

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Guests,

I warmly welcome you all to our Conference **Challenges and Perspectives in the field of addiction prevention**. Thanks a lot for coming and joining our encounter, exchange of information, and discussions on the topics.

My gratitude applies to all who prepared this outstanding event and to presenters from BIH, the region and EU countries. I thank you very much for your great contributions for this event.

I stand here on behalf of the RIPPO Advisory Board. This Conference is a huge milestone within the so-called RIPPO Project. The target of the RIPPO project to enhance the professionalization of addiction prevention in BIH and to establish **the Professional Support Centre for prevention of addiction and health promotion**. Later on, following the conference programme, the idea and conception of the Centre will be presented to us by Azemina Vuković, my colleague from the RIPPO Advisory Board with long years experience in the non-governmental sector and in international organisations.

Further, in this **RIPPO Advisory Board** are represented:

- Draženka Malićbegović, Ministry of Civil Affairs
- Ognjen Zekić, Ministry of Security.
- Milena Jurić, Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees who recently got retired and is followed by Ajla Nanić, and
- Prof. Dr. Elmedin Muratbegović, University of Sarajevo - Faculty of criminalistic, criminology and security studies
- Marin Kvaternik, Institut for Public Health of the Republica Srpska – Regional Center in Doboj

The main actors in the project are the non-governmental and governmental organisations of the so-called **RIPPO Network**. The RIPPO-Network organised this conference with full engagement to make it happen: This is the first conference for prevention of Addiction in the Balkan countries. You will meet them as presenters and facilitators of the workshops.

It is wonderful to see so many committed people for prevention of addiction in one room this morning. Among us we find professionals, practitioners and volunteers from the field, as well as researchers and policy makers from BIH, and all over Europe – from Sweden in the North to Portugal in the South-West.

My personal role in the RIPPO project is organisational development including cross-sectoral cooperation with all stakeholders involved.

Narko-ne as the initiating organisation of RIPPO project was founded in 2002. One year before, I met Sr. Magdalena Schildknecht, a Franciscan Nun from Switzerland in Banja Luka. Complementary to the therapeutic offers she wanted to establish a NGO with a focused mission for Prevention of Addiction. Together, we conducted a baseline study that confirmed the urgent need of its intended mission.

Main target group are children and youth, as well as parents, teachers and stakeholders of local communities. Narko-ne started with several projects, a telephone line, the older brother older sister project, the intercity theatre project, the intercultural and creative summer weeks, or the youth journal Preventeen. I got involved into programme and team development, into strategy development of quality standards. Dear Sr. Magdalena, thank you very much for you encouraged initiative and longyears

A huge challenge we faced when in 2012 Sr. Magdalena announced that she is going to retire and we needed to find a new director for Narko-ne. In the recruitment process we conducted an assessment centre we found Amir Hasanović, and who is exact the right person at the right place.

Already in the DUPPO project 2003, a non-formal training course for professionals on prevention of addiction the idea of a Professional Support Centre was born. More than ten years later it was followed-up by the JUPPO project including a study visit to Austria to learn from Austrian support system in prevention of addiction. Finally, after DUPPO, JUPPO we currently are conducting the the RIPPO project that is extending the actors' network by public sector institutions and prepares the political ground for the Professional Support Centre through steady advocacy.

Looking back, it make us proud to see what has been already achieved - on the operational level with all the volunteers, target groups and stakeholders involved in numerous local communities; and what has been achieved in the public sector with regards to the adoption of several the political strategies supporting the prevention of addiction and health promotion in BIH. Ms. Džemić , thank you very much for outlining these strategies on behalf of the

Ministry of Civil Affairs with its coordinating function on BiH state level. The political frameworks give us a strong back-up as the prerequisite to our work.

Success always means to go on, to see the challenges up-front, and to focus on the next step. And this is now to open the Conference. Once again a warm welcome to everybody! I wish us all 2 days that are fruitful with new insights, ideas, networking and co-creation.