The call to **ACT DIFFERENTLY!** encourages us to seek better and more innovative ways in which we carry out our work. It inspires us to pursue our common goal, of building more healthy and resilient communities.

**CALL FOR ACTION**

In a continuously changing humanitarian landscape, the Florence Call for Action (FCfA) seems more relevant than ever. The document signed in 2014 by all National Societies across the Europe Region calls for increased commitment to forge **STRONGER PARTNERSHIPS** with stakeholders within and outside our Movement, and for maintaining an **INNOVATIVE** and **FLEXIBLE** approach throughout our work. **SOCIAL ASPECTS** is one of the three main topics alongside **MIGRATION** and **VOLUNTEERING** highlighted in the Florence document.

### BACKGROUND

Following the economic downturn of 2008, many National Societies across Europe and Central Asia have tailored their programmes and activities to address the needs of the newly emerged vulnerable groups.

The imminent risk of marginalization and social exclusion that comes with the alarming growth of long-term unemployment - especially among the youth – as well as the soaring number of those living below the poverty line should not be underestimated.

Other factors, such as natural disasters and conflicts in the region, impacted many people living in societies already burdened by the effects of the economic crisis in recent years. As a result, National Societies in Europe and Central Asia have been at the forefront of responding to the newly emerging needs.

Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers often engage in food distribution donated by large suppliers and producers, providing for the basic needs of people living on the poverty line. Furthermore, National Societies look at ways to improve food and nutrition security programmes in Europe and Central Asia, at both operational and policy level.
The vulnerable groups

- the unemployed and the working poor;
- youth, pensioners and elderly;
- disabled;
- single parent households;
- migrants and asylum seekers;
- persons under substance abuse;
- the new poor—individuals in low-paid jobs, whose wages cannot cover their household’s needs;
- young people that lack employment opportunities.1

OUR WORK

Resilient and relevant National Societies need to:

SPEAK OUT Be seen as the partner of choice when addressing social needs of people at local and national level. Seek opportunities to advocate on behalf of vulnerable groups with governments and local authorities using the auxiliary role of your National Society.

RESEARCH Collect and analyze evidence. Integrate the information into your National Society advocacy efforts on social aspects.

REACH OUT Identify new social vulnerabilities and gain access to these groups. Stay relevant by responding to their emerging needs.

NETWORK Establish good networks with other organizations and governments to ensure complementarity, coordination and funding for activities that improve the lives of individuals and strengthens the resilience of the community.

CHANGE MINDS Look for creative ways to promote a culture of non-violence, peace and social inclusion. Strengthen and refine your advocacy efforts with different stakeholders.

WORK TOGETHER Have an integrated and holistic approach to designing social programmes, think outside of silos and be innovative! Involve and coordinate with other actors.

MOBILIZE AND ENGAGE Mobilize communities and motivate volunteers at grass roots level to participate in social programmes and be an active part of their society.

The vulnerable groups

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Current Red Cross and Red Crescent activities across the region

- employment support and providing information to facilitate understanding of the procedures to access assistance;
- psycho-social support and promotion of health, including mental health;
- empowering communities by providing life skills;
- community centres; networking and building solidarity;
- advocacy at local and national level.

GOOD PRACTICES

Cooperation with corporate sector

- Bulgarian Red Cross, with the support of the Corporate Partner Network, provided school meals to children from poor families under the “Hot Meal” programme.

Cooperation with governments, NGOs and other actors

- The social inclusion programme of the Red Cross of Serbia is conducted in close cooperation with the Ministry of Education and UNICEF. The National Society works directly with communities to integrate Roma as well as disabled children in the school system, while the government ensures that the legislation framework is in line with social and educational inclusion practices. The Swiss Agency for Development is also a partner in the programme.

- The Austrian Red Cross distributes starter school kits for children and youth from families on minimum income as part of a programme developed in close collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs. This initiative was funded by the EU through the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD).

Working with communities

- Trained Red Crescent volunteers in Tajikistan regularly visit households in the Shulle village in the Rasht Valley, an isolated mountain and disaster-prone area, to raise women’s awareness about reproductive health, the risk of home birth, and the importance of vaccinating children against diseases. As part of the same Healthy Community project of the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan, pupils learn about hygiene and sanitation, and the importance of drinking clean water in educational ‘health corners’ set up in schools. Moreover, Red Crescent volunteers give a helping hand to local people in building causeways that prevent the risk of landslides.

1 Growing Vulnerabilities in Europe and Central Asia, Updates from the Red Cross Red Crescent Societies in the view of ‘Florence Call for Action’ and ‘Think Differently Report’, Marta Maliszek and Ilya Kvitakovsky, Central European University (CEU), July 2015

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