



Црвен крст на Република Северна Македонија
Red Cross of The Republic of North Macedonia
ЦРВЕН КРСТ НА ГРАД СКОПЈЕ / CITY RED CROSS OF SKOPJE

TWINNING PROJECT CAPACITY BUILDING (TWINNING PROGRAM)

CITY RED CROSS OF SKOPJE
RED CROSS OF THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA
-TELEMARK RED CROSS,
NORWEGIAN RED CROSS



INTRODUCTION

The Red Cross in our country has been functioning since 1945, within Yugoslavia from that time, and since 1995 as an independent Red Cross association meeting the criteria set by the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent for the manner of its function. For this whole period, which was filled with many challenges and transitions, in addition to the development of the program activities aimed at meeting the needs in the field, one of the priorities was also the establishment and improvement of partnerships and cooperation with other National Societies. From the beginning, the cooperations mostly referred to the region where a similar language was spoken, where the culture is similar and crossed the borders, and in which the Red Cross organizations developed similar programs because the requirements were at the same level. However, throughout the years, it has spread around the world. This way of functioning was especially important in building a strong National Society that had to expand its horizons by exchanging with other organizations of the Red Cross, similar but still different. From the beginning, the cooperation was mostly focused on providing assistance and support to various program and project initiatives, and it grew further into a communication channel through which the exchange of positive experiences and good practices developed. When something has been already well done and implemented within the Movement, the philosophy was, and still is, that it should be shared with others in order to exchange good practices and experiences that will make life easier for the target groups who we are initiating projects and initiatives for.

The exchange of positive experiences brought new opportunities to increase the number and quality of activities, which in turn directly affect the increase of the number of volunteers, the improvement of the image of the organization as well as new opportunities

for mobilization of funds both at local and international bases. Through these programs, the volunteers got the opportunity to travel to other countries, attend trainings in different languages, learn about other cultures, make new friendships, and thus to strengthen their personal capacities and also the capacities of the organization. They also became ambassadors of the Red Cross, carrying the emblems always and everywhere and sharing the stories of their loved ones, friends, family members, thus building the image and creating a space for new volunteers and members.

The National Society of the Red Cross of the Republic of North Macedonia had signed cooperation agreements with the Bulgarian Red Cross, the Turkish Crescent, the Romanian Red Cross, the German Red Cross, the Spanish Red Cross, the Swedish Red Cross, the Albanian Red Cross, the Red Cross of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Serbian Red Cross, the Red Cross of Montenegro, Lithuanian Red Cross, Slovenian Red Cross.

Excellent cooperation has been developed with the German Red Cross, Norwegian Red Cross, Austrian Red Cross and American Red Cross.

The City Red Cross of Skopje and some other Red Cross municipal organizations operating under the auspices of the Red Cross of the Republic of North Macedonia have established bilateral cooperation with other city/municipal organizations of the Red Cross/Red Crescent.

The City Red Cross of Skopje has signed a memorandum of cooperation with the Red Crescent of Izmir, Red Cross of Belgrade, Red Cross of Sarajevo, Red Cross of Novi Sad, Red Cross of Cetinje, Red Cross of Banja Luka, Red Cross of Podgorica, Red Cross of Tirana, Red Cross of Sofia, Red Cross of Ljubljana, Red Cross of Bucharest, Einberg Red Cross and Nuremberg Red Cross.

In 2017, a memorandum of cooperation was signed with the Telemark Red Cross - Norwegian Red Cross.

STARTING THE TWINNING PROGRAM

(Memorandum of cooperation and definition of priorities)

The National Society of Red Cross of the Republic of North Macedonia had an excellent cooperation with the Norwegian Red Cross, and they initiated a twinning between two Red Cross municipal organizations, in order to deepen the cooperation. The Norwegian Red Cross has positive experiences in this field because it has already realized several twinings in the region (in Bosnia and Herzegovina), and for that reason, the mentality of the people, culture and activities of the Red Cross are not far-off and unknown to them.

Due to the importance with which they approach this type of cooperation, in the Norwegian Red Cross - in the central office, they have a person in charge (coordinator) who leads the international cooperation of this type, with an emphasis on twinning.

The representative of the Norwegian Red Cross came in May 2016 to talk with the representatives of the Red Cross of the Republic of North Macedonia and to assess the capacities of the Red Cross municipal organization, to express an interest in developing such a program that would be beneficial to both parties.

After the meeting at which the local capacities of the Red Cross municipal organization and the City Red Cross were presented, the City Red Cross of Skopje was proposed as a prospective twinning organization due to its similar structural arrangement in the country and in the National Society. The representative from Norway had a meeting with representatives of the City Red Cross of Skopje and at the meetings that were held a theoretical presentation was performed, and all the material capacities available to the organization were shown, as well, i.e. the centers/services through which the community operates were presented. Through this type of presentation, the priorities of the organization, the mission, and also the planned directions of action in the future were further explained.

After conveying the positive signal in Norway, the next step was to present the facilities directly to Telemark Red Cross representatives. The meeting took place by the end of the same year, i.e. in 2016. The delegation who visited the

Plan of Action 2020



This Plan of Action is linked to the Twinning Co-operation Agreement between: City Red Cross of Skopje in North Macedonia and Telemark Red Cross in Norwegian Red Cross. The plan is valid for the year specified above and has been discussed and approved by both partners.

A. Building capacity

The cooperation shall contribute to strengthening and developing the district and local branches involved, so that both parties achieve their goals.

Purpose/ goal	Activity	How and when	Who is responsible for what (division of responsibilities)	Expected result (indicators)	Resource contributors (financial, human, contribution in kind and other)
Red Cross Conference, Telemark Red Cross	Invite 2 volunteers	24.-26 April Telemark, Strand hotel in Vrådal	Responsible for developing the program: TRC: v/ Twinning Committee TRC and Ellen H Granlid	The goal is to inform volunteers from TRC about the illegal refugee route in North Macedonia and Human Trafficking challenges for the country and Red Cross.	CRCS: Core team for twinning cooperation TRC: Twinning Committee TRC district Board
Youth Camp 2020	15 Red Cross Youth from Telemark + 2 staff members 8 Red Cross Youth from Skopje + 2 adults from district office	29 June-03 July Struga	Responsible for developing the program: CRCS v/ Ana Francic TRC v/ Twinning Committee TRC and Marlena Slijvo	The goal is to strengthen youth capacity, to promote the youth activism in both country, to inspire each other through the presentation, group works and to promote different culture.	CRCS: Core team for twinning cooperation TRC: Twinning Committee TRC
Motivation trip to Solferino, Italy	10 volunteers from TRC and 8 volunteers/staff from CRCS	17-20 oct	Responsible for developing the program: CRCS v/ Aleksandra Ristovski TRC v/ Twinning Committee TRC	Motivation trip for volunteers from TRC and CRCS. The groups meet in Desenzano and have two days together (Castiglione and Solferino)	CRCS: Core team for twinning cooperation TRC: Twinning Committee TRC

2020 Plan of Action: City RC of Skopje and Telemark RC (2021).docx

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TRC CRCS

capital was composed of representatives of the twinning coordination body who had already functioned in Telemark. Due to their previous experience with this type of programs, they have prepared special documents that define the twinning program, and all further communications that were made with the City Red Cross of Skopje, plans and the memorandum of cooperation were based on that document.

Afterwards, there was a return visit by a delegation of the City Red Cross of Skopje in Telemark, which took place in January 2017. The Secretary of the City Red Cross of Skopje also attended the meeting for easier decision making which was to the benefit of the whole process. At this meeting, in a composition expanded by them (a coordinating body was included, and a number of volunteers), the priorities for action were defined. Both parties agreed that in the coming period we should focus on:

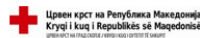
- Volunteer management with an emphasis on youth programs;
- Social and humanitarian activity with emphasis on clothing stores and day care centers for the elderly;
- Acting in case of disasters with emphasis on the way of recruiting volunteers and training for them;
- Migrations;
- Organizational development;

After completing this process for several months, the Memorandum was signed on 28 March 2017. It regulated the obligations and rights of both parties, and the time frame for action was also agreed.

It was signed for a period from 2017 to 2020, i.e. for a period of 4 years with the possibility of extension. The time frame is a positive practice that they have been practicing for many years, and which is based on their experience in the program, and is described in their internal twinning document.

This was a different step from everything we had before as an experience when it comes to twinning programs. Until now, they were open, undefined with time, with priorities and specific activities that often did not result in anything (in general, however, there are Red Cross municipal organizations that have a positive experience, but they are in small numbers and percentage).

For the next few years, every November when the annual report meeting of the City Red Cross of Skopje took place, a team of several members from Telemark stayed in Skopje where the action plan for the next year was agreed. That workshop or working meeting usually has several segments, such as participation and presence in the ceremonial part of the assembly, a working part to agree on a time frame, activities for the next year that are based on pre-determined priorities and opportunities for both sides. The plan as such is verified by both parties, by the management structures of both organizations and in January next year, it is signed, certified and enters into force



Assembly of City Red Cross of Skopje, 22-25.11.2019	
Day	Time/responsible
22.11.2019 – Friday	
Arrival in Skopje, accommodation in hotel "London Inn"	13:00 Ivan K. will pick you from the airport
Lunch in restaurant "Toros"	15:00 Sanja M., Aleksandra V, Ana F, will wait you in front of the hotel and will join you for the lunch
Museum exhibition in Museum of Holocaust	17:00-18:00-Aleksandra R.
Red Cross Skopje Assembly in "Museum of Holocaust"- translation will be provided "Tijasa O. and Sandra T.* After the assembly will be organized a cocktail as dinner	18:00-20:00
Hotel-London	Aleksandra B, Ivona G, Erna T. will join you after the assembly for a coffee
23.11.2019 – Saturday	
Breakfast in the hotel	
Meeting in City Red Cross of Skopje Suzana T. Paunovska, Aleksandra R, Aleksandra V, Katerina G, Ana F	09:30-12:30
Lunch in the City Red Cross of Skopje	12:30-13:30
Presentation from Telemark Red Cross, Guide in the hospital	13:30-15:00
Presentation from City Red Cross, Guide in the hospital Eleonora A (15 volunteers)	
Free time	15:30
Dinner at Old house Suzana T. Paunovska, Aleksandra R, Aleksandra V, Zoran E Aleksandra V. will pick you from the hotel London Inn at 19:00	19:15
24.11.2019 – Sunday	
Breakfast in the hotel	
Visit to Matka (cave, lunch) The team will pick you from the hotel at 09:30	Oliver P, Sasa C, Aleksandar B
Lunch at Matka	
Dinner at Anika at 19:00	Dr. Stevan T, Sandra T, Tamara B, Kristina G, Ilin S.
25.11.2019 – Monday	
Departure from the hotel at 04:00. Plane is leaving at 05:05 Breakfast will be prepare for you, sandwiches	Taxi will pick you at 04:00 in front of the hotel)

MANNER OF COMMUNICATION IN THE PROGRAM

At the first meetings, it was agreed that both parties in the whole process have chosen one responsible person through whom all the correspondence, negotiation and logistics related to the twinning will run. In the course of one year, several visits were realized, and it was essential to have a coordinator who takes care of the whole process to run with no interruptions, easily and with support. The visits included booking of flight tickets for the visits, preparation of programs, briefing of volunteers, promotion of activities at local and regional levels, constant communication and many other things. Besides the coordinator, a team of several representatives from the professional service and volunteers representing the coordination body of the cooperation was formed. Together they participate in online meetings if necessary, and also nurture the cooperation within the local context, i.e. they are responsible for promoting the activities in their country.

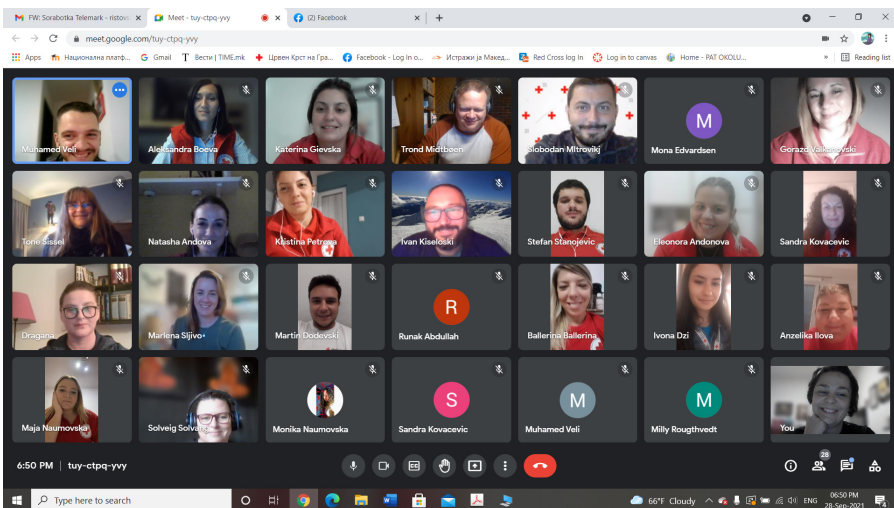
The communication takes place through official emails; also a Facebook group can be formed which will have its administrators, in which photos will be posted, holidays will be congratulated and activities that will take place in the coming period will be promoted. The group should grow after each completed activity because the volunteers who were part of it from both countries become members of the group. This strengthens the sense of belongingness, as more people share the same or similar experiences.

CONTINUATION OF THE COOPERATION

Due to the good cooperation, as a result of the excellent sharing of experiences, serious approach and opportunities for learning new and other things, both sides showed interest in continuing the cooperation for another year, i.e. until the end of 2021 and this was allowed according to the cooperation document. The document as such was adopted by both parties and the cooperation continued.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, many Red Cross activities were postponed, reorganized, or stopped due to other priorities and needs. We focused more on the activities of the mobile teams, on supporting the elderly in their homes and of course, on preserving the health of the citizens. Of course, the twinning program was also questioned, taking into consideration the aspect of joint meetings and an exchange of experiences through physical meetings. On the other hand, at that given moment, we did not know what a pandemic would bring and how long it would last. This was reflected in the signed memorandum of cooperation because in 2021 the program was to be completed and all planned activities were to be finalized, but due to the given situation, we asked our boards for understanding and continuation of it. Several online meetings were organized with the representatives of the Norwegian Red Cross, where the positive impressions of the program were conveyed. Due to the foregoing, the program was extended, i.e. it was agreed that the planned activities for 2020 and 2021 will be extended to 2022 and 2023.



However, in order to have a certain continuity, in the period from 2020 to 2021, several online workshops were organized. During the first year, they were more intended for the professionals and the team that leads the program, and in 2021 we focused more on the volunteers. A total of 3 workshops with specific topics and lecturers were agreed upon.

The first workshop was for psycho-social support of the volunteers during Covid-19 and it was attended by more than 40 volunteers from both sides.

The second workshop aimed at presenting the day care centers available to the City Red Cross of Skopje as ways of recruiting volunteers. This workshop was attended by more than 30 volunteers who were interested in the work of these centers.

The third workshop was organized by the Telemark Red Cross and was aimed at presenting the „Henry House“ which is a café-gathering spot for the young people, as well as support for easier integration of migrants. It was attended by about 30 participants from both sides.

At the end of 2021, an online meeting was held at which plans and steps for 2022 were agreed. Of course, everything depends on the current situation, but also on the changes that might occur. However, the plan is that in August 2022, Telemark Red Cross will organize a summer camp for children with special needs, which will be attended by 6 young volunteers, representatives of the Youth Club of the City Red Cross of Skopje. At the same time, a larger youth camp will be prepared to be held in 2023 in the „Solferino“ Center, Struga (an activity that was postponed due to the pandemic, although planned previously).

In addition to this activity, it has been agreed their visit to the annual assembly of the City Red Cross of Skopje, which should take place in November 2022. During this visit, the activities and the time frame for 2023 will be planned, which will also be the last, i.e. completed year in cooperation.

REALIZED ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE PERIOD 2016-2020

- 2016 (May) - visit by a representative of the Norwegian Red Cross, start of cooperation;
- 2016 - visit by a 5-member delegation from the Telemark Red Cross, to the City Red Cross of Skopje, field assessment;
- 2017 (January) - working visit by a 5-member delegation from the City Red Cross of Skopje to the Telemark Red Cross;
- 2017 (April) - visit by a 3-member delegation from the City Red Cross of Skopje to the Assembly of the Telemark Red Cross;
- 2017 (May) visit by a 5 member delegation from the Telemark Red Cross to the PHV final workshop in Solferino, Struga;
- 2017 (August) - visit by a 6-member delegation from the City Red Cross of Skopje to the Telemark Red Cross - participation in a summer camp for children with special needs;
- 2017 (September) - visit by a 22-member delegation from the Telemark Red Cross in Struga at Solferino - holding a management workshop;





- with volunteers. It was attended by 20 persons (volunteers and professional service) from the City Red Cross of Skopje;
- 2017 (October) - visit by a representative of the City Red Cross of Skopje in Belarus where a program for twinning with the Telemark Red Cross was presented, organized by them;
- 2017 (November) - visit by a 4-member delegation from the Telemark Red Cross to the Assembly of the City Red Cross of Skopje and a working meeting to agree on activities for 2018;
- 2018 (February) - visit by a 5-member delegation from the City Red Cross of Skopje in Telemark, an exercise organized for the Disaster Response Team - rescue in a mountain under winter conditions;
- 2018 (May) - visit by an 8-member delegation from the Telemark Red Cross to a conference on migration organized by the City Red Cross of Skopje;
- In 2018 (September), a 20-member delegation from the City Red Cross of Skopje visited the Telemark Red Cross - a workshop for management with volunteers. This workshop was attended by 15 volunteers;
- 2018 (November) - visit by a 4-member delegation from the Telemark Red Cross to the Assembly of the City Red Cross of Skopje and a working meeting to agree on the activities for 2019;
- 2019 (March) - visit by a 3-member delegation from the City Red Cross of Skopje to the Assembly of the Telemark Red Cross;

- 2019 (May) - visit by a 5-member delegation from the Telemark Red Cross to the City Red Cross of Skopje - Conference on Migration;
- 2019 (June) - visit by a 4-member delegation of young people from the City Red Cross of Skopje to the Telemark Red Cross;
- 2019 (June) - visit by a 4-member delegation from the Telemark Red Cross in Solferino, Struga - camp for the use of a water treatment plant and construction of a camp settlement;
- 2019 (September) - visit by a 20-member delegation in Solferino, Struga, a workshop for management of volunteers which was attended by 20 volunteers from the City Red Cross of Skopje;
- 2019 (October) - visit by 8 employees of the Telemark Red Cross to the City Red Cross of Skopje - presentation of the Day Care Centers and corners of the Red Cross (this activity was not included in the action plan for 2019, but turned out to be necessary for better acquaintance of the two professional services);
- 2019 (November) - visit by a 6-member delegation from the Telemark Red Cross to the Assembly of the City Red Cross of Skopje and working meeting for the preparation of the action plan for 2020;
- In 2020, the activities were suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic, however, the activities in 2020 and 2021 were organized online.



POSITIVE EXAMPLES

“BUTTON“

During the numerous visits that were organized by both parties, time was used for getting to know each other, exchange of information and presenting the activities at different levels, through responsible persons, and also from the volunteers' points of view. The centers and corners where field activities took place were visited for an easier explanation of the theory, and also to see in practice how things work in the field.

During the several-day visit to the Telemark Red Cross in 2017, we visited their second-hand clothing shop in the city and we had the opportunity to spend a few hours talking to the people directly responsible for the operation of the shop and all aspects of its operation were discussed. The Red Cross in the Republic of North Macedonia has always dealt with and organized the process of donating clothes from the citizens to the end-users, but never in such a systematic way. In parallel with the visit and seeing the positive example, the expert team made a strategy for the function of a social enterprise. The enthusiastic approach of the professional service and the opportunity to see the shop in Telemark was used to open and operate presently the Button shop of the City Red Cross of Skopje, certainly, adapted in a local context according to the needs in our city and the capacities we dispose with.

he “Hospital Guide” is another project that we had the opportunity to see, discover and recognize as a good one and necessary in our society, too. It is a project in which the young volunteers from the youth club of the City Red Cross of Skopje and the volunteers from the Day Care Center for the elderly are involved. This project was active even during the Covid pandemic due to the need for such systematic and structured assistance and support. The persons involved in the project, deployed in shifts and at certain locations in the Clinical Center, give directions to the citizens where they should go according to the instructions they have for their medical examinations (the citizens do not know the clinical center well and get lost in the labyrinth of

TWINNING PROGRAM

Skopje Red Cross - Telemark Red Cross



3-RD ONLINE WORKSHOP-PRESENTATION OF THE RED CROSS SKOPJE CORNERS

28 September at 18.00



Црвен крст на Република Северна Македонија
Круци i Куќ i Republikës së Maqedonisë së Veriut
ORGANIZACIJA ZA ČOVJEČANSKO DELO I CRVENI KRST SVETA

corridors of different clinics). Stands with Red Cross insignia have been set up, and the volunteers are in uniform outfits and orient the citizens where they should go. Representatives of the Ministry of Health also participated in the opening and promotion of the project, and became aware of the need for such a project, i.e. service and give full support for its implementation.

ОРИЕНТЕР

For every single volunteer who wishes to get involved and volunteer in the Telemark Red Cross, at the very beginning, there is a responsible person who accepts them and organizes them further. The person in charge of this activity is called Orienter.

The Orienter program is organized according to their model in our country as well, and it has been implemented at a national level for the last couple of

years. These are people who orient other interested and potential volunteers and members about the Red Cross activities, the opportunities, the ways of volunteering, i.e. whether an interested person wants to become a volunteer, and present the Local Action Plan adopted and approved by the working organization of the municipal organization of the Red Cross.

REFUGEE GUIDE

Since 2020, we have been implementing a project activity to support the local integration of refugees and persons under international protection in the Republic of North Macedonia. One of the better examples of local integration, which we got to know during the visit to the Telemark Red Cross, and also through their participation in the migration conferences organized by us, is exactly the model of the Norwegian Red Cross. Adapting their model in a local context, a GUIDE manual for local integration was developed and a model similar to theirs was developed, according to which a trained person/volunteer from the Red Cross will facilitate the process of language learning, learning the social norms and the way of life in the new country of the person who gained the status in our country. The mentoring program, through a „face to face“ approach is easier and faster socialization by supporting volunteers who have previously completed training on this issue. Through this model, the target group gets facilitated access to all public, service activities, the system of social protection, health care and education, up to full interaction with the other members of the community in the country where the integration process takes place.

On the other hand, what they especially liked about our work was the work with the volunteers. The Promotion of Human Values tool, through which the young people are recruited as soon as they show interest, was different from the approach they have. It must be pointed out that in Telemark, Norway, older people volunteer more and need tools to work with young people. According to our assessment and the conversations we had with them, it is due to the social and economic status of the persons. The young people in that period of life leave their homes and start their own independent life and besides learning, they also need a job. This means that there is not much time left for the volunteer classes and assistance

in the community. In contrast, the adults have more time, they volunteer more, and they are more present in the community. In one of the Red Cross municipal organizations where we stayed all day, the persons who volunteer there, in the house of the Red Cross, prepared traditional food for us and considered it a volunteer engagement, which showed that one can volunteer in many different ways.

In 2021, following the principle of PHV online workshops, they organized regular online workshops for their young volunteers. A model of promotion with a poster and planning an event was used which anyone could apply for. By this method, they were closer to the young people, and yet they did not threaten their health.

Before the cooperation with the City Red Cross of Skopje, the Telemark Red Cross (according to their statements) did not pay much attention to the uniforms of the volunteers and the visible features of the Red Cross. The current volunteers have taken our approach as a positive example, especially when they go to seminars, inside or outside the country, they are dressed in the same way, i.e. they wear insignia with clearly and visibly placed Red Cross insignia.



ACTIVITIES BUDGETING

Taking into consideration this dynamic cooperation, one must pay attention to the financial construction of both organizations. With the preparation of the action plan for the twinning program as well as the time frame for the next year, the budget for the activities is prepared.

Before starting a cooperation with a new city, one more country, attention should be paid when choosing it, i.e. it has to be taken into consideration the mutual distance. The connection that exists must also be taken into account, whether there is an airport near the two cities and even better whether there is a direct flight because in that way it directly affects the reduction of costs. They are always planned by both parties, and that is something that should be regulated by the Memorandum of Cooperation, of course, depending on the budget available to both parties. One side (which is more powerful, in financial terms) may come more to visit, and the other side more to host, because the airline tickets can be expensive. Or, if it is a neighboring country, it can all be organized with a different transport that mitigates further the situation and leaves room for more meetings and exchanges.

CONCLUSION

Such a structured approach allows us to have concrete and more frequent activities that we know should be implemented in a given time frame, „pushes us forward“ regardless of all the circumstances in which and under which we work.

The frequent visits and exchanges provide a channel through which the activities can be seen and presented and as a result of that opportunity, implemented by the other party, adjusted to the requirements and conditions in the other country (implementation of positive practices).

For the purpose of cooperation, there must be more frequent communication and closeness, and thus a desire on both sides to exchange and share experiences. The people who will be the bearers of the activities from both sides should be selected appropriately so that there is no interruption in the communication and activities.

On both sides, there should be a pre-defined system of rewards for the volunteers who should be given the opportunity to be part of such a program. Some of them will have the opportunity to host in their city and their country, and some will have the opportunity to travel, discover new countries, new cultures and meet new volunteers. Of course, we should not forget that one of the reasons why young people particularly a volunteer is the opportunity to travel. For this reason, it is important to have pre-determined reward criteria that are transparently explained to everyone. Through the twinning program of the City Red Cross of Skopje and Telemark Red Cross, more than 400 persons have been involved in the past few years.

After completing each activity, it is necessary to make an analysis that involves deep reflective thoughts from both sides. Certain promotional materials can also be produced, which can be prepared by the volunteers who were part of the activity and it can be translated into the language of communication, most often English. It is necessary to make regular promotions of the activities and sharing on the social media from both sides. All of this contributes to strengthening the ties and deepening the mutual cooperation and trust.

Also, such programs promote the culture of different peoples and groups, reduce the barriers that exist, people have a direct opportunity to meet and communicate with each other and nurture and develop relations further, regardless of the organization that initiated them. All this contributes to better openness, especially to the young people who begin to walk the path of life and have the opportunity with the help of the Red Cross to properly trace it. Some of them may decide to study in the twinned countries or another country and open a window that they thought was closed to them and that is simply not for them.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COORDINATOR:

- Initiate joint activities, do not wait to receive initiatives and additional things to be encouraged only by one side;
- Be open to cooperation;
- Keep in mind that these are different cultures and often that can be a challenge but also a barrier;
- Using another language can be a barrier to communication and lead to misunderstandings, so always try to explain better yourself.;
- Let the agreements be followed by a written correspondence;
- Involve other professionals and volunteers in the meetings. In that way, the activities will be accepted by more people and a sense of belongingness will develop;
- Make regular promotions after each activity;
- Be sure to open a folder (both electronic and hard copy versions) in which you will store all documents, starting with a Memorandum of Understanding, reports, action plan, promotional materials publicized. Let it be chronologically prepared.

OPINION OF THE COLLEAGUES INVOLVED IN THE TWINNING PROGRAM:

Aleksandra Bozhinova, Volunteer:

Initially, the choice by the City Red Cross of Skopje that I should be part of the team that will visit Norway was a challenge, satisfaction but also a great motivation for me.

Exchanging and sharing experiences with people who have similar views and interests, who listen carefully, support you and see it all in terms of applicability in their organization simply inspires you, it motivates you to be an example, upgrade and develop yourself.

When you see all this from the point of view of a volunteer, it is fun, socializing, having a good time, upgrading, new experience, but when years later you look at it from the point of view of a professional who coordinates field activities, takes responsibilities, develops and implements activities, you understand how much you actually grow with this type of experience, your horizons expand and new horizons open up for you. This experience motivated me and took me one step closer to where I am today.

Aleksandra Valkanovska,

Expert Associate at the City Red Cross of Skopje:

The twinning program is an excellent opportunity for cooperation with another Red Cross organization, in order to exchange experiences and good practices and to improve the work of our organization in several segments.

Although the cooperation with the Telemark Red Cross (Norway) is not based on specific financial/material support for the implementation of a particular program or project activity, the Twinning Program is a unique model that offers space for upgrading the personal and professional capacities of both employees and volunteers in the organizations. This means an opportunity to improve the organization itself.

The benefit of the Twinning Program is reflected in all those segments that were pre-defined as key areas of mutual cooperation. In each of these areas there were specific activities leading to development. The motivation of the professionally engaged people and volunteers is an added value in this whole process. The experiences, contacts, seen and experienced cases mean lasting values for everyone involved in the Twinning Program. The differences and specifics of each organization, as well as the wider cultural differences existing between the two countries/systems were very easily overcome, and they were a great opportunity to accept the differences, for cooperation within the Red Cross movement which is in fact a great example that gives direct results and remains a lasting value for anyone involved in the program.

Katerina Gievska,

Expert Associate at the City Red Cross of Skopje

Although the National Red Cross societies have direct and developmental communication on various grounds, the twinning program, however, developed with the Norwegian Red Cross, Telemark Red Cross, stands out on several grounds as a model, in terms of theory and practice. Namely, the program by its way of function, i.e. the Twinning is an extremely direct model for the mutual development of two national societies.

If in the past such programs were a practice between more developed national societies and less developed ones, as one-sided input and one-way support, this particular collaboration is not the case. The program showed that the development of a country does not always follow the development of one national society and vice versa, although Norway as a country is

much more developed country in the western region of Europe unlike the Republic of North Macedonia as a country from South-Eastern Europe, the Telemark Red Cross and the City Red Cross of Skopje showed identical work tools and similar results.

In addition to the already mentioned fact that is important to emphasize, the direct development and communication, it was additionally determined that as a model/way of cooperation between two national societies, the Twinning is an opportunity to motivate the volunteers and professional staff of the Red Cross. The program itself has provided an opportunity for gaining self-confidence and confirmation of the services that the City Red Cross of Skopje established. Of course, the sharing of good practices was also present in this case of cooperation.

This cooperation requires the appointment of a coordinating person, the creation of an implementation team and the definition of a special program analogous to the individual annual programs of the National Societies, i.e. local Red Cross organizations from two different countries.

The twinning between the City Red Cross of Skopje and the Telemark Red Cross confirmed that „love“ may exist at a distance if it has a good structure and format.

Ellen Haagenrud Grønlid

**Coordinator of the Twinmark program in Telemark,
Norwegian Red Cross**

We are amazed at how you manage to run so many activities before Covid-19, and also during the pandemic itself. We are also inspired by how you run your PHV program tool to recruit volunteers into your organization and how present you are in your community. During our collaboration, we understood that there were differences between the way we run our offices, the activities, the management with the volunteers, but it all motivated us to learn and think differently, to accept the differences and be open to new challenges and opportunities. As an organization, the cooperation and this twinning program mean a lot to us because our volunteers had the opportunity to see the programs and get closer to your volunteers and thus promote the culture, as well.

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