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ASB FINALISES THE EU-FUNDED PROJECT FOCUSING ON HUMAN AND MINORITY RIGHTS IN THE TOWNS OF PAKRAC AND LIPIK AND THE MUNICIPALITY OF OKUČANI, CROATIA

The Office of the Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund (ASB) in the Republic of Croatia has recently finalised the EU-funded project focusing on development and consolidation of democracy, the rule of law and respect for human and minority rights through strengthening the reconciliation process and citizens' participation in the decision making process with the aim of establishing and improving constructive dialogue between local minority councils, minority organisations, civil society organisations (CSOs), women's associations and local authorities. This project was implemented in the towns of Pakrac and Lipik and in the municipality of Okučani in Croatia in partnership with the Serbian Democratic Forum (SDF), Croatia. The total value of this project was € 124,973.

The aims of the project were to provide direct legal assistance to minority members in realising their rights (residence status, reconstruction rights and housing provision, return of property, retirement and health insurance, employment and social care) through the SDF legal offices, to monitor any human rights violations, to indicate the shortcomings of the existing laws, to advocate the improvement of existing legislation and education of governmental employees, which should further decrease the number of human rights violations and establish a practice of respecting human rights.

Under this project, ASB also worked on increasing public awareness of the local communities and authorities about the needs and problems of the minorities (Czechs, Italians, Serbs, Hungarians and Germans), women and the disabled; who are suffering high unemployment, non-inclusion in decision-making processes and experiencing human rights violations. This situation is especially reflected in war-affected areas such as this target area where the local authorities are faced with problems such as an undeveloped decentralised government, a lack of mechanisms for the inclusion of citizens into the decision-making process, the shortage of educated professionals, small budgets, poor infrastructure and low economic activity.

Therefore, ASB in co-operation with its partners, built capacities of the minority councils and civil society organisations through education with respect to advocacy, lobbying and monitoring of minority rights, women's rights and the rights of people with disabilities. A brochure entitled "Human rights violation of returnee population in Republic of Croatia" was created by ASB in co-operation with the SDF and the Centre for support and development of civil society "Dolphin" Pakrac with a purpose of raising public sensitivity to minority issues. One thousand copies of the brochure were printed and distributed to all members of the Local Councils for Community Development (LCCD) established in each target area, local and regional authorities, state institutions, governmental offices and ministries, foreign and local NGOs, embassies, and all national minority councils.



This project is funded by
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The European Union numbers 27 Member States: 27 different nations determined to shape their future closely together. Over a period of enlargement of 40 years, they have, together, built a zone of peace, stability, progress and solidarity. The European Union is a model for overcoming conflict and promoting reconciliation through close co-operation to achieve common goals, while respecting national sovereignty and territorial integrity. But the EU is not focused on itself: its ambition is to share its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders. The European Commission is the EU's executive body.

P R E S S R E L E A S E

Through this project, the living situation of minorities in the municipalities of Pakrac, Lipik and Okučani had improved which helped them to continue living in this area fully reintegrated and at the same time, to actively contribute to the community life. The implementation of the above-mentioned projects' activities by ASB should be considered as a substantial contribution to the protection, promotion and improvement of minority/human rights in local communities of Western Slavonia.

Since 1996, ASB has implemented projects valued at € 83 million in Croatia with funding from the European Union and individual member states. ASB rebuilt more than 4,235 housing units for DPs and refugees and carried out numerous projects in the field of mine-clearance, technical, social and economic infrastructure, sustainability measures and capacity building.

For further information please contact:



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