

Public Launch Forum

“Advancing Civic Alliances for Democratic Resilience”

In the framework of the project CIVIC_ACT - Empowering Public Watchdogs to Counter Disinformation and Strengthen Democratic Resilience in Europe, funded by the European Union

2 October 2026 | 09:30 – 15:00

[Tirana Times Library](#), Tirana, Albania

Across Europe and the Western Balkans, democratic resilience is tested not only at elections, but in the everyday ability of citizens to organise, protest peacefully, obtain reliable information, scrutinise public decisions and participate meaningfully in policymaking. The [European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights’ 2026 Civic Space Update](#) identifies continuing obstacles for civil society across Europe: restrictive legal environments, difficulties in accessing sustainable funding, threats and attacks against civic actors, and weaknesses in meaningful consultation. The [2026 Rule of Law](#) cycle highlights smear campaigns, prosecutions of activists, SLAPPs and growing concerns over restrictions on peaceful assembly. 2026 is also a defining year for Europe’s democratic-resilience architecture: EU Member States were required to transpose the [Anti-SLAPP Directive](#) by 7 May 2026; implementation of the [European Media Freedom Act](#) is moving from legislation to practice; the [European Democracy Shield](#) is developing new measures on democratic resilience.

In Albania, these questions have acquired an immediate and highly visible dimension. What began at the end of May as opposition to development in the Vjosa–Narta protected area evolved into months of sustained civic mobilisation known as the “Flamingo Revolution”, demanding profound political change. SCiDEV’s [monitoring](#) has highlighted polarisation, attempts to delegitimise journalists and civic actors, pressure on journalists covering demonstrations, selective mainstream coverage, and the growing importance and vulnerability of livestreams, independent media and citizen-generated information. In Serbia, mobilisation triggered by the Novi Sad railway-station tragedy has continued into 2026, and the [SafeJournalists Network](#) records pressure on civil society, allegations of excessive police force, deteriorating journalist safety and SLAPP cases against investigative media and CSOs. Legal intimidation remains relevant inside EU Member States too, while Ukraine demonstrates the resilience of journalism and civic information under war, propaganda and cyber threats.

It is against this backdrop that [CIVIC_ACT](#), funded by the European Union through the [Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values \(CERV\) Programme](#), convenes its first public roundtable in Tirana. Rather than treating civic participation, media freedom, disinformation, SLAPPs and democratic resilience as separate subjects, the discussion examines how they interact: what generates civic mobilisation; what allows citizens and journalists to sustain scrutiny; what narrows participation; and how civic energy can become lasting democratic influence and stronger institutions.

AGENDA

TIME	PROGRAMME
09:30 – 10:00	Registration & welcome coffee
10:00 – 10:10	Welcome and Opening — CIVIC_ACT: Why Civic Action Matters Now Blerjana Bino, <i>Executive Director</i>, SCiDEV; CIVIC_ACT Coordinator Host and opening remarks, framing the 2026 context and the central question of the roundtable: how can civic participation translate into democratic influence?
10:10 – 11:50	Panel I — Civic Mobilisation Under Pressure: Protest, Journalism and Public Participation in 2026 Moderator: Abi Dodbiba Adri Nurellari, <i>Political analyst</i> Albania 2026: what recent civic mobilisation tells us about citizen agency, trust, accountability and collective action. Marija Babić, <i>Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS)</i> Serbia: student and civic mobilisation, journalist safety, pressure on independent media and the cost of scrutiny. Lorin Kadiu, <i>Executive Director</i>, Citizens.al Media and mobilisation: public-interest journalism, citizen-generated information, verification and the increasingly digital public square. Davor Marko, <i>Programme Manager for Central and Southeast Europe</i>, Thomson Foundation - online Media resilience under pressure: how independent media can sustain public-interest journalism, audience trust and organisational resilience amid political, economic and digital pressures. Iryna Synelyk, <i>Ukrainian journalist</i>, UNIAN correspondent Ukraine: democracy and journalism under pressure — reporting through war and disinformation while sustaining reliable information, public trust and civic participation. Serena Epis, <i>Editor and Researcher</i>, Osservatori Balcani e Caucaso Transeurope Italy 2026: Pressures on media and civic space in EU members states
11:50 – 12:00	Coffee break

TIME	PROGRAMME
12:00 – 13:15	Panel II — From Voice to Influence: Building Democratic Resilience Moderator: Abi Dodbiba Rashela Shehu, <i>Correspondent in Albania, Deutsche Welle</i> Journalism between mobilisation and public understanding: sustaining visibility, verification and trust while connecting national civic debates with European audiences. Lyudmila Makey, <i>Ukrainian journalist</i> From vulnerability to resilience: how Ukrainian journalists adapt to displacement, insecurity and prolonged crisis while continuing public-interest reporting. Doriana Musai, <i>Architect and activist</i> Public space, development and the right to participate: how citizens can influence decisions that reshape their communities. Jasmijn de Zeeuw, <i>Free Press Unlimited, the Netherlands — online</i> SLAPPs and public participation: how legal intimidation affects journalists, activists, experts, sources and citizens speaking on matters of public interest.
13:15 – 13:30	EU Survey on Justice, Rights and Values Participants complete the EU Survey on Justice, Rights and Values. The link is shared on screen and circulated to all attendees.
13:30 – 14:00	CIVIC_ACT Exchange — From European Experience to Local Action Facilitated by Abi Dodbiba A structured exchange around three questions: what is making meaningful civic participation more difficult? What alliance, protection or capacity is missing? What should CIVIC_ACT concretely test or build over the next two years?
14:00 – 14:10	Conclusions: Five Priorities for Civic Resilience Isa Myzyraj, <i>Chair, Association of Journalists of Albania</i> Key priorities emerging from the panels and the participant exchange, linked to the next stages of CIVIC_ACT.
14:10 – 15:00	Networking lunch



About the project

The project “*Empowering Public Watchdogs to Counter Disinformation and Strengthen Democratic Resilience in Europe*” ([CIVIC_ACT](#)) is coordinated by the [Centre Science and Innovation for Development \(SCiDEV\)](#), Albania, and implemented in partnership with the [Association of Journalists of Macedonia \(AJM\)](#), North Macedonia; [Independent Journalists’ Association of Serbia \(NUNS\)](#), Serbia; [Association of Journalists of Kosovo \(AJK\)](#), Kosovo*; [Association of Journalists of Albania \(AJA\)](#), Albania; [European Federation of Journalists \(EFJ\)](#), Belgium and [Free Press Unlimited \(FPU\)](#), the Netherlands, under the [Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values \(CERV\) Programme](#), funded by the [CERV Programme of the European Union](#). CIVIC_ACT (Project No. 101252459) will be implemented during the period 2 February 2026 – 1 February 2028 with the aim of strengthening democratic resilience by empowering public watchdogs, including journalists, civil society organisations, youth, digital creators, academia, to counter disinformation, resist SLAPP intimidation, and defend democratic debate across Europe.

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

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