

The SOLIDAR network has been active for more than 10 years in the Western Balkans, working for equitable and sustainable development in the region.

SOLIDAR is engaged in four main fields:

- building the capacity of trade unions and promoting social dialogue
- protection of human rights and democratisation in the region
- income generation, rural development and health and social services
- humanitarian aid and disaster relief, reconstruction, refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) including returnees.

SOLIDAR members are working together with 198 partner organisations including local and national Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), trade unions and employers' unions, and local and national administrations working on social and employment policies. Read more about our activities:

QUESTIONNAIRE: HOW TO STRENGTHEN CSOs?

SOLIDAR is currently undertaking a study on the capacity and legal status of civil society organisations in the Western Balkans. The study is investigating the following five elements: the current capacity of civil society in the Western Balkans; the challenges and opportunities of civil society organisations with regards to the European enlargement process; the needs of civil society organisations; an analysis of the legal recognition of civil society organisations; and a political understanding on the role of civil society organisations at local and national level.

Please fill out the [questionnaire](#) or distribute it amongst your partners in the Western Balkans.

DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Movement for Peace (MPDL), Spain

On 1 April 2009, MPDL finished the first year of a project on the strategic litigation of discrimination cases in Bosnia & Herzegovina (BiH) and Kosovo. Strategic litigation uses the justice sector to achieve legal and social change through cases. The project was carried out through the MPDL Initiative for Development and Cooperation (IDC) in BiH and the Center for Legal Aid and Regional Development (CLARD) in Kosovo. The project was extended for a second year and activities are now ongoing.

The project is funded by the Open Society Institute in Budapest and implemented by the Minority Rights Group, a British NGO. Activities are based on public advocacy and the search for direct or indirect discrimination cases, focusing on access to education, employment rights and health in minority communities, to be taken to court. In BiH, MPDL's work has contributed to the development of an anti-discrimination law, a final draft of which will be voted on by the National Assembly. In Kosovo, an anti-discrimination law has existed since June 2006 but to date there is no jurisprudence, as no discriminatory practice or decision has been challenged in accordance with the law.

Email: [Mikel Cordoba Gavin](#) Websites [MPDL](#) | [IDC Bosnia-Herzegovina](#) | [CLARD Kosovo](#)

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE AND RECONSTRUCTION

Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund, Germany

The focus of Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund (ASB) activities in the Balkans lies in the sustainable reintegration of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees as well as in the economic and social development of particularly vulnerable groups of the population. A new project in Kosovo will carry out the emergency repair of 15 houses for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian families who either are returning to Kosovo or have so far been living in temporary shelters in Prizren.

Income generating measures will accompany the construction and support a more sustainable economic base for the beneficiaries. In Serbia, there are two new projects supporting refugees and returnees through providing accommodation. One is being implemented in cooperation with the municipality of Krusevac and funded by the German Foreign Ministry, the other one - supported by the EU - will benefit at least 250 families.

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CIVIL SOCIETY AND VOLUNTEERING

Olaf Palme International Centre, Sweden

Cooperation between CSOs and Local Self-Government in Montenegro, Increased Satisfaction but Improvements still Needed

On 28 April 2009, a conference on 'Local self-governance and NGOs' was held in Podgorica. Goran Djurovic

from the Centre for the Development of NGOs (CRNVO) stated that the overall impression of cooperation between NGOs and local self-governance (LSG) has improved. This assessment is corroborated both by CSOs and by the branches of LSG. However, Djurovic added that even after 5 years of cooperation, the situation was far from satisfactory in a number of municipalities.

CRNVO's Head of department for cross-departmental cooperation and public administration reform - Ana Novakovic - presented the conclusions of the 2008 Report on cooperation between CSOs and local self-governance. This research has been conducted on an annual basis for the past four years. All Montenegrin municipalities have been included in the research sample which consisted of 288 representatives of local self-governance and 350 CSO representatives. Novakovic said that the average grade of satisfaction for cooperation between CSOs and LSG has improved from 2.36/5.0 in 2007 to 3.05/5.0 in 2008

Serbian Web Portal to Support Civil Society Contribution to Reform Process

The [European Movement in Serbia](#) has launched a new portal - [Serbian Civil Society Proposes](#) - with the aim to allow as many civil society organisations in Serbia as possible make contributions to the reform processes; making the process of Serbian integration into the EU more efficient. Civil society organisations can input what they see as the priority problems and propose solutions.

Some of the proposals collected on the portal will be defined as recommendations for the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) programmes, especially its Component I. And the rest will be put together in a more general paper and presented to relevant decision-makers. The Serbian Civil Society Proposes portal is a part of a larger project entitled 'Local Self-Government and Civil Society in IPA Programming Process 2007-2013'.

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SOCIAL DIALOGUE

Swiss Labour Assistance, Switzerland

The Swiss Labour Assistance (SLA) office in Belgrade opened in 2005 with the project 'Support to Social Dialogue in Serbia', mandated by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. By the end of 2008, this project was implemented at the local level in four Serbian municipalities (Uzice, Kragujevac, Leskovac, Sabac) and at the national level. It covered support to social dialogue through tripartite bodies consisting of representatives from trade unions, employers and local government - such as local project teams and social and economic councils - as well as through bipartite social dialogue in the metal and construction sectors, which started as a new project in 2008.

The project 'Trade Unions and Social Dialogue' is scheduled to last until the end of 2011. The main project partners are trade unions in the construction and metal sectors of the Confederation of Autonomous Trade Unions of Serbia and Trade Union Confederation 'Nezavisnost', youth and women sections of the respective trade unions, National Social and Economic Council and tripartite bodies at the local level in four Serbian cities. The overall objective is to contribute to a better observance of labour rights, an improved climate for economic development and a reduction of unemployment. The project purpose is to improve the capacity for social dialogue in the Serbian world of labour.

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MEETINGS & EVENTS

Civil society and the EU integration process: what's in it for us?

The Olaf Palme International Center organised, together with SOLIDAR, a conference entitled 'Civil society and the EU integration process: what's in it for us?'. Bringing together 40 organisations in the Balkans in Montenegro in December 2008, the conference participants discussed various topics around civil society in the Western Balkans. Read a full report on the [OPIC website](#).

Volunteurope Conference 2009 in Sarajevo

The 18th Volunteurope Conference on Voluntary Action: Engaging Communities will take place in Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina from 8-11 October 2009.

See the [Programme](#) | [Workshops](#) | [contact](#)

***SOLIDAR** is a European network of 53 NGOs working to advance social justice in Europe and worldwide. SOLIDAR lobbies the EU and international institutions in its 3 working areas: social affairs (more social Europe), international cooperation (decent work, decent life) and education (lifelong learning for all). www.solidar.org*

*50 civil society organisations (CSOs) which the **SOLIDAR** network supports in the region, drafted 18*

Recommendations for the European Commission in order to strengthen their role in the European Enlargement process.