

NEWSLETTER N°2

Newsletter published by "COOPERATION BETWEEN EMPLOYMENT AGENCY OF MONTENEGRO AND SOCIAL WORK CENTRES" PROJECT

Operational Programme "Human Resource Development 2012-2013"

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Persons with disabilities and the RE population are one of the most vulnerable groups in Montenegro in terms of their access to education, employment, social services, etc.

Within the framework of the Component IV of the Instrument of Pre-Accession Assistance programme project "*Cooperation between Employment Agency of Montenegro and Social Work Centres*" was designed with the purpose to increase employability and improve access to the labour market for persons with disabilities and RE population.

The project started in December 2015 and will run for 18 months.

Project Beneficiary:

Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MLSW), the Directorate for Social Welfare and Child protection

Target groups:

- MLSW
- Employees from Employment Agency of Montenegro (EAM) and its local branch offices
- Employees from Social Work Centres (SWC)
- Persons with disabilities
- RE population

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

- Component 1: Analysis of present situation in the sector of social inclusion mainly in local branch offices of EAM and Social Work Centres including analysis of business solutions and capacities for the activation and support of most disadvantaged groups into the labour market
- Component 2: Conduct series of workshops and joint trainings for EAM and EAM local branch offices, SWCs and representatives of social partners as regards social inclusion policies in Montenegro
- Component 3: Develop and prepare a detailed agreement between EAM and SWCs and its dissemination, as well as to undertake campaign for the most disadvantaged groups (persons with disabilities and RE population) on the new improved working methods
- Component 4: Provide support to potential grant applicants and grant beneficiaries:
 - 4.1. Training for potential grant applicants to ESF (European Structural Funds) type of projects;
 - 4.2. Training for grant beneficiaries on the grant scheme "Implementation of trainings and employment projects for persons with disabilities and RE population".



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THE REPORT ON PRESENT SITUATION IN SOCIAL INCLUSION SECTOR

Within the component 1, in June 2016, Project Team prepared Report, with the aim to provide an insight into the present situation in the Montenegrin social inclusion sector. Project team analysed:

- The existing legal, strategic and administrative framework on the support and integration of persons with disabilities and RE population in the labour market;
- The current situation of existing and missing support services in the local communities, intended to support the inclusion into the labour market and professional rehabilitation for persons with disabilities and RE population; and
- The institutional setting up of the Employment Agency of Montenegro and its local branches, their links with professional rehabilitation providers, Social Work Centres and other social partners that could assist persons with disabilities registered in the EAM to facilitate their better access into the labour market.

The analysis started in March 2016 and the process of gathering information ended in June 2016.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Legal and strategic environment

During the last few years, a series of laws were adopted which govern aspects of the social and employment position of disadvantaged groups (particularly PwD and RE population), or more directly, their position on the Montenegrin labour market. **The legislative, strategic and institutional framework for social and labour inclusion is following the *acquis communautaire* and European norms**, however, at the **level of implementation** of these documents it is a different situation.



Discrimination of PwD and RE population still exists. The situation regarding discrimination **on the ground of disability** indicates that concerted efforts aimed at promoting equal treatment of people with disabilities are

needed in almost all areas of life, including healthcare, social welfare, education, vocational training and employment and accessibility. People with disabilities are encountering numerous problems, such as lack of adequate conditions, inaccessibility and discrimination, which make them socially isolated and powerless to take an active role in their life. Particularly vulnerable are people with intellectual disabilities, especially in the field of equal treatment before the law and legal capacity. People with disabilities are unable to enter the premises of public institutions, schools, hospitals, social welfare centres, cultural and sports facilities. Regarding discrimination **on the grounds of ethnic origin**, the Roma and Egyptian populations continue to be the most discriminated groups in society. Widespread illiteracy among this group and low levels of education are the main drivers in their social exclusion and marginalization. In addition, discrimination against members of this community is present in employment, healthcare and social welfare.



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Inclusion of socially vulnerable groups into the labour market has been identified as a priority in all strategic documents dealing with employment and social inclusion, but **some recent amendments of laws do not contribute to a better working activation of persons with disabilities** (and other vulnerable groups) such as the right to unemployment benefit for PwD which may be achieved regardless of the previous insurance period. New right to lifelong benefit for mothers who gave birth to three or more children can be seen as discriminatory in terms of other mothers, but also fathers - as the other parents. This solution also does not facilitate the involvement of women in the labour market. On the contrary, this solution discourages women to find employment, as they will with possible employment lose the right to the benefit.



Although many strategic documents related to the social inclusion of people with disabilities and RE population have been adopted in Montenegro in the past period, it is necessary to develop further measures and **monitoring system** at the state and local level, related to the implementation of the measures for better social inclusion and easier access to the labour market of RE population and persons with disabilities.



The setting of clear goal and objectives, allocation of funds and key performance indicators (KPI) are important aspects of the strategic planning process and play a major role in the measurement of progress towards the attainment of its planned goals. In addition, it is necessary to precisely define the **evaluation process and methods**, which would enable the critical examination of the strategic documents in accordance with the situation and needs in practice. It involves collecting and analysing information about a program's activities, characteristics, and outcomes. Its purpose is to make judgments about a program, to

improve its effectiveness, and/or to inform programming decisions.



In this connection, we also recommend improvements in development of **on-going assessment of the position of vulnerable groups in the labour market** (especially of PwD and RE population). One of the suggestions is to analyse specific vulnerable groups related topics, such as: the link between employment and social welfare, intersection of nationality and position on the labour market, practical and cultural barriers in access in, re-entering and remaining in the labour force.

There is **lack of special legal forms for employment of disadvantaged groups**. The Law on Professional rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities stipulated several organizational forms of sheltered employment for people with disabilities and these opportunities were not used by any employer by June 2016. There is an urgent need for adoption of the **missing** secondary legislation in this field.



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Potentials of **social economy and social entrepreneurship** are already recognized in several Montenegrin development strategies. Moreover, there is existing interest on behalf of civil society organization as well as examples of practices on the field. There is a need for development of supporting environment for development of social economy and social entrepreneurship.



2. Cooperation between stakeholders

Lack of cooperation **between the local and national level** has also been identified as an obstacle in progressing the implementation of national social inclusion and employment policies. Direct links and communication system from the local to the national level, and from the national to the local level as well as across Government Departments at national level and their agencies at local level, need to be developed. Interviews with practitioners identified that local level organizations are limited in responding to local needs and needs of the different disadvantaged groups.



Further development of LAPs for social services at local level, with local authorities as the coordinators and/or lead agencies will require local authorities and agencies at local level (SWC and EAM local offices) to have greater degree of flexibility and autonomy. In the process of empowerment of disadvantaged groups, an important role is played by **non-governmental organizations** which sensitize the public by advocating public policies and which participate in proposing and/or resolving certain problems. The realisation of the above mentioned policies necessarily includes cooperation with non-governmental organisations and their quality partnership with state administration and local self-government bodies.

Lack of linkages and cooperation among stakeholder: In the last few years institutional mechanisms for the implementation of the social inclusion, antidiscrimination and employment policies have been established at the national and local level, and legislative amendments have been introduced to remove all types of discrimination against disadvantaged groups. The legal environment is a powerful mechanism for influencing motivation for social and economic activity if there are sanctions in place which require strict adherence to legal requirements.

Cooperation between the EAM and the SWCs is superficial and based on data exchange with the aim of implementing an individual activation plan. Individual activation plans, recognized in numerous strategic documents as one of the priority measures in social inclusion of persons with disabilities and RE population, do not function in practice. One of the consequences of the weak co-operation between SWCs and EAM is lack of **an integrated/holistic approach** when combining different measures/programmes/projects, implemented by these two organizations.



There are, however, several changes which could be introduced, such as forming cross-institutional teams from both organizations which could also include members of civil society who usually target specific groups of excluded people.



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In this case, time could be used more effectively. One of the prerequisites for improving cooperation between local employment offices and centres for social work is further **decentralization in the provision of services** in the field of social and child protection. Moreover, it is necessary to develop measures aimed at activation of able-bodied beneficiaries of the right to social protection.

Social planning (e.g. Local Action plans) is a good tool for cooperation between stakeholders at local level. However, administrative and fiscal decentralisation of social services needs to be improved and sufficient staff ensured.



3. Services and programmes for PwD and Re population

Considering the numerous barriers faced by PwD there is a need for **adequate social welfare and disability-focused support and services**. Disability-focused support and services may include social housing, personal assistance support, technical aids and devices, special equipment, life skills assistance, modification of homes and accessible transportation.



Community-based services should be increased to enable PwDs to live in their own homes and not be confined to institutions. **The delivery of integrated services at local level is important.** The term „integrated services“ refers to examples of joined-up social services, for the benefit of service users or providers. e.g. support for elderly

The low rate of participation of RE population and persons with disabilities in the labour market is the result of **prejudices** of employers, both in terms of their working capacity - when it comes to persons with disabilities, and lack of understanding of the culture and traditions of the members of RE population. This requires the **implementation of constant awareness raising activities** about the capabilities of these categories of persons, as well as providing stimulus measures for employers who hire persons with disabilities and members of RE population (wage subsidies, tax allowances, etc.).



During the preparation of this report (in different documents as well as in the interviews with different stakeholders) project team identified problems related to professional rehabilitation, such as: long procedures, lack of adequate information, lack of all necessary secondary legislation, incompleteness of individual procedures, lack of providers of professional rehabilitation, lack of competences at different levels, insufficient capacities of Fund, not clearly defined concept of Grant Scheme, etc. Therefore, **the project team proposed a comprehensive and consistent analysis of professional rehabilitation** including legal framework, institutional framework (EAM, Fund, commissions for professional rehabilitation, providers) as well as the implementation process with monitoring and evaluation procedures.

Activation. The main needs of many unemployed are for comprehensive counselling and career guidance so that they can access a range of support activities and thereby increase their employability. These include training, retraining and work experience in addition to on-going help with job search and job placement. In providing information services and job placement to unemployed people EAM is obviously facing a challenge on how to make these types of services available to disadvantaged groups on the labour market.



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Active labour market measures play important role in assisting disadvantaged groups into employment and increasing their income level, but currently the size of labour market programmes is very small, as the result the overall impact on labour market is questionable. Further improvements should be made in effective targeting of ALMPs to specific groups and greater flexibility of ALMMs measures. Number of PwD and RE population in training and retraining programmes and other mainstreaming active labour market measures and programmes RE population and PwD in mainstreaming programmes should increase.



In discussion with NGOs Project team identified projects at local level with activities and services which are not part of the regular national or local funding sources. They can serve as a learning process and capacity building regarding co-operation among different project partners from public, private and civil society sector.

Most of the projects implemented under LAP and other Grant schemes (different donors, Fund for professional rehabilitation, etc.), facilitated matching the unemployed and inactive target groups' needs. Different project activities: training; workshops; support activities for participants, short-term employment engagement, on the job training etc., enabled Roma population and PwD to access services needed to enhance their ability to look for work. When participated in such group activities their participation in project activities was helping them to gain or to improve their competences, also that it was boosting their self-confidence and self-esteem and allowing them to learn from one another. Experience shows that so far only a few of the lessons learned have found their way into mainstream policies and practices (e.g. domestic/home help for elderly) and that also the most innovative and effective solutions are not included as part of regular employment programmes.

Therefore, one of the recommendations is that the **knowledge and experience** gained in the implementation of successful projects **are transferred and disseminated to other** local communities/regions and **embedded in the regular practice of the labour market and social institutions.**

Report on present situation in the social inclusion sector in Montenegrin language is available on web page:
<http://www.csrcg.me/index.php/ipa-projekti>



TOPICS OF THE NEXT ISSUE:

- Information on Agreement between Employment Agency of Montenegro (EAM) and Social Work Centres (SWC); and
- New/improved working methods of EAM and SWC



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