

Respect for human rights of vulnerable groups

Improving economic, social and cultural rights of vulnerable groups in the Western Balkans

The challenge

Accession to the European Union (EU) is a declared political goal of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, North Macedonia and Serbia. While equality, fight against discrimination and the inclusion of vulnerable groups constitutes an important part of the EU negotiations for accession, the implementation of legal frameworks, political strategies and action plans to ensure full economic, social and cultural rights (ESC rights) has been stalling for years. Similarly, little headway is being made in implementing the 2030 Agenda and especially its overarching principle of 'leave no one behind' (LNOB). The region faces vast socio-economic challenges. Besides, neither local nor national stakeholders are capable to adequately ensure respect for human rights, including the right to non-discrimination and social protection.

Throughout the Western Balkans region, those suffering the consequences are primarily members of vulnerable groups, such as (ethnic) minorities (e.g. Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians), persons with disabilities, members of the LGBTIQ community, refugees, internally displaced persons, vulnerable migrants and returnees, poor residents of rural areas, single parents, the elderly, young people, as well as women and girls.

Members of vulnerable groups often face multiple forms of discrimination, among others hostility and threat of their physical and mental well-being. Apart from being at a high risk of poverty, many of them do not have equal access to employment opportunities and have only limited access to education, especially primary school and secondary education. Their living conditions are often disastrous and their access to social protection and health care is insufficient.

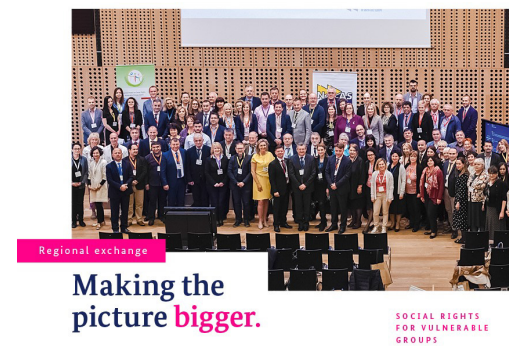
Many members of vulnerable groups lack knowledge about social rights and access to social services, education, healthcare and housing. State and non-state entities, on the other hand, do not have the relevant data required to meet the shortage of basic public services for vulnerable groups.

Our approach

Project name	Social Rights for Vulnerable Groups II (SoRi II)
Commissioned by	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project region	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, North Macedonia, Serbia
Lead executing agency	Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS)
Duration	October 2019 to September 2022

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

This regional project focuses on local and national governmental as well as non-governmental actors whose job it is to ensure ESC rights. Based on the principle of 'leave no one behind' it enables the responsible actors to identify, develop and apply strategies for ensuring ESC rights for vulnerable groups. The measures aim at promoting the creation of structures to support these groups, while concentrating on the following three areas of activity:



L. to r.: SoRi I Outreach work / SoRi I-NALAS Regional Conference

1. Scaling-up of good practices

Enhancing capacities of public and civil society stakeholders to replicate successful approaches for protection and promotion of ESC rights.

The project assists government agencies, local authorities and non-governmental organisations in scaling-up their inclusion and supports their efforts towards vulnerable groups. In doing so, it builds on past experiences and results by scaling-up innovative social approaches that were piloted in the predecessor project. The approaches and good practices are disseminated via so-called learning clusters, proven formats for learning and sharing created by NALAS (Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe). Additionally, the capacities of representatives of relevant ministries, of other institutions and organisations which participate in the scaling-up process are also strengthened.

2. Social Mapping

Strengthening capacities of relevant national and local institutions to integrate the LNOB principle into evidence-based planning and decision making for vulnerable groups.

Relevant local stakeholders are supported in conducting mapping processes in their respective communities, hereby addressing the prevailing lack of data regarding the LNOB principle. To do so, a method for collecting social data within the city administration is being developed (social mapping). Social mapping facilitates the data collection to identify who is being excluded or discriminated against, how and on what grounds, as well as who is experiencing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and inequalities. Here, too, the project involves the local authority associations in the different countries and their umbrella organisation, NALAS, as intermediaries and exchange platforms.

3. Social Mentoring

Strengthening capacities of selected stakeholders for mentoring and integration of vulnerable groups into businesses.

The employability of particularly vulnerable groups is being improved by providing them with the opportunity to participate

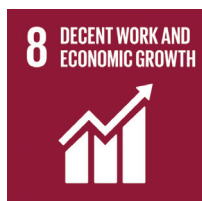
in social mentoring programmes. Social mentors support and advise them on the process of employment-seeking and starting a job, for instance, through introducing them to the requirements of vocational trainings, application procedures for jobs or coaching on relevant social skills.

The project works with selected companies and governmental as well as civil society actors who will be informed on and sensitized about the needs of vulnerable people and the benefits of social mentoring.

The benefits

The project aims at achieving the following benefits:

- Through scaling-up social inclusion approaches will be embedded more effectively and sustainably at local level throughout the region. They will contribute to the ensuring of ESC rights and an improvement of living conditions of vulnerable groups.
- Disseminated experiences as well as know-how on the municipal level, vertical coordination processes and cross-border exchange will influence national policy and its implementation in favour of a stronger focus on the inclusion of vulnerable groups. Scaling-up of good practices via institutions and partners represents an efficient and sustainable form of capacity development in the partners' systems.
- Gathering data and raising awareness of relevant stakeholders about vulnerable groups, their needs and the gaps between the needs and social services offered will ensure that the overarching principle of LNOB is given greater consideration in planning and decision-making processes.
- Informing state and private sector entities about so-called social mentoring programmes and building their capacities to offer such programmes will enable them to better meet the needs of vulnerable groups when seeking, taking up and staying in employment and will reduce discrimination of jobseekers.



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Social Rights for Vulnerable Groups II
Project main office in North Macedonia
Antonie Grubishikj Nr. 5, 1000 Skopje
Phone: +389 (0) 2 3103 570
Michael.Samec@giz.de
www.giz.de

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