



Strengthening the NGO network – a tool for social society

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Project start date **1 October 2020**, project end date **30 April 2022**



Project report summary

The Status Report period 01/10/2020 – 31/08/2021

Category	The project is delivering	Comments
Quality	as expected	<p>The project had deepened understanding of the role of civil society and strengthens the NGO network of the Baltic Sea Region to contribute to the social and health sector by using the social rights instruments. Six partners from 6 countries – Latvia, Estonia, Russia, Belarus, Sweden, Poland and Norway - have developed the network by improving 24 experts' knowledge and skills regarding the topical social rights that are being used in cooperation with education institutions, state's or municipality's structures in decision-making. By using the basic principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the exchange of experience the partners have built their capacity in order to positively influence to the social secure policy in the Region, which has supported by the European Commission and the Nordic programs.</p>
Time	as expected	<p>In the period from February to August 2021, six project management meetings were held in remote format, which were attended by 10 managers from partner organizations.</p> <p>On May 21, 2021, the project partner Eesti People to People (Estonia) organized a project launch webinar - NGO expert seminar. The webinar was attended by 13 participants from organizations in Estonia, Latvia, Sweden, Norway and St.Petersburg.</p> <p>On July 13, 2021, the project partner PSP-Foundation (St.Petersburg, Russia) organized a webinar - NGO expert seminar. The webinar was attended by 18 participants from organizations in Estonia, Latvia, Poland, Sweden, Norway and St.Petersburg.</p> <p>In the period from February to September 2021, 9 project partners prepared a plan of 1-5 seminars-workshops and implemented local activities in their countries. The project partners involved a total of 358 participants in local workshops.</p>



Budget	with challenges	30% from the total grant DKK 444,150 used. Based on the amendments regarding the organization of webinars in May-September 2021, the project budget was also amended to take into account the savings in NCM funding previously planned for trips to Estonia, St.Petersburg, Poland, Sweden and Belarus. The project included relevant activities for the period from January to September 2021 – local workshops, with equal funding for each partner from travel expenses, i.e. a total of DKK 67,914.
Objectives	as expected	The objectives of this project achieved by implementing the following tasks: 1) improving the knowledge on the principles of the EPSR and other social rights instruments with the experience in Estonia, Russia, Latvia, Belarus, Sweden and Norway; 2) improving the knowledge on the previous experience of partner organizations in cooperation with education institutions, state's and municipality's structures in the social and health sector; 3) strengthening the built NGO network of the Baltic Sea Region to contribute to the promotion of the social security in cooperation with NGOs and society in partner countries; 4) summarizing and disseminating of information with conclusions of the NGO experts on the role and opportunities of NGO network in advocacy of interests in the social security policy of the Region.
Deliverables	with challenges	Information about the content of the project and the achieved results was disseminated both to the participants of the NGO and to the public in general with the main website of the project and social network help. These pages contain the logos of the project sponsor and partner organizations and information about the project. In addition, EAPN-Latvia distributed a monthly "News" for use by partner organizations. Resources such as the press, radio and television were not used during the project reporting period. Due to the political situation and the existing legislation, the partners from Kaliningrad and St.Petersburg had very limited opportunities to disseminate content and visual information about the cooperation in the project, but from Belarus there were practically no such opportunities.



1. PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT, STRATEGIC LINK, OBJECTIVES AND BENEFIT

The project in period of 11 months had deepened understanding of the role of civil society and strengthens the NGO network of the Baltic Sea Region to contribute to the social and health sector by using the social rights instruments. Six partners from 6 countries – Latvia, Estonia, Russia, Belarus, Sweden, Poland and Norway - have developed the network by improving 24 experts' knowledge and skills regarding the topical social rights that are being used in cooperation with education institutions, state's or municipality's structures in decision-making. The need for this project is determined by the large amount of the population being socially disadvantaged in the Baltic States, Poland, Russia and Belarus. Only strong NGO network, which includes the Nordic countries, can successfully handle the advocacy of these people's interests. By using the basic principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the exchange of experience the partners have built their capacity in order to positively influence to the social secure policy in the Region, which has supported by the European Commission and the Nordic programs. The success of this project will result in change of attitude and activation within NGOs and population.

The participation of partners from the Nordic countries in this project has been mutually beneficial for all partners. Cooperation between EAPN-Latvia and its partners of Russia, Belarus, Estonia and Poland is directly aimed at fostering democracy and protection of social security in the Baltic Sea Region with the help of Nordic countries. The positive experience in the legislative processes that Denmark, Sweden and Norway have is useful in order to comprehensively develop social and health promotion sectors. The proclamation of EPSR in Sweden in 2017 shows the direction of development for the social rights of socially disadvantaged groups, and that is recommended also to Baltic States, Belarus and Russia. The project is focused on increasing the significance and impact of the civil society of Nordic countries by strengthening NGOs and their cooperation with different institutions in each partner country. The expanded participation and exchange of experience within the NGO network will be able to affect the understanding and balanced development of society in the Baltic Sea Region.

EAPN-Latvia and partners maintained the three cross-sectoral strategies planned in the project: 1) while planning to increase the influence of NGO network the partners included in project activities the discussions regarding the use of social rights instruments with education, state and municipal institutions that are responsible for the social inclusion of children and young people; as a result the NGO experts will summarize and disseminate their conclusions on health care and social security for children and young people both in law and in practice; 2) the sustainability of this project was ensured by the stable cooperation between the NGO network organizations with a common goal – creation of strong social security in the Baltic Sea Region, with getting funding for NGO activities from EU and Nordic funds; 3) the partners unequivocally support gender equality in society and decision-making, as provided for in the EPSR, and this aspect was observed by ensuring the equal participation of women and men in this project.



The target group of this period has consisted 24 experts in the social and health sector who works in 6 partner organizations: EAPN-Latvia, Eesti People to People, PSP-Foundation, Foundation INTERAKCIA, Stowarzyszenie VESUVIO, B-Creative Association and Velferdsalliansen EAPN-Norway. The objectives of this project achieved by implementing the following tasks: 1) improving the knowledge on the principles of the EPSR and other social rights instruments with the experience in Estonia, Russia, Latvia, Belarus, Sweden and Norway; 2) improving the knowledge on the previous experience of partner organizations in cooperation with education institutions, state's and municipality's structures in the social and health sector; 3) strengthening the built NGO network of the Baltic Sea Region to contribute to the promotion of the social security in cooperation with NGOs and society in partner countries; 4) summarizing and disseminating of information with conclusions of the NGO experts on the role and opportunities of NGO network in advocacy of interests in the social security policy of the Region.

a. Amendments

No changes were made to the project's basis, problem, purpose, scope or target group, as well as to the project's strategic links with co-operation programs and the Nordic vision.

2. DELIVERABLES AND ACTIVITIES

Management meetings

Activity # 1. In the period from February to August 2021, six project management meetings were held in remote format (10.02., 11.02., 03.03., 06.05., 15.06., 12.08.), which were attended by 10 managers from partner organizations: Laila Balga, Ruta Pels, Marina Matiunina, Boris Panich, Marina Borisova, Alina Stadnik, Jan Johansen, Ingmarie Rohdin, Honoratte Muhanzi and Hans Vodsgaard (until 11.02.). The webinars discussed and approved the schedule of international activities, tasks for the implementation of local activities, partners' budgets, publicity measures and tasks for dissemination of results. Administrative meetings were organized by EAPN-Latvia, each partner provided a computer and connection to ZOOM to participate in the webinar.

Activities

3 On May 21, 2021, the project partner Eesti People to People (Tallinn, Estonia) organized a project launch webinar - NGO expert seminar on the topic "European Pillar of Social Rights and other tools of social rights – Fair working condition. Exchange of experience of NGOs". The webinar was attended by 13 participants from organizations in Estonia, Latvia, Sweden, Norway and St.Petersburg. The seminar was moderated by Ruta Pels, President of EPTP, who introduced the project tasks to the participants. Experts from Estonia, Sweden, Norway and St.Petersburg gave presentations on the implementation of the EPSR, fair working conditions and gender equality in Estonia, Swedish practices in promoting social security, ensuring a guaranteed minimum income in Norway, and legal employment of migrants and protection of labour



rights in Russia. After the webinar with questionnaires, NGO experts provided their assessment and suggestions regarding the results of the seminar.

5 On July 13, 2021, the project partner PSP-Foundation (St.Petersburg, Russia) organized a webinar - NGO expert seminar on the topic "European Pillar of Social Rights and other tools of social rights – Social protection and inclusion. Exchange of experience of NGOs". The webinar was attended by 18 participants from organizations in Estonia, Latvia, Poland, Sweden, Norway and St.Petersburg. The seminar was moderated by Olga Efimova, Project Manager of PSP-Foundation. Experts from St. Petersburg, Latvia and Belarus gave presentations on the main tasks in the field of promoting the social and cultural integration of migrants, on social integration of migrants in the legal and socio-cultural context and on inclusive practices in the field of integration of female migrants in Russia, the Latvian experience on strengthening the NGO network, and the rights of persons with disabilities and social integration in Belarus. After the webinar with questionnaires, NGO experts provided their assessment and suggestions regarding the results of the seminar.

Local workshops

In the period from February to September 2021, 9 project partners prepared a plan of 1-5 seminars-workshops and implemented local activities in their countries that corresponded to the goals and objectives of the project (see Chapter 1). The project partners involved a total of 358 participants in local workshops (Latvia - 41, Estonia - 20, Poland - 16, Belarus - 40, Norway - 96, Sweden - 15, Denmark - 40, St. Petersburg - 30, Kaliningrad - 60). Target groups were formed by NGO staff and volunteers, politicians, decision-makers in state institutions and municipalities, and stakeholders. In these workshops, the partners achieved the following results: 1) strengthened the management capacity of their organization; 2) strengthened NGO networking methods and knowledge of social security in pandemic conditions; 3) increased knowledge on social inclusion and gender equality; 4) increased knowledge about the principles of the ESRP and their implementation in the EU Member States; 6) increased knowledge of social inclusion strategies; 7) raised awareness of the role of employment and education in the process of social inclusion, incl. for young people; 8) increased knowledge for ensuring equality in social and labor law and the right to education; 9) provided knowledge and skills for the protection of the health of the elderly and people with disabilities; 10) raised awareness of child poverty; 11) strengthened contacts and cooperation with politicians, decision-makers and business representatives; 12) prepared proposals for legislators on issues of ensuring access to health, training and promotion of employment aimed at poverty reduction.

a. Amendments

During the project implementation process, several changes were made in connection with the pandemic restrictions in 2020 and 2021; these amendments have been agreed with Mr.Daniel Jaakkola, Advisor at the Secretariat to the Nordic Council of Ministers – 15/03/2021 – for a change of partner; 21/05/2021 on the approval of webinars, the inclu-



sion of additional activities in the project and amendments to the budget; 26/06/2021 - on the extension of the Status Report deadline until 30/09/2021.

Due to the aggravation of the pandemic in the autumn of 2020 and the restrictions set by the governments, as well as the lack of experience of the partners to move to the implementation of remote activities, the active implementation of the project actually started in February 2021.

The following changes were made to the project regarding the organization of seminars / workshops in webinar format, namely: Activity # 3 in Estonia 21/05/2021, Activity # 5 in St.Petersburg 13/07/2021; Activity # 6 in Poland 08/2021; Activity # 4 in Sweden 09/2021; Activity # 7 in Belarus 09/2021.

However, the symposium, two seminars / workshops and evaluation meeting planned for the project until 30 September 2021 were not planned in a webinar format, as trips to four partner countries were planned, namely: activity # 8 10/2021 - Norway, activity # 9 11/2021 - Kaliningrad, activities # 2 and # 10 2022 - Denmark and Latvia.

Based on these amendments regarding the organization of webinars in May-September 2021, the project budget was also amended to take into account the savings in NCM funding previously planned for trips to Estonia, St. Petersburg, Poland, Sweden and Belarus. The project included relevant activities for the period from January to September 2021 – local workshops, with equal funding in the amount 7546 DKK for each partner from travel expenses, i.e. a total of DKK 67,914.

Practicing seminars / workshops in webinar format, already in two implemented activities, which took place in May and August, attracted a larger number of individual participants - NGO experts than planned, i.e. 24 instead of 18.

On 15 May 2021, the lead partner EAPN-Latvia attracted a project partner from Denmark - Odense Aftenskole, because the previously planned partner Interfolk - Institute for Civil Society withdrew from the project on 15 March 2021 without signing the contract.

No changes are envisaged in the content of the project activities and the planned results. In some cases, the sequence of activities was changed in the project, but this does not affect the achievement of the intended results.

b. Status

The project implementation process in the period from October 1, 2020 to August 31, 2021 is ensured by 22%. The amount of the NCM grant to partners during this period is 30% from the total DKK 444,150.



3. COMMUNICATION

In the period from February to August 2021, communication in the project was provided by 9 partners with the planned target groups: NGO experts in the social and health sector, NGO employees and volunteers, and heads of public administration institutions and employees in the social and health field of education, state and municipal structures.

Communication took place in two seminars / workshops and a significant number of local workshops with a direct target group of 24 experts on the European Pillar of Social Rights and other social rights instruments, on cooperation with educational institutions, state and municipal structures, on topical social and health issues, on previous developments in this area, on mutual cooperation between NGO experts, on dissemination of information of social security policy. The knowledge and skills of NGO experts for operating in the network of the Baltic Sea Region for the promotion of social security were improved.

The project contacted a significant number of NGO staff and volunteers, who are an indirect target group but were involved in activities in 9 partner countries, as well as received information both during and after the activities. Communication with these participants took place on the EPSR and other social rights instruments, on topical social and health issue, on the role of Network in the Baltic Sea Region and on the capabilities of NGO experts in the implementation of social rights, as well as on cooperation with society in the social and health field in general. The knowledge, understanding and skills of NGO employees and volunteers for operating in the network of the Baltic Sea Region for the promotion of social security were improved.

The project also contacted a significant number of heads of public administration institutions and employees in social and health field of educational institutions, state and municipal structures, who are also an indirect target group, but were not involved in activities in the partner countries; this target group received information after the activities were completed. Communication with this target group took place on similar topics as mentioned above, as well as on cooperation between NGOs and decision-makers. The knowledge of state structure specialists on the activities of NGO network in advocacy in the Baltic Sea Region in the social and health field and in the promotion of social security in general was improved.

To ensure communication and visibility, the project coordinator EAPN-Latvia and 8 partners regularly used their staff and volunteer resources, as well as their organisation's premises, communication services and technologies. The implementation of these measures was significantly and differently from previous experience affected by the pandemic, as the communication took place remotely, but the visual design (logos, inscriptions, souvenirs, handouts, etc.) had to be used to a much lesser extent.

Information about the content of the project and the achieved results was disseminated both to the participants of the NGO and to the public in general with the main website of the project http://www.eapn.lv/baltic_project_4/ and Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/PretNabadzibu> and <https://www.facebook.com/laila.balga/>



help. The project website and social network pages contain the logos of the project sponsor and partner organizations and information about the project. Partner websites and/or social networks (Facebook, Instagram, Youtube) were connected to EAPN-Latvia pages. In addition, EAPN-Latvia distributed a monthly "News" ("Jaunumi") for use by partner organizations, and in some cases other partners distributed their newsletters. Resources such as the press, radio and television were not used during the project reporting period.

Due to the political situation and the existing legislation, the partner organizations from Kaliningrad and St.Petersburg had very limited opportunities to disseminate content and visual information about the cooperation in the project, but from Belarus there were practically no such opportunities. However, online communication with EAPN-Latvia and other partner organizations in Russia and Belarus was provided very regularly and in good quality, which ensured the process of achieving the planned results.

Six project management meetings in web format were important during the reporting period to ensure regular communication and visibility between partners.

a. Amendments

Due to the limitations of the pandemic, the communication within the project took place remotely, which was different from the planned process. No formal changes were made to the project in terms of communication and visibility plan.

b. Status

The project communication process in the period from October 1, 2020 to August 31, 2021 is ensured according to the scope of implemented activities and in relation to them.

4. RISKS

EAPN-Latvia had prepared an application for the network's activities, without anticipating significant risks that would hinder the achievement of the planned objectives. EAPN-Latvia took into account the cooperation of the project partners over several years and the long-term experience of the partners in the implementation of international projects, as well as the signed cooperation agreement, which helped to avoid risks during this reporting period. The project coordinator and partners also communicated in a timely manner and also addressed technical issues that may have been related during this reporting period.

a. Amendments

During the reporting period, a number of new pandemic risks emerged for project management. First, due to psychological disagreements over the project management methods, the approved Danish partner withdrew from the project, which posed a risk to the achievement of the intended objectives and the scope of the activities. Secondly, for political and legal reasons, it was difficult for the Russian and Belarusian partners to ensure the publicity of the project, as well as to attract participants in Belarus, which posed a risk to



the project's intended results. Thirdly, all meetings and seminars had to be organized remotely by the project coordinator, which posed a risk to the timing, quality and attractiveness of the participants. Fourth, all remote meetings and seminars had to be provided with modern technology and trained staff and participants, which risked the partners' full participation in the project. Fifth, the partners' budgets had to be amended and local action plans had to be prepared and implemented, which created additional risks for the partners' workload and the achievement of project results. Sixth, the actual start of the project took place 4 months later than planned, which posed a risk to the implementation deadline of the activities.

All these risks were eliminated during the reporting period through successful cooperation with partners and consultation with NCM advisor Daniel Jaakkola.

b. Status

Risk management is provided.

APPENDICES

Use information from EAPN-Latvia website: http://www.eapn.lv/baltic_project_4/ and Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/PretNabadzibu> and <https://www.facebook.com/laila.balga/>

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