



AMALIPE CENTER FOR INTERETHNIC  
DIALOGUE AND TOLERANCE

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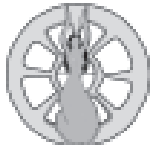
# ANNUAL REPORT

## For the activity of Amalipe Center

### in 2013



ASTARTA  
Plovdiv  
2014



**AMALIPE CENTER FOR INTERETHNIC DIALOGUE AND  
TOLERANCE**



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# 1

## CENTER FOR INTERETHNIC DIALOGUE AND TOLERANCE „AMALIPE“

**CENTER FOR INTERETHNIC DIALOGUE AND TOLERANCE „AMALIPE“** is the biggest Roma organization in Bulgaria which works for equal integration of Roma into the Bulgarian society. At present it is the only Roma organization that maintains regional and municipal structures.

The organization is implementing activities to improve education, health and socio-economic status of Roma at local and national levels. It plays a central role in organizing the Roma civic movement and in implementing advocacy activities before the national and local authorities. Center „Amalipe“ participates in consultative structures that formulate key public policies: the Interministerial Task Force for Resources Provision of Roma Integration, the National Public Council on Education, the Public Council of Veliko Turnovo District and others. The Chairman of the organization, Mr. Deyan Kolev has been elected to represent the Roma NGOs in the Monitoring Committee of „Human Resources Development“ Operational Program as well as in the Working Groups that prepare the new Human Resources Development OP and Science and Education for Smart Growth OP. In all these consultative structures Center „Amalipe“ is reliable partner to the respective institutions and promotes the interest of the Roma community. At the same time in 2013 Amalipe and 9 other Roma NGOs left the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues because of the inefficiency of this structure; the organizations have suggested changes in the Council.

Center „Amalipe“ is the only non-governmental organization from Bulgaria that takes part in the work of the European Roma Platform.

### Our vision, mission and long-term goals

Center „Amalipe“ **believes** in equal integration of Roma in society based on the preservation of Roma identity, mutual understanding and solidarity between Bulgarians and Roma. **Our mission** is to stimulate modernization and empowerment of the Roma community in Bulgaria for its active participation and equal access to resources and development processes, with priority focus on access to quality education, quality health care and social services.

#### **THE LONG-TERM GOALS OF „AMALIPE“ are:**

- To nurture capacity within the Roma community for access to development by increasing the educational level of Roma children and youth.
- To strengthen Roma community self-organization.
- To increase the participation of Roma in the policy making process by growing advocacy skills and joint action practices of Roma organizations.
- To stimulate more consistent and accountable public policies providing for increased access of Roma to education, quality healthcare and social services by suggesting responsive to community interests approaches, monitoring and feedback for improving policy measures and practices.

**OUR APPROACH TO ACHIEVE** these goals includes:

- Testing of innovative methods and practices at local level: in each of the areas in which we operate, we apply practical models that we check out.
- Systematize the practical results of the pilot initiatives of own and various organizations to disseminate and mainstream them national-wide and include them in the national policies.
- Advocacy activities before institutions at national, regional and local level to extend and institutionalize best practices tested by Amalipe and other organizations.
- Advocacy activities before institutions at national level to form a stable model of Roma integration and to accelerate the integration process.
- Preparation of analyzes, monitoring and evaluation of existing policies related to the integration of Roma.

## The organization in 2013

In 2013 Center Amalipe continued its main activities from the previous years further developing and extending them. Important new element was the establishment of Youth Tolerance Task Forces / Voluntary Groups. They were formed in 6 big cities as well as in the municipalities where Amalipe has established Community Development Centers (11 municipalities situated in all regions of the country). Uniting young people from different ethnic background – Bulgarian, Roma and Turkish, the Youth Tolerance Task Forces brought the message of Amalipe to the most important generation. And brought back from it energy, enthusiasm, innovation and hope that the upcoming days are the better ones.

The establishment of Women Groups within the Community Development Centers and Local Community Development Clubs was another new element in the activity of Center Amalipe during 2013. Their main goal – to activate and empower Romani women could not be achieved for one year. Nevertheless the Women Groups set a good promising start of this process.

In 2013 we also put additional efforts for establishing and developing Parental clubs in dozens of schools: important task that we are planning to continue during the upcoming years.

Thus, the organization covered all geographic regions and is currently implementing activities in 26 districts. This led to increasing the number of the regional and local structures of Amalipe. In order to work more effectively in the regions, and to expand our activities across the country, we increased the number of our regional coordinators from 4 to 6, and since September 2012 we have a coordinator in each of the planning regions. To reach out the local communities across the country more effectively, in 2013 we continued the operation of the existing 11 Community Development Centers. In every Center we established Local Community Development Groups (in the biggest villages in every municipality) with respective Women clubs and Youth voluntary clubs. In addition, in 2013 we formed youth district structures in 6 districts in order to engage the young people with Roma integration.

Thus, at present Amalipe is the only Roma organization in Bulgaria that has its own local, district and regional structures all around Bulgaria. We have establish these structures with three objectives:

1. To help out more effectively our partners (schools, municipalities, local organizations, activists) and the local communities that we work with.

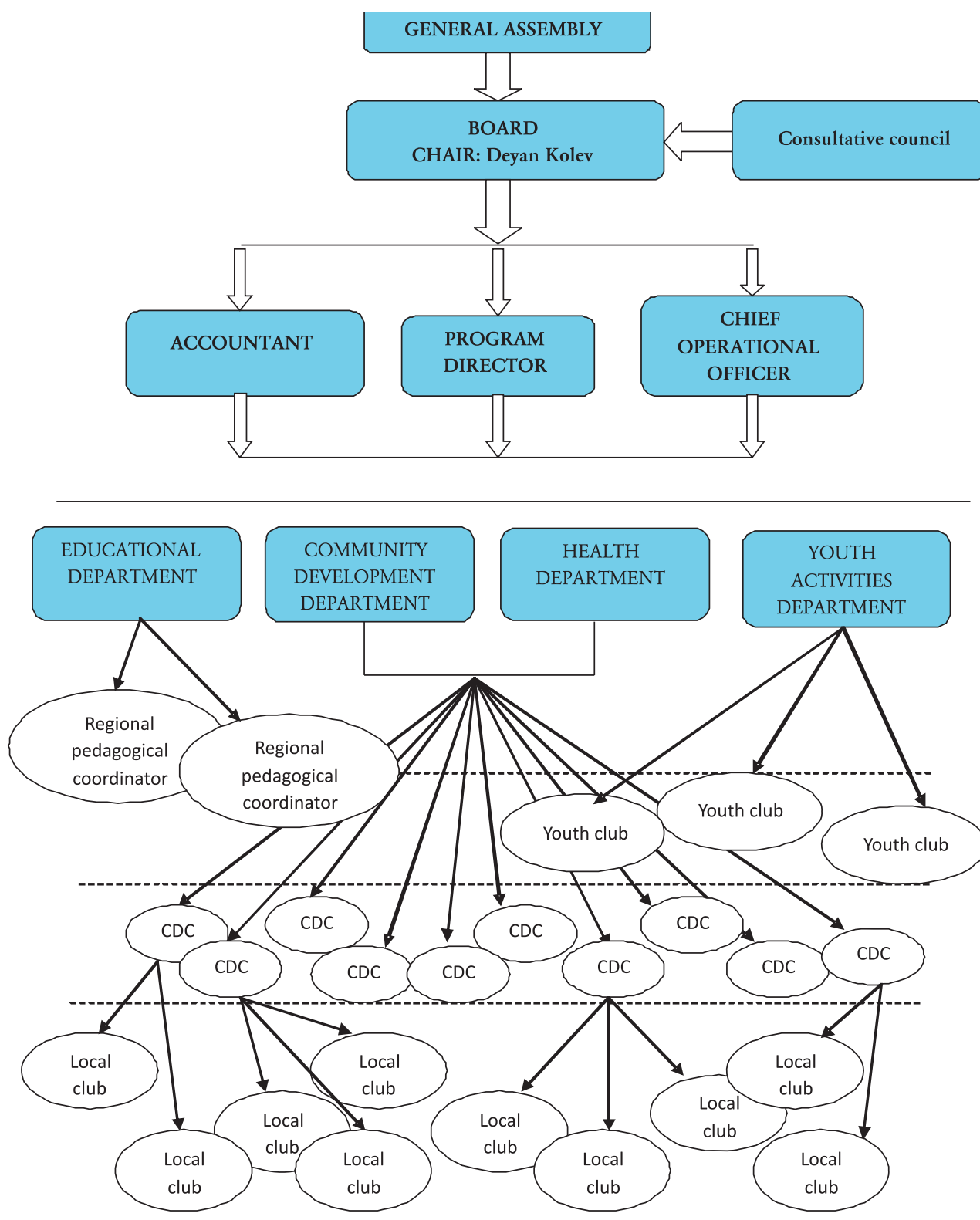
2. To effectively implement activities throughout the country.
3. To create a network that unites the efforts of thousands of Roma people and friends of Roma people – energy that can turn the wheel of Roma integration.

The increased scope of work led to increasing the organization's employees – to 76 in 2013 (out of them 40 are on full day and 36 on half a day employment). It is Amalipe's pride that our employees work with employment contracts, following the requirements of the labor legislation. Working as a team in which each person performs a specific task and assists the others, the people of Amalipe have contributed to the success of the ongoing initiatives.

The organization also relies on more than 180 volunteers who have been systematically involved in activities and campaigns. Their number increased twice in 2013. They are organized in voluntary clubs (around every Community Development Center and Youth Tolerance Task Force). They became a driving force and a face of most of the campaigns. Young people wearing Amalipe Center T-shirts, became a symbol of the awakening community life and will for voluntary work in dozens of villages, towns and cities. The fact that Roma community could generate voluntary work is part of the good news brought by the Amalipe clubs.

One hundred and thirty experts and field workers from different areas were involved and also participated in the organization's activities. Colleagues from the local Roma organizations have contributed to the good work of the Community Development Centers. Experts from the Regional education inspectorates, regional health inspectorates and regional directorates Social Assistance and dozens of other experts were involved in the activities organized by Center Amalipe nationwide. This way we united the efforts of Roma and non-Roma in order to achieve the mission of intercultural dialogue, tolerance and friendship.

## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE





## 2

## INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION AND EDUCATIONAL INTEGRATION DURING 2013

Education has been a priority area of work for Amalipe Center since its establishment and in our work we have reached schools, teachers, parents and students across the country. Our main cause here is to make the school a place where every child can find himself or herself, a place where every child to believe s/he can be an excellent student, a place to get a chance to dream and be a person!

Every child can be a winner! If you make a child to believe it can succeed and sincerely to seek it, then you're able to find the key to success in its development – from then on no one and nothing can get him or her down to achieve it. This is the basic approach that Amalipe Center applies in its educational activities. A key element of this approach is the introduction of intercultural education (with a focus on the introduction of classes on „Ethnic Folklore – Roma Folklore”) as a means of preserving and renewing the cultural identity of the Roma community, as well as mutual understanding and tolerance formation between children of different ethnicities. Thus helping to improve the quality of education and modernization of the Bulgarian education system – intercultural perspective is an integral part of this process. On the other hand, we work hard for Roma children and youth to attend school regularly: our dream is for all Roma children to complete not only primary, but also secondary education, after which many of them to continue their studies in universities and colleges. Qualified Roma, having secondary and university degrees are a reliable basis for what we call „integration”.

The success of the Amalipe Center in the sphere of education is recognized. We achieve them through the implementation of several programs:

### 2.1. Decreasing the dropout rate among Roma children from school Program

#### **DURATION**

01.2010 – 08.2013. After that the Program was continued till June 2015 with the financial support of Trust for social achievement

#### **FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

America for Bulgaria Foundation

#### **WHAT**

The program is a major initiative that classifies and builds the long experience of Amalipe Center and hundreds of partner schools in the field of educational integration and implementation of EPA „Ethnic Folklore – Roma Folklore”. Its main objective is the prevention of Roma children drop out of school in the compulsory school age; reducing the problem of the large number of absences,

low grades in school, a relatively small percentage of Roma continuing their education in secondary schools (high schools), the non-participation of Roma parents in school life and school governance structures.

In the 2012 – 2013 school year, the program included 173 schools.

### WHY

The main concept of the program is that early school leaving / drop-out-of-school is a pedagogical issue and educational resources are necessary to overcome it: social activities are not sufficient but rather complementary in this case. A change in the overall school environment is necessary: changes in the applied teaching methods, in the syllabi, in the organization of the learning process with the participation of the parents. Interactive and intercultural education is the best basis for overcoming the drop-out problem: for instance, the schools teaching the optional subject „Ethnic Folklore – Roma Folklore”.

Pedagogical concept is based on several principles:

- Each student can be a winner;
- Setting high expectations;
- The school may be attractive for every child!;
- The school may be a well-functioning system. A well-organized school is the best guarantee for recruitment, retention and success of students. A well-organized school knows how to involve and empower parents, has the resources to offer a wider range of educational opportunities beyond one shift learning in class and applies modern teaching methods (including intercultural and interactive education).

### HOW?

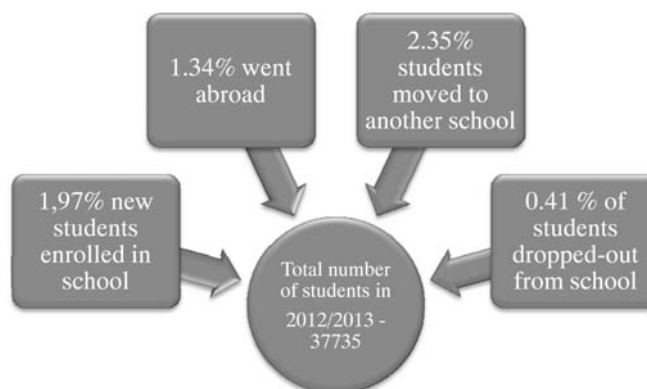
One of the main approaches used in the program is „teachers teaching teachers” , i.e. using the experience gained so far by schools working successfully to reduce the dropout of Roma children from school. For this purpose a certain group of „mentoring schools” were selected that had experience and success in efforts to attract and retain Roma children in school under the program for the introduction of EPA „Roma folklore” and other programs. They supported new / pilot schools in the development and implementation of school programs for dropout prevention. Each of the schools involved in the program must have adopted its School program for dropout prevention, which included activities for creating a favorable environment in order to support quality education and educational integration of Roma children. Each program must have included the following elements:

- Train all teachers to work effectively in a multicultural environment, which is carried out by specially trained teachers (so-called „mentors”).
- Introducing intercultural education: by the EPA „Ethnic Folklore – Roma Folklore”, extracurricular activities, classes in the subjects of mandatory training.
- Activities for the empowerment and involvement of parents: Establishment of an active school board and inclusion of Roma parents ; create parent club of active parents to engage parents in solving problems related to children at risk of dropping out; organizing community discussions / parental lectures and „school for parents” on burning issues.
- Creation of a school parliament – with students of different ethnic background/ where possible/ for active involvement of students in school life; engage and empower them to make decisions regarding their stay in school; support for early school leavers.

- Peers helping peers (tutors): using this practice students who have achieved good results in school are included as mentors / tutors to students who have a problem with dropping (bad success, absenteeism for various reasons, problems with other students and so on.).
- Individual work with students at risk of dropping out: profiling students at risk of dropping; preparing a portfolio of each child , studying the EPA “Ethnic Folklore”, in which materials for the operation and development of the child are collected.

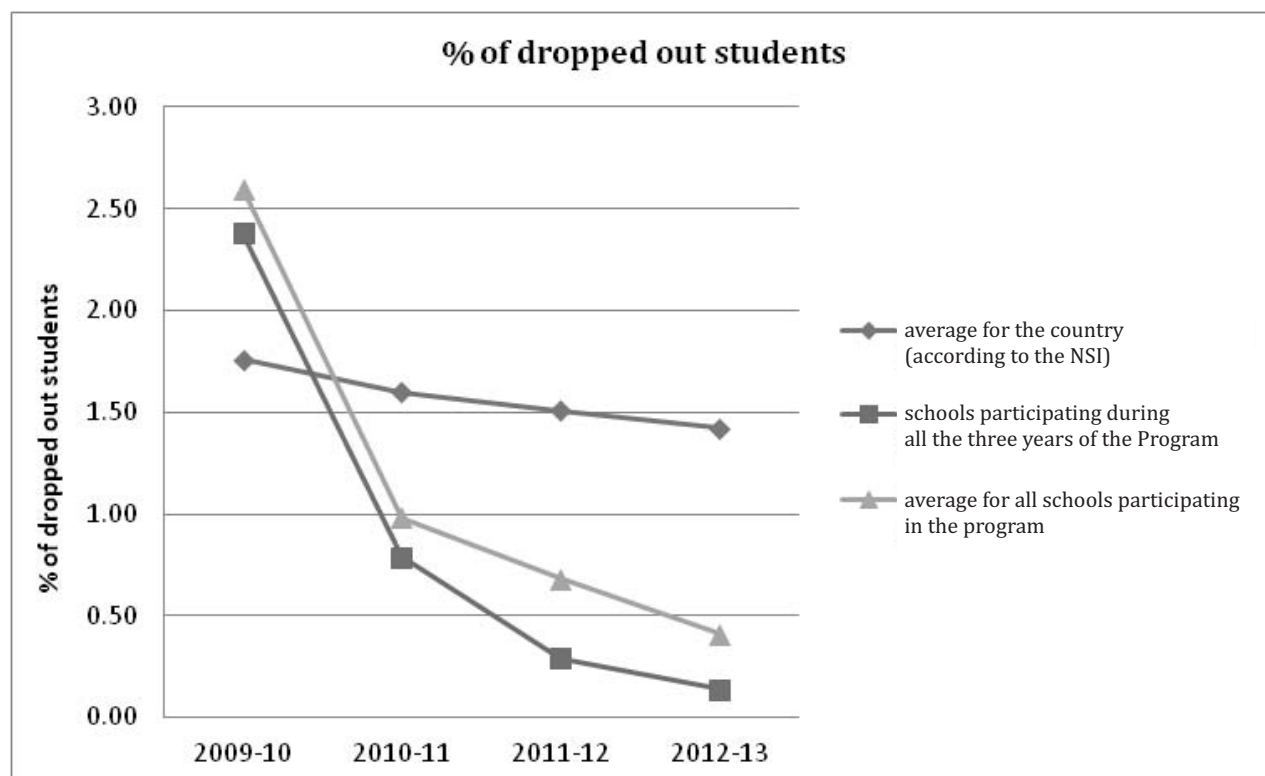
## RESULTS

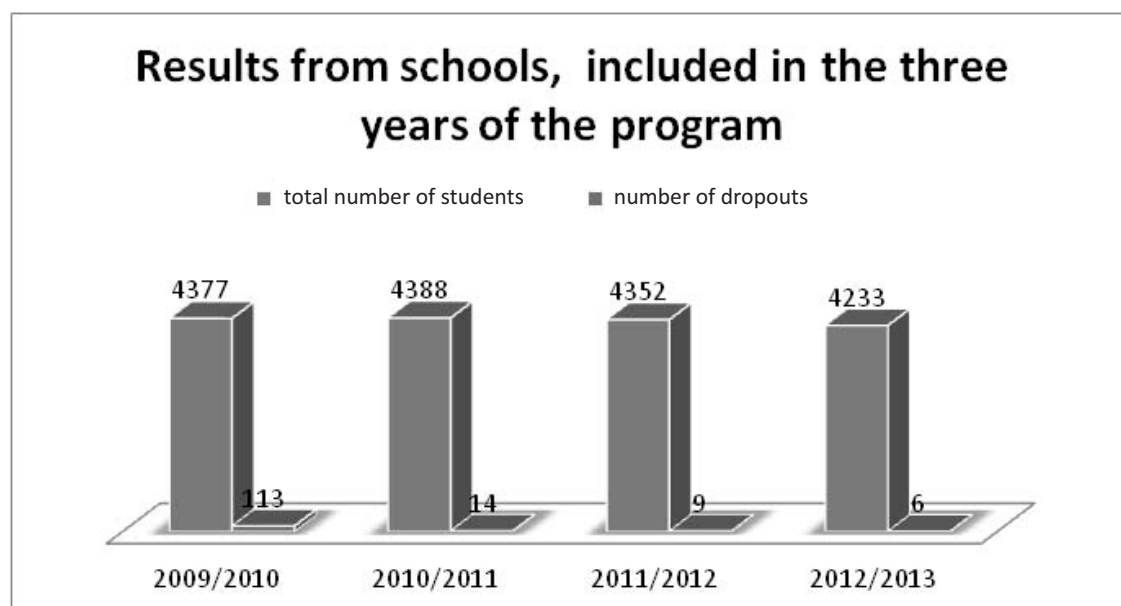
In the end of 2012/2013 school year, having the intervention on 37 735 students, studying in the schools, included in the program, we have achieved the following results:



As a result of the interventions of the program, the level of dropouts in the 173 schools participating in it was reduced from 2.60% (the average rate for the year preceding the one in which the school has included in the program) to 0.41% at the end of the academic year 2012/2013 (157 students dropped out ). Only 14 students out of these 157 were from the risk grades (seven students from 4<sup>th</sup> grade and 7 students from 7<sup>th</sup> grade). And the fact that only one of the dropouts was studying „Ethnic Folklore – Roma Folklore” classes, shows the undeniable contribution of these classes for attracting and retaining children at school.

For the three years of the program, the number of students „saved” from dropping exceeded 1100.

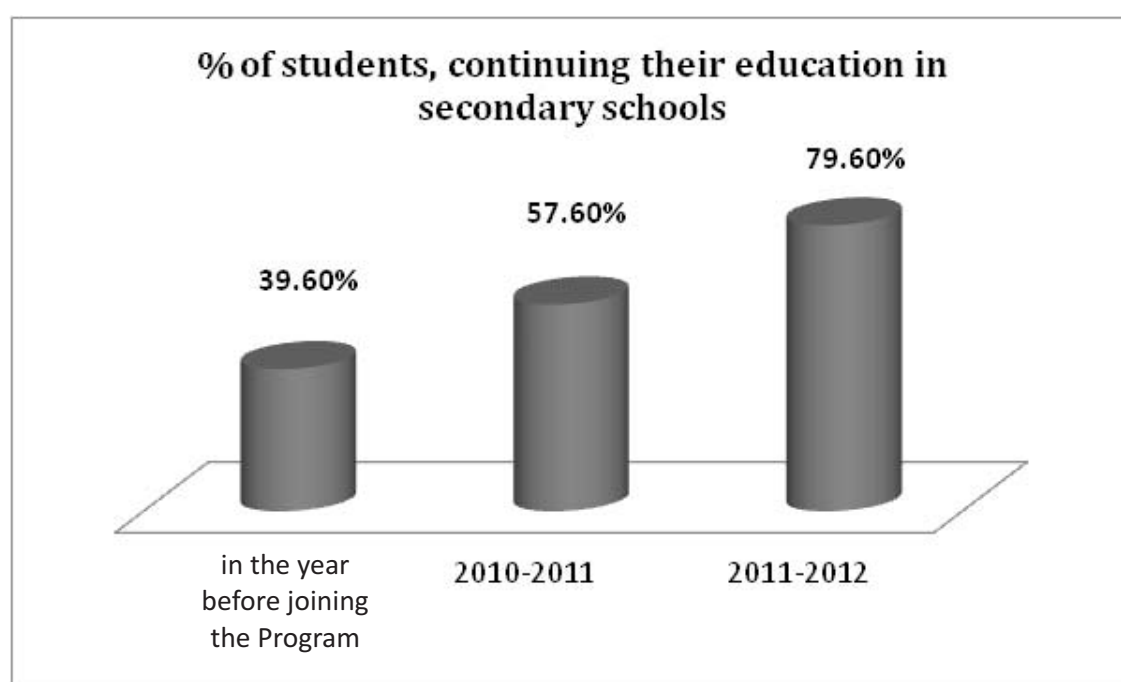




The average number of absences (including all absences – excused and unexcused ones) in the schools involved in the program in the academic year 2012/2013 dropped to 28.6 absences per student, compared to 110, which was the critical limit adopted by the Ministry of Education. At the same time the average number of absences per student who attended classes in „Ethnic Folklore – Roma Folklore” is 15.12 (includes all absences, excused and unexcused), which indicated that the concentrated intervention and program activities reduced absenteeism.

The program has a serious impact on the number of children continuing their education at secondary level. There has been various activities to achieve this goal: motivational campaigns, joint initiatives with high schools, meetings with successful young Roma, etc. As a result, the number of students continuing their education in secondary school after 8<sup>th</sup> grade doubled.

### THROUGH THE EYES OF THE OTHERS



*Extremely useful, quality and useful meetings where all participants learn something and leave ready for the challenges that await them in school. We thank the organizers, Center „Amalipe” for the positive emotions we receive at each meeting with them!*

**Daniela Hristova, “P. R. Slavejko” Primary school,  
village of Djuliunitsa, Veliko Tarnovo District**

*Visits of students from mentoring and pilot schools give a refreshing element in the school climate. Such visits are a component of the activity plan of each school project. I agree for their positive impact: on the one hand they bring positive emotions and excitement for all students; on the other hand, the visits contribute to the exchange of experience. In our school this change lead to improvements in the school environment and greater motivation among students.*

**Teacher of “Vasil Levski” Primary School,  
village of Vidrare, Sofia District**

*It was a lot of fun during the visits of peers. We met a lot of kids like us. I went to the “Open Heart” festival in Veliko Tarnovo. I will remember this forever.*

**Nevin Shukrieva, a student in “Hristo Botev” Primary school,  
village of Kaspichan, Shumen District**

## WHAT

### 2.2. Supporting high school students Program

For the third consecutive year Amalipe Center implements activities in support of students in vulnerable position studying in secondary schools. Supporting high school students Program is funded by Trust for social achievement. Within the Program we cover the cost of the set of textbooks necessary for classes, and those students who travel to school in another settlement are provided with transportation passes. For the 2013/2014 school year 97 high school students were preselected for the Program; 81 out of them were supported financially.

## WHY

One of the main objectives of the program is to support the education of high school students who are highly motivated to learn, but they face serious financial difficulties for it. At the same time, as this is not a social program but an initiative aimed at helping Roma educational integration, it is necessary for the students, included in it to be engaged in activities to motivate other peers to learn, to support the schools involved in the program of Amalipe Centre to reduce the dropout of Roma children from school and other similar activities.

## RESULTS

73 high school students were approved for the 2012/2013 school year. We have seen that 85% of the students involved in the program reduced their absenteeism and became more active in school activities. As a result, 75% of them improved their success and increased their motivation to continue their education in the future. The average grade of the participants in the program is good 4.00.

During the 2013–2014 school year 81 high school students were approved. Increased activity and engagement of the students is observed from the supporting documents they have sent us (reports, tables filled with activities). More students were involved in organized activities at school, greater commitment and responsibility to the learning process was observed due to one of the criteria of the Supporting high school students program - maintaining and enhancing very good academic success during the school year. Reduction in students' absenteeism from school and their willingness to support and help their peers is also obvious. All this shows that the program achieves its objectives and the results are positive. Requirements of the program contribute to the good success of grantees and their regular attendance at school.

More information about the activities of the supported students can be seen on:  
<http://amalipe.com/index.php?nav=news&id=1799&lang=1>.

### THROUGH THE EYES OF THE OTHERS

*I want to thank you – Amalipe and America for Bulgaria Foundation that during the passed 2012/2013 school year you opened doors and gave me a hand and chance to continue my education providing me textbooks for 9<sup>th</sup> grade. A big THANK YOU again! I wish you to remain as tolerant and good to the children of Bulgaria as you are now! I am proud with you!*

**Rosen Ralchev, Byala Slatina**

## 2.3. Ethnic Folklore – Roma Folklore classes

### WHAT

Amalipe Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance has been committed to making intercultural education part of the curriculum of Bulgarian schools through the introduction of non-compulsory optional „Ethnic Folklore – Roma Folklore” classes since 2002. Through this initiative we aim to decrease the drop-out rate of Roma children from school by filling the gap between the school as an institution and the Roma community, to preserve and develop the cultural identity of Roma children and enhance tolerance and solidarity among children of all ethnicities. Ultimately we want to turn the school into a community center.

### WHY

For these reasons, „Ethnic Folklore – Roma Folklore” is being taught not only to Roma, but also to Bulgarian and Turkish children. The subject is taught in Bulgarian, the learning aids published illustrate the diversity of Roma folklore, its relations to the folklore of other ethnicities in the context of Bulgarian national culture. For the purpose, we compiled and printed a complete set of methodological aids (textbooks, workbooks, teacher's books, interactive audio and video materials) which have been disseminated free of charge to schools teaching this subject.

More information about the school subject „Ethnic Folklore – Roma Folklore” can be found at:  
<http://romaeducation.com/index.php/bg/sip-bg>

### RESULTS

During the 2012/2013 school year, „Ethnic Folklore – Roma Folklore” is taught in over 300 schools across the country to more than 5500 students (from Bulgarian, Roma, Turkish origin) – as EPA, extracurricular activities (within USPEH project, initiated by the Ministry of education) or classes

of interest. 4162 students studied Roma folklore classes in the Prevention of the drop-out rate of Roma children from school Program as some of the schools made more than 2 groups.

The results that these students achieved in the academic 2012/2013 year, clearly illustrate the need for incorporating „Ethnic Folklore – Roma Folklore” into the national school curriculum. The average number of school absences per student of those who attended Roma Folklore classes fell to 15.12 (including all absences, both justified and unjustified, in all subjects), with 28.6 absences average per student for those included as a total in the Drop-out Prevention Program and compared to 110, which is the critical limit adopted by the Ministry of Education as an indicator of students at risk of dropping out. In addition, drop-out rates among students involved in the Roma folklore classes was 0.02%. Just a single student of those, who attended Roma folklore classes, dropped out in 2012–2013 school year.

### THROUGH THE EYES OF THE OTHERS

*Through my participation in the „Ethnic Folklore-Roma Folklore” classes I learned to listen, to be more careful at class. I knew almost nothing about our traditions, but with my participation we made Calendar of ethnic groups. All customs are so beautiful and so alike. I was interested. And I loved dancing, learned dances from the three ethnic groups. Our classes passed in entertainment, songs, dances, stories, legends.*

**Sylvia Naskova, a student at “Hristo Botev” Primary school,  
village of Kamburovo**

*I’ve been teaching for two years Roma Folklore in „Tsanko Tserkovski” high school, village of Nikola Kozlevo. I knew that these classes are useful and necessary. But what I see in children – the change, enthusiasm, willingness to work and self-expression – just surpasses all expectations. Children change. And it’s good that they change other people as well, and their attitudes...*

**Refat Talib, a teacher at „Tsanko Tserkovski” high school,  
village of Nikola Kozlevo**

## 2.4. Support for the schools

Throughout the year 2013 Center „Amalipe” continued to support the schools working with , for drawing bigger financial resource, which will assist their entire work. From 25 to 27 October 2013 in Liaskovets we organized meeting of the educational team of Center „Amalipe” and directors of schools, that are working on the program for decreasing the drop-out rate of Roma children from school. The meeting was organized after requests for consulting from 14 directors of schools, from different regions in the country in acquaintance with the announced competition of Foundation „America for Bulgaria” – „School of the future”. The directors was consulted from the educational team of Center „Amalipe” about working on project motions for participation in the competition of Foundation „America for Bulgaria” for modernization of the studding quarter. The cause of the projects was to encourage using of contemporary educational methods and technologies that would improve the achievements and increase the motivation of students and teachers. During the meeting we discussed ideas for formulating of objectives and activities of the project, also quantitative and qualitative indicators for the expected results. Since the contribution of Foundation „America for



Bulgaria” could not exceed more than 75% from the whole value of the project, the directors shared their difficulties in finding the other 25%. The ideas of the consultants for finding sources of acquisition of equity contribution for the project were appreciated gratefully from them. The directors that took part in the meeting were from the schools of Yambol, Tishevica, Berkovica, Kaspichan, Nikola Kozlevo, Vurbitsa, Koinare, Bohot, Biala Slatina, Vidrare, Dupnitsa and Pobeda. Consultations continued on e-mails until the deadline of the competition.

Throughout the year 2013 the Center for Educational Integration of Children and Students from the Ethnic Minorities (structure of Ministry of Education) also announced competition for supporting the educational integration. The focus of the competition was creating models for work with parents; creating methods for work with parents of children and students from ethnic minority; motivation of Roma parents for support of their children and students; also including parents in preparing school strategies, plans and programs and their partnership in the School boards. This gave possibility for activities that implement one of the important components of the program „Decreasing the Dropout Rate of Roma Children”, namely the involvement and empowerment of Roma parents. Center „Amalipe” again supported the schools working with, through the application guidelines and methodological support for working on project motions. More than 10 schools from Amalipe network have been approved for funding.

At the same time the team of „Amalipe” encouraged the schools for organizing literacy courses for illiterate parents, because this is one of the extra methods for including the parents in the school life. More than 30 schools which work with Center „Amalipe” participated in the project „New chance for success” of Ministry of Education for organizing literacy courses.





The delegated budgets are insufficient for renewing the material bases of the small schools with few students. There is a big need for computers, because without them the contemporary educational process is impossible. To help the schools, Center „Amalipe” attracted serious donor – Municipality of Lousanne, Switzerland through the Bulgarian – Swiss Chamber of Commerce. 72 schools received a donation of computer configurations during 2013. Most of them furnished cabinets of „Folklore of the ethnoi – Roma folklore” classes and other subjects. The donated computers helped the work with Parents clubs and the Student parliaments. Undeniable fact is the meaning of the provided technique for the good results, which the schools achieved in the educational program „Decreasing the dropout rate of Roma children”.

The donated computers were used also for extending the work of the moderators from the Community Development Centers as well as by the Youth clubs established within the program „Youth tolerance”. In addition, they were provided also for strengthening the non-governmental sector which received 34 computers.

Center „Amalipe” expresses its gratitude to Municipality of Lousanne (Switzerland) and the Bulgarian- Swiss Chamber of Commerce and estimates the help, that we received for amending the quality of education at school and increasing the information of the community. The whole information for the donated computers and list of the schools, organizations and institutions, which received the computers you could find of the page of Center „Amalipe”.

The access to good health services continues to be a challenge in the context of a health reform which lasts longer than the most pessimistic prognoses. Nevertheless, the biggest challenge remains for the people from ethnic minorities, especially Roma who live in the countryside, far from a municipal or regional centre. In addition, granting access for Roma to quality health services also faces serious problems in the rural areas as well as in the big Roma neighborhoods (ghettoes).

Another important problem is the lack of health insurance for many of the Roma citizens due to the impossibility for regular health payments, as well as the low health culture. As a result, since many Roma are not health-insured, they cannot use any health services, except for emergencies.

Therefore, Centre 'Amalipe' and its partners continued in 2013 to initiate and participates in activities aiming at improving the health status of the Roma community.

### **3.1. Program 'Prevention and control of HIV/AIDS' – Component 7: „Reducing vulnerability to HIV of young people at greatest risk (age 15-24) by increasing the range of services and programs aimed at youth“**

#### **DONOR**

The Ministry of Health, Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB, and malaria.

#### **WHY**

The low sexual health culture of young people on the territory of Veliko Turnovo region defines the need for Centre 'Amalipe' to implement the activities in the frame of Component 7 of the Program for prevention of HIV, TB and Malaria. It is a fact that the youngest people who live in non-urbanized rural areas have significantly more limited access to good education. Furthermore, the youngsters from the traditional Roma groups consider the theme of sexuality a taboo and it is rarely discussed at home.

#### **WHAT**

Centre 'Amalipe' has worked on the Program for prevention and control of HIV/AIDS coordinated by the Ministry of Health and its Component 7 since 2010. The activities and services of the Programme 'Prevention and control of HIV/AIDS' are organized in 9 components. This organization aims to ensure the execution of integrated and balanced approach to fight against HIV/AIDS through prevention, diagnostic, treatment, care and support for the people affected by the disease. Component 7 works for prevention and decrease of the vulnerability to HIV among young people at the highest risk (14-25) by increasing the services and programs directed to youngsters.

## HOW

18 non-governmental organizations in different cities of Bulgaria work within Component 7 of the Program. They have youth volunteer clubs for prevention and control of HIV/AIDS. Center Amalipe has also established such club in 2010. The activities of the volunteers consist of providing information campaigns and materials aiming to reach the most vulnerable young people. Another main activity of the volunteers is the fieldwork: reaching the young people in their natural environment, consulting them about sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS, methods of protection from unwanted pregnancy and motivation for testing. The volunteers also conduct trainings on sexual and reproductive health based on peer-training method by passing on what they have learnt to other young people. The volunteers conduct trainings led by educators – specialists in the given areas, too.

## RESULTS

According to our summarized data for 2013, the fieldwork reached 961 people while 7640 young people were covered by various campaigns during the year. During the campaign activities, fieldwork and trainings 23823 condoms and 4411 health-educating materials were distributed. 127 youngsters aged between 14 and 25 have been trained in our peer trainings.

### 3.2. Program: Scholarship program for medical students of Roma origin (Roma Health Scholarship Program)

## DONOR

**Roma health project, Open Society Foundation – Budapest**

## WHAT

A scholarship program for Roma students in the medical universities and colleges gives the opportunity to young, educated and highly motivated young people from Roma background to develop their knowledge and professional experience in the sphere of Healthcare.

The program started in 2009 with 23 students in medical colleges and universities. During the second program year they became 57. In academic year 2011-2012 eighty Roma students received help for their education in Medicine and other medical subjects, while in 2012/2013 they were 77. Since in 2013/2014 the Program did not enroll new students the grantees were 64

## WHY

With the implementation of the program, the initiators Roma Health Project of OSI, Budapest, Roma Education Fund and Open Society Institute, Sofia aim to improve the quality of the provided health cares and to overcome the acts of discrimination in the system of healthcare by giving examples to follow, which can motivate the young Roma to choose a career in the field of healthcare.

## HOW

The programme, which is the first of its kind in the region to support the medical training and education of young and ambitious Roma is composed by several components:

- providing scholarships for students in higher medical and professional schools and colleges, as well as for doctors-postgraduates;
- mentoring of grantees in academic and professional issues;
- advocacy training
- media and public awareness component.

Amalipe Center for interethnic dialogue and tolerance – Veliko Tarnovo is selected for the implementation of the Advocacy component. The training involves building skills for personal development (communication, leadership skills, work in multi-ethnic environment, etc.), advocacy and giving information concerning the right of access to health care, legislation on protection against discrimination, the relevant elements of Bulgarian and European legislation. The advocacy training is usually conducted in two main areas – theoretical and practical. Some of the topics are related to history, life and culture of Roma, the reforms in the field of health care and their impact on ethnic minorities, conflict resolution, social and health intervention in the community. On the other hand, the students also get practical experience in various localities near Veliko Turnovo, Stara Zagora and Sliven with the support of our partners World without Borders – Stara Zagora and Health for Roma Foundation – Sliven. As a part of the fieldwork in 2013 the students visited the towns of Kotel and Radnevo where the problems in the access to healthcare are a challenge due to the failure of the health reform in the hospital care which closed a lot of municipal hospitals down.

Over 80 people took part in the traditional advocacy conference at the end of the training which took place on August 2 at the District Administration in Veliko Tarnovo. The forum was titled „We are not impersonal, neither indifferent”. Deputy governors Andrey Iliev and Stefan Stefanov welcomed the guests and praised the future doctors for their dedication. The meeting was attended by the Ambassador of South Africa Boyki Motlung, MD. Angel Kounchev – Chief State Health Inspector of the Ministry of Health, representatives of the municipalities of Veliko Tarnovo Region, the Head of the Regional Medical Association MD. Mariana Kirilova, health professionals and representatives of various organizations.

Without any hesitation the medical students impressed the participants in the forum with professionalism and innovative ideas. In the first panel they presented their proposals on 4 key health system issues: career development of young professionals, expanding the scope of the health insured, the fate of municipal hospitals, health care in rural areas and school health care as well as preventive health care. The students presented not only facts about the current situation, but also specific suggestions for its improvement. For example, young doctors wanted medical insurance for pregnant women and mothers up to 1 year, citing the interest of the child, increasing the number of specializations, reducing the statutory period for health insurance status to 18 months, funding system that promotes preservation of municipal hospitals and disclosure practices of general practitioners in rural areas, expanding the number of mediators and the Centers for Community Development, etc. During the second panel, the students presented their impressions of the field work in four settlements, realized the day before. On August 1<sup>st</sup>, future doctors visited Gorna Oriahovitza, Byala Cherkva, Ledenik and Stambolovo where health discussions were held among the local Roma population and helped the moderators in the Centers for Community Development in carrying out surveys to assess local health services. Young doctors presented their observations and suggestions for solving the problems in health care in these communities.

### **THROUGH THE EYES OF THE OTHERS**

*If we have a Roma center like Amalipe in each district of the country that actively works for raising the health culture of minorities, the health culture of the Roma community will be much higher which will bring to faster and better solution of problems.*

**Angel Kunchev, MD, Chief State Health Inspector**

### 3.3. Advocacy for sustainability of the Roma Health Scholarship Program

#### WHAT

In 2013 Center Amalipe continued with the advocacy activities to provide sustainability for the Roma Health Scholarship Program.

#### WHY

The Program has already proved its efficiency and importance for raising the number of Roma health professionals and thus contributing to raising the quality of health services for the Roma community (recognized also by the Ministry of Education). At the same time, the financial support of Roma Education Fund and Open Society Institute finishes in 2013. Therefore, it is crucial to provide the support (including also financial support) of the government for continuing the Program

#### HOW

In 2011 and 2012 Center Amalipe has organized a series of advocacy conferences and events to reach consensus regarding the continuation of the program through the Norwegian financial mechanism managed by the Ministry of Health. Finally in 2013 all stakeholders – the Council of Ministers, the Ministry of Health and the Embassy of the Kingdom of Norway agreed on this.

### 3.4. Programme for community monitoring of the healthcare services

#### PERIOD

01.2013 – 07.2015

#### DONOR

Open Society Foundation – New York and Budapest

#### WHY

The program has started at the beginning of 2011 and has been already working for three years for the improvement of the access of Roma to healthcare in the countryside. This is an initiative which general aim is to use the **community monitoring of healthcare services** in Roma communities in Bulgaria to strengthen the advocacy which will give the local communities the opportunity to participate in the local policies and the processes of local-level management, improving the Roma health services and status in a long-term plan. In 2013 the community monitoring model was expanded to several other municipalities.

#### HOW

The model follows the methodology of community monitoring through the so called '**community inquiry**', including periodical (twice in the year) consultation with the local communities about the health services they receive and their quality. We supplemented this with two more elements. The first one is the **community mobilization and building groups of activists in the community** which precedes the 'community inquiry'. During the recent years, the program has achieved its goal to create, test, and evaluate a **mechanism for mobilizing the local community** in seven different towns and

villages on the territory of Veliko Tarnovo, Gorna Oriahovica and Pavlikeni. The results show that the method works successfully for the mobilization of the local communities for solving issues in the field of healthcare.

The second element is the advocacy activities before the local and regional health institutions as well as community campaigns for improving the health awareness. All activities are accompanied by the work of juvenile and female groups which is an important part both of the community mobilization and the advocacy.

Another aim was to create prerequisites for future **expansion of the model in other municipalities** and regions in Bulgaria. Two new organizations joined the program: our partners from 'World without Borders' Association and LARGO Association. They start to implement the community monitoring on healthcare services in Stara Zagora and Kustendil. Center Amalipe will provide methodical support. This shows the fact that the developed and tested model in Veliko Tarnovo and the created know-how can be multiplied in other regions, as well.

Our team keeps looking for people with civic position, with potential, ready to work for the health of their community and who believe that the things depend mainly on them, on their participation and active citizen's position. These people become community moderators, local moderators and volunteers who implement the community monitoring on a local level.

### WHAT HAVE WE DONE?

In 2013 we extended the programme in 3 more municipalities – Strazhitsa, Knezha and Dolna bania (since October 2013). We have also continued the activities in the municipalities of Veliko Tarnovo and Pavlikeni. Except the two new regions, in which the health monitoring begins to be applied, Centre 'Amalipe' expanded the network of towns and villages. As a result the community monitoring has covered Kaltinets neighborhood (city of Gorna Oriahovica), the villages of Ledenik and Vodolei (municipality of Veliko Tarnovo), the city of Veliko Turnovo, the villages of Batak, Varbovka, Stambolovo and the town of Biala Cherkva (municipality of Pavlikeni), the villages of Enitza, Brenitza and the town of Knezha (municipality Knezha, Plevan district), the villages of Kamen, Vinograd, Dobri dyal (municipalities of Srazhica and Liaskovec) and the town of Dolna bania (Sofia district).

Our first assignment in the new towns and villages was to support small initiatives with local importance which could lead to mobilization of the community and could make people believe in their own strengths and qualities. These were different sports and cultural activities on a local level.

From the beginning of 2013, two surveys were carried out following the methodology of 'community inquiry'. It includes "door to door" questionnaires with all the women in the neighbourhood/village. The questionnaires provide information about the awareness of the women about healthcare issues, the access to healthcare, and the quality of some of the health services. Some questions are about the **health insurance status, maternal and child healthcare and the access to emergency, hospital and primary medical care.**

In the first community inquiry in 2013, 475 respondents participated while in the second one 593 women aged between 16 and 55 were questioned. The inquiry was implemented by around 30 volunteers who were trained in advance to work with the inquiry cards and process the information. This is one of the basic features of the **community inquire**: it is carried out, analyzed and discussed by the local community.

At the same time, a negative trend was identified in 2013: raising the percentage of health uninsured women – more than half of the respondents. For example, 247 women out of 475 respon-

dents inquired in July 2013 are not health insured. In the meantime, a positive tendency is that 431 women share they have a general practitioner (GP), while only 43 share they do not have.

Furthermore, the survey shows gaps in the access to healthcare. 232 respondents have a general practitioner visiting the town twice or three times per week; 126 – only once per week, while only 107 have access to their GP every working day. These results show that most of the people living in rural areas (and especially in village) have rare access to primary medical care which is a tendency in many regions in the country.

Other alarming tendency which comes out as a result of the research is the extremely hard access to emergency medical care. The research there shows that 238 people from the inquired share that every time they have called an ambulance the call center asked first if they had a health insurance which is against the health legislation.

Going deeper in the community the project methodology includes local clubs for community development coordinated by the municipal Community development centers. The centers and the local clubs work further on the issues of community mobilization and help the process in which the problems of the different individuals are identified as community problems, which is the first step of tackling the problematic issues.

Other general aim of the community monitoring of health services is to encourage the interaction of the local people with the health authorities on a local level (including GPs, dentists, hospitals, Regional Health Inspection and the centers of Emergency Medical care). Citizens are those who should keep the institutions accountable and responsible for the quality and the accessibility of healthcare. In regard to this during the last year a big success was achieved. A lot of common activities and public events were organized. They were all organized by the local people and the health institutions in the respective villages and municipalities. From being precedents, the collaborative events between the citizens and the health authorities became traditional and part of community life.

## THE RESULTS

The efforts of the local activists to improve the access to healthcare services already show their results. For instance, in Ledenik and other villages on the territory of Veliko Tarnovo the GPs ceased the practice of illegal payments for giving a child-immunization certificate which has happened after the interference of the local moderators from the Community development center in Veliko Tarnovo. Such examples were identified also in the municipality of Pavlikeni. In the villages of Ledenik and Vodolei nurses in all schools were hired. An example of great success comes from the municipality of Pavlikeni. The local moderators have worked intensively to bind the local Roma integration plans (as part of the Bulgarian National Roma Integration Strategy) with the activities in the sphere of healthcare. One of the concrete things which the citizens of Batak demanded from the municipality was a reconstruction and renovation of the dental medical office in the village. The dental medical service in the village ceased to exist 30 years ago. As a result of the local mobilization activities, the dentist cabinet was reopened and the renovation for its reopening started at the beginning of 2014.

Thanks to the constant work of the local moderators with medical professionals and different representatives of the health authorities, a lot of specialists started a series of regular prophylaxis exams in the community in order regarding various significant diseases – oncological, nephrological, ophthalmological, infectious and others. This is an indicator for high level of community mobilization and increased interference between local people and health authorities.

Every new community inquiry registers improvement in the quality of the provided health services and especially an increase in the communication between the local people and the health institutions. To a great extent, we can claim that this is because of the undertaken activities within the



project's framework and not so much because of the whole improvement of the health services or the access to healthcare in Bulgaria.

### THROUGH THE EYES OF THE OTHERS

*„It is my second mandate as a mayor of Biala Cherkva and until this moment there has not been such a active behavior among the local minorities considering the health awareness and culture. Thanks to the efforts of Center ‘Amalipe’ and the Local Development Club, an engagement from the community’s side was noticed, an interest towards the personal and the children’s health. I, as a Mayor, have always supported and will support the campaigns and the initiatives of the organization because it is for my fellow-citizen’s sake.”*

**Albena Todorova, Mayor of the town of Byala Cherkva,  
Pavlikeni municipality**

*„Congratulations to the good job of the organization. Thanks to the moderators of Center ‘Amalipe’ I am alive now. They are the people who helped. Let such organizations exist and people who help the others and those who need help.”*

**Dimitar Iosifov, the village of Varbovka,  
Pavlikeni municipality**





# 4

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL SERVICES IN ROMA COMMUNITIES

Community development is an approach that Amalipe applies to all its activities. In order to mobilize the efforts to accelerate the development of the Roma community in 2011 the organization has developed special know-how – Community Development Centers, systematizing experience from different types of community centers created by many different organizations. In 2013 eleven Community Development Centers on the territory of the country worked with great success and enthusiasm. This was in the municipalities of Peshtera, Nozi Pazar, Etropole, Byala Slatina, Kameno, Pavlikem, Veliko Tarnovo, Strazhitza / Lyaskovec, Dolna Banya, Knezha, and Radnevo. Local clubs for community development and volunteer groups were formed to activate the most vulnerable parts of the Roma community. The activity of the Community Development Centers in 2013 took place within two different projects.

### 4.1. „A step forward – empowering young people and women from local Roma communities“ Project

#### DONOR

**European Commission Directorate General for Justice – Daphne III Funding Programme**

#### WHY

To allow increasing the capacity of community (with a special focus on young people and women from the Roma community, as their empowerment is at the core of the change process at the local level). Emphasis in the project is the creation of Women's and Youth groups, informal support mechanism to work not only in the Center but also in the surrounding villages. Young people and women are the most vulnerable groups within the Roma community. Creating these groups will further enhance and strengthen the structures to support community development.

#### OBJECTIVE

The main goal is the empowerment of youth and women from Roma communities to enhance community capacity for social development. Active communities are a prerequisite for accelerating the process of modernization of the Roma and preserve / renew the Roma identity. Active communities are also essential for the success of Roma integration. Furthermore, the project has as its goal to expand the know-how from years 2011/2012 – the activities of the Community Development Centers and the community moderators – to a comprehensive model by adding some additional activities and elements – local clubs, voluntary groups and others. An additional aim is to create conditions for further expansion of the model to other communities and regions across Bulgaria in the coming years.

## APPROACHES AND ACTIVITIES

In 2011, 6 Community Development Centers were established in Bulgaria – the municipalities of Peshtera, Novi Pazar, Kameno, Etropole, Byala Slatina and Pavlikeni. Two Moderators from the local community worked in each Center. 15 additional local development clubs supporting the Centers were created in 2013 in larger settlements in municipalities with predominantly Roma population. Activities of the local clubs are organized by a local moderator who works in the Roma community. In addition to them, volunteers groups – leadership, youth and women's groups – are functioning in most of the municipalities.

**Basic approach** is working at the grass-root level by mobilizing the resources of the community. Centers and local clubs for community development work towards supporting the efforts of the local Roma community, to develop mechanisms for self-organization and cooperation. This contributes to the development of children, young people and women from the local Roma community to have skills to create a safe environment, in order to build a resource for self-organization, self-help and support to enhance their ability to address traditional practices such as early marriage, early pregnancy and dropping out of school. In this regard, an important part of the activities of the Community Development Centers and the Local clubs are aimed at organizing the community for public discussion on social problems that concern them:

- Gender Equality and professional realization of Roma women.
- The role of Roma women and equal opportunities for social and career development.
- Women's and children's rights .
- Encourage young people and women from the local Roma community towards active role in public and political life.
- Discuss local and national policies for integration measures.

## RESULTS

- There are 21 Youth groups created to work with young people from the local Roma community in six municipalities. More than 500 young people have been involved.
- There are 21 women's groups established in six municipalities in the country and there are over 200 women involved.
- There are Leadership groups created, with a total number of 124 participants.
- There have been trainings to improve local social capacity of local activists within the 21 places in six municipalities. The total number of participants was over 400 people.
- There have been 10 campaigns for raising awareness about accessing health, social and educational services to Roma youth and women. That covered 2,500 people.
- There have been community discussions with representatives of local authorities and state institutions on social, health and educational issues – 1,200 people from the local Roma community participated in these discussions.
- There have been made a profile of 21 settlements, with the purpose of preparing and planning activities aimed at increasing local social capacity.
- There are proposals prepared and submitted by the six municipalities to include specific Roma related activities to be provided in the municipal implementation plans of the National Roma Integration Strategy.
- 6 inter-institutional teams established at the municipal level.
- 27 children reintegrated into school.
- 59 cases of prevention of school dropout.

- 75 adults enrolled in literacy courses.
- 29 successful cases for prevention of early marriages.

### OTHERS ABOUT THE PROJECT

*No jealousy from social services, we are helping each other with the community moderators and so must continue our joint work. Their focus of work should continue to be not on individual cases, but community work! Although we have some services such as Public Support Centers (PSC) and in these centers their focus is on an individual basis rather than community development ... So at present, the community moderators are the only ones who do community activities. They need to be more in number and to be more structured in their future actions.*

#### **Head of “Child Protection” Department in a district where there is a Community Development Center**

*The community moderators work on specific activities in primary school „Hristo Smirnensky” and several other schools, „Hristo Botev” in the town, vocational school, and the schools in the villages of Popitsa, Tarnava, Tarnak, and Gabare. They always respond when asked for help in organizing different initiatives. For the April 8th – Roma Day a festival was organized at the stadium, there was an exhibition, and all week there were initiatives. Their work is more than just important, because people need to see that something is being done. Working with young mothers, talks about the early birth, and lectures on infectious diseases is also essential, and this type of work must continue.*

#### **A focus groups with public administration in the Municipality of Byala Slatina**

## **4.2. „Promoting social inclusion of young people in marginalized rural communities” Project**

### **DONOR**

**PROGRESS Programme of the European Commission’s DG for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion**

### **WHY**

The project is two year initiative financed by European Commission within PROGRESS Program. It is implemented since October 2011 in Bulgaria, Romania and Macedonia by Center Amalipe (lead applicant), Liga pro Europa – Romania and National Roma Centrum – Macedonia (partners).

### **OBJECTIVE**

The overall project objective is to combat the social exclusion of young people from marginalized Roma rural communities in Bulgaria, Romania and Macedonia through developing and testing innovative community based services. Through this project the Amalipe Center focused its efforts in raising the levels of employment and social inclusion of one of the most vulnerable groups in Bulgaria – young people from rural areas.

### **APPROACH**

The project is based on the assumption that the reasons for social exclusion relate not only to poverty but also to the absence of social structures within the local communities. Community based

services are strong way to support establishing community social structures and to foster social inclusion. That is why the project promotes methodology that includes 3 aspects:

- Establishing Community Development Centers as a framework for innovative forms of community based services in marginalized rural Roma communities.
- Using the method of „social experimentation”: the project developed at relatively small scale an innovative approach and concrete innovative forms of community based services for social inclusion of young people from marginalized rural Roma communities.
- Coordinating of the efforts of the responsible institutions, NGOs and Roma authorities.

## MAIN ACTIVITIES

Community moderators from the four municipalities in Bulgaria (Kneza, Veliko Turnovo, Radnevo and Dolna Banya) realized a wide range of activities to mobilize young people, enhancing their education, training and increasing the employment rate:

- Screening of Roma groups of the territory – survey and mapping to analyze the socio-economic status of the community (2540 polls).
- Identify opportunities for employment – local and regional business contacts, research, presentations and organize joint meetings with the Roma community.
- Analyzing the skills and attitudes of young people in the Roma community and other ethnic groups, creating lists of people interest in training, employment and acquisition of additional skills, identifying opportunities for creating employment – local and regional business contacts, studies, presentations and joint meetings with the Roma community.
- Assistance in finding job: moderators form the CDC using established contacts with local businesses to recommend hiring a reliable Roma youth. Moderators recommend appropriate youth to the municipalities which are currently the largest employers (through programs funded by the Operational Programme „Human Resources Development” and the National Action Plan for Employment).
- Follow up work with the employed young Roma to maintain their motivation and work discipline: this type of CDC activities were highly valued by employers.
- Promoting social inclusion of young people and mobilize community members – organizing volunteer’s club, targeted work with young people and students. Moderators were able to form active groups of volunteers who actively participated in all activities of the CDC.
- Participation in the development and implementation of activities of the Municipal Roma Integration Plans: CDCs are included with responsibility for the implementation of certain activities and tasks.
- Development and validation of the Community Development Center among local authorities, educational and social institutions, businesses, NGOs and others.
- Training and qualification of the moderators, incl. involving other local stakeholders – conducted 9 training in Bulgaria and two in Romania and Macedonia for exchanging of good practices.
- Support for the schools, working with problem students, parental involvement in committees, assistance for the implementation of the free elective subject Roma folklore, participation in extracurricular activities, etc.
- Organizing health lectures, screening and prevention of diseases in cooperation with the Regional Health Inspectorates.
- Organizing special days and occasions to celebrate.

## RESULTS

In 2013, there were many achieved results - concrete and measurable, e.g.:

- Cooperation with local authorities to provide more than 220 jobs.
- Providing support to 7 Roma entrepreneurs to start their own business.
- Providing support to 6 Roma to register as farmers.
- Assistance in registering in Labour Office – over 100 persons and subsequent inclusion in courses and temporary employment.
- Contacts and collaboration work with local initiative groups, supported by the Program for Rural Development (Knezha and Strazhitsa-Lyaskovets): supported 3 Roma entrepreneurs.
- Reintegration of 12 dropout students and retention of more than 60 students at risk of dropping out.
- 13 schools are included in the educational program of Amalipe Center.
- Assistance to access medical and social services - conducting preventive measures – 186 persons.
- Identifying groups willing to finish their educational studies – 60 persons, 19 of them to raise their educational level.
- Assistance in obtaining a grant or scholarship of Roma students – 15 person.

Results that cannot be measured are associated with activation of young people and Roma communities in the municipalities involved. This is a process that cannot be completed in one or two years. Amalipe has started it and will continue its efforts in this direction..



Youth volunteer group



Lidership group



Work with young people



Field work

## OTHERS ABOUT THE PROJECT

The activities within the project and the results were highly valued at the closing conference held on September 17, 2013. The conference was attended by Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Policy Rositsa Yankova, Deputy Minister of Education Ivan Krastev, Representative of DG „Employment” of the European Commission Cornelia Andrew, who welcomed the results and expressed support for the implementation of the model.

*“Lessons can be learnt from successful projects, for example ... Community Development Centres to eliminate barriers to the labour market in Bulgaria ...*

*Good example: "Bulgaria-Community Development Centres (CDC) aim to empower and promote the employment of young people and women in marginalised Roma communities. The initiative has been implemented by AMALIPE Centre for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance with the support of European Commission since 2011. Community Development Centres were established in 11 municipalities.”*

**Report on the implementation of the EU framework  
for National Roma Integration Strategies published  
by the European Commission on April 4, 2014**

# 5

## COMBATTING ANTI-ROMA STEREOTYPES AND XENOPHOBIA

One of the main obstacles to the implementation of the policies for Roma integration is the lack of broad public support for those policies. The lack of knowledge about Roma (in particular the Roma culture) and the vast anti-Roma stereotypes and prejudices are a the major reason for the lack of public support for integration policy. We don't blame the majority for prejudice against the Roma people, because we believe that moral categories apply to individuals and not to groups of people. All the activities that we realize seek to promote mutual understanding and collaboration between Roma and non-Roma, and help combatting the anti-Roma stereotypes and prejudices.

In addition, during 2013 we've implemented targeted activities for combatting stereotypes and prejudices towards Roma among the most important target group – the young people.

### PROJECT

Youth is Tolerance: combatting anti-Roma stereotypes among the young people.

### DURATION OF THE PROGRAM

February 2013 – January 2015

### DONOR

European Commission under the program Fundamental rights and citizenship.

### WHY

Project „Youth is tolerance – combatting anti-Roma stereotypes among the young people” aims to fight with racism, xenophobia and the anti-Roma prejudices based on traditional and new stereotypes among the people at age 14 to 25. The project aims to promote mutual understanding and tolerance.

### HOW

A comprehensive model to overcome racism and anti-Roma stereotypes has been established and tested among young people within the project in Bulgaria, Romania, Greece and Hungary. It uses the „peer to peers” method which actively engages young people with a wide range of activities to overcome stereotypes: campaigns, training of peers and others. They are united in the so called Youth Task Force Groups (Youth Groups for Tolerance). The project activities are implemented in one city in Romania, Greece and Hungary and six districts in Bulgaria – Veliko Tarnovo, Blagoevgrad, Vratsa, Burgas, Plovdiv and Shumen.

### WHAT

Together young people from different ethnic groups united in the clubs „Youth is Tolerance” combat negative attitudes and stereotypes, xenophobia and racism. The main activities in this project are campaigns, peer trainings on tolerance and other public activities. The volunteers have regular meetings once a week to discuss their future activities.



A concept for the development of youth volunteers groups, which describes in detail the activities, target groups, how to reach them and their activation was established under the program. In each of the four countries have been collected data on existing documents and materials on anti-Roma stereotypes, discrimination and tolerance. Sociological research on stereotypes of the young people in terms of ethnic and religious minorities and other nationalities living in Bulgaria was done before launching the activities of the volunteers groups. The survey showed that the majority of young people share mostly negative stereotypes towards Roma, the lack of real contact with young Roma and the lack of information on Roma are among the main causes of major social distances. The study showed the channels of influence among young people – personal networks / contacts and the Internet. That defined the methods used to impact.

Before the start of the activities of the volunteers groups an international summer camp for young people from the four participating countries was held. They were trained how to reach out to their peers and to open their hearts for tolerance. At the end of the year an exchange visit in Romania took place, where the most active volunteers from the four countries shared their experience and „took” ideas from their Romanian counterparts.

Since the autumn of 2013 the youth volunteers groups began a series of campaigns and peer trainings. To assist them our team carefully prepared a manual on tolerance. The manual contains valuable information and practical tips ([http://youthtolerance.eu/images/materials/Narachnik\\_tolerantnost\\_joint.pdf](http://youthtolerance.eu/images/materials/Narachnik_tolerantnost_joint.pdf)). Armed with the Manual, much enthusiasm and open hearts the youth clubs registered a total of 23 peer-trainings (of high school and university students) in 2013 by the modules that were identified as a result of the survey.

The trainings in the six areas involved in the project in Bulgaria acquainted the volunteers with the Roma history and culture, with the objectives of the project, how to break up the negative stereotypes and how to influence other young people to be more open and more tolerant towards others.

We have been looking for the participation of various institutions that are relevant to youth, tolerance, education and the fight against discrimination in all the activities held during the past year. For the successful implementation of the activities we engaged over 60 professionals from health, educational and social institutions, dozens of non-governmental organizations and local and national authorities.

The youth volunteer groups in the project have organized a number of events including campaigns (on the street, in places where young people gather in schools), trainings, press conferences and other public activities. More than 30 campaigns were held during this year in the four countries working under this project.

These events „touched” nearly 23 500 people, 120 journalists, and included more than 3000 young people. Some of the examples of the campaigns fostering tolerance, understanding and respect, organized by youth clubs are „Roma Pride – Day of the Roma culture”, „International Tolerance Day” and others.

To spread the information and news about events organized in the project faster we created a Facebook groups and website of the project – [www.youthtolerance.eu](http://www.youthtolerance.eu).

## RESULTS

The establishing of the youth voluntary clubs „Youth is Tolerance” was an important result by itself: the unification of young people for social cause voluntary basis, furthermore, a tolerance-oriented cause, is a promising start. The voluntary clubs have brought together Roma, Bulgarian and Turkish young people and this has become a model for what they want to achieve. Activities that they organize unite youth. Young people from different ethnic backgrounds become friends and have fun



together. The young people are a good example of how our society should look like. They actually show that regardless of ethnicity, religion, appearance, people can be friends and do interesting and useful things.

Since the beginning of the project to now volunteers had organized jointly campaigns and trainings on tolerance, which helped them to break some of their stereotypes and show others that they can do it. They really can!

### THROUGH THE EYES OF THE OTHERS

*The thing that I like in „Youth is Tolerance” is the friendship and the warm connections between the coordinator and the volunteers, the aim for a better future for all the young people. I like that we are taking different initiatives and organizing campaigns to popularize this club and its aim and in particular – tolerance among the ethnic groups in Bulgaria. I believe that the club helps a lot for the integration of Roma people in Bulgaria.*

**Simona Petrova, 18 years, volunteers, Shumen**

*This project gives something that our town and country are missing – more goodness, tolerance, humanity and empathy. I also like the meetings with a lot of children, different people and communication. This is such a treasure!*

**Harieta Tsenova, The town of Vratsa**

*I am part of the „Youth is Tolerance” project, because I am fascinated by the idea to make the situation in our country better. The activities that we are involved in unite us and other young people like us. This type of activities makes us feel complete. I hope that my contribution to the project is positive and I hope that this project is just the beginning of something bigger. I hope there will be a change in the bad stereotypes laid in our nation. This project can leave lasting legacy for really a better world!*

**Miroslav Stoinov, 26 years**



One of the main goals of Center Amalipe is to provide equal opportunities for Roma woman and to promote her active role in public and political life. This is a main principle for our organization. To achieve this goal in 2013 Amalipe continued to work in several directions: on one hand empowerment of women in the Roma community to become active members of the community, and on the other hand – mainstreaming the problems of Roma women in the general problems of women in Europe.

As a member of the Bulgarian Platform of the European Women's Lobby, Amalipe got involved in number of EWL campaigns aimed at achieving gender equality and improve the situation of Roma women on the European scale. One of these campaigns was designed to promote the participation of women from minority and migrant background in the European Parliament elections in 2014 through a project by the European Women's Lobby „Minority Women – Equal Votes-Equal Voices. Mentoring for Change in View of the 2014 European Elections” („Minorities – equal vote, equal voice. Support for change on the eve of the European elections in 2014”). In 2013, the European Women's Lobby continued to recognize the problems of minority women in Europe, including Roma women as a priority in its advocacy.

Amalipe's contribution on the report developed by Livia Jaroka was significant. She is the only Roma woman – Member of the European Parliament. In September 2013 she presented the report at the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality of the EP „Gender Aspects of European framework for National Roma Integration Strategies” and it was approved by the European Parliament on December 10, 2013<sup>1</sup>.

In order to raise awareness among organizations working on women's issues, Teoroda Krumova and Maria Ivanova participated in the 15th Annual Conference of the European Alliance – Violence against women, introducing the topic of early marriages and models to address the problem. In November 2013 Bulgarian EWL platform along with the Alliance against Domestic Violence organized joint campaign within 16 days dedicated to combating violence against women, in which Amalipe took also place. On November 22, 2013 was given start to the campaign with „colorful” peaceful protest in front of the National Assembly. Around fifty women gathered to demand „Ratify the Istanbul Convention Now!”. Center Amalipe as an organization that is a member of the European Women's Lobby joined the campaign to combat violence against women. In five municipalities where Amalipe has established Community Development Centers there were information campaign held on the Istanbul Convention. The campaign covered the women from ethnic minorities who are part of the women's groups to the Community Development Centers. The company reached more than 70-80 members of the fairer sex. The initiative managed to raise the women awareness and what preventive measures can be taken.

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<sup>1</sup> You can find the full report here: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P7-TA-2013-0545&language=EN&ring=A7-2013-0349>

The second aspect of the activities of Amalipe for empowerment of Roma women includes activities aimed at the community. They shelter both male and female groups, since the change is only possible if it happens parallel in both „camps”. In 2013, 26 Women’s groups were established at the Community Development Centers aiming activation of women from the local communities and their active involvement in community development and improvement of the environment in which they live. Initially the groups started timidly, all moderators (whether male or female) gradually grew in understanding what it means equality and empowerment of women. They were involved in the number of advocacy activities to improve the situation in the community, and also solving a few cases of early marriage and violence against women. They were able to boast with a big victory. They won a case for child custody of a girl from one of the most traditional Roma communities – Burgudzhij. That was remarkable and showed the other girls in the community that they can fight for their rights, especially their right to free choice.



# 7

## PRESERVATION AND RENEWAL OF THE ROMA CULTURE AND IDENTITY

A guiding principle in the work of Center Amalipe is to support the preservation, promotion and renewal of Roma culture and identity. We perceive the integration not as assimilation / acculturation, but as a chance to upgrade and modernize the Roma culture. Contemporary Roma culture and identity must continue the traditions of Roma folklore, but in terms of the needs of the modern Roma who has rejected the patriarchal habits without denying the ethnic identity. Contemporary Roma culture should be broadly defined to include the identity of groups such as Millet, Rudari and others without being perceived as „second class” or „non-genuine” Roma.

The preservation and renewal of Roma culture and identity cannot just happen by itself. Instead a concerted effort in this field is required. Therefore in 2013, continuing the practice of previous years, Center Amalipe organized:

### 7.1. Tenth Children Roma Festival „Open Heart”

#### WHAT

For the tenth consecutive year CIEDT „Amalipe” held the „Open heart” Roma Children Festival – an arc of song, dance, smiles and friendship... with no end!

Between the 7th and 9th of June, Amalipe in partnership with the Municipality of Veliko Tarnovo held the tenth anniversary Roma Children Festival „Open Heart” in the city of Veliko Tarnovo. The program started on June 7th (Friday) at the „Boris Denev” Art Gallery. During the festivities the moderators and volunteers of the Community Development Centers throughout the country as well as similar centers in Macedonia and Romania showed great skills in crafts, orchestral and vocal singing. The celebration continued on June, 8th and 9th of June in „Marno pole” park, which is traditionally the stage for dozens of schools across the country that study the „Ethnic Folklore – Roma Folklore” free elective subject.

#### WHY

The festival aims to give children of different ethnicities opportunities and to encourage in them a lasting interest in the learning process as a whole. The main goal is showing that the folklore of each ethnic group brings its cultural heritage and is indispensable to our existence as a unified nation. The festival targets the preservation, development and promotion of Roma culture and folklore, as well as the presentation of the folklore and culture of other ethnic groups in Bulgaria. Its purpose is to bring children from different ethnic groups to the same stage united under the common idea – „World is for everyone”.

#### WHO

Over 1400 children from more than 100 schools and clubs in Bulgaria and Macedonia participated. They were welcomed by many guests who came specifically to immerse themselves in the

atmosphere of talent. Furthermore they acquainted themselves with the teachers, admired the lovely workshops where children wove baskets, made spindles and spoons and beautiful souvenirs from natural materials with unsurpassed dexterity. They also drew and sculpted all manner of items that can be displayed outdoors. The official guest list included: HE Gyuro Katarina Vikyor – Ambassador of the Kingdom of Norway ; N.Pr. Leshek Hensel – Ambassador of Poland; Daniel Panov – Mayor of Veliko Tarnovo; Boni Bonev – Chairman of the Bulgarian – Swiss Chamber of Commerce; Karina Fortuny – Trust for social achievements; Prof. Maria Baeva – Pedagogical Faculty of Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski” Stefan Stefanov, a representative of the Veliko Tarnovo City Council. Their presence was a sign of appreciation and respect for the achievements of students, teachers and parents.

Traditionally each of the participating schools presented their own programme: song and dance, dramatization of stories, reenactments of the holidays and plenty of emotions... However the event that stole the show was undoubtedly the makeshift Gangnam style dance that the Hristo Smirnenski – Koynare beauties performed after the rain had stopped. Barefoot, muddy but happy they enthralled the audience with their incredible emotion and rhythm. Marno pole park filled with colors, rhythm, song and dance indigenous not only to Bulgarians, Turks and Roma popular in Bulgaria but also the different styles associated with Roma around the world. These ranged from the fiery rhythms of Spanish flamenco in Goran Bregovic's Balkan music to the moving melodies of Russian Gypsy romances.

Through the participation of the Community development centers we were able to demonstrate that we aim to preserve crafts practiced now only by older people in the community. Traditional craft workshops, situated next to the main festival stages exhibited continuity in tradition.

Maybe – because it's an anniversary! Maybe because it was a labor of love! Maybe – because the students were expecting it for a long time and had been preparing for the entire school year!

Maybe – because it is our beloved project – a Roma festival that unites Bulgarians, Roma and Turks... all children in Bulgaria... we congratulated ourselves: „It was the best festival ever!”

### **THROUGH THE EYES OF THE OTHERS**

*An emotional, colorful and sunny mood. Excellent organization and a place where our children were able to display their talents. We've made a whole bunch of new acquaintances and friendships. Thanks for the wonderful event, full of positive emotions, songs, dances... Children's Folklore Festival is an opportunity to bask in the rich palette of colours and beauty tha ethnic folklore provides.*

**„L. Karavelov” school Varna**

*For an entire decade the Amalipe center has brought joy to children, young people and a large number of Bulgarian citizens by holding the annual Open Heart Roma Children festival. All things created by children's talent and heart bring beauty and faith in the success of Bulgarian youths and the nation as a whole. I am certain that the colourful folklore bouquet of several ethnic groups enriches our nation's cultural environment and hope that the interest and respect for this event will continue to grow. Therefore I heartily hope the festival continues to be a wide open heart to all the children of Bulgaria.*

**Rosen Plevneliev, President of the Republic of Bulgaria**

## 7.2. ROMA PRIDE 2013

### WHY

To show a wide audience that Roma have their pride and because of that the Roma community has contributed and will continue to contribute to the development of national and European culture. The campaign also aims to combat anti-Roma stereotypes and discrimination.

### WHAT

For a third consecutive year CIEDT „Amalipe” has organized the celebration of Roma Pride – Day of the Roma culture and pride. In the days between 4th and 8th of October 2013 a variety of activities took place. These events aroused great interest and gathered many people. Roma Pride 2013's celebration brought together hundreds of school and university students, teachers and citizens from more than 15 districts in the country. The motto of the campaign was „I have a dream – to study and live together”.

### WHO

Center Amalipe took part in the campaign by the activities of the centers for community development together with the local clubs for development, schools working under the project „Reducing the drop-out of Roma children from school” and for the first time – the youth clubs for tolerance established under the project „Youth is tolerance – combating anti-Roma stereotypes among the young people”. Exactly the youth groups for tolerance were the core of the initiatives.

### HOW

Readings of texts by Roma authors, recital of works relating to the topic of the Holocaust, exhibitions of diplomas for secondary and higher education belonging to the Roma from the local community, exposures of old crafts, music, dance and theater acts and exhibition of traditional Roma clothing were only part of the initiatives organized for Roma Pride. There were also information materials distributed to the wide audience. These brochures were specially prepared to give information about the Roma Pride day and about the reasons why Roma should be proud of their culture. You can find some of the materials at the following link: <http://youthtolerance.eu/index.php/bg/materiali>

Roma Pride is an international initiative coordinated by EGAM (European Grassroots Antiracist Movement), and aims to encourage the Roma communities of Europe to organize initiatives with the idea to show pride in their origin and culture. Roma pride was held on October 6 in Denmark, France, Portugal, Italy, Croatia, Czech Republic, Poland, Romania as well as in Norway, Serbia, Montenegro, Ukraine and Moldova.

Roma Pride in Bulgaria was held under the project „Youth is tolerance – combating anti-Roma stereotypes among the young people”, financed by the European commission under the program „Fundamental rights and citizenship”. The most active were the youth task force groups for tolerance established in the cities of Burgas, Blagoevgrad, Veliko Tarnovo, Vratsa, Plovdiv and Shumen. Center Amalipe will continue supporting initiatives that demonstrate respect to the cultural diversity of all the ethnic groups in Bulgaria, combating discrimination and anti-Roma stereotypes, promoting mutual understanding and respect.



### 7.3. Vasilitsa 2013 – Roma Culture Day

#### WHAT

On January 14, 2013 for the fourth consecutive year Amalipe has kept the tradition of celebrating Vassilitsa which is not only the beginning of the New Year according to the old Roma tradition (and in the past Bulgarian tradition as well), but also as a day of Roma culture. At the very beginning of the New Year, Center „Amalipe” along with nearly 170 schools, centers for community development in 11 municipalities and volunteer groups held over 100 events across the country and under the motto „Rebuilding bridges between us.”



## WHY

The Roma New Year campaign had several goals:

- to present to the general public the richness of Roma culture, the links between Roma and Bulgarian culture;
- to bring to everyone a common hope for a more successful and „healthy” year, and
- to introducing Roma New Year’s traditions to young Roma in order to preserve and keep their link with the tradition.

## HOW

More than 140 schools and eleven Community Development Centers organized activities with Bulagrain and Roma children which they presented in front of parents, representatives of municipal and regional administrations in all regions of the country.

Children from different schools participating in the „Reducing the dropout of Roma students” program visited Sofia with the traditional „survaknitsa”. Combining dance, songs and poems, they wished health and a good new year to the Vice President Margarita Popova, Prime Minister Boyko Borisov, Deputy Prime Minister Tsvetan Tsvetanov, ministers of European funds, education, health and regional development Deputy Ministers of Culture and defense, the ambassadors of the U.S.A, the Republic of France and Great Britain, Sofia Mayor Yordanka Fandakova, representatives of the Secretariat of NCCEIL, The Center for Educational Integration and many others.

More than hundred events were held in that day. Students did the traditional ritual „survakane” to wish Happy New Year and to remind that the educational integration efforts require support from representatives of the Regional Education inspectorate, Regional health inspectorates, Social Assistance Directorate and municipal mayors from all over the country.

## RESULTS

For the first time a campaign with over hundreds of events in more than 24 districts was held in one day. In one day Bulgaria began to live in the rhythm of the Roma culture. All this has contributed for the promotion of Vasilitsa as the Day of the Roma culture.



## INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION AND EDUCATIONAL INTEGRATION







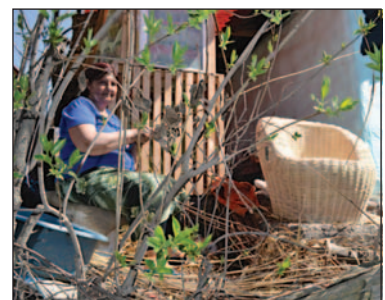




## HEALTHCARE



## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT







Publishing various forms of analyses, reports, annual books and others is an important part of Center Amalipe's work. They summarize the gained experience in the different fields intervention of the organization. They introduce models applied in practice, make assessment of the situation of the Roma community and the integration policies, they introduce the Roma culture and history.

In this regard, 2013 was a year of a lot of publications. The list of publications for 2013 consist of:

**THE REPORT „Beyond anti-Roma Stereotypes: World is not Just Black and White”** introduces basic observations and conclusions about the stereotypes about Roma among teachers, social workers and health practitioners in Bulgaria, Romania and Netherlands, but also presents activities and achievements within the project „TO TOUCH THE UNTOUCHABLE: combating traditional and new anti-Roma stereotypes”. Part One gives an overview of the legal, legislative and institutional framework related to the citizenship in Netherlands as well as information about the Roma community and the problems related to the citizenship of Roma people. Part Two consists of information about the research and activities under the project in Romania. Part Three is related to the national sociological survey on anti-Roma stereotypes of teachers, social workers and doctors in Bulgaria and the main findings of the research. The next part Four describes the main elements of the model for overcoming of the anti-Roma stereotypes, applied within the project, undertaken actions and achieved results. The main conclusions, recommendations and guidelines for development – on national and European level – are introduced in Chapter 5.

The report is published in Bulgarian, English, Romanian and Dutch languages. The English version is accessible under “Publication” on the web site of Center Amalipe at:

<http://www.amalipe.com/files/publications/Stereotipi-eng.pdf>

**REPORT „The Community Development Center: the Heart of the Community”** introduces the activity of the Community development centers (CDC) and the community moderators who work there, which is an important approach for community development, applied by Center Amalipe. The report also makes a short overview of the implementation of project „Promoting Participatory Fieldwork at Grass-root level in Marginalized and Traditional Roma Communities”, main conclusions, as well as ideas and recommendations for further implementation of the model for community development in Roma community. Chapter One gives a short information about the project. Chapter Two presents the concept of the Community development centers as an illustration of the main approach for community development used in the framework of the project. Examples from the field work of the CDCs can be found in Chapter 3. The following chapter describes the participation of CDCs in the process of preparation of the Municipal Roma integration plans and the National Roma integration strategy, as well as the extend to which those documents support the approach for community development. Chapter 5 gives information about the necessary steps and contains recommendations

for promotion of the field work in Roma community, in particular – it gives ideas for multiplying the model and institutionalization of the CDCs.

The report is published in Bulgarian, English, Romanian and Greek languages. The version in English is accessible under “Publication” on the web site of Center Amalipe at:

[http://www.amalipe.com/files/publications/Sarce-eng\\_article.pdf](http://www.amalipe.com/files/publications/Sarce-eng_article.pdf)

**COLLECTION „Successful practices in the activities of the Community Development Centers”.** Through many pictures and colors the collection presents concrete examples of the activity of the CDCs in Pavlikeni, Novi Pazar, Kameno, Peshtera, Etropole and Byala Slatina. The stories told by the community moderators themselves and the people whom they helped touch the reader with its sincerity and purity. They are the best proof for the meaning of CDCs’ existence and for the growth of the community moderators.

The collection is published in Bulgarian and is distributed for free through the network of CDCs. You can find it on the website of the Community development centers under “Publications”:

[http://romadevelopment.org/images/pdf/uspeshni\\_praktiki.pdf](http://romadevelopment.org/images/pdf/uspeshni_praktiki.pdf)

**HANDBOOK for community moderators „Back to school”.** Since fall 2013 the moderators at the Community development centers started a cycle of trainings with volunteers on the history and tradition of Roma in Bulgaria, right and responsibilities in the fields of education, healthcare and social protection; the main institutions and their field of expertise and other important for the local people topics. The handbook „Back to school” is designed for the needs of those trainings as it gives the necessary information and supplements it with number of interesting cases and interactive games. With this issue the Roma families learn both about their history and culture and about whom they can turn to on practical issues that they encounter.

The handbook is published in Bulgarian and is distributed for free through the network of CDCs. You can find it on the website of the Community development centers under „Publications”:

<http://romadevelopment.org/images/publikacii/back-to-school.pdf>

**HANDBOOK for community monitoring of the healthcare services.** It is designed for community moderators, volunteers and Roma activists who implement the community monitoring of the healthcare services. The book is also suitable for other practitioners and professionals who wish to apply the model in other areas of the country. The manual gives useful information about the Roma community and groups (with an accent of the health attitudes), main institutions in the field of healthcare, the different stages of the process of community monitoring (community mobilization, community inquiry, local advocacy). The handbook includes practical advices for establishing volunteers’ groups, implementing advocacy activities, how to work with healthcare institutions and others.

The handbook is published in Bulgarian and can be downloaded on the website of the Health Program of Center Amalipe under „Publications”:

[http://www.romahealth.com/images/publications/Manual\\_CommunityMonitoring\\_final.pdf](http://www.romahealth.com/images/publications/Manual_CommunityMonitoring_final.pdf)

**HANDBOOK on Tolerance.** Since fall 2013 volunteers from the Youth groups for tolerance, established within the project „Youth is Tolerance” started a cycle of trainings with their peers – high school and university students to get them acquainted with the Roma community and to help them overcome their own stereotypes – about Roma, the different, the others.



The handbook on tolerance is designed to support those trainings. The content is rich in topics related to Roma culture, prejudices about Roma, culture of tolerance, social and ethnic conflicts, interaction between Roma and non-Roma young people. There are also topics that would be very important for building skills and competences of the volunteers: leadership, conflict resolution, working with peers and volunteers, decision making, problem solving, organizing campaigns, working with media and others. There is a chapter with additional materials that includes practical tasks and cases for facilitating the training process.

The handbook is published in Bulgarian and is distributed for free through the network of youth volunteers' groups „Youth is Tolerance”. Electronic version can be downloaded on the website of the Youth Program of Center Amalipe at:

[http://youthtolerance.eu/images/materials/Narachnik\\_tolerantnost\\_joint.pdf](http://youthtolerance.eu/images/materials/Narachnik_tolerantnost_joint.pdf)

**CONCEPT “Roma exclusion in the rural areas – a barrier to the sustainable growth”.** The concept introduces strategic ideas for overcoming the social exclusion of the young Roma people living in rural areas. The concept builds up on the experience gained under the project „Promoting social inclusion of young people from marginalized rural communities”, implemented in Bulgaria, Romania, and Macedonia.

The concept is printed in Bulgarian, English, Romanian and Macedonian languages. Electronic version in English can be accessed at:

[http://romaprogress.org/images/pdf/Roma\\_social\\_exclusion-en.pdf](http://romaprogress.org/images/pdf/Roma_social_exclusion-en.pdf)

**REPORT „Promoting social inclusion of young people in marginalized rural communities”.** The report introduces the experience from implementing a project with the same name, conducted by Center Amalipe, National Roma center – Macedonia and Liga Pro Europa – Romania. The report contains main facts about the levels of social exclusion of Roma in rural areas and successful models for increasing the employment levels and social inclusion, implemented under the project. The approaches for community development are also introduced (through the work of the Community development centers and the community moderators) around which model examples of success are built up. The report concludes with recommendations for continuing, enlargement and institutionalization of the activities for social inclusion of young Roma in rural areas – in the context of implementation of the National strategies for Roma integration and the new programming period 2014 – 2020.

The report is published in English. An electronic version is accessible at:

[http://romaprogress.org/images/pdf/report\\_Progress2.pdf](http://romaprogress.org/images/pdf/report_Progress2.pdf)

**REPORT „Center Amalipe’s contribution to the assessment of the implementation of the National strategy of Republic of Bulgaria for Roma integration”.** In October 2013 the European Commission (EC) announced that it would publish its first assessment of the implementation of the National Roma integration strategies from the member states in April 2014 and invited all stakeholders – governments and NGOs – to give their contribution to the assessment. In the framework of announced procedure Center Amalipe prepared and submitted its report including facts, interpretations, recommendations and descriptions of good practices for implementation of the national policy for Roma integration in Bulgaria. The report was highly evaluated and main recommendations from it were laid out in the Monitoring report of the EC.

The contribution of Center Amalipe was drafted in English and it is accessible under “Publications” on the website of Center Amalipe:

[http://www.amalipe.com/files/publications/NRIS\\_2012-2013.pdf](http://www.amalipe.com/files/publications/NRIS_2012-2013.pdf)



In 2013 we continued to publish a **monthly newsletter “Amalipe”**. The newsletter represents the activities implemented in the relevant month, information about the development of the Roma integration policies, as well as analyses. The newsletter is printed in Bulgarian and English and the electronic version is accessible on the website of Center Amalipe under „Archive newsletters”.

In 2013 the Community development centers – Pavlikeni and Veliko Tarnovo started issuing a Community newsletter – once in three months. It represents events from the activity of the centers. Special accent is put on the efforts for community monitoring of the healthcare services. The articles are written by the community moderators and local volunteers.

Number of flyers, brochures and other materials were prepared and printed as supplement to the main activities of Amalipe. They are also accessible under „Materials” or „Publications” on the websites maintained by the organization:

Community development centers: <http://romadevelopment.org>

Innovative forms of employment in the community: <http://romaprogress.org>

Youth is tolerance: <http://youthtolerance.eu/>

Roma education: <http://romaeducation.com>

Roma health: <http://www.romahealth.com>

Central webpage of Amalipe: [www.amalipe.com](http://www.amalipe.com)

# 9

## ADVOCACY FOR ROMA INTEGRATION IN 2013

Advocacy is one of the most important ways civil organizations can influence the formation and execution of public policies. Advocacy is the field in which Amalipe has been focused for years and the organization has been acknowledged as the most successful Roma advocacy group in Bulgaria by both national and European institutions, by the foreign embassies in Sofia and our civil structures.

The year 2013 was one of the most difficult years when it comes to efficient advocacy due to the permanent political instability: we had three successive governments, civil protests almost throughout the entire year which were accompanied by institutional instability which, in turn, caused the need to replace the people working in those institutions. At the same time, 2013 was a key year when it comes to the framing of programmes for the Bulgarian 2014–2020 European strategic documents preparation.

### 9.1. The preconditions

Advocacy for a certain cause is always a collective effort. The advocacy for Roma integration is even more challenging since it requires cooperation between the Roma and non-Roma communities and the efforts of organizations which work in different regions and with different Roma communities. Thus, the support and partnership with several organizations were very important: Association „World Without Borders” – Stara Zagora, Association „Nov pat” – Hayredin, Association „Slance za vsichki” – Peshtera, Association „Roma academy for culture and education” – Sliven, Roma women organization „Haiyachi” – Novi Pazar, Open Society Institute, National Network for Children and number of other organizations in Bulgaria, as well as the National Roma Center (Macedonia), Romani Criss and Satipen (Romania), European Roma Information Office (Brussels) and others.

We value greatly the support provided by the ambassadors of the United States, Great Britain, Belgium, France, Norway, Poland and Sount African Republic who graciously took part in the forums organized by Amalipe. Some of them visited the office of our organization in Veliko Tarnovo, others – the offices in rest of the country which in itself was an act of trust and willingness for cooperative work.

The trust of the institutions – regional, national and European – towards the activity of Amalipe was an important precondition for the success of the advocacy initiatives. The fact that ministers and deputy ministers from the three Bulgarian governments in 2013 took part in the forums and events we organized is a good indicator for this. Members of Amalipe were received by Bulgarian vice president Mrs Margarita Popova, the Prime Minister Boiko Borisov, five ministers, several deputy ministers and ambassadors (see <http://www.amalipe.com/index.php?nav=news&id=1448&lang=1>) during the festivities celebrating the Roma New Year (Vasilitsa) in 2013 and we kept the tradition of meeting high-ranking officials in 2014 as well. Members of the European Comission also took part in Amalipe forums, some of them travelling to Bulgaria especially for that purpose.

## 9.2. Advocacy on a national level

The current situation gave rise to several important tasks when it comes to Amalipe advocacy activities on a national level:

1. The inclusion of the issue of the Roma integration in the new Operational Programmes/ the Programme for Rural Development in a way that would ensure sufficient funding for the execution of the National Strategy for Roma Integration

1.1. Regarding the Operational Programme Human Resources Development (OPHRD): In 2012, the President of Amalipe Deyan Kolev was elected representative of NGOs working for Roma integration in the Working Group on the development of the Operational Programme Human Resources Development. After consulting with the other organizations, we came up with a few basic requests towards the new OPHRD: the inclusion of the investment priority „Integration of marginalized communities such as the Roma” as one of the main priorities in the programme, the inclusion of the possibility of financing for municipal integration plans and for Integrational Interventions via OPHRD, a more serious involvement of NGOs in the process of execution of the new OPHRD. The Center for Interethnic Dialog and Tolerance Amalipe worked hard to reach its goals throughout 2013: by taking part in the activities of the Working Group, as well as by organizing advocacy forums. As a result, with the generous cooperation of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (which is the ruling body of the OPHRD) and the European Commission, almost all of our goals were achieved. The working version of the OPHRD at the end of 2013 included the investment priority ‘Integration of marginalized communities such as the Roma’, according to which integration projects would be supported and those would include activities in four directions – improvement of access to employment, access to education, access to quality social and health services (mandatory components), as well as development of local communities and overcoming of anti-Roma stereotypes. This investment priority would support integrated projects with priority for the execution of the Municipal Integration Plans provided by municipalities, NGOs or other institutions. Partnership with organizations based in the community would be a requirement for those integrated projects. The investment priority was chosen as one of the four main priorities towards which 60% of the programme’s resources would be directed<sup>1</sup>.

1.2. Regarding the Operational Programme ‘Science and Education for Smart Growth’(OPSESG): the national decision for this programme was taken in January 2013. In September 2013, the President of Amalipe Deyan Kolev was invited to take part in the Working group developing the programme.

The working version of OPSESG at the end of 2013 contains a separate priority axis for educational integration. It contains the investment priority „Socio-economic integration of marginalized communities such as the Roma” which would support a great number of educational integration projects.

Although the operational programmes were not finalized in 2013, we could say that OPHRD and OPSESG provide the necessary foundation for financing for the so-called ‘soft part’ of the activi-

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<sup>1</sup> Analysis of the project of OPHRD regarding the Roma integration :  
<http://www.amalipe.com/index.php?nav=news&id=1893&lang=1>

ties for the execution of the National Roma Integration Strategy. The contribution of Amalipe and the NGOs is indisputable.

- 1.3. Regarding the Rural Development Programme (RDP): our efforts were met with an initial lack of understanding and capacity on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food when it came to the inclusion of the topic of the Roma integration. Due to the ceaseless efforts of Yulia Grigorova as well as the generous contribution of the GD Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Commission, in the end of 2013 texts allowing the support of housing construction for the disadvantaged were included in the RDP as well as texts ensuring greater chance for projects for municipalities with higher minority rates. RDP needs many more aspects covered, therefore we will continue our advocacy activities regarding this programme in 2014.
  - 1.4. Other programmes: The Center for Interethnic Dialog and Tolerance Amalipe took part – by providing outlooks and standpoints – in the creation of the Partnership Agreement setting the national priorities to be funded under the European Structural and Investment Funds in the period 2014 – 2020. We took part in the election of NGO participants in the Working Group developing the Operational Programme ‘Good Management’ (OPGM) by supporting Milena Ilieva from the Association World without Borders who was later elected.
2. The actual implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria (NRISRB) : the National Assembly adopted the NRISRB on March, 1st 2012. Amalipe and a great number of Roma organizations took active part in its creation. In order to turn this document into a working strategy, in 2013, the Amalipe Center focused its efforts towards:
- 2.1. The adoption of the „Programmes for the execution of NRISRB” Addendum. The first version of a Plan with special programmes was suggested by Amalipe during the process of development of NRISRB. At the end of 2011 the Plan was introduced to the Council of Ministers, but it was neither adopted, nor rejected. The Interdepartmental Working Group for resource support on Roma integration with funds of the European Union decided to renew the suggested Plan in the end of 2012. Following an intensive discussion among the members of the group (representatives of institutions and Roma NGOs) the Plan was finalized and approved on February, 28th 2013.
- The plan contained proposition for 45 programs to be funded with resources from the European funds, the state budget, the financial mechanism of the EEA and the Bulgarian – Swiss Program for Cooperation. Through these programs the activities laid-out in the Action Plan of the National Roma integration strategy<sup>2</sup> will be implemented. The approval of this plan was specifically pointed at as a good example from Bulgaria in the Communiqué of the EC „Steps forward in implementation of the National Roma integration strategies”, published in June 2013.
- Unfortunately, the political changes that took place in Bulgaria led to obstacles and cancellation for the adopted Action Plan (with the argument that there were difficult to understand administrative issues in it). In 2013 a new discussion on the document started and it is expected to be adopted again in 2014.
- 2.2. Building up on the institutional framework for implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategy (NRIS). In 2012 two intersectional commissions were established, envisioned in the NRIS – a working group for normative changes and an intersectional group

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<sup>2</sup> Detailed information see at:

<http://www.amalipe.com/index.php?nav=news&id=1485&lang=1>

for resource provision for the Roma integration with funding from the EU. In both groups except for the responsible institutions were included representatives of NGO after an election procedure. Center Amalipe actively participated in both groups.

The group for resource provision of the Roma integration was chaired by the Minister of EU funds Tomislav Donchev. The responsible Deputy Ministers – Chairpersons of Managing and Intermediate bodies under OP „Human resources development” (OPHRD), OP „Regional Development” (OPRD) and OP „Rural Development” also were members of the group. By the end of February 2013 the groups approved the proposed by Center Amalipe idea for drafting a definition of standardized Integration interventions as well as two new concrete proposals for such interventions – Community center and Intervention for preventing the drop-out from school. The group approved also a Plan with programs for support of the implementation of the NRIS in the new programming period. The activity of the intersectional working group was specifically pointed at as a good example from Bulgaria in the Communique of the European Commission – „Steps forward in the implementation of the national strategies for Roma integration” published in June 2013.

After the political changes that occurred the activity of the intersectional group was recovered in October 2013. The tasks and functions of the group remained the same as they were initially determined at its establishment in 2011 2012. The membership of the group preserved its policy character – the respected Deputy Ministers who manage the respected Operational programs / the Program for rural development and chairpersons of NGOs (elected after a specific procedure in 2012).

An important set back from the policy character of the group was the appointment of an administrative (not political) figure as a Chairperson – to the seat of the previous Chairman (the Minister of EU funds Tomislav Donchev) was appointed not the Deputy Prime minister and Minister of EU funds Zinaida Zlatanova, but the Secretary of the National council on ethnic and integration issues Rositsa Ivanova<sup>3</sup>. The future will show whether this will affect the activity of the group.

2.3. Preparation of the Municipal plans for Roma integration (MPRI). The NRIS requires all municipalities to prepare their own Municipal integration plans. In February – April 2013 close to 220 municipalities adopted their MPRI for 2013 or for the period 2013–2014. Unfortunately, most of the Plans did not foresee new activities, but only summarized existing ones and many of the activities did not have envisioned budget to them. Nevertheless, the Plans were a good beginning in shifting the integration policy to local level.

Center Amalipe took part in the process of drafting the MPRI in more than 40 municipalities with its local and regional representatives and expert staff in the headquarters office. In the end of 2013 we initiated a process of drafting of such Municipal plans for 2014–20 as the Community Development Centers held trainings of local activists in more than 20 municipalities and discussions in the Roma neighborhoods. The process will continue in 2014.

3. Changes in the overall framework for implementation of the integration policies. In March 2013 three ethnically motivated murders of Roma occurred and again, there was a wave of anti-Roma attitudes. On April 8<sup>th</sup> 13 Roma organizations (Center Amalipe was among them) left the official meeting of the National council on ethnic and integration issues as a protest against the complete absence of reaction of this structure regarding the ongoing events and they requested its restructuring. A week later the organizations came up with a detailed proposition for establishment of a Public council for the implementation of NRIS (by the model of the Tri-side council for coopera-

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<sup>3</sup> Detailed information see at:

<http://www.amalipe.com/index.php?nav=news&id=1748&lang=1>

tion to the Ministry of labor and social policy – with concrete criteria for national representation and mandatory consultations before decision making), establishment of a State agency for Roma integration and establishment of State commission for monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the NRIS (see: <http://www.amalipe.com/index.php?nav=news&id=1557&lang=1>).

Unfortunately, this rare example of unity among the Roma organizations did not lead to an adequate reaction from the government. By the end of 2013 the proposals of the Roma organizations did not get the chance to be discussed with the responsible state institutions. As a result the dialogue between the NCEII and the Roma organizations was practically ceased.

### 9.3. Advocacy on European Union level

In 2013 Center Amalipe continued to participate actively in Advocacy activities on European level. Although the focus of work of the organization remains in Bulgaria – on local and national level – we acknowledge and welcome the fact that as a member state of the EU Bulgaria takes into consideration the decisions of the European institutions. The Roma integration is not only a national challenge: Roma lives in all member states and the freedom of movement is a foundation for the EU, the formulation of European Roma policy is necessary which does not take over the responsibility of the national governments, but proposes more active participation of the European Commission.

Having this in mind, in 2013 we set the following advocacy goals on EU level:

1. Strengthening the engagement of the European Commission for inclusion of the topic of Roma integration in the new operational programs in the countries with numerous Roma population: as the programs are shared responsibility between the national government and the EC, the inclusion of the Roma integration can be demanded by each of the two sides. This is why throughout the whole year Center Amalipe maintained a close contact with the directorates of the EC that are responsible for the key operational programs and the Program for rural development. We held working meetings, we submitted position papers and proposals. In the face of the EC we see a trustworthy partner.
2. Deepening the engagement of the EC for control and monitoring of the implementation of the National Roma integration strategies in the member states of the EU: continuing the undertaken in 2012 when Center Amalipe organized specific Hearing in Brussels, and in 2013 we insisted for formulation of a mechanism for monitoring of the implementation of National Roma integration strategies on national, European and program level which would include the participation of the civil sector (through different forms of shadow reporting, civil monitoring, etc.) and the local communities (through different forms of community monitoring). In November 2013 Center Amalipe submitted its assessment of the implementation of the National Roma integration strategy of Bulgaria<sup>4</sup> within a procedure announced by the EC with a purpose to collect feedback. Center Amalipe's contribution was highly appreciated and a large part of the propositions from it were included in the Monitoring report of the EC on April 4<sup>th</sup> 2014. (<http://www.amalipe.com/index.php?nav=news&id=1925&lang=1>).

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.amalipe.com/files/publications/NRIS\\_2012-2013.pdf](http://www.amalipe.com/files/publications/NRIS_2012-2013.pdf)

## The steps forward

Despite the dynamic and unstable political environment, the Roma integration remained on the agenda of the institutions and the society in 2013. Many necessary steps were not taken, but in the same time preconditions for the implementation of the National Roma integration strategy in the following years were established. The broken dialogue between the NCEII and the Roma organizations was one of the serious weaknesses in 2013. The inclusion of the Roma topic in the operational programs was a key success. Center Amalipe was an active and even main initiator of the most important events in the field of the Roma integration in 2013. Currently the role of the organization as a main partner in determining and implementation of the policies for Roma integration is acknowledged by all institutions.

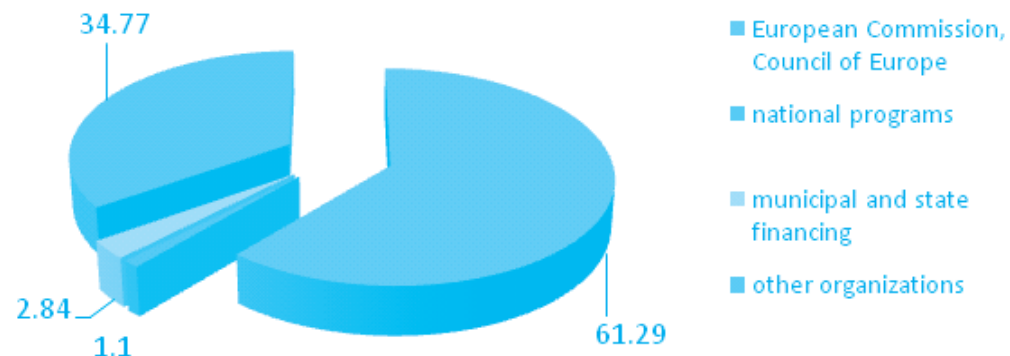
We will continue the advocacy efforts in all directions started in 2013. The above mentioned steps are to be continued and developed. It is important to stress that they can shape a suitable ground for the implementation of policies for Roma integration but not to guarantee the implementation of those policies. For the later public consensus and political will are needed: factors which influence but are not determined uniquely by the advocacy of the civil organizations.



## PROFIT AND LOSS STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR 2013 ON THE NON-PROFIT ACTIVITY

Expenses title	Amount – in thousand leva (BGN)		Income title	Amount – in thousand leva (BGN)	
	Current year	Previous year		Current year	Previous year
a	1	2	a	1	2
<b>I. Operating expenses</b>			<b>I. Operating income</b>		
<b>A. Expenses on regulated activity</b>			<b>A. Income from regulated activity</b>		
1. Donations		161	1. Income from onerous donations	1835	1644
2. Other expenses	1836	1516	2. Income from perfect donations		
<b>Total A</b>	<b>1836</b>	<b>1677</b>	3. Membership fees		
<b>B. Administrative expenses</b>	6		4. Other income		
<b>Total group I</b>	<b>1842</b>	<b>1677</b>	<b>Total A</b>		
<b>II. Financial expenses</b>			<b>Total group I</b>	<b>1835</b>	<b>1644</b>
5. Foreign currency exchange rate losses	0	0	<b>II. Financial income</b>		
<b>Total group II</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	5. Interest income	7	33
<b>V. Total expenses</b>	<b>1842</b>	<b>1677</b>	<b>Total group II</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>VI. Result</b>	0	0	<b>V. Total income</b>	<b>1842</b>	<b>1677</b>
<b>Total (V + VI)</b>	<b>1842</b>	<b>1677</b>	<b>Total (V):</b>	<b>1842</b>	<b>1677</b>

Financing received in 2013 from:





## ROMA CHILDREN FESTIVAL “Open Heart”



## ROMA PRIDE





## Vasilitsa Day of the Roma culture



Celebrating Vasilitsa in a family and with the institutions



Celebrating Vasilitsa at the Ministry of defense

## Tolerance Day



Tolerance Day – Shumen



Tolerance Day – Vratza



## ADVOCACY FOR ROMA INTEGRATION



International conference with the participation of the Deputy Ministers of the social policy and education



National conference on the education of Roma children with Minister Nikolay Miloshev



Meeting with the Vice President Margarita Popova



Conference on Roma healthcare with the participation of H.E. Boiki Moutlung – Charge d'Affairs of Republic of South Africa in Bulgaria



Meeting with the Vice President Margarita Popova



## Activities for combating the anti-Roma stereotypes among young people



Summer camp



Activities of the volunteers' groups "Youth is Tolerance"



Activities for encouraging the participation of Roma women and girls