COUNTRY STUDY

MACEDONIA

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 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 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.

IRIS Network
Improving social services in SEE

ASB
Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund

solidar

TOGETHER FOR SOCIAL EUROPE

COUNTRY STUDY

NOVEMBER 2016

ASSESSING SOCIAL PROGRESS IN THE
WESTERN BALKANS 2016

MACEDONIA

MACEDONIA
–

Social inclusion and the protection of minorities

The Republic of Macedonia adopted a National
Strategy to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion
2010-2012), revised in 2013. In accordance with this
Strategy, action and operation plans were adopted
to improve the condition of the people affected -the
elderly, the young, people with special needs, people
suffering from rare diseases, HIV positives, children
(particularly homeless children), single parents, the
victims of domestic violence, and others.
The strategy itself has been sub-divided into 14 fields:

1. Employment
2. The informal economy and strengthening
   proprietorship
3. The labour market
4. Poverty and social discrimination
5. Healthcare
6. Long-term care
7. Education
8. Social care
9. Transport
10. Communications
11. Housing
12. Child protection
13. Equal opportunities between men and women
14. Informing/Сензибилизација (raising awareness
    of) the public on social inclusion

Furthermore, strategies were adopted on the following
areas - older people, demographic ageing, young
people, Roma citizens, drug abuse, and the recently
ratified convention for people with disabilities.
The major problem in the implementation of these
strategies is lack of budget - Macedonia does not
allocate adequate budget funds to implement the

strategies. Instead, it relies on project activities in the
civil sector, which contribute significantly to helping
the target groups and their social inclusion. The
strategies are set up aimed specifically at the target
groups' needs.

The LGBT community in particular face discrimination
across the country and they are excluded from social
policy. The community has suffered from numerous
instances of discrimination and disrespect for their
human rights. Rights on sexual orientation have been
ignored, for example the most recent law on family
emphasizes and defines marriage exclusively as the
union between a man and a woman.

The most recent sector to be hit by budget 'assets
cutting' will be HIV in 2017. The civil sector organised
many protests on this issue. The cuts show the state's
indifference, resulting in an increase in new infections
and an increase in death rates.

The government also does not have goodwill when
facing poverty and social exclusion issues. It is
artificially cutting the percentage of poor people in
its indicators, not taking into account new measures,
or European models for the measurement of poverty.
Various categories are excluded from obtaining social
help. As a result, the government is creating new levels
of poverty in Macedonia.

There are current efforts to include the disabled in
the labour market, both in the public and the private
sectors, but they show how unready the state is to
tackle this problem.

The decentralisation process has still not been
completed in Macedonia, so the local governments are
prevented from getting the powers to implement and
provide social services locally.

TOGETHER FOR SOCIAL EUROPE

ASSESSING SOCIAL PROGRESS IN THE
WESTERN BALKANS 2016

COUNTRY STUDY

MACEDONIA

NOVEMBER 2016

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) as providers of social services

According to the law on Associations and Foundations and the law on social welfare, CSOs have the opportunity to register with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and then deliver social services.

For many years, the non-member organisations of the IRIS MK (the regional network that brings together CSOs providing social services in the Western Balkans) have been delivering social services in their communities, including care for the elderly at home, care for the disabled, services and support for single parents and youth services. All these organisations, with many years of experience, are recognized by their communities and they are agents for improving the everyday lives of their target groups. The services being offered are on a daily basis and they give 24/7 support. All services are carried out according to the target groups' needs, and the listed target groups are supported by personal assistants, nurses, legal assistance, general care and so on.

In general terms, in the short period since the IRIS MK network was set up to improve the social services in Macedonia, it has created significant results and established itself in the public domain. Services provided by the voluntary sector have had to find financial support from international organisations, project activities or donors. At a local and national level, the social services need a licencing process for civil organisations offering quality services, with ISO standardising.

The following support measures are needed to further improve Macedonian CSOs' ability to provide social services:

1. Decentralisation and support by the state and local self-government to create community services, which means further decentralisation, financial support and regional support;
2. Preparing social cards/maps, and regional strategies for developing the social services on local level;
3. Standardising the services - organisations should offer additional high quality services;
4. Licencing civil organisations as providers of social services. (Although this process has been started, there should be a full commitment to complete it. Some form of government commission or agency is needed to implement the process);
5. The law on social protection needs to be altered, modified or perhaps completely rewritten such that the civil sector is considered as an expert and partner in providing social services;
6. The creation of special funds to support the social services on a central and local level.

The main challenge is for a complete change in the law on social protection. IRIS MK should become an equal partner with the state in developing social services. Together they should support and fund social care activities. This service would be of the utmost importance for the organisations as network members implementing social services, while adopting the law on social companies. It should enable additional opportunities for many services in the community and create sustainable support services.

An education process is also crucial, to strengthen the capacities of civil organisations for the implementation of quality social services.

solidar

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.