

# Social Rights for Vulnerable Groups (SoRi)

## The Challenge

Accession to the EU is the declared political goal of the five countries of the Western Balkans: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\*, 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 Acquis Communautaire (the body of rights and obligations common to EU Member States). This is particularly evident in terms of social policies and the guarantees for social rights, including the right to non-discrimination. Those suffering the consequences are primarily members of vulnerable groups, e.g. (ethnic) minorities (Roma and other, e.g. Ashkali and Egyptians), persons with disabilities, single parents, internally displaced persons, the elderly, LGBT, poor residents of rural areas, vulnerable (potential) migrants and returnees, as well as women and girls. Members of disadvantaged groups often do not have sufficient knowledge about social rights and access to social services, education, healthcare and housing. Their living conditions are often disastrous. Many members of the Roma population in the Western Balkans live below the national poverty threshold, and are not able to secure livelihood for themselves. They mostly depend on assistance from the state. However, the competent institutions have so far

not been able to support these people sufficiently. Key local and national actors are not able to create adequate conditions for guaranteeing equal access to social rights and to social services to all vulnerable groups.

Name	Social Rights for Vulnerable Groups
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Implemented in	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, 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 (RS)
Duration	2015 – 2019
Project value	7.95 Mio Euro

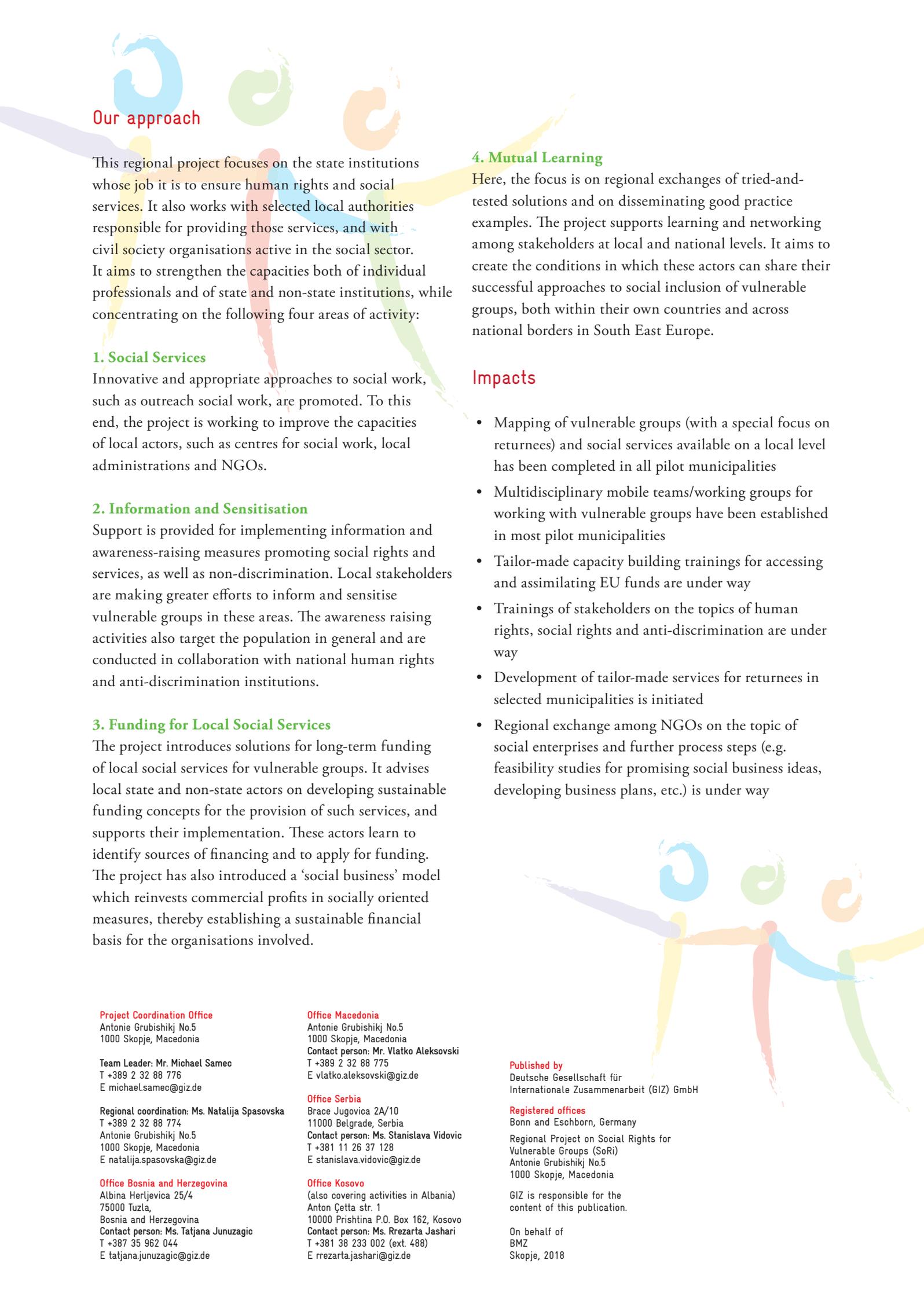
\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.



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## Goal

Key stakeholders, such as centers 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 ensure 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 four 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 for social work, local administrations and NGOs.

### 2. Information and Sensitisation

Support is provided for implementing 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 the provision of such services, 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. Mutual Learning

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 social inclusion of vulnerable groups, both within their own countries and across national borders in South East Europe.

## Impacts

- 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 assimilating EU funds are under way
- Trainings of stakeholders on the topics of human rights, social rights and anti-discrimination are under way
- Development of tailor-made services for returnees in selected municipalities is initiated
- Regional exchange among NGOs on the topic of social enterprises and further process steps (e.g. feasibility studies for promising social business ideas, developing business plans, etc.) is under way

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