



COUNTRY STUDY

ALBANIA

Assessing social progress in the Western Balkans 2016

This country report provides policy recommendations on how to strengthen social inclusion and protection of minorities in the Western Balkan region and how to enable the environment for CSOs to provide social services. It focuses on recent developments that have taken place since January 2016.

This country report is based on inputs provided by members of the IRIS Network, a regional network that brings together CSOs providing social services in the Western Balkans. The IRIS network has been founded in the framework of the EU-funded project “Improving the provision of Social Service Delivery in South Eastern Europe through the empowerment of national and regional CSOs”, implemented by the consortium of LIR CD BiH, OGI Croatia, EDC Serbia, SOS TELEPHONE Montenegro, CLARD Kosovo, ARSIS Albania, ASYD FYROM, and SOLIDAR - led by ASB Germany.

The inputs provided by our partners in the Western Balkans are focused on the following sections:

1. Social inclusion, human rights and protection of minorities;
2. The situation of civil society organizations as service providers.



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Social inclusion and the protection of minorities

In the past year, the Albanian government has set up a 'National Action Plan' on gender equality, children, youth, women, the victims of domestic violence and human trafficking, Roma and Egyptian citizens, LGBTI, the disabled, the elderly, people who are HIV positive and on other forms of discrimination. The Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth (MSWY) set up a the 'Social Care Service Reform' commission (2013-2016) and drafted the National Strategy on Social Inclusion 2015-2020, which set up the National Action Plan. Governmental bodies are currently setting up finance and a sustainable legal and administrative system for the delivery of social services. These measures aim to comply with EU standards and criteria.

According to the Albanian "National Cross-sector Strategy for Decentralisation and Local Government" (2015-2020), the delivery of most social services will be decentralised and they will become a local government responsibility. From a long-term perspective, local governments will be in a stronger position to extend the range and quantity of social services under the proposed administrative and territorial Reforms. Local governments will also have opportunities to generate funds.

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) as providers of social services

The 'IRIS Network' (the regional network that brings together CSOs providing social services in the Western Balkans) in Albania supports children, young people and women in vulnerable situations, marginalised Roma and Egyptian communities, the disabled, people

in extreme poverty, victims of domestic violence and trafficking, LGBTI and other groups suffering from discrimination.

The IRIS Network Albania is made up of 23 CSOs and it delivers multi-disciplinary, innovative and high-quality social services. The services provided are client-oriented, flexible on time and location, and tailored to beneficiaries' needs. They also include case management, day-care and residential centres, emergency responses (available 24/7), outreach interventions, the facilitation of access to public services, capacity building for relevant stakeholders and advocacy activities. Support from the Albanian Government is very limited both at central and at local level.

To improve social services provision in the future, members of IRIS Albania call for:

- Enhanced participation for CSOs with the government during the drafting of laws and policies related to social services.
- Clear-cut rules, standards and procedures for the public funding of CSOs, including the percentage of the annual budget that is provided annually by both central and local government.
- Central government to allocate a specific item in the annual budget (most likely through an increase in the Agency's annual budget to support to civil society) to ensure public funding for the CSOs.
- Unambiguous rules on allocating public funds for CSOs to overcome prejudices and other challenges in this area.

Among the main challenges for CSOs providing social services in Albania, members of the IRIS Network said that due to the shortage of capacities and resources, the relevant Albanian state stakeholders, at both central and local level, cannot deliver the social services that individuals and different social strata need in the required quantity and quality, and in an appropriate



way. IRIS Albania Network members ensure their funding mostly from international donors, both public and private. The delivery of social services by IRIS members and other CSOs in Albania are:

- Project-driven and adapted to the requirements of the foreign donors;
- Reliant on the fluctuation of funding;
- Insufficiently funded;
- Unsustainable in the long-term.

Ways to enhance the social service delivery in Albania in the future include:

- Social procurement as the right approach to ensure the delivery of social services by private providers. Due to its particularities, the procedure for social procurement should be separated from the general procedure for public procurement.
- Setting up and strengthening local and regional social funds.
- Increasing the overall amount of funds that central and local government provide for social services.
- Allocating public funds to procure private providers (particularly CSOs) for the delivery of social services.



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This country report has been developed on the basis of inputs provided by ARSIS, Social Organisation for the Support of Youth (Albania), member of the IRIS network.

Part of SOLIDAR's work is dedicated to the promotion of democratic transitions in Central and Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans, and to ensure the social dimension in the EU Enlargement process. Together with local partners, SOLIDAR works to contribute to the promotion of social progress and prosperity in the Western Balkans.

SOLIDAR is a European network of membership based Civil Society Organisations who gather several millions of citizens throughout Europe and worldwide. SOLIDAR voices the values of its member organisations to the EU and international institutions across the three main policy sectors; social affairs, lifelong learning and international cooperation.



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