



PRESS RELEASE

EU supports professionalization of social workers in Eastern Partnership countries

Regional conference of EU-funded project "Social Workers in Collaboration for Social Change" shows how social workers can effectively support vulnerable groups in Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Moldova. Thanks to the project social workers' associations improved their capacities to strengthen their 10.500 members as well as 160 local organizations.

Tbilisi, 28 March - At the closing conference of the project "Social Workers in Collaboration for Social Change" the project consortium highlighted the results achieved over the course of the project and discussed implications for the future development of the social worker's profession in the region.

Speaking at the opening of the conference, **Vincent Rey**, Head of Cooperation Section of the Delegation of the European Union to Georgia, stated, "*Thanks to this project and the support from the European Union local social workers' associations have improved and broadened their services. Professional and accessible social work is instrumental for positive social change. We are proud to support the effort social workers' associations are undertaking to empower vulnerable groups and strengthen families in the regions of Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Moldova.*"

Gerhard Schaumberger, Head of the Austrian Development Agency Georgia Office, commented, "*We are proud to contribute to strengthening the professional social work in Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Moldova. Social workers are critical members of society who work diligently to relieve suffering and improve the lives of people. Through their commitment to promote social change and empower people, social workers play an important role in improving the lives of those who need it most.*"

During the opening session **Nino Shatberashvili**, Chairperson Georgian Association of Social Workers, stated, "*Social Work is a supporting profession – it supports individuals in the realization of their social rights and its supports the state to a great degree in the realization of the expectations people have towards the state in terms of their well-being and improvement of their standards of life. This profession is very powerful. It supports and transforms welfare systems.*"

Project Achievements

Besides discussing current questions of social reforms and the professionalization of social work in the region, the main results and achievements of the project "Social Workers in Collaboration for Social Change" were presented:

Social workers' associations in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova improved their organizational capacities as well as their information services and outreach activities to their **10.500 members and supporters**, intensified collaboration with **160 local organizations** so they can provide more effective, targeted and coordinated services to vulnerable groups, and also developed and successfully lobbied for 16 new professional concepts and papers on improvement of standards, laws and regulations in the social field.

Furthermore, 15 small grants were awarded to 24 local CSOs in Armenia, Georgia and Moldova with a total grant sum of EUR 540.000 and an average grant amount of EUR 36.000. The small grants covered 8 regions of Georgia, 5 regions of Armenia and 9 regions of Moldova. Local CSOs increased their capacities



and skills on social work and service delivery, on inter-sectorial cooperation with other stakeholders and on empowering vulnerable population groups, especially families, to contribute to family strengthening and preservation. The small grants programme reached approximately **3500 direct beneficiaries and stakeholders** (social workers, representatives of CSOs, authorities, media, etc.), established **81 functioning mechanisms** of inter-agency/inter-sectorial cooperation on a local or regional level to more effectively and efficiently render targeted support to families and children in need, elaborated **44 handbooks / brochures / training modules**, and conducted **approximately 200 info-meetings** and awareness raising measures.

Project Key Data

The European Union and the Austrian Development Agency support the project "Social Workers in Collaboration for Social Change". It is implemented by the Austrian organization "Hilfswerk International" in cooperation with the Georgian Association of Social Workers (GASW), the Armenian Association of Social Workers (AASW), the Azerbaijan Social Work Public Union (ASWPU) and the Nursing Association of the Republic of Moldova (NARM) in the time period August 2015 until May 2018 with a total budget of EUR 1,079,413.

The main aim of the project has been to contribute to the social well-being of vulnerable groups, to greater social justice and social change by developing and strengthening the concept of and access to social work in the four project countries.

“Support is good, professional social work is better”

For additional information please contact:

Nicole Maria Bauer

Hilfswerk International, Regional Manager South Caucasus

Email: nicole.bauer@hwa.or.at

Nino Shatberashvili

Georgian Association of Social Workers, Chairperson

Office Phone.: + 995 32 239 00 71

Email: nino.sh@gasw.org

Tamriko Mikadze

Press and Information Officer, Delegation of the European Union to Georgia

Office Phone: +995 32 2943763

Email: tamriko.mikadze@eeas.europa.eu