

## On the way towards a Europe for all ages

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### Abstract

In the framework of the action of the European Commission Networking Programme – Civil Society Component – Bulgaria and Romania, the present project proposes to assist the Civil Society Organisations in Bulgaria and Romania in order for them to strengthen their activities and actions towards the “third age” population as this is a vulnerable group that demands special attention and care from the Civil Society institutions. The overall aim is to ensure equal treatment of all groups of population. The direct target groups of the project are Civil Society Organisations from Bulgaria and Romania, interested to develop activities and policies addressed to the “third age” population. The indirect target group are the older (55+) people in Bulgaria and Romania, who will benefit in their situation from the activities of the Civil Society Organisations and will count on better advocacy and representation from the “third sector” institutions. The main activities cover local and national researches on the topic, building of networks of CSOs involved in active ageing in Bulgaria and Romania, workshops and seminars for improving their capacity, establishment of contacts with EU Civil Society Organisations and networks active in the area, and building future partnership through web-based platform, future partnership projects, and possible establishment of new Civil Society Organisations structures. All these activities are based also on the active involvement of the older people themselves.

Keywords: Civil Society institutions, equal treatment, networks active, workshops and seminars.

### I. Introduction

In Bulgaria and Romania – there is a large range of Civil Society Organisations (NGOs, Foundations, Associations, Charity organisations, Environmental organisations, Community organisations, Social partners Associations).

As most of them were founded in the early 90ths, and usually for a specific occasion (tackling specific social, environmental or other problem), they are now in a process of revising their activities for answering the challenges of the EU civil society and being ready to face the European agenda in the moment when Bulgaria and Romania enter the EU.

This project will guide the concerned organisations through examples of best practice of similar institutions from more developed countries: Germany, The Netherlands and Finland. Also, it will support them in adapting their methodologies, practices and policies in view of preparing them for the accession in the EU. In this sense the Czech partner will have a great contribution as they will share their experience about the processes undergone by the CSOs during the transitional periods, the Czech Republic being a member of the EU since the beginning of 2005). Thus, Bulgarian and Romanian CSOs will be able to plan appropriately their policies and practices in order to face the new priorities.

### II. Research problem and objectives

The specific objective of the project is to stimulate the potential of the CSO for better approach of the “third age” population in both countries: older and elderly people. They are a vulnerable group and demand special care from the Civil Society institutions.

The importance of dealing with the Active Ageing is marked clearly in the EU Social Measures documents.

As it is pointed in the Green Paper “Confronting demographic change: a new solidarity between the generations”, the EU is going through clear demographic changes that are the result of three basic trends:

- the longevity is continuously increasing as a result of the considerable progress made in health care and quality of life;
- the number of workers over 60 is also increasing;
- the birth rates still remain low, due to many factors, notably difficulties in finding a job, and changes in the working life and family life choices.

The place of the CSOs in this process is clearly stated in a series of documents of the UN and EU bodies. The Resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (January 2004), recognizes also that the global demographic change is to be expected in both developing and developed countries, as well as in countries with economies in transition, and that it is imperative that ageing has to be integrated into development policies for the attainment of internationally agreed development goals. The General Assembly also *encourages* the establishment of institutional linkages at the national level, implementation and coordination of ageing-related policies and programmes, and *stresses* that the role of civil society, including non-governmental organizations, is important in supporting Governments in their implementation and assessment of and follow-up to the Madrid Plan of Action.

There is an important number of Civil Society Organisations in Bulgaria and Romania that are active and even experienced, but they focus mainly on their specific areas of interest, not having well-developed national and international contacts, as well as methods for cooperation, when dealing with more wide and nationally-significant policies.

This project will strengthen their organisational and managerial capacities, will equip them with methodologies on provision of services, care, advocacy and fundraising, and will support the EU cooperation and the transfer of the best practices of the EU CSOs, for ensuring that the challenges of population ageing and the concerns of older persons are adequately incorporated into the programmes and projects of the CSOs in Bulgaria and Romania.

### III. Work methods

The project is planned on 6 main activity packages: Activity 1: Analysis and “State of the Art”

Activity 2: Building national CSOs networks in Bulgaria and Romania Activity 3: Transferring examples of best EU practices Activity 4: Capacity Building and Promoting cooperation Activity 5: Dissemination and sustainability Activity 6: Project management

### **3.1. Detailed description: Activity 1: Analysis and “State of the art”**

#### **Main activities:**

- research on the number and type of CSOs involved in the issue of active ageing in Bulgaria and Romania, and the types of actions and policies implemented until now; evaluation of their human resources potential and their needs for training and capacity building; identifying CSOs that will be interested in becoming involved in the further project activities
- need analysis in Bulgaria and Romania, concerning the national policies towards older people, and the expected role of the CSOs in promoting and advocacy of active ageing; identification of specific thematic area where transferring of experienced European practices and models will be valuable, and of methods and approaches that would be useful for the CSOs to master and implement corresponding to the national specifics

#### **Expected outcomes:**

- National reports for analysis of the practices and potentials of the CSOs in the field of active ageing in Bulgaria and Romania
- National reports / recommendations for enhancing the role of the CSOs in policies and advocacy of active ageing in Bulgaria and Romania
- Identified CSOs in Bulgaria and Romania, which will be involved in the further project activities, and needs for capacity building based on their needs and the country situation

### **Activity 2: Building national CSOs networks in Bulgaria and Romania**

#### **Main activities:**

- building national focus-groups of CSOs in Bulgaria and Romania (approximately 15 CSOs in each country), interested in promotion and advocacy of active ageing. The CSOs are expected to be of various types: associations, training institutions, organisations representing social partners, community-based organisations. Implemented activities till now are not a prerequisite for participation in the focus-group, as the aim is to involve more and new CSOs in the process.
- development of a training programme for initial information and training, aiming to smoothen the gaps in the up-to-now experience of the various participants in the focus-groups, to give them relevant information for the EU policies and plans in the target area, and to establish a common platform for the future project activities; the programme will be based on the results of the analysis during Activity 1, respecting the EU civil society priorities.
- training seminars: 1 seminar for CSOs in Bulgaria and 1 seminar for CSOs in Romania, for initial information and training of the participants in the national focus-groups.

During the seminars the participants will receive initial information for both the civil society tasks in the area of active ageing, and for the planned project activities; special care will be paid to establishing contacts amongst the participants at a national level, and appropriate teambuilding in the national focus-groups necessary for the implementation of the further project activities.

#### **Expected outcomes:**

- national focus-groups of CSOs in Bulgaria and Romania (approximately 15 CSOs in each country), interested in promotion and advocacy of active ageing
- training programme for initial information and training of the CSOs
- 2 seminars for 60 beneficiaries
- good contacts established between the CSOs at national levels and national teams for the further project activities

### **Activity 3: Transferring examples of best EU practices**

#### **Main activities:**

Study visits to EU countries implementing good practices in the field of active ageing: Group 1: visiting Germany and Finland Group 2: visiting Germany and the Netherlands Group 3: visiting Germany and Czech Republic.

Each group will consist of 15 participants from CSOs from the national focus-groups both from Bulgaria and Romania (which will also promote contacts between the two countries). Two interpreters (BG-DE and Rom-DE), two group leaders (for Bulgaria and Romania) and one project coordinator will accompany each of the groups.

The duration of each visit will be 8 days (5 working days, 1 day for cultural programme, 2 days of travelling)

The programme of the study visits will be developed together with the host organisations, aiming to introduce the beneficiaries to the experiences and best practices of the CSOs in the respective countries.

#### **Expected outcomes:**

- 45 experts and collaborators from CSOs in Bulgaria and Romania becoming familiar with the experiences, models, methodologies and best practices of the CSOs in Germany, The Netherlands, Finland and Czech Republic.
- good contacts established between CSOs in Bulgaria and Romania, and CSOs in the visited EU countries, as a basis for future collaboration
- the CSOs from Germany, The Netherlands, Finland and Czech Republic are better introduced to the situation in Bulgaria and Romania, which opens them new possibilities for future joined activities with these countries.

### **Activity 4: Capacity Building and Promoting cooperation**

#### **Main activities:**

- organising workshops (2 in Bulgaria – towns of Lovech and Plovdiv, and 2 in Romania – towns of Oradea and Iasi) for further development of the capacity of the CSOs in providing active ageing policies and services. The workshops will build upon the results of the Activity 3 and will activate the participants to review and reformulate the

best EU practices towards their particular needs and objectives.

Thematic: during the workshop will be discussed and practiced methods and approaches for policy development, advocacy, promoting adult citizens' awareness of Europe, cooperation with social partners, building local networks, as well as communication, human resource management and fundraising for ensuring better implementation of the CSOs' statute tasks. During the workshops will be developed also models for future civil society campaigns and partners cooperation projects.

**Expected outcomes:**

- the 30 CSOs (15 from Bulgaria and 15 from Romania), participating in the project focus- groups, have established good contacts at national and cross-border basis for exchange of experience and cooperation
- they have strengthened their organisational and managerial capacities to pursue their activities in the field of active ageing, which improves the quality of Bulgarian and Romanian CSO actions
- they are equipped with methodologies on provision of services, advocacy and fundraising, reviewed and updated taking into account the experiences and best practices of CSOs in Germany, The Netherlands, Finland and Czech Republic
- good contacts and exchange of information are established between the 30 Bulgarian and Romanian CSOs and EU CSO Networks AGE and PEFETE; 5-6 CSOs from Bulgaria and Romania are participating actively (as regular or associate members) in the activities of the AGE and PEFETE networks.
- at least 25% of the participating CSOs have initiated new cooperation projects with EU partners in the field of active ageing.
- at least 75% of the participating CSOs have joined the partnership agreement for future support and cooperation.

**Activity 5: Dissemination and sustainability**

**Main activities:**

The dissemination activities will start from the very beginning of the project and will last during all the stages. They will cover:

- design and empowerment of a project web-site, which will give information for the project, but also will serve as a Resource center for materials for active ageing activities, and will give a possibility of the CSOs to establish contacts and communicate with partners.
- publicity campaign: press-releases and press conferences at the beginning of the project and at the end of the activities, and regular media publications, for informing the wide public and involving more social partners in the project thematic
- developing and printing materials, promoting the EU practices and the formation of CSOs networks in the field of active ageing, for information and supporting the future cooperation

**Expected outcomes:**

- the civil society sector and the social partners are well informed about the project activities and the way to establish contacts with the national networks for future actions
- the Bulgarian and Romanian CSOs are ready to continue their contacts for exchanges of views and experiences at local, regional or national level about their experiences, further policy development and communications through the project website and established institutional and personal links
- the resource centre of the project web-site is open to provide additional materials to all the interested CSOs for supporting their policies in active ageing.

**Activity 6: Project management**

**Main activities:**

The project management covers all the stages of the project.

At the very beginning of the project activities, a Steering Committee will be formed, including a General manager of the project, and project coordinators from the 4 partnering institutions. The work of the Steering Committee will be assisted by an administrative secretary and a financial expert. The partnering institutions will also involve additional administrative personnel and technicians for performing the project activities.

**Expected outcomes:**

- the appropriate project management ensures the regular flow of the project activities and the reaching of the expected outcomes
- the project documentation and financial documents are managed properly
- the partnering institutions have evaluated the short and long term impact of the project and have planned consequent cooperation activities

**IV. Results**

**During the project activities** are planned 3 types of outputs:

**1. Publicity campaigns** – 2 in Bulgaria and 2 in Romania, in the beginning of the project and during the evaluation of the project activities.

During the publicity campaigns are planned 2 press-releases, 2 press conferences, and approximately 12-15 media publications.

**2. Establishing of a project website**, functioning as a Resource portal with web-based materials for the needs of the CSOs. The materials will be collected by the participants in the workshops, and till the end of the project it is expected that approximately 75-85 materials and links will be collected in the site.

**3. Printed dissemination materials.**

3 types of dissemination materials are planned to be printed:

- an information leaflet (in the beginning of the project),
- a brochure about the project results (at the end of the page)
- a leaflet promoting the project web-site and the collected materials

All the printed materials will be in both languages – Bulgarian and Romanian, and each of them will be printed in 1000 copies.

## **V. Conclusion**

It is very important that as a result of the project activities, the Bulgarian and Romanian CSOs will have become more sensitive towards the problems of the 55+ population, and will have identified better the paths to deal with their needs. The fact that the CSOs in Bulgaria and Romania will have to opportunity to analyse best practices from other countries will allow them to judge better and possibly improve the current practices in their countries. What is more, after this project the CSOs will be able to **propose changes of the legislation** for improvement of the life condition of the older people in both countries.

Another measure that is expected as a result of this project is that the strengthened capability of the CSOs will help them to **initiate the establishment of new CSOs, involving the older people themselves** (which are at this moment not really existing). For the good run of the processes of the civil society, it is very important that the older people are themselves involved in the activities, as this builds new bridges between the life stages, and helps to use better the human potential.