



EU TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
TO CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS
IN THE WESTERN BALKANS AND TURKEY



COMMUNITY RESILIENCE FORUM 2021

Tatjana Stoimenovska
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Vulnerability in the time of crisis

Who we are? HOPS – Healthy Options project Skopje

- Briefly about **HOPS - Healthy Options Project Skopje**: Who we are, how long do we exist, our main target communities, and main activities and areas of interest.
- <https://hops.org.mk/> or facebook.com/hops.org
- How did HOPS – Healthy Options Project Skopje deal with COVID – 19 crisis and protected its clients (sex workers and PWUD, and their families)?
- The programs and the service provision continued uninterrupted in times of COVID – 19 crisis.

Services and reaching communities

- Our programs and services provision were adapted according to the changes. When institutions were closed for citizens, we were not.
- During the curfews and restrictions the 3 centers (CRR, Gazi Baba, Dunja) had to be closed; but the teams from the centers went out in the field & outreach work was intensified:
- intensive outreach & field work in communities (harm reduction, psychological & social services) and very strong online presence (live podcasts, and constantly distributing information)
- Legal and paralegal services

Paralegals

- One of the most important links to the communities were the **paralegals**.
- Paralegals (7 from the community of people who use drugs, 8 initially from the community of sex workers/2 trans women too)
- They are representatives from the communities, but well trained by the legal team of HOPS to provide paralegal aid;
- Through them we were in touch with our communities, heard about legal / social/ health issues they were facing and tried to resolve them
- Reaching the “new” scenes

Some numbers – for 2020

Paralegal services

- Paralegals from community of PWUD:
- 550 services , to 200 different clients

- Paralegals from community of SW:
- 700 services, to 110 different clients



Areas where paralegal services were provided:

- Human right violations; discrimination, family law, gender based violence, health and social protection and rights;
- Police violence
- Criminal Acts 2015 and Criminal Act 2016, Misdemeanour Act 20.
- Provided food and hygienic packages

Diary of an outreach worker

<https://hops.org.mk/od-dnevnikot-na-edenterenec/>



Legal services

- Legal team of HOPS: 2 lawyers and one legal officer
- Numbers for 2020:
- 1030 legal services, to 150 different clients
- Strategic litigation – identified specific cases taken to court

Advocacy

- Advocating to government bodies to introduce and recognize marginalized groups into the economic measures by the Government in times of crises
- The tool of the Government's Council for cooperation with CSOs
- It was successful and they were recognized as specific marginalized groups, received funding and were provided assistance.



Challenges

- Needs of marginalized citizens and groups are not taken into consideration when Government measures for assistance are being planned
- Institutions closed their doors and worked with extremely low capacities, while CSOs stepped up with their efforts and services to meet the needs of their target communities
- Sustainability of services – donor funded and inconsistent