our online engagement, we will strive to spark discussions which will help us identify additional needs, challenges and topical necessities.

3 Methodological diversity

Diversity in approach to young people through different methods, tools and interactions is a tradition that we aim to maintain. CDN believes that Non-Formal Education (NFE) methodologies respond to the needs and interests of young people.

NFE is based on the values of inclusion and democracy while being interactive, participatory and experimental methodology which enables people with different skill-sets and knowledge levels to learn and cooperate, thus empowering one another. We are upholding the principles of NFE and aiming to learn and contribute to the new ways of conducting different methodologies within the Green Values as well as share them in the network with young people. Therefore, CDN will keep track of and attempt to further upgrade its NFE competency and invest time and resources in educating and training members of the EC and Secretariat.

By the same token, CDN will strive to strengthen its MOs' capacities by providing expertise through adopting NFE methods in its educational or statutory activities.

We will explore digital interactive and inclusive methods and implement them in online events, as we have seen the importance and benefits of creating a positive online group dynamic and safe online space. In this process, we still aim to-

wards using open source technologies and promoting their values in the times of a digital transition of Network members.

In partnership with our project partners, CDN will keep on developing online courses, podcasts, webinars, among others so that they can be disseminated, as well as open discussions and networking events for the community.

4 Geographical scope of work

In order to strengthen the position of MOs and their capacity to take an active role in local communities, we will continue to implement activities at local, regional and international level.

International activities such as topical seminars, study sessions and summer schools, are the space for gathering knowledge and information that go in line with the development of new ideas, practices and mindsets. They are also a good space for creating cooperation and interaction between MOs, POs, WGs and other green-minded EE youth. In this way, CDN will keep maintaining its role in enabling MOs to create visibility and a wide network in an international context. It also positions CDN as relevant partner not only in Green circles but also within organisations working on similar topics.

CDN operates in regions that share similar issues and at the same time provide limited space for youth to cooperate due to current and past political tensions between the countries. On a regional level CDN will be effective conjunction between MOs. Through regional activities, young people will continue having the space and possibility to cooperate, exchange practices and work together on topics of regional interest. CDN will continue its regional work by organising regional events, trainings, round tables, webinars etc. and concentrate more on the cross-regional ones based on different politically relevant factors.

A cross-regional approach comes as a result of the assessment that some MOs share similarities and needs due to the level of their organizational development or the external pressures of the environments they operate in.

Apart from organising international and regional events, the local level of support is also very important. CDN will continue to be present in MOs' local life and activities through trainings, study visits and direct support by having representatives on MOs events when possible or through online consultancy. Another way of local support to MOs is by co-organising side events with MOs hosting CDN activities and thus helping them raise their visibility on a local level.

5 Internal development

CDN is growing and changing, so are our Member, Partner and Observer Organisations – they are changing and thus changes CDN. We are becoming more political, more diverse and more experienced. We will reflect on all the changes and adapt, with focus on internal development. Institutional sustainability and transfer of knowledge have always been essential for CDN. We believe the institutionalised memory that the network has accumulated should not be stagnated, rather – enriched and matured.

Growth generates and causes some challenges as well. We have more events, more projects, more ideas and ambitions – therefore we see the need to strengthen our internal capacities. Consequently, CDN will focus on increasing the secretariat's capacities, strive to have more people employed and improve Secretariat working conditions. We will also focus on increasing the capacities of the Executive Committee through skill-based trainings and work on strengthening the role of treasurer in the EC. Additionally, we will strive to better define and implement the role of office responsible EC member, a position that will be an objective body to monitor secretariat well-being.

Moreover, CDN will concentrate on engaging in more political work, deepen the understanding of political realities MOs operate in, help MOs in communication with each other and other green networks, commenting on important political news, support organisations vocally and through solidarity actions and campaigns.

6 Working groups

Working groups are autonomous bodies of CDN which ensure bottom-up activities, provide topical expertise and take on the consultative role. Working groups are open to all youth and engagement in the groups is not limited by CDN membership.

CDN will support their initiatives to plan and implement projects that resonate with MO needs and expectations through the development of work plans, different activities whether online or live. We are aiming for working groups to become recognized as topical reference points by MOs and be a starting point for topical cooperation. Working groups can be topical and regional. CDN will support new initiatives that come up, especially the regional initiatives and regional working groups that members have shown potential and need for (Balkans and South Caucasus).

As the level of independence still varies between different working groups, CDN will strive to secure funding for (bi-)annual WG meetings that will also serve as a space for WGs to learn from each other's good practices. As an additional way of engaging WGs, we will strive to hold annual strategic planning meetings and support internally organized teambuilding meetings for all WGs in order to spark discussions about future work and development, as well as provide space for networking.

When it comes to the structure of the working groups, the focus will be on making them sustainable and self-sufficient. This process will be done by leading the members through different strategic steps, creation of internal documents and ultimately electing coordinators. CDN will continue providing support and resources for working groups to become more independent.

7 Communication and outreach

We live in an age of communications, as some would say the age of “information capitalism”, therefore in order to reach out, be visible and vocal, one should invest in communications significantly. As we also understand the importance of communications in CDN, we will increase our knowledge and focus on it. We see the need to strategically invest more in building EC and Office capacities on communications that will be positively reflected on CDN's visibility and outreach.

There are a few concrete steps to be taken in order to enhance external communications. CDN will continue to improve social-media strategy, enhance visual identity and improve our quality and presence in social media, in addition, we will strive to hire a communications officer. We will also help our organisations in the promotion of their events.

Last but not least, we strive to boost the visibility of the Eastern European Young Green community and ensure youth perspectives are included within the wider Green movement and Green perspectives are mainstreamed within the wider youth movement.

8 Wider green family

CDN is a part of the wider Green family and it is a relevant actor that holds a good deal of knowledge, resources and successful green partnerships.

We have a very close relation with our sister organisation Federation of Young European Greens and its mother party European Green Party. We plan to continue the good cooperation and make it even more close.

The interaction with Green foundations, pan-European Green and youth Green networks will enrich our organisational knowledge and ideological stance. This can later be prospered and translated into educational activities. Partnerships can also help us gain recognition in the struggle for youth to assume significant roles in their societies.

The fruitful collaboration within Greens is a very important factor in the way of CDN becoming a reference point as a capacity builder of the Eastern European Green movement. We plan to continue the cooperation and even closer communication with FYEG, as well as explore the possibility of formalisation of relations with the European Green Party.

In the process of forming green partnerships in Eastern Europe, we will try to balance between strengthening the existing network and its composing MOs and POs but also keep on searching for potential partnerships from the societies where we do not have member/partner organisations from at the moment (Kosovo, Montenegro, Russia, Greece).

9 Cooperation perspectives

Besides being part of the European Green family, we strive to expand our cooperation perspectives and find common grounds with other organisations. Therefore, CDN is open and responsive to all initiatives that correspond to its values, are within its capacities, and to the interest and benefit of its member organizations and Eastern Europe.

10 Shrinking space for civil society

We acknowledge the influence that restrictive political environments and shrinking spaces for civil society in the region have on the work of our MOs. As we witnessed lack of capability of governments all around Eastern Europe to respond to the emergency caused by the Covid-19 pandemic without severely threatening democracy and freedoms of people, we expect the pressure only to deepen in the post-pandemic period, especially for political actors, civil society organisations and media with a critical discourse towards governments' actions.

This being said, CDN will intensify its work on exploring alternative strategies, methodologies and tools for doing activism in restrictive political environments. The support to MOs in this sense will be provided through topical and skill-based activities and financially when possible. The particular potential is seen in Cross-Regional events organised for MOs on the basis of similarities in regards to the external environment they operate in.