

## 2021 Annual Narrative Report

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### 1. General Programmatic Progress

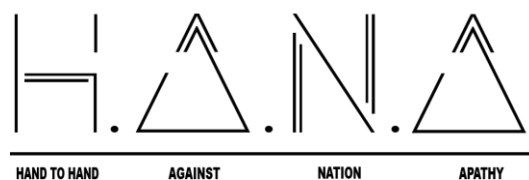
This document has been conceived divided into 3 phases throughout the year 2021 for the effect of coherent reporting and to avoid the realization of an important document such as the annual narrative report of the organization cumulatively the following year.

#### *January – April 2021*

The first 4-month period has found the center active and alert to position the image among young people in Lezha as an interactive space of social-cultural events. It is a phase that finds the center in maximum efforts for consolidation, cooperation and external recognition. The flow of new attendees has been at much higher levels compared to previous months, as familiarity with the existence of the center is noted. Cooperation with an institution like the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of Luxembourg thanks to the networking of the European Fund for Democracy, one of the center's donors in 2021, has undoubtedly been a great moment of achievement for the center for 2 reasons; the first because it gave them the opportunity to test themselves in a long-targeted profile (political activism) but newly experienced, and secondly because it presented the center in a new light to the audience, that is, as an entity trusted by the diplomatic structure of the EU countries (since Luxembourg is one of the founding countries of the Union) to convey the need for Albania's integration in young people. The contacts of the members of the center and the young people participating in the implementation directly with the ambassador of this country for the Balkan countries and Turkey has given even greater importance to the work of the center and the community's trust in it. The young people recruited to attend the winter school intervention in political studies and European integration have established a strong relationship of trust with the center and a good part of them are regular attendees already giving the center a good "arsenal" of responsible young people with good premises for activism.

Through the winter school in politics and integration in the EU, we aimed to form the participants with a culture of engagement in political life in the near future, and for this we need knowledge of how a democratic state works, and its law and justice institutions; also, the role played by politics and that of political parties

The program was a success in terms of the quality of teaching, as cited by youth and other center audiences, as Lezha had never before experienced an informal learning event of this magnitude involving such a dynamic group of professionals and academics. We were delighted to see parents approach the center and express surprise and gratitude for exposing their child to the experience. The intervention was among the most important experiences within the youth center program. Politics, political development and the subject of EU integration are sensitive issues in the country which are considered problems for "adults", discouraging young people's participation and understanding of political discourse.

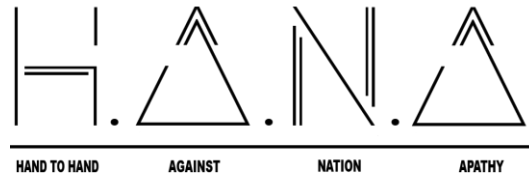


Also, engagement in the election process was another key moment that happened during this period. A major challenge that was undertaken with the aim of strengthening the position of the NGO in the same field of political activism. It has been less than 2 years since the opening of the center, so it cannot be considered that we have reached professional maturity in the initiatives above, but a solid step towards this field. It is important for us not to remain only at the level of organizing social and cultural events with the primary purpose of entertaining or spending the free time of the young people who attend. Although HANA is already known in Lezha and wider as an active youth center that is required in cooperation, the efforts for genuine youth activism through the creation of groups with young people who know how to react and advocate their voice remain a goal in itself.

Collaboration and portfolio growth of projects has been an important point of this implementation phase. Thus, 2 new projects (MFA Luxemburg & Leviz Albania) have been an incentive and optimism for the stability and growth of the center, albeit for short periods of time. Cooperation with KRIIK Albania for election observation and informing young people who vote for the first time has also kept the center motivated to benefit from the experience of others and offer an additional service that we consider a safe step towards positioning as a space for activism political in the civil society of Lezha.

Another very important aspect for us was the decision to introduce theater to young people as a way of expressing the problems of society, those related to the fight of girls/women for equal treatment. Worked with 2 groups of young people aged 15-17 years to stage a play, original or created just for them, inspired by events in the country against the life and freedom of girls and women, patriarchy, stigma and gender discrimination. The show is called "The Re-Education of Apollo" and is being finalized fueled by the initial sparks in December during the 16-day campaign of activism against gender-based violence (GBV). We have seen how this form of habit (theatre) is an exciting manifestation of rebellion and the growth of young people's self-confidence and their abilities to cooperate and interact with each other. It is definitely an area we want to explore further as the results are promising and tangible in a short time. During May 2021, the play will be ready and staged for the first time for the Lezhian public, and then a tour among collaborators will be planned.

Another collaboration that the center has carried out during this period is to replicate in Lezha the youth club called "Be a Man" (from the Young Men Initiative network) which it piloted during the months of October-December and is implementing during 2021. While it is an excellent opportunity to expose young people to the discourse of gender-based violence, it is also an opportunity to evaluate a curriculum established by many experts who have accredited it and is today easily replicated by professionals in the social sciences and communication. It is not a project accompanied by a budget, but it is an opportunity to go to young people equipped with functional and structured instruments. 15 young people are part of this club and a rural community was chosen as we wanted to reach young people who cannot access the center physically. There are many deficiencies in their understanding of gender roles that are reflected in the sessions, a consequence of a long-term bombardment from harmful practices in the family, school and society (the acute non-treatment of topics of this nature with this category), but precisely for this reason, we insist on concluding the discussion with them according to the accredited module.



During April, the center had numerous and important institutional visits and exhibitions from the OSCE representative (Ambassador of the observation mission in the country; representative of the British Embassy; virtual meeting with 5 EU Ambassadors in the country, including Ambassador Luigi Soreca). They are considered important moments because it has seen appreciation for the existence and work of HANA, diverting attention from the problems of future sustainability of income for a moment thought that there may be structures that will likely be ready to support it. the center to stay the identity that he was able to create in Lezha.

Likewise, another aspect of the implementation of the center's program during this period has been the social corner where events such as cinema afternoons, game afternoons, cultural afternoons, book clubs and exhibitions have been organized. An important aspect of the center's success is the ability to be active with events for young people who do not have the opportunity to be part of the groups above but want a different kind of engagement within the center. This has been the opportunity to approach this category or to offer a participation alternative for young people who come to be part of the work groups described above.

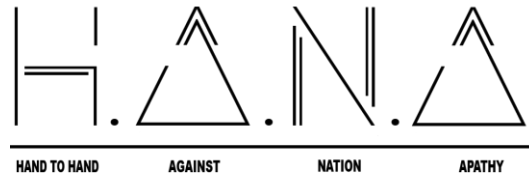
### ***May – August 2022***

HANA has implemented activities that have contributed to its mission to serve as a liaison of opportunities with youth potentials in Lezha by focusing on 3 main directions that have gradually turned into the center's major objectives for 2021 and will feed the ongoing program; 1) education of young people in the environmental field, waste management, operation of the center as a social-cultural space for the enrichment of the free time of youth, focus on media education of young people (the use of information channels to convey the message on issues relevant).

This period has served to consolidate cooperation with the largest educational institution in the city, the "Hydajet Lezha" Gymnasium, fulfilling the hours of community service for over 70 young people of this institution, thus building a 'precedent' and positive experience of the center as a provider services. The young people have appreciated the commitment and contribution in some works of special importance for them, such as the rehabilitation of some forgotten corners in Lezha, among others.

Also, an important moment has turned out to be the intentionality of the organization to take under the tutelage the issue of waste management in the Municipality of Lezhë, in addition to the cooperation with the latter. HANA focused on this issue, triggered by the implementation of a project with the support of a donor in Tirana (Lëviz Albania) but especially driven by the desire to take on a challenging mission outside the "comfort zone" of staying within wide limits. -then of the center to implement.

During this period, the organization has been trying to find opportunities to contribute to its sustainability in the future, since the support of EED has been a strong guarantee of continuity for the implementation period of the supported project, but there remains a need to continue the journey without EED in the near future.



There have been no lack of attempts to contact various national and international actors through responses to calls launched by the latter, or requests for direct contact. The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of Luxembourg has responded positively to our contact, giving the center the possibility of implementing a project of greater value than the first one. While other responses are expected soon, the organization's goal is to under no circumstances break the cycle of services offered as a youth center, being open and accessible to youth first.

August has been a more difficult period of implementation due to the coincidence with the holiday season, which after last year's breaks, has been much more active in tourism, causing the physical participation in the center to be significantly reduced, to return again in September of course. As a whole, the period May-August 2021 can be called for HANA as a mixed period between the intensive implementation of strategic planning for the following months, taking into consideration certain reflections and lessons from the past and that there is a strong possibility that the center does not enjoy at any moment the municipal institutional support or certain public institutions that do not welcome the critical approach. This makes it necessary for HANA to strengthen its position of independence and autonomy in the future, regardless of public institutional support.

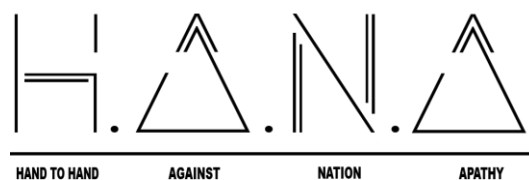
### ***September – December 2021***

The last 4 months of the annual reporting period for 2021 have been supported by the European Endowment for Democracy and have been just as intense as at the peak of the implementation of the 2-year time segment (2020 – 2021). 54 activities, events and/or products have been realized during this time and there has been a consolidated understanding of the center by the staff as well as the community. The last period of implementation of the project "Joint Actions for a Pro-Active Youth" has also coincided with an increase in recognition of the existence of the HANA center beyond Lezha, as a local youth organization and center, the only one of its kind in Lezha .

The organization's attitude with partners is also more determined and mature in terms of its offer at the cooperation table.

Having said that, special focus during this period continued to be on the 4 directions of the program set at the beginning of the year and following the previous 2 phases; media education, democracy and engagement in decision-making, gender equality and the environment.

At the end of the reporting year, it can be said that it has been fulfilled the aim to offer the youth of Lezhë a bouquet of activities and opportunities for engagement and participation channeled through a youth center taking the form of a real provider of youth services in Lezhë. During this time, the center has been strengthened and has established partnerships with new actors of civil society in some of the directions of the program. Thus, 2 agreements have been signed for the establishment of a media education model with 2 serious and independent media organizations in the country (Center for Quality Journalism and Faktoje.al); 1 agreement with a national organization (Act for Society center) for the establishment of youth clubs for the discussion of gender norms in the country; the conclusion of an agreement for the implementation of a cycle of lectures on democracy as well as the debate tournament with the youth of 9-year-old schools in Lezha with the Ministry of



Luxembourg's foreign and European affairs; the implementation of the agreement with the Municipality of Lezhë for the implementation of the waste differentiation model at the source as well as other activities in the field of the environment has continued according to an agreement with Leviz Albania.

In the framework of these collaborations, more than 120 young people have been reached as beneficiaries and direct participants and a stronger relationship of trust has been built with them, also increasing the number of young people who attend the center for the first time.

During this time, it has been necessary for the center to search for ways and sources of income to ensure its sustainability in the future, that is, for the year 2022 and beyond. Unfortunately, efforts in this direction have not been successful. Currently, the center does not have a guaranteed support to cover the duration of at least 2022. The current projects end in February 2022 from December 2021 originally foreseen in the agreement, through a time extension without financial effects requested by the center for one project (Leviz Albania) while on February 17 according to the contract with the donor MFA Luxembourg.

This reporting period marks the complete consolidation of the center in the field of civil society in Albania and especially in Lezhë, as it is now known and accepted as a genuine and unique youth service provider in Lezhë in terms of the civil society sphere.

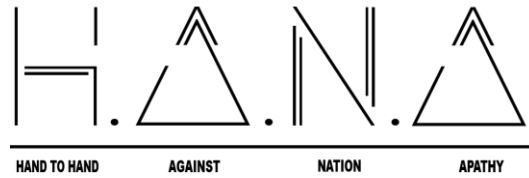
The young people who mainly attend the center are of compulsory or optional school age (secondary school), since in Lezha there is a high rate of migration or immigration of young people and their older ages are either in university, or living outside Albania or actively seeking ways to escape and have low interest in involvement. With the efforts made by the center to approach young people over 18 years old, it has been possible to approach them in sporadic events such as events with guest speakers, social time and entertainment, but there have been challenges to guarantee their dedication in continuous events and in series. However, the center believes that working with young people under the age of 18 is a good way to ensure that these young people get a different foundation when they grow up.

## **2. Lessons, Challenges & Opportunities**

### ***January - April 2021***

One of the challenges during the period in question was the situation caused by the pandemic. Most of the staff and close collaborators of the center were infected during the months of January-February 21, which made the implementation challenging due to the need to quarantine in times of work flow.

The strain of the relationship with donors (during this period HANA has had 3; EED, MFA Luxembourg and Leviz Albania) has resulted in trials with multiple responsibilities for the staff but has also brought the great benefit of a new member in the team who is now an asset added for center. The need to implement a busy calendar, implemented with different groups of young people has certainly increased the participation figures by expanding the radius of influence of the center throughout Lezha and wider (Mirdite and Kurbin, young people attending public/non-public schools in Lezha they also attend the center). During these 4 months, 31 young people were recruited from the winter school, 65 from the project with environmental focus



financed by Leviz Albania and over 70 young people who have attended the basic program of the center with the support of EED ("Be a Man" club, Social Theater, Social Corner of Events, involvement in the election process, etc.). Participation and gender variances have improved as more boys have participated during this phase in the center's various events. We believe that at this stage the center has reached the widest level of outreach in the community and the influence of young people attending has influenced their peers to join. Also, several agreements with 3 schools in Lezha have significantly increased the number of attendance.

The major challenge now is the perspective of the future and the vital need for sustainability. It is inevitable not to think about the future after the support of EED, prompting questions but also receiving encouragement and encouragement from the positive comments received these times for new horizons. However, at the present moment 2022 remains a concern to ensure the guarantee of the program with the same human resources. Efforts are being made for the conception of project proposals for potential sources of support inside and outside the country, mainly inside.

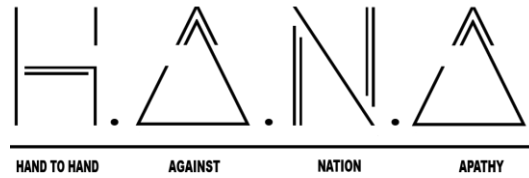
### ***May – August 2021***

A challenge of this period has resulted in the need for human resources prepared to advance an activist mission. HANA prefers the employment of young people under 30 years of age, but the main criterion besides age is seen to be the mindset and understanding of the person reflected in lifestyle and sense of initiative. An activist who does not shy away from challenges, is open to learning and growing, has the flexibility to adapt, the creativity to lead young people in new fields of engagement, in contrast to conventional initiatives at the levels of passive volunteering .

It has been among the main barriers, finding such people to assist with the quality implementation of the program, taking time for the board of the organization to train and prepare. Unfortunately, it is not easy to shape the ideals of even a young professional and simultaneously implement the program at the same pace. The organization seeks the profile of a young professional who is not afraid of prejudices and stereotypes but fights them pro-actively with initiatives and ideas, instead of being a fanatic of religious dogmas and being restrained by them; that has the initiative to implement programmatic aspects with minimal supervision; that generates ideas that feed the program which already has a well-defined handle on where it is going. Due to many objective and subjective circumstances,

Likewise, it is natural for the center to aim to have staff who each contribute to enriching the program and finding ways to sustain it. This has not happened and has been the burden of the organization's board even during this time, together with the need to manage the center's virtual presence, which is also an important way of informing the public and interested parties about the center's work, but especially recruitment of young people. Work that takes its own time.

An evidenced need is also that of the main principles embedded in the leadership of the organization to prioritize, delegate successfully and understand in real time the needs of the team although



not always articulated by its members, but often perceptible. It is important that the pressure of leadership does not fall on one individual to make things work as expected, and this becomes possible when there is a certain standard of professionalism and mindset and intuition of activism among the members. Multi-tasking is an indisputable need of leadership and it is learned but also a constant challenge to divide time successfully between staff support, weekly and monthly planning and those in the long term, research and utilization of opportunities for networking with potential donors. and collaborators.

### ***September – December 2021***

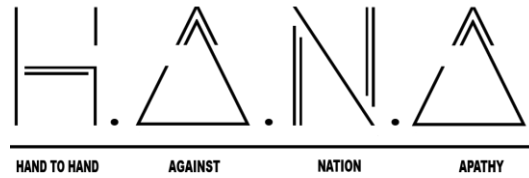
This period has been accompanied by challenges since it represented the end of a certain era of the center, namely the awareness that the budget support from EED is coming to an end. There have been numerous attempts to seek support for the center's ongoing program, but significant challenges have been encountered. There was an optimistic understanding, however, on the part of the leaders of the center, since, especially during 2021, there was a significant number of visits and interest shown to visit it and learn about its activity from many local and foreign actors of donor agencies. in countries such as OSCE, UN, British Embassy, EU Delegation, etc. The organization has tried to present future support interventions which were seen with interest during these visits, but without success. However, efforts continue after HAN

During these 4 months of implementation, good foundations of the center's considerable experience in certain fields, especially the environmental one, have been created, becoming a positive precedent in the future to extend the impact in this direction to a wider range of action. For the first time, HANA has implemented a real source separation model of urban waste in cooperation with the municipal institution and waste management company. Also, a good opportunity for the center has been the many communications with local, national or international organizations, local public institutions and diplomatic presence to organize joint events, thus proving the strengthened position of the center in the civil society of Lezha during this 4 - the last month of implementation.

### **3. Gender Balance and Other Cross-Sectoral Issues**

#### ***January – April 2021***

The center has had challenges with approaching the boys in the organized events due to the low interest from this category. This period, this indicator (percentage of male attendees) has increased significantly. Cooperation with schools and talking about this situation with school staff and the young people themselves but



of course, the time taken for the center to gain popularity among young people has led to a significant increase in boys, going to about 30% participation at the total level. Patriarchalism and the withdrawal of boys and men from events of a social nature continues to remain a problem of Albanian society, especially in rural areas, and the further you travel from the capital to the center, the treatment of gender inequalities is always in focus. A theatrical performance is being staged dedicated to this phenomenon by the young people of the center, which is certainly original. The "Be a Man" youth club deals with gender-based violence and gender roles in such a way as to convey the message that boys and men are allies in this cause, not the problem because society has placed unfair pressure on them. Withdrawal, shyness, skepticism, aggressive behavior, dirty words, nervousness, the center notices in boys many times more than in girls. This is rooted in the upbringing and pressures of raising boys to be strong, assertive, manly and dominant. They are hard-wired behaviors that require coordinated and long-term work to model in childhood. So at the moment we are enjoying the small victories by having the highest level of participation from the boys from the wide start today.

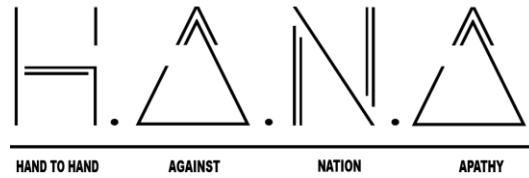
### ***May – August 2021***

There are more boys attending the center as a result of being targeted since in the activities that have been developed, a gender balance has been requested from the schools (the main source of youth recruitment). Due to the transition of the staff in the center and the needs for the execution of agreements with the education office within the hours of community service as well as environmental intervention, there has not been the same focus in the volume of the organization as in the previous months in activities with a genuine focus gender equality. The "Be a Man" club has closed one cycle and due to the volume of work, it has not been possible to restart the next cycle during this time. Also, one of the most successful interventions, social theater, was successfully completed, but it could not be replicated during this time because it takes a financially motivated professional to continue the work at a satisfactory pace. Something that was not possible during this period. On the other hand, the organization is in solidarity with the efforts of other civil society actors in demonstrations and manifestations against the phenomena of violence against girls and women.

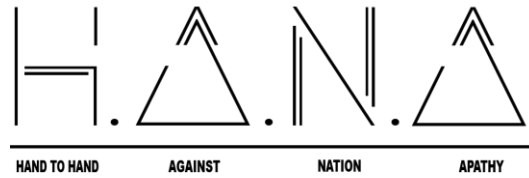
### ***September – December 2021***

The center has a special focus on gender issues, since gender equality is one of the areas of action, manifested through the "Be a Man" youth clubs. The "Be a Man" youth club, although it sounds like a disorienting phrase at first, is actually a call for young people to consider boys as allies in the efforts for equality and fairness in a society that encourages them to navigate the waters of misogyny and gender inequality. Also, an attempt to re-dimension the term "man" which in fact, for the purpose of this group, does not at all coincide with the typical definition with nuances of patriarchy that pressures young boys to be the dominant gender in strength, achievements and contributions . During this implementation period, we have continued meetings with young people to break down gender stereotypes, although not easy. In one of our meetings, one of the girls introduced her friend using, among other things, the epithet "mobile" and when asked to define it, she said that society uses this term for rebellious girls, who do not become parties to injustices and try to set the rules themselves because how they want to live their lives. She herself did not agree that her friend was





doing something wrong, but if it was wrong for society and mentality, she had to see it as such too, otherwise she would be judged too. So, for them, society, in addition to defining roles, also defines She herself did not agree that her friend was doing something wrong, but if it was wrong for society and mentality, she had to see it as such too, otherwise she would be judged too. So, for them, society, in addition to defining roles, also defines She herself did not agree that her friend was doing something wrong, but if it was wrong for society and mentality, she had to see it as such too, otherwise she would be judged too. So, for them, society, in addition to defining roles, also defines



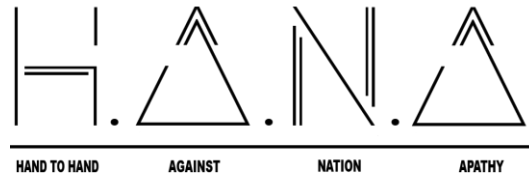
attitudes and tries to shape the mindset. They must think and act as required by adults, peers and the entire circle they are in, limiting them the opportunity to develop individuality, creativity and a mindset that is not conditioned by the surrounding environment. When asked if they were free and unprejudiced by the environment they are in, would they have acted differently, they say that if they were not conditioned by the external environment and risk factors, then they would want to behave differently. In the family they play the gender roles that are assigned to you. Girls are more focused on personal growth and taking care of the family, while boys are focused on providing income and offering to protect the family from dangers that may threaten. Boys feel that they have to be strong because they are men and that they have to protect the women and girls of the family. The boys of the club know that girls have rights, but these rights are not for the girls in their family, they are for girls who grow up and live in other contexts and societies, because the girls around them still need work to be achieved and the reasoning they give is; "we live in Albania and this is how it is here!" And if you ask them how it is in Albania, they all answer in unison that they have a hard time because they are judged for their behavior and attitudes, if they want to diffuse the roles; the surrounding environment does not accept it. It is the parents who first force them to adhere to the mental schemas associated with gender. When asked if they discuss such topics with their parents or family elders, they state that they find very little understanding and often decide to create alliances with peers who understand them better and spend more productive time with them. And yet, even when asked how much they contribute to the family through work, they are shy to say that they wash, throw away the garbage, clean the house and tidy their room; there is no shortage of laughter. Guys see expressing feelings as weakness, but if you ask questions and try to understand more, they are willing to share, which lets you know that they didn't get enough attention and you weren't asked to do it first and what is most important, no one has taught him that expressing yourself and showing what you feel is necessary,

The constant discussion of these issues by the same young people has been observed to progressively have a positive effect on the attack on the patriarchal mindset that weighs on the young men and especially on the young women of the club. Day by day these young people lose the complexities of discussing these previously unaddressed topics, although the change in thinking takes its own time. It is obvious to the staff of the center that the young people who attend the club or even the young people of other interventions, where there is no lack of an intersection of the topics in question with that of gender roles, are more free, more extended and more predisposed to consider the friend and/or friend as equal in discussions, decision-making and any other cognitive and articulatory aspect.

#### **4. Communication, Outreach and Visibility**

##### ***January – April 2021***

In this period, the center has been working on the revision of the official website [hanacentre.org](http://hanacentre.org), which has not been at the right height to convey the right image. In April, the organization's website was redone from scratch with enriched data and documentation of every event that took place. It took longer than expected due to the work flow and the need to re-formulate each column.



However, the social networks Facebook and Instagram have been the most used, the center also has a presence on Twitter. During the 4 months of reporting, the Facebook and Instagram platforms, sometimes Twitter, were mostly used for the visibility and communications of the Center's project/program.

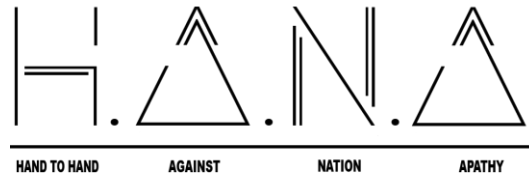
The winter school has significantly increased the attendance of the center's virtual Facebook audience. However, young people visit this medium less and Instagram more. It remains a fact, however, that many institutions with which we have come in contact for various implementation purposes, mentioned in this report, both in Lezha and in Tirana and wider, have shared that they have become familiar with the center through social networks and that they have been familiar with the work done before they met its staff. An indication that Facebook has served to direct you to an audience of professionals, institutions, potential supporters more. From now on, the center will maintain the attention of the website and one of its sections (Blog) to make the connection with other places on the Internet.

### ***May - August 2021***

The organization has tried to reflect its work as best as possible for the audiences, being the goal in documenting and disclosing them to the public. The pages on the organization's social networks have been constantly updated, and the center's official page on the network has been redesigned, taking on a more dignified, professional and complete look. The visibility is satisfactory and it is noted that from a small civil society organization, launched at the start of the pandemic, there is a surprising recognition among non-profit organizations at the national level, public institutions, international agencies present in the country as well as members of community. This has been noticed from contacts received for collaborations, evaluations received at various meetings by invitation as well as analytics of following in social networks.

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## 5. Final Assessments

A total of 212 events, activities and products have been completed in 24 months with an average of 10 events per month, excluding the first phase that coincided with the establishment of the physical premises of the center as well as the start of the global pandemic, significantly limiting the implementation.

From the beginning, this project has been seen as a golden opportunity for the center to implement a vision, that of building a physical space dedicated to youth in Lezha, challenging the status quo of the lack of institutional dedication from the local or central government to invest in infrastructure for young people. In this sense, the main goal of the "Joint Actions for a Pro-Active Youth" project has been achieved. Lezha already has a youth center and it is equipped to serve as such thanks to the investment of the project. At the beginning of the project implementation, it was expected that the center would be equipped with the appropriate infrastructure to hold activities and welcome young people, and also that this equipment would significantly increase the number of attendees, but it was beyond expectations the positive reception given to the center by many people and the structure, giving it a kind of image of much larger dimensions than what was quoted in the design of the project (Appendix D). The implementation of the project and the trust of EED in a small local organization in Lezha made HANA to be presented in a dignified way to the young people, encouraging them to come closer, since in the year of inauguration more than 200 young people have visited the center, although it was newly introduced, as well as in the midst of a pandemic. As well, The staff of the center felt motivated to enrich the project with many other additional but necessary activities to strengthen the identity of the center as a service provider as well as the missing need in the city (and in the entire municipality) for awareness-raising, cultural and formative. For example, there is no cinema in Lezha and HANA, thanks to the equipment provided by the project, has fulfilled this function for the young people of Lezha. Courses for young people in media education have not been given before in Lezha and HANA offered them. Young people have cited that being a volunteer and frequenter of a youth center has helped them eliminate their fears of speaking in public and has given them an advantage in their relationships with others as they have become more open in interaction and tolerance.

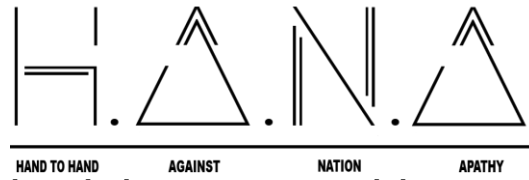
*"The opportunities offered from the HANA center are not offered anywhere else, and thanks to my participation in its program, I have met new friends, some of whom have become my closest friends since we were connected by a common interest."* - Claudio, 15 years old.

*"When I come to the center I feel very comfortable like at home as we already know each other and we are very free with each other and the ideas we give for activities we have in common and we don't fight about which idea to implement."*

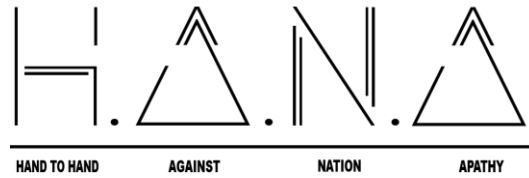
– Keslin, 14 years old.

*"It's good when you have something different to do that you don't need to go to Tirana or Shkodër to look for, such as taking part in a poetry class, seeing a theater performance or doing a course you want I had to pay a lot of money if it wasn't offered to me for free at HANA"*– Desaida, 19 years old.

The staff of the center has gained a lot of experience during these 2 years of implementation, since the center was opened from scratch and none of them had experience in managing a new NGO, let alone a youth center. The project has allowed the flexibility to learn along the way, adapting activities or new ideas that have added value to the center at a certain point in time, such as not continuing with more



courses in storytelling and multimedia but moving to social theater and setting up an amateur theater troupe among young people as a way to try and explore what works best. The performance of the center has led to the staff being invited to various events as part of civil society,



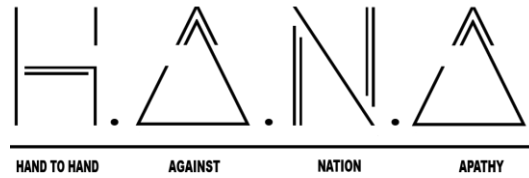
share the journey of the center, network with many parties that you did not know before, not frequenting the same circles. These recognitions have often become a trigger for the exchange of experiences for the staff, but also for enriching the center with activities. The experience gained in the management and administration of a youth center is among the greatest successes since for 2 years of programmatic financial support that the center has had, the staff did not have to commit to trying to secure funds and survive in a difficult context of the year pandemic but have been focused on its growth and finding ways to increase the impact of young people and cooperating actors.

We believe that we have managed to fulfill the objectives of establishing the first youth structure in the municipality, making it stable and active, since this was the main initial objective. We are satisfied with the progress of the center and the path it has followed to reach this stage where it can be considered ready for another stage, that of being stable for the future. And at this point there is a certain fear since the civil society in Albania exists in a very fragile context, firstly in terms of a devaluing opinion among people as inefficient and secondly because there is a very large number of organizations that operate in the country for a long time, some with a great contribution and others damaging not only to themselves but also to other NGOs due to the labeling of people as "associations are the same",

In the case of HANA, the seriousness in the work undertaken has had a positive impact, not just as a project, but as a new entity in the country, a sense of responsibility towards people, young people and various institutions to keep the word that Lezha will have the first youth center already; secondly, the passion for the cause of the founders who have abandoned a career in progress to dedicate themselves to the running of the center has had a positive impact. Being dedicated without holidays on the weekend or long hours during the week, all because at the end of the day it has been a life mission and a dream for a long time that of setting up a youth structure. Being part of a network of supporters (not necessarily financial) sharing challenges and being encouraged together has helped to motivate and encourage to come up with new ideas of engagement and events at the center. EED has influenced HANA to create a circle of friends in Tirana, which has since expanded naturally.

The challenge has often been the sometimes antagonistic stance of state institutions, such as the municipality, which, although not expressing it openly, but implying it with some non-presence or lack of institutional commitment in cases such as the piloting of a the model of separation of waste at the source or cognitive visits by young people where a reprimanding and accusatory position was taken if/when the young people demanded accountability in their own way. Having a well built image of the center, this challenge has been overcome by not finding a permanent solution but by "pulling and not breaking" the relationship.

Another challenge has been finding young people (or older) who are prepared and suitable, compatible with the center's mission to recruit, which has been reflected several times in previous reports. Finding professionals is difficult as they either move to Tirana or outside of Albania and it is a long established problem that the small municipality of Lezha lacks professionals. The departure for 1 year of one of the founders of the center for further specialization in another country has aggravated the situation even more and can be considered a significant challenge



past that of concentrating the main jobs in a few hands. The lack of standard and understanding of the mindset of youth development and work with a youth center among those contracted early have seriously risked slowing down the pace. However, we have tried to preserve the quality and creativity and the sense of initiative as much as possible.

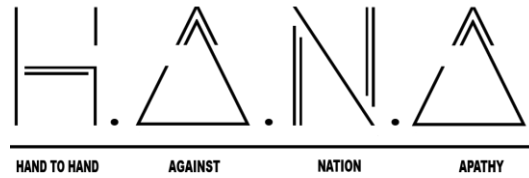
## 6. Major Change Achieved

The main change achieved is the establishment of the youth center that was previously missing in Lezha as a structure, a dream of the founders for a long time but impossible to realize without the support of EED since the need for human and material resources made the nature of the necessary structural support, a type of financial support that traditional donors do not provide. In less than 3 months, the equipment and transformation of an empty 250 m2 environment into a well-equipped space to develop various social, cultural and developmental events and, moreover, the opportunity to have human resources available for a full 2 years of guaranteed to manage it, was precisely the greatest possible incentive to achieve this major change. Having this support, all the staff's attention has been to reflect, planned and implemented the most strategic and attractive initiative for the youth of Lezhne, that is, a dignified presentation different from the majority of local NPOs without human or administrative capacities, which suffer an image blow that in creation and consequently have low performance. ABOUT

HANA was different and that has made all the difference. There are many young people who attend the center who can clearly articulate a change in their lives as a result of now attending the center HANA where they channeled all their free time.

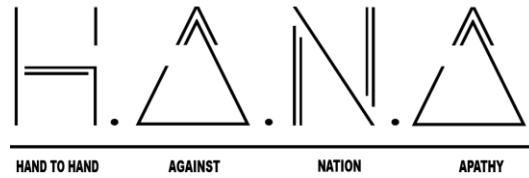
Today we feel proud to represent a complete structure, with a consolidation between the civil and public society of Lezha, with a lot of factual experience accumulated and with a wide network of collaborators and acquaintances. All this thanks to the trust that was put through the project for which it is reported. During 2 dynamic years, many experiences have made HANA gain self-confidence to aim for more ambitious plans, aiming now to move from the first major objective (establishing a serious and influential structure in Lezha) to the next objective which is the consolidation of a programmatic focus where clear progress is made and a local policy is changed, a mentality of a grouping or any cooperation influencing the intended changes is achieved. For example, the center's focus on environmental policies in Lezha to advance with the fulfillment of the legal standard of waste management by limiting the percentage of waste sent to the landfill; or, the center's focus on establishing a barrier-free tradition of a winter school of youth activism; the promotion and sustainability of an amateur social theater troupe among young people who have talents that they cannot express in any other way; sustainability of youth clubs where gender stereotypes are discussed and fought, etc. the center's focus on establishing a barrier-free tradition of a winter school of youth activism; the promotion and sustainability of an amateur social theater troupe among young people who have talents that they cannot express in any other way; sustainability of youth clubs where gender stereotypes are discussed and fought, etc. the center's focus on establishing a barrier-free tradition of a winter school of youth activism; the promotion and sustainability of an amateur social theater troupe among young people who have talents that they cannot express in any other way; sustainability of youth clubs where gender stereotypes are discussed and fought, etc.

Perhaps it is difficult to express in words compared to experiencing in reality the changes we talk about, but it can be said that it has never been easier for us as founders, to describe an achievement



without having to choose the right words ( because the achievement cannot speak for itself) than in the case of the establishment of our youth center in Lezha as well as the contribution of EED. If more donor agencies took the same approach of encouraging local or national organizations to implement a vision of their own rather than a predetermined list of activities according to a fixed and inflexible donor focus, they would undoubtedly had a better image of civil society in Albania and especially their achievements as organizations or contributing individuals. inn





in Albania and recently the MFA of Luxembourg and yet all we have achieved through them has been the implementation of an intervention within and from the youth center; without EED there would not have been a youth center (or not an attention-grabbing one). Thanks to this, we have been curiously visited by institutions that we never thought we could shoot in a room together and even more so have come on their own initiative to visit and learn about HANA and its plans. We are talking here about different embassies (US, Sweden, Austria), international organizations (OSCE, UN Albania, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, EU Delegation,

Besmira Lekaj, Executive Director, January 21, 2022

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**Report submitted by**

*(Full name, title, signature and date)*