



One of the long-term goals of MCIC is accepted cultural diversity, interdependence and dialogue, which is a basis for building a cohesive multiethnic and multi-confessional society. Peace building in a society does not only mean absence of direct violence, but also elimination of all forms of violence (indirect/ structural and cultural violence), which also includes negative phenomena as segregation, intolerance and discrimination. With this purpose, MCIC is focused on strengthening the capacities of state institutions and civil society organizations in the area of intercultural dialogue, creation of positive atmosphere in the society for accepting the cultural differences and mutual respect, building awareness of mutual relatedness and interdependence, establishing positive and harmonious mutual relations and developing relevant mechanisms contributing for more efficient implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement. Sharing experience and knowledge with other multiethnic and multi-religious societies is of key importance for the process.

The overall objective of the project is to address the issues of segregation through the creation and development of international linkages, the exploration of good practice and the up-skilling of local mediation practitioners and practical implementation of the newly acquired knowledge and skills both on local and international level.

The project purpose is to share the best practices between the Northern Ireland (and the bordering areas of the Republic of Ireland) and Macedonia in four different sectors: policing and justice, local government, faith and media.

The project is a continuation of the existing successful cooperation between MCIC and the Mediation Northern Ireland (MNI) and is a result of the successful application submitted to the

EU Board on special programmes (part of the European Regional Development Fund “Investing in your Future”). MOST is part of the broader program of MNI on learning and networking based on three strands. MCIC is involved in the first one – transnational exchange of good practices. Six exchange visits are foreseen between Macedonia and Northern Ireland. The visits will be focused on policing, local government, faith, media, and should they prove successful two more visits will be organized on youth and housing.

The visits should be realized in the period from 2010 to 2012. The target group includes 72 civil society leaders from Northern Ireland and equal number from Macedonia. The idea behind the MOST (Most is the Macedonian word for “bridge”) Project is the similarities between Macedonia and Northern Ireland (size of the territory, population, representation on ethnic and religious grounds – with large minorities and similar history), including the conflicts and the agreements for putting end to these conflicts (Ohrid and Good Friday Agreement), as well as the experiences of MNI and MCIC from the previous activities – for MNI training on mediation and peace building in Macedonia and for MCIC organization of study visits to Northern Ireland for delegations from Macedonia (media, religious communities).

For the period 2010-2011, four exchange study visits are planned in the areas of policing and justice, local government, faith and media.

The first study visit on policing and justice will begin in Macedonia from March 21-26, 2010 and the return visit will be from May 23-28, 2010. It is intended for MPs, representatives from the police, Ministry of Justice, the Ombudsman, academy and civil society organizations.

The second study visit is intended for the representatives of the local government and will be realized in Macedonia from September 19-24, 2010, while the return visit to Northern Ireland will be from November 7-12, 2010. Participants will be MPs, representatives of the local governments (mayors and other municipal officers), of the Ministry of Local Self-Government, ZELS and civil society organizations working in this area.

The third visit (on religion) and the fourth (on media) will be organized in similar period in 2011.

During the study visits, the participants will have an opportunity to meet with the key policy makers from relevant areas, political leaders and high-ranking civil servants from Macedonia

and Northern Ireland, who will share their experiences, ideas and problems they face in the process of building a cohesive society and elimination of segregation. It is also planned to hold discussions on topics relevant for the project between the participants from Northern Ireland and their counterparts from Macedonia as well as to visit locations important for understanding the conflicts and their resolution. All activities regarding the organization of the study visits will be realized by MCIC and MNI.

The assumptions affecting the realization of project objectives are: interest of the partners and their target groups for active participation in the activities; lack of tensions and conflict renewal; corresponding level of the participants and host organizations and application of the acquired knowledge in the native country and the working process.

The project will be implemented from January 1, 2010 to December 31, 2011.

The project will not incur any direct costs (all costs are covered by MNI), while the income comes from the engagement of MCIC's staff for organizing the study visits to Macedonia.