



HORIZONTAL FACILITY FOR WESTERN BALKANS AND TURKEY

Strengthening the Protection of National Minorities in Serbia

As a part of the European Union and Council of Europe programmatic framework “Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey” (Horizontal Facility), the Council of Europe will implement the Action “Strengthening the protection of national minorities in Serbia”, in close partnership with the Office for Human and Minority Rights, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, the Ministry of Justice, as well as civil society organisations and the National Councils of National Minorities in Serbia.

The Action will support the authorities in enhancing the rights of persons belonging to national minorities in Serbia, by addressing the legislation, policy and practice in particular fields. Expert advice will be provided in respect of amending the Law on the National Councils of National Minorities. In addition, steps to raise awareness about national minorities and promote tolerance will be taken. Finally, the Action will seek to promote the use of minority languages in education, public administration and courts, by addressing both the authorities and the national minorities themselves.

The Action, which started on 1 November 2016 and will be completed on 23 May 2019, has an overall budget of 500,000 Euros.

Objectives and expected results

The **aim** of the Action is to contribute to strengthening the protection of the persons belonging to national minorities in Serbia, in line with the European standards.

The Action intends to address the following **objectives**:

- ✓ Improve the legal framework concerning the National Councils of National Minorities;
- ✓ Raise awareness about national minorities, their rights and promote tolerance;
- ✓ Strengthen minority languages in education;
- ✓ Enhance the use of minority languages in public administration and courts.

Accordingly, the objectives of the Action will be supported through the realisation of the following **expected results**:

- ✓ Enhanced expertise with a view to amending the Law on the National Councils of National Minorities;
- ✓ Enhanced capacity of the authorities to ensure an appropriate presentation of national minorities in education;
- ✓ Increased knowledge of the general public on national minorities in Serbia;
- ✓ Increased knowledge about the role and functioning of the Councils for Inter-Ethnic Relations among local authorities;
- ✓ Enhanced capacity of the authorities to improve the minority language education system;

- ✓ Strengthened capacity of the authorities to provide for the use of minority languages in public administration and the courts;
- ✓ Increased knowledge of persons belonging to national minorities about their rights and the opportunities for use of their language in education, administration and courts.

Background information

On 11 April 2016, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Thorbjørn Jagland, and the European Union's Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn, announced a new co-operation initiative of the two organisations aimed at supporting South-East Europe and Turkey in their efforts to comply with European standards. The initiative is called the European Union/Council of Europe Horizontal Facility for Western Balkans and Turkey (Horizontal Facility). It is a three-year programme (May 2016 – May 2019), focusing on three themes: ensuring justice; fighting corruption, economic crime and organised crime; as well as combating discrimination and protecting the rights of vulnerable groups. It has a budget of €25 million, of which €20 million has been provided by the European Union and €5 million by the Council of Europe. Through the Horizontal Facility, the European Union and the Council of Europe will assist beneficiary countries to comply with Council of Europe standards and the European Union acquis in the framework of the enlargement process, through a complementary two-fold approach of technical co-operation and the provision of expertise. The Horizontal Facility relies on the Council of Europe's unique working methods, whereby tailor-made technical co-operation activities are based on conclusions and recommendations of the Council of Europe's monitoring bodies, which highlight areas where improvements are needed in the legislation and policies of the beneficiaries to comply with the Organisation's treaties and other standards.

Council of Europe Office in Belgrade
 Spanskih boraca 3
 11000 Belgrade, Serbia
 Tel: +381 11 71 55 500



<http://www.coe.int/belgrade/>



horizontal.facility@coe.int



[jp.horizontal.facility](https://www.facebook.com/jp.horizontal.facility)



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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

The European Union is a unique economic and political partnership between 28 democratic European countries. Its aims are peace, prosperity and freedom for its 500 million citizens – in a fairer, safer world. To make things happen, EU countries set up bodies to run the EU and adopt its legislation. The main ones are the European Parliament (representing the people of Europe), the Council of the European Union (representing national governments) and the European Commission (representing the common EU interest).

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Horizontal Facility for Western Balkans and Turkey

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by the European Union
and the Council of Europe



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