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Nr. 9

The project "Equality through Difference. Roma Women's Access on the Labour Market" promotes social inclusion of Roma women and young individuals by acknowledging their particular needs and interests. It is funded by the European Social Fund, Operational Program for Human Resources Development 2007 - 2013. "Invest in people!" Priority axis and domain field "Equal opportunities and respect."

The project runs for three years, starting in November 2008. The following partner organizations contribute to its implementation: Roma Women's Association "For Our Children" from Timisoara, Desire Foundation from Cluj, Parudimos Association from Timisoara, National Agency for Roma, the Municipality of Timisoara, Autonomy Foundation (Budapest).

Project activities take place on local, multiregional, national and transnational levels.

Some activities are informative (provide information for Roma communities, or sensitize public awareness on problems encountered by Roma in the domain of labour). Other activities formative (aiming to have a direct impact on target groups we work with, and on the degree our society knows and acknowledges the reality of ethnic and gender discrimination, and the importance of eliminating it. Research and social intervention mutually supports each other.

The 9th issue of the Newsletter presents details of the Information Campaigns, and the Conclusions and Recommendations of the qualitative research conducted during the second project year.



ASOCIAȚIA
FEMEILOR ȚIGĂNCI
„PENTRU COPIII NOȘTRI”



FUNDAȚIA DESIRE



ASOCIAȚIA PARUDIMOS



PRIMĂRIA MUNICIPIULUI
TIMIȘOARA



GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI
AGENȚIA NAȚIONALĂ
PENTRU ROMI



FUNDAȚIA AUTONOMIA

Activity 1
Promoting the principle of equality and non-discrimination

1.2. Information campaigns

<http://www.femrom.ro/EN/information-campaigns.html>

The Information Campaigns of the project "Equality through difference: Roma women's access on the labour market" have two aims, namely the dissemination of materials elaborated by the project, and raising awareness about the values promoted by it. They consist of actions taken for distributing the project publications (flyer, poster, journal, newsletter, film), and/or of meetings with representatives of public authorities, media, civic organizations, academic institutions and with members of Roma communities.



May 22 2010, Măguri, Timis county

Association Parudimos organized in the village of Măguri from Timis county, a wide information campaign within the event "Roma Children's Prayer". The field workers, the occupational expert and three volunteers informed 360 beneficiaries about the services offered by our project, who were also receiving the project's publications.



June 28 2010, Turda, Cluj county

The team of Foundation Desire participated on an event organized by the Ratiu Centre for Democracy from Turda within their Campaign Against Gender Discrimination. With this occasion our staff was invited to sustain a lecture on the topic "Feminism/ Femininity". Eniko Vincze, the foundation's president presented the project, its activities and results, and as well as the ideas promoted by it such as equality through difference, the elimination of Roma women's multiple discrimination, or considering the relationship between social justice and cultural recognition, and recognizing that social inequalities are sustained by ethnic and gender prejudices. Noemi Magyari distributed posters and flyers to 20 participants.



July 20 2010, Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj

On July 20, Desire Foundation organized an information campaign for PhD students at Babes-Bolyai University. On this occasion, Eniko Vincze delivered a speech on equal opportunities, presented project activities and results, Hajnalka Harbula presented project publications, leaflets from the first and second year of the project and the Nevi Sara Kali journal. Noemi Magyari distributed to 17 participants at this event posters and leaflets from the second year of the project and DVD containing the film, the journal and newsletters of the project.

September 2 2010, Zalău, Sălaj county

On September the 2nd, Desire Foundation (project leader from the foundation Hajnalka Harbula, principal investigator Vincze Eniko, sociologist Iuliu Kozak, and public relations expert Noemi Magyari) organized an information campaign for public authorities, representatives of NGOs and media representatives in Zalău. On this occasion, Vincze Eniko, President of the Desire Foundation presented the project activities and its results, sociologist Iuliu Kozak presented the results of the survey carried out in the first year of the project, Hajnalka Harbula presented project publications, leaflets from the 1st and 2nd project year, and the journal Nevi Sara Kali. Participants watched parts of the film of the first year of the project, during which Noemi Magyari distributed posters and leaflets from the second year of the project and the DVD of the film, the journal and newsletters for 13 participants.

September 15 2010, Huedin, Cluj county

On the 15th of September, representatives of Desire Foundation (principal investigator Eniko Vincze and public relations expert Noemi Magyari) met representatives of Huedin City Hall (8 persons, the mayor, deputy mayor, social workers and health mediators). The project team distributed 8 posters, 8 leaflets and 8 DVDs containing the film of the project, the Nevi Sara Kali journal and newsletters.

October 15 2010, Timisoara

The project staff from the Association of Gypsy Women for Our Children and Association Parudimos participated on the fair of non-governmental organizations organized in Hotel Continental from Timisoara. They promoted the project activities through a multimedia presentation, and distributed 100 flyers and 100 posters.

Information Campaigns held at the summit on "Contribution of EU funds to the integration of Roma"

(Bucharest, October 12-12; Cluj, October 14; Iasi, October 20)

Dissemination of materials elaborated during the second year of implementation took place at the event titled "Contribution of EU funds to the integration of Roma, a meeting with representatives of the European Commission". The event took place in Bucharest, Cluj and Iași. At each location, the Association of Roma Women "For Our Children" booked a stand where they displayed the publications and photographs of the project. The participant project staff from this association and from Foundation Desire distributed the second issue of the journal Nevi Sara Kali, the poster and the flyer of the second project year, and Newsletter Nr.8 from September 2010. With these occasions there were distributed 138 copies of each of our publications (poster, flyer and journal).



October 19 2010, Turda, Cluj County

The information campaign took place at the Turda City Hall. Logistics was provided by Desire Foundation, which comprised scanners, projector, camera and laptop. 20 persons attended the meeting; 18 of them were distributed project publications. Information campaign progressed according to the agenda. On behalf of Desire Foundation, Eniko Vincze presented the project and the

qualitative research conducted in the second year of the project. Materials developed during the project (posters, leaflets, magazine) were presented by Hajnalka Harbula. Participants watched selections from the film showing the first year of the project. Registration of participants was coordinated by Noemi Magyari. The lengthy discussion of those present at the meeting testified for their interest.

Activity 2 Research, studies, analysis

2.2.

Qualitative research

http://www.femrom.ro/_EN/research.html

In our Newsletter Nr. 7 from September 2010 we started presenting the qualitative research conducted within the project:

http://www.femrom.ro/infopub/2010/buletin-informativ/newsletter%20nr%207_august%202010.pdf

There we described the aims and the research methodology used in our qualitative case studies accomplished in Roma communities from Cluj and Timis counties, and the factors affecting people's position on the labor market. In this current issue of the project's newsletter we discuss the final conclusions and recommendations regarding policies and projects dedicated to Roma employment.

Final conclusions

For various social categories access to and options for certain jobs are determined by macro-structural factors, among them the economic and political regime of a country (including the employment policies of firms, governments, and private and state companies); residential environment, housing, living conditions and socio-economic situation of one's family; and the opportunities provided by the formal educational system.

The transition from socialist state industry and collectivized agriculture to a market economy and a post-industrial society has left many social groups (among them many Roma people) in long-term structural unemployment. This is why these groups cannot be seen as winners of the capitalist competition, which is unequal anyway. Even if they opt for integration, Gypsies are left in the abyss between structural semi-integration and cultural non-acceptance. This position in-between was valid for the socialism when policy towards Roma was fuelled by the desire to culturally assimilate them and by the benefits brought by using them as unskilled workforce, as it is valid now when the dominant trends are those that exclude Roma from employment opportunities and remind them that they remain unwanted Gypsies even if they want to integrate. This phenomenon certainly shapes their chances of positioning in the labor market positioning.

Besides these macro-structural factors, people's economic, social and cultural micro-capital, (by which they must cope with life) structure their choices made in the domain of work.

Family budget, their informal and formal relations, and their educational background are the elements that prescribe the most general frames in which they move as social persons and have access to certain jobs and not others. Finally, available and accessible jobs reproduce their available capital, and influence their and their children's destinies. Poor living conditions, in which they must be able to cope when it seems that living is no more possible, but also many Roma people's ability to learn languages of other ethnic groups they must live with, all these strengthen their ability to adapt creatively, certainly a very important element of social and cultural capital to be invested in all areas of life, including employment.

Further, the life of the Roma is structured by a multitude of vicious circles, being channelled by them in certain directions that are reproduced from one generation to another.

Among them there is the interdependence of factors that could bring change (the relationship between access to education, access to decent jobs, access to acceptable living conditions on the one hand and poverty on the other), but also the mutual influence of socio-economic status and cultural conceptions. Economic status does not affect behaviour and ideas only as a set of objective conditions, but also as a certain configuration of identity generated by their experiences and reflections on these conditions.

Poor Roma internalize an image of these condition that is sustained by others (the majority population and / or Roma living in different circumstances), and they constantly experience rejection by the majority (of those who embody the 'normal') despite their desire

to be accepted. These mechanisms of subjective poverty / exclusion create at a certain moment the inability to change something, or even to imagine that you could change something in your and your children's situation.

In short, starting from the above mentioned observations, we conclude that options for different types of employment are structured by the impact of several interconnected factors. Intersectionality of socio-economic status, gender, age, ethnicity, and the way these factors are (self-) perceived in the specific context of a social / economic / political system on the one hand, as a whole, determine the chances and options for people in all walks of life, on the other hand generates differences between people, even though they belong to the same community. Of course, intersectionality does not work in the abstract but through individual actions in the context of social groups; individuals are the ones who develop strategies to accommodate to, or even changes the conditions imposed by the system.

"Work culture"¹ practiced by that poor people living market economy without property

¹ We use here the term culture in the anthropological sense, referring to the practices by which people assign meanings to things (including labor) and the set of negotiated and shared meanings. Culture ultimately is how a group of people understands and adapts to an environment (it is a model *of* and *for* and reality, including production, consumption, exchange, relationships and socio-political organization, secular and religious thought and ritual behavior). Thus, work culture is the way people think about how they want and can secure necessary sources for life and how they actually work with this goal in mind in different areas of life.

and without a family inheritance cannot be other than one characterized by multiple and frequent changes of jobs, the alternation of paid and unemployment, the acceptance of "shameful" and poorly paid work, the acceptance of conditions imposed by the informal economy (or "black" labour force market), and domestic or transnational migration motivated by a search for sources of income.

Unfortunately, this culture is an obstacle to social integration and "modernization" as far as majority population sees it in negative terms and believes that this culture is particular to Roma. However, in reality this culture is characteristic to large masses of people, a reaction / adaptation to situations where they face unwillingly. Ethnicity plays a role in creating this culture (of work) to the extent that negative stereotypes refer to it. Thus ethnicity becomes a factor that explains, justifies and maintains the exclusion of those (self-) perceived by this ethnicity.

Thus, socio-economic conditions and cultural prejudices mutually reinforce each other when the people seeking jobs, are perceived by their ethnic belonging to the Roma, and are rejected by employers on the grounds linked to the assumption that "you cannot trust the Roma" or when - for example on job fairs of jobs - employers look for Roma to hire them as unskilled workers in poorly paid jobs.

Attitudes of rejecting, practiced by majority population, can generate resignation among certain groups that reactively define themselves as minority (i.e. respectively seeing themselves through what they not have). In communities we done research, most people

understand the condition in which they live, and many of them accept it with resignation, because they see no way out, silently accepting what happens to them.

But these attitudes motivate various practices of resistance (school dropout or refusal to enter the labyrinths of a repulsive bureaucracy only to be unsuccessful in to seeking employment or social welfare may have such meanings). Finally, the rejection exercised by the majority can fuel opposition to various manifestations of exclusionary and discriminating power, attitudes that explain accumulated dissatisfaction in different forms (offensive verbal and / or physical reactions, individual complaints and petitions to the authorities, group protests, etc.).

Due to large waves of economic migrants who migrate to European countries (mainly Italy, France, Spain and England and Germany), and who are motivated by the desire to gain subsistence in Romania, the European Union is confronted with what we might call the export of poverty from new to old Member States. This happens in conditions in which Romanian citizens are European citizens, they benefit of freedom of movement, and in the context in which in Western countries - former welfare-states - the state reduces its expenditure on social benefits to vulnerable groups, the extreme right develops xenophobic attitudes, and political elections are won with anti-immigration discourses and practices. In these circumstances, stigmatization of the Roma in Romania (together with Bulgaria) that transforms "Roma" in collective criminals, and in the radical otherness of Europe who come from states that were the less desired to join the European Union, states that even today are unable to implement policies for Roma that aim

to give disadvantaged Roma the chance to live a decent life in their home country.

Recommendations regarding policies and projects for Roma

Due to the interdependence of factors that establish the frame within which poor Roma live their daily lives, policies for Roma, but also projects dedicated to Roma have to be integrated policies and projects meaning that they have to address each aspect of life. Interventions in one community or another have to treat all the problems Roma face to reach sustainable solutions (i.e. to create conditions that allows for the solution of one problem to contribute to solving other issues too).

Problems faced by many Roma (among them access to decent work) are created by a complex set of factors. Therefore, solving them requires the sustained involvement of the state, both on institutional and financial levels.

Regarding employment, the state must engage all its legal tools to motivate people to work legally (by increasing wages). The state should also take initiative in areas in which it can subsidize products or support their distribution. Further, the state should give incentives to state and private employers to hire disadvantaged individuals, to actively take part in their training and to provide them various services (e.g. access to kindergarten or day care for the children of employees).

Public institutions involved in the domain of work and workforce (among them county agencies for employment) should strengthen the position of Roma employees (primarily of employment mediators or agents, but also of

social workers and mediators). Thus, they can benefit from having contact persons who can make a real difference regarding policies' impact on Roma communities in terms of information and mediation to find jobs.

Local public authorities have to be more open - in real terms, not just on the level of discourse - in working with Roma civil organizations. Authorities should benefit from their support in their actions undertaken in and for Roma communities. On the other hand, they should provide them financial and logistical support for civil organization so that they can act as agents of attracting European funds.

Efforts to eliminate school dropout - at least among children who should attend compulsory education due to their age, but also for those who should continue their education at higher level - must go hand in hand with financial and other types of support for programs designed to improve school education and professional training for adults.

Persons who practice traditional crafts, or practice certain professions in the formal or informal economy, but without formal qualifications, and consequently without being recognized skilled workers, must be supported in their effort to acquire permits for their crafts and skills that would allow them to become independent producers and service providers.

In the domain of work employers and public authorities still need courses / training on legislation regarding equal opportunities and discrimination, but also on social inequality, anti-Gypsy prejudice and discrimination and exclusion of Roma on several bases.

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