

Scaling-up: Forum on Social Dialogue and Cooperation

Regional Project on Social Rights for Vulnerable Groups

Short Background

Implementation and protection of human/social rights in the Western Balkans is a challenge. Although there are significant improvements in this area today, several groups remain vulnerable, especially the Roma minority, people with disability, at risk children and youth and elderly. The general impression is that local/municipal stakeholders do not have enough capacities for identification, planning and provision of qualitative and targeted services for vulnerable groups. Lack of client-oriented approaches and sparse public funds that are not being spent as effectively and timely as they could be, represent other shortcomings. To this end, there is a need to strengthen capacities in developing all-inclusive needs analysis and long-term planning methodologies by introducing also multidisciplinary approach and proactive service provision measures.

About the approach

Social Dialogue Forums are multidisciplinary municipality embedded platforms, bringing different actors, mainly representatives from NGOs and public authorities, together and facilitating dialogue, cooperation and exchange. They promote a culture of people-oriented and non-discriminatory decision-making and enable timely and concrete interventions for the most at-risk categories. Representatives of civil society have the chance to sensitise decision-makers on current issues and to advocate for their interests and deprived social categories that they represent. Municipalities, on the other hand, are brought closer to their communities which can increase their ability to identify, address and prevent shortcomings proactively, ultimately leading to better focused planning processes and provision of services in a qualitative and timely manner.

While the focus originally was on dialogues with ethnic minority groups, Social Dialogue Forums now uses a holistic approach targeting all types of vulnerable persons.

Results

Social Dialogue Forums enable information exchange between stakeholders. It is a tool for bringing together and sharing the voices of vulnerable communities and local actors, actively integrating them in decision-making processes. Such cooperation between the public institutions and the civil sector allows for finding desirable solutions to common problems, ultimately leading to improving the quality of life of vulnerable groups in a community by developing proactive and concrete intervention measures.

Story from the Field

The forum on Social Dialogue and Cooperation was initially implemented in the municipality of Tetovo, North Macedonia and is based on a model from the Schleswig-Holstein region in Germany. The forum in Tetovo is characterised by non-hierarchical collaboration and communication between participants, its representatives and decision-makers. The main goal of the forum is to lay the foundation for the realisation of equal access and rights of all citizens regardless of their ethnicity and social background. Similar models in line with the Forum approach were developed in several municipalities in Kosovo* with the establishing of 'Municipal Multidisciplinary Working Groups'. Another interesting example is with 'Minority Commissioner' actions in Bijeljina, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

*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.

Title	Social Dialogue Forum - Tetovo
Timeframe	October 2016 - July 2019
Partners involved	Local NGOs; municipal representatives; political party representatives in the municipality
Target group(s)	All vulnerable groups with focus on ethnic minorities
Country	Tetovo, North Macedonia



■ Social Dialogue in Municipal Multidisciplinary Working Groups

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