

15 May 2019

Country: Macedonia



We are excited to share that our “Diversity: A Matter of Perception” project in Macedonia has begun implementing 16 new projects, funded by sub grants from the European Commission.

“By targeting one of the most vulnerable groups in the society, people with disabilities, the project builds relations between journalists and media through most of the implemented activities,” the Macedonian Institute for Media wrote in a statement.

“By joining the journalists and representatives from people with disabilities, CSOs to work together, to hear each other and discuss common issues, the project enabled the problems, the interests and the challenges of the people with disabilities come in the journalists’ focus.”

One of the projects is [a children's book](#), where some of the characters are children with disabilities. Another is a creative campaign which trains hiking guides in how to make their hikes accessible to blind people.

Macedonia has ratified Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, however through one of the [sub-granted projects we have made it accessible](#) to key target groups by making it available in Braille and audio version.

Some of the projects relied on arts to challenge common perceptions of disability, including [gرافيتي art](#)

,
[music](#)

and theatre. The performance of Cinderella which builds the story on relation between people with and without disability, has been prepared and performed already, including in front of the British prince Edward, but more performances are to come to make this unique inclusive play accessible to more people across Macedonia.

“We want to support media campaigns that increase the visibility of people with disabilities, and change societal perceptions,” said Ivana Jelaca, MDI Western Balkans coordinator.

“Language matters,” she continues. “We encourage journalists to say that someone has a disability, rather than ‘suffers’ a disability—we want to show that disability can be a normal identity, that doesn’t have to prevent anyone from living a normal life.”

Over the past year and a half, “ [Disability: A Matter of Perception](#) ”—co-ordinated by MDI alongside the Macedonian Institute for Media and the National Council of People with Disability Organizations of Macedonia has flipped the concept of disability on its head by running media trainings that challenge journalists in how they cover disabled communities.

Each of the trainings has brought journalists, CSOs and disability activists together to come up with creative story ideas and campaigns that challenge perceptions of disability.

“Before, many journalists only reported on sensationalist stories about disability, after these trainings, they’re focusing on a more positive approach,” said Vlado Krstovski, who runs the National Council of People with Disability Organizations of Macedonia.

“I hope it will have a lasting effect.”