

**The project « WAI4PWDs- Web Accessibility and Other Initiatives for Persons with Disabilities in EU in Pandemic and Other Crisis Times» was funded with the support of the European Union under the Programme "Europe for Citizens"**

**Applicable to the Strand 2 – Measure 2.2 "Networks of Towns"**

**The project was organized as six (6) events that were duly carried out within this project:**

**Event 1 (Kick off event)**

**Participation:** The event involved 107 citizens, including 60 participants from Municipality of Ruma and City of Sremska Mitrovica and surrounding local self-governments (under Regional Development Agency Srem- RDA SREM, Red Cross Sremska Mitrovica and Center for Economic Empowerment of Roma Sremska Mitrovica), 10 participants from Prague, Czech Republic (from Municipality Prague9), 10 participants from Razlog, Bulgaria (from CHANCE- Association for People with Intellectual Disabilities); 12 from Varaždin, Croatia (from Center for Education and Upbringing Tomislav Špoljar and Faculty of Organization and Informatics), and 15 from Sarajevo and Brčko District of Bosnia and Hercegovina (from TMP-Company for Employment of Blind and Visually Impaired Persons and Brčko District of the Government of BIH.),

**Location / Dates:** The event took place in Ruma, Serbia over a 3-day period (23/06, 24/06, 25/06/2021)

**Short description:** The format and schedule of the event needed to be changed due to the health and public safety measures in place during the COVID-19 pandemic. The partnership adopted a hybrid format during the event where participants per partner were gathered in a single space (i.e. Hotel Park in Ruma, Serbia) and were connected via teleconferencing technologies (Zoom). The aim of the event was to present EU framework and calls for addressing PwDs' needs in times of crisis, especially to demonstrate how citizen-driven initiatives function in the European context by presenting on how civil society organizations and local public bodies have promoted citizen engagement, solidarity, built a sense of belonging and involved volunteers in their communities. Particular focus was put on how such actions have been adjusted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The main theme of **Day 1 (23/06/2021)** was to present the project to the public and to apply comparative approach in presenting national legislations for addressing rights of PwDs in times of crisis with a special focus on EU framework in relation to national frameworks of project partners. Bojana Lanc, project manager from RDA SREM, presented the project to the audience (via Zoom and those in attendance at Hotel Park) in order to describe the project activities, goals and purpose. After that, press conference was held and partners present were interviewed by the local media. Tatjana Jovančević from Red Cross Sremska Mitrovica described the work of its organization and what national legislation applies to them when addressing rights of PwDs. By presenting the work of another Serbian partner, Centre for Economic Empowerment of Roma People, Slađana Teodorović made a reference on legislation applying to Roma people as one of the most vulnerable groups in Serbia. Partners from Bosnia and Hercegovina from Brčko District and Sarajevo, Valentina Novaković and Armin Hadžić made a reference to national legislation applied to both governmental and civil society institutions in BiH. Marin Vučić from Centre for Education and Upbringing Tomislav Špoljar and Violeta Vidaček Hainš from Faculty of Organization and Informatics presented Croatian legislation but especially applied to sector of primary, secondary and tertiary education in times of COVID. Lidia Pankova from Bulgaria made a reference to current legislation addressing rights of PwDs in Bulgaria.

On **Day 2 (24/06/2021)**, the focus was to present EU programs supporting rights of PwDs with a special mirroring on perspectives reflected in EU 2020-2027 period. Project manager Bojana Lanc presented calls such as HORIZON and CERV (Citizenship, Equality, Rights and Values) and made an introduction to Project Cycle Management necessary for participating in the planned workshop due to happen on the third day. Special focus was put on 4 main points of interest in accessibility (COVID19 and other crisis- physical accessibility; COVID19 and other crisis-access to public information; COVID19 and other crisis: access to education, COVID19 and other crisis: access to tourism products and offers, entertainment. As the continuation of this, and especially related to physical accessibility issues in times of crisis, Tatjana Jovančević presented a project Boards without Borders implemented within CBC Serbia-Croatia Call to adress rights of PwDs during crisis times, especially floods. Afterwards, participants were taken on a guided tour to Sremska Mitrovica where they were presented to a Red Cross volunteer day during Covid19 and to all specialized equipment and training designed to overcome physical accessibility issues recognized within Boards without Borders project.

On **Day 3 (25/06/2021)**, the focus of day 3 was on brainstorming and developing 4 project ideas based on

previously learned PCM techniques and scenarios that were given to participants on the previous day. Group work was organized in situ and via Zoom breakout rooms. Participants from each country were given a scenario and had to develop short concept note containing basic project idea information such as background, target groups, activities etc. Each group discussed their findings which were further voted on by all the participants. Afterwards, representatives of partners gave their interviews to the press, introduced themselves and gave their view on the project and the partnership to make it as much as visible to the public. Project meeting was held to finalize the event, to reflect the work done and the outcomes of first event held in Serbia, evaluate the event and discuss the expected dates and topics for the event in Bulgaria.

## **Event 2**

**Participation:** The event involved 106 citizens, including 60 participants from Razlog, Bulgaria invited by Chance, 6 participants from Prague, Czech Republic (from Municipality Prague9), 15 participants from Ruma and Sremska Mitrovica, Serbia; 10 from Varaždin, Croatia (from Center for Education and Upbringing Tomislav Špoljar and Faculty of Organization and Informatics), and 15 from Sarajevo and Brčko District of Bosnia and Hercegovina (from TMP-Company for Employment of Blind and Visually Impaired Persons and Brčko District of the Government of BIH.),

**Location / Dates:** The event took place in Razlog, Bulgaria, from 08/09/2021 to 10/09/2021

**Short description:** The aim of the event was to start and open the discussion on how volunteers can contribute in crisis times and to get an insight into EU perspective and solidarity. Special focus was put on interaction between digital content, volunteers and persons with disabilities as well as on employment and skills development of persons with disabilities in IT sector. The event was organized as hybrid due to COVID19 restrictions. Most of participants, except Czech ones, managed to join both online and in situ.

On Day 1 (08/09/2021), a project manager from Bulgaria, Chance organization, Atanas Krantchev, opened up the conference and led a discussion regarding how can volunteers contribute in crisis times with a special focus on examples from Bulgaria but also from other EU countries. The room was left for other project partners to address this issue with their best practice examples. Tatjana Jovančević from Red Cross Sremska Mitrovica gave an insight into a red cross volunteer contribution, Sladjana Teodorović into a volunteer working with Roma as marginalized group in a detached Roma settlement, Marin Vučić and Mario Konecki from Croatia talked about volunteers' contribution to education goals, Armin Hadžić from Sarajevo talked about volunteers in recruiting persons with disabilities as work force and finally, Pavel Pospisek from Prague9 made a reference on how public authorities are managing and coordinating volunteers. It turned out in all cases that volunteers' response to COVID19 crisis was already prepared due to previous crisis that hit these regions. In the end of day 1, press conference was organized to reach wider audience and make project visible to the general public.

Day 2 (09/09/2021) morning was reserved for presentations regarding volunteers' contribution to making digital content more accessible to PwDs and the group work. Bojana Lanc made a presentation on this first topic with best practice examples of projects such as Be my eyes project in which volunteers are used to provide help to blind and visually impaired persons in everyday tasks and chores. In this project, making help digital turned out to be successful in the form of a mobile application. Bojana Lanc also made a reference to other means of using volunteers to assist for example as employment boost, sightseeing, storytelling in tourism, everyday life, education. In the other part of the day, Sinisa Tešić from the Cluster of Social Entrepreneurship of Vojvodina made a theoretical introduction to inputs to the skills development and employment initiatives for PwDs in times of crisis. Once again, it was pointed out how necessary it is to make all content digital, and the lecturer used this opportunity to present to the partnership a platform called Employ4All which was being piloted on working able persons with disabilities in Serbia. All partners but especially partners from Croatia (FOI) and Sarajevo (TMP) who already had experience in this were invited to give their inputs and feedback from the perspective of digital and IT sector and the possibilities and experience of employing PwDs in this in the first place. The end of the day was reserved for simulation of a CHANCE volunteer during Covid19. President of the Association, Lidia Pankova, led an on site tour through the organization premises, giving accent to all areas where PwDs are actively and socially involved in the local community.

On Day 3 (10/09/2021) the partnership held a hybrid meeting (partnership meeting) to end the event. They discussed project progress and upcoming events, communication and dissemination obligations, project event evaluation and feedback and joint development of framework for the Methodology of skills development and employment of PwDs in times of crisis.

## **Event 3**

**Participation:** The event involved 110 citizens, including 60 participants from Varaždin, Croatia (from Center for

Education and Upbringing Tomislav Špoljar and Faculty of Organization and Informatics, 10 participants from Prague, Czech Republic (from Municipality Prague9), 15 participants from Ruma and Sremska Mitrovica, Serbia; , 10 from Razlog, Bulgaria and 15 from Sarajevo and Brčko District of Bosnia and Hercegovina (from TMP-Company for Employment of Blind and Visually Impaired Persons and Brčko District of the Government of BIH.),  
**Location / Dates:** The event took place in Varaždin, Croatia from 26/04/2022 to 28/04/2022

**Short description:** The aim of the event was to demonstrate how educational institutions and their PwD users and families are coping with covid19 crisis and its implications for learning. Most partners, meaning those from Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia and BIH participated in situ. Only participants from Czech Republic weren't able to participate so they joined online. Overall, the event was organized as hybrid and zoom sessions were available throughout the three days of event.

On Day 1 (26/04/2022), the Opening was used to introduce e-learning as very important education aspect during COVID19 as point of discussion. Special reference was given to strengths and challenges for e-learning for persons with disabilities, from a perspective of working with this target group in a primary, secondary and tertiary system of education. Day 1 was organized in FOI for in-situ participants and partner's representative working on the project, Mario Konecki presented best practice examples in e-learning for PwDs.

Day 2 (27/04/2022) began with lectures in the premises of Tomislav Špoljar school for education and upbringing of children with disabilities. Participants were greeted with an exhibition- representing how children are viewing covid19 and the fact that for the time of strict isolation they weren't allowed to go to school. Marin Vučić, school director and his cooperatives involved in the project took the attendees on a school tour all the time simulating and comparing the learning methods for persons with disabilities from a perspective of both e and in-situ learning. E-learning platforms and their user-friendliness were presented by Ines Žukina, a teacher from Tomislav Špoljar who had to use these during lockdown. To test platforms, participants were invited to make an online quiz adapted to persons with disabilities from web accessibility standards.

On Day 3 (28/04/2022), Mario Konecki from FOI and Laura Strupar presented Latest discoveries for making digital content more accessible to PwDs with an overview of online communication and collaboration tools, and challenges of using them by PwDs. Mario talked about tools for automated accessibility analysis/checking of digital content. Most interest was aroused upon presenting a video game focused around covid19, designed to make video players learn more about protection and covid19 implications. The best practice examples and interactions have contributed to raising participants'/citizens' knowledge about how citizen-based actions function in a European context, and how EU policy & values and especially support function in practice. The event ended by a project team meeting with topics that are concerning the upcoming obligations and responsibilities of the partnership. The meeting was held by project manager, Bojana Lanc.

#### **Event 4**

**Participation:** The event involved 111 citizens, including 60 participants from Prague9, Czech Republic (from Municipality Prague9), 12 from Varaždin, Croatia (from Center for Education and Upbringing Tomislav Špoljar and Faculty of Organization and Informatics, 16 participants from Ruma and Sremska Mitrovica, Serbia; , 7 from Razlog, Bulgaria and 16 from Sarajevo and Brčko District of Bosnia and Hercegovina (from TMP-Company for Employment of Blind and Visually Impaired Persons and Brčko District of the Government of BIH.),

**Location / Dates:** The event took place in Prague9, Czech Republic from 14/06/2022 to 16/06/2022

**Short description:** The aim of the event was to show citizens and partners how Prague9 and generally in Czech republic they coped with covid19 in terms of adapting entertaining and tourism content to persons with disabilities. Despite the still present COVID19 crisis and the outbreak of the Ukraine war and the large number of Ukrainian refugees in Prague9, the partners managed to gather in situ which made it possible to physically experience accessibility interventions Prague has made for PwDs in accessing tourism sites.

On Day 1 (14/06/2022), the event began with welcoming words of the Prague9 mayor Zdenek Davidek and continued with interactive presentations and discussions on how cultural/tourism community faced COVID-19 and what

digital approaches were used for PwDs. Pavel Pospisek from Prague9 presented how Prague9 was turned from industrial to modern residential neighborhood with an accent on how much city locals paid attention to accessibility. In the remaining part of the event, Pavel talked about two best practice projects: BlindFriendly project and Poslepu which turned out to be a turning point in reaching important information for the blind and visually impaired on a national scale in Czech republic. Afterwards, all partners presented their best practice projects in turning culture and tourism content into digital. Accent was put how these contents contribute to social inclusion and how they should be widely available without discriminating anyone. Most impressions were gathered around Serbian example, where a single librarian from a children's department managed to turn books and many other activities to audio fairytales now available on a YouTube channel.

Day 2 (15/06/2022) was dedicated to Web accessibility standards in creating public websites, whereas Prague9 as local self-government had the opportunity to show how this functions in practice and whether or not LSGs in Czech republic are following the EU directive in this matter. Theoretical side was held by FOI representative Mario

Konecki who held an online presentation of EU web accessibility standards but also on VR tools and digital innovations in entertaining and cultural content. The second part of the day was dedicated to joint work of all partners on Study on introducing web accessibility standards into digital agendas of partners regions. Project manager Bojana Lanc explained the task to all partners after which the work was divided into groups, per country. Main task was to identify whether or not partner countries have digital agendas and whether or not these have introduced web accessibility standards. After the group work, all partners presented progress made with an overall impression that any work or initiative in this respect is necessary but should be applied in multi-disciplinary and on a national scale in each country.

Day 3 (16/06/2022) was performed entirely in situ, meaning that partners were taken to experience Prague and its tourism/cultural/residential contents in person and physically. Once again, focus was put on noticing and discussing that despite all these were mostly accessible to persons with disabilities, the fact remains that there should be an alternative solution in case of any pandemic similar to COVID19 or any other physical lockdown caused by emergency crisis situations. In this respect, partners investigated VR/AR tools as an alternative to visitors, especially those with disabilities. They departed in discussing the dates for Sarajevo, BiH event and other project related issues.

### **Event 5**

**Participation:**The event involved 107 citizens, including 58 participants from Sarajevo and Brčko District of Bosnia and Hercegovina (from TMP-Company for Employment of Blind and Visually Impaired Persons and Brčko District of the Government of BiH.), 11 from Prague9, Czech Republic (from Municipality Prague9), 13 from Varaždin, Croatia (from Center for Education and Upbringing Tomislav Špoljar and Faculty of Organization and Informatics, 15 participants from Ruma and Sremska Mitrovica, Serbia; , 10 from Razlog, Bulgaria (CHANCE association)

**Location / Dates:** The event took place in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Hercegovina from 26/10/2022 to 28/10/2022

**Short description:** Initially, the event was supposed to take place in Brčko district, BiH. However, given the scope and overall aim of the event, it was agreed on partnership level to organize it in Sarajevo, in the premises of TMP- Association for the employment of blind and visually impaired. The aim of the event was to present methodologies for skills development and employment of persons of disabilities in times of crisis, represented through best social entrepreneurship models in BiH.

Day 1 (26/10/2022) started with an on-site tour of TMP- social enterprise for the employment of the blind and visually impaired, with practical examples of how social entrepreneurship and employment of PwDs became a way of overcoming COVID19 and other crisis. Participants had the opportunity to see several examples of businesses where PwDs are employed: waitering and catering, physical therapy, printing, packing, handmade jewellery and leather bags etc. Afterwards, Armin Hadzic vice director and project manager and the representatives/teachers from the secondary school for the blind and visually impaired explained the models and methodologies of training/teaching pupils and afterwards recruiting them to become employees at TMP. Practically, it turned out that with this model, there is no gap between getting a proper education and acquiring skills and getting and employment.

Day 2 (27/10/2022) was dedicated to employment as a topic. First part of the day continued with a discussion of how social entrepreneurship can be a method to overcome the crisis and certainly a method of both social and economic inclusion of persons with disabilities. A representative from the Fund for professional rehabilitation and employment of Pwds of Bosnia and Hercegovina talked about incentives dedicated to social enterprises and self-employment of PwDs and how this was managed during Covid crisis. Afterwards, Armin Hadžić presented how digitalization of public procurements and giving advantage to tenderers who are public enterprises can become the safest means of employing PwDs. Mid of the day was reserved for the press conference and partners gave statements to both local and national media representatives. Second part of the day was dedicated to presenting best practice examples of projects which were funded by EU and which helped local communities to overcome various crisis. Such was the project Emergency Relief Now- ERNOW presented by government representative Miroslav Geljić, which was implemented in Brčko district (BiH) and the City of Sremska Mitrovica (Serbia) in the IPA CBC Serbia-BiH and which made significant changes in the local communities after 2014 floods which hit these areas.

Day 3 (28/10/2022) was dedicated to interactive role plays and workshops. With the instructions from representatives of Red Cross Sremska Mitrovica, partners were directed to play roles: half of them were volunteers and half of them persons with disabilities. The final goal of the activity was for the participants to follow pre made scenarios of different COVID 19 situations and to take roles and feel of what is like to be a PwD or a volunteer in the times of COVID 19. Through various scenarios, revised their previously acquired knowledge of rights of persons with disabilities and responding to their needs in times of crisis. In the end of day 3, project manager Bojana Lanc used an opportunity to present a new project idea to the partnership, a project which is already being piloted in Germany and several countries and which is employing blind persons in early recognition of breast cancer with women.

## **Event 6**

**Participation:** The event involved 108 citizens, including 61 participants from Municipality of Ruma and City of Sremska Mitrovica and surrounding local self-governments (under Regional Development Agency Srem- RDA SREM, Red Cross Sremska Mitrovica and Center for Economic Empowerment of Roma Sremska Mitrovica), 10 participants from Prague, Czech Republic (from Municipality Prague9), 11 participants from Razlog, Bulgaria (from CHANCE- Association for People with Intellectual Disabilities); 11 from Varaždin, Croatia (from Center for Education and Upbringing Tomislav Špoljar and Faculty of Organization and Informatics), and 15 from Sarajevo and Brčko District of Bosnia and Hercegovina (from TMP-Company for Employment of Blind and Visually Impaired Persons and Brčko District of the Government of BIH.),

**Location / Dates:** The event took place in Ruma, Serbia from 26/02/2023 to 28/02/2023

**Short description:** The aim of the event was present project achieved results and developed documents, as well as to ensure long-lasting cooperation through signature of Mutual Cooperation Agreement and through thorough discussion of new project ideas and Europe2030 and Sustainable Development Goals. For all participants, the conference was organized in-situ.

Day 1 (26/02/2023) started with opening presentations concerning project achieved results: especially Best practice Guide and Mutual Cooperation Agreements that was due to be signed during the events. Project Manager, Bojana Lanc made a summary of all events that were held in Serbia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic and BiH with a reference on the covered topics and best practice examples presented. She made a reflection to all the project implementation challenges caused by covid19 pandemic and the ways used within the partnership to mitigate them. All partners signed Mutual Cooperation Agreement at the end of the day 1.

Day 2 (27/02/2023) started with press conference, with the presence of all project partners and local and regional television and newspapers. In the continuation of the event, project manager Bojana Lanc gave a presentation on Europe 2030/ SDG Goals and how they fit into rights of PwDs in terms of web accessibility and other forms of accessibility. After this theoretical part, open discussion was organized in order to get an insight whether there was any progress regarding WAI standards in partner countries. The discussion covered overview of legislation progress, new best practice examples and the newly emerging crisis situations (Russia-Ukraine war, earthquakes in Croatia and Turkey/Syria etc.). In the remaining part of the day, meaning in the afternoon, work was dedicated to developing a new project idea but firstly through theoretical covering of project cycle management approach: developing LFA, application form, budget. All partners participated very actively. In the end, there was an overview of calls currently open or those that are in announcement in order to get an agreement on which the partnership will apply.

Day 3 (28/02/2023) was dedicated to video presentations, i.e. making reference to the event held in Sarajevo and presentations of partners videos from previous events showing COVID 19 interaction between volunteers and PwDs in lockdown. Via zoom application, the partners voted on best video and awarded the best and the most creative example of COVID 19 interaction between volunteers and PwDs in lockdown. Project manager once again used the opportunity to remind the partners on their reporting obligations as well as to wish them a happy return home and successful applying to EU funds in the future.