



Center Amalipe

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Monthly newsletter April 2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

April 8

Day of Commitment, Day of Commemoration and Hope

Where:

- Partner Meeting on the Speak UP! Project Took Place in Brussels
- A Study Trip in Brussels Took Place with Amalipe's Participation. Why is it Necessary to reform European Agricultural Policy Now?
- 4 Rural Communities Have Been Selected Within the "Promoting Social Inclusion of Young People in Marginalized Rural Roma Communities" Project
- The International Earth Day Celebrated in Novi Pazar
- Informational Meeting on the RMUSP Scholarships was Held in Byala Slatina

Observer:

- CEICPEM Session
- Up Coming Under OP Human Resources Development
- The Strategic Part of the National Development Program Bulgaria 2020 has Been Discussed
- Roundtable on "National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria to Integrate the Roma" (2012-2020)
- The Committee on Education Passes the School Law at First Reading
- Amalipe is Presented in the Euronews Video-report Reaching Out to Europe's Roma

School:

- Deputy Minister Milena Damyanova Visits the Students from the School "Vasil Levski" in the Village of Karadzovo
- The Educational Team of Amalipe met with the Directors of "America for Bulgaria"

Roma Health:

- Analysis of Health care Reform and its Impact on the Roma Community in Bulgaria April, 2012

APRIL 8 – DAY OF COMMITMENT, DAY OF COMMEMORATION AND HOPE



April 8 is the International Roma Day since 1992. This year the United Nations and the European Union support the idea of the international organization "Romano Union". The choice of this date is no coincidence. On that date the liberation of Roma from Auschwitz concentration camp in Germany after World War II is celebrated. On April 8, 1971 the first Roma Congress was held in London. The aim of its establishment is to integrate and systematize the efforts of the international Roma movement. The meeting adopted the Roma anthem and flag. For the anthem the song "Djelem, Djelem" by Žarko Jovanovi from 1969 was chosen. The flag shows blue sky, green land and a red wheel for continuous movement. April 8, the International Roma Day, is the day of Roma culture, history and traditions. The day symbolizes the fight against discrimination against minorities on a global scale and calls for respect

for human rights and tolerance. Many Roma communities worldwide celebrate the April 8 with festivals, dance performances, concerts and events in many different ways. Center Amalipe became part of the diversity of initiatives on the occasion of the International Roma Day. Coordinated by Center Amalipe and funded by the America for Bulgaria Foundation the event was registered in 65 schools in 22 provinces of Bulgaria as part of the three-year program to reduce the dropout of Roma children from school. Under the motto of the campaign "The Sun Shines Equally for Everyone" concerts, parties, inter-school meetings, sport competitions and events, readings, exhibitions, information days, etc. were organized – not only Roma children participated, also children from other ethnic groups. In the events this year the Parents' Clubs, established in schools within the framework of the program, were also included as well as the school board, mostly supported by local authorities. City-wide events were the result. The six Centers for Community Development, established by CIDT Amalipe within the project "Promoting Fieldwork of Marginalized Groups of the Roma Community" participated actively as well. The campaign and the beginning of the events was announced by the Deputy Chair of CIDT Amalipe, Ms. Teodora Krumova on the National Conference in BTA, Sofia on April 4. And on April 5 the premiere of the movie "Mission Amalipe" was organized in the town of Veliko Tarnovo. All together we showed that the sun really shines equally for everyone, no matter how you look like, what color you have or which ethnic group you belong to... But even more important is that we have the same wishes and intentions and this is a equal chance for all of us to learn, work and live so that we could develop as important people, equal in rights and of equal value.

That we get to know each other
and step forward together!

FOR MORE INFORMATION

<http://www.amalipe.com/index.php?nav=news&id=1144&lang=1>
<http://www.amalipe.com/index.php?nav=news&id=1153&lang=1>

KHERE(AT HOME)



4 RURAL COMMUNITIES HAVE BEEN SELECTED WITHIN THE "PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN MARGINALIZED RURAL ROMA COMMUNITIES" PROJECT

After analysis and evaluation of the received 38 requests for participation in the "Promoting social inclusion of young people in marginalized rural Roma communities" project, the following municipalities have been approved – Dolna banya, Kneja, Radnevo, Lyaskovec and Strazhitsa. There will be built Centres for Community Development. Again we express our most sincere gratitude to applicants for their activity and demonstrated commitment to the problems mentioned in the project. Our main task is to promote center's work and to receive government support to extend them at

national level. At each center will be recruited two community moderators, who will be our representatives to work with local institutions and the Roma community. In the month of April 2012 will be announced selection procedure for two local moderators. Community moderators will work to: strengthening the local Roma community; raising awareness of community; helping for increasing employment among young people from the community organizing community events; lectures, traditional celebrations and more. In the month of May 2012 is going to be organized a training of representatives of municipalities, representatives of local Directorates "Labour Office", Directorates "Social Assistance" and other officials for working in multiethnic environment.



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CEICPEM SESSION

The activity of Centre for Educational Integration of Children and Pupils from Ethnic Minorities in 2011 and a draft budget for 2012 were key topic at the meeting of the Governing Board of the Centre, held on 24 April. It was chaired by the Chief Secretary of the Ministry of Education Krasimir Valchev. The Board adopted the 2011 activity report of CEICPEM, publication on the website of the Centre is pending. The 2012 budget to be allocated by the Ministry of Education for the Centre activity will amount to 1.3 million BGN. Apart from the running and administrative costs, the budget envisages additional funding for Calls for proposals announced in 2011 and two quite new procedures. One of them will support the process of desegregation of the Roma schools and the other will support schools in their effort to elaborate forms of involving and effective participation of Roma parents. Besides the budget, the Centre will rely on revenue from international donors, as the Roma Education Fund. On the proposal of Deyan Kolev it was decided that the rich to-date experience in extracurricular activities in the field of intercultural education, funded by CEICPEM shall be summarized, classified and the major categories of activities shall be explicitly proposed for inclusion into SUCCESS program of the Ministry of Education. Thus, the schools will be able to provide funding outside the delegated budget for many attractive extracurricular forms such as 'Ethnic Folklore', 'Roma Folklore' and others. Another discussed topic was the opportunity for CEICPEM to receive funding under the OP Human Resource Development as well as other financial sources. This will provide an opportunity to encompass more schools in terms of integration targeted educational activities. CEICPEM is a structure of the Ministry of Education distributing funds between schools and other institutions to support the realization of the Strategy for educational integration of children and pupils from ethnic minorities and the National Roma Integration Strategy. Among the members of the Center's Governing Board are representatives of departments at the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance, NCCEII and NGOs (Centre 'Amalipe', Foundation SEGA and the Institute 'Ivan Hadzhiiski'). Chairperson of the organization is the Deputy Minister of Education Milena Damyanova.

UP-COMING UNDER OP HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

The Group for Integration of Roma into the Monitoring Committee of Operational Program "Human Resources Development" discussed the proposed criteria for selecting the operations made by the Managing Authority and the representative of Roma NGOs in the monitoring, Mr. Deyan Kolev. The proposals will be tabled at the meeting of the MC of the OP HRD, which will be held on 30 and 31 May in Plovdiv. The group supported the announcement of a pilot operation for employment, education and social services, which will benefit 4 specific municipalities included in the program for social housing for marginalized groups. At this stage these are the municipalities of Burgas, Dupnitsa, Vidin and Devnya. This pilot intervention launched by the Minister for EU funds management will include the construction of social housing in order desegregation of separate quarters (with funding of nearly 16 million BGN of OP "Regional Development") and "soft" measures for employment, better education and social services (funded by the HRD OP). This will create a pilot model for cross-financing of two financial sources of the EU, which can be expanded in the next period. The group did not support the proposal of D. Kolev to widen the health mediation due to lack of financial resources and many technical obstacles. In an extensive discussion held was not found a consensus on the proposal at this stage and it will be submitted to a next session. 5 million BGN will be the additional funding of "Educational Integration of Children and Pupils from Ethnic Minorities" operation. This operation was announced in 2011 at the insistence of Roma organizations after lengthy negotiations with the Ministry of Education, following alleged violations of the previous scheme. The operation was launched as an open three-time application - 9 January, April 9 and July 9. Because of the many applications and quality proposals received the initial budget will be increased from 6 to 11 million BGN, which will make possible the approval of projects submitted in the third deadline. The proposal will be submitted in a written procedure codes in the coming days.

THE STRATEGIC PART OF THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM BULGARIA 2020 HAS BEEN DISCUSSED

The National Development Programme 'Bulgaria 2020' will not cover all policy areas, but only those ones conducive to development. This statement has been made by Yuliana Nikolova, Advisor to the Prime Minister and leader of the working group for preparation of the NDP 'Bulgaria 2020' during a forum for public discussion on the draft contents of the strategic part of the document, which was held April 26 in Granite Session Hall of the Council of Ministers. The forum brought together the Minister of Management of EU Funds Tomislav Donchev and respectively deputy ministers in charge of specific program priority areas, secretaries in the administration of the President, representatives of socio-economic partners and NGOs. Center 'Amalipe' was represented by Deyan Kolev. The National Development Programme 'Bulgaria 2020' is a collective effort of tens of institutions, socio-economic partners and civil society representatives, pointed out Minister Donchev at the opening of the meeting. This effort is rather a policy matter than an expertise search - we need a clear policy development and expert solutions will be consequently found. We do not need 'a smooth text' resulting from a distorted idea of consensus which says everything and suits everybody: such type of text does not give directions and it is not strategic. What we need is a text with edges which opts for a few guidelines among many. Let's not overdo with the document, but rather commit ourselves to planning, demanded Donchev. This was followed by short introductions and discussions on the key priority areas of the program: - Improving access to and quality of education and training and the qualities of the workforce, reduction of poverty rate and promotion of social inclusion, achievement of sustainable and integrated regional development and utilization of available potential of local people, fostering agricultural development to ensure foodstuff safety and high quality products combined with sustainable management of natural resources, support for the development of highly advanced industrial base and innovative infrastructure, promoting innovation and research activity, consolidation of institutional environment for greater efficiency of public services for citizens and businesses, building of favourable power infrastructure, fostering resource efficiency and lowering the degree of energy dependence, improving transport facilities. The priorities were presented by Deputy Ministers, managing cross-sectoral groups on each priority area and comments and suggestions have been made by socio-economic partners and NGOs. In his statement, Deyan Kolev accentuated on the necessity of incorporating strategic guidelines for the elaboration and realization of comprehensive policy for Roma integration into NDP 'Bulgaria 2020'. Roma people can contribute to the development of Bulgaria and Roma integration is actually a development policy. On March 1 the National Assembly adopted unanimously the National Roma Integration Strategy. Meanwhile, the current text of the NDP 'Bulgaria 2020' mentions hardly anything about Roma integration. This is a serious gap which in its own turn entails that the Inter-governmental body for resource provision of Roma integration chaired by Minister Donchev review the draft of the NDP and propose relevant texts.

THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION PASSES THE SCHOOL LAW AT FIRST READING

For nearly five hours the Committee on Education discussed the draft law on pre-school and school education introduced by the Council of Ministers. The draft was passed on first reading with 11 votes 'pro' and 4 - 'against'. The session was held on April 12 and led by Ognyan Stoichkov - Chairman of the Committee on Education. Besides the representatives from National Assembly in the Committee, the session has been attended by the Minister of Education Sergei Ignatov, the Deputy Minister Milena Damyanova, the Chief Secretary of the Ministry of Education Krasimir Valchev and a number of citizens - representatives of educational institutions and NGOs. Spokesperson on behalf of Amalipe was Deyan Kolev - chairperson of the organization. The draft law puts child and student in the center of the educational process and allows for cross-sectoral interventions, stated Minister Ignatov in his introductory speech. He introduced the chief

OBSERVER

Continued from page 2


THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION PASSES THE SCHOOL LAW AT FIRST READING

priorities, among which is the reduction of school dropout rate and achievement of educational integration. To this purpose, the draft envisages a gradual introduction of full-time organization of the learning process to 7th grade, compulsory preschool education from the age of 4 and a lot of other measures. Minister Ignatov emphasized the innovative elements of the draft, which according to officials from the Ministry of Education will transform the Bulgarian educational system into an up-to-date system tailored to the needs of students and the currently changing labor market demands. The complete list of reasons behind the new Pre-school and School Education Law can be found at:

http://www.mon.bg/opencms/export/sites/mon/left_menu/documents/documentsproject/2012/motivi_proekt_zakon_obrazovanie.pdf

During the discussion, members of the GERB party unreservedly supported the draft law. In favour of the draft law, albeit with due amount of reserves to certain texts, spoke a number of MPs from the Blue Coalition and Attack political party. Valentina Bogdanova (Bulgarian Socialist Party) and Aliosman Imamov (Movement for Rights and Liberties) criticized the draft law in general and refused to support it at first reading but they expressed willingness to take part in subsequent discussions, stating that the draft contains worthwhile texts as well. Active part in the discussion have taken representatives of educational institutions and NGOs. It turned out that within the short time span since the submission of the draft to the National Assembly for consideration, 90 opinions have been expressed. Most of them are in favour of the draft law but certain texts are subject to criticism. Special attention has been rendered to the law by representatives of Schools for Children with Special Learning Needs, Schools for Children with Disabilities, and Resource Centers, who appealed for preservation of the structures. Many posed the issue of the need for special attention to problems related to education in small municipalities and places of living. Most of the proposals are considered relevant, not concerning the law in general but referent to specific sections of it. They are due on second reading of the draft at which they will be taken into consideration, summarized Ognyan Stoichkov – chairperson of the Committee. In his speech, Deyan Kolev emphasized that for the first time a draft law addresses the issue of educational integration of minorities and does it rightly - meaning integration not isolation, separation or segregation. Among the newly introduced principles of the educational system are 'equal access', 'non-discrimination' and 'fostering of ethnic diversity'. The draft envisages also a national standard for intercultural education. A requirement for each school is to elaborate and agree on its own program for educational integration and dropout reduction whereby targeted funding for the implementation of these programs will be provided beyond the delegated budget, thus giving hope that they will be fulfilled in practice. Of significant importance is that in its latest version the draft bans the formation of ethnically based classes in ethnically mixed schools (Article 96) and of groups along ethnic lines in mixed kindergartens (Art. 60). This should be supplementary to another ban which shall also be incorporated into the law forbidding the establishment of schools along ethnic lines in settlements with mixed population, emphasized Kolev. To this claim agree all Roma organizations and it is considered that thus, the legal basis for initiation of desegregation in Roma neighborhood schools will be laid. It does not concern the villages, where on account of demographic factors only Roma or Turkish children are available – it concerns rather the school specifics in big cities where a 'Bulgarian' and 'Roma' school exist in proximity to each other – a phenomenon in discord with the national traditions in education. The first working draft version of the Pre-school and School Education Law has been finalized in April 2010, and it did not address in any way the theme of the educational integration of Roma children. At national meetings in May and June 2010, Roma organizations joined around common demands which had been accordingly submitted to the Ministry of Education for consideration. Subsequently, Rumyan Setchkov and Deyan Kolev have been invited to join the working groups preparing the draft and the standard for civic and intercultural education. Gradually, most of the demands of the Roma organizations were incorporated into the draft law.

The full text of the draft can be found at:
<http://parliament.bg/bills/41/202-01-20.pdf>

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ROUND TABLE ON “NATIONAL STRATEGY OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA TO INTEGRATE THE ROMA” (2012-2020)

Roma Academy in culture and Education, Sliven and Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance Amalipe held a roundtable entitled 'National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria to integrate the Roma' (2012-2020). The roundtable was held on April 10, 2012 in the Drama Theatre in Sliven, Bulgaria under the patronage of the Governor of Sliven District, Mr. Marin Kavrov. There were also representatives of the regional and municipal administration of Sliven, representatives of Yambol, Kotel and Straldzha municipalities, representatives of regional's Center for Economical Development, Youth House, Health inspection, Job Center and Social Assistance Agency, Police Office and hospital, public figures, journalists and young volunteers. Mr. Kavrov told in front of the audience that the Roma Strategy is a need of the Bulgarian society and that all must work together for an equal integration of Roma. Mrs. Stela Kostova, a Chair of the Roma Academy and Deputy-Chair of the National Council on Ethnic and Integration Issues presented the document and its Action Plan as well as the strategic objective and priorities: Education, Health, Housing, Employment, Rule of the law and of the non-discrimination and Culture and media. Mrs. Kostova proudly announced that this is the first document with an action plan and clear financial framework with responsible authorities and deadlines relating to the integration of Roma in Bulgaria. After this, Dr. Stefan Panayotov – chair of the 'Health' Task Force explained in details how the whole writing of the 'Health' priority of the Strategy was conducted. Mrs. Ana Nikolova – representative of the Youth House stressed her incomprehension and bewilderment of the policy of the new Health Minister and new National Health Treasure Chair who want to make the health insurance a tax. Mrs. Totka Kostova, Director of the Regional 'Social Support' Directorate shared case studies from her daily work, difficulties connected with legal constraints and the inability of the social workers to respond quickly to the needs of the people and to assist them. The representative of the Regional Police Office, Mr. Mihail Dzhongozov, was adamant that cannot be put a sigh of equality between Roma and criminals. Dr. Vasilslav Petrov, director of the 'Dr. Ivan Seliminski' regional hospital proposed to be established a shelter to the hospital that will serve the homeless people. All the attendees shared their concerns and problems faced: unemployment, lack of personal documents, bad infrastructure, petty crime, illiteracy. The organization of the roundtable was founded under 'National Strategy for Roma in Bulgaria: Transition from a good documentation to a good work' project funded by the Roma Initiatives Program of Open Society Institute, Budapest.

AMALIPE IS PRESENTED IN THE EURONEWS VIDEO-REPORT REACHING OUT TO EUROPE'S ROMA

On April 30 Euronews broadcasted “Reaching out to Europe's Roma” video report of Seamus Kearney. It presents the challenges before Roma integration in Europe as well as good examples and successful initiatives. The report shows stories from Bulgaria and Spain. In Bulgaria Seamus Kearney describes the efforts undertaken by Kavarna mayor Tzonko Tzonev and his administration to improve successfully the situation of the local Roma community. It shows also the work of Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance AMALIPE for fostering school attendance and moderating Roma community development in the tough region of Novi Pazar. The video report provides comprehensive picture of the significant results achieved by Community Development Center Amalipe in Novi Pazar. The video report will be broadcasted by Euronews once a day from April 30 to May 6.

It is available at:

<http://www.euronews.com/2012/04/30/reaching-out-to-europe-s-roma/>

The voices from Bulgaria are available at

<http://www.euronews.com/2012/04/30/bonus-voices-from-bulgaria/>


KHERE(AT HOME)
A STUDY TRIP IN BRUSSELS TOOK PLACE WITH AMALIFE'S PARTICIPATION. WHY IS IT NECESSARY TO REFORM EUROPEAN AGRICULTURAL POLICY NOW?

The challenges facing agriculture in Europe have increased. The CAP reform provides the EU with the opportunity to review its agricultural policies and ensure that they better address growing public concerns about food safety and the protection of the rural environment, as well as providing greater value for money. Eurobarometer results show that citizens broadly agree with the CAP objectives including food safety, environmental preservation, and farm income. However, they have doubts as to whether the right instruments are in place. The proposed reforms respond to the mandate given to the Commission by the 1999 Berlin Summit to review agricultural market organisations. They go further to meeting the economic, social, and environmental goals that Agenda 2000 set for the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). They are in line with the objectives of the Sustainable Development Strategy addressed by the European Council in Goeteborg in 2001, where it was agreed that the CAP should continue to contribute to achieving sustainable development by increasing its emphasis on encouraging healthy, high-quality products and environmentally sustainable production methods. CAP Reform – an explanation of the main elements The Commission has today published proposals for Four basic European Parliament and Council regulations for the Common Agriculture Policy – i) on Direct Payments, ii) the Single Common Market Organisation (CMO), iii) Rural Development and, iv) a Horizontal Regulation for financing, managing and monitoring the CAP. In addition, there are 3 smaller regulations to address transition arrangements to the new rules. The package also contains: An Explanatory Memorandum; Citizens Summary; and Annexes linked with different aspects of the Impact Assessment. The main elements of the proposals can be summarized as follows:

1. Direct Payments The Basic Payment Scheme: In order to move away from the different systems of the Single Payments Scheme in the EU-15 (which allows for historical references, or a payment per hectare, or a "hybrid" combination of the two) and the Simplified Area Payments Scheme (SAPS) in most of the EU-12, a new "Basic Payment Scheme" will apply after 2013.

(See http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/markets/sfp/pdf/ms_en.pdf for current models in each Member State.) This will be subject to "cross compliance" (respecting certain environmental, animal welfare & other rules), as at present, although there are various simplifications to current requirement (see below). The aim is to reduce significantly the discrepancies between the levels of payments obtained after full implementation of the current legislation, between farmers, between regions (i.e. internally) and between Member States (i.e. externally).

2. Market management mechanisms The existing systems of public intervention and private storage aid are proven safety net mechanisms to help producers at times of market difficulties following for example a food crisis. However, they will be revised to be more responsive and more efficient. A new safeguard clause is introduced for all sectors to enable the Commission to take emergency measures to respond to general market disturbances – such as the measures taken during the e-coli crisis in May-July 2011. These measures will be funded from the Crisis Reserve outlined in the Multi-Annual Financial Framework.

3. Rural Development The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development Fund (EAFRD) will fit into the new Common Strategic Framework also applicable for the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the Cohesion Fund (CF) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) - published on October 6 [See IP/11/1159] - to achieve the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy (Sustainable Growth, SMART Growth, Inclusive Growth). As in the other funds, in order to introduce a clearer link to performance, targets will have to be set for all Rural Development programmes for the 6 priorities outlined below. Some 5% of the funds will be held back in a so-called "performance Reserve" and only made available when it can be shown that progress towards meeting these targets is being made.

4. Further new elements Monitoring & Evaluation of the CAP: The Commission will present a report before the end of 2017 – and every 4 years thereafter – on the impact of the CAP on the 3 main priorities – viable food production, sustainable management of natural resources, and balanced territorial development. Simplification of controls: Control requirements lowered in regions where previous checks shown good results, i.e. the rules are being properly respected. However, checks will need to be increased in regions


KHERE(AT HOME)

where there are problems. There will be separate proposals before the end of the year relating to the Aid for the Needy scheme (for the period after 2013), and to provide for full transparency of direct payments and other CAP subsidies, taking into account the Court ruling of October 2010 which stated that the existing rules did not respect data privacy rules for natural persons.

Documents and information on the CAP reform proposal are available at: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-post-2013/legal-proposals/index_en.htm

All text can be read at:

<http://www.amalipe.com/index.php?nav=news&id=1190&lang=1>

THE INTERNATIONAL EARTH DAY CELEBRATED IN NOVI PAZAR


A surprise was served to the townspeople on the occasion of the forthcoming International Earth Day by the Community Moderators of the Center for Community development, Novi Pazar (created by Amalipe Center, Veliko Tarnovo) and the Vocational High school of Agriculture. Because the dates happened to be the professional holiday of the High School the students presented a literary-musical program.

The event began with a recital devoted to the Earth. Then the audience enjoyed the musical group "Mad-Young", composed of graduates of the vocational schools in the town. The culmination was the quiz organized where the 'History' team and 'Geography' team were in a strong competition. The international Earth Day – April 22 is the largest secular holiday celebrated worldwide by over half a billion people. Each year the International Earth's Day Network coordinates more than 12 000 partners in 174 countries aimed at protecting the Earth and preserve the biosphere. The network aims to create a broad civil support for sustainable and effective environmental policies for development worldwide.


INFORMATIONAL MEETING ON THE RMUSP SCHOLARSHIPS WAS HELD IN BYALA SLATINA

On April 25 in the "Hristo Smirnenski" Elementary Building School, Byala Slatina was held an informational meeting with candidate-students and students of Roma origin who intend to apply for the RMUSP scholarships designed for students of Roma origin in accredited universities. Organizers of the meeting for Center for Community Development – Byala Slatina and "New Road" Association, Hayredin. Special guest of the meeting was Mrs. Veska Karastoyanova – coordinator of the Program. The Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program provide through an open competition scholarships for academic achievements of students of Roma origin who are citizens of Albania, Bosnia and Hertsegovina, Bulgaria, Kosovo, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Turkey, Montenegro, Czech Republic, Hungary or Croatia. Candidates for scholarships must be trained in programs for Bachelor, Master or PhD in higher education accredited by the State of which the student is a citizen or where he resides. The application is online on the website: <http://www.romaeducationfund.hu>. For this purpose the candidate must write a few essays on a given topics, to present his past success with an official document of the school and to complete the entire form due to the May 15. These and other issues were discussed with Roma current and future students in Byala Slatina with Mrs. Veska Karastoyanova. There were clarified and inaccuracies in the process of applying for a scholarship through clearly a demonstration of opening the electronic form and filling in data. A very important moment of the match was when it comes to the necessary recommendation from a teacher or an NGO. Clearly and categorically Ms. Mihaylova underlined that to the young people that have no participation in initiatives related to the Roma community recommendations can not be issued. More information about RMUSP scholarships can be found at : <http://www.romaeducationfund.hu>

ROMA HEALTH



ANALYSIS OF THE HEALTH REFORM AND ITS IMPACT ON THE ROMA COMMUNITY IN THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA IN APRIL 2012

Hospitals Are Indebted With 378 Million Bgn

New record for the debts of hospitals - 378 million. This is the total debt of hospitals by 29th of February this year, according to a report to the MoH. Of these 70 million are overdue. Since 2006 NHIF pays for 300 clinical referrals, debts haven't grown so. Debts have accumulated due to mismanagement and the large number of uninsured persons who receive medical care at the expense of hospitals.

1.2 million without health insurance

The new health minister Mrs Atanassova said that problem for the sector remain the number of people without health insurance, which according to recent data is 1.2 million. The health minister announced that the measures against non-payment of contributions currently are ineffective and should be changed. Government grants additional 147 million BGN for health which is under European funding program for regional development.

The state will penalize uninsured patients

One option for this is the country to find a mechanism by which it retracts its money from rogue debtors, regardless whether they were not paying health insurance contributions or taxes. This can be done through the use of administrative services for citizens and a requirement to provide information about insurance status. Legislative changes that give health insurance the status of tax are being considered. This practically means that the NRA will go after people without health insurance in our country. Namely the non-payment of health insurance is one of the reasons for the debts of hospitals.

Case of treatment of Roma children as mentally disabled under investigation

Regional Health Insurance Fund (RHIF) in Pleven signaled the prosecutor on suspicious large number of children treated for mental retardation combined with epilepsy. The Director of the RHIF Martin Mitev stated that the case was about 80 Roma children who were treated in two clinical directions. Specialists from the RHIF noticed inconsistencies - facts and primary documents described in epicrisis and outpatient treatment. Strange is that the number of children who went to the hospital in Pleven - 80 is greater than the largest provincial hospital - "St. George" in Plovdiv, said Mitev. Experts from the fund revised 30 cases for the period fourth quarter of 2010 - first quarter of 2011, after that the signal was submitted to the prosecution. Investigation is under process and is not completed to date.

Inspection in all institutions for orphan children

MoH began inspection of all orphanages in the country. The reason for this is huge distortions found in the home for medical care in Pleven, where adolescents with disabilities weigh under 10 kg. In a surprise inspection in the orphanage in Sliven flaws are registered in documenting donations. In 2011 the facility has received 800,000 BGN Lev from the Ministry. About 240,000 of the sum is for maintenance. About 8 lev per day is the food cost for one child. Drastic disturbances are found in the home for medical care for children in Pleven. That said Minister Desislava Atanasova, which carried out an unannounced inspection after the signals from non-governmental organizations. It was attended by Deputy Minister Desislava Dimitrova and the Head of the Inspectorate at the Ministry of Health. The facility in Pleven is among the largest in the country and there are currently accommodated



OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE
Public Health Program

employees work there. One example for violation is received donation from an anonymous sender with unknown content that no one ever bothered to undertake the necessary health checks.

The new Executive Director of the Medical Audit Agency was appointed

The new Director of Executive Agency "Medical Audit" (EAMA) is Dr. Svetlozara Ilieva. She was appointed by the Minister of Health Desislava Atanasova, in consultation with the Prime Minister, in accordance with the Rules of EAMA and the Administration Act.

Dr. Ilieva Svetlozara previously occupied the post of Director of "Control of supply and consumption of medicines in hospitals" EAMA. She graduated in medicine at the Sofia University, worked as a doctor-intern at the Fourth Hospital, Sofia and as an assistant at University Hospital "Queen Joanna".

Desislava Atanasova Minister: "partnership of government institutions and NGOs is a model for prevention of acute infectious diseases"

Bulgaria has achieved very good results in the field of immunotherapy through successful partnerships with NGOs and this model is considered very successful by our international partners. This was stated by Minister of Health Desislava Atanasova in her address to participants in the Fifth National Meeting of the "Initiative for Health and Vaccinations" in the capital. The forum is organized by the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and integration issues to the Council of Ministers, the Parliamentary Committee on Health and the Ministry of Health.

An emphasis on prevention of acute infectious diseases focus on vulnerable and minority groups, said Health Minister. Current practice shows that joint action between general practitioners, representatives of RHI, the mediators and social workers are one of the most successful approaches to increase immunization coverage among minority groups and control potential outbreaks. Thanks to this cooperation in 2010 was successfully contained an outbreak of measles, said to the participants in the meeting, Minister Atanasova.

Minister Atanasova opens new invasive Cardiology structure "Dr St. Cherkhezov" district hospital - Veliko Tarnovo

On 10th of April the Minister of Health Desislava Atanasova was on a working visit to the "Dr. St. Cherkhezov" District hospital Veliko Tarnovo. It will opened a new invasive Cardiology structure in the second internal compartment in cardiology and rheumatology. The new structure was built entirely with funds of the hospital. The purchased equipment is worth 700,000 Levs. The department has high-end equipment that can cover the needs for diagnosis and treatment of both the Department of Cardiology, Vascular Surgery, Neurology and Neurosurgery.



**KHERE(AT HOME)****PARTNER MEETING ON THE SPEAK UP! PROJECT TOOK PLACE IN BRUSSELS**

A working session of the partners working on the “Speak Up! Giving a voice to Europe’s most vulnerable children” project took place in Brussels in April. The meeting was held in the office of Eurochild – the leading organization in the project. The aim of the meeting was to assess the achievements of the partnering countries and to compare the results on focus groups sessions with vulnerable children. The participants represented NGOs from Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Netherland, Poland, Sweden and Universal Education Foundation. The project addresses the protection of the rights of the child. It falls under the programme objective "to promote fundamental rights and to inform all persons of their rights including those derived from citizenship of the Union, in order to encourage Union citizens to participate actively in the democratic life of the Union". Within the European Union, children's rights have attracted increasing attention since the adoption of the 2006 Communication "Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child" (COM2006 367). This policy document recognised the need to improve cooperation with stakeholders, including children, and to raise awareness on children's rights. It also committed the EU to "involving children in the decision-making process". However, this project addresses an important gap in the work carried out to date. Children who are particularly vulnerable - either due to their situation (in conflict with the law, living in inadequate housing, separated from their parents, living in residential care etc.) or due to their characteristics (children with a disability, children of an ethnic minority or migrant background) - are much more likely to have their rights violated. They are also less likely to have their voices heard. The partners involved are skilled in listening to children views and transmitting these messages to a wider audience. The children involved are frequently the subject of adult policies and intervention. It is important their views are heard regarding their perception of the situation, their needs and the specific policy intervention approach that is required. The views and experience of the children will provide valuable input to the development and implementation of the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child. They will also feed into the important EU work on tackling child poverty and social exclusion in the European Union - a policy area that Eurochild is following closely.

**SCHOOL****DEPUTY MINISTER MILENA DAMYANOVA VISITS THE STUDENTS FROM THE SCHOOL “VASIL LEVSKI” IN THE VILLAGE OF KARADZHOVO**

On April 19, 2012 Deputy Minister Milena Damyanova visited the school “Vasil Levski” in the village of Karadzovo. During her visit she met with the boarding groups working on the project “Ensuring a whole-day



organizing of the school day for the high schools” of the Ministry of Education and the Club “Folk Music” under the project of “Colorful Magic” financed by Center for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities (CEICSEM). In a short program students and teachers presented some of their work hours from the classes “Ethnic Folklore – Roma Folklore” and the work on the project “Colorful Magic” from CEICSEM. Deputy Minister Damyanova also met with the teaching staff from school to discuss in an informal atmosphere the development of our educational system and the opportunities we provide in the draft law on

**SCHOOL**

pre-school and school education. She said she enriched their good impressions of the work of schools working on the project “Prevention of the Drop Out of Roma Students” funded by America for Bulgaria Foundation through Amalipe, Veliko Tarnovo. The work of the school network created by CIDT Amalipe is a good and sustainable model of developing and sharing the best practices among schools working with mixed ethnic groups of students.

THE EDUCATIONAL TEAM OF AMALIPE MET WITH THE DIRECTORS OF “AMERICA FOR BULGARIA”

The team of the project “Reduction of Roma children dropping out of school” and the regional coordinators of Center Amalipe met with the President of the Board of Directors of the America for Bulgaria Foundation Gary McDougal and the Director of the social program Sarah Perrin. The meeting was held on April 9 in the building of the Center for Community Development – Peshtera. During the meeting the project's development during the first semester of 2011/2012 and the plans for the new school year were discussed. Teodora Krumova and Tanya Vanova presented a summary which shows that at the end of January 2012 in 90 schools included in the project “Reduction of Roma children dropping out of school” the dropout rate was 0,5%, which gives hope for an annual drop out rate not higher than 1 – 1,2%. This will be a significant improvement compared with the year, before the schools joined the project – back then the drop out rate in these schools was 2,5%. Hopeful is the fact that 60 of the project schools do not have a single school drop out. The regional coordinators talked about their daily work with the schools, how assisting them in their efforts to retain all risk of dropping out as well as gathering information from them about drop outs and successes etc.. Deyan Kolev emphasized that the model established under the project “Reduction of Roma children dropping out from school” is recognized as successful by the Ministry of Education and started already being institutionalized. So is it, for example, requiring for each school to develop its own program to reduce school dropouts, enshrined in the draft law on school education. From 2012 on, the Ministry of Education launched the National Program “School without absence” which will be supported with 2 million BGN for schools who create programs to reduce school dropouts. This program was proposed by Center Amalipe and it created some of the most important prerequisites for the sustainability of the model for keeping Roma children in school, said Kolev. Gary McDougal and Sarah Perrin indicated that the project “Reduction of Roma children dropping out of school” is one the most successful projects supported by the America for Bulgaria Foundation and they would like the model created in the framework of the project being implemented in a large number of new schools. The foundation will continue to invest in improving the educational status of Roma and Amalipe is among the main partners in education and educational integration.

