



COUNTRY STUDY



KOSOVO

Assessing social progress in the Western Balkans 2016

This country report provides policy recommendations on how to strengthen social inclusion and protection of minorities in the Western Balkan region and how to enable the environment for CSOs to provide social services. It focuses on recent developments that have taken place since January 2016.



This country report is based on inputs provided by members of the IRIS Network, a regional network that brings together CSOs providing social services in the Western Balkans. The IRIS network has been founded in the framework of the EU-funded project “Improving the provision of Social Service Delivery in South Eastern Europe through the empowerment of national and regional CSOs”, implemented by the consortium of LIR CD BiH, OGI Croatia, EDC Serbia, SOS TELEPHONE Montenegro, CLARD Kosovo, ARSIS Albania, ASYD FYROM, and SOLIDAR - led by ASB Germany.

The inputs provided by our partners in the Western Balkans are focused on the following sections:

1. Social inclusion, human rights and protection of minorities;
2. The situation of civil society organizations as service providers.



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Social inclusion and the protection of minorities

In legal terms, the Kosovo Assembly passed a new set of laws on Human Rights in 2015. The Kosovo government adopted a package of laws for the protection of rights and freedoms as a requirement of the European Commission report on visa liberalisation. The package includes laws on gender equality, anti-discrimination and the ombudsman. The gender equality law sets up a system for the equal treatment of women, men and members of the LGBT community. The new law for the ombudsman's office includes the creation of a national mechanism for monitoring torture and inhuman treatment. These laws should promote and guarantee gender equality with equal treatment under the law. The law applies to women, men and the LGBT community, in both the public and the private sphere, including employment, the economy and the payment of social benefits. This package of laws has two purposes. Firstly, it should create a national mechanism for the prevention of torture, ill-treatment and other inhuman and humiliating punishments. Secondly, it should increase the powers of the ombudsman as a mechanism for monitoring equality and equal treatment. The new package of laws is now in force, and the expectation is that the government will set up appropriate mechanisms and fully implement them on the ground.

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) as providers of social services

CSOs have started to create a new IRIS (the regional network that brings together CSOs providing social services in the Western Balkans) network in Kosovo. The selection of partners was a very sensitive process.

They were very careful on the selection of the partners for the project, looking for partners that could increase the capacity to help people in need. In a short period of time, the Kosovo IRIS managed to create a network where partners signed legal MOUs (Memorandums of Understanding) with the CSOs. In general, we have a very fruitful cooperation with both national government bodies and local governments - and they support us in every activity.

The following steps were taken to create the Kosovo IRIS Network:

- The establishment of informal cooperation between the selected CSOs and the institutions which offer social services for vulnerable groups;
- Cooperation with CSOs that offer free social services
- Joint advocacy with national governmental institutions and local government;
- Establishing the common aim of offering better services for marginalised groups;
- Cooperation with all relevant outside bodies. This includes local organisations, international organisations such as NGOs and locally-based NGOs, the ombudsman's office, the police, the State Prosecutor, the Justice Council, the Justice Institute, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, lawyers, the Law Faculties in universities and centres for social aids.

The Kosovo IRIS Network believes financial sustainability is one of the main factors holding back the ability of CSOs to develop the provision of social services in the future. Financial sustainability is always a risk, as CSOs are mainly working on project-based contracts. Each project is time-limited, and creating good relationships, especially with governmental bodies and maintaining them, takes time and commitment. In every project, it is very important to have a network of professional cooperation, and professional access in delicate areas such as dealing



with the victims of violence. Task forces are of crucial importance, and it is also crucial to be able to quickly respond to people in need.



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This country report has been developed on the basis of inputs provided by CLARD – Centre for Legal Aid and regional Development (Kosovo), member of the IRIS network.

Part of SOLIDAR's work is dedicated to the promotion of democratic transitions in Central and Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans, and to ensure the social dimension in the EU Enlargement process. Together with local partners, SOLIDAR works to contribute to the promotion of social progress and prosperity in the Western Balkans.

SOLIDAR is a European network of membership based Civil Society Organisations who gather several millions of citizens throughout Europe and worldwide. SOLIDAR voices the values of its member organisations to the EU and international institutions across the three main policy sectors; social affairs, lifelong learning and international cooperation.



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