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**ASB PROMOTES HUMAN AND MINORITY RIGHTS IN THE TOWNS OF  
PAKRAC AND LIPIK AND THE MUNICIPALITY OF OKUČANI,  
IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA**

The Office of the Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund (ASB) in the Republic of Croatia has recently received funds from the European Commission to implement a 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. This project will be 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 and the Serbian National Council (SNC), Croatia. The total value of this project is estimated at € 124,973.

In countries in transition, such as Croatia, local authorities are faced with many 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. This situation is reflected in war-affected areas especially among marginalised groups of peoples such as the three minorities (Serb, Czech and Italian) in this target area.

Therefore, ASB will work on improving public opinion at the local level in relation to minority issues and constructive dialogue between the minority organisation, local minority councils, civil society organisations, institutions and local authorities. In addition, ASB in co-operation with its partners, will identify and conciliate priority needs of the target area, increase public awareness of the local communities and authorities about the needs and problems in this area, especially in relation to minorities, as well as build capacities of the minority councils and civil society organisations through education on advocacy, lobbying and monitoring of minority needs in everyday life.

Through this project, the living situation of minorities in the municipalities of Pakrac, Lipik and Okučani should improve. This will also help them to continue living in this area fully reintegrated and at the same time, actively contribute to the community life in their towns.

Over the past 10 years, SDF, SNC and ASB have been implementing various projects related to refugee return, economic revitalisation, social inclusion and capacity building projects in the area of South Eastern Europe.

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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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.