

Seeking equality for people from minority groups

Recognising the identity of people from minority groups is the first step towards granting them equality – and opening up the possibility of integrated and sustainable socio-economic development. That is why the EU has backed a cross-border project across Adriatic countries (Croatia, Albania, Italy, Montenegro, and Slovenia) that aims to strengthen sensitivity to cultural and ethnic diversity. SIMPLE, as the project is known, promotes multi culturalism based on the recognition of diversity and the strengthening of minority identity.

HISTORIC AND EMERGING MINORITIES

Countries around the Adriatic have a wide range of historic and emerging minorities, and this project aimed at achieving wider recognition of their rights. Relations between majority and minority communities have not always been harmonious, with the result that people from minorities have suffered exclusion – notably from the labour market, access to social services, or education. To overcome such tensions, the project pioneered some flexible models of governance and of service provision. It made use of carefully targeted awareness strategies to enhance social cohesion – a prerequisite to the sustainable socio economic development that equality depends on.

Public authorities and civil society organisations from Albania, Croatia, Italy, Montenegro, and Slovenia worked together during the project to build on equality and non-discrimination as basic values for citizens to coexist peacefully. They emphasised the importance of language diversity, – urging wider use of different languages in local and national government – and pressed for fair access to citizens' services, irrespective of race, religion or ethnic origin. Much of the work involved supporting a multi-cultural approach to education and to information and media.

LOCAL PILOTS TO MAKE AMBITIONS A REALITY

Thematic guidelines and local pilot actions explored how best to make a reality of ambitions for multilingualism, local development, education, information and fair media, and how to strengthen protection of minority women. Staff in participating organisations were trained on these issues, and awareness of the underlying cultural and ethnic issues received attention through workshops and conferences, TV broadcasts dealing with minority issues, an Adriatic journalist award, and media campaigns. The project has led to the preparation of the Blueprint for the Adriatic Observatory on Minority Communities, launched at the Adriatic Intercultural Day in early 2014 and aimed at advancing the Adriatic Action Plan for monitoring the conditions of minorities in the involved countries.

Exclusion and participation of minority communities are complex phenomena. Related problems have their origin in individual and collective framework conditions of a political, cultural, social and economic nature.



Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA)

Western Balkans

IPA – AN INVESTMENT IN EUROPE. AN INVESTMENT IN PEOPLE.

A wide holistic approach covering all these aspects is a necessary challenge for strengthening the minorities in terms of human rights, effective equality and social dignity. That is why the SIMPLE project has worked in

many dimensions, covering the main issues affecting the life of minority communities in the five countries involved.

PROJECT DETAILS –

Strengthening the Identity of Minority People Leads to Equality – S.I.M.P.L.E.

The project is part of the IPA Adriatic programme, a cross border cooperation programme between Italy, Greece, Slovenia, Croatia, Montenegro, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia.

Partners:

Cooperation and Development Institute (Albania)
Municipality of Durrës (Albania)
Region of Istria (Croatia)
Italian Union of Fiume-Rijeka (Croatia),
Progetti Sociali srl Impresa Sociale (Italy)
Institute of International Sociology Gorizia (Italy)
Region of Abruzzo (Italy)
Ministry for Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro (Montenegro)
Italian Union Koper-Capodistria (Slovenia)

Total cost in €:
1.061 million

EU Contribution in €:
907,916.30 (85%)

Start date:
March 2011

End date:
February 2014

Results:

- 5 thematic guidelines and national pilots for innovative improvements to the condition of minorities in relation to (i) language; (ii) education; (iii) fair representation in media; (iv) employment and local development; (v) diverse forms of discrimination against minority women
- 5 cycles of transnational training on creating and realising innovative solutions and services for the issues confronting minorities
 - 5 national sensitisation campaigns
- analysis of the condition of minorities in five Adriatic countries and preparation of indicators for evaluating progress in minority rights

Techniques:

Training, campaigning, analysis

Project website:

<http://simpleproject.eu/>

