

# Triple A for Citizens Newsletter

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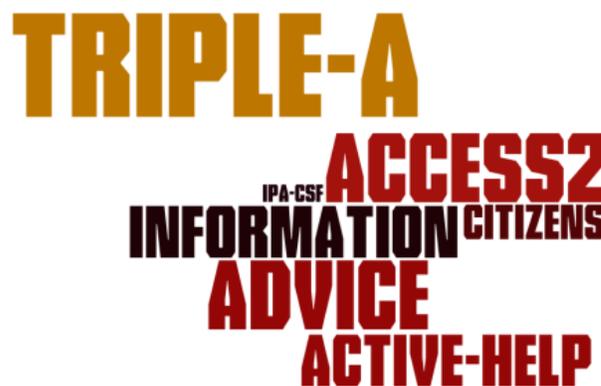
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## About the project

The project *Triple A for citizens - access to information, advice and active help* – is implemented in the framework of the European Commission's Partnership programme for Civil Society organisations (Regional and Horizontal Programmes Ref. EuropeAid/132438/C/ACT/Multi).

The Triple A project aims to encourage non-governmental organisations to provide information, advice and active help to citizens on their rights and entitlements in the Western Balkans and Turkey. It also



seeks to promote the role of civil society in giving citizens a voice and holding governments to account. By aggregating the complaints and evidence they receive, citizens' information and legal advice services seek to

be able to influence government policy on key reforms and their implementation. The immediate objective is to spread the citizens' advice concept to the Western Balkans and Turkey.

## TRIPLE A concept explained

### ACCESS TO INFORMATION



Everyone has an equal right to "come to our door", irrespective of income, status, language or belief and be treated with dignity and respect. People should be able to find and access information about their rights in the most convenient way possible. Equal access requires reaching out to those most in need, to ensure that vulnerable people are not marginalized.

### ADVICE



Citizens must find a free, personal, independent, confidential and impartial service they can trust. This can take the form of self-help manuals, interactive tools to resolve an issue through preventative action or face to face assistance/help. Citizens should receive the same level of service and care.

### ACTIVE HELP



Sometimes, it is necessary to advocate on behalf of citizens. This may involve preparing an administrative or judicial appeal, which could involve the cooperation of more specialised services or pro-bono legal support.





“...this should be much more than just a one-off project; the objective is to make the foundations for creating a sufficiently strong network in each country.”

– quote from the [Guidelines](#)

### Future national conferences:

Sarajevo; Belgrade;  
Pristina:  
**12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup>  
September**



## National reports

In order to examine the situation regarding information, advice, advocacy and legal aid to citizens in the WB & Turkey like, a mapping study was conducted in five countries of the region.

The structure of the national reports was prepared by ECAS, together with the questionnaire that served as

a starting point in the research.

The questionnaire was translated into local languages and adapted to certain country specificities before it was sent out to local CSOs and governmental departments involved in the provision of free legal aid and advice to citizens.

The surveying was complemented with additional

desktop research and follow up interviews, which allowed the partner organisations from WB & Turkey to prepare comprehensive reports.

The reports provide an overview of the legal framework, analyse the situation on the ground and formulate recommendations for future developments.

## Guidelines

Following a consultation process between partners, the document called '*Guidelines on Triple A - Towards a shared concept of access to information, advice and active help services*' has been drafted and published on ECAS' website. It gives an overview of how the future

services should look like, giving ideas for sustainability and the organisational aspects of the future pilot projects.

In addition, the document explains in more detail the conceptual background of the project, such as the cascade system, the idea of the one stop shop,

traceability of records, campaigning and advocacy.

The guidelines also provide a reference document for the future pilot projects, giving ideas on how to spread citizens advice and free legal advice services across the region.

The document is available at the following [link](#).

## Events/conferences

During the inception phase of the project, there were two conferences organized by the European Commission:

1. Kick-off conference, held in Brussels on the 21<sup>st</sup> of January served as an introduction to the FPA system and initiated the process of cooperation between different implementing organisations and with the EU.
2. Inception conference, held in Belgrade from

the 23<sup>rd</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup> of May offered the opportunity to further develop contacts and hear news from all the awarded projects.

The first national conference in the scope of the project was held in Croatia in Zadar, from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> of July, at the IMPACT Centre. It brought together different stakeholders involved in free legal aid in Croatia.

In addition to national stakeholders, the conference hosted all the partners involved in the project as well as the Croatian experts from ECAS run *Your Europe Advice*, so that different experiences and best practices could be shared. The agenda of the conference is available [here](#).

On the margins of these conferences the Triple A Steering Group held its meetings.



## Consultations on Free Legal Aid Law

### - Bosnia and Herzegovina

As part of the consultation process in BiH regarding Free Legal Aid Law (FLAL), ADI has together with five members of the Justice Network in BiH signed the Letter of Commitment with the Forum for Joint Policies (Ministry of Justice of BiH and High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council) in

February 2013. The main objective is to join the efforts in the process of bringing and implementing the FLAL in BiH.

In addition, in March 2013 ADI organized a round table on the topic of Free Legal Aid Law in BiH.

The discussion defined eleven recommendations

which will be used in the process of discussion with the newly appointed working group for the drafting of the fourth version of FLAL.

More info (in local language) available [here](#).



### - Serbia

In Serbia the work on the draft of the Law on Free legal aid is under way.

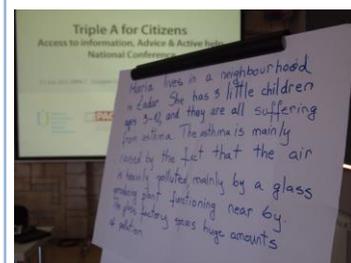
In order to boost the process, YUCOM has sent a request to the Ministry of Justice for the information about the working group. After the inquiry, the Ministry has sent

information about the Working group (WG) members as well as plans for their future work.

What is more, YUCOM was invited to participate as a monitoring body at the WG meetings. That has given them the opportunity to influence the decision making and lobby for

effective changes in the new legislation.

For example, the preliminary results of the mapping study in Serbia were useful for the ongoing consultation process and have contributed to the removal of some legal obstacles.



### - Croatia

The Legal Aid Law (LAA) was introduced to the Croatian legal framework in 2008.

Civil society organisations, Croatian Bar Association, legal experts, international organisations and beneficiaries themselves have been warning about the problems

in the functioning of the established legal aid system in Croatia ever since.

The recent situation is such that the new law is about to enter the formal procedure acceptance very soon. The proposed improvements are seen as resulting from the broad consultation procedu-

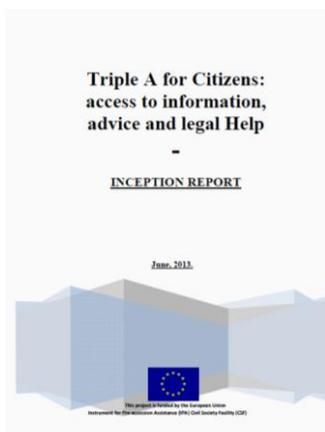
res, including all of the interested public, and are accepted by them all. However the funding remains the biggest threat to the sustainability of services.

[Link](#) to the website of the Croatian Ombudsman related to the consultation process.



*“Funding remains the biggest threat to the sustainability of services.”*





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**We're on the Web!**

<http://www.ecas-citizens.eu>

**Project website SOON!**

## Synthesis report

On the basis of the results from mapping and national conferences, ECAS with support from partners will put together a Synthesis report. The purpose of this report is to bring to light the experiences of the free legal and citizen advice in the UK,

Romania and Ireland but also identify the lessons learned from EU enlargement in 2004. The report will also summarize the main conclusion from the national analysis and bring forward initial recommendations for sustainability.

The report will be available on ECAS' website and distributed widely. The tentative date for its release is end of September 2013.

## Inception report

After the inception phase, i.e. the first six months of the project, the *Inception report* was prepared. It outlines all the preparatory activities undertaken to kick-off the Triple A project and the initial surveying activities. It covers the

period between the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2012 and 31<sup>st</sup> May 2013. concerning the activities planned in the second year of the project.

It gives an insight to all the activities done so far, and includes all the produced materials. During the meetings of the steering group, changes were agreed

The report is available [here](#)

### **PARTNERS INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT:**

**European Citizen Action Service (ECAS), Belgium** ([website](#))

**National Foundation for Civil Society Development (NFCSD), Croatia** ([website](#))

**Association for Democratic Initiatives (ADI), Bosnia & Herzegovina** ([website](#))

**Civil Rights Program (CRP/K), Kosovo** ([website](#))

**Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights (YUCOM), Serbia** ([website](#))

**Association of Civil Society Development Centre (STGM), Turkey** ([website](#))

**Law Centres Federation/Network (LCF), UK** ([website](#))

**National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux (NACAB), Romania** ([website](#))

**National Association of Citizens Information Services (NACIS), Ireland** ([website](#))

