

INTRODUCTION

The document before you is the new five-year Strategic Plan (SP) of the Ecumenical Humanitarian Organisation (EHO) for the period 2019 to 2023.

The new SP is the result of a participatory process and summarises several months of work on the part of all stakeholder groups within EHO. The SP comprises all key information collected during the strategic planning process from consultations with all employees of EHO, the sixth Partner Meeting of EHO with international partners, consultations with members of the Assembly and the Management Board of EHO and representatives of local authorities, state institutions, CSOs, EHO volunteers and beneficiaries of EHO services. The strategic planning process was begun in September 2017 and was completed in December 2018.

This document comprises basic and relevant information and provides a clear strategic framework for the operation and further development of the organisation for a period of five (5) years: 2019-2023.

During implementation of the SP, depending on the internal and external environments, revisions to the SP may be made, or supporting documents drafted.

1. HISTORY OF THE ORGANISATION

EHO is a non-profit citizens' association that continues the work of the Ecumenical Humanitarian Service, founded on 19th February 1993 on the initiative of the World Council of Churches. The members of EHO are as follows: Slovak Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Serbia, the Reformed Christian Church in Serbia, the Evangelical Methodist Church in Serbia, the Eparchy of Saint Nicholas of Ruski Krstur and the Evangelical Christian Church of the Augsburg Confession in Serbia – Vojvodina.

From its very beginnings, EHO has exemplified church partnership in conducting diaconal, humanitarian and development work across Serbia, and is testament to the mission of the churches in working with the poor and marginalised, showing that traditional social structures such as churches can be a motivating force for the development of civil society.

EHO has shown itself to be an open and flexible organisation, successfully meeting the challenges placed before it and society as a whole by the process of reform, democratisation and European integration.

2. MANDATES AND OBLIGATIONS OF THE ORGANISATION

In the coming five-year period the mandate of the organisation will particularly be pursued through: 1) humanitarian work, 2) interfaith and interethnic partnership, 3) development of diaconia, 4) social welfare and 5) development of civil society.

In the preceding period (2005-2018), EHO brought its operations in line with Serbian legislation, drafting and adopting the following documents: 1) Operations Rulebook; 2) Accounting and Accounting Policy Rulebook; 3) Internal Rules and Procedures; 4) Workplace Health and Safety Rulebook; 5) Staff Structure Rulebook; 6) Low-value Public Procurements Rulebook; 7) Recruitment Policy; 8) Ethical Codex; 9) Eurodiaconia – Quality Principles of Diaconal Social Services; 10) Guidelines for Standardised Non-Discriminatory Speech and Behaviour, 11) Gender Policy for Responding to HIV and AIDS, 12) Internal Whistleblowing Rulebook. In the course of its operations EHO also consults the rules of the networks it is a member of.

The documents adopted by EHO have been harmonised with: The Associations Act (2018); the Labour Act (2005, 2018); the Health and Safety in the Workplace Act (2006, 2017); the Anti-Discrimination Act (2009); the Gender Equality Act (2009); the Voluntary Work Act (2010); the Prevention of Harassment at Work Act (2010) and other relevant laws.

In line with the Associations Act (2009, 2011, 2018), EHO drafted a new Statute (approved at the EHO Assembly on 27th May 2010, with most recent changes in 2018), submitted an application for entry in the

Companies Register and (pre)registered as a citizens' association permitted to conduct business activities by way of decision no. BU 8890/2010. dated 27th August 2010.

3. ANALYSIS OF ENVIRONMENT

3.1. Social, economic and political context:

According to the National Statistical Office, the Republic of Serbia (2017) has a population of 7,020,858, of which 51.3% are women and 48.7% men.

Various analyses have shown that the number of people living in absolute poverty is around 8.5% of the total population, while every fourth person is exposed to the risk of absolute poverty.

Today, in 2018, Serbia faces large-scale unemployment, sluggish reforms, a high rate of emigration and discrimination of minority groups. Especially vulnerable minority groups are internally displaced persons, returnees under the readmission agreements, the LGBT population, Roma men and women, people with disabilities, single mothers, the elderly and other socially vulnerable people in Serbia.

EU accession negotiations officially began in January 2014. As of 2018, a total of 16 negotiating chapters had been opened, with Chapter 23: "Judiciary and fundamental rights" and 24: "Justice, freedom and security" being of particular significance for the work of EHO. The process of Serbia's joining the EU will open up new possibilities for CSOs in Serbia – it will improve the position of CSOs and ensure that they become equal partners with the state.

As part of the process of EU integration, the government is successfully drafting and adopting modern legislation, but failing to apply it sufficiently in practice. In addition, there is a lack of vertical and horizontal coordination between the state and CSOs, which has a major impact on the efficiency of implementation of adopted strategies and action plans.

3.2. EHO in its environment:

EHO has been implementing successful projects since its very beginning, in 1993, and has often been the only CSO able at short notice to respond to urgent humanitarian needs. For example, during and after the NATO bombing campaign, EHO helped shelter 800 families from Kosovo who had fled to Novi Sad. Thanks to its primarily humanitarian focus, during the 1990s EHO became recognised as the largest humanitarian organisation in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, and certainly the largest church humanitarian organisation in the then-Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. EHO affirmed its humanitarian orientation in its response to the devastating floods that affected Serbia in May 2014, and to the refugee crisis in 2015.

During the last 20 years of its operation, EHO has placed a focus on development programmes and projects, and many of EHO's projects have served as models of good practice and spurred other CSOs to action. EHO today has the reputation of an organisation that tackles broad social problems and often plays a pioneering role in creating initiatives that contribute to the resolution of social problems and empowering marginalised groups.

Keeping abreast of reforms in the social welfare system, in 2015 EHO was one of the first CSOs in Serbia to be issued a licence to provide home assistance services by the competent ministry.

3.3. EHO stakeholder groups:

Beneficiaries: EHO's most important stakeholder group consists of the beneficiaries of its services. Through direct assistance and meeting basic needs, education, employment, public advocacy, participation, mobilising local communities and other forms of support, EHO intends to empower the beneficiaries themselves, and together with them, leveraging their capacities, numbers, visibility and motivation, continue to work on poverty reduction, social inclusion and civil society development.

Together with its beneficiaries, EHO will continue to fight for the recognition of human rights and against all forms of prejudice, marginalisation and discrimination.

Member churches: The five minority churches that founded the organisation have since the beginning been an important EHO stakeholder group. Represented through the administrative bodies (the Assembly, the Director and other working bodies), they play a key role in the adoption of those strategic documents of the organisation that determine the direction of its development and also in the implementation of projects, first and foremost through the action of church voluntary/diaconal groups.

EHO will continue to improve communication with church representatives and groups and work on the mutual exchange of experiences and synergy of activities.

Volunteers: Another significant resource of the organisation are its local and foreign volunteers, men and women who become involved in the implementation of projects and who through their efforts promote voluntary work and mobilise and motivate the public to help the vulnerable in their own communities.

EHO, together with its volunteers, will continue to provide services and promote the mobilisation of the public in order to contribute to the development of the local community.

EHO employees: A significant resource of the organisation are its employees, who contribute their knowledge, experience and efforts to the successful implementation of projects and to the resolution of numerous problems in local communities, and in doing so reinforce the leadership position of EHO in the civil sector in Serbia, and further afield.

EHO will continue to empower its employees by investing in their capacities and developing their knowledge and skills through participation in training and seminars locally and abroad, in order to best address the problems faced by our beneficiaries.

Civil sector: EHO cooperates with other CSOs through long-term partnerships and networking, as well as at the project level, where partnership is time-limited for the duration of the project.

EHO will seek to promote networking and joint action among CSOs. This will significantly increase the impact of CSOs on government bodies at the local, provincial and state levels. EHO will seek to work towards synergy with other CSOs for the purposes of more effective public advocacy and lobbying in areas of relevance for EHO's operation.

Local authorities: At the local level EHO has established cooperation with a number of local authorities (LAs). EHO pursues partnership with LAs primarily for the purposes of joint implementation of projects of limited duration (projects usually last one year), but also through public procurements, where EHO takes a lead role in the implementation of social services (home care) in the local community.

Today local authorities participate in financing EHO projects. EHO will continue to work with local government and through intersectoral partnerships contribute to the improvement of the position of vulnerable and marginalised groups in society. EHO will seek to work with LAs with the aim of building their capacities and resources, in order to access opportunities for donations for LAs.

Provincial government bodies: At the provincial level, partnership has been further strengthened with the Vojvodina Provincial Secretariats for Economy, Employment and Gender Equality and for Education, Regulations, Administration and National Minorities and the Vojvodina government's Office for the Inclusion of Roma.

EHO will continue to work with provincial government and through intersectoral partnerships contribute to the improvement of the position of vulnerable and marginalised groups in society. In addition, EHO will in cooperation with provincial government bodies promote examples of good practice and provide methods and instruments for pursuing projects in the areas of social welfare and social inclusion.

National government bodies: At the level of the Republic, EHO has intensified partnership with the government's Office for Human and Minority Rights, the government's Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Team, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure, the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Policy and the government's Commissariat for Refugees and Migration.

EHO will continue to work with national government bodies and through intersectoral partnerships contribute to the improvement of the position of vulnerable and marginalised groups in society. In addition, EHO will in cooperation with national government bodies promote examples of good practice and provide methods and instruments for pursuing projects in the areas of social welfare and social inclusion. As part of the Strategy for the Improvement of the Status of Roma in the Republic of Serbia, EHO will seek to capitalise on its expertise.

International partners – non-governmental organisations: International partners, churches and church organisations from Western Europe from whom EHO has received ideas and the financial and material assistance that has made a range of projects possible, have been of great significance to the organisation from its very beginnings. EHO's membership in the international networks Eurodiaconia and ACT Alliance have also been of great importance.

International partners – governmental organisations: Thanks to its traditional partners from Western European countries, EHO has successfully worked with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the Swiss State Secretariat for Migration, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Organisation, the Canadian International Development Agency, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and other international governmental organisations.

EHO will continue to cooperate with international partners and by working with them contribute to the improvement of the position of marginalised groups in the Republic of Serbia.

3.4. What does EHO need to do?

In the next five years, EHO needs to focus on areas in which it can develop and advance its services (providing direct services to people in need), but also, more than in the past, work on institutionalising its expertise and in doing so increase its influence at the political level.

EHO will continue to promote activism in churches and will work on mobilising and developing local communities and empowering active citizenship in order to improve the status of the most vulnerable groups.

EHO will seek to strengthen its position in society and strive towards establishing cooperation and partnerships with national government bodies in order to pursue strategically important projects in the areas of social welfare, social inclusion, improving the status of marginalised groups and the democratisation of society. As part of that process, EHO will for the first time consider options for raising its profile in Belgrade, where national government bodies, other CSOs and the international donor community are based.

4. VALUES, MISSION AND VISION OF THE ORGANISATION

4.1. EHO's values

- **Human rights, equality and human dignity**

EHO recognises the innate dignity of every person and supports vulnerable people and communities in their efforts to attain a future worthy of human beings, and for a society in which there is respect for human rights, non-discrimination, equality and equal opportunities for all people whilst respecting their diversity. EHO projects promote the empowerment of those for whom and with whom it works in order to achieve these objectives.

- **Peace and reconciliation**

EHO advocates for peace and reconciliation and supports the non-violent resolution of all types of conflict.

- **Interfaith cooperation**

EHO supports cooperation and closer ties between Christian churches, whilst at the same time promoting interreligious dialogue. EHO believes that churches and believers have a responsibility towards those most vulnerable, regardless of their ethnic or religious affiliation, and that concern for marginalised individuals affords an excellent opportunity for ecumenical and interfaith action and dialogue.

- **Solidarity, social justice and inclusion**

EHO advocates for solidarity and social justice, and for the greater involvement of those at risk of poverty and social exclusion in decision-making regarding their own lives, the improvement of living standards and general well-being. Solidarity, networking and inclusion aim to contribute towards overcoming social problems and towards a dignified life for all.

- **Sustainable development**

EHO supports the establishment of a balance between social, economic, technological and environmental factors in order for the wealth and resources of our planet to be safeguarded for future generations.

- **Responsibility, efficiency and transparency**

EHO strives towards the highest standards of efficiency, quality, flexibility and transparency in all aspects of its work, as well as accountability towards all stakeholders. EHO pursues this by ensuring the proper and efficient distribution of available resources, investment in their development and a readiness to learn and change in accordance with the demands of the environment.

- **Participative approach**

EHO strives towards ongoing dialogue and partnership, including forging ties amongst all stakeholders in all areas of its operation, and especially during the planning and implementation of projects. Accordingly, EHO supports the participation of all citizens in the process of making decisions of significance for their own lives and the lives of their community as it believes that the development of a society characterised by stability and solidarity will be the result of inclusive and participative processes.

4.2. EHO's Vision

A civil society fostering human dignity.

4.3. EHO's Mission

The Ecumenical Humanitarian Organisation is a development organisation which through practical action, guided by Christian ethical values, is contributing to the building of a just society in which diversity is respected.

5. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1. Development of civil society through advocacy for rights, social inclusion and developing the capacities of vulnerable groups, as well as partnerships with state institutions and other stakeholders;
2. Integrating EHO services into the existing system of social welfare and developing innovative services by building our own capacities and through partnerships with all interested parties;
3. Improving cooperation between ethnic and faith communities in the country through information-sharing, public advocacy, partnership, development of intercultural values, establishing dialogue and joint initiatives for peace-building and reconciliation;
4. Participative management, developing and strengthening organisational resources and capacities and providing for the institutional and financial sustainability of the organisation;

6. PROGRAMME AREAS

EHO's programmes of operation are divided into five groups:

1. Humanitarian work
2. Interfaith and interethnic cooperation;

3. Diaconia;
4. Social services;
5. Civil society

7. TARGET GROUPS

EHO's target groups are all vulnerable and marginalised groups whose human rights are compromised and/or who are discriminated against.

EHO works directly with the following target groups: children and young people, people with disabilities, the elderly, migrants, Roma men and women, people with health issues, the rural population, the unemployed, girls and women, young church leaders and civil society organisations.

EHO's target groups also include local authorities, provincial and national administrative bodies and state institutions, all those tasked with implementing policy aimed at improving the status of vulnerable and marginalised groups in the Republic of Serbia, as well as the international donor community which facilitates the sustainability of project activities.

8. PLAN OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE PERIOD 2019-2020

No.	Name of activity	Strategy for achieving	Person responsible	Timeframe 2019-2020	
1.	First SO: Development of civil society through advocacy for rights, social inclusion and developing the capacities of vulnerable groups, as well as partnerships with state institutions and other stakeholders				
1.1.	Strengthening cooperation/partnership	Greater involvement in strengthening the capacities of local associations Establishing cooperation with independent state bodies Launching initiatives for creating networks/coalitions/associations that would represent the interests of CSOs Greater participation in local networks of CSOs Launching an initiative for the establishment of a network of church organisations in Serbia	coordinators	x	x
1.2.	Participation in political dialogue advocating for the rights of vulnerable groups	Reinforcing this component as part of project activities Initiating and drafting a practical policies proposal	coordinators	x	x
1.3.	Empowering the civil sector	Educating target groups and organising civil society Networking Exchanging resources Creating joint projects	coordinators	x	x
2.	Second SO: Integrating EHO services into the existing system of social welfare and developing innovative services by building our own capacities and through partnerships with all interested groups				
2.1.	Institutionalisation of the EHO model for social inclusion (housing, education, social welfare and other areas)	Development and implementation of a strategy for public advocacy and lobbying	coordinators	x	x
2.2.	Development of innovative	Identifying good practices of similar	coordinators	x	x

	approaches and strengthening of the advisory role of EHO	organisations Exchange visits to similar organisations and experience-sharing Visits to relevant international events			
3.	Third SO: Improving cooperation between ethnic and faith communities in the country through information-sharing, public advocacy, partnership, development of intercultural values, establishing dialogue and joint initiatives for peace-building and reconciliation				
3.1.	Improve relations with member churches	Greater involvement of churches in planning and strategic development Ongoing support from partner churches abroad Development of joint projects between churches and EHO, and utilisation of existing human and material resources of both Improve cooperation with the majority church Improve communication of management bodies of EHO with the organisation itself and with founding churches	Director Members of the Assembly	x	x
3.2.	Development of intercultural, ecumenical and interfaith projects	Writing projects on this subject and including it in fundraising efforts Establishing cooperation and exchanges with church organisations and international donors	Director Members of the Assembly Coordinators	x	x
4.	Fourth SO: Participative management, developing and strengthening organisational resources and capacities and providing for the institutional and financial sustainability of the organisation.				
4.1.	Reinforce good governance	Exchange and use of knowledge and experience with international partners Analysis of the existing system of governance with the aim of further advancing the business of the organisation Possibility of taking on professionals in human resources, fundraising and public relations in order to support the further development of the organisation	Management	x	x
4.2.	Drafting of a fundraising strategy	Development of a strategy which would reduce the dependency of the organisation on single sources of financing, identify new sources of financing, recognise possible partnerships and potential new directions for development (e.g. social entrepreneurship) Exchange and use of knowledge and experience with international partners	Fundraising professional Management Coordinators		x
4.2.	Development of a public relations	Development of a strategy that will	Public		x

	strategy	provide for better visibility of the organisation, identify various channels of public communication and work on a visual identity Exchange and use of knowledge and experience with international partners	Relations professional Management Coordinators		
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