

# Social Rights for Vulnerable Groups (SoRi)

## The Challenge

Accession to the EU is a declared political goal of the five countries of the Western Balkans: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia and Serbia. Furthermore, with the exception of Kosovo, they have ratified the European Social Charter and have assumed the obligation to guarantee comprehensive social rights.

There are still deficiencies in these countries' transposition of the Community Acquis (the body of rights and obligations common to EU Member States). This is particularly evident in terms of social policy and the guarantees for social rights, including the right to non-discrimination. Those suffering the consequences are primarily the members of vulnerable groups, including ethnic minorities (above all the Roma), internally displaced people, people with disabilities, migrants, refugees, women and girls.

Members of these disadvantaged groups often do not have sufficient knowledge about social rights, access to social services, education, healthcare or housing. They often live in appalling conditions. Many members of the Roma population in the Western Balkans live below the national poverty threshold and are unable to secure their own livelihoods, depending instead on assistance from their families or from the state. However, the institutions legally responsible for this are not yet in a position to provide these people with adequate support. Even today, key actors at local and national levels are not able to create adequate conditions for ensuring equal access to social rights and social services for all vulnerable groups.

Name	Social Rights for Vulnerable Groups
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Countries	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Serbia
Lead executing agency	Ministry of Health and Social Protection (AL), Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees (BA), Ministry of Local Government Administration (KS), Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MK), Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-government (SR)
Duration	2015 – 2019
Project value	9.45 million Euros

## Goal

Key stakeholders such as centres for social work, local administrations and non-governmental organisations have improved the conditions needed to ensure equal social rights for vulnerable groups in selected municipalities.

## Our approach

This regional project focuses on the state institutions whose job it is to guarantee human rights and social services. It also works with selected local authorities responsible for providing those services, and with civil society organisations active in the social sector. It aims to strengthen the capacities both of individual professionals and of state and non-state institutions, while concentrating on the following areas of activity:

### 1. Social Services

Innovative and appropriate approaches to social work, such as outreach social work, are promoted. To this end, the project is working to improve the capacities of local actors, such as centres



Left to right:

Mobile teams reach out to vulnerable people in their communities; SoRi Postcard;

for social work, local administrations and NGOs.

## 2. Awareness raising

Support is provided for appealing information and awareness-raising measures promoting social rights and services, as well as non-discrimination. Local stakeholders are making greater efforts to inform and sensitise vulnerable groups in these areas. The awareness raising activities also target the population in general and are conducted in collaboration with national human rights and anti-discrimination institutions.

## 3. Funding for local social services

The project introduces solutions for long-term funding of local social services for vulnerable groups. It advises local state and non-state actors on developing sustainable funding concepts for such service provision, and supports their implementation. These actors learn to identify sources of financing and to apply for funding. The project has also introduced a 'social business' model which reinvests commercial profits in socially oriented measures, thereby establishing a sustainable financial basis for the organisations involved.

## 4. Sharing experiences

Here, the focus is on regional exchanges of tried-and-tested solutions and on disseminating good practice examples. The project supports learning and networking among stakeholders at local and national levels. It aims to create the conditions in which these actors can share their successful approaches to the social inclusion of vulnerable groups, both within their own countries and across national borders in the Western Balkans.

## Results

- Mapping of vulnerable groups (with a special focus on returnees) and social services available on a local level has been completed in all pilot municipalities
- Multidisciplinary mobile teams/working groups for working with vulnerable groups have been established in most pilot municipalities
- Tailor-made capacity building trainings for accessing and using IPA funds have been conducted
- Capacity building trainings of stakeholders on the topics of human rights, social rights and anti-discrimination are under way. More than 1,700 professionals have been trained so far.
- Tailor-made services for returnees in selected municipalities have been developed
- The establishment of four social enterprises has been financially and technically supported
- Strengthening of capacities of stakeholders to establish and run social enterprises is under way
- Innovative awareness raising measures (theatre plays, animated cartoons, tv shows, exhibitions, etc.) on the topic of social rights and anti-discrimination have been conducted in several municipalities
- Approaches for inclusion of minorities and vulnerable groups have been successfully transferred from Germany and implemented in the local context in several municipalities

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