



ANNUAL  
ACTIVITY  
REPORT  
2023

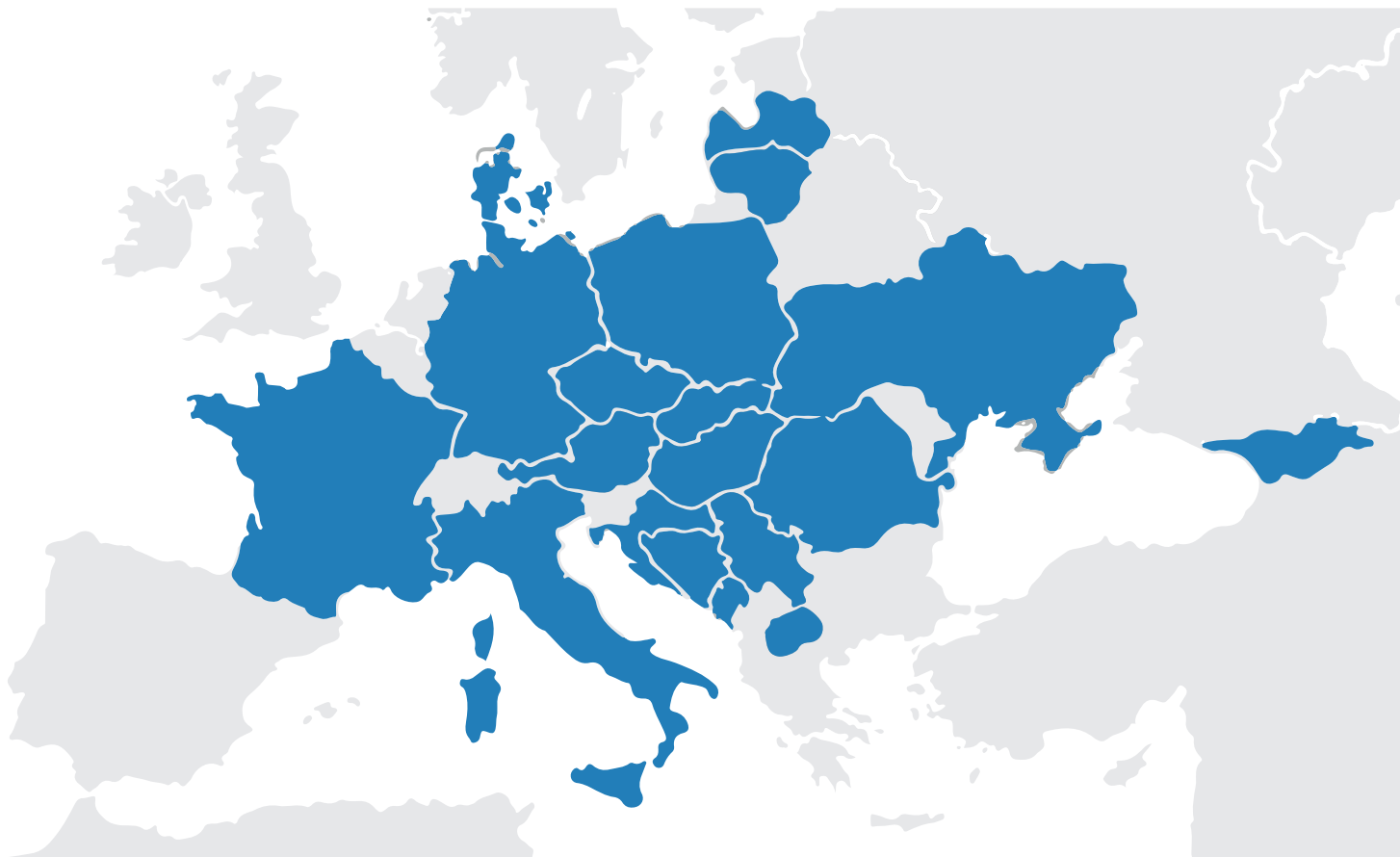
1 MEMBERS AND NETWORKS.....	4
Members .....	5
Networks .....	5
Presidium .....	6
2 PROJECTS .....	7
Inclusive First Aid.....	8
Integrated Training in Emergency Management .....	9
Digitalisation of First Aid Education .....	10
Assistance to Ukraine .....	11
Response to the Earthquake in Turkey and Syria .....	13
3 ADVOCACY.....	14
Position on the Driving Licences Directive .....	15
Position on Civic Engagement .....	16
Position on the European Qualifications Framework.....	16
Position on Talent Mobility .....	17
European Year of Skills.....	17
Position on European Cross-Border Associations .....	18
SOLIDAR - Participation in study visits .....	18
4 EVENTS .....	19
Policy debate “Qualified volunteering – Skills for Resilient Societies” in Brussels.....	20
First Aid Courses in Brussels .....	21
5 FACTS AND FIGURES 2023 .....	21

## Dear Readers,

for many Samaritan International member organisations, 2023 was still largely marked by the continued Russian aggression against Ukraine, as we continued to provide aid and assistance to the Samaritans of Ukraine (SSU). In May, SAM.I. President Knut Fleckenstein and Secretary-General Ivo Bonamico travelled to Kyiv in an expression of solidarity and support.

With the addition of Pompiers Humanitaires Français, Samaritan International welcomed its 21st member organisation into the network. Their expertise in the field of civil protection, disaster relief and humanitarian aid, PHF will bring high added value in this sector. In Brussels, our team focused on several policy initiatives, notably gathering support from both the European Parliament and the Council to enable the driving of heavier ambulances with a regular driving licence. In addition, we organised a political debate in the framework of the European Year of Skills, as well as First-Aid trainings in the European Parliament.

In the following activity report, you can find an overview of this eventful and active year of the Samaritan International Network.



# 1 MEMBERS AND NETWORKS

---



## Members

The members of Samaritan International as of 31/12/2023 are:



## Networks

Samaritan International is a member of the following networks, as of 31/12/2023:



## Presidium

The current presidium of Samaritan International as of 31 December 2023



Knut FLECKENSTEIN  
(President)



Andris BERZINS  
(Vice-President)



Dr. Ivo BONAMICO  
(Vice-President,  
Secretary General)



Reinhard HUNDSMÜLLER  
(Vice-President)



Klaus NØRLEM  
(Vice-President)



Renata PENAZZI  
(Vice-President)



Dr. Fabrizio PREGLIASCO  
(Vice-President)



Edith WALLMEIER  
(Vice-President)



Barbara ZYCHOWSKA  
(Vice-President)

# 2 PROJECTS

---

## Inclusive First Aid (INFA, ongoing)

**INFA is a best practice exchange on teaching first aid to persons with disabilities.**

The SAM.I. organisations have, for quite some time, noted a demand for inclusive courses or accessible courses that take the support needs of people with certain types of disability into account. The conviction that everybody can and should learn first aid does of course also include persons with disabilities. The first aid training organisations are always looking for a way to better offer courses to persons with disabilities, even if this poses didactical challenges.

Many first aid trainers in SAM.I. have thus found practices to realise this - flexible and creative solutions to teach persons with disabilities in first aid – either simply in instances where someone with a disability showed up at their course or in other cases in dedicated courses, often requested by service providing institutions.

These existing practices will be exchanged and, in collaboration with several disabled people's organisations (DPOs), critically discussed in terms of whether and under which circumstances they could be a generally recommended practice. At each meeting, a practice is presented, which is then reviewed in light of the principles brought forward by the DPOs, who can also directly contribute to the feedback loop. The end result will be a catalogue of practices that can be considered good starting points or very practical examples of approaches. This catalogue is meant to support other trainers who wish to offer courses for persons with disability but need inspiration on how to approach the topic.



More  
information  
on INFA





## Integrated Training in Emergency Management (I\_TEM, concluded)

**I\_TEM was an Erasmus+ KA2 project in adult education that concluded in August 2023.**

The aim of the project was to explore the benefits of digital training elements or blended learning in an area that conventionally is very focused on hands-on training: volunteer training for emergency situations.

I\_TEM did not only focus civil protection volunteers, but bridged the gap between civil protection and the sphere of social services by involving a number of social service providers in the project. This is important because, in emergencies, the continued provision of social services to vulnerable groups is crucial and, at the moment, often overlooked or beyond the competences of civil protection aid workers and volunteers.

I\_TEM built on the work of the earlier SAMETS project, but updated the guidelines and, contrary to SAMETS, did not rely on external expertise to consult during the project but had member organisations of Samaritan International from both civil protection and social services as direct part of the consortium.

Two pilot trainings took place in 2023, one in Rome and one in Bolzano, as live tests and evaluation tools for the project's work.

The final result was a blended-learning-based training concept (i.e. utilizing digital training elements as well as on-site training) describing a model curriculum for a volunteer course as well as general considerations brought up for the different target groups during the project.

Following its conclusion, I\_TEM was designated a "Good Practice" project by the German national agency for Erasmus+ Adult Education.



The results of I\_TEM and more information can be found on the project website at:



## Digitalisation of First Aid Education (DIGIFIRSTAID, concluded)

**Digitalisation of First Aid Education (DIGIFIRSTAID) was a best-practice exchange project on how to introduce e-learning or blended learning in an area of training that is, by its very nature, hands-on: First Aid training. The project was supported by the EU's Erasmus+ program.**

Digitalisation of First Aid Education (DIGIFIRSTAID) was a best-practice exchange project on how to introduce e-learning or blended learning in an area of training that is, by its very nature, hands-on: First Aid training. The project was supported by the EU's Erasmus+ program.

While practical exercise will never be entirely replaceable in first aid training, digital educational elements can still be beneficial to improve the quality of the training and the learning experience for the trainees. Also, exceptional situations prohibiting or severely restricting on-site training, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, have proven that certain fall-back options could be very useful in such contexts.

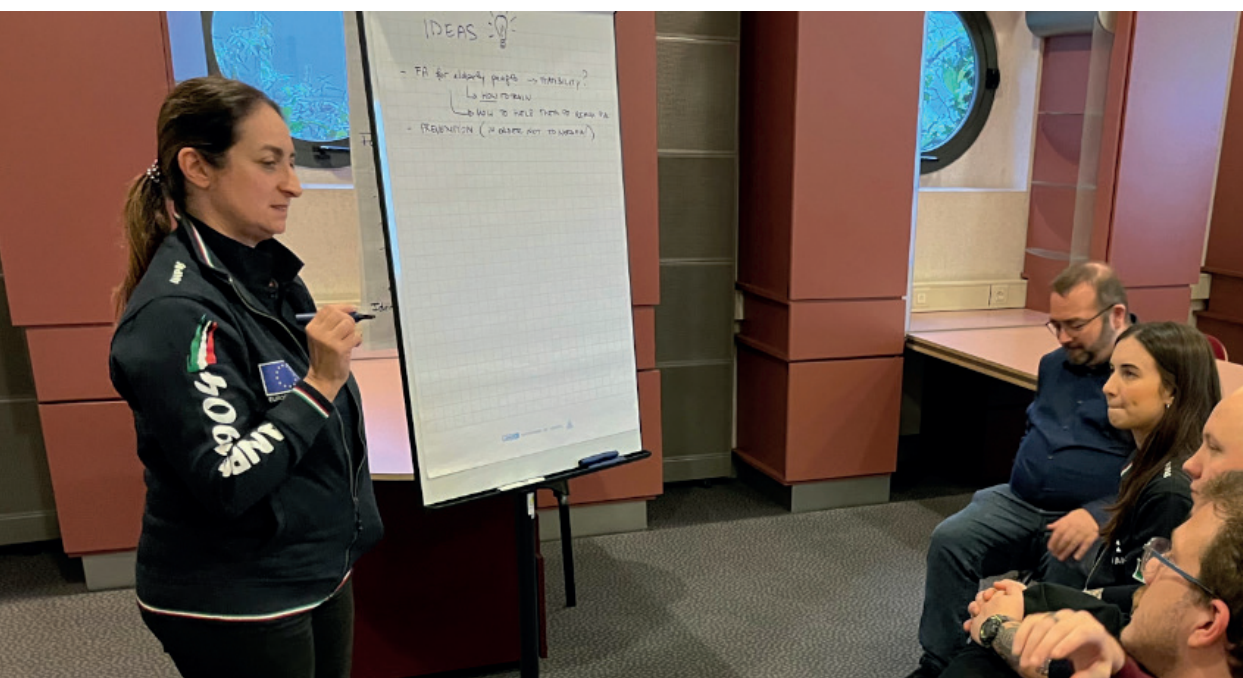
In DIGIFIRSTAID, project partners active in first aid training got together to exchange their experiences.

Some of the partners had already introduced digital elements into their training systems, others had tried to do so prompted by the pandemic with mixed results. Other project partners were in earlier stages of the introduction of digital learning and thus used DIGIFIRSTAID as a starting point.

As part of the project, a knowledge network on digitalization of first aid education was established, located at the SAM.I. CC First Aid.

DIGIFIRSTAID was concluded in November 2023.

More information, including contact information for the knowledge network, is available at





## Assistance to Ukraine (ongoing)

### AID DELIVERIES

Ever since the Russian attack on Ukraine in Februar 2022, the SAM.I. member organisations have been coordinating their aid and support. With the Samaritan Association of Ukraine, we have a strong and committed partner organisation on-site in Kyiv, through which SAM.I. and its member organisations organised numerous deliveries and distribution of aid goods. On top of these deliveries to SSU, SAM.I. members fulfilled direct requests for aid materials from other NGOs and institutions on-site.



### KYIV CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL AIR RAID SHELTER

In 2022, together with SSU and supported in particular by our four member organisations from Austria, Germany, South Tyrol/Italy and Latvia, we repaired and refurbished the air raid shelter of a local children's hospital, including basic medical infrastructure such as oxygen supply for patients who have to seek shelter while still requiring such medical support. The air raid shelter is still operational and provides adequate hygienic conditions and the necessary medical equipment for the children and staff.





## VISIT TO KYIV: SAM.I. LEADERSHIP TO SUPPORT SSU



In May 2023, SAM.I. Secretary General Ivo Bonamico and SAM.I. President Knut Fleckenstein travelled to Kyiv to visit our Ukrainian member organisation SSU, who has uninterruptedly continued to provide services and helped to distribute aid shipments to the Ukrainian people since the start of the Russian aggression. The SAM.I. delegation travelled jointly with representatives from ASB Germany, including European Parliament's Vice President and ASB President Katarina Barley.

Together they visited several service points provided by the SSU, as well as implemented projects, such

as the air raid shelter of a children's hospital. Making the air raid shelter habitable and providing the shelter with the needed equipment has been the first jointly financed and implemented project of that kind of the SAM.I. network.

The delegation also met with Kyiv's mayor Vitali Klitschko to hear from him, how he assesses the situation, what kind of support the city needs, and to discuss future aid shipments and projects.

The visit demonstrated strong solidarity with our member organisation SSU, which has been actively manifested by the network since the start of the aggression against Ukraine, not only through aid shipments, but also by SAM.I. members hosting refugees themselves, setting up and running a refugee camp or implementing a project on the ground in Ukraine.





## Response to the Earthquake in Turkey and Syria

### SHELTER AND ASSISTANCE

In February 2023, southern Turkey and northern Syria were struck by an earthquake, resulting in the death of thousands of people and severe destruction across many provinces in Turkey and in northwest Syria. The Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund Germany (ASB), Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund Austria (ASBÖ) and the Secouristes Francais Croix Blanche sent their respective Rapid Response Teams to assist the search and rescue operations and provide medical support and shelter to the population. In addition, the ASB and ASBÖ continued their assistance in form of water treatment equipment, shelters and psycho-social support in Turkey, as well as humanitarian assistance in Syria, mainly through the partner organisation ADRA Syria.



# 3 ADVOCACY

---

## ADVOCACY

In 2023, SAM.I. was actively engaged in many policy initiatives at the European level through participation in consultations, development of position papers,

meetings with EU decision makers and networking with other civil society networks. The main topics of our work in 2023 were the following:

## REVISION OF THE DRIVING LICENSE DIRECTIVE

The European Commission presented on 1 March 2023 a proposal to revise the Driving Licences Directive. Samaritan International was concerned about the absence of specific rules for ambulances exceeding 3,5 tonnes, up to which a normal B-licence is sufficient. The lack of EU rules has led to very different national, or even regional legal frameworks, which creates legal uncertainty for cross-border emergencies and can become a deterrent for civic engagement in cases where C-licences are required.

Therefore SAM.I. started an advocacy campaign to create a minimum standard at EU level. Ambulances of up to 4,25 tonnes should be driveable with a regular B-licence, in order to keep the threshold for civic engagement low and to create legal certainty for

cross-border emergencies, without negatively impacting road safety.

After talks with EP representatives, as well as Council representatives, and the participation in a hearing of the European Parliament's Transport Committee (TRAN), Samaritan International strongly welcomed the Council's position on 4 December 2023 and the TRAN vote on 7 December 2023, which both incorporated the demands of Samaritan International.

The European Parliament will vote in plenary on the report early 2024. The negotiations between the European Parliament and the Council are not expected to take place before the elections of the European Parliament in June 2024.



More  
information





## POSITION ON CIVIC ENGAGEMENT (QUALIFIED VOLUNTEERING)

Samaritan International participated in the European Commission's consultation for a planned Recommendation on civic engagement. In its contribution SAM.I. highlighted the important role of structured and qualified volunteering for social cohesion and resilience. Thus, not-for-profit organisations that offer qualified volunteering opportunities are a crucial pillar of civil society and need to be supported by an adequate framework.

The European Commission adopted the Recommendation on promoting the engagement and effective participation of citizens and civil society organisations in public policy-making processes on 12 December 2023, calling for the involvement of civil society in all stages of policy planning and implementation, as well as the set-up of national structured dialogues on specific topics.

More  
information



## POSITION ON THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (FIRST AID)

Samaritan International contributed to the evaluation of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and repeated its call for cross-border recognition of First Aid qualifications under the EQF. Despite predominantly focusing on secondary and post-secondary degrees and diplomas, SAM.I. stressed that the EQF is designed with sufficient flexibility to also map smaller scale qualifications. First Aid qualifications are still predominantly nationally regulated and an officially recognised European standard for First Aid qualifications, including AED (automated external defibrillator) usage, does not exist. The integration of First Aid qualifications into the EQF based on established and accepted standards, such as the European Resuscitation Council guidelines, could pave the way towards cross-border recognition.

More  
information





## EUROPEAN YEAR OF SKILLS

The European Commission declared 2023 as the European Year of Skills, which is an initiative to highlight specific policy areas throughout the duration of the year. This year's motto aimed to address skills gaps in the European Union and boost the EU skills strategy, which will help reskill people with the focus on digital and green technology skills.

Samaritan International used its voice to emphasize the importance of skills that go beyond labour-market

relevance. Especially skills acquired through qualified volunteering are and will be increasingly important for the future of democratic societies and social cohesion. Therefore, SAM.I. organised a policy debate titled "Qualified volunteering – Skills for Resilient Societies" (see Events).

More  
information



## POSITION ON MAXIMISING THE POTENTIAL OF TALENT MOBILITY TO ADDRESS LABOUR SHORTAGES

Samaritan International participated in the European Commission's consultation for a Communication on maximising the potential of talent mobility. In its position SAM.I. welcomed that the Commission is addressing the pressing issue of labour shortages, especially in the sector of social services.

However, SAM.I. stressed that facilitating labour mobility was not a solution to the root causes and expressed the following demands:

1. Increasing the attractiveness of the professions has to be the main priority
2. Avoiding "brain waste" and "brain drain" by using all available talent first
3. Cooperate closely with third countries from where talent is sought

The Commission adopted on 15 November 2023 the Communication on Skills and Talent Mobility, stating among the sectors most affected by labour shortages the healthcare, long-term care sectors, as well as social work activities. While the communication states that a strategic approach to solving labour and



skills shortage "must start at home", the initiatives focus mainly on skilling and upskilling, rather than the attractiveness of the jobs.



More  
information

## POSITION ON EUROPEAN CROSS-BORDER ASSOCIATIONS

On 5 September 2023, the European Commission published a proposal on European Cross-Border Associations. The proposal envisions to establish the European Cross-Border Association (ECBA) as a new national legal form in each Member State. The objective is to enable mutual recognition and to facilitate associations to participate in the internal market.

Samaritan International joined the advocacy collaborative effort lead by Civil Society Europe (CSE), to

ensure that the governance structures do not discriminate against third country nationals or organisations. In addition, SAM.I. renewed its call for a European definition of “public benefit status”, which was left out of the Commission's proposal.

More  
information



## SOLIDAR - PARTICIPATION IN STUDY VISITS

Samaritan International participated in two study visits organised by SOLIDAR and the SOLIDAR foundation:

During the first Peer Learning Activity in Patras (Greece), DAFNI KEK presented its work which aim is to foster a more engaged and empowered society through the following pillars: access and participation in non-formal and informal learning (Safe Spaces project) and identification of skills (ProfilPASS), as well as migrant integration and empowerment.

The second study visit was hosted by Prodiversa in Malaga (Spain) and focused on Prodiversa's work on social economy (work integration enterprises and social work in the Palmilla neighbourhood) and its participation in policy making at different levels.



# 3 EVENTS

---



## POLICY DEBATE “QUALIFIED VOLUNTEERING – SKILLS FOR RESILIENT SOCIETIES” IN BRUSSELS

On 14 November 2023, Samaritan International organised a policy debate with high-level stakeholders to discuss the importance and value of qualified volunteering for our societies. The event took place in the framework of the European Year of Skills to put the spotlight on skills beyond the labour market, which often tend to get sidelined in the political debate. SAM.I. considers volunteering not only an expression of civic engagement, which is vital for living democracies, but structurally committed volunteers are also a necessity for the work of the members of Samaritan International, both in the area of disaster prepared-

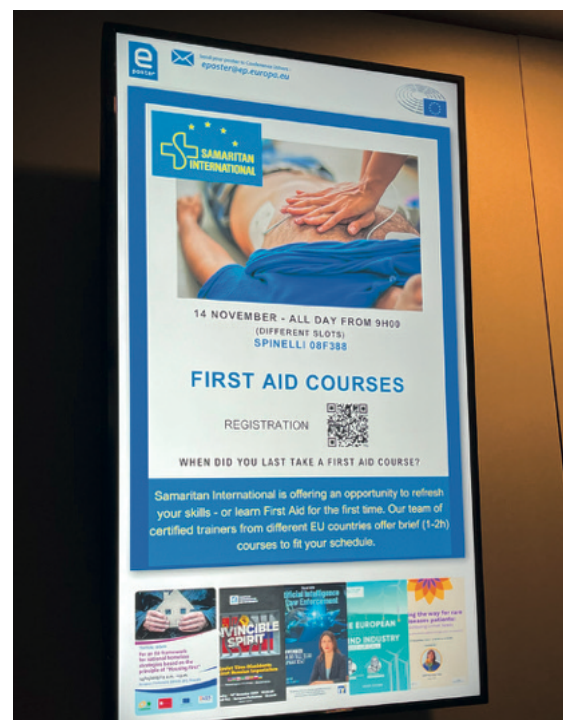
ness and response, as well as in the area of comprehensive social service provision.

The panelists included Mr. Christoph Nerlich from the cabinet of the European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, Nicolas Schmit, Ms. Gabriella Civico, Director of the Centre of European Volunteering and Ms. Renata Penazzi, Director of the Asociácia Samaritánov Slovenskej Republiky and Vice-President of Samaritan International. The debate was moderated by SAM.I. president and former Member of the European Parliament, Knut Fleckenstein.

## FIRST AID COURSES IN BRUSSELS

For the third time, trainers from the European Samaritan organisations held short courses in first aid for MEPs and their staff, as well as other relevant institutions and organisations in Brussels. Although the importance of first aid is quickly recognised across the board, it rarely finds a place on the political agenda. For example, there is still no easy way to have first aid courses recognised across borders within Europe, although in some cases the training is professionally relevant, e.g. in jobs with security responsibilities.

SAM.I. drew attention to this fact with the campaign and at the same time emphasised the fundamental importance of learning first aid and made a practical contribution to ensuring that even people with usually very full diaries could learn about some important measures.



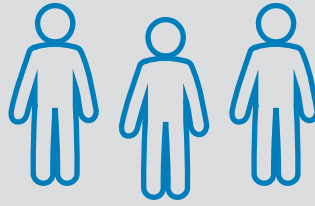


# 3 FACTS AND FIGURES 2023

---

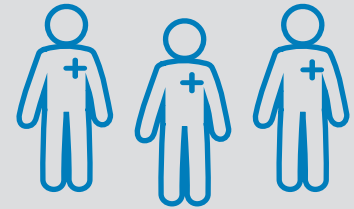
ALMOST

**3 MILLION**



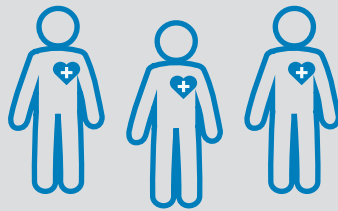
INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

**50.000**



EMPLOYEES

**150.000**



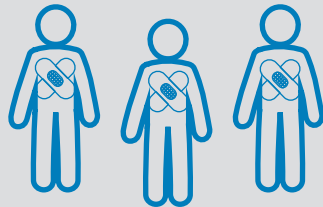
VOLUNTEERS

**1 MILLION**



MEDICAL TRANSPORTS

**400.000**



BENEFICIARIES OF  
SOCIAL SERVICES

OVER

**100.000**



PEOPLE TRAINED IN FIRST AID

**30.000**



PEOPLE IN INTERNAL STAFF AND  
VOLUNTEER TRAININGS

**Published by**

Samaritan International e.V.  
Sülzburgstr. 140  
50937 Köln  
Germany

Brussels Office  
Rue de Pascale 4  
1040 Bruxelles  
Belgium

[mail@samaritan-international.eu](mailto:mail@samaritan-international.eu)  
<https://www.samaritan-international.eu/>