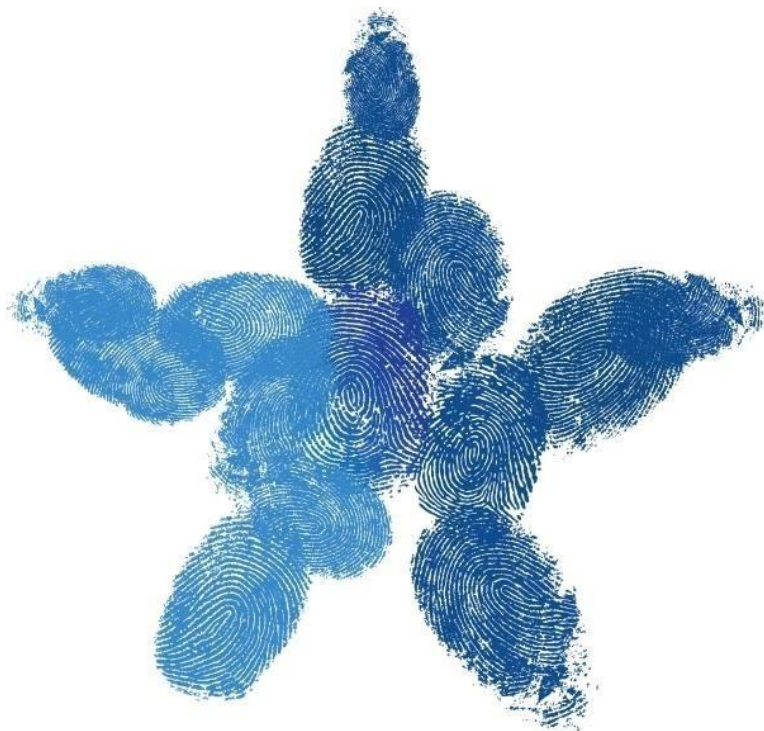


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IRIS NETWORK NEWSLETTER JANUARY - JUNE 2020

COVID REACTION STORIES

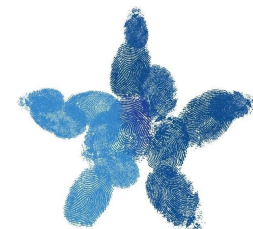


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INTRODUCTION

In spite of the global scale, severity, and widespread uncertainty of the coronavirus outbreak, which hindered the efforts of the Iris Network and its members, the Network has been regularly following the activities of its members, especially their responses throughout the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

One of the lessons learned in the face of the pandemic was that the ability to react promptly and tackle the new challenges in an innovative way have been pivotal in surpassing the crisis. For that reason, the **January - June Edition of the Newsletter** features the stories of the Network members, in which they shared how they managed to adapt their activities to the new reality.

Along the same lines, the Iris Network conducted a survey among its members and based on the thorough analysis of their responses compiled a **Report on Social Services during Coronavirus Pandemic in Western Balkan Countries** ([link](#)).

Members of the Network reported that they have not been included by local governments to participate, discuss and create adequate responses and policies pertaining to the protection of rights of vulnerable categories during COVID-19. Likewise, IRIS Network members indicated that only a few local authorities have implemented measures in order to maintain current social services, support them and mitigate the critical situation. More so, sources of funding constitute by far the greatest challenge in the current situation, while majority of the survey participants expressed their concern regarding future sources of funding and declared that their expectations lay within the pool of international donors.



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IRIS network aims to strengthen the role of civil society organisations social service providers trough SEE and to ensure that these organisations are recognizes as equal partners by public sector.



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LEDA Development Association – COVID19 reaction

The Association for Development LEDA has a vision of a society in which every individual lives a life worth of human dignity, and they are recognized as the initiators of all actions that contribute to the social inclusion of vulnerable groups.



Due to the new situation with COVID-19, the Iris Network member, LEDA Development Association, suspended fieldwork thus complying with measures to prevent the spread of the infection. Since their primary users are pre-school children, LEDA found the means to communicate with children and families via telephone and online platforms. Due to their line of work and their beneficiaries, it is very important for LEDA to follow the instructions and keep their contacts to a minimum, while finding a way to keep their beneficiaries from being neglected.

Since LEDA is prevented from working in the field and supporting the little ones in kindergartens, their hardworking online educators encourage throughout their time in isolation and help them pass the time more easily and with more fun. They make fun games for them, and in return, the children are happy to send their work to LEDA. The least LEDA can do is post them on website, thus stimulating other parents to spend time at home in a fulfilled way. As an organization, LEDA is at the disposal of its users, and they can gladly be mediators when it comes to assistance packages or other assistance to the socially vulnerable categories. LEDA: “Stay at home, everything will be fine.”

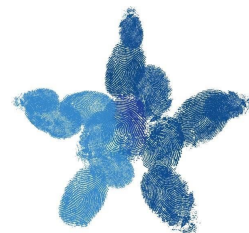
Zemlja djece BiH – COVID19 adaptation of activities

Association Zemlja djece works with children and for children, constantly warning about the position of children in BiH, and advocating for change in the community.



In the situation of the Covid-19 pandemic crisis, Iris Network member, Zemlja djece u BiH (Land of Children in BiH), reorganized the work of the Association in accordance with the measures of the relevant crisis authorities. Although “work from home” is one of the intensively used options, in all situations where this is possible, very intensive field work is still taking place through mobile teams, which, while respecting all applicable measures, provide humanitarian support to the most vulnerable categories.

Thus, families with children in which both parents are unemployed (more than 150), otherwise beneficiaries of the Day Care Center for street children and children at risk, are provided with a food and hygiene package, and continuous assistance in food, protective equipment and other non-food items. This is also provided for minor migrants from the East who found themselves in Tuzla during the pandemic crisis.



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The complete restriction of group activities with children and women has been overcome through the use of information technology. The contents of promoting healthy lifestyles are broadcast in collaboration with a local broadcaster, while the gender-transformative program for adolescents has been successfully transformed through the use of online platforms and social networks.

Their “Be a Men Club” not only designs successful pandemic prevention content, it also organizes online peer counselling on crisis and related occurrences for all adolescents in need. Also, the volunteers of the Association have been very actively involved in the wider local initiative “Street Heroes” to help older fellow citizens.

IDC and ASB SEE COVID19 reaction - Modest contribution to the Shelter for Adults and Elderly in struggle against COVID-19



IDC is a group of enthusiasts led by the principles of solidarity, active inclusion, equal rights, decent jobs and satisfied people. These principles are integrated in all programs and activities which is continually keep on innovating. Main program focus of IDC - Social development, economic development, equal rights, volunteer program.

ASB is a German aid and welfare organisation, engaged in areas such as civil protection, rescue services and social welfare services. As a non-political organisation, ASB has, since its foundation in 1888, provided rapid and direct help to all those in need of our support.

The Shelter for Adults and the Elderly in Belgrade today received modest donations from the German non-governmental organization Arbeiter Samariter Bund (ASB) and the local association Initiative for Development and Cooperation (IDC), as a first aid in mitigating the causes and effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in Republic of Serbia.

Based on the decision of the Arbeiter - Samariter - Bund eV (ASB) headquarters in Cologne to allocate emergency funds as an emergency help and the expressed needs of social services institutions in Serbia, the ASB office in Belgrade and IDC awarded the Shelter with a refrigerator, freezer, bread cutter, roller and disinfectant, 5,000 pieces of gloves, 1,500 masks and 600 pieces of disinfectants.

At the Shelter in Kumodraska Street, assistance and accommodation are currently provided for 111 people, while the accommodation capacity is 104. Users are between the ages of 26 and 89. This institution which is financed by the City of Belgrade, provides accommodation, nutrition, health care services as well as support to beneficiaries by social workers and through the organization of various incentive programs. During the emergency, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, sanitary and disinfection measures were intensified at the shelter and all emergency recommendations and regulations were observed.

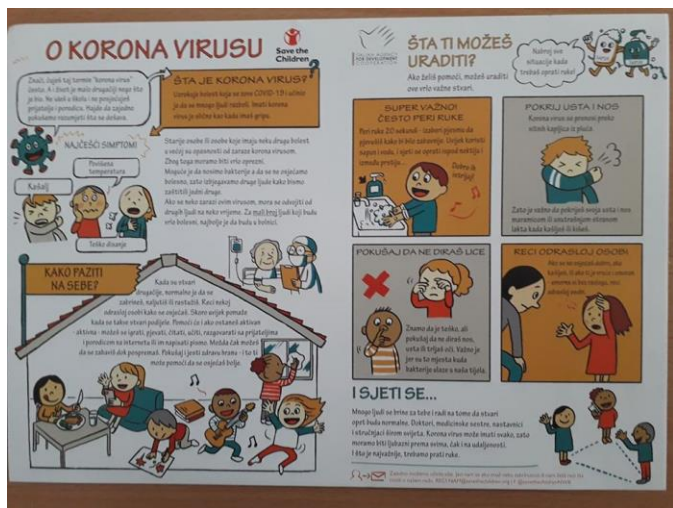


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Iris Network member Altruist – COVID19 response

The Association of parents and caregivers of children and youth with developmental disabilities enables children and youth to get involved in regular life.



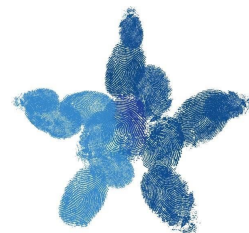
The Altruist Association works with children at risk and in the prevention of risky behaviours. They work in two locations, the Day Center and the Field Classroom in Bafo. Altruist program consists of working individually with a teacher, psychologist or social worker. They offer help with schoolwork or homework, as well as instructional teaching and also conduct creative educational workshops tailored to the needs of the children they work with. In addition, Altruist beneficiaries are parents and entire families for whom they offer psychological counselling and support as needed.

Due to the appearance of COVID – 19, the Day Center and the Field Classroom stopped working directly with the users as of March 12, 2020, the same day when the children stopped going to school. The staff continued to work on the premises of the Center on the administrative part of the work, and on further planning of emergency work. After additional measures were introduced by the HNZ expert staff, it was decided that all staff would continue to work from home on the administrative part of the work, with regular meetings to plan work in the coming period, in extraordinary conditions. After the Day Center and Field Classroom stopped working directly with users, all Altruist activities were moved online and to social networks.

All parents were personally contacted and informed that the Center would not continue to work with users on their premises, but that an alternative work plan was developed. It involves online communication via Viber messages or calls. Viber was chosen as a medium of communication because most of the Altruist beneficiaries have access to it. Through Viber, parents can get the help they need in schoolwork or homework. A psychologist and / or social worker is also available to them in case of need for psychosocial support related to their or their children's personal needs or directly related to the pandemic. Altruist also set up a Viber group where parents can ask for help with their children at school.

The group was formed with the aim of creating a common database of all tasks that were done with children, but also because of the possibility of connecting the users with each other. In addition, all additional information and announcements of some events, marking important dates throughout the month can be followed by users on social networks (Facebook). It is important to emphasize that the Viber Group is made with parents, not children, to activate and involve parents in working with children and to avoid the overuse of cell phones in children.

Altruist users responded positively to the alternative work plan and immediately accepted it. Already after the first contact, beneficiaries have accepted the new mode and started working with the Altruist staff. Currently, parents respond well to this type of counselling and are more relaxed in seeking help. With this mode of work,



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Altruist is in constant direct communication with beneficiaries, actively cooperating and receiving constant feedback on its work, on the basis of which they then plan further activities.

Their activities related to marking significant dates of the year and educational and creative workshops conducted on a weekly basis cannot be maintained until they start working with beneficiaries at the Center. However, they have postponed all of the planned activities, and they are developing a plan for when and how they will be resumed and implemented. In addition, Altruist users of the Bafo Resort Classroom are mostly socially disadvantaged families. At present, material assistance is a priority, as many users are left unaccepted in this situation.

On this basis, in addition to online communication, Altruist works to secure funds and donations to provide material assistance to their vulnerable beneficiaries. For now, Altruist alternative work plan is working and they have received a positive reaction from beneficiaries. It is important to emphasize that the expert team is in constant communication with each other and adjusts the work plan according to the feedback received from parents and children.

Iris Network Covid19 reaction stories – Women’s Association “Nature”, Bratunac

The Women's Association "Nature" contributes to the development of active, enterprising communities and citizens. Through lifelong learning, encouraging entrepreneurial initiatives, encouraging civic action and advocating for a society of equal opportunities, "Nature" empowers citizens, especially women and youth, to work together on the socio-economic development of BiH.



Immediately after the Corona virus emergency was declared, the Women’s Association “Nature”, Bratunac made all its available resources available to the Bratunac Red Cross Municipal Organization and the Center for Social Work. The staff and volunteers of Nature have become volunteers of the Red Cross, and the Chancellery of Nature and the technical resources at their disposal serve the needs of this situation.

Volunteers distribute masks (which some of their members have sewn) on a daily basis, they come on call to the Red Cross info center deliver food to the walking disabled elderly people, deliver medicines according to prescriptions from the health center, pack and distribute food and hygiene packages to vulnerable populations. “Nature” pays particular attention to vulnerable categories, which are their beneficiaries, such as women victims of war, women from large families, single mothers, and women at risk of domestic violence or women victims of domestic violence.

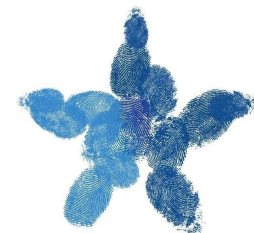
Women’s Association “Nature” is currently considering setting up a SOS line for psychological support for this vulnerable category.

Iris Network COVID19 reaction stories – Organization for Development and Democracy, Bujanovac

Since it was established in 2003, the organization has implemented over 120 projects, by itself and in partnership. The organization works on the social and economic inclusion of vulnerable groups and the protection of their human rights, as well as on building a democratic open society. The organization



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implements projects in the south of Serbia, in Western Macedonia and in Kosovo, mostly in the Kosovo-pomoravski region.

ORGANIZATA PËR ZHVILLIM DHE DEMOKRACI NË BUJANOC ofron falas KËSHILLA, KONSULTIME DHE NDIHMË PROFESIONALE PËR BIZNESET TUAJA GJATË KOHËS COVID 19 Në komunat Bujanoc dhe Preševo Nga e hëna deri të premten prej orës 11:00 deri në ora 14:00 Telefon: +381 63 1 785 420 E-mail: biznispomocccovid19@gmail.com	ORGANIZACIJA ZA RAZVOJ I DEMOKRATIJU BUJANOVAC pruža besplatno BIZNIS SAVETE, KONSULTACIJE I POMOĆ ZA VREME COVID 19 u opštinama Bujanovac i Preševo ponedeljak - petak od 11:00 do 14:00 h Telefon: +381 63 1 785 420 E-mail: biznispomocccovid19@gmail.com
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Organization for Development and Democracy, Bujanovac launched a support program for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in the municipalities of Bujanovac and Presevo. The organization has formed a volunteer expert team that will provide free advice, consultations and assistance on tax breaks and direct financial assistance to businesses. Assistance can be requested in two ways: by telephone – 063/1785420, on weekdays from 11am to 2pm, as well as by email at bizpompomccovid19@gmail.com. What users have to prepare before contacting the team is the business ID. In this way, ORD Bujanovac would like to contribute to reducing the economic consequences of the COVID19 pandemic and the state of emergency in Southern Serbia.

Iris Network COVID19 reaction stories – SOS phone Podgorica

SOS hotline for women and children victims of violence Podgorica

#CORONAINFOGG BEZBJEDNA DOMA Uprava policije 122 Nacionalna SOS linija za žrtve nasilja u porodici 080 111 111 Centar za ženska prava 067 166 800 Sigurna ženska kuća 069 013 321 SOS telefon za žene i djecu žrtve nasilja Podgorica: 020 232 254; 067 805 297 Centar za romske inicijative 067 104 700	#OstaniDoma BEZBJEDNA DOMA Uprava policije 122 Nacionalna SOS linija za žrtve nasilja u porodici 080 111 111 Centar za ženska prava 067 166 800 Sigurna ženska kuća 069 013 321 SOS telefon za žene i djecu žrtve nasilja Podgorica: 020 232 254; 067 805 297 Centar za romske inicijative 067 104 700
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**SOS TELEFON PODGORICA 24H/7 PRUŽA SAVJETODAVNE USLUGE
POZIVOM NA BROJEVE TEL 020 232 254; MOB: 067 805 297**

The global pandemic COVID -19 is, unfortunately, an opportune time for the volume of all forms of domestic violence to increase. Therefore, since the start of the pandemic in Montenegro, there has been a reorganization of the work of the SOS Telephone Podgorica, which introduced a 24-hour on-call service and, in addition to the two existing ones, activated another number available to clients (067 805 297). The changes that have been made include the availability of counselling services 24 hours a day, instead of the planned 8 during the work week.

Within the counselling services, trained and competent staff provide support and assistance to victims of violence, which, in addition to the counselling services, provides emotional support, which is very important for beneficiaries at these times. With consent, SOS Phone Podgorica mediates the beneficiaries to the institutions of the system and work to quickly suppress / end the violence. They guarantee anonymity and confidentiality, respecting their rights and integrity of their beneficiaries, above all else.

SOS Podgorica is also part of the #SafetyHome Campaign launched by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Montenegro, Police Directorate, SOS Podgorica, SOS Niksic, Center for Women's Rights, Safe Women's House and Center for Roma Initiatives. The aim of the campaign, supported by the British Embassy Podgorica / United



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Kingdom Embassy in Podgorica, is to show the victims that they are not alone and that they can get help and protect themselves and other family members from violence.

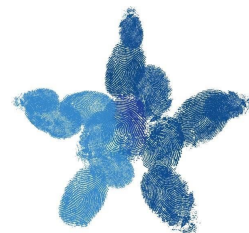
Iris Network COVID19 reaction stories – CAZAS

Cazas, an association to fight AIDS, is involved in disease prevention and public advocacy against stigma and discrimination.



At the time of measures aimed at suppressing and preventing the transmission of the corona virus, measures were also introduced at CAZAS to protect the health of employees, and the organization of work was modified. Namely, one employee is on duty at the main office every weekday from 9 am to 2 pm. Other employees work from home. All activities that involve gathering of more than one person in one place are postponed until further notice (seminars, round tables, meetings, etc.).

During this period, emphasis was placed on online activism and online counselling. Working hours of drop-in centres in Podgorica and Bar, in accordance with the Government's measures, were reduced to the period from 4 to 6pm, while the field work remained unchanged, with mandatory observance of measures of protection and preservation of health. In order to protect the health of employees, the provision of hygiene services in drop-in centres is currently suspended, while counselling with a psychologist, social worker or physician is done exclusively by telephone or through a social media account at @smanjenje_stete_cazas. Lunch packages are distributed to customers without modification, while the exchange and distribution of injection supplies is done in large quantities to reduce the number of social contacts.



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Iris Network COVID19 reaction stories – Juventas

The mission of Juventas is to encourage as many young people as possible to be active participants in the decision-making process related to the creation and realization of their future.



United we are stronger – for all of our communities!

Juventas, Queer Montenegro, Association “Spektra” and LBT women Association “Stana”, a group of Montenegrin NGOs, continue to provide services during the COVID-19 epidemic despite all the changes in the working conditions, and following all of the guidelines of the National Coordination Body for the prevention of the new Corona virus spread.

Persons from the LGBTIQ communities, people who use/inject drugs, sex workers, ex-prisoners, who are the main target groups, face many challenges at the moment, some of which include: emerging or worsening mental health issues due to the long isolation and no contact with relevant others, additional economic hardship which can potentially lead to unemployment and homelessness, higher risk for the ones already facing domestic violence, as well as higher risk of discrimination happening due to changed health system priorities.

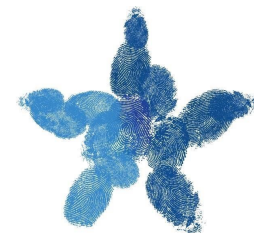
People who use/inject drugs, sex workers and former and active prisoners are communities NGO Juventas works with in particular. The services being delivered to them are the following - distribution and exchange of safe injection equipment in Drop in centers and during outreach, distribution of free condoms and lubricants in Drop in centers and during outreach, device of washing and drying of laundry and garments, online and phone counselling with outreach and expert workers, delivering food packages.

According to measures issued by the Government, all external partners/associates are forbidden to provide additional services in prison. On the other hand, Juventas is supporting the work of this institution by providing materials for in prison tailoring of protective masks throughout the framework of a project this organization has.

The services delivered to the Montenegrin LGBTIQ communities are a product of cooperation and synergies of all four named organizations, Juventas, Queer Montenegro, Association “Spektra” and LBT women Association “Stana” - distribution of free condoms and lubricants, online and phone counselling with outreach and expert workers, service of washing and drying of laundry and garments, delivering food packages, free legal aid, online self-support group for trans and gender variant persons.



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Juventas and Queer Montenegro, in cooperation with international donors, have set aside a part of their funds in order to fully and adequately provide this service. Delivery of food and personal hygiene packages is being implemented on a weekly basis and received a special permission from the National Coordination Body for the Prevention of the new Corona virus spread. Outreach workers and associates are dedicated to communicating with clients based on their needs, whether online, telephone or in direct contact, again with preventive measures in place. Online communication with all our communities is conducted through social networks (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) and various communication platforms such as Viber, Whats App, Skype and the new House party application which, in addition to communication, enables people to play social games.

All of these four organizations have been advocating for the protection and human rights of all the communities they work with since the outbreak. For Juventas, it has been a great pleasure to be able to provide services to their clients coming from all the communities they work with and they are grateful to all of their colleagues for their hard work in trying to alleviate the consequences of the COVID-19 epidemic.

Iris Network COVID19 reaction stories – Center for Roma Initiatives

Emancipated Roma/Egyptian Woman in equal and tolerant society.



In accordance with the decision of the Government of Montenegro dated March 16, 2020, due to the Corona virus pandemic, Center for Roma Initiatives Niksic introduced several necessary measures, one of which is on-call to the landline from 08:00 a.m. to 04:00 p.m. re-routing to executive coordinator number, and a mobile psychological counselling hotline available for 24h was also introduced for victims of domestic violence.

During this time, members of the organization provide the service of a confidential person for victims of domestic violence. The organization is involved in the Home Security Campaign conducted by the Ministry of internal affairs, which provides a hotline for victims of domestic violence.

Also, a local mediator of the organization in Podgorica has been continuously sewing protective masks for the Roma and Egyptian communities since the start of the COVID – 19 pandemic. Activists and volunteers of the Center for Roma Initiatives participated in the distribution of several food and hygiene packages with the coordination of the Red Cross.

In an interview with the Vjesti News, the Center for Roma Initiatives called for the disinfection of Roma and Egyptian settlements in Niksic. Rapid response of PE “Water Supply and Sewerage” disinfection in several Roma and Egyptian settlements took place. Since the COVID-19 pandemic start, the organization has been



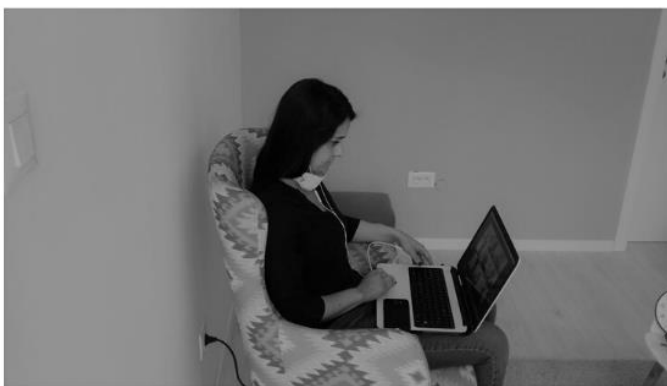
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informing the general public about the current state of the community and urging the provision of emergency hygiene and nutrition packages for the Roma and Egyptian communities in Montenegro.

Iris Network COVID19 reaction stories – Sensus

Center for Psychological Support "Sensus" is a professional non-governmental organization whose goal is to improve psychosocial development, provide support and provide education for children, youth and adults, through preventive, interventional, counselling and workshop work.



In the COVID 19 pandemic crisis, the Sensus Center has focused its capacity on organizing online education for parents on how to cope with isolation, especially targeting parents of primary school children. Sensus capacities are also focused on the preparation of online training for members of the network "The common story" on the topic "Creating guidelines for monitoring and protection of children's rights in primary education in Mostar" within the project "Equal rights, equal education". Through project activities, they organize online counselling and support for their 25 volunteers. "Be conscientious, taking care of your health, caring for the health of others. Be gentle and supportive to yourself in times of isolation, and support for others", is the message of Sensus.

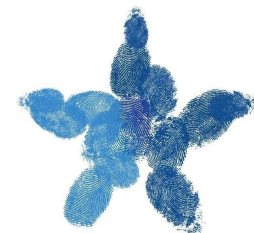
Iris Network COVID19 reaction stories – Association for Democratic Prosperity ZID



ZID – for society of equal and responsible citizens focused on democracy, social values and balanced community development.

In accordance with the measures prescribed by the Government of Montenegro, regarding the COVID19 pandemic, the work of the Association for Democratic Prosperity ZID changed its work regime by switching from office to online mode. In order to adapt to the situation in which the whole world finds itself, ZID's service to gambling addicts and those who gamble at a problematic level has continued to function, but in the form of online counselling sessions through the application "Viber" and "Zoom". The members of ZID's team continued to follow the needs of the association in their homes and accordingly worked on the projects they received, in a slightly changed environment, but just as well as they have done so far. At the same time, adapting to the situation we found ourselves in, the rest of the ADP ZID team continued to organize a series of activities





for this year, and one of those activities is the “i2space challenge days” challenge. By organizing this challenge, they offer young people, whose plans for seasonal work have been changed due to the new situation with the Corona virus, or have lost their jobs, or do not know what to do when the situation in the country stabilizes, the opportunity to have an idea of what to do next, they develop with the help of a series of awards that ZID gives them. With regular “Zoom” meetings, ADP ZID, with an innovative and team spirit, managed to confront the Corona virus, and to continue its activities as it did before the situation with COVID19.

Iris Network COVID19 reaction stories – Women’s Rights Center

An organization that fights to combat all forms of violence against women and for their access to justice, developing gender-equitable democratic practices and cooperating with all relevant domestic and international actors.



The pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus also forced the Women’s Rights Center to focus all its activities on working from home. They continued to fulfil their obligations, such as working with users, which they perform electronically. Psychological counselling takes place online and gives valid results. Users can contact Women’s Rights Center by phone, at +382 67 166 800, on weekdays from 9 am to 5 pm. The Women’s Rights Center participated in the BEZBJEDNA DOMA campaign, which is part of the national OSTANI DOMA campaign, launched to prevent the spread of the new corona virus in Montenegro.

They implemented the BEZBJEDNA DOMA campaign together with the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Montenegro, the Police Directorate and non-governmental organizations that are members of the Operational Team for Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence: SOS Niksic, Safe Women’s House, SOS Podgorica and the Center for Roma Initiatives.

During the implementation of measures against the spread of the COVID-19 virus, the Women’s Rights Center, within the regional project “Promotion of Women’s Labor Rights”, which is carried out by the NGO “Kosovo Women’s Network“, conducted a campaign to protect women’s labor rights measure. The campaign is implemented with the financial support of the European Union and is co-financed by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). In addition to the Center for Women’s Rights, partners in the Coalition against Discrimination on the territory of our country are the Media Union of Montenegro and the Association of Youth with Disabilities of Montenegro.

Women’s Rights Center noticed an increase in violence during the duration of the measures and thus received a larger number of calls in March and April. They have spoken on these topics in numerous media. Regardless



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of the extraordinary circumstances, the Women's Rights Center operated at almost full capacity, implementing its programs and plans, as well as regular communication with relevant international and national institutions and beneficiaries of their professional assistance and support to women at risk of various forms of violence. They have also provided their beneficiaries with help packages with basic necessities.

It was also shown in the conditions of narrowing, i.e. absence of direct communication, that their activity is irreplaceable within the entire system of protection and assistance to women in need.

Iris Network COVID19 reaction stories – Youth Center Vermont

Supports youth PwDs in social, economic, cultural, sporting, technological and other fields. It also works on the inclusion of youth in decision-making processes, constructive use of youth's leisure time, strengthening the influence and involvement of civil society organizations in the process of development, abilities and needs of improvement of the quality of social services for people with disabilities. Vermont established an SOS blue phone for children.



A large part of the members of the Roma national minority in BIH live in very difficult conditions. The current epidemic is just an additional burden for them. Little or no regular income, lack of information, poor hygiene, are just some of them. Activists of Youth Center "Vermont" within which the Day Center was working (until the decision on temporary suspension due to preventing the spread of the epidemic), visited some of the Roma families to whom they handed out food and hygiene packages of one-time assistance, adhering to the measures and regulations of the Department for security. "

For us, this is just a continuation of the activities we work on every day. In our organization, young and hard-working Roma also work. Our Day Center was visited daily by a large number of children. Since we cannot work with groups at the moment, we decided to visit them, symbolically help, and provide some kind of help and solidarity in these equally difficult times for all of us", said Damir Radenkovic, director of the Vermont Youth Center from Brcko.

In many families, due to the lack of the Internet and appropriate computers, phones or tablets, children do not even attend classes, and parents are said to be fighting for a piece of bread. "My wife and I live in one room with five children, the oldest of whom has nine and the youngest, three months old. Until recently, we lived, or rather survived, from collecting secondary raw materials. There is no such thing now. We almost don't have anything to eat, and we don't even think about gloves and masks", says Saban Omerovic from the Brcko settlement of Brodusa.

A similar fate is shared by their neighbours. Mehmed Salihovic has six children. The eldest daughter is twelve years old and the youngest child is five months old, next to them are his parents, brothers and sisters, so that fourteen of them live in one household. "I have an uncle in Germany who sometimes sends us something so





that we can somehow survive. I would like to thank Vermont, because any help is really good for us”, emphasizes Salihovic.

In addition to multi-member families, Vermont activists have not forgotten the Roma couple from the settlement of Prutaca, who are preparing for the IVF procedure. “We are certainly grateful for your help and support. My wife and I live in alternative accommodation. We have arranged it as much as possible,” says Samir Hokic, who also until recently was engaged in the resale of secondary raw materials.

Iris Network COVID19 reaction stories – Tracak Nade

Tracak Nade - helping children with disabilities



“EVERY PART IS EQUALLY IMPORTANT!” Given the emergency situation, which excludes mass gatherings and events, “Tracak Nade” came up with an alternative solution to mark the World Autism Awareness Day on social media, through which they passed the message to combat prejudice that autism is a disease and that children with autism live enclosed in their own world.

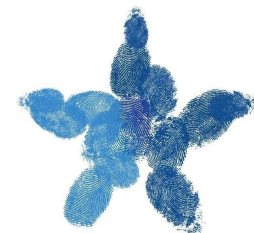
Tracak Nade wants to highlight the abilities of children with autism, not their shortcomings, and send the message that they only perceive the world around them differently and that the support of all of us is very important. On the eve of the World Autism Awareness Day, they have organized an online creative workshop for the members of the Association and volunteers through a video conference. The aim of the workshop was to Tracak Nade Foca volunteers and children with the assistance of parents, siblings, and with the direct instructions of the expert team, make props planned to mark the World days of awareness of autism. The workshop was very successful.

Throughout this workshop, the users were encouraged to work on their fine motor skills, creativity, attention and concentration. Since both the volunteers and the professional team participated in the workshop, the feeling of loneliness due to social isolation was significantly reduced. Even though they each took part in the workshop out of their own homes, they have managed to complete one more puzzle, with the joint effort and creativity, thus supporting the persons from the spectrum of autism.

Iris Network COVID19 reaction stories – Red Cross of Montenegro

The Red Cross of Montenegro is a unique, independent and voluntary humanitarian organization operating in the territory of Montenegro, as the only recognized national society of the Red Cross in the country.





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From the very beginning of the corona crisis, the Red Cross of Montenegro reacted in line with its role and responsibilities in the system. There are some 100 employees, 130 professional home helpers and around 450 volunteers who are involved in the response across the country.

Red Cross continued with visits to older people (both professionals and volunteers), respecting all preventive measures, except in cases where beneficiaries are refusing the visit due to a fear of disease.



There is a Red Cross Call center for people in need (older people, persons with disabilities, people who live by themselves...) who can call and ask for assistance after which the Red Cross volunteers procure what is needed instead of them. To those in need, and after appropriate assessment, the Red Cross also provides food and hygiene items. Vast majority of the calls are related to requests for humanitarian assistance. In addition, there is a hotline for providing psycho social support where trained RC psychologists provide the necessary assistance.

Since the Call center was opened from March 19 (in the afternoon hours) until May 14, Red Cross provided assistance for 33 176 beneficiaries; distributed 47 366 humanitarian parcels; volunteers organized groceries shopping, paying bills, etc, for 2 240 persons, including older people, people with disabilities, etc, and PSS through the hotline, the Call centre and in person (at local level) was provided to 3 263 persons.

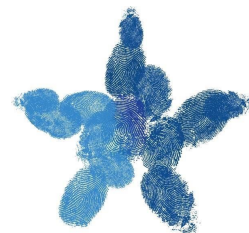
Beds, mattresses and linens were provided for the location defined as quarantine by the National Coordinating Body. Five prefabricated containers were also provided as triage facilities that are placed in front of the three hospitals in the country. Some tents were also set up in front of emergency centers. Red Cross Training center in Sutomore is also used as a location for quarantine and Red Cross volunteers assisted in food distribution in some of the quarantines.

Assistance is also provided to Roma population (food and hygiene). Red Cross of Montenegro has been working with Roma community in the country for almost 20 years now – activities related to education, health, but also provision of humanitarian assistance. RCM also has an office in the camp near Podgorica with around 2 000 Roma refugees from Kosovo. RCM is well aware of their needs and the response is currently mainly on the distribution of food and hygiene items and being organized in cooperation with community leaders. Besides this, RCM is continuously communicating with other Roma NGOs and some other organizations throughout the rest of Montenegro to provide assistance.

The Red Cross of Montenegro continuously provides assistance to socially vulnerable people in the country – older people, people without any or with extremely low income, persons with disabilities and the Roma population. However, the current situation with the Covid-19 pandemic is also affecting new categories of people – people who stayed without jobs due to restrictive preventive measures adopted by the Government of Montenegro. These are people who were receiving daily income (taxi drivers, waiters, hair dressers...) and



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due to complete lockdown of the country they were now forced to stay at home. Some of them also lost their job. This has increased the need for basic items such as food and hygiene items.

Iris Network COVID19 reaction stories – Osmeh Vlasotince

UG "Osmeh" provides social protection services for the elderly with disabilities and for people with mental and intellectual disabilities.



Eliminating emergency conditions takes a new look at the responsibility and the desire to help people in the community. The volunteers of UG "Osmeh Vlasotince" from the first day of the state of emergency were at the service of about 320 elderly citizens in 17 villages in the vicinity of Vlasotince, respecting the protection measures prescribed by the Government of the Republic of Serbia. Some of them were sewing masks and donated to the Health house in Vlasotince, retailers, residents and users on the ground. The telephone of psychosocial support 060/6016210 was available all the time.

Iris Network COVID19 reaction stories – Defendologija

Organization "Defendology center Niksic" - center for security, sociological and criminological research of Montenegro.



The resulting epidemiological situation affected all spheres of life, but with strict adherence to all prescribed measures, the Center for Security, Sociological and Criminologist Research continued its work with users, children and parents primarily by providing basic foodstuffs to vulnerable families, who remained without



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basic means of subsistence, without food, hygiene. During the entire period behind Defendology, with the support of our strategic partners Save the Children from several divisions, over 100 families received assistance, while with the support of private individuals, the Red Cross, the National Kitchen, the Center for Social Work, the Center for Roma Initiatives, Repopulation Affirmation Center, Miljanic cheese factory, Goranovic butcher shop, doo Popovic, NTC shop, managed to deliver help several times upon request and need to families whose children are directly involved in life and work on the street.

Good cooperation again showed the strength and importance of togetherness, support and mutual understanding, anti-discrimination and anti-marginalization.

This period was critical when it comes to monitoring regular classes for members of the RE population, but the common will and struggle, as well as the built system of trust with users and this time resulted in support by phone, social networks and all other available means, so the users of the Day Center had the full support of the expert team of Defendology in this situation as well. On this occasion, according to the children's requests, they handed out school supplies for over 100 children (notebooks, crayons, blocks, tempera paint).

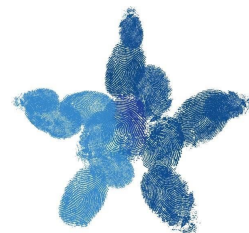
This period, although very negative in many aspects of life, did have a positive contribution, in a way that some families connected and kept closer. In regular communication with parents, together we managed to support learning, family cohesion, togetherness and the importance of the family as a main pillar of society. This whole period has shown us once again that we are an integrated support service that is trusted and that only in this way we create a bridge to fight poverty, social exclusion, on the path to understanding, acceptance and togetherness.



Iris Network COVID19 reaction stories – Naše doba

Improving the position of the elderly and encouraging their active participation in the community by promoting active aging, volunteerism, generational and intergenerational cooperation.

NGO Naše doba deals with the issues of interest for senior citizens, and their members are mostly retirees. This age group was particularly vulnerable to the Corona virus and, as required by epidemic protection measures, they did not gather at the time. Naše doba used only electronic communication and created a project that encouraged elderly to use this type of communication more. Almost everyone in this generation has some kind of a chronic disease and they need medical care and medicines in their everyday life, much more than the younger ones. In Montenegro, there is an electronic service through which persons with health insurance can make an appointment with their doctor and request medications that the doctor regularly prescribes. However, the elderly rarely use e-services, although most of them have a smartphone and use the Internet. That's why Naše doba made a video guide for using the eHealth service. It simply explains and shows step by step how to register, schedule an examination and order regular therapy. The video was published on the Facebook page of NGO Nase doba and on the website – <http://nasedoba.me/aktuelno/kako-koristiti-servis-ezdravlje/>



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Naše doba believes that the video instruction will continue to help many, not only the elderly, and spare them the unnecessary trip to the clinic. During the Corona crisis, they have also set off to learn how to use applications on smartphones at the Club for the Elderly in Podgorica. Thus, with the consent of fAKT donors, they mastered this unplanned lesson.



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