

IRIS Network



Project is funded
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ABOUT the IRIS NETWORK

What is the IRIS Network?

Founded in 2012, the IRIS Network is a unique regional network that brings together CSOs, social service providers in SEE. The Network is based on vision of equal rights and opportunities for decent living for all. The network has been created to ensure social inclusion by supporting the environment for the provision of high quality services through support to national developmental social policies. Also, an important part of the Networks' mission is to support its national members in 7 countries and respective decision-makers in the creation of developmental policies, lobbying and advocacy focused on ensuring access to quality social services. Since 2014, the IRIS Network has seven national secretariats in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, FYROM and Albania.

IRIS in numbers:

- » **7 national networks** in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, FYROM and Albania dealing with Elderly people, People with Disabilities, Children and Youth at risk, Gender based and domestic violence, Migrants (Roma and refugees, DP and IDPs);
- » **150+** organizations from the SEE region are connected along with having their capacities enriched through provided social services;
- » **10 000** beneficiaries are provided necessary social and health services each day by our member organizations;
- » **500+** decision makers and stakeholders from civil and public sector attended our national events;
- » **36** grass root projects have been supported, focusing on improving social services on the local level.

About the PROJECT

Project “Improving the provision of Social Service Delivery in South Eastern Europe through the empowerment of national and regional CSO networks” (Social services in SEE), implemented by Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund, e.V. Germany (ASB), in partnership with SOLIDAR Belgium, Local Initiative for Development Civil Society (LIR CD) from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Centre for Legal Aid and Regional Development (CLARD) from Kosovo, SOS Telephone for women and children victims of violence (SOS Podgorica) from Montenegro, Organisation for Civil Initiatives (OGI) from Croatia, Educational centre Leskovac (EDC) from Serbia, Association of students

and youth with disabilities (ASYD) from FYR of Macedonia and Social Organization for the Support of Youth - ARISIS (Albania) in period from December 2014 to December 2016. Project is financed by European Union in framework of Partnership Programmes for Civil Society Organisations.

During the previous phase of the project, the main result was the establishment of the regional **IRIS Network** that is now covering 7 countries and has so far managed to position itself as the only SEE network gathering CSO s – Social Service Providers.

Based on the lessons learnt from the previous project the clusters of activities have been adapted and focused into two main pillars:

Pillar 1:

**Capacity Building of CSOs
and networks of CSOs
providing**

Pillar 2:

**Social Policy
Influencing**

1. Capacity building of IRIS Network

1.1. Strategic advocacy planning – Sarajevo April 2015

The IRIS network has managed to position itself as the only SEE network gathering CSO providers of social services. Having in mind the reform of the provision of social services in SEE and increasing level of outsourcing of those services towards CSOs, the need for such network is even greater. Therefore IRIS Network organized a process of strategic and advocacy planning in Sarajevo in the premises of Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) in April 2015 with the presence of the decision-makers and stakeholders from the relevant institutions. In the framework of the event joint advocacy positions on various social inclusion policies in the Western Balkans are defined. This will enable their further and more dedicated involvement in all of the future activities of the IRIS network.



1.2. IRIS Network Academy

Young activists in civil sector (44 of them), chosen from 7 countries from SEE - Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, FYROM and Kosovo, participated in the IRIS Network Academy, organized in Rijeka, Croatia from 15th to 18th June, 2015.

The Academy covered most relevant issues social workers are dealing with, such as:

- » How to address the needs of most vulnerable groups in the best possible manner?
- » How to improve social protection and services on the local level?
- » What is social entrepreneurship?
- » How to diversify funding of civil society organizations, provider different type of social services?

Academy program included visits to local CSOs providers of social services, and meetings with the officials from ministries and local authorities in Croatia. Having in mind that Croatia joined the EU recently, this was the valuable opportunity for participants from the other West Balkan countries to learn from the firsthand how the EU integration process is influencing CSOs delivering social services, and what are the benefits and challenges of the EU Social Fund.

IRIS Network Academy was supported and organized in partnership with University of Rijeka and City of Rijeka.



1.3. Traineeship program // Policy fellowship program

Mr. Bregt Saenen was the first participant at the fellowship programme related to Social Affairs appointed in SOLIDAR office in Brussels for the period of 6 months. The fellow implemented the tasks: analysis of the impact of EU social and employment policies and of the EU Enlargement Policy in the Western Balkans. In particular, in the framework of the Social Progress Watch initiative, the fellow monitored progress towards the achievement of the social objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy as well as the improvement of the social dimension of the EU Enlargement for candidate countries.

Ms Jasmina Hasanagic is selected candidate who is participating in professional training programme. Candidate is spending 4 weeks in the premises of Movimiento por la Paz (MPDL) in Madrid (Spain) gaining a learning experience on the provision of social services and civic movement in Spain.

During the following year four young people will take part in traineeship and one more will be participating in fellowship programme.

1.4. Support to the IRIS Network member organizations through Small Grants Programme

Out of 34 received project proposals, IRIS Network awarded 13 grants under 2nd CFP Support to projects of CSOs – social service providers in SEE. Project Evaluation Committee decided to support projects in 6 project countries: three in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania, two in Serbia, Kosovo, and FYROM and one in Montenegro. Total amount of the received grants is 60 000 EUR.

Implementation of all supported project starts on 4th January 2016 with the duration of four to six months. Each project deals with important social issues and strives to strengthen civil society organizations role in the creation of social policies and social protection programmes. Overall objective of the SGF is to achieve a more dynamic civil society actively participating in public debate on democracy, human rights, social inclusion and the rule of law and with capacity to influence policy and decision making processes.

Grant beneficiaries can be found in the following table.

No.	Beneficiary(ies): Name & Location	Action title	Grant amount
1	Euro Rom, Bosnia&Herzegovina	"Development of Local action plans for effective social inclusion of Roma"	4990
2	Institute of Romani culture in Albania, Albania	"Advocating for Social Service Delivery by CSOs at Local Level in Albania"	4660
3	Partnerë për Fëmijët, Albania	"Strengthening Citizenship and Advocacy with Persons with Disabilities"	4700
4	Association "Women from Una", Bosnia&Herzegovina	"Local partnership for preventing and combating violence against women"	5000
5	CAZAS, Montenegro	"Health Up"	4850
6	Društvo gerontologa Bijeljina, Bosnia&Herzegovina	"Living with dignity to the very end"	4700
7	Association of Social Workers of the City of Skopje, FYROM	"Local, but Vocal!"	4600
8	National Association Education for Life, Albania	"From Alternative training to Better Job Opportunities: a new approach to vulnerable youth"	4500
9	Beyond the Rainbow, Kosovo	"Empower Women Equality"	4500
10	Mus-e Kosova, Kosovo	"Art Values To Be Recognized"	4500
11	Poraka Nasa, FYROM	"Advocacy research tool: Early Adaptive Physical Education and Socialization for ages 4–7"	4500
12	Association of people with cerebral paralysis "Will for life", Serbia	"Equal opportunities"	4500
13	Association of parents of children and youth with special needs Presevo, Serbia	"I also has right to work"	4000

2. Social Policy Influencing

2.1. Congresses of National IRIS Networks

In order to transfer strategic guidelines adopted at the strategic planning of the regional IRIS network to the national levels, during the 2015 national partners organized an Annual Congress of their national networks. These events are used not only to set strategic goals of the national networks, but as an advocacy tool to present policy standpoints of the national networks to the decision-makers in the respective countries. National networks created and presented their strategies at the event to the stakeholders, decision makers and wider public through media. All of events are organized in close collaboration with the relevant Ministries for Social Policy.



2.2. Voice of IRIS Network in Brussels

From the beginning of migrant crisis, IRIS Network got involved through direct assistance but also in the advocating of the relevant policies. Apart from assisting in humanitarian crisis relief, IRIS Network, together with SOLIDAR organized in November 2015 roundtable debate "Migration and fundamental rights: will the EU live up to its values?" in Brussels. This round table offered to policy makers and members of the civil society the possibility to discuss about migration, fundamental rights and humanitarian assistance. Members of the SOLIDAR and of the IRIS network presented their daily work in field of migration and discussed the link between EU Enlargement and EU migration policies. Tools to support CSOs providing humanitarian assistance to migrants and refugees along the Western Balkan route were also debated. The recommendations on how to better support the work of CSOs in the Balkans were directly communicated to the representatives of the European Parliament, European Commission and EESC who attended the discussion. TACSO supported round table organization through IRIS Network activities.



IDC helping refugees in Serbia

Initiative for Development and Cooperation organized network of 25 volunteers working on the field distributing food, water, clothes, shoes and blankets to refugees in Adaševci near Serbian-Croatian borderline. IDC also established medical team, accredited by Ministry of Health of the Republic of Serbia, which provides necessary medical assistance to refugees passing through Šid. This team is active every day and night with on call doctors and nurses ready to assist great number of people.



PREDAPlus is helping in Macedonia

IRIS Network member PREDA Plus is providing immediate help to the refugees on exit point in FYROM in Tabanovce. In cooperation with ASB, PREDA Plus distributed 150 humanitarian packages per day, out of which 50 for women and 100 for men. Additionally, PREDA Plus provided food and milk for the refugee children, as well as the blankets. This number roughly covers 5 to 10% of the total distributed humanitarian aid at the moment at the spot.

2.3. Policy papers

Based on the national congresses of the IRIS networks in the region, each national IRIS network prepared a Policy Paper with the aim to focus on several specific issues within SSD in SEE which they want to raise as being the most important ones. Policy papers' topics are: Victim Protection and Safety in Cases of Domestic Violence in Kosovo, Decentralization of Services and Cooperation Between Government and Non-government Providers of Social Services in FYROM, Implementation of National/Regional Strategies in the Field of Mental Health Protection in Serbia, Development of Social Services on Local Level in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Improving the social service delivery by enhancing the role Civil Society Organisations in Albania, Applicability of Standards for the Provision of Social Services in CSOs in Montenegro. Additionally, another policy paper was created reflecting situation in SEE and possible joint actions to be implemented. Based on these Policy Papers the National IRIS Networks will conduct Advocacy Campaigns in 2016.

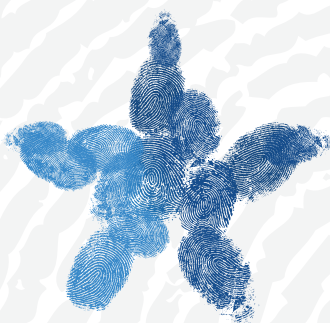
2.4. Annual Monitoring Report // Social Progress Watch Initiative

The Social Progress Watch Initiative monitors and evaluates Member States' and Candidate Member States commitments and effectiveness in contributing to promote active inclusion, reduce poverty and inequality, fight unemployment and tackle demographic challenges when developing national policy strategies in the field of education and lifelong learning, as well as employment and social sector. Annual monitoring report is composed of annual national desk studies, inputs from partners in countries in the Western Balkans as part of their contribution to the SOLIDAR Social Progress Watch Initiative. The desk studies are providing an overview of the progress made at national level in the framework of the EU enlargement process regarding the following policy areas: employment policies, services of general interest, education and lifelong learning, anti-discrimination policies, active citizenship and social economy. Another successful outcome of the implementation of the project "Improving the provision of Social Service Delivery in SEE" has been the strengthened collaboration between the IRIS Network and SOLIDAR members working in European Member States. The increased communication flow through the project website as well as the implementation of the project activities annual monitoring reporting have contributed to strengthen the relationship and knowledge exchange between the IRIS network's members with CSOs in European Member States.



Volunteer Centre Osijek immediate assistance in Croatia

IRIS Network member Volunteer Centre Osijek, in cooperation with CARE International, has organized over 100 volunteers in everyday support activities for refugees in transit centre Opatovac, a place near Croatian eastern border with Serbia, but also border crossings Tovarnik and Bapska. Volunteers are engaged in delivering humanitarian aid (food packages, clothes, raincoats, etc.) in the camp, providing support to refugees, mothers with young children who need medical and social care and helping with registration of refugees. Many prominent individuals in the community are getting involved through the VCO: actors, writers, university professors, psychologist etc. In VCO they say: "This crisis has shown a great potential for solidarity and volunteerism, proving the need for active and strong civil society."



Contact us and keep in touch with our activities!

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