

We are proud to mark the first, exceptionally successful year of the "Empowered – Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, Regional Cooperation and Development in the Western Balkans" project.

This comprehensive initiative, funded by the **Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and development BMZ**, and led by **ASB**, in partnership with local organizations (**LIR Civil Society, IDC - Initiative for development and cooperation, PREDA Plus, Alfa Centar, Community Development Institute CDI, Albanian Disability Rights Foundation ADRF**), runs from **September 1, 2024, to April 30, 2028 (44 months)**.

**Our core objective is to create a society of equal opportunities for persons with disabilities.**

During this first year, our efforts have spanned across **15 municipalities in the Western Balkans**. Partnerships with local self-governments, civil society, and key stakeholders have been established and strengthened. Through intensive **advocacy for the rights of persons with disabilities**, connecting with stakeholders, and promoting **inclusive values**, the **first inclusive projects** have already been created in numerous communities, **psychosocial support** and **career counseling** have been launched, and **mechanisms for inclusiveness** have been strengthened. All of this contributes to creating an **Empowered community** dedicated to improving the position of PwDs across the region.

**By the end of the project, significant and lasting impact is expected:**

- **21,500 PwDs** will access improved community services and infrastructure, with **1,500 PwDs** directly benefiting from support programs.
- **600 PwDs** will receive psychosocial support and career counseling, while **300 PwDs** will gain vocational training and job placement opportunities.
- **15 municipalities** will adopt inclusive policies and action plans.
- Over **1 million citizens** will be reached through advocacy campaigns, increasing public awareness and challenging stereotypes about PwDs.

This newsletter provides an overview of the project's first year and invites you to follow our continued progress towards achieving these ambitious goals.

## LIR Civil Society: Empowering local communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina – a partner in the EMPOWERED Initiative

As a dedicated partner in the EMPOWERED initiative, **LIR Civil Society** actively implements the project in three municipalities in **Bosnia and Herzegovina: Travnik, Foča, and Bosanska Krupa**.

The first phase focused on establishing strong foundations. **LIR Civil Society** conducted a total of **7 working group meetings and 9 focus groups across the three municipalities**. These sessions engaged **persons with disabilities, parents, professionals from relevant public institutions and employers**, presenting analysis findings and discussing project ideas for local implementation. **Three initial meetings with mayors** also resulted in the signing of memoranda of cooperation, which laid the crucial groundwork for capacity building and strengthening inclusion mechanisms.

Beyond local efforts, LIR Civil Society was an **active participant in the regional conference** held in Skopje in May 2025. and the trilateral conference held in Sarajevo on October 22, 2025, **fostering knowledge exchange**. This significant **gathering brought together key regional stakeholders at a ministerial level**. Preparations are also underway for a **study visit to Croatia and Slovenia** to adopt best practices.

**LIR Civil Society is committed to translating these joint efforts into tangible results.** Upcoming plans involve development and implementing selected inclusive projects, launching **psychosocial workshops and career counseling, vocational-educational training and work Integration programs** and strengthening support mechanisms to expand opportunities for persons with disabilities in **Travnik, Foča, and Bosanska Krupa**.

[www.empowered-wb.org](http://www.empowered-wb.org)