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Internal Midterm Evaluation **REPORT**

Taking Action on Social Inclusion of Older People

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1. Executive summary

The purpose of this evaluation is to analyze the progress and impact of the project in comparison with the project document, the logical framework indicators and the framework of the analysis of the situation in general. The objective of this evaluation is assessment of project progress, relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability towards national CSO networks on social inclusion of the elderly. As the outcome of this evaluation, it is expected to summarize the previous performance of the project, gain experience and recommend the most effective approaches and methodologies by identifying and describing the main lessons learned in the light of the above objectives.

The **main findings** based on the objectives and scope indicate:

- The existence of network organizations has contributed to awareness-raising, in terms of the importance of social inclusion of older people in the Western Balkan countries through the joint action of CSOs dealing with these issues.
- The process of mobilizing national networks on social inclusion was efficient and successful in terms of creating active networks in each country. Each country has an active network that gathers CSOs dealing with social inclusion issues of the elderly.
- The network has had an effect on members and they work with a large number of relevant actors for social inclusion of elderly persons.
- The networks have influenced the development and enhance the capacities of CSOs that are members of national networks.
- The project has enabled to start nearly 50 micro-projects in the countries of the Western Balkans, which through direct engagement of CSOs have influence on the social inclusion of the elderly, engagement in policy-making processes and decide on the social inclusion of the elderly.
- Sustainability of the individual networks is a challenge but possible, particularly through partnership with state institutions, but also through capacity building of network members, inclusion of new thematically important members, joint initiatives, campaigns, organization of projects.

All participants of this evaluation agree that through previous project activities, they have already had some **learned lessons** that will help them in achieving social inclusion of elderly people (for example, with regard to advocacy, the creation of coalitions, etc.).

- All participants were united and emphasized the importance of their national networks in the implementation of project activities aimed at social inclusion of elderly people in the each country and the lessons learned that will be used to undertake further actions for the social inclusion of older people.
- The resources, knowledge and skills, the experience and image and the well-established cooperation with the national and local authorities enable the network to implement the planned activities.
- The regional exchange has been experienced as very enriching in learning about alternative set-ups, solutions and possibilities of engagement.

Recommendations and conclusions indicate that the project contributes to the objectives for which it is being implemented, and that it is possible to further improve in order to maximize the effects on national and regional levels.



2. Background and Introduction:

The ageing of population is a prominent phenomenon across most of Europe. The effects of population ageing are different from country to country in terms of how the society accommodates to a changing demographic structure. However, commonly older people are excluded from decision-making processes at all levels and they have an image problem too. The three-year project *Taking Action on Social Inclusion of Older People (TASIOP)* coordinated by the Red Cross of Serbia is supported by European Union through its IPA fund, the Austrian Red Cross as well as the Austrian Development Agency. It started in February 2016 in the Western Balkans, including the countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia and can be considered a regional effort to put older people's fate back in their hands, support them in being better included in their communities and discuss the topics of importance with decision makers and community leaders.

In order to achieve results, the **main aims** of the project are to

- Strengthen and widen networks of civil society organizations in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia and to improve their ties to the communities and facilitate social inclusion of older people in local communities and the society across the region.
- Encourage and support older people to take part in decision-making processes related to ageing and older age at local and national levels through offering knowledge and transfer of good practices.
- Change the public perception of older people through engaging the public via targeted advocacy campaigns and working with the media on better understanding of the demographic realities and individual strengths, capacities and contributions of older people across a range of ages, geographic areas and social classes.

Current status of the project:

At this stage, the TASIOP project has been implemented half the period of its implementation (18 months). The majority of activities are completed within the planned timeframe.

in particular:

- The project countries have functioning and active civil society networks with a total number of 50 active CSOs across the five countries (List see Annex 6).
- Summarized strategic documents of each network were compiled in an inception report (Annex 5).
- All the civil society networks in the project countries have had two national meetings, following the kick-off meetings in each country to present project objectives and allow to civil society partners to ask questions and express their interest in further participation.
- The communication with stakeholders, national and international partners increased by devising a set of six websites to provide information on the project activities as well as other activities of national CSO networks, supplemented with the quarterly project newsletter.
- Preparatory- and partly implementing-activities for five national research studies have been completed.
- Sub-grantees for support of small CSO initiatives have been invited to submit their applications and in some countries, the selection process is already ongoing.
- Preparatory activities for multiplier effects such as citizen education actions have been completed.



3. Evaluation purpose and applied methodology

The **purpose** of this evaluation is to analyse the progress and performance of the project as compared to the project document, logframe indicators and situation analysis framework, in general.

This shall serve to develop lessons learned and provide recommendations for improvement of processes and methods used in the project implementation, to coordination, management and planning of activities during the second part of the project period and future project in this field.

The evaluation is an internal process involving all project partners and project related stakeholders, including national government, ministries, local government entities, media, public service providers and others, as defined by each national coordinator. The analysis within this evaluation shall, at all stages be carried out in cooperation and consultation with the main stakeholders.

As an outcome of this evaluation, it is expected to summarize the project performance and experiences gained so far in order to allow implementation of possible recommendations for improvement or change in processes, methods or direction during the second part of the project period.

The methodology applied during the evaluation has been based on standards of the Evaluation Guideline for the Austrian Red Cross International Aid Department (Annex 7) by a team consisting of local consultants, the implementing partners, Red Cross of Serbia (RCS) and Austrian Red Cross (AutRC) Headquarters staff. It has been carried out as a self-evaluation with participation of all partners and member organizations of the national networks. The evaluation has taken place in all five countries where the project is implemented.

The evaluation is based on the findings and factual statements identified from review of relevant documents including the project document, quarterly operational reports of network coordinators and project manager and biannual financial reports, 1st interim narrative report to the EC, evaluation reports of trainings and any other documents and meeting's output.

Further reference shall be made to the situational analysis undertaken in the beginning of the project, which is part of the Inception report submitted to the EC, three months after project inception.

Participation of project stakeholders as defined by the national project coordinators in the evaluation should be maintained at all the times, reflecting opinions, expectations and vision about the contribution of the project towards the achievement of its objectives.

For the purpose of obtaining the required information, the team

- updated and analyzed the Monitoring & Evaluation plan to assess achievement of results and indicators from the logical framework.
- held an evaluation workshop with all partners to obtain qualitative feedback on the assessed achievements and the process of the project developments.
- undertook a review using a standardized questionnaire (Annex 2), with help from project partners and network members (List see Annex 6).
- carried out focus group discussions with national stakeholders as defined by the national project coordinators by local consultants hired in each country to (see Annex 4 for discussion guidelines).



4. The main findings based on the objectives and scope of the evaluation:

This section of the **assessment summarizes the generally analyzed overall project performance and efficiency** through the measuring the validity of set indicators from the logical framework with focus on

- 1) Overall project performance and efficient use of resources
- 2) Project achievements as compared to planned results

In a second step, the **assessment summarizes the specifically analyzed main focus of the project by measuring the relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability** of the national CSO networks on social inclusion of older people by assessing

- The influence of the national networks on the topic of social inclusion in each country.
- The mobilization of national CSO networks on social inclusion of older people.
- The capacity building of CSOs participating in the national network in general and their capacities to engage in policy- and decision-making processes concerning social inclusion of older people at national level (and regional level in Western Balkan countries).
- The effect the networks have on participating organizations to cooperate more closely with other actors in the field of social inclusion of older people.
- The sustainability of the networks and requirements to continue after phase out of the project

4.1. Overall project performance and efficient use of resources

Are the goals of the initiative achieved within the set timeframe?

Overall, all activities have been carried out within the set timeframe. Slight delays have been experienced for some activities, mainly due to administrative challenges connected to sometimes complicated political conditions.

Are the objectives being achieved efficiently, within the planned budgetary boundaries?

All objectives have been achieved within the budgetary boundaries and savings have been made.

According to close cooperation between the management support partner, the Austrian Red Cross and the project lead the Red Cross of Serbia, it could be analysed that the budget has been spent and used in a highly efficient and correct manner.

A very detailed review of spending and savings has recently been done in order to make best use of any unspent resources/savings until the end of the project. It will be communicated to the European Commission with the 2nd progress report at the end of March 2018, covering the period of the first 2 years from Feb 2016-Jan 2018.

Savings have not been made at the expense of the quality or quantity of the activities but reflect the difference between projected prices at the time of the budget creation and the prices at the time of the implementation.

Any decisions on the budget and spending are taken in a careful and professional manner adhering to rules and regulations set out by the project contract as well as including all project partners equally in view of ensuring best implementation of planned activities and more efficient use of funds in reaching the goals of the project.



Are the set indicators applicable for monitoring purposes and used by the project management?

The set indicators are applicable for monitoring purposes and applied by all partners as well as project management.

Some sources of verification have proven to be less useful than others, e.g. percentage of improvements or increase of awareness is hard to measure within a short period of time and without referencing studies.

Are there any strengths and weaknesses in terms of planning, management, implementation and monitoring observed?

The **Red Cross of Serbia** has been leading this regional effort in a very professional way from the first day. Partners are satisfied with the support they receive and found it very helpful with the preparation of different materials, e.g. ToRs, guidelines as well as with solving administrative challenges, e.g. VAT exemption regulations in each partner country.

The Red Cross of Serbia has acted very independently and has always been able to find ways of solving a problem within their own capacities, e.g. through good communication with other CSOs in the country or with the office of the European Commission.

The Red Cross of Serbia has proven high professionalism and flexibility in resolving challenges on level of activity implementation, administrative as well as partner management.

The **Austrian Red Cross** has been involved in the project as management support partner and provides this mid-term review.

The Austrian Red Cross is in continuous exchange and contact with the Red Cross of Serbia and cooperation has been very positive and effective, additionally supported by personal exchange to overcome challenges that appear through the different locations.

All partners participated in the project actively and supported the activities to their best capacities and knowledge with highly satisfactory outcomes so far. Reporting obligations have been adhered to, usually on time and all partners responded to the requests of the project lead and management satisfactorily.

Each country and each partner organization experiences different challenges to which the national project coordinators and the project lead together with the management support, is trying to respond individually. So far it has been possible to solve all problems and keep all partners actively on board.



4.2. Summary of project achievements:

The summary of project achievements refers to the Monitoring & Evaluation Plan of the project assessing set indicators from the logical framework and the comparison of the current situation to the baseline, assessed via the situation analysis study.

Specific Objective: Capacities of CSO networks and CSO network members to increase public awareness and subsequent impact in decision making processes on social inclusion of older people in Western Balkan countries at national and regional level (Albania, BiH, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia) are improved.	Capacities of 50 CSOs and 5 CSO networks in increasing public awareness and influencing decision makers have been improved ➤ At this stage a 50-80% improvement is reported by the partners, depending on the country. Policy makers in the 5 partner countries have initiated a process of policy changes to reflect the advocacy objectives of 5 CSO networks ➤ The awareness of the topic of aging and that policies are necessary has risen slightly in the five countries. The creation of or increased activeness of the networks and its members has obviously had some impact on this. ➤ Important activities included the participation in the Ministerial Conference on Aging (+UNFPA), NGO Forum within the UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing in Lisbon, Portugal, involvement in the AGE DEMANDS ACTION movement, continuous interaction with relevant ministries. Outreach of targeted CSOs through awareness raising and education is increased, measured through ➤ According to the information provided by the partners, this varies significantly across countries. However, all reported that, via the project-related activities, visibility has been improving. ➤ In all countries, not only beneficiaries of existing network members have been reached but also new network members could be gained. ➤ The numbers of CSOs participating in the activities varies between 8-20, depending on the country.
Expected result 0 Inception: 5 CSO networks and their strategic work plans on advocacy for social inclusion of older people are established, mobilised and refined	5 CSO Networks are set up or have improved their network structure ➤ 1 network is fully set up in each country, three already existing networks were refreshed through review and redefinition of strategic priorities and the two new ones have been formally established, adopting strategic priorities, now better set-up and more active. At least 50 CSOs are active in the networks ➤ All together 62 network members participate in activities, ranging from 7-16 members per network, depending on the country. 5 CSO networks have finalized their strategic work plans in consultation with national stakeholders and the European Commission ➤ National stakeholders have been consulted for strategic workplans, particularly during the situation analysis. The



	european commission is consulted sometimes for specific questions and informed about status via reports. ➤ All the civil society networks in the project countries have had two national meetings in the first year, as planned, following the kick-off meetings in each country to present project objectives and allow to civil society partners to ask questions and express their interest in further participation. ➤ The first series of national meetings focused on strategic planning and formulation of strategic priorities. The second series of national meetings focused on workshops raising the capacity of the networks' members to engage in evidence-based advocacy as well as on defining research priority areas for the research in the subsequent phase of the TASIOp project.
Expected result 1: Capacities of 5 CSO networks to engage in evidence-based policy dialogue for older people increased	5 CSO networks have defined research priorities and advocacy strategies ➤ Research priorities had been elicited via the situation analysis and the national meetings that took place ➤ Each country selected 1-2 topics essential for the national circumstances. Advocacy strategies will be designed based on the research activities still ongoing. Capacities in taking an evidence-based approach in advocacy activities have increased. ➤ Dedication to the project development and activities (especially research) have improved (50-100%) the evidence based approach vs. the anecdotal approach that prevailed before. Increased communication and interaction with media based on awareness of addressing the topic of social inclusion ➤ In the first 1.5 years all countries had good communication with media (e.g. via interviews, television presence etc.). ➤ National trainings with media to further improve 1) the interaction of CSOs with the media and 2) the awareness of the media representatives about the topic, its importance and sensitivity of social inclusion of older people in the society has been postponed to the 3rd year.



Expected result 2: CSOs have engaged public and policy makers in a structured dialogue leading to better recognition of rights of older people	CSOs participate in at least 45 of meetings in official policy working groups on topics related to social inclusion ➤ The number of meetings CSOs participated in, in each country varies from 3-10 meetings. In general it can be said that not many CSOs work on the topic of social inclusion of older people and thus meetings outside the network are rare. At least 5.000 older people are engaged at community level through citizen education in each partner country ➤ ToR as well as a power point presentation with essential material, for citizen education has been developed, network structure(s) will help to implement it. At least 60 small local initiatives are strengthened through sub-grants ➤ Between 12-15 small local initiatives have been awarded a sub grant in each country, starting to implement activities by 1 Nov. 2017. ➤ Bosnia's activities have been delayed due to administrative challenges related to VAT exemption regulation, which have been resolved in the meantime and implementation will start in February 2018.
Expected result 3: Regional networking and knowledge-transfer on social inclusion of older people increased in Western Balkan Countries	Number of spin-off activities defined after the regional study visit/peer exchange programme (target: 1/network). ➤ This indicator comes into play after peer exchange activities have been implemented. However, some activities have been initiated, e.g. Intergenerational spaces have been started. Regional exchange platform established ➤ Planned for later stage Regional recommendations on social inclusion developed and disseminated ➤ Ultimate goal



4.3. Relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the national CSO networks

This analysis makes reference to three activities carried out within this assessment in order to reach as many groups of stakeholders as possible:

- 1) A **questionnaire** was carried out with representatives of all network members
- 2) A **focus group** discussion was held with a wider group of stakeholders as defined by each project coordinator.
- 3) A **feedback workshop** was held with the project coordinators of each partner involved in the project.

The results from the three groups are shown separately. Where messages from all three groups showed a similar picture, the groups were merged.

Each guiding questions as defined in the ToR of the evaluation has been analyzed on **regional level** summarizing the outcomes from each national member as well as on **national level** drawing attention to specifics in each country:

Has the existence of the networks **increased the awareness and relevance** of the topic of social inclusion of older people in the country?

Regional

The existence of network organizations has contributed to more awareness-raising activities and thus increased awareness in the countries of implementation. This increases the importance and relevance of social inclusion of older people in the project countries and ultimately in the region through joint action of CSOs dealing with these issues.

National:

Albania:

Focus group: Participants in the focus group pointed out that the theme of social inclusion is very relevant to the Albanian social context and that social inclusion need to be systematically implementing across the work of the Network.

Questionnaire: The results of survey said that the relevance of 'social inclusion of older people' was considered very important or important for network by all the surveyed and that the existence of the networks increased the awareness/relevance of social inclusion of older people in the country.

Workshop with coordinators: Network is much better recognised now in public and that have positive influence for social inclusion of elderly.

Bosnia and Herzegovina:

Focus group: Elderly people in BiH face multiple discrimination. They are not organized nor encouraged to participate in the processes that affect their lives. The network is very important for raising awareness, evidence-based advocacy, impact on policy tracking, good governance and the Network have an important influence in that fields.

Questionnaire: When asked questionnaire participants about the relevance of the topics on social inclusion of older people, 100% of respondents believe that these topics are very important for the work of the network as well as for the work of their own organization. About 10% of respondents believe this issue is "becoming important" for the country than 90 % of respondents believe that these topics are very important.

Workshop with coordinators: The interest for the network by other NGOs has been increasing and new potential members are approaching the network.



Macedonia:

Focus group and workshop with coordinators: The relevance of the project activities was evaluated through analysis of the responses in terms of how relevant is the topic of social inclusion of older people in the Republic of Macedonia. The relevance of the selected topic can be seen with the increase of the number of older people in the total share of the population and the prolongation of the lifespan of the older people, it is evident that there is a need for provision of enhanced support for their social inclusion, in order to improve their quality of life.

Questionnaire: The existence of the network has an impact on increasing the relevance of social inclusion in Macedonia.

Montenegro:

General conclusion from **questionnaire, focus group and workshop with coordinators** is that the network has an impact on the social inclusion of the elderly. Through direct impact, but also indirect. Indirect impact can be seen because since the network established, it is noticeable that some organizations are implementing projects that are aimed at the older people, although they are not their key target group.

Serbia:

Focus group and workshop with coordinator: General conclusion from focus group and workshop is that the topic of social inclusion of older people is very important as it ensures better participation of older people in decision making and this influences their quality of life, better standard of living and respect for their human rights. The topic is present in the public but there is still no sufficient volume of projects and programmes that tackle it. The existence of the network has contributed to a wider (greater) representation of the topic in the public and increasing the relevance / awareness of the issue of social inclusion of the elderly in the country.

Questionnaire: As the result of questionnaire, majority of organizations responded that the topic of social inclusion of older people is **very relevant** for the network (9) and for their organization (8), while smaller number think that the topic is important for the country (5). Surveyed organizations stated that the topic as such is not important for the country (2 said "important" and 2 "partially important").

Has the process of the **mobilization of national CSO networks** on social inclusion of older people been effective and successful in terms of creating active networks in each country?

Regional:

The process of mobilizing national OCD networks on social inclusion was efficient and successful in terms of creating active networks in each country. Each country has an active network that gathers CSOs dealing with social inclusion issues of the elderly.



National:

Albania:

Focus group: Most participants agreed that MOSHA network has been a good instrument for put in contact many organisations and build the right environment (in forums or meetings) for them to collaborate, or **work** together. The creation of such a network and the combined action of a large number of stakeholders has eased the efforts towards the main goal of the projects - social inclusion of elderly and fight against social isolation.

Questionnaire: The effectiveness of the developed joint network structures was highly rated by the interviewed. Either 'capacity building' or 'bases for joint action' were considered very good or good (70% and 62% respectively) by all of them.

Workshop with coordinators: Now the network structure is better than earlier and this affects the improved activity for social inclusion of elderly

Bosnia and Herzegovina:

Focus group: The network counts a large number of members and mobilizes them in order to achieve social inclusion. It influenced the decision makers to start dealing and talking about ageing and older people issues and the evidence on that is in place. The Network has been attracting new members which are also an indicator of visibility.

Questionnaire: A significant percentage of respondents, almost 70%, pointed out that the topic of involving older people affected the mobilization of the network. Advocacy and events related to (TASIOp) projects are also important (70%). On the other hand, the main obstacles that were mentioned were lack of resources, lack of capacity and motivation.

Workshop with coordinators: Network members appreciate OSMIJEH efforts to bring in NGOs and other stakeholders dealing with diverse areas of ageing.

Macedonia:

Focus group: The Network is comprised of associations of citizens that have different experience, human, technical and financial capacities for work with older people. It enables sharing of experiences for efficient coordination of the activities with different stakeholders on local level. Because of this reason, the process of mobilizing national CSO networks on social inclusion of the elderly is efficient / successful in terms of creating active networks.

Questionnaire: The network actively participates in the mobilization of CSOs that contribute to the achievement of social inclusion of the elderly. The Network is comprised of associations of citizens that have different experience, human, technical and financial capacities for work with older people. It enables sharing of experiences for efficient coordination of the activities with different stakeholders on local level.

Workshop with coordinators: More NGOs now recognise the importance of work with elderly people.

Montenegro:

Focus group: The process of mobilizing national OCD networks on social inclusion was efficient and successful in terms of creating an active network in Montenegro. However, the visibility of the network is not at a satisfactory level among the general population and needs to be improved.

Participants on **questionnaire** said that evaluation of the effectiveness of the jointly developed network structure, in terms of:

Capacity Building - 6 out of 7 respondents answered this question. Half of them (3, i.e. 50%) estimated that capacity building was very good, and the other half rated it "good".

The basis for joint actions - From this aspect, the effectiveness of the network structure was assessed „very good“ by 42.9% of the respondents, and 57.1% of respondents rated it „good“.



Workshop with coordinators: The coordinators said that some members of the network are less active and that this should be improved.

Serbia:

Focus group: The process of creating active networks on social inclusion of the elderly in Serbia is successful and is reflected in the existence of the Humanas network that gathers a large number of CSOs that have for objective to advance the position of the elderly population in Serbia.

Questionnaire: Participants on the questionnaire said that is important that all of surveyed organizations belong to the national network (9), while 2 are members of the local and 2 are members of the international network. They all working together to achieve the goal - social inclusion of elderly in Serbia.

Workshop with coordinators: The network is visible in front of institutions and governmental bodies and that conclude that Network working good for social inclusion of elderly in sense of creating active members of Network.

Have the networks had an **impact on the capacity-building of CSOs** participating in the national network in general?

Regional:

The networks have influenced to the development and enhance of the capacities of CSOs that are members of national networks.

National:

Albania:

Focus group: There is a direct impact on the capacities of participating NGOs in the fields of advocacy, coalition's development, planning and management, and in civil society developments. 'We know better now how to communicate with state institutions' said a participant.

Questionnaire: MOSHA network has had a significant influence on building capacities of the organizations involved. 75%-85% of participants rate this influence either good or very good for all components of the capacity building: to engage in the policy creation process, to engage with other stakeholders in general, and to secure funding for the activities of network members (advocacy/lobbying).

Workshop with coordinators: In general NGOs working with elderly people (part of the network) now know better how the civil society works/can work. In terms of: Understanding of network structures and work, communication and collaborations; how projects are implemented – "projects" as such had a bad connotation before.

Bosnia and Herzegovina:

Focus group: The Network members feel that their knowledge and capacities increased thanks to the project and that they are more competent now to integrated advocacy and policy influencing activities in their work.

Questionnaire: The impact of the Networks on building different capacities of all partners in the country is limited and is one of the key issues that prevent the involvement of civil society organizations in political dialogue. The limitation is linked to the problem regarding the lack of financial resources and human resources. For this very reason, only 10% of respondents said that the capacity to participate in the national policy-making process was very good.

Workshop with coordinators: All members appreciate the possibility to build their capacities, to have access to new information, knowledge, practices.

Macedonia:



Focus group: The activities that implemented in cooperation and partnership with the associations of citizens through the Network InkluzivaM, and through their different experience, credibility and different areas of interest for work with older people, they contributed for enhancement of the capacities of the associations and the Network itself. All the participants in the focus group discussion emphasized the specific impact of the activities and the achieved results of the members associations through the activities of the Network.

Questionnaire: Most of the members of the Network appraised the efficiency in the two main areas (**capacity building 55,56%** and basis for joint action 88,89%) as very good. None of the members do appraise the efficiency of the Network as bad, which indicates that the efficiency for development of common structures of the Network regarding capacity building and basis for joint action are appraised as good by all associations, members of the Network InkluzivaM.

Montenegro:

Focus group and workshop with coordinators: The existence and operation of the network are of great importance for its members, as network helped build member's capacities, but also contributed to their better cooperation. Benefits of membership have been achieved through the exchange of experiences, inclusion in the process of applying for support through mini-grants (organizations have had the opportunity to apply for funds for their services, but also to gain useful experience in the process of the writing of the application itself).

Questionnaire: On the question at the questionnaire: "How do you assess the effectiveness of the developed joint network structures regarding-Capacity building", the participants answered: Very good 42,9 and Good 49,2.

Serbia:

Focus group and workshop with coordinators: General conclusion from focus group and workshop about impact on capacity building is that Network have big influence on capacity building of Network members. The Network is a resource for information and data on older people as relevant actors invite them to cooperate and include them in working groups. Some of the Network members are informal providers of family care (over 65 and providing care to parents in rural areas). The results of targeted researches by the Network also provide information necessary to decide priorities in advocacy and defining recommendations for decision makers. The research in the field is important as it defines the profile of socially excluded people and helps define the programmes for inclusion of older people. All of the above provides the opportunity to exchange good practice examples that contribute to capacity building

Questionnaire: Effectiveness of the developed joint network was assessed positively regarding the basis for the joint action (88,8% as very good and good), while capacity building was a bit less positive with one third of organizations (33,3%) assessing it as satisfying.



Have the networks had an **impact on improving the CSOs capacities to engage in policy- and decision-making processes** concerning social inclusion of older people at national level (and regional level in Western Balkan countries)?

Regional:

The project has enabled to start nearly 50 micro-projects in the countries of the Western Balkans, which through direct engagement of CSOs have influence on the social inclusion of the elderly, engagement in policy-making processes and decide on the social inclusion of the elderly.

National:

Albania:

General conclusion from **Focus group, questionnaire and workshop**: For some months, in a participative way, involving a number of NGO activists, and in collaboration with Association of Gerontology, many ideas were transformed into structured proposals. The project supported the realization of these structured proposals through mini-projects. Many participants in the focus groups consider the mini projects as the most important component of TASIOp.

Bosnia and Herzegovina:

Focus group and questionnaire: Participants on focus group and questionnaire has agreed that the impact of the Network approach and efforts has been visible and the evidence for that are the activities and initiatives related to development of the 3 strategies on ageing (Federation of BiH, Republic of Serbs and District of Brčko entities).

Workshop with coordinators: The improvement in the strategic thinking of the Network was observed too – for example during one of the last Network meetings big national demonstrations by pensioners were on.

Macedonia:

Focus group: On the advocacy training, the members of the Network InkluzivaM and the representatives of the state institutions gained knowledge on advocacy, advocacy concepts, styles, approaches, advocacy strategies, skills for effective advocacy and practical introduction to several key tools and methods on advocacy.

Questionnaire: In terms of the engagement in the process for development of national policies, most of the members of the network responded that the impact is good (77,78%) or very good, particularly in terms of the local self-government bodies. The impact was appraised as very good by 44,44% of the Network members, 22,22% of them stated that the impact was on satisfactory level and only 33,33% stated that the impact was good. Regarding the capacity building of the associations of citizens the members of the Network stressed the impact of engagement in three main areas: engagement in the process of creation of policies, the general engagement with other stakeholders.

Workshop with coordinators: Next year strategy for advocacy is prepared within the network, based on the results of the research carried out within the TASIOp project.

Montenegro:

Focus group and workshop with coordinators: The Network activities have so far contributed significantly to the achievement of national goals (defined in the Law and new Strategy for Social Protection of the Older People), but also to the achievement of goals defined by the network itself. This primarily relates to the contribution that network activities have had to the development of relevant documents on a national level, strengthening the involvement of the NGO sector in the issues of social inclusion, and developing additional services that improve the quality of life and social inclusion of the older people. It is expected that this effect will be more



concrete in the future, through the implementation of mini-grants, public information campaigns, and the other project activities.

Questionnaire: The impact of the network on capacity building for participation in the public advocacy process was rated very good by 28.6% of the respondents, 42.9% of them rated it good, and 28.6% said it was satisfactory.

Serbia:

Focus group and workshop with coordinators: Through the organization of several education by the networks, it contributed to the improvement of the capacities of the members, and through the 12 selected and financed micro projects enabled the members of the network to realize some of the goals and contribute to the social inclusion of the elderly.

Questionnaire: Opinions on the network's influence on capacity building of all partners in the country differ. It seems that influence on securing funding for the activities of network members was best assessed (22% very good and 44% as good). However, in the same time it was also assessed as bad by 22% of organizations. Influence on engagement with other stakeholders was slightly better assessed than influence on engaging in the national policy processes.

Have the networks had an **effect on participating CSOs to cooperating** more closely with other actors in the field of social inclusion of older people?

Regional:

The network has had an effect on members and they work with a large number of relevant actors for social inclusion of elderly persons.

National:

Albania:

Focus group: Some representative of pensioners organisations said that they have been learning new things about how coalitions and networks work and how to put them at good use for advocacy. This has contributed to establishing cooperation with other relevant actors and creating coalitions aimed at achieving social inclusion of elderly people. The MOSHA network has a direct impact on capacity building in the field of coalition, development and governance.

Questionnaire and workshop with coordinators: Collaborations with governmental bodies improved, e.g. Ministry of social protection came to meetings and Ministry of health

Bosnia and Herzegovina:

Focus group: The Network members feel that their knowledge and capacities increased thanks to the activity of the Network and that they are more competent now to integrated advocacy and policy influencing activities in their work. They have better access to information, to practice not only nationally but also regionally and globally.

Questionnaire: When asked about benefits of the network participants conclude 80 % members is rated as very good ('Cooperation with other CSOs improved/extended', Cooperation with other CSOs extended, Development of joint network priorities; Skills gained and capacities strengthened; Regional cooperation; Exchange of best practice).

Workshop with coordinators: The all appreciate the TASIOP project and the potential possibilities to participate with the implementation of sub grants, in exchanges, in joint public campaigns because they believe that having roles in certain projects and in the network too makes it easier for the members to identify with.

Macedonia:



Focus group and questionnaire: Establishing the Network enables associations to participate in decision-making in order to improve the lives of older people. Good cooperation has been established between the network InkluzivaM and the governmental institutions on national and local level which represents a good base for implementation of activities for social inclusion of older people.

Workshop with coordinators: For the first time MIPA report included RC and Minsitries in a Working group and the network members activities are reflected in the national report.

Montenegro:

Focus group: The Network has achieved its visibility among the relevant subjects. Thus, network members are regularly contacted by line ministries and other institutions to be included in the process of writing reports and making relevant documents, and they also have faster access to information and explanations when needed. The network has its website where all relevant information and newsletters related to work of the network and individual members are published.

Questionnaire: In assessing the capacity to work with other organizations, the overall ratings ranged from very good (28.6%), good (42.9%) to satisfactory (28.6%).

Workshop with coordinators: Cooperation with government bodies are improved and some of the government representatives also participated in the focus groups.

Serbia:

Questionnaire and Focus group: The network has an important effect on the cooperation of CSOs with other stakeholders in the field of social protection. The Humanas Network and the network members co-operate with The Commissioner for Protection of equality; The Protector of Citizens; Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Policy; The National Institute for Public Health etc.

Workshop with coordinators: Network members start to understand that functioning advocacy is based on networking and they opportunities can be synergised via the network and/or with other nat. or intl. networks.

How is the **sustainability of the networks** measured and what is needed to increase probability of the continuation of the networks after phase out of the project?

Regional:

Sustainability is possible through partnership with state institutions, but also through capacity building of network members, inclusion of new thematically important members, joint initiatives, campaigns, project organization.



National:

Albania:

Focus group: Participants underlined the importance of 'continuous international collaboration' to assure the continuity of the project. The new strategic plan and organisational structure of the MOSHA network should be better put into action and give more 'dynamism' to the network with 'new members', from other groups interested.

Questionnaire: When participants on questionnaire asked about approaches to assure sustainability of the network after the project ends, the overwhelming majority of the respondents pointed out at getting local 'funding for concrete activities' (82%) and strengthening 'regional links to other networks' (71%). Other important ways to be followed are 'partnership with other country networks' (47%) and actively involving 'more members in the network' (35%).

Workshop with coordinators: Sustainability has to be improved, for e.g. by including more actors such as businesses or the UN.

Bosnia and Herzegovina:

Focus group: All participants agreed that the further capacity building, involvement of new thematically important members, joint initiatives, campaigns, projects are the way to sustainability.

Questionnaire: Regarding to assure sustainability of the network after the project ends majority of the respondents 'funding for concrete activities' is rated as very important (100%). Time resources is valued with (80%). Other important ways to be followed are 'More network members (60 %)' and Priority of social inclusion of older people in my organization/institution (20%).

Macedonia:

Focus group: The sustainability of the Network is perceived as an important aspect and this must be supported with provision of assistance from regional networks and the local self-government, projects of the Government and donations from the corporate sector, and legal instruments for support of social services and project activities of associations of citizens, members of the Network.

Questionnaire: The answers regarding the requirements for ensuring sustainability of the Network InkluzivaM are as follows: The members stated that after the completion of the project activities there is a need for raising sufficient funds for concrete activities and enabling other associations of citizens to join the Network, as well as establishment of partnerships with other networks in the country and coordination of the work of the Network members.

Workshop with coordinators: Sustainability remains a challenge and open question. The suggestion was to ask the local government for coordination, to write proposal to EU together

Montenegro:

Focus group: Focus group participants are confident that conditions for network sustainability have been created, as they have established strong cooperation, as well as a sustainable platform for further improvement of the network functioning

Questionnaire: The most frequent answer (25% of the total number of answers) to this question, which all respondents indicated, is financing for specific activities. In addition to this, as a significant precondition (17.86% of the total number of answers, i.e. 71.43% of the number of respondents), the respondents recognize the leadership/coordination by one of the members. Partnerships with other existing networks in our country is indicated in 14.29% of responses.

Workshop with coordinators: Coordinators from Montenegro are concerned about sustainability: question is who will be in charge of network in the future.

Serbia:

Focus group: The Network has good predisposition to be sustainable. It has adopted a strategic plan, it has an internal protocol on cooperation that defines duties and responsibilities of the



members. It has plans for joint activities and public statements which ensures visibility of Network members. HumanaS Network is set up in such a way as to not be additional burden or effort for any of its members. It is used as a channel when it is needed, to ensure support for organisations for their activities – and this is one of the preconditions for sustainability.

Questionnaire: All surveyed organizations (9) think that sustainability could remain if funding is provided for concrete activities, followed by the regional links to other networks (6).



5. Conclusions of the project evaluation

The **overall project performance** has been implemented efficiently and according to the project plan.

- The project implementation process was successful and did not experience and significant shortfalls.
- The project lead, the Red Cross of Serbia, is acting highly professional and supportive to all partners. Reports are requested and delivered on time in the correct formats. Decision making takes place in a participatory and transparent form.
- The realized activities contributed to the realization of the planned results and significant achievements can be reported.

The **relevance, impact, effectiveness and sustainability of the project outcomes** and planned activities can overall be analysed as positive

- The process of mobilizing national networks on social inclusion was efficient and successful in terms of creating active networks in each country. Each country has an active network that gathers CSOs dealing with social inclusion issues of the elderly.
- Project activities around the structuring of the networks significantly contributed to the members of the network having a common vision and increased their motivation to be active.
- The capacities of the CSOs have been improved, the CSOs are active members of the network, cooperation with the Government bodies has been improved thanks to the network.
- The existence of network organizations has contributed to awareness-raising, in terms of the importance of social inclusion of older people in the Western Balkan countries through the joint action of CSOs dealing with these issues.
- The activities carried out with the networks and the member organisations increased the development and enhanced the capacities of CSOs.
- The project has enabled to start nearly 50 micro-projects in the countries of the Western Balkans, which through direct engagement of further small CSOs have wider outreach to act on social inclusion of the elderly.
- Sustainability of the individual networks is a challenge but possible, particularly through partnership with state institutions, but also through capacity building of network members, inclusion of new thematically important members, joint initiatives, campaigns, organization of projects.
- The networks are clearly important for the implementation of the project activities targeted for social inclusion of older people in the country and the lessons learned which will be used for taking further action for social inclusion of older people.

All in all the project can be evaluated as **very useful for all project stakeholders**, for the elderly people, the members of the networks, but also for the whole society in Western Balkan countries.



6. Lessons learned and recommendations based on the assessment

- There is a unified and emphasized impression on the **importance of the networks** in the implementation of the project activities targeted for social inclusion of older people in the country and the lessons learned which will be used for taking further action for social inclusion of older people.

Recommendation

- Increase activities on network visibility in order to raise awareness about the existence and the opportunities of the network on everybody's life but also for specific CSOs, e.g. through the promotion of the small grants provided, information campaigns and better visibility of the network itself when a network representative is present in the media.

- Through the process of advocacy and lobbying, the networks can encourage positive changes in addressing the key issues of the older people. **Strengthening the capacities** of the network members in these fields already helped the members to understand complex processes in their country.

Recommendation

- Establish strong and continuous co-operation with the media in order to encourage broader groups of volunteers among old people in their community to publicly discuss the themes that concern them.
- Organise and support national trainings with media to further improve 1) the interaction of CSOs with the media and 2) the awareness of the media representatives about the topic, its importance and sensitivity of social inclusion of older people in the society.
- Work on improvement of the technical and financial preparedness of the networks for taking action on local level in advocating for older people in the process of social inclusion, enhancement of the visibility.
- Exchange lessons learned and examples of best practice within the network and with other networks, either in the country or in the region, to influence future improvement of capacities of network members, of the network structures and decision-making processes, for example on financing and designing programs in this area.

- **Sustainability of the networks** and activities around the topic of social inclusion of older people is a challenge in each country. Participants expressed an improvement in the feeling of sustainability of their network through the establishment of network structures, statutes and agreement on common goals. However, more will be needed in order to ensure sustainability of the networks on national levels and even more efforts are required to enable regional exchange and lobbying.

A very important point in order to tackle this issue is the participation and activeness of all members in the network. This can be supported by common goals but also good leadership and guidance. The coordination and organisation of such remains a question to be solved.

When a network has a leadership or other members that regularly activate and bring together network members for specific activities such as the TASIOp project provided, topics, a strong increase in interest for the network can be observed. Tighter bonds between the members, developing through this common activity and vision, can importantly strengthen



the position of the network in the country, improve existing relations with other stakeholders, raise the importance of the topic as well as attract new potential members and supporters.

Recommendation

- Find options for continuation of the activities of the network
 - Foster established network structures to ensure leadership/coordination of the network.
 - Foster common goals and a clear vision of all network members.
 - Exchange lessons learned and examples of best practice to improve capacities of network members and improve chances of development of follow-up activities.
 - Strengthen capacities of network members to find ways to be active continuously, e.g. by exploring funding opportunities through joint applications to international donors, local governments, and through donations from the corporate sector or private individuals.
- In addition to the activities within the networks, the activities around providing **small grants** to CSOs has proven to be a powerful tool to achieve multiple benefits for the social inclusion of the elderly. The networks helped in attracting the right organisations as well as improve the outreach. Furthermore it strengthens the position of the organisation that provides the grants.

Recommendation

- Continue support to and cooperation with small grant awardees in order to widen and thus strengthen the position of the networks and by increasing the number of members and active supporters.
- In many countries in the region and particularly in Bosnia, due to complicated **political and administrative organisation of the country** and many fragmented and decentralised government layers, it has been very difficult to define the institution of government body dealing with ageing in particular and to lead the process at the state level. Governments do respond to the project partner and network's invitation to the meetings, but the idea and the culture of bottom up and participatory approaches in dealing with policy development, implementation or monitoring requires further development. Continuous governmental support and cooperation, beyond the project lifespan will be a particular challenge.

Recommendation

- Complex political set-ups have to be considered when planning a project.
- Provide specific attention to the political and geographical set-up.
- Intensify communication with the partners to improve the cooperation as well as implementation of the project activities in the country.



Annexes to report:

1. Terms of Reference of Evaluation
2. Network Questionnaire
3. Agenda, Workshop with Coordinators, 13 Nov 2017
4. Guidelines for Focus Group discussions
5. TASIOP Inception Report
6. List of CSOs in national networks
7. Evaluation Guideline for the Austrian Red Cross International Aid Department