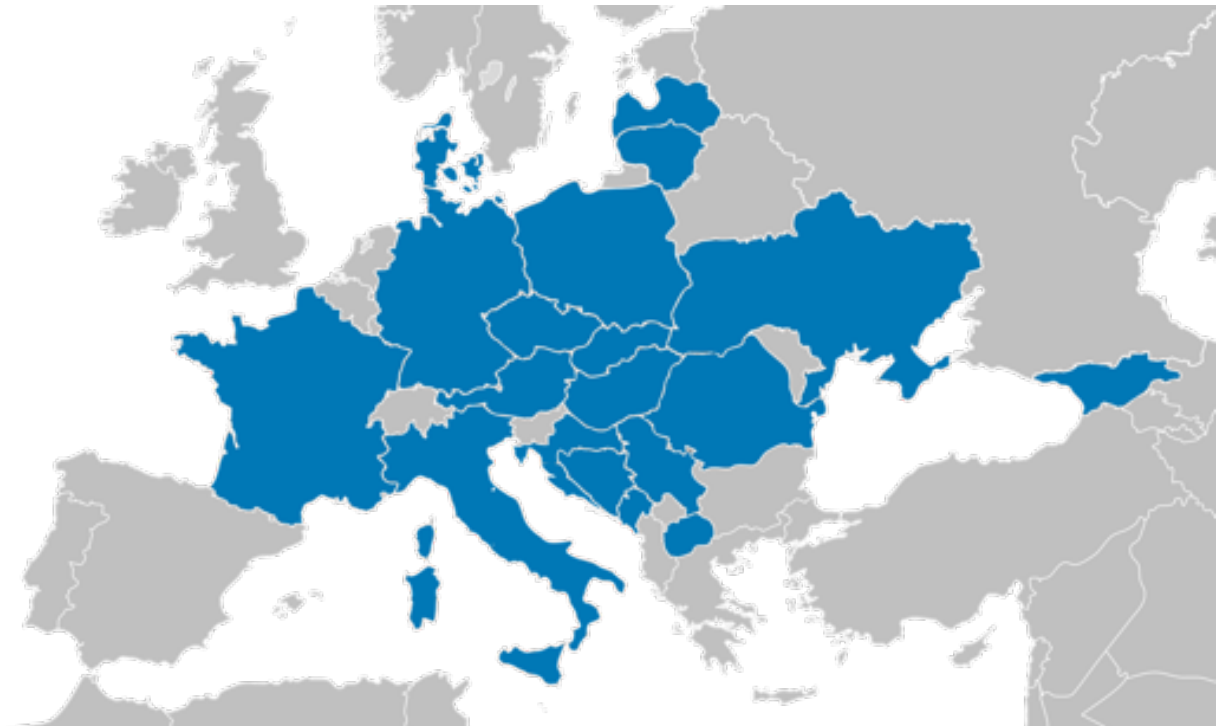


Strategy Paper – European Social Policy 2021-2024



About SAM.I

SAMARITAN INTERNATIONAL (SAM.I) is an umbrella organisation of 20 European welfare and rescue organisations from 19 different countries. SAM.I is politically and denominationally independent and cooperates across borders within the network on a regional, bilateral and multilateral basis.

The wealth of experience and the wide-ranging know-how of the individual organisations provide a good starting point for the European work of SAM.I. Over three million members, 150,000 volunteers and 45,000 full-time staff form the foundations of SAMARITAN INTERNATIONAL.

The members bring their many years of experience in the field of social services, rescue, first aid training and humanitarian aid abroad to the political work at European level. Cooperation is also being strengthened in disaster preparedness and the development of international disaster management systems.

SAMARITAN INTERNATIONAL serves to coordinate activities among its membership, to develop new cross-border partnerships and represents the interests of its members vis-à-vis the European Union.

The SAM.I guiding principles

Jointly

We are perceived as a competent partner and consultant in European decision-making procedures and EU-funded project co-operations and represent the relevant political matters of the network in Brussels.

We bring our members together in joint cross-border co-operations and enable activities in the areas of first aid and rescue services, social services, civil protection, youth work, and volunteer management that yield better results when done on the European level.

We fulfil our tasks with democratic participation of many citizens as members, volunteers, and supporters.

Active

We focus our European advocacy work on cross-cutting issues of our fields of activity and, in this context, act as an intermediary between EU institutions, other European networks, and our member organisations.

Support

We identify relevant EU funding programmes and support our members in the application for and implementation of funded projects.

Network

We understand ourselves as a network and as a strong partner for co-operation in matters of policy and expertise. Thereby, we are contributing to the creation of a European civil society. Through continuous expansion of our membership, our activities are backed by a broad socio-political foundation. By exchanging knowledge and experience between our member organisations, we improve together, for the benefit of all partners and the beneficiaries of the services offered by them.

Voluntarily

We consider the attractive and efficient contributions of qualified volunteers – hand in hand with employed personnel – a basic prerequisite for effective aid services. We advocate for the creation of appropriate framework conditions for voluntary commitment and support the international exchange of volunteers.

Social policy priorities 2021 to 2024

Promoting the idea of European unification in the member associations

The Samaritan International network has always put the European, solidarity-based community idea at the forefront. Member organisations from different European countries have been working closely together for many years and support each other with the exchange of know-how. Events such as the SAM.I. Contest are also intended to bring the youth organisations of our members closer to the European idea. These events of international encounters are to be expanded even further in the coming years, at all levels. As many full-time and voluntary staff of SAM.I organisations as possible should have the opportunity to further internalise the European idea within the framework of further international exchange events, workshops and seminars.

The promotion of European, politically and denominationally neutral social non-profit organisations, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, through project cooperation and material aid as a contribution to the development of a European civil society

Samaritan International has a very large number of member organisations in the new EU Member States that have joined the EU since 2004, as well as in several candidate countries in the Western Balkans. In most of these countries, the structure of NGO welfare organisations is still very young and there is still a whole range of measures to be implemented in order for this sector to become established. For us, European integration is not only a task of politics, but also a task of society - especially in the enlargement countries. The people in the candidate countries should notice that this

development has concrete effects and that their civil society is arriving in the EU. The organisations from these countries support each other with their experiences and are supported by the umbrella organisation Samaritan International. Large, established organisations, such as the 132-year-old Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund Deutschland, with its more than 1.4 million members, also support these organisations with their know-how and with material. This mutual assistance is to be further intensified over the next four years.

The provision and promotion of social services and offers in the general interest as well as solidarity-based project cooperations in this area

All member organisations of SAM.I have in common that they offer their services for the benefit of the general public and provide competent assistance to people in emergency situations in an unbureaucratic way. The member organisations cover the entire spectrum of social work: care, especially long-term care, addiction support, help for the homeless, help for migrants and refugees, both on site and after arrival in Europe, child and youth welfare, facilities for people with disabilities, palliative services, help for the long-term unemployed, meals on wheels, women's counselling and many other areas. Many SAM.I. members are also active in rescue and civil protection, with a lively exchange between civil protection and the social sector in the network. In times of social and demographic change, more and more groups that normally use social services find themselves facing special challenges in an emergency. As a network in which both sectors are represented, SAM.I. is working on these challenges - from the perspective of those affected as well as from that of the helpers.

As a European network, we already work together in many of these areas across borders within the framework of project cooperation. Here, not only our employees,

but also the people to whom we offer our services have the opportunity to experience European exchange first hand.

Promotion of the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights in member organisations

Samaritan International expressly welcomes the proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and all its 20 principles. These, together with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, serve as the cornerstone for guiding our work, especially at the European level. Many of our member organisations are active in member and candidate countries where many of the EPSR principles are not yet a reality. Together with other civil society actors and with political allies, we want to advocate for the further implementation of these principles in the coming years, in line with the European Commission's Action Plan for the implementation of the EPSR.

Expand and promote volunteering and voluntary services that meet the demand of people in social need

Volunteering as a recognised added value

Especially in areas that are highly dependent on the commitment of citizens as helpers beyond the official services catalogue, volunteering must be seen as a quality criterion for sustainable service. Volunteering and its added value are a sensitive asset worthy of protection. It is a matter of actively supporting the civil commitment of citizens in areas of public interest. Particularly in times of increasing needs (also due to demographic developments), it is becoming increasingly impossible to finance services that cover - large areas. Especially far away from the urban centres, every citizen must receive the same basic services as those in the cities. "Active citizenship" - a term often used in Europe - is one of the keys to solving this -

problem. We promote volunteerism as an integral part of our organisations and support organised, project-based participation.

To ensure that this added value is available to society in a sustainable and secure manner, we stand up for legally secure protection and recognition of voluntary work. In those associations where volunteering is already well developed, we promote sustainable development and advocate that this idea of civic engagement is also extended to countries where this is not yet as established.

The promotion of common quality standards in the cooperation with volunteers

We place a special emphasis on organised, qualified volunteering in civil society organisations. Sustainable *social added value* can only be created if volunteer management at a professional level enables, values and maintains people's commitment and expands it through qualification opportunities. Without such quality standards, it cannot be ensured that volunteers are prepared to help where and how it is needed. We therefore consider it essential to promote good framework conditions in order to maintain, disseminate and further develop such quality standards.

Strengthening the public perception and representation of political interests of Samaritan organisations for increased influence on European political decision-making processes in the social sector

Samaritan International has had its own representative office in Brussels since October 2016. The office is currently staffed with one full-time and one part-time employee, but the aim is to significantly expand our activities in the future, both to

offer our affiliates even more services and to strengthen our presence in Brussels. We are already in regular dialogue with representatives of the EU Parliament, Commission, EESC and other European interest groups. We will get more involved in Brussels than before and contribute to a social Europe and represent the interests of those people who are offered help and support by our member organisations.

Promoting cooperation between member organisations on major social policy issues, for example the future of care

Samaritan International is characterised above all by mutual solidarity. Larger, better established member organisations help smaller and younger partners at all levels. SAM.I also works together to overcome challenges that do not stop at national borders. For example, our member organisations, many of which are active not only in the social sector but also in rescue and civil protection, worked closely together to deal with the Corona crisis. Our cooperation is therefore not only theoretical, but also takes place on many levels in practice. Experts from the social sector who are employed by our member organisations meet regularly to work out new concepts and project ideas for the challenges of our time. Based on the principles of the EPSR, we will further intensify this cooperation in the next four years.

Establishing and expanding alliances with other organisations and networks with comparable values at European and international level

Samaritan International already works closely with other European networks and umbrella organisations on specific topics. For example, SAM.I is an associate member of the European network SOLIDAR. Provided that we succeed in expanding our office, we want to work more intensively in and with the other European networks in the coming years and advocate together for a

social Europe for all citizens.

Supporting our member organisations in accession countries and the new EU member states in building a self-sufficient civil society

As mentioned before, many of our member organisations are active in the new EU member states or the candidate countries of the Western Balkans, for example in the framework of the Social Dimension Initiative or in the IRIS network. Civil society participation, the important role of NGOs and the establishment of independent welfare work are still in their infancy in many of these countries. Unfortunately, many of our member organisations are fighting against state corruption, have difficulties in obtaining funding and expect in vain support from the state in building up their structures. It is precisely in these countries that funding from the European Union is of immense importance for the development of a self-sufficient civil society and the establishment of social organisations that provide competent help to those in need quickly and without complications. A major focus of our work within the network is to support those organisations that are struggling with the problems listed above. In doing so, the member organisations concerned also support each other by exchanging their experiences and their approaches to solving the problems. We are planning to acquire further financial resources in the next four years in order to be able to support this development work not only with know-how but also with the necessary capital.

Thematic focus

Care

Many member organisations of Samaritan International are active in the field of outpatient and inpatient care and are

constantly striving to improve the conditions for carers and nursing staff. To this end, they also regularly exchange information within the SAM.I network. Within the framework of the Erasmus+ project TECS, experts in the field of care from our network are given the opportunity to get to know particularly innovative care concepts on site and to learn from each other. The members strive to work on the most important issues concerning the future of care, especially long-term care and the shortage of skilled workers, at the European level.

Digitalisation in social work

Digitalisation is both an opportunity and a challenge - also in the social sector. The member organisations of Samaritan International welcome the European Commission's focus on digitalisation and are willing to engage intensively in the process to improve digital networking in the social sector across Europe and to optimise work processes with the help of new technologies and digital solutions.

Labour shortage in social professions

The lack of qualified professionals in the social sector is an EU-wide problem and, in view of demographic change, an important issue for the future, especially in the field of care. Since the member organisations are active both in countries from which qualified professionals are poached and in those countries with higher wage levels that actively poach professionals from other EU countries, the Samaritan International network can examine this challenging issue from all perspectives and contribute a great deal of expertise to possible solutions at the European level.

Poverty reduction; especially child poverty

The member organisations of Samaritan International are committed to combating poverty throughout Europe and operate a

large number of facilities and counselling centres for people affected by poverty. A particular focus is on combating child poverty, where a lot of advocacy is already being done at the political level as well. Samaritan International therefore expressly supports the European Commission's initiative for a European Child Guarantee and wants to play a decisive role in supporting the implementation of the principles contained therein.

People with disabilities

Many member organisations of the Samaritan International network work in the diverse area of people with disabilities. The focus is clearly on inclusion and there are many initiatives to integrate people with disabilities into the labour market, but also special projects for children with disabilities. The new European strategy for people with disabilities is welcomed by SAM.I and the member organisations support the implementation of the strategy at national level.

Planned activities

Regular specialist group meetings at CC Social

The SAM.I network has various topic-specific Competence Centres (CCs), including a CC Social Services. In these CCs, experts from SAM.I member organisations meet to discuss current socio-political issues and challenges, to develop joint statements and to work on sustainable concepts for tackling these tasks.

Exchange of best practice examples within and without projects

The SAM.I network is characterised by efficient and intensive knowledge transfer among each other. By visiting each other's innovative institutions and projects, the

member organisations can learn from each other. For example, SAM.I runs the Erasmus+ project TECS, which highlights best practice examples in the training of care professionals. The participants in the project not only have the opportunity to learn first-hand about innovative concepts, but also build their own network of competent contact persons and future project partners. This exchange of experience is to be significantly expanded in the next four years due to the very positive feedback and the sustainable added value of the actions and, if financially available, will also take place outside of EU co-financed projects.

Organisation of workshops and seminars with experts, especially on the development and improvement of structures in the Eastern European Member States and the Western Balkan countries

SAM.I has already offered workshops and seminars on various EU-relevant topics, especially in the area of funding. Our education and training offers are very well received and are to be further expanded in the coming years so that we can also offer our expertise in other areas and at other events. We also support the multilateral networking of our member organisations, for example through the Social Dimension Initiative or the IRIS Network.

Representation of member organisations' interests vis-à-vis EU political institutions and civil society actors at European level

Political participation and advocacy for those who use our services is an important pillar of Samaritan International's work. We meet regularly with representatives of the Commission and the Parliament, but also with representatives of other European networks, in order to advocate for a social, just and solidary Europe. Political representation in Brussels and in the EU member states will continue to be an

important and essential area of work for SAM.I and is reflected in:

- Participation in consultations of the European Commission,
- Technical discussions with Members of the European Parliament,
- Intensive contact and exchange with other civil society associations

Organisation of network meetings; events in Brussels

At regular intervals, Samaritan International organises networking meetings of the member associations and political evening events in Brussels and elsewhere, at which important positions of the network are communicated to a broader public. As soon as normality returns after the Corona crisis, we will organise such events again.

Major events with a socio-political focus, e.g. SAM.I. Forum

Samaritan International has already held international conferences on the topic of social services / social affairs in the past, such as the Samaritan Forum 2017 in Riga, Latvia. This thematic focus will continue to be reflected in larger European professional events and enable civil society exchange on the latest developments in this field, for example at the next planned Samaritan Forum, which will take place in Worms, Germany.

Previous activities of the SAM.I. network

EU-funded projects

In line with the above objectives, Samaritan International and its members have already carried out various activities over the past years.

Among them were many projects financially supported by the EU. While not all of these projects have a social policy issue as their primary objective, as many are in the field of civil protection or first aid, most at least have important components from the social field. The combination of complementary elements of civil protection/rescue on the one hand and social services on the other hand characterises the diverse expertise that the SAM.I. network and its members bring to these projects:

SAMETS - Social Affairs Management in the Emergency Temporary Shelter

The project funded by DG ECHO in the *Prevention and Preparedness (P&P)* programme focused on the needs of special target groups in temporary shelters, e.g. after a natural disaster. Guidelines were created to support children, older people, people with disabilities and migrants in temporary shelters, and civil protection volunteers were trained on these guidelines. SAMETS has also proven its worth in operations, e.g. through organised childcare in emergency shelters after the earthquake in central Italy a few years ago.

ADAPT - Awareness of Disaster Prevention for Vulnerable Groups

Also funded under the P&P programme, ADAPT worked on systematic data collection and utilisation regarding special needs of vulnerable groups in an emergency. In contrast to SAMETS, the focus here was on practical information relevant to aid workers in the event of an evacuation - e.g. whether civil protection forces should have wheelchair-accessible transport facilities available. The data was structured into a database with extensive search and filter functions as well as an interactive map for easy usability.

INDRIX - Inclusive Disaster Resilience Index

The INDRIX project built on the idea of ADAPT. Instead of focusing on practical implications of special needs, it took another look at vulnerability and resilience and developed an index of inclusive resilience that was based both on statistical data and, in the pilot test at local level, on additionally collected data. The project was coordinated by the University of Rome Tor Vergata. Besides SAM.I. and several of its members, the organisations Auser and FISH were also involved in the project, as representatives of affected people's organisations.

TECS - Training and Further Education in Care and Social Services

TECS is an Erasmus+ funded best practice exchange in vocational education and training in the social sector, especially in care and connected services. The focus is on visiting and presenting education and training practices of the 10 participating partner countries. As an additional component, there is an informal exchange between the partner organisations on European policy developments with implications for their field of work.

I_TEM - Integrated Digital Training in Emergency Management

I_TEM tries to bring together the spheres of social services and civil protection. The Erasmus+ funded project builds on the results of SAMETS but updates them with the direct involvement of many partners from the social sector and also makes them ready for new contact-reduced training needs revealed by the Covid-19 pandemic through a stronger focus on digital content or blended learning.

Events with a socio-political focus

In addition to the projects, there have already been **events with a socio-political focus**.

The Samaritan Forum 2017, an international conference with over 100 participants from civil society and politics, which took place in Riga in August 2017, focused on "Social Services and Social Affairs". In addition to lectures and workshops from the practical field, there were also contributions on European social policy. Among other things, the then still new European Pillar of Social Rights was presented by rapporteur Maria Joao Rodrigues, MEP, and discussed with those present.



Furthermore, SAM.I. has already organised events and activities in the Brussels political arena. Among others, a parliamentary evening was held, during which a paper on the topic of voluntary work in civil protection was handed over to Christos Stylianides, then Commissioner for crisis management.



Furthermore, there have been several first aid courses for EU parliamentarians, with which we want to draw attention to this important possibility of civil society engagement and also promote good European framework conditions for cross-border recognised, high-quality first aid courses. A report on the state of first aid in Europe was handed over to the then President of the European Parliament Martin Schulz at the first instance of this event.



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