



# IRIS Network

## Social policy influencing in South East Europe

**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, 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.

In previous phase of this project, main result was establishment of the regional **IRIS Network** that is now covering 7 countries and so far has managed to position itself as the only SEE network gathering CSO providers of social services.

Based on the lessons learned from the previous project the clusters of activities have been adapted and focused into two main pillars: (1) Capacity Building of CSOs and networks of CSOs providing social services and (2) Social Policy Influencing. Within the second pillar of policy influencing project partners developed policy papers relevant to the improvement of the social service provision in their respective countries.

### Policy papers

Based on the national congresses of the IRIS networks in the region, each national IRIS network prepared 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 Organizations 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. Hereby we are presenting national policy papers in short summaries. Full text of the policy paper is available at the IRIS Network website [www.iris-see.eu](http://www.iris-see.eu)



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## Improving the social service delivery by enhancing the role CSOs **IN ALBANIA**

The Albanian Government, in particular the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth has:

- » undertaken the Social Care Service Reform (2013-2016),
- » drafted the National Strategy on Social Inclusion 2015-2020.

This strategy includes the National Action Plan respectively on Gender Equality, children, Youth, Women, Victims of domestic violence and trafficking of human beings, Roma and Egyptian citizens, the LGBTI persons, persons with disabilities, elderly, HIV+ persons etc.

Currently the governmental bodies are setting the new financial instruments, legal and administrative for a sustainable system of social service delivery. The above measures aim to comply with the standards and criteria set by the European Union.

According to the National Cross-sector Strategy of Decentralization and Local Government 2015-2020, in the Republic of Albania the delivery of most social services will be decentralized and become a competence of the local government. Seen from a long-term prospective the local government under the Administrative and Territorial Reform will be on stronger position to extend the range and quantity to deliver social services. The local government will have further opportunities to generate funds. The civil society organizations are pushing to speed up the reforming process. There is the urge to further consolidate, clarify and divide the role between the central and local government on planning, financing, delivery and monitoring of social services at bottom-up level and vice-versa for each kind of service and targeted client. The unclear division of tasks, competences, responsibilities between the local and central government could jeopardise the system of social service delivery. The provision of specialized services for groups/individuals in need very likely will remain at the bottom of priority list of politicians.

**The establishment of the Regional Social Funds in the whole territory of Albania will remain in the focus for follow-up of the CSOs that provide social services. Policymaking and decision-taking bodies need to reassess the role of CSOs to provide services. They need to undertake legal steps and allocate the resources to ensure sustainable partnership between the government and CSO sector at all levels. Particular emphasis should be on the financing of social services delivery CSOs with public funds.**

The CSOs should demand their right to be part of the decision-making and be sustainable partners in the planning and delivery of social services. The demand and efforts of the CSOs should be aimed at facilitating effective and equal access for all those who need appropriate services social care. This approach should be in tune with the challenges of social policy in Albania for:

- » Effective intervention to ensure sustainable social protection;
- » Further investment in skills development and human capacity in order to improve their ability to integrate into society and the labor market;
- » Social protection systems to respond adequately to people who need it at most.



Policy paper can be found on:

<http://iris-see.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/PolicyPaper-Alb.pdf>



## Development of social services at the local level in **BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

The Social protection, as part of the overall social policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the responsibility of the entities. The joint institutional authorities at the state level have only a coordination role. The planning, organizing, financing, control and implementation of social protection measures are the exclusive competence of the entities, cantons and municipalities. At the state level there is no single strategic framework for the development of social protection system, neither common policy in this area. The entities legally regulate their social protection systems in accordance with their needs, resources and strategic commitments. Unlike that the Republic of Srpska has a unique management system of a social protection throughout its territory; the level of the Federation of BiH is responsible for defining the basis of social protection and the Cantons governing direct implementation mechanisms. Brcko District, as a separate administrative unit, has special regulations and responsibilities in this area.

All the laws on social protection in BiH (14 laws exist) similarly define the state of social need, type of beneficiary, organizational system structure and rights and services to be provided to beneficiaries in need. The law defines the priority beneficiary group: children, the elderly and persons with disabilities. The laws define the basic level of financial support and social services that are considered mandatory part of social protection measures and that must be provided to the entire area covered under the law jurisdiction (the "basic rights"). In accordance with the specific social problems that communities face, legislation defines the ability to create the new rights and services that respond to the specific needs of the citizens of these communities (extended rights). The BiH financial and material benefits have priority in the implementation of social protection measures. Unfortunately, the social services system is underdeveloped, although there are significant resources for its development (public institutions, NGOs and private institutions). The possibility of system development of social welfare services is found in the affirmation of the concept of "extended rights". The development of policies to improve the quality of social services could go in two directions:

- » To reform the legislative framework at the Entities and Cantons level,
- » To improve the practice of social services at the local level.

The reform of the regulatory framework implies recognition of the system of social services through: drafting specific legislation for services, making development strategy of social services, making service standards, the introduction of the licensing procedure of service providers, strengthening the competence of the control body in the system of social protection. The improving the practice of social services includes professional and institutional strengthening of social service providers through: making analysis of the needs of citizens for social services, development and adoption of municipal decisions about extended rights of social protection, education, exchange of good practices, piloting new services, social protection based on recognized needs of the citizens of the local communities.

The goal of advocacy campaign is to raise awareness on the importance of the development of social services at the local level because it achieves more effective social protection of citizens based on their actual needs. This goal can be reached if the activities of advocacy campaign are directed towards the development of local action plans for the development of social protection with an emphasis on the development of social services, and if the decision on extended rights of social protection is drafted and adopted at the local level. The campaign should be directed to the executive and legislative power in the local government units, Line Ministries, Centres for social work, CSOs and the public. The advocacy campaigns organisers should be CSOs social service providers and recognized non-governmental organizations, IRIS network.



Policy paper can be found on:

<http://iris-see.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/PolicyPaper-BiH.pdf>



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## Victim Protection and Safety in Cases of Domestic Violence: a Whole Community Response **IN KOSOVO**

Domestic violence in Kosovo has been a “taboo” subject for many years. It often went un-reported by its victims or witnesses, though there was a “community of silence” that accepted that it existed. Reporting domestic violence was considered a “disgrace” for the victims. This meant that vulnerable family members were twice victimized: once by the perpetrator of the violence and by the “culture of denial” that made reporting violence somehow intolerable.

Where the domestic safety and well-being is a concern, all that happens within family can no longer be considered as an internal issue of family alone. Interventions from outside the family are often required to ensure the safety and well-being of individual family members.

A new response is required from the community of Kosovo – from its people, its responsible institutions and its social agencies. It must be a coordinated response that is more reflective of our new understandings of personal human rights. Powerful legislation against all forms of physical and psychological domestic violence will be the foundation of that response. Our new policy will interpret this new legislation and identify the short and medium term goals to be achieved by this new approach to protecting victims of domestic violence. In turn, a strategy by which the policy is to be implemented further defines specific objectives to be achieved and identify structures, functions and responsibilities required to fully implement this policy.

Our renewed and coordinated protection for victims will enable them to recover in a place of safety and empower them to protect themselves and those who depend on them for their safety.

However in Kosovo there are developed the set of laws and administrative Instructions, standards and other tools in order to protect the victim of domestic violence, also many champagnes for Institutions and NGOs are organized, but the fundamental criteria to do implementation of those legislative act still remain the lack of the financial support from the government. Until now the service for domestic violence mainly are based on donation from International community and having in consideration that everyday those donation are reduced, the state must start planning a budget line to ensure that those service are covered directly by Kosovo budget.



Policy paper can be found on:

<http://iris-see.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/PolicyPaper-Kosovo.pdf>





## From idea to initiatives - reform the public social services **IN MACEDONIA**

The social protection system is of crucial importance to provide social security and welfare of the citizens in each social country. Subsequent to its independence, the Republic of Macedonia inherited a social protection system based on substantial centralization, in which the country imposed its dominant role as a protection provider, thus there was insignificant participation in the non-governmental, private and religious sectors in the activities from the social protection field. Within this system, the social protection was mostly carried out through monetary transfers and benefits for citizens exposed to social risk. The social services like non-financial measures aiming to improve the social functioning of individuals and groups exposed to social risk, were insufficiently developed, and were reduced above all, to institutional forms of protection.

The social protection system of the Republic of Macedonia enables development of non-institutional protection for people in need of social services as well as people in social risk, to use the stated services, however, the process of decentralizing the social protection has not been finished yet, the decentralization of social services, particularly of non-institutional protection, i.e. developing social services locally is still an unresolved status in the Republic of Macedonia. The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy as a leading institution which should provide and create conditions for developing social services i.e. services at local level along with the local self-government units have set a really extended deadline for these social services to start functioning locally.

The civil society sector so far has offered social services within its power and possibilities and required conditions imposed by the country and the local self-government, reducing it to project activities and according to non-stipulated protocols to carry out the minimum standards required as social service providers. A service provider which offers quality and professional service is the one which follows certain standards and guarantees that the end user will be provided with social services in compliance with all standards. Development of staff licensing programs is also required regarding employees in the social services. In Macedonia there is only a developed licensing programs for nurses working with children, the Institute for Social Activities issues licenses to the staff in tertiary education working in public or private social protection institutions. In order to overcome this obstacle it is essential to develop conditions for staff licensing and their prior education by already existing licensing education programs developed by the civil society sector, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Adult Education Center and the Vocational and Educational Training Centre.

Other major problems in our country are the sustainability of these social services, lack of minimum standards for the social service providers as well as deficiency of local plans for improvement and development of social services. The country does not allocate assets to support and develop the social services, the local self-government units have not projected budget funds for social services and service providers. The business sector is not sufficiently motivated to support social services although concerning social security; they have an opportunity to project financial assets.

Numerous national strategies exist like the National Strategy for Poverty Reduction, the National Strategy for the Elderly, the National Strategy on Demographic Ageing, the National Strategy on equalizing the rights of the disabled, in its frame aiming for social protection, yet, unfortunately, for the action plans and plans for conducting strategies the country has not allocated any budget assets, once again all work is reduced to project activities in certain areas in the civil society sector.



Policy paper can be found on:

<http://iris-see.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/PolicyPaper-MK.pdf>



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## Applicability of standards for the provision of social services by CSOs **IN MONTENEGRO**

The social protection system founded by the Law on social and child protection has a totally different system approach in relation to the previous legislation. It is based on a different paradigm in which social protection is, to a large extent, based on the social services which: need to meet to the fullest extent of the needs of beneficiary while respecting human rights and dignity; are equally accessible to all beneficiaries in the communities in which they live; give beneficiary a choice of social services and the providers of social services, whether it is a public, non-governmental or private sector and are provided continuously in the necessary duration. Service providers in accordance with this law, may be civil society organizations (CSOs), entrepreneurs, companies and individuals (Article 119).

The existence of possibility that different organizations provide social services, requires both, the necessary mechanisms for maintenance and improvement of quality system and regulatory mechanisms which enable the functioning of such a system. These mechanisms are; the standards of social services; the licensing of organizations which provide social services; the licensing of professionals who provide social services; the accreditation of training programs and programs of providing social protection.

The reform of the social protection system, after adjustment of all legislation must create the conditions for consistent enforcement in practice. It should be pointed out that the levels of involvement of CSOs in the sphere of providing of social services depends not only on the characteristics and quality of the sector itself, but rather the willingness and ability of the state to support these processes. It is necessary that a number of preconditions are met so that the CSOs would take their place in the sphere of social protection. The most important preconditions are: change in the financing of social protection and development of CSOs, the introduction of standards, accreditation and licensing for service providers, improving of the function of monitoring and evaluation, empowering beneficiaries, and providing continuing education.

Bearing in mind that the largest number of social services in Montenegro are provided by NGOs (82.9%), the understanding of the criteria and standards for social services and the assessment of the applicability of these standards in civil society organizations, is the first prerequisite in creating a plurality of service providers and functioning of such a system. This study will present the current situation in Montenegro with focus on legislative framework, the system of financing of the services, the licensing process and evaluation which will indicate what extent and in which way it is possible to standardize services in CSOs.



Policy paper can be found on:

<http://iris-see.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/PolicyPaper-MNE.pdf>



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## Deinstitutionalization of persons with intellectual and mental disabilities **IN SERBIA**

Mental disorders in Serbia is one of the biggest public health problems, caused in substantially decades of stress which our population is exposed since the nineties, while the Ministry of Health claim that mental difficulties felt close to 400,000 people. According to a survey from 2013, the presence of depressive symptoms in the adult population is connected with the material status, age and gender.

For many hospitalized patients problem arises with the exit from the institution and entering the recovery phase, because they are confronted with hostility and reluctance. In the Republic of Serbia in three of the previous government as well as in the present almost no cooperation between the Ministries of Health and Social Welfare, which together should regulate this area.

High resistance to reforms in the field of mental health occurring in the professional workers employed in institutions of stationary accommodation of these beneficiaries. In addition to the funds allocated from the central level for these institutions are financed by beneficiary. The process involves the development deinstitutionalization daily services in the community and to be financed by the central level opts for each beneficiary. But the principle that money follows the beneficiary has not yet introduced such a rule but only proclaims to take the decision go by the relevant Ministry. In this way, the institution from which institutionalize beneficiaries to services in local communities, continue to be allocated to the institution for stationary care no matter what the beneficiary is no longer a resident of the institution.

In this way discourage the process of establishing services in local communities because funds that local government have in this area are not sufficient to sustainably funded support for people with mental and an Intellectual disabilities in the manner provided for regional and national strategic documents for mental health

It is necessary to influence decision makers to establish adequate legislation for the implementation of measures adopted by regional and national strategy for mental health. Advocating for the implementation of national mental health strategy. Getting to know all the actors with elements of national strategies to support active approach to local community representatives for faster implementation of strategies to efficiently services are established at the local level that effectively support deinstitutionalization people with mental and intellectual disabilities.



Policy paper can be found on:

<http://iris-see.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/PolicyPaper-Srbija.pdf>

# ABOUT IRIS NETWORK

## What is IRIS Network?

Founded in 2012, IRIS Network is the 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. It is created to ensure the social inclusion by enabling the environment for the provision of high quality services through support to the developmental policies focused. Also, important part of Networks' mission is to support the national members and decision makers in creation of developmental policies, lobbying and advocacy focused on ensuring access to quality services. Since 2014, IRIS Network has seven national secretariats SEE.

## IRIS in numbers

**7 national networks**

in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, FYROM and Albania



**150+**

organizations from 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



Contact us and keep in touch with our activities!



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