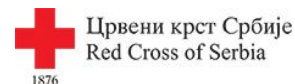




The project is funded
by the European Union



Taking Action on Social Inclusion of Older People

Newsletter Nr. 1;
20 July 2016

Welcome to the first issue of the TASIOP (Taking Action on Social Inclusion of Older People) newsletter that will be covering the development in the regional project dedicated to social inclusion of older people. In this inaugural issue we present the background and inception phase activities: kickoff meetings, liaising with the partners and stakeholders as well as media activities.

Background

Taking Action on Social Inclusion of Older People is a project created to harness the power of the civil sector in five western Balkans countries in response to demographic ageing. The ageing of population is a prominent phenomenon across most of Europe: 23.2% of the European population was over the age of 60 in 2014 with estimated share of older people by 2050 climbing to 33.6%. The effects of population ageing are however different from country to country in terms of how the society accommodates to changing demographic structure. Global AgeWatch Index, a tool developed by HelpAge International to gauge and compare the quality of life of older people across the world and covering 96 countries as of 2015, ranks Albania as 53rd, Serbia as 66th and Montenegro as 68th (with data for Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina as yet being incomplete) which clearly indicates that Balkans' societies are underprepared to face demographic ageing.



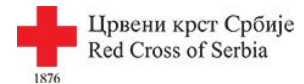
Aware of the need to respond to demographic ageing by mobilising the whole society, six civil society organisations worked together on creating the project TASIOP. The project is supported by European Union through its IPA fund, the Austrian Red Cross as well as the Austrian Development Agency. It aims to strengthen the networks of civil society organisations in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia to improve social inclusion of older people in local communities and the society at large across the region. The project will improve inclusion of older people in decision making processes related to ageing and older age as well as reinforce the positive image of older

people in the project countries. The countries selected for the project share a lot of institutional history and practices in relation to social and health protection of older people and the partner organisations in each country have years of experience in implementing projects and programmes focused on older persons and





The project is funded
by the European Union



improving the quality of life in the older age. Of course, all the countries in the project are also on some of the stages of EU Accession process. This creates opportunities for sharing relevant experience across the region and ensuring that civil sector plays a significant role in assisting the decision makers in all of the countries undergoing transition and preparing for EU membership.

The project was launched in February 2016 and will run for 36 months. The activities will include:

- capacity building for civil society networks and older people themselves in the five countries,
- working with the media,
- educating media professionals in order to reduce discrimination, promote positive image and improve the perception of ageing and older people,
- Raising public awareness on healthy ageing, lifelong learning and

volunteering through campaigns that will be simultaneously organised in all the project countries.

These campaigns will work on improving the perception of older people as actively contributing to development of their communities and using their knowledge and experience to enhance social cohesion at national and local level. In turn, creating and spreading positive image of older people will help decrease their isolation and motivate them to be more active and take their rightful position in the society.

In addition to these activities, support will be provided for volunteer activities of older people in urban and rural environments.

Public advocacy for improved quality of life of older people will be another important part of the project and this is why research studies in all five countries are planned. The data collected and processed through these exercises will also serve to create recommendations for decision makers in creating inclusive policies.

Partners

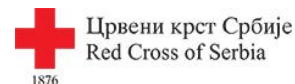
The Red Cross of Serbia is the leading partner and coordinator of the project due to its many years of experience in the field of ageing and protection of older people. Other partners are Austrian Red Cross (providing technical support), Albanian Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics, Osmijeh NGO, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Red Cross of Montenegro,

Macedonian Red Cross and Humanost, NGO from Macedonia. These partners are, each in their respective country, coordinating or founding civil society networks focusing on ageing and older people in their respective countries, leading the research and strategic planning activities and facilitating the capacity building for network members.





The project is funded
by the European Union



Project activities in the first three months

Regional Kickoff Meeting in Belgrade

The first regional Kick off meeting was hosted by the Red Cross of Serbia from 9th to 11th March 2016 in Belgrade. At the three day meeting the partners discussed the activities in the first year of the project: performing a situation analysis in each country – a research of the legislative framework but also the analysis of the capacity of the civil society to successfully advocate on this topic – and then following it with strategic planning that will take into account the necessary capacity building for the civil sector as well as the identified needs in terms of public advocacy. This will set the stage for research activities in each of the project countries that will focus on the chosen most relevant topic for the older population and the results of which will be the foundations of the advocacy activities for the course of the project.



An important segment of the project is inclusion of experts who will contribute to increasing the capacities of partner organisations and the Kick-

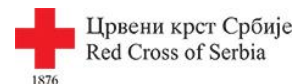
off meeting thus featured Ms. Bridget Sleaf, Senior Policy Advisor of HelpAge International from the United Kingdom. Ms Sleaf had a session – lecture and discussion – with the project partners on data collection for efficient advocacy, as one of the preparatory activities for all the project countries. As one of the challenges of demographic ageing is the need to optimise systems of public support through better targeted policy changes. In order to design the policies to befit the specific needs, capacities and the diverse context of ageing it is crucial to obtain and provide reliable evidence that will move beyond mere statistics and present case studies and best policy practices.

Head of the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit of the Government of Serbia Ivan Sekulović has talked to the participants of the meeting about social inclusion and work with grassroots organizations on improving inclusion of older people in local context. Finally a session with the representatives of the Resource Centre of Technical Assistance for Civil Society Organisations in Belgrade, whose experts provided helpful clarifications to the partners on various technical details related to project management as well as the issues of the visibility of the activities.





The project is funded
by the European Union



Activities in Serbia



The Red Cross of Serbia coordinates the project implementation due to its rich, long experience in projects and programmes targeting and working with older people and its experience in advocacy to improve the quality of life of older people. It is also a partner of HelpAge International, a civil society organisation based in the United Kingdom, a member of International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse as well as the Global Alliance for Rights of Older People.

The Red Cross of Serbia organised a national kickoff meeting on 11th April. The meeting was attended by HumanaS network representatives – a network of civil society organisations working with older people coordinated by the Red Cross of Serbia – as well as representatives of other civil society organisations, of older people, institutions working with older people, Marija Raković from the Belgrade UNFPA office and other partners. More than thirty participants followed the presentation of objectives and activities of the three year project in the region

and then discussed the opportunities for inclusion of older people in decision making processes related to ageing and older age, as well as influence building of positive image of older people in the project countries. The response to the project and the proposed activities and objectives was enthusiastic with the civil society organisations expressing satisfaction with the information on display and strong interest in taking part. Capacity building elements of the project resonate strongly with the interests of these organisations and their presence in the field will help many older persons to become more active and do meaningful work in their local communities.

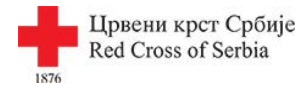
On the occasion of the 7th of April, World Health Day a delegation of older people, representatives of the Red Cross of Serbia and of HumanaS network have visited the Deputy Minister of Health Dr Vesna Knjeginjić. This was a part of the Age Demands Action – ADA for Health campaign globally coordinated by HelpAge. More information can be found [on the Red Cross of Serbia Website](#). The Red Cross of Serbia also took part on the session organised by the national Commissioner for Protection of Equality on discussing the Commissioner's Strategic Plan for the 2016-2020 period. The plan foresees creating of a national network against discrimination and the Red Cross and other HumanaS members will take part.

Red Cross of Serbia developed the Communication Plan and the Visibility Factsheet as well as the Monitoring plan for the project with assistance from the Austrian Red Cross.





The project is funded
by the European Union



Activities in Albania

After participating in the regional kickoff meeting in Belgrade, Albanian Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics (AAGG), the leading partner for the project activities in Albania started talks and consultations with the Albanian TACSO office, as well as select civil society organisations (members of the AAGG-lead network Movement of Organisations Supporting Healthy Ageing (MOSHA) and other) and government officials.



These culminated in the national kickoff meeting for the project on 21st April in Tirana with 30 participants. Most relevant civil society organisations operating in the field of ageing participated in the event along with representatives from Ministries, Tirana municipal government, social services institutions, universities, media, UN agencies and EU.

There were also ten representatives of several branches of pensioners unions from the country regions. The meeting was also attended by the Deputy Minister of Health.



Details of the TASIOP project were presented in the meeting, while all the representatives discussed their organisations' positions on issues of older age and potentials of collaborating with AAGG and the project. The meeting also featured a retrospective of ageing in Albania and the region.

Representatives of central and local governments voiced their support for the action mentioning as well some of the challenges in the collaboration between civil society and policy makers. TACSO representative gave a view of opportunities for Albanian civil society in the field of networking and coalition building. UN representative assured their support and partnership with the project.

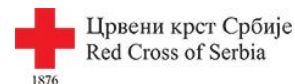
The meeting was used to announce the upcoming situation analysis, by discussing the methodology and deciding the best approach to gather the data with the participants. AAGG and MOSHA will be finalising the situation analysis and designing the strategic advocacy plan based on its results in June.



To increase the visibility of the project on 6th May AAGG and MOSHA organised a street march for 100 older people, activists of three pensioners associations from Tirana and their provincial branches to follow up the kick off meeting.



The project is funded
by the European Union



Media representatives were invited to cover the event and at the start of the march AAGG representative answered their questions. At the Amphitheatre speeches were given by other AAGG representatives, presenting facts about low participation of older people in Albania's civil

society and public life as well as underlining opportunities provided by the project initiative. A group of public health students provided some simple tests and measurements on health and mobility for interested participants.

Activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Osmijeh NGO, the leading partner in Bosnia and Herzegovina organised a national kickoff meeting in Sarajevo on 15th April upon having a consultative meeting with the EU representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina organised by



TACSO office. In addition to participants from the existing national network "For Ageing with Dignity", representatives from the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees and a representative from UNFPA took part in the meeting too.

The representative from the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees was introduced as the national focal point on ageing at the meeting, for the first time in Bosnian history.

Participants expressed their satisfaction with the project objectives and the opportunity to work together and pursue the recognition of the older people's rights. They all agreed on the need of the Network members to strengthen their

capacities as well as to pursue the common goals. Additionally, government representatives and UNFPA enthusiastically reacted to revitalisation of the Network and opportunities for future partnership, especially with BiH government re-initiating the process of national policy framework development with the need to have civil society take part in it. In more specific terms, the BIH government, with the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees as the leader, has started developing national Human Rights Strategy and the Network will be invited to participate.



Also, the Network will follow the suggestion made by the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees and address the relevant Ministry – Ministry of Civic Affairs, for example, to ask for formal recognition of the international dates such as June 15th, World Elder Abuse Awareness Day and October 1st, International Day of Older Persons.



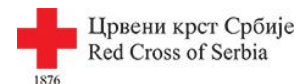
Црвен крст на Република Македонија
Крстот и куќа на Републикa сè Македонисè
Macedonian Red Cross



Crveni krst Crne Gore



The project is funded
by the European Union



The Network will invite relevant new organisations to join (women's organisations, youth organisations, journalist organisations, disability organisations etc.) to better address the heterogeneous needs in the ageing world.

All participants were also informed on the situation analysis process for the Network and were invited to cooperate on that.

Activities in Macedonia

Macedonian Red Cross and Humanost NGO, the partners running the project in Macedonia have identified NGOs in Macedonia interested to become members of the network-in-the-making of civil society organizations focusing on social inclusion of older people. The initial membership of the network will include a number of organisations whose focus is on older people (Union of Associations of Pensioners of



Macedonia, University of Third Age), development and human rights (Justicija, Sumnal).

Macedonian Red Cross and Humanost NGO organised a kickoff meeting on 13th April, presenting the project to government institutions, civil society organisations, international agencies and the media. The meeting was covered by the national media (examples of media coverage: <http://tv21.tv/web/?p=73444>, http://kanal5.com.mk/vesti_detail.asp?ID=9494



[2 or http://mrt.com.mk/node/31487](http://mrt.com.mk/node/31487)) and the evaluation done at the end of the meeting showed enthusiastic reception of the project objectives and priorities among the participating civil society representatives. UNFPA expressed their readiness to support the project activities in Macedonia too.

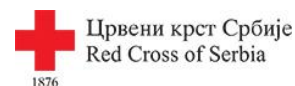
The project partners contracted an expert to work on situation analysis that will provide information on relevant stakeholders, the capacity of civil society organizations, gaps in policies, services and the needs of older people, and will begin to build the foundations of the strategic plan of the network.

On 26th April Mrs. Olga Fimin – Projects Assistant in the European Commission Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations Western Balkans Regional Cooperation and Programmes Unit in





The project is funded
by the European Union



Brussels visited the project partners in Macedonia. Meeting in the Macedonian Red Cross headquarters, she discussed the start of

the project activities and reviewed the financial documents of the project.

Activities in Montenegro

Red Cross of Montenegro has had a long history of working with older people starting in early 2000s with volunteer-based service activities that have been building up to reach the most vulnerable older people across the country but also to ensure intergenerational solidarity between older people and young volunteers who are mostly high school or university students.



The activities have targeted older people living in their homes but have expanded to clubs for older people and in the last several years the Red Cross has heavily focused on advocacy for older people trying to address the common image stereotypes but also find solutions for some of the frequent problems they encounter. TASIOP project is a step to the next level with the organisation working on building a partnership network with other civil society actors.

Red Cross of Montenegro organised the project kickoff meeting 21st April inviting a selection of

civil society organisations, international agencies and government representatives for a discussion on the project's objectives and other details. Since there was no prior network of civil society organisations working on issues of older people in Montenegro, here Red Cross, using its experience and expertise, lead the initiative to establish a functional network of civil society actors to work with national and international institutions and agencies on issues related to ageing and older people.

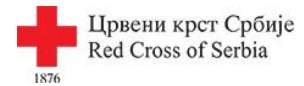


The selection of participants in the kickoff meeting reflects the diverse environment in Montenegrin civil sector, ranging from human rights organisations, organisations focusing on volunteering, support and services provided to older people, to those focusing on education. All in all seven organisations present at the meeting (in addition to the representatives of UNDP and public institutions) expressed their interest to join the new network. The formal signing of the memoranda of understanding will be organised at the national network meeting in late June and





The project is funded
by the European Union



all the participants agreed to come up with recommendations for other potential partners and members.

All the participants have high expectations for the project first in producing relevant actionable

data on the target population and then in working on strategic initiatives that will enable the civil sector and older people to enter a period of more stable and meaningful cooperation with public institutions on the issues related to ageing.

Austrian Red Cross Activities

Within the TASIOP project, the AutRC is project partner and will provide general support regarding the implementation and development of the project and specifically provide technical support on grant management. The AutRC will also coordinate and carry out the midterm-evaluation of the project. Furthermore a training on EU proposal writing will be conducted for CSO network members.

The Austrian Red Cross has been working for a long time in the Western Balkan regions and has long-standing experience and good cooperation with Red Cross National Societies in the field of home care and social inclusion as well as disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction. Since 2010, the AutRC has been supporting the Macedonian Red Cross and the Red Cross of Montenegro in developing home-based services for older people focusing on quality assurance in service provision, advocacy and networking to enable efficient and sustainable partnership building and educational initiatives for further awareness-raising among the wider public. Together with the Red Cross of Serbia and with support of Neighbour in Need (NIN), the AutRC supports a disaster preparedness program in schools in order to strengthen the resilience of communities in major flood-prone areas.

The AutRC was also the coordinator of the network project "South East European Forum on Climate Change Adaptation", including Civil

Society Organization (CSO) networks in Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia which aimed to raise awareness about the humanitarian consequences of climate change in the SEE region.

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union through the CIVIL SOCIETY FACILITY AND MEDIA PROGRAMME 2014-2015. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the Taking Action on Social Inclusion of Older People project partners and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.

