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The Community Development Center: the Heart of the Community



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FORWARDS

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AS PROMISING TREND IN ROMA INTEGRATION

The present report outlines the main results and conclusions from the implementation of the project Promoting Participatory Fieldwork at Grass-root level in Marginalized and Traditional Roma Communities, implemented by Amalipe Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance (Bulgaria) in partnership with Liga pro Europa (Romania) and ARSIS (Greece) and financed by the European Commission within the Daphne III Programme.

The idea of this project emerged in 2010. During the cycle of trainings of social workers and teachers from Bulgaria, Romania and Greece the trainees shared on many occasions their opinion that the institutions failed to perform successful fieldwork, when it is about Roma. Often, the social workers are not welcome and when they visit a Roma quarter/neighbourhood, they encounter an invisible yet, very firm barrier of mistrust failing thus to resolve many of the field cases. When it is about occasions of domestic violence or the problem concerns traditional practices (such as early marriages, arranged marriages and so on) among Roma, the social workers' failure is almost a hundred percent guaranteed, which makes them not to respond to such signals. Not to mention that it is extremely rare that someone would signal them, at all. They don't perform preventive work, because they regard it as doomed to failure: one cannot do prevention at minimal or even lower levels of trust. Exactly the same findings and assessments were registered as a result from the national inquiry involving all Departments for Child Protection in Bulgaria, and organized by Amalipe Centre and the State Agency for Child Protection.

The teachers enjoy better reception, yet it often turns out that the demonstration of higher trust in them is just ostensible. They also fail in resolving more serious cases of dropping-out from school, or dropping-out due to an early marriage. They fail in attracting the Roma parents for

participation in school life and in achieving their more active involvement with the education of their children.

Quite expectedly, both groups (social workers and teachers) believed that the main reasons for the unsuccessful field work among Roma lies in the Roma community itself: too conservative and traditional, completely attached to the “Roma” customs to settle down their children to a married life and to give early births to many children (“children give birth to children”), mistrustful by nature to institutions and order... During the follow-up discussion a large portion of them rebutted their colleagues and themselves regarding these “findings”, agreed that what was said may in no case be considered valid for all Roma people, etc. Yet, the frustration from the failure of their field work attempts among Roma remained considerable.

Firm was also the opinion of the trainees/ questioned people that institutionalisation of a position “within the community“, which will work for „change from within is needed“. This position must be occupied by educated Roma, which are well accepted by the other Roma and have not broken their connections with the community. The teachers and social workers expressed their desire to work together with such people: part of them believed that such a position in the community must be entrusted with the entire field work among the Roma community, while another part – that the field work is a joint responsibility.

In the same time, Amalipe Centre and local groups of Roma activists held campaigns for prevention of early marriages in 10 municipalities of Bulgaria. These campaigns included a wide range of field work among various Roma groups: from discussions and “door-to-door” actions to arranging of “family consultative conference” (specific method of social work, involving all interested parties within the extended family in finding and implementing a solution) and other actions in response to early marriages. The campaigns were implemented by Roma activists, living within the respective community. Quite expectedly, they achieved gratifying results: it became clear that field work can be done even on the most sensitive issues among the most conservative and traditional Roma groups.

In 2009–2010 occasions of conflicts and even violence against Roma people multiplied in many European countries. The climax was the “sending back” from France of thousands of Romanian and Bulgarian Roma.

Many people defined this as “deportation” and quite expectedly this caused an European level scandal. These events demonstrated again the lack of real efforts for integration / social inclusion of Roma and the failure of the scant integration activities undertaken. The successful integration of Roma turned out to be a challenge for Europe.

Analysing all of the above we came to several conclusions:

- one of the reasons for the failure of the institutions within their field work with Roma is that they do not do any work in the community. The individual work must be supplemented by community work: something the educational and social institutions fail to do. In the same time, in all Roma groups the separate individuals exist in the context of the extended family and the community and thus, the community work should always accompany the individual work;
- another important reason is that the field workers are not aware of the specific ethno-cultural and social characteristics of the Roma community, which hinders their efficient work;
- serious weakness – in the work of both institutions and of the entire integration policy – is the lack of approach, aiming at development of the community. The administrative punishing or the law protecting approach only, cannot guarantee efficient field work. Complete support for the development and modernisation of the Roma community is required. Namely this approach formed the foundations of the project Promoting Participatory Fieldwork at Grass-root level in Marginalized and Traditional Roma Communities.

In 2011 and 2012 the project was implemented by Centre AMALIPE (Bulgaria), Liga pro Europa (Romania) and ARSIS (Greece). The basic approach used in the project was based on developing the field work at the local level by mobilizing the resources of the community, capacity building of local activists, developing informal mechanisms for community support as well as building cooperation with the existing institutions. For this purpose the position of a community moderator was introduced and Community Development Centres were established in 8 municipalities (Thessaloniki in Greece, Tirgu Mures in Romania, and six 6 municipalities in Bulgaria – Peshtera, Novi pazar, Kameno, Etropole, Byala Slatina and Pavlikeni). The community moderator supported the development and modernization of the local Roma community, supported the

dialogue for better interaction between the community and local government institutions. In each of the centres two community moderators were employed. The Community Development Centre was an innovative community based service with the goal to enhance fieldwork at local level and to foster the development of the local community. In addition, the moderators and the Centres organized broad set of activities and campaigns for decreasing the early school leaving, preventing early and forced marriages, raising the health culture, establishing community support mechanisms for the most vulnerable community members, etc. They solved successfully hundreds of cases. In Bulgaria, the practice of CDCs and community moderators was recognized as strongly successful by the national institutions in the field of social inclusion and Roma integration; preconditions for sustainability and further extension of this practice in many other municipalities were set.

The report presents short overview about the project implementation, the key findings and main conclusions as well as ideas and recommendations for further development of a comprehensive community development approach for and with Roma. Chapter one provides short information about the project Promoting Participatory Fieldwork at Grass-root level in Marginalized and Traditional Roma Communities. Chapter two presents the concept of the Community Development Centre as illustration of the main community development approach applied within the project. Examples from the field work of the Community Development Centres could be found in Chapter 3. The following part describes the participation of the CDCs in the process of preparing Municipal Roma Integration Plans and the National Roma Integration Strategies as well as the degree these documents support the community development approach. Chapter 5 orients the discourse about the following steps that are necessary and contains recommendations for promoting the field work in Roma community, in particular of the Community Development Centres in the documents from the so-called “European semester” for the next planning period 2014 – 2020. The report ends with the declaration **Towards comprehensive policy for Roma community development at grass-root level adopted** during the International conference “Community Development: a Key for Roma Integration” that took place in Sofia on December 12, 2012 as a concluding event of the project.

The authors of the present report express their gratitude to everybody who participated in the implementation of the project “Promoting Participatory Fieldwork at Grass-root level in Marginalized and Traditional Roma Communities”. The work of all community moderators was the real inspiration of this report. We truly believe that this work paves the development and the future of the Roma community as well as the welfare of the entire society!



CHAPTER ONE

THE PROJECT

The Project “Promoting Participatory Field Work at Grass-root Level in Marginalized and Traditional Roma Communities” was a two year initiative of the Centre for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance “AMALIPE”, Bulgaria (lead organization) and implemented in partnership with ARSIS – Association for the Social Support of Youth (Greece), and Liga Pro Europe (Romania). It was funded by the European Commission within DAPHNE III Program. The project was implemented from February 2011 to January 2013.

The project and its approach were inspired by previous field work carried out by Centre Amalipe. More precisely this was the community campaigns for preventing the early marriages organized in 2010 in 10 municipalities in Bulgaria¹. Within these campaigns as well as within other similar field work activities carried out by Amalipe² it appeared that “**support for community development**” is important principle that should be applied in the efforts for prevention of early marriages. The community and the different communal mechanisms for influence are very important for the life of the individual Roma. Thus, it is necessary the community to participate actively in the efforts for overcoming different negative practices. Even more – the complete community development has to be supported. That may occur through different community discussions, activities for support of individual members of the community and so on. The sustainable frame, where the community development may be supported,

¹ Detailed information see at: Amalipe, Preventing early marriages, Plovdiv 2011, p.p. 112-144. Available at:

<http://www.amalipe.com/files/publications/ranni%20brakove%20last.pdf>

² Lazarov, Lyubomir and Deyan Kolev, Community Monitoring of Health Care Services in Veliko Turnovo and Pavlikeni Municipalities, Plovdiv 2012, p.p. 7-11. Available at: <http://www.amalipe.com/files/publications/Pavlikeni-VT-engl.pdf>

is the establishment of community centres that should systematically organize the indicated activities.”³

In addition, the project was inspired by the discussions held during the international conference “Policies for empowerment of Roma women in the context of European agenda for social inclusion” that took place in Sofia on November 29, 2010. The Declaration “Towards comprehensive policy for social inclusion of Roma women” approved by the participants in this conference called for **“Promoting widespread application of innovative approach for supporting the modernization of the Roma community and overcoming the patriarchal practices hampering the realization of the Roma woman:** this approach should be based on activation of local Roma communities (including supporting the efforts of successful Roma and their engagement with the modernization of Roma community), promotion of social work in Roma communities (including the development of innovative community-based services) and cooperative action among the institutions working with Roma communities, NGOs and Roma authorities. Applying this approach should become a priority in the overall policy for Roma integration and emancipation of Roma women”⁴

Goal and approach

The goal of the project was to create innovative approach and structures for effective field work at grass-root level in marginalized and traditional Roma communities via empowering young people and women in these communities to fight harmful traditional practices, to establish protective environment for children, young people and women at risk and to develop the communities concerned. This would happen through mobilizing the inner human resources within the Roma community in close cooperation with the mainstream prevention and protective institutions (such as schools, child protection departments, etc.).

³ Amalipe, Preventing early marriages, Plovdiv 2011, p. 164. Available at: <http://www.amalipe.com/files/publications/ranni%20brakove%20last.pdf>

⁴ Amalipe, Preventing early marriages, Plovdiv 2011, p. 171. Available at: <http://www.amalipe.com/files/publications/ranni%20brakove%20last.pdf>

At the core of the strategy for achievement the objectives was the creation of a new community based service – Roma Community Development Centre and testing the position of Community Moderators directly working with the community and with relevant local institutions. Thus the project activities were focused on:

- **Establishment of an internal community perspective for prevention and protection** of the Roma people, who are at risk, through the creation, testing and implementation of the position Moderator in the Roma community (Community moderator) and developing of informal mechanisms for community support within the frame of Community Development Centres.
- **Increasing the effectiveness of key institutions, related to prevention and protection of marginalized groups and Roma community:** for this purpose trainings of field workers from these institutions (social workers, teachers, medical workers) were conducted and numerous joint activities were implemented in Roma community by the representatives of the mainstream preventive and protection institutions, the community moderators and Roma activists;
- **Creating a model for systematic cooperation between institutions and Roma community for developing field work at grass-root level:** in this regard joint programs for prevention and protection (called Municipal Roma Integration Plans) were prepared by the key institutions along with activists of Roma NGOs and community moderators. They were adopted with decision of the respective Municipal Council and first steps for their implementation were undertaken.

Activities and results

The key project activities were implemented within 6 workstreams

Workstream 1: Mobilizing Roma community for preventing violence and protecting the victims

All of the activities were implemented and the necessary results delivered as follow:

1. Eight Community Development Centres (CDCs) were established.

In June 2011 8 Community Development Centres were established – one in Greece (with the name 'BARABERI', in the Roma Community of Dendropotamos, Thessaloniki), one in Romania (Targu Mures) and in Bulgaria, Amalipe opened up six centres – in the municipalities of Peshtera, Novi pazar, Kameno, Etropole, Byala Slatina, and Pavlikeni. These municipalities were situated in all NUTS 2 regions in Bulgaria in order to test how the Centres work in different environment. The selection of community moderators was on competitive basis. They had to cover certain criteria: secondary education, ability for community work, recognition by the side of the local communities. Speaking Romani language (or the other language spoken by the local Roma communities) was also a requirement. Preceding the final interview, the shortlisted candidates had to do a number of tasks – to make a description of the community, to organize a community event, to show that they have credit from the community. The final selection of the candidates was combined with the initial training of the community moderators. During this initial training, by putting the candidates in role situations they revealed their skills and abilities, which was crucial for the final choice of two moderators for each Centre. The final choice of moderators for each centre was based on a comprehensive assessment of the attached documents, the performance during the interview and the realized community events. This was followed by preparatory activities for starting the activities of the Centres: negotiations with the municipalities, signing contracts with municipalities, etc.

2. Training of the moderators: Innovative training scheme was developed to assist the community moderators in fulfilling their job and to help their successful work for Roma community development. The training scheme included:

2.1. Initial training: During three days, the community moderators through various interactive techniques mastered basic skills for team work, decision making skills, and discussed the features of the local Roma groups. They got familiar with the specifics of the work in the Roma community and outlined a common vision for the development of the centres. The accent of the training was the specifics of fieldwork in the Roma community and how the work in the centres needed to be orga-

nized. Since it has been a new initiative a common vision for the development and the work of the Centres was transmitted to the moderators.

2.2. In-service and regular trainings: During the time between starting of the activities carried by the community development centres (July 2011) to the end of the project (January 2013), the moderators went through a series of in-service trainings. These in-service trainings were conducted by both the leading organization/once every two months/and the supporting NGO's/monthly.

- From 19th to 21st of August 2011, the first training after the selection of the moderators was held near Vratsa. During the training the participants shared information about their first steps in the field work. During the training each moderator received a training kit – containing the guidelines for their work.
- Another training was held from 26th to 28th of January 2012 in the town of Vratsa. One of the Community Development Centres – the one in Byala Slatina, is situated in Vratsa region. During the training, moderators from the six centres discussed the specific activities carried out and set specific tasks for the next two months. The need for better promotion of the activities carried by the centres was highlighted. In this regard, a specific task was set for the next month: the moderators together with the project team to make brochures, promoting each centre, with its specific activities and partners.
- Another joint training was organized from 29th to 31st of May 2012 in Pomorie in the center of Kameno. It stressed the work with media and PR, the usage of internet technologies for attracting the Roma youth and other topics;
- Several other meetings were organized for the community moderators in order to get them share experience and discuss short-term plans. Such were held in March 2012, during the big Children Roma Festival where the moderators and their volunteers also took place, in September 2012, and so on.

The most important result from this activity was the sense of belonging to a team that was created among the community moderators and they started feel like belonging to a network. This strengthened their self-esteem and further empowered them.

The in-service trainings were carried out as follows:

- CDC– Kameno – by NGO “Faithful steward”, Bourgas;
- CDC – Byala Slatina by NGO “New Road” Hayredin;
- CDC – Peshtera by NGO “Sun for All”, Peshtera and by NGO “World Without Borders”, Stara Zagora;
- CDC – Etropole by Centre Amalipe;
- CDC – Novi pazar by NGO “Hayachi” Novi Pazar;
- CDC – Pavlikeni by Centre Amalipe.

In Greece the in-service training was delivered in the form of meetings of 3 hour duration and 15 days frequency, for the first 12 months of the project organised by the community expert and implemented by the specialized staff of ARSIS. For the remaining months of the project, training meetings were delivered twice a month in the form of 3 hours meetings.

2.3. Two additional trainings were conducted to support the moderators in order to consolidate and build on their knowledge:

- From 1st to 4th of November, 2011 an International Camp for community moderators from Bulgaria, Greece and Romania was held close to Veliko Tarnovo (Bulgaria). The goal of the camp was the participants to share their work experience within the community, to seek joint decisions on different cases, as well as to exchange ideas for dealing with specific problems of Roma children, women and families. During the meeting the moderators of the Community Development Centres worked on developing a Strategic Action Plan to the end of the project – January 2013. Specific work plans for the next two months for each Centre, according to its particular needs were developed. The participants were trained about the specifics of selecting and working with volunteers, and their subsequent motivation and engagement.
- From 12th to 14th of November, 2012 another training was held in Veliko Tarnovo. During the three-day meeting, the moderators analysed the work done at the Centres and outlined the strengths and impact of their work. The community moderators analysed also the weaknesses and / or the moments that were not very effective in their work. They also found areas of work that still had not been targeted, and as the moderators said “without these fields sustainability

would not be achieved.” Analysing the activity of the centres they were trained how to organize community events (like celebration of traditional feasts, community discussions, etc.) and campaigns.

2.4. Field visits for exchange of best practices and models:

- On 21st and 22nd of June 2012 an exchange visit of moderators from Bulgaria and Greece to Community Development Centre, Tirgu Mures, Romania was conducted;
- From 3rd to 5th of July 2012 an exchange visit of moderators from Bulgaria and Romania to the Community Development Centre, Thessaloniki, Greece was held.
- Another visit was organized for some of the Community moderators to Romania in November 2012 (25 – 29.11.2012)
- Final concluding exchange visit was organized at the mere end of the project – in January 2013 – in Baraberi Centre in Thessaloniki, Greece. It was combined with the national conference in Greece and a traditional festival for Roma culture where the moderators also took part.

3. In order to increase the efficiency of the moderators **a supervision and support to the community moderators** were also provided: periodic monitoring and counselling by experts from organizations that support the project implementation, namely NGO World without Borders Stara Zagora, NGO New Road – Hayredin; NGO Faithful steward – Burgas, NGO Sun for everyone – Peshtera; Women Roma Association Hayachi – Novi Pazar.

This kind of supervision proved to be very efficient and effective. From one side it engaged the local / regional organizations and created a strong feeling of ownership. From the other side it provided the moderators with the support they needed

4. Development of activities and mechanisms for community support: For fostering the community development a comprehensive approach of measures in different fields – education, health, culture, etc. was applied. Work was being done with the assumption that for a community to develop its resources, it needs measures in areas that are mutually and inextricably linked, more specifically – health, social, educational and economic spheres. That is why the work on developing measures for com-

munity support covered the work on individual cases and the mobilization of the local community.

4.1. *Conducting field work* – finding cases, “primary intervention” work, establishing initial contact, facilitation and mediation in the process of communication between the community and the people working in the institutions.

4.2. *Mapping of the Roma community in the eight municipalities.* The moderators visited each house of the Roma community, based on a survey and interviews they identified the risks and developed appropriate prevention activities. As result of this activity, the moderators prepared database for every Roma household in the municipal centre: number of families, education, health and social status, etc. It was used as basis for all the following activities.

4.3. *Assisting teachers and school principals in attracting and retaining children in school,* including the implementation of school programs for prevention of school leaving, for organizing parental club / school board with the participation of Roma parents, etc.

4.4. *Work with the local community on particular issues such as improving health education and personal hygiene* – for this purpose information campaigns were conducted to explain to the target group the benefits of vaccination and immunization; organizing and conducting jointly with representatives of health institutions lectures on the topics of general hygiene, family planning and reproductive health issues, the impact of early marriages and births for the body of young girls.

4.5. *Organizing cultural and community events and discussions* and celebrating traditional holidays: the Community Development Centres organized public celebrations of the biggest Roma calendar feasts (St. Vassil's Day, St. George's Day, Easter, Bayram, Rooster Day, etc.): thus for first time the Roma feasts became part of the cultural calendar in these municipalities. The Centres organized also celebration of the International Roma Day 8 of April as well as of the Roma Pride Day that is a new European initiative. Step by step, the CDCs became organizers of the community life of Roma in the municipalities included in the project.

As a result of the developed mechanisms for community support the moderators worked in a cooperation with local institutions, involved in activities for protection and prevention in the community. As a result of

the partnership built between the centres, local community and the responsible institutions, a specific work results were obtained in deciding individual cases and work at community level. The Community Development Centres established within the project were considered as a very important and necessary innovative initiative that meets the needs for work in the community. In addition ***the most important results was the development and the mobilization of the community itself, raising its civic responsibility and participation*** which was one of the initial and basic goals of the project

The activities of the moderators at the centres contributed to local community development and capacity building and development of skills for prevention and protection of local young people and women:

- Over 600 children were trained in health education.
- Series of discussions were held with the local community on the topics of community importance: early marriages, the role of education, our rights, etc.
- Discussions were held with children, young people and their parents on the topic Prevention of school dropout.
- Discussions were held with the local community to raise citizens' awareness and knowledge of insurance, labour and health rights.
- There have been trainings with local activists and volunteers.
- Trainings for community moderators for increasing their skills for community work
- Youth and Sports clubs were established. They targeted young people from the community to build skills for team work, communication and self-improvement.
- Workshops at the centres were established for rationalization of spare time, stimulating imagination and thinking, preventing school dropout, preventing aggression.
- Local Support Groups were established.
- 10 computer clubs were established to develop the skills of the local community to work with computer and to promote information culture of the local population. The clubs were equipped with computers donated by the Municipality of Lausanne and the Swiss Embassy.

5. Publishing flyers and other promotional materials. Promotional materials were published aiming to promote the project activities during the time period, to present the work of the centre and to help moderators in their work. They were used in numerous campaigns at grass-root level described below

Workstream 2: Establishing cooperation between institutions and Roma community

The activities within this workstream were implemented as follows:

1. A series of trainings for social workers, teachers and other employees of the state administration were held in June 2011, February 2012, May 2012, and August 2012. They aimed at preparing them for better field work in Roma community as well as at forming cooperation between the mainstream institutions and the community moderators from the CDCs;

2. Training of NGO activists and activists of organizations working in the community was also held in March 2012, a series of local trainings in the second half of June 2012, in November 2012.

3. Joint camp of officials, community moderators and Roma activists for planning Joint programs / Roma Integration Municipal Plans was organized at the end of July 2012 (it is described below, Workstream 3)

The activities brought important results:

- strong alliance among mainstream preventive and protection institutions (such as schools, child protection departments, etc.), Roma NGOs, informal Roma leaders and Community moderators in the pilot municipalities was established. It raised the confidence among them as well as the readiness for implementing joint field work in marginalized and traditional Roma communities. The municipality in Pavlikeni could be given as an example in this direction. The institutions there and the community moderators started to work together and held common working meetings on weekly basis. Owing to this, certain problems were solved: for example the emergency care began visiting the Roma villages Varbovka and Batak at time, children place was built in the Roma neighbourhood in Pavlikeni, etc.;
- the capacity of the mainstream prevention and protection institutions for field work in Roma community was significantly raised:

owing to this the quality of the services delivered at grass-root level in Roma community also raised;

- in addition, the position of Community moderator was recognized and strengthened as continuation (not as alternative) of the mainstream prevention and protection institutions. It was also recognized by the Roma activists and leaders.

Workstream 3. Implementation of joint programs for community development, violence prevention and victim protection

In order to decrease the level of harmful traditional practices, to protect the victims and most importantly to develop and modernize the local Roma communities, the community moderators, local institutions and Roma leaders prepared and implemented joint programs with comprehensive set of concrete actions. Since the project implementation coincided with the preparation and approval of the National Roma Integration Strategy that opened the need for designing and implementing Local plans for Roma integration, the project team in Bulgaria decided to use this chance and to foster preparing Municipal Roma Integration Plans all over Bulgaria through implementing the project activities in the 6 pilot municipalities.

The following activities were implemented within Workstream 3:

1. In January 2012 in Vratza, Centre Amalipe organized joint workshop with the moderators at the Community Development Centres and representatives of the local institutions from the pilot municipalities. They discussed the common activities to be implemented in the next 6 months;

2. In the time period 24th, 25th, 26th and 27th of July 2012, in the village of Arbanasi (Veliko Turnovo Municipality) a joint camp – training of moderators, representatives of local government and state institutions was held. Within four days, they discussed specific steps in the preparation of municipal plans and key elements of these documents. During the camp the roles of the participants involved in the preparation and in the implementation of municipal plans was discussed in details with special focus on the active participation of the Roma community. During the discussions at the joint meeting representatives of various institutions ex-

pressed their opinion, shared problems and concerns about the implementation of the plans and meeting points for intervention.

The joint camp was attended also by representatives of the National contact point for the National Roma Integration Strategy. They agreed to start process of preparing Municipal Roma Integration Plans all over Bulgaria and to use as a model the 6 pilot municipalities;

3. Implementing of Local programs for prevention of violence, protection of victims and community development: the Local plans have been implemented since August 2012 until the end of the project in January 2013. Representatives of the local institutions, Roma activists and leaders, NGOs and the community moderators carried out a broad set of activities, such as:

- community meetings: on weekly basis, in every centre in Bulgaria, Romania and Greece;
- public discussions: on topics of community importance;
- “door-to-door” campaigns
- organizing cultural events and celebrations of Roma calendar feasts: this appeared to be very useful means for community mobilization. The Community Development Centres initiated the celebration of a number of traditional and calendar festivals, such as: Ihtimya, The day of maternal care / Babinden / Winegrower Day, and others. The idea of the moderators for celebrating various holidays was on the one hand through them to increase the tolerance of the local population and on the other hand to raise the awareness of young people, women and children on health, social and educational problems;
- discussions with Roma youngsters and women: in most of the pilot municipalities they extended to forming women clubs and youth clubs. This trend appeared to be very useful and the project partners plan to continue and extend the women clubs and youth clubs after the project end;
- community campaigns: they were a culmination of the process for activating the local community. Their implementation was based on the specific needs of the local community and the decision was proposed by community members. Community events proved to be a powerful tool for uniting the community, for extracting the possibilities of self-organization and mutual aid. This implies a great

diversity and uniqueness of each initiative that is conducted. The message is striving for positive change. Examples of such campaigns are the following campaigns:

- To Enter the Classroom and Back to School – aiming at reintegration and prevention of school dropout – it took place in the summer months, when schools were in vacation. The goal was to visit the families and the institutions related to education, so that as many Roma children to enter the classrooms on September 15th / the beginning of the school year /. More than 2,000 families were visited during these campaigns within the project;

- I Want a Better Future – introducing young people from the community with opportunities for continuing education. The campaign covered about 1,500 youths on the territory of six municipalities in Bulgaria;

- Health is in your hands – moderators, with the assistance of local health workers, organized and conducted health discussions, indicated as current during the daily fieldwork. Over 3000 people of all ages were included in the initiative;

- For Beautiful Birthplace – in all towns where the community development centres are located , the community stepped up and carried out permanent campaigns for cleaning and landscaping the town;

- Reach Out – charity campaigns to collect clothes, shoes, school supplies with the goal to support children and families in need and to prevent Roma children school dropout;

- Participation in national campaign Let's Clean Bulgaria for One Day. The initiative involved more than 1,000 local activists and volunteers from the Community centres in Bulgaria.

The joint celebration of traditional, international and national holidays were one of the main mechanisms for community cohesion and increasing its resources to address issues such as: early dropout of Roma children from school, early marriages and early pregnancy among Roma girls, lack of parental competencies and skills; reduced or lack of responsibility towards the environment and personal health. In this connection, in the period January – April 2012 moderators of the Community Development Centres organized and held a number of community events that contributed to the unification of the local community. They brought together representatives of different ethnic groups in their respective mu-

municipalities and contributed to strengthening the authority and confidence of the community towards the work of the Community Development Centres. Celebrations of different festivals showed in practice that centres are uniting the representatives of different ethnic groups.

Workstream 4: Public awareness campaign

Within this workstream a number of activities were organized in Bulgaria, Romania and Greece:

1. Publishing educational materials – during the project the following materials were issued and disseminated: Handbook for community moderator, flyers to change the negative image of the Roma people, handbook for teachers, social workers and health workers to raise awareness and support for the field work in the Roma Community. A film that shows traditional practices and how the work of the centres overcomes these practices was made.

2. The following printed materials were made and disseminated among the local community and stakeholders with educational and informative purpose: Promotional materials which the community moderators can use in their work with Roma families – weekly program, ruler, personal calendar, notepad, key chains – since September 2011, they have been used in campaigns among the local community, in local schools, at field work; Calendars; General brochure for Community Development Centre - basic approach, objectives, results; poster – Step ahead! Each of us can do it!; Flyer to overcome stereotypes towards Roma community

3. A number of campaigns were organized in the 8 pilot municipalities:

- Celebration of International Roma Day – April 8: The campaign The Sun Shines for All of Us – series of events were held on the occasion of International Roma Day, during the week from 4 to 8 April 2012 in six municipalities in Bulgaria, the Baraberi Centre in Greece and the centre in Tirgu Mures, Romania. As part of the campaign community meetings, sports competitions, distribution of informational materials were held and distributed. The events were attended by hundreds of children and young people, representatives of municipal administrations, representatives of local government institutions, hundreds of members of the local community.

- Celebration of Roma Pride – The Day of the Roma culture and pride was new European initiative undertaken by European Grass-root Antiracist Movement. As founding member of EGAM Amalipe joined the Roma Pride Day in 2011 and 2012 with national-wide initiative titled “I have a dream – to study and live together”. The campaign was held over two consecutive years of project implementation – in October 2011 and October 2012.
- Celebration of November 16th – International Day of Tolerance: the campaign was held under the motto “Tolerance means Respect” and included over 1,800 people in the 8 pilot municipalities.
- Celebrating the World Day of Languages – September 26th 2012. The initiative aimed to promote multilingualism, to inform the local community about the importance of learning foreign languages and to promote the diversity in learning languages; to encourage learning languages at any age, to promote the rich linguistic and cultural diversity in Europe and to increase the level of intercultural unity.
- Celebration of the Day of mother’s tongue – in February 2012. The initiative has set several goals: to promote the conservation of language diversity, preservation of native languages, respect for diversity and education in the spirit of tolerance. The campaign took place both in different schools in the pilot municipalities and public places in front of the local municipal buildings and local administrations. More than 4,000 students, teachers, local activist, representatives of institutions and the local Roma community participated in the campaign.
- The Community Development Centres in Bulgaria participated in the national celebrations of Vasilitsa – the Roma New Year, organized by Centre Amalipe. The celebration of this holiday at places where it is not traditional showed that the idea of a joint celebration of different festivals unites the local community and provides an opportunity to explore different traditions and customs.

4. Publications in the media – there was strong media coverage of the activities in regional and national media during the implementation of project. Special strategy was developed to reach the broad public. In this respect the project achieved its goals. There were more than 150 media

publications for the project at local and national level. At the same time with the cooperation of journalists in national media several materials were published or broadcasted in national media

The activities implemented lead to the following results:

- Significantly raised awareness about the necessity of strong field work at grass-root level in marginalized and traditional Roma communities for overcoming harmful traditional practices, establishing preventive environment and developing the community.
- Public support for implementing all project activities and for further developing them.

Workstream 5: Advocacy activities for institutionalizing the established model

Certain activities were implemented for convincing the respective national and municipal institutions to continue the model established after project end through providing institutional sustainability (for the new position of Community moderator in particular) and financial sustainability (through their budgets and through European funds):

1. Workshops with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Education and Science. In March 2012 a meeting was organized in the town of Elin Pelin where the institutionalization of Community Development Centres in Bulgaria was discussed. The meeting was attended by the Secretary for Education in the administration of President – Mrs. Anna-Marie Vilamovska, Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Policy – Mrs. Valentina Simeonova. They visited the CDC in Etropole and expressed strong support for ensuring the project sustainability.

In Romania working meetings were organized with the National Agency for Roma. Mrs. Maria Ionescu and Mrs. Onesia Babes expressed support for the work of the community moderators. Although there was no vision for continuing the entire model, they planned to incorporate certain features from the community moderator job in the job description of the Roma health mediators in Romania.

2. National Advocacy Conferences – in every country a national advocacy conference was organized: Yet at the end of August, beginning of September 2011 a special advocacy camp was organized with the par-

ticipation of community moderators, students to be involved in community work and representatives of national institutions. Later, in March 2012 a big advocacy event was organized in Bulgaria together with the Steering Committee meeting it was attended by the Secretary for Education in the administration of President – Mrs. Anna-Marie Vilamovska, Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Policy – Mrs. Valentina Simeonova, Mrs. Radostina Angelova – Head of Cabinet of the Minister for EU Funds, Mr. Georgi Krastev – Deputy Chairman of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues (NSSEI), representatives of the Employment Agency and the regional directorates Social Assistance, Roma NGOs and leaders. Besides the discussions on the achievements on the project and the next steps to institutionalize the model, the participants had the chance to see the field work at one of the community development centres. They visited the local community centre and school in the village of Malki Iskar, Etropole municipality, where they were greeted traditionally with bread and salt. In the community centre in the village of Malki Iskar children from the local school Georgi Sava Rakovski presented traditional Roma songs and dances. Community moderators from Community Development Centre in Etropole shared with the participants the difficulties they encounter in their work, the results of social surveys about the needs of the local community, the creation of parent club, the work they have done in the school towards enhancing motivation for education, reducing school dropouts, and having discussions to prevent early marriages. The participants agreed that the entire model of Community Development Centre should be standardized and opportunities for its further application in big number of municipalities all over Bulgaria through EU funds and national budget funds should be established.

In Greece the National Conference was held on the 29th of January 2013 under the form of a daily workshop, holding the title “Supportive actions on Roma communities in Thessaloniki”. The workshop was organized by ARSIS and Roma Community Development Centre “Baraberi”, and was primarily a closing event of the project. During the workshop results and best practices of the project were presented as well as ways forward were examined. Additionally a number of other actions on Roma communities in Thessaloniki were presented by local authorities, nongovernmental organizations active in the Roma field and Roma associations.

More specifically the officials, NGOs and institutions participated by presenting actions and plans undertaken in Roma communities were the following: ARSIS and AMALIPE representatives presenting the results of the project, Ampelokipi – Menemeni Municipality (where the community of Dendropotamos and RCDC consequently belongs), Delta Municipality (where another large Roma community exists), Oikokoinonia NGO, Association of Roma women, Roma association “Alexander the Great”, PRAKSIS NGO, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

The National conference in Romania was held from 26th to 28th November, 2012 in the town of Tirgu Mures, Romania, where the Community Development Centre was established. It was attended by the president of the National Agency for Roma and the district administration in Mures County. Community moderators from the Community Development Centres in Bulgaria presented their work. The conference participants showed keen interest in the activities of the moderators towards dialogue with local institutions and how they respond to the community needs.

3. Participation in international conferences and the meetings of the European Roma Platform: the project manager Deyan Kolev and the coordinator Teodora Krumova took part in certain international forums and presented the model of CDCs. Their presentation was met with big interest and help significantly the efforts for making the project results popular at international level. In addition, the project results and model have been presented during a number of international events and conferences: in Romania in April 2012 (Yordan Stanev), in Czech Republic in May 2012 (Momchil Baev), in Hungary in June 2012 (Momchil Baev).

As part of Workstream 5 (i.e. of the efforts for ensuring sustainability and further extension of the model in Bulgaria, Centre Amalipe organized also:

4. National conference “Good practices for social services in Roma community” – the conference was organized in October 2011 by New Road – Hayredin (one of the organizations supporting the CDCs) with the support of Centre Amalipe and with the purpose to advocate for incorporating the practice of CDCs in the National Roma Integration Strategy. More than forty experts and politicians, representatives of leading Roma NGOs, national, regional and local institutions participated in the

conference. Among them were representatives of the Secretariat of National Council for Cooperation of Ethnic and Integration Issues - NCCEII, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, National Employment Agency, State Agency for Social Assistance and other. The conference was held on October 27 in Vratsa. The experience of CDCs was presented by the moderators from Byala Slatina and by Deyan Kolev, the project manager. All the participants agreed that this experience is promising and negotiated its incorporation in the National Roma Integration Strategy.

5. Participation in the work of the Interministerial Working Group for Resource Provision of Roma Integration: it was proposed by Amalipe and other Roma NGOs and formally established with order of the Prime Minister P-193/02.08.2012. The Group was established at political level: chaired by the Minister on EU Funds and composed by Deputy-ministers and executive directors who chair the Managing authorities and Intermediate bodies of different Operational programs and Rural Areas Development Program. This was important asset and precondition for taking important political decisions. Another important asset was that the Group incorporated also representatives of Roma NGOs elected after special procedure of nominations.

During the last 4 months of 2012 the Group started active work in two important directions:

- ensuring standardized financial instruments for integration: the idea for preparing methodology and financial standard for several models called “Integration Interventions” was proposed by the Roma NGOs and approved by the Group. In addition, during the session from December 11, 2012 the Group approved the first two Integration Interventions, namely the Community Centre and Intervention for Decreasing the Early School Leaving. Methodology and financial standards would be prepared for these interventions as well as for several more. After this, funds for their concrete applying will be ensured with the support of HRDOP, RDOP, RADP;
- updating and approving the Appendix “Programs for Implementation of the NRIS”: the Appendix was prepared in 2011 as the most concrete part of the National Roma Integration Strategy (NRIS). Nevertheless, it was not approved (neither rejected) by the Council

of Ministers and its status was rather unclear. In December 2012 an updated version was prepared by Deyan Kolev and proposed to the Interministerial Group for Resources Provision of Roma Integration. Its final version was approved by the end of February 2013. The plan is divided into two parts: programs during the current programming period and programs in the new programming period (2014 – 2020). It contains 45 proposals for programs that will be funded by EU funds (“Human Resources Development” Operational Program, “Regional Development” Operational Program, “Science and Education” Operational Program, “Good Governance” Operational Program and the Rural Areas Development Program), the state budget, the EEA Financial Mechanism and the Bulgarian-Swiss program. Via these programs the activities will be implemented under the Action Plan for implementation of the National Strategy for Roma Integration. One of the main programs approved envisages establishment of Community Centres all over Bulgaria that is a key precondition for ensuring the CDCs sustainability.

These activities contributed to achieving higher visibility of the work of the Community Development Centres and bringing them into the political agenda.

The activities undertaken – especially the ones in Bulgaria – achieved its planned results. In Bulgaria the possibilities for extending the model of CDCs in big number of municipalities were set within the project:

- the CDCs have been officially recognized as successful practice and included in the National Roma Integration Strategy;
- the Interministerial Working Group for Resource Provision of Roma Integration chaired by the Minister of EU Funds approved special Integration Intervention “Community Centre” and methodology & financial standard for it will be prepared. In addition, the Action plan “Programs for NRIS implementation” approved in February 2013 contains program for establishing CDCs all over Bulgaria.

Workstream 6: Experience exchange between Bulgaria, Romania and Greece

1. Organization of national conferences: as described above, national advocacy conferences were organized in Bulgaria, Greece and Ro-

mania. All the partners and community moderators attended them that opened a broad space for know-how exchange;

2. **Concluding conference:** on December 11, 2012 in Sofia the International Conference “Community Development – the key to the Roma integration” was held. It was organized as a closing event of the project Promoting Participatory Fieldwork at Grass-root level in Marginalized and Traditional Roma Communities. About 100 participants – government representatives, representatives of NGOs and community moderators from Bulgaria, Greece and Romania, as well as representatives of foreign embassies in Sofia took part in the event. The participants discussed the main conclusions from the implementation of the innovative model of Community Development Centre in six municipalities in Bulgaria, one in Romania and one in Greece. They also outlined the basic steps to institutionalize the established within the project model at national and European level.

Additional activities. Management and Coordination

Certain activities were implemented to ensure environment for the fluent implementation of the main project activities:

1. **Project Steering Committee was established:** the committee included stakeholders from the three participating countries – representatives of the respective Ministries of Labour and Social Policy, Ministries of Health, Ministries of Education and Science and the National Focal Point for the National Roma Integration Strategy, NGOs and municipal authorities. Four meetings of the Steering Committee were organized:

- on 1st and 2nd of April, 2011: in Veliko Turnovo;
- from 26th to 27th of March 2012 in Elin Pelin;
- on 27th -28th of June, 2012 in Brussels, Belgium;
- on December 12, 2012 in Sofia.

The meetings were attended by high level representatives of the state institutions, such as the Secretary for Education in the President’s administration in Bulgaria – Mrs. Anna-Marie Vilamovska, the Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Policy in Bulgaria – Mrs. Valentina Simeonova, Mrs. Radostina Angelova – Head of office of the Minister for EU Funds

in Bulgaria, Mr. Georgi Krastev – Deputy Chairman of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues (NSSEI) in Bulgaria, Mrs. Maria Ionescu, Mr. Marian Babesh and Mrs. Onesia Babesh, who are representatives of the Romanian National Roma Agency in Romania and others. During the second meeting the participants visited the Community Development Centre in the town of Etropole, where they saw how the community moderators work on the field. During the third meeting the participants presented the project before representatives of the European Commission and the European Economic and Social Committee, as well as other national and international Roma organizations who attended the hearing on M&E of the National Roma Integration Strategies. During the fourth meeting the participants discussed the sustainability and follow up steps for continuation of the project.

The work of the Steering Committee created a sense of ownership on the project model among the respective institutions (especially in Bulgaria) that was important precondition for ensuring the sustainability;

2. A web-site was developed: <http://romadevelopment.org>. It presented to the public news, project information, project activities; the main directions in the work of the Community Development Centres and the conducted campaigns;

3. In terms of monitoring and evaluation – an independent evaluation of the activities carried out by the Community Development Centres was performed in May – June 2012 by a team of external independent experts: Mariana Milosheva, Dimitar Dimitov and Georgi Bogdanov. The main findings of the assessment were used for defining the project developments (especially regarding the advocacy activities for ensuring project sustainability; they were also presented to the European Commission in Brussels. In January 2013 the final evaluation was conducted by the same team.

The main findings of the assessment were:

- the Community Development Centres, established on the project, are considered as a very important, innovative and necessary initiative, that meets the needs for work in the community;
- the activities organized by the centres meet the needs and arise from the needs of the local communities;

- the centres are visible and recognized by the local communities;
- there is a risk for the community and local institutions to raise their expectations to the belief that the centres may resolve all kinds of cases;
- the community development centres are definitely recognized as useful partners from other local institutions (municipalities, schools, labour offices, Social Assistance Directorate, Regional Educational Inspectorate, Regional Health Inspectorate, community centres, local NGOs, etc.);
- it is necessary to work towards the institutionalization of Community Development Centres a methodology and financial standards need to be further developed and CDC to be transformed to a state-delegated activity.

Success factors

The project built its success on several important factors.

- **Important goal and objectives:** The goal of the Project was to create innovative approach and structures for effective field work at grass-root level in marginalized and traditional Roma communities via empowering young people and women in these communities to fight harmful traditional practices, to establish protective environment for children, young people and women at risk and to develop the communities concerned. This happened through mobilizing the inner human resources within the Roma community in close cooperation with the mainstream prevention and protective institutions (such as schools, child protection departments, etc.). These proved to be the right goals and objectives.

- **Proper approach and strategy:** The core of the strategy for achieving the objectives was the establishment of a new community based service – Roma Community Development Centre and testing the position of Community Moderators directly working with the community and with relevant local institutions. Both of them appeared as proper tools following proper approach.

- The Roma **Community Development Centres**, created by the project are considered as a very important, innovative and timely initiative that is relevant to the needs for proactive work inside Roma communities. This

was the opinion of all stakeholders – the local institutions, representatives of the Roma communities and of other Roma NGOs.

- The Centres are not just a passive social service provider, they are **catalyst for activating the local communities**. They are an “active social service” based within the communities and mobilizing their internal resources.

- The core of the work of the Centres is the application for the best approaches and forms of **self-organizing of the local communities**, which will gradually help for their self-organizing and empowerment. In regard to this, the resolving of individual cases and problems is just an instrument. The long-term task of the centres is perceived by all participants as a systematic effort for activating community members and groups to start resolving community problems together thus bringing for the modernization and new civic culture and empowerment.

- **All of the activities, organized by the Centres respond to the real needs in the local Roma communities**. They were identified together with the institutions and based on the active participation of the communities themselves. A major strength of the implementation strategy of Amalipe and its partners is that it is open and stimulating initiatives from the different localities to identify the best responses to the different needs in the different local contexts.

- The Roma Community Development Centres are already **visible and have credibility among the local Roma communities**. People know about their work and there is growing demand for their service – to resolve concrete cases and/or for involvement in the initiatives organized by the centres. In all locations there are already emerging community groups, activated by the Centres that volunteer and assist the various aspects of the work with the communities. This is a sign that the centres are growing into community forms of self-organization and have a lot of potential to become community based service and self-help structures.

- The Centres are **recognized as useful and credible partner by all local institutions**. They are viewed as a useful initiative for finding solutions for the numerous problems of the communities.

- The project relies on a good approach during the process of selecting community moderators. They were hired by an open call for applications. For the positions of community moderators in different municipi-

palities the people who were hired were people who really could work for the development of their community. Leading factor in the selection of community moderators was the desire of the applicants to work in the local community, to be responsible and resourceful in their work, to be creative and willing to develop innovative skills and uphold their mission during the daily work. An advantage for the selected moderators was that they were well known in the community as people who can be trusted. Although most of them were young people they had good reputation and were admitted by different communities. Important feature was also that they came from the same local communities and had Roma origin: this appeared to be strong precondition for trusting in the most sensitive issues.

- The periodical **upgrading trainings** of community moderators, representatives of local institutions and NGOs conducted within the project, contributes to the development of local social capacity – first by developing the capacity of the moderators, as members of the community; second – developing the capacity of local activists; third – the community moderators and local activist share their knowledge and skills with different groups in the community: children, youth, women and others. During the workshops for two - three days not only new skills were acquired by the moderators but also the performances of the centres were discussed, their problems, and the success that they had. During these workshops, the community moderators were trained in various skills that contributed to the development and improvement the effectiveness of their work. Very useful were also the exchange of practices between centres at the general meetings of all community moderators.

- Important success factor (achieved especially in Bulgaria) is **the involvement of the key institutions** with the project implementation: Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, and the National Contact Point for the National Roma Integration Strategy. They took part in the Steering Committee, recognized the model and established preconditions for its sustainability.

Negative factors

Although the challenges that appeared were met respectively and did not affect the project implementation, some factors could be considered as negative and should be avoided in the future:

- In Bulgaria the CDCs were established in the so-called “rural municipalities”, unlike Greece and Romania where the Centres operated in big cities. The project proved that the model is very successful in the rural municipalities where the communities (Roma communities as well as the majority population) are smaller in numbers. In these cases the number of moderators proved to be enough for achieving a change. At the same time the model was less successful in the urban municipalities. In the cities there is a need of more community moderators and most probably of some additional activities.

● **A major challenge for the strategy of the project was that it had set very ambitious goals in a very short time of two years.** Most of the tasks of the centres were long term – modernization of the community, building trust in the community and among institutions, proving the usefulness of the innovative active community service and its institutionalization – all required processes and time, that were longer than the two-year time frame of the project. In Bulgaria, the respective institutions recognized the model even within this short period and started establishing preconditions for its sustainability and extension. This was not the case of Romania and Greece where the short time obstructed the model sustainability much harder.

Final conclusions

In 2011 and 2012 the project Promoting Participatory Fieldwork at Grass-root level in Marginalized and Traditional Roma Communities was implemented by Centre AMALIPE (Bulgaria), Liga pro Europa (Romania) and ARSIS (Greece). The basic approach used in the project was the field work at the local level by mobilizing the resources of the community, capacity building of local activists, developing informal mechanisms for community support as well as building cooperation with the existing institutions. For this purpose the position of the Community Moderator was introduced and Community Development Centres were established in 8 municipalities (Thessaloniki in Greece, Tirgu Mures in Romania, and six 6 municipalities in Bulgaria – Peshtera, Novi pazar, Kameno, Etropole, Byala Slatina and Pavlikeni). The Community moderator supported the development and modernization of the local Roma community, supported the dialogue for better interaction between the community and local go-

vernment institutions. In each of the centres two community moderators were employed. The Community Development Centre has been an innovative community based service with the goal to enhance fieldwork at local level and to foster the development of the local community. In addition, the moderators and the Centres organized broad set of activities and campaigns for decreasing the early school leaving, preventing early and forced marriages, raising the health culture, establishing community support mechanisms for the most vulnerable community members, etc. They solved successfully hundreds of cases. In Bulgaria, the practice of CDCs and Community moderators was recognized as strongly successful by the national institutions in the field of social inclusion and Roma integration; preconditions for sustainability and further extension of this practice in many other municipalities were set.



CHAPTER 2

THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CENTERS AND THEIR METHODOLOGY

Terminological notes

The approach of the project Promoting Participatory Fieldwork at Grass-root level in Marginalized and Traditional Roma Communities is based on several key concepts, explanted herein below. The project team was fully aware of the relativity of these concepts (characteristic of every theoretical concept with a certain degree of abstractedness, when applied in practice) and aimed at their further development in the work of the Community Development Centres.

Community: The classical definition of Ferdinand Tönnies sees the community as multiple individuals, who share an emotional connection among each other, they live as a part of a larger group, which exceeds the boundaries of the family, share certain common values, which heavily affect their behaviour. In his book “Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft” Tönnies makes the difference between two types of unions: Gemeinschaft (translated as “community”) and Gesellschaft (translated as “society”). According to Tönnies, within the community the relationships between the individual members are stronger, because they have common will. The community has shared values and its members are united, and the sense of group responsibility is very strong.

Every community develops its own interest, originating from the daily life of the members and hence, is intertwined with the daily life of each member. This is multiplied by the division line between us and the others. Quite often this makes it difficult for an individual leaving a community, as it attributes a moral evaluation of the act (usually – very negative), and the community limits or even suppresses the individuality at the expense of the group identity.

Roma community: In every country where Roma live, they represent a specific ethno-cultural community. Although often some of the most important common features of the classical ethno-cultural communities (e.g. common territory, common religion, common language) are missing (the Roma language *Romanes* is not spoken by all Roma, etc.) , Roma form a community in two important aspects:

- the separate individual and his/her behaviour can be properly understood only within the context of the community and the specific community relations: cases of complete assimilation exist only when the person breaks completely his/her connections with the community. It is quite indicative that whole groups that declare their non-Roma identity (e.g. the groups of *Millet*, *Rudari*, etc.) would preserve their intra-group relations unchanged and this is one of the reasons for them to be still perceived as Roma;

- they are perceived as a community by the surrounding population.

This specification is the grounds for the theoretical assumption, fully confirmed during the implementation of the project, that field work (including work on an individual case) must include community work, as well.

Without denying the existence of numerous Roma groups in Bulgaria, Romania and Greece (as well as in the rest of the European countries), each one of which could justify the definition of Tönnies for a community, we do regard Roma in the respective country as a single community, which is not homogenous, but maintains an intra-group (within the community) differentiation. The individual Roma groups have their own specific group characteristics, which must be understood and accounted for at the field work. Thus, for example, the moderators of the Community Development Centres, the teachers, the health and social workers were purposefully taught to discern the specific Roma groups, comprising the Roma community in the respective municipality and take into consideration their specifics when doing field work. The principle for the moderators to be representatives of different Roma groups, etc. was observed.

Types of communities

Traditional / patriarchal communities

The main structure of *the traditional community* is the extended family/ the kin. In such communities all works are to be done within the kin and the family. The traditional community cares for the people to be fed, to work and live, being part of it. The extended family or the patriarchal community is the enterprise, which fully defines the social and economic status of the community. The main characteristic feature of the traditional community is that the social life is unconditional and self-understanding. All relationships are refracted through the prism of custom and other socio-cultural phenomena, guaranteeing the reproduction of the community with its fundamental characteristics and functions. The next generations are socialized and brought up through adoption of the traditional manners and customs beyond any criticism. Separation of a personality from the traditional community and any of the various forms of individual and / or innovative behaviour are sanctioned in one or another form.

Modern communities

The main activities within *the modern community* are outside the kin's relationships, and the family is mainly used for reproduction of the kin and for socialization – education of the following generations. Usually, the economic activity of people is performed outside the extended family. For this reason, the person can visit and stay in different communities, implementing different roles and on the occasion of various assignments he/she may have taken. In the modern community the inherited values are usually contested by the next generations. The customs start losing their role of main agent and a model explaining life. Quite often is the “re-discovery” of customs within the modern ethno-cultural communities, but not as explanatory and normative model, but as symbol, historical myth and method for emotional connection with the historical past and the community.

Undeveloped, developed and developing communities

The division between developed and undeveloped communities does not coincide with the division between patriarchal and modern communi-

ties. A modern community can be either developed, or undeveloped. The same is valid for the traditional community.

To define a community as developed one, as well as within for the community development one can describe three types of «capital», available in the community, itself. Achieving development of the community means suitable utilization of these three types of *community capital*:

- physical capital– natural, material and financial funds;
- human capital – higher educational level, higher health status speaks about developed community;
- social capital – the capacity of the community members to mobilise, organize and self-organise themselves to achieve common goals.

The social capital is of paramount importance for the community development, since it will define the use of the other two community capitals i.e. the development of a community depends on the ability of people to organize themselves, to use the locally available resources and on their skills to work together for determination and achieving the common interests and goals.

A developed community is the one that has high levels of community capital, especially social capital. The main difference between the developed and the undeveloped community is regarding the person who takes the decisions in relation to an issue occurred. In the undeveloped community people would wait for someone outside the community to resolve the problem. While in the developed community people organize themselves, unite their efforts and resources and take the initiative for dealing with the situation at hand.

Marginalised (socially excluded) and integrated communities

The division into marginalised and integrated communities is related to the place of the community within the macro-society and in particular – to the capacities of the community to participate in the decision making process, on issues concerning the macro-society. *Marginalised* communities, groups or families are those, which for one or another reason have been “pushed” to the outskirts of society, do not take part in the social life and especially – in the processes of taking decisions. Often, these communities create their own parallel structures, in order to compensate their

members for the rights and opportunities taken from them by the macro-society.

Integrated are those communities, which fully participate in the life of the respective society and can provide their members with the opportunity for participation in the process of decision-taking. This way, working for its community the individual works for the society as well, and vice versa.

Development of the community

The development of the community is a process, which assists the creation of a modern, developed and well-integrated community. It has at least four aspects:

- it helps people to identify and develop their abilities and potential, as well as to succeed outside the community without breaking their relationships with it. At the same time, this leads to transformation of the mechanisms for interaction within the community, and of the community – individual interaction. The latter one is changed from restriction of the individuality and total control to regulation, coordination and support. This aspect is often referred to as *modernisation*;
- it helps the members of the community to organize and self-organise themselves, in response to the problems they share. This provides them with the chance to also pay sufficient attention to the vulnerable groups within the community, so that they will also self-organise. A solid social capital is created in this way, transforming the community into a developed one;
- it helps the members of the community to succeed in the macro-society without breaking their relations with the community. This way, succeeding, the separate individual helps not only his/her well-being / the well-being of his/her nuclear family, but also works for the prosperity of the macro-society and of the community. This aspect is often called *integration*. It should in no case be mixed with the process of assimilation, where the personality succeeds within the macro-society breaking his/her connections with the community;

- it helps the individuals to participate in the decision-making: within the community and within the macro-society. This aspect is often called *empowerment*.

Through the process of development of the community communities are created, where:

- people have the opportunity to study and develop their skills;
- people and groups that may be excluded from the society or are in unequal situation can be reached and included;
- creation of organizations, which deal with the needs within the community and represent their interests, is facilitated;
- work is being done for encouragement of inclusion and dialogue between the communities and institutions, which are related to the community life;
- people can be what they are;
- people have positive future perspectives;
- people acquire experience, they are paid respect, equal and fair treatment.

Approach for development of the community

The implementation of the project “Promoting Participatory Field-work at Grass-root level in Marginalized and Traditional Roma Communities” applied the approach of development of the community, based on the following principles:

- Mobilisation and development of the resources of the local community: within the project moderators from the local community were engaged. The main activities were implemented by the local communities. This did not exclude attraction of external for the community experts and activists, although mainly for assistance and support to the local communities.
- Encouraging participation of wide range of people: including purposeful focus for activating of vulnerable groups within the community, such as women and young people.
- To correspond/ meet/ the real needs, identified by the community itself, and not imposed from above, from someone external for the community.

- Institutionalisation of the position, supporting and moderating the process of development of the community: the position of the community moderator and of the Community Development Centres.
- Interaction with the main institutions, supposed to do the field work in the Roma community: the community moderators and the Community Development Centres were created neither as an institution parallel to the other, nor as servicing the work of the other institutions. These were designed and introduced as equal in rights partner of the educational, the health and the social institutions, supposed to do field work, including in it the Roma communities.

The Community Development Centres and the Community moderators

Establishing and developing Community Development Centres as well as the work of the community moderators were at the core of the strategy for achievement the objectives of “Promoting participatory field-work in marginalized and traditional Roma communities”. Based on the experience we can conclude that

- The Roma Community Development Centres, created by the project are very important, innovative and timely initiative that is relevant to the needs for proactive work inside Roma communities.

- The Centres are not just a passive social service provider, they are viewed as a catalyst for activating the local communities. They are an “active social service” based within the communities and mobilizing their internal resources. The Centres and the community moderators working in them had a very successful start-up. Despite of the short time of their existence they succeeded to gain the trust of the communities served by resolving concrete cases and problems and became visible through the organized community initiatives and campaigns.

- At the core of the work of the Centres is the application for the best approaches and forms of self-organizing of the local communities, which will gradually help for their self-organizing and empowerment. In this, the resolving of individual cases and problems is just an instrument. The long-term task of the centres is viewed by all participants as a systematic effort for activating community members and groups to start resolving

community problems together thus bringing for the modernization and new civic culture and empowerment.

- All of the activities, organized by the Centres respond to the real needs in the local Roma communities. They were identified together with the institutions and based on the active participation of the communities themselves. A major strength of the implementation strategy of Amalipe is that it is open and stimulating initiatives from the different localities to identify the best responses to the different needs in the different local contexts.

- At the same time, the needs in the marginalized Roma communities are numerous and a main challenge to the centres has been to what extent they can respond to the high expectations from their work with the limited resources they have. In cases, the expectations of the centres are very diverse and unrealistic. In this respect it is important to keep the focus of the work and to provide clear messages what the Centres can do, what they can do by themselves and what – by activating partnership with other local actors – institutions or other NGOs.

- The Roma Community Development Centres are already visible and have credibility among the local Roma communities. People know about their work and there is growing demand for their service – to resolve concrete cases and/or for involvement in the initiatives organized by the centres. In all locations there are already emerging community groups, activated by the Centres that volunteer and assist the various aspects of the work with the communities. This is a sign that the centres are growing into community forms of self-organization and have a lot of potential to become community based service and self-help structures.

- The Centres are recognized as useful and credible partner by all local institutions. This by itself is a sign for the good approach selected by Amalipe and the good choice of community moderators. The Centres are also well accepted by other social services, centres or Roma NGOs in the different localities. They are viewed as an useful initiative for finding solutions for the numerous problems of the communities.

- However, the successes of the Centres may also become a challenge to raise the expectations among the community and the local institutions that they can resolve all type of cases or community problems. This challenge needs to be analysed and identify best ways to approach

the inevitable growth of expectations for the outcomes of the work of the Centres.

- As of now there are three main options for the institutionalization of the Centres as a new type of service: 1) developing the model as a delegated service according to the relevant social service legal framework and regulations; 2) developing of the model as a new approach, methodology and instrument for the National Roma Strategy and funded by the OP Human Resources Development / other EU funded programs; 3) continuation of the work of the centres with sporadic funding from outside programs, which if interrupted will be always a risk for their sustainability.

- We consider that the best option is the second one – developing the Community Development Centres as a new approach, methodology and instrument for the National Roma Integration Strategy is the best strategic approach to be applied. It can provide for sustainability of the centres. It can also provide for identifying a very good approach to practical implementation of the National Roma Strategy for Inclusion.

In the case of Bulgaria, the Community Development Centre could follow the standardized methodology described below:

Title of the successful practice	COMMUNITY CENTER
Range	<p>Community centres could be established in various forms in different places where the Roma community lives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Health and Social Centres: they have been existing since 2006 in Sliven, Varna, Sofia, Burgas, Stara Zagora, Vidin, Pazardzhik, Kyustendil with the support of Global fund for prevention of HIV/AIDS through the Ministry of Health. They are managed by the local Roma organizations. – Mother Centres: operating since 2007 in the town of Razgrad, Sandanski, Stara Zagora. Coordinated by the "Integro" Association. – Community Development Centres: operating since 2011 in the municipalities of Veliko Tarnovo, Peshtera, Novi Pazar, Kameno, Etropole, Byala Slatina, Pavlikeni, Strazhitzha – Lyaskovets, Radnevo Dolna Banya and Knezha. Guided by the Centre "Amalipe" with the financial support of the European Commission. – Many other forms of Centres in the Roma community.

When the practice has been implemented?	The first Community Development Centre had been established in the Roma neighbourhoods by Open Society Foundation in 1998; the Health and Social Centres have been functioning since 2006; the Mother centres – since 2007 and the Roma Community Development Centres since 2011.
Short description	<p>Community centres currently operate in various forms (see above) having the following characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The centres operate on a local level, covering not only the municipal centre but the other settlements in the municipality as well. Local clubs / volunteer groups are formed in the surrounding villages with Roma population subordinated to the Centre. – The main approach used in the work of the community development centres is the fieldwork by mobilizing the resources of the local community; – A substantial part of the activities of community centres is to increase the self-organization and development of the potential of the local communities: by organizing leadership groups, youth groups, women's clubs and so on; social structures in the community, campaigning, community discussions, community events and so on, trainings, involvement in different forms of continuing education, etc. – The organization and coordination of the activities of the centre is provided by Community Moderator / Community worker. – The main directions of activity of the community centres are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prevention of school dropout, • increased motivation of Roma children and adult to attend school and engage in forms of continuing education and training; • prevention of early marriage and early pregnancy among Roma girls; • prevention of child abandonment and placement in specialized institutions; • increasing employment levels in the Roma community; • prevention and control of social diseases; • support the self-organization of the Roma community life and the creation of social structures in the Roma community

<p>Basic elements</p>	<p>1. Community Moderator / community worker: In each of the established centres at least 2 community moderators / community workers operate, having identified the need for their number to be increased to at least 4. The moderator is a representative of the local Roma community with at least secondary education with proven abilities in social work. Community Moderator does fieldwork in the community, working on individual cases, fosters the formation of structures for community support (youth clubs, women's clubs, and leadership groups) and community life (e.g., community discussions, etc..) Coordinates campaigns at the local level; supports dialogue for better interaction between the community and local institutions.</p> <p><i>The work of the Community moderators is directed at :</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A) Filling a social card – collect demographic data; describe physical infrastructure, institutional infrastructure, informal social infrastructure, various Roma groups, and life-styles of various local community groups. The social card is filled on the basis of interviews from door to door and is updated periodically; B) Activities of community mobilization – identify activists; organize and facilitate community meetings and discussions; facilitate meetings between the community and local authorities, facilitate the establishment of voluntary groups and clubs in the community and their activities; C) Activities to support the community – inform, provide trainings, exchange visits, counselling, advice, attract resources to various community initiatives, support groups in different communities; communicate with local authorities and institutions, facilitate the organization of community events D) Fieldwork – finding cases working on the "primary intervention"; establish initial contact, facilitate and mediate the process of communication between the local community and people working in the institutions. E) Support the local institutions for effective work in the Roma community: e.g. assist teachers and school management in attracting and retaining children in school, incl. implementation of school programs for dropout prevention; for organizing parents' club /
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	<p>school board of trustees with Roma parents, supports general practitioners for health interventions, etc. The moderator is an equal partner in dialogue with the local institutions;</p> <p>F) Activities to increase the employment rates: help local businesses to hire members of the Roma community, organize supporting activities for income generation and more.</p> <p>2. <i>The Community Centre</i> works at the municipal level – both in the community centre, and in other places with compact Roma / minority population.</p> <p>The centre is located in premises provided by the municipality (backup – to facilities provided by the school / community centre). Requires a minimum of 3 spaces – an administrative unit, a room for community discussion and a room for children and other family members.</p> <p>3. <i>Main activities of the Centre are:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Mapping": conducting social survey (filling a social card) in each household in order to clarify the educational, health and social status; • Permanent fieldwork in the community: activities to prevent school dropout and increase the motivation of Roma children to attend school; activities to increase the motivation of children and young people for lifelong learning and education activities for the prevention of early marriage and early pregnancy among Roma girls; activities for prevention and control of social diseases, contacts with local businesses and placements for Roma and members of other vulnerable groups, promotion and support of entrepreneurship and self-employment in the Roma community • Periodic campaigns in the Roma community: at least one campaign in 2 weeks following a community development program. • Organization of social structures in the community and community events <p>3. <i>Municipal plan for social inclusion / integration of Roma:</i> The plan is prepared jointly by the community centre, municipal administration, local institutions, local businesses and local communities. Comprehensive planning interventions to promote social inclusion of marginalized groups and Roma integration.</p>
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Target group	Roma community/ local community
Participation of Roma and the target group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community moderators / workers are members of the local Roma community; • One of the main activities of the CDC is the establishment and development of community structures (youth clubs, leadership groups, women's groups, etc.). • The community structures established define most of the activities; • Each CDC operates a number of volunteer clubs
Mid-term results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activation of the Roma community • Changed attitudes to better education, • active participation in the labour market, • overcoming patriarchal practices (such as early marriage, etc.). • Establishing sustainable partnership with local institutions.
Long-term results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased educational level • Improved health status • Elevated levels of employment in the Roma community. • Improved business climate in the municipality
Is there independent evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and social centres are monitored annually by KPMG; • Evaluation of the Mother Centres was made by Professor Ilona Tomova in 2008 • Evaluation of CDC is carried out by Mariana Milosheva, Georgi Bogdanov and Dimitar Dimitrov in 2012
Main conclusions from the evaluation	<p>The independent evaluation of various forms of community centres indicate that they are very important and needed innovative initiative that responds to the needs for community work.</p> <p>Activities organized by the centre meet and are provoked by the needs of the local communities</p> <p>The Centres are visible and are recognized by the local communities.</p> <p>At the same time, there is a threat that the Centre could create higher expectations among the community and local institutions than realistic.</p>

	Centres are definitely recognized as useful partners in other local institutions (municipalities, schools, employment agencies, Directorate "Social Assistance", REI, RHI, community centres, local NGOs, etc.).
Contextual limitations of the intervention	Depending on the nature of the municipality (urban or rural) and in regard to the size of the Roma population, the Community centres operate with a different number of moderators
Resources needed to implement the practice	<p><i>Human resources:</i> between 2 and 4 community moderators / workers, Head of the Centre. In larger places it is necessary to recruit local moderator / employee</p> <p><i>Material resources:</i> office with a minimum of three units – administrative room, a room for community meetings, family room, equipment</p> <p><i>Financial resources:</i> salaries, supplies and campaigns. Estimation: 28,000 BGN for 2 moderators 52,000 BGN for 4 moderators per year</p>

As part of the advocacy efforts for ensuring sustainability and extension of the Community Development Centres in Bulgaria this methodology was proposed and approved in the Inter-ministerial Working Group for Resources Provision of Roma Integration. It will be further developed through concrete methodology and financial standard.





CHAPTER 3

THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CENTRES

For the short time of its existence, the Community Development Centres received wide recognition and trust – by both the local communities, and the institutions expected to do field work in Roma community. This recognition was due to a large extent to the assiduous work of the community moderators and to the successes achieved. The present chapter presents a small part of the varied activities of CDC.

Community Development Centre, Byala Slatina

Byala Slatina is a town in the District of Vratsa, North-West Bulgaria. It is an administrative and economic centre of the eponymous municipality of Byala Slatina. The municipality population lives in 15 settlements – 1 town and 14 villages.

Representatives of different ethnic groups live on the territory of Byala Slatina Municipality, where besides the majority of ethnic Bulgarians, the Roma ethnic community is also numerous. Data from the inquiry performed in the municipal centre show that in the town of Byala Slatina 2064 people define themselves as Roma people as of 2012. Out of them 1324 specified the Bulgarian language as their mother tongue. 963 identified themselves as Christians. The main Roma group is the so-called Yerlii from the subgroup of «Dasikane Roma». Rudari and the Muslim Roma are represented to a smaller extent. Roma live as compact groups in most of the villages within the municipality of Byala Slatina.

A Community Development Centre established by Amalipe have been operating on the territory of municipality of Byala Slatina since 2011. Two of the community moderators work in the Centre: Mariyan Alexiev and Galya Mladenova.

Galya Mladenova is 33 years old, married with two children. She studied economics of agriculture in the town of Byala Slatina and passed a qualification course for social work in Roma communities at the New Bulgarian University. Galya Mladenova perceives herself as a person who is called to work for the Roma community and as she describes herself: *“I work as a community moderator, because I believe that this is my dedication”*.

Mariyan Alexiev is 26 years old. He completed his secondary education in the Professional High School of Agro-technical machinery (PAG) “Nikola Y. Vaptsarov” in the town of Byala Slatina. As of the present moment he is to obtain his diploma from the Veliko Tarnovo University, in the speciality of “Business management”. Mariyan Alexiev believes in the idea, *“that the Roma community can and deserves to live better”* and sees himself as a person, who changes and modernises the attitudes of the Roma community. And the community perceives him as someone, they can confide in.

Within their work the community moderators and the numerous volunteers at the CDC – Byala Slatina resolved plenty of cases:

Case concerning: support for social assistance and enlisting of children in the kindergarten

During the field work in the Roma quarter of the town of Byala Slatina the community moderator visited the home of a young woman. The woman was visibly angry and not very talkative. She was mumbling that no one wanted to help her. From her words they learned that she told the social service about her problem, but didn’t find there anyone to help her.

The woman was co-habiting with a man, who was currently abroad, looking for job, but still has not started one. The young woman lived currently along with her three girls, the oldest of which was a pupil. The two younger children were visiting kindergarten, but due to the lack of financial support, their mother removed them from the lists. She also had some old outstanding fees to pay to the kindergarten.

The woman was officially married to her first husband, who abandoned her. They were not divorced. This fact particularly deprived her of her right to receive both child allowances for her children, and social allowances. Her children were three and only the oldest one was from her

first husband, the other two were from the man she was cohabitating with at present.

Furthermore, during the conversation it turned out that the mother did not use her single allowances for giving birth to her second and third child, because she had an existing marriage with her first husband.

The moderators started work on the case:

- they went to a meeting with the kindergarten's directress, where the children used to visit. After our conversation, it was agreed to admit a deferred payment of the due charges and thus, return the children into the kindergarten as soon as possible;
- they went to a meeting with representatives of the Social Assistance Directorate – Byala Slatina. The social workers remained quite surprised by the whole case. They did not know the details and the particular facts. They have not visited the family and knew only what was written in the application for social allowances. Thus, the woman was given the opportunity to submit an application for receiving family allowances. She was also given the name of a lawyer, to provide her with a free-of-charge legal assistance and cooperation to obtain divorce.

As of the moment the young woman was given again the right to receive family allowances for her three children, after ten years of interruption. Thanks to the free-of-charge legal advice she managed to get a divorce from her first husband. The two younger children visit kindergarten again.

Case regarding: Assistance for provision of accommodation to a homeless elderly person

We, the moderators from the Community Development Centre town of Byala Slatina, were asked for assistance by representative of the Regional Social Assistance Directorate – Vratsa. Mr. Ivanov asked the moderators of the Community Development Centre to find an elderly man, A.A.I. with address registration in the town of Byala Slatina. This was on the occasion that the person has submitted an application for social assistance, followed by complaint for the fact that he was not approved for social assistance. Actually, the motive for refusal was that the person was not found by the social service at the address specified in the application.

What was exactly the problem of the person A.A.I. It turned out that the initially specified address by the person is not his. The person had no permanent address, because he did not own a home. He was also left with no means of living. He was forced to move from house to house, staying at different relatives and friends of his. While clarifying the facts, the moderators have already visited four different addresses, where, at different times the person in question used to live for a short time. Thanks to their patience and the responsiveness of the local Roma community, they finally managed to find A.A.I. at the last address given to them. The old man admitted that due to the lack of his own home, he desperately needed accommodation at a Home for elderly people. That was why he submitted application for social assistance. He also submitted a complaint to the Social Assistance Directorate and specified the address, he was living at that moment. He did not supposed that until his application is reviewed, he would have changed several addresses. Having listened to him the moderators decided to help the process of dialogue between the person and the social institution. On the following day they organized a meeting with the representative of the Regional Social Assistance Directorate – Vratsa and took on the role of intermediaries during the preparation and drafting of the social report concerning the accommodation of A.A.I. at a Home for elderly people. Moral support was also provided by the Centre to the elderly man. What was achieved: just five days later the moderators found the elderly man, and took on the role of intermediaries, the Order for accommodation at the Home for elderly people in Popitsa village was issued. The moderators personally accompanied the elderly man for his accommodation in the Home. The conditions in the Home are very good. A.A.I. has already a permanent roof above his head and sustenance ensured. What is more, he also receives adequate care. He participates in various cultural events and has new friends. The village, the Home for elderly people is situated, is one of the villages in the municipality of Byala Slatina, where the moderators work among the local Roma community. So, always when they are there, they find time to visit A.A.I. as well. He is good and so they also feel satisfied by the fact, that they helped him in finding a good and tranquil place.

Case regarding: School reintegration

Walking along Latinka Street in the town of Byala Slatina in one of the houses outside the regulation boundaries, the community moderators Galya Mladenova and Mariyan Alexiev found a case of a dropped out from school pupil. The boy has not been going to school for more than two years. From the conversation with the grandmother of the child, they understood that not only he stopped going to school, but that he had no will to continue, as it was now his second year in the fifth grade. The elderly woman admitted that both she and the mother of the boy had no education completed; so, they saw no problem in the fact that he stopped going to school. The boy had regularly been late for classes, he had bad behaviour in school, there were often and reasonless absences, etc. His mother has been abroad for years, the father's whereabouts were unknown and the grandmother cared for the child.

„Despite the efforts in our conversation with the grandmother and the boy, we reached no result, said the moderators. We couldn't convince them in the necessity of continuation of the education. Therefore we decided that instead of pressing hard, we might better invite the boy to the Centre, to help us with various activities we had to perform. We were preparing a campaign and every day the Centre was full of volunteers. Perhaps, they could influence the boy. So, the young person came to the Centre. In the beginning he was just watching what his age mates were doing, and then he gradually got carried away in the preparations. Once the work for the campaign was over, we, the moderators had another conversation with the boy about what he planned for himself in the future, that going to school and the activities in the Centre were a good foundation for a better way of life. We told him he could come to the Centre whenever he wanted and take part in the various activities here. This continued for a certain time until one day the boy came to the Centre with his grandma. They asked us to assist them to enrol him in school“. Despite the desire of the boy and his relatives to get back to school, the school principal refused to receive him in the school. The moderators then asked for cooperation the Municipality of Byala Slatina – the Education Directorate. Once the municipal servants got acquainted with the case they shared that they would provide them with assistance and would talk with

the school principal. Several days later the boy was already enrolled back in school. It was agreed that as a control measure, every Friday from 2 p.m. the moderators and the boy would visit the chief expert in education at the Municipality of Byala Slatina, in order to trace down his development in school and to resolve any difficulties he might have. The community moderators Galya Mladenova and Mariyan Alexiev regularly visit the Primary School Kliment Ohridski. They keep in touch with the class teacher of the boy and support him in his new beginning. As of the moment, the boy regularly goes to school, shows no aggression and has a good behaviour. Furthermore, the Centre has supported the boy by some school aids, such as notebooks and pens.

School for health

“Health is in your hands”

“When starting the mapping of the local community in Byala Slatina, we could hardly thought that there would be any need of establishing a health school at the CDC. Yet, here it has been, operating for almost a year and a half and playing important role in the development of the local Roma community.

How did the idea of “School for health” emerge? During mapping performed we came across numerous examples of infectious diseases. Bad hygiene was the main case for many of these infectious diseases. Both children, and the adult population of the Roma neighbourhoods were on the sick list. That was why we, the moderators from the Centre decided that at this stage we must start working on increasing the health culture of the population. We had never planned to turn health as part of our work. We intended only to satisfy the specifically identified need – increasing the personal hygiene. To this end, we carried out a series of meetings with representatives of the local health institutions – Regional Health Inspectorate, Multi-Profile Hospital for Active Treatment (MPHAT), health offices. This was the way we started the work of the health school with lectures titled “Personal hygiene” and the first ones were with children from 1 to 4 grade, and from 5 to 8 grade. However, it happened so that the local residents asked us with the proposal to hold such lectures for older pupils, emphasizing the hygiene in the teenage years. Furthermore, people shared their desire to organize health lectures on certain topics among

the adult population. Having responded to the needs of the local community we were also asked by the management of the schools in the smaller settlements of the municipality. Besides the initial topic for the personal hygiene and as a result from our everyday work the need of various health information lectures was identified. Here is how the idea for establishing “School for health” at the CDC, Byala Slatina – came into existence, the moderators share.

The events were carried out in conjunction with the Regional Health Inspectorate, Vratsa, Multi-Profile Hospital for Active Treatment (MPHAT) – Byala Slatina and the local health specialists. The health school included arranging of a series of lectures and discussions on different health-related topics as a result from the everyday field work of the moderators, such as:

- Prevention of malignant diseases
- Sexual and reproductive health
- Family planning
- Risk of early marriages and early pregnancy
- Personal hygiene and healthy feeding, etc.
- The harm of tobacco smoking
- Prevention of HIV and AIDS
- Child and female healthcare
- Socially significant diseases and their prevention

The health lectures were held by separate modules, where each of the following ones upgraded the previous knowledge. The objective of the various modules was to comprise different age groups from the population – from early school age through the teenage, to the middle and adult age. The idea was by increasing the health culture of the population, to make people think about their health and that their health was their personal commitment. As a result we would increase the awareness, the health culture and the sensitivity of the local community on the one hand – regarding demand and supply of health services, and on the other hand – regarding the quality of the medical assistance offered.

Community Development Centre – Etropole

Etropole is a town in West Bulgaria. It is situated in Sofia District and it is the administrative centre of the Municipality of Etropole. It comprises 10 settlements with total population of 12 047 inhabitants – one town and nine villages.

Orthodox Christians predominate in the municipality. As of 2012, by data from a survey of CDC Etropole a total of 726 Roma people live in the town, out of which: 437 Kalaidzii, 211 Rudari, and 78 Tsutsumani. They all are of Christian religion. The Roma population in the municipality is concentrated mainly in the town of Etropole – around 80% of the total number. In the villages of the municipality around 20% of Roma live mainly in the villages of Malki Iskar, Laga and Lopyan.

Two community moderators work in the CDC – Etropole – Ivan Todorov and Ganka Hristova.

Ivan Todorov is 24 years old, married and a father of a wonderful boy. Ivan belongs to the group Kalaidzii Roma. He has secondary specialized education “Machine operator and mechanic of road construction machinery and vehicle driver”. Prior to his inclusion in the work of the Centre in Etropole, Ivan worked abroad. As he speaks of himself: *“I have always worked hard physical work and I have never thought that I would someday work for the well-being of my community. I like working with people and my work as community moderator provides me with exactly this opportunity. The work in a Roma community as moderator is hard, but I find it satisfactory. To me, it is a pleasure that people confide in me and look for me to help. I feel best when I manage to help”*.

Ganka Hristova also has secondary special education. She is from the group of Rudari. *“I want to help the people from the Roma community. I know them and I think that I can be useful for them”*, says for herself Ganka.

The moderators and the volunteers from CDC – Etropole resolved many cases, such as:

Case of prevention of dropping-out from school

The moderators from the CDC in Etropole received the signal from the principal of the Primary School Hristo Botev in the village of Lopyan. It was about a pupil of second grade, who had not been to school for the

last three weeks. The school principal told them that for the time of absence of the child from school, the class teacher had on many occasions visited the family. During each conversation with the mother of the pupil, she received promises that he would come back to school. Nevertheless, the pupil was still missing from any school classes. From the conversation with the school principal, they learned that the family had a total of seven children. Four of the children studied in the Primary School Hristo Botev in the village of Lopyan, and the rest of the children were still very young and that's why they went neither to school nor to kindergarten. Apart from the boy, the other three children, who were pupils had also stopped going to school. The father had recently been released from the prison and one of the reasons for the children to skip school was probably the father. In principal's words, while their father was still in the prison the children regularly came to school and there were no complaints about any of them.

The family lived in a state-owned dwelling of the municipality of Etropole. From the moment of return of the father to his family neighbours started signalling about regular disturbance of the public order. Signals were also sent to the Department for Child Protection-Etropole that the father harassed his family.

On the next day after receiving the signal the moderators met the family in question. First of all, because they knew where the mother of the father of the children lived, they decided to talk to her and attract her as an ally for this mission. The elderly woman met them and carefully listened to us. She admitted that just like them she also wanted her grandchildren to go to school and would accompany them to the dwelling of her son. When they met the father, he started swearing at them, thinking that they were trying to take his children away. Gradually, and thanks to the support of the elderly woman – his mother, they managed to have a normal conversation with the parents of the children.

Thanks to the fact that the moderators were from the community and they knew its specifics, and the people who can provide us with support in our efforts, we managed to have normal dialogue with the family in question. As a result from this, the children returned back to school, and the father registered in the Employment Service Directorate and began doing some cosmetic repair of the dwelling his family lives.

Case of assistance in preparation of documents and granting of pension

The moderators at the Community Development Centre, Etropole were personally contacted by a 58 year – old man. The man named M. was resident of the town of Etropole and worked under a programme of the Employment Service Directorate. He was redirected to them by his direct supervisor under the said programme. At that time, the man was on a sickness leave. Upon his birth he has been diagnosed with a very serious illness. He has not had his employment readjusted for reasons of health. He had no own residence, he lived at his sister's and his nephews' place. From his story, the moderators learned that due to his illness, he had been prescribed expensive medicines, but the man did not take them regularly, because he had no sufficient means. Apart from the main illness, the man shared that he had concomitant diseases, as well. Lately, he had been sick of serious lung diseases. For the last one year he had been hospitalised four times. Quite recently, he had been again for a 10 day treatment at the Multi-Profile Hospital for Active Treatment (MPHAT) in the town of Etropole with diagnosis „pulmonary pneumonia“.

It was on several occasions that M. attempted to apply at the Work Capability Assessment Commission (WCAC), for granting of pension for invalidity. Yet, every time matters reached to the level of General Practitioner (GP) and there was no development from there on. The moderators also learned that the person is health insured and had his social security contributions paid, meaning that in practice he must have the right to apply at the WCAC and to prepare the respective documents for granting the invalidity pension.

As a result from their conversation , they started working on the case:

- They contacted representatives of Social Assistance Directorate in the town of Etropole and acted as intermediaries in the dialogue between them and M.
- They contacted the GP of M.
- They provided support to M. in the preparation of the necessary documents for applying at WCAC.

Recently, M. has a decision of WCAC. He receives free medicines for his main illness from the Regional Health Insurance Fund. He also receives pension and has the right of a social assistance.

Community Development Centre – Novi pazar

Novi pazar is a town in Shumen District, North-East Bulgaria. The town is situated in the valley between Shumensko, Ludogorsko and Provadiysko plateau in the Danubian Plain. The towns of Kaspichan and Pliska are located near Novi Pazar, which is situated about 22 km. east of the town of Shumen. The municipality consists of total of 16 settlements – one town - the municipal centre of Novi pazar and 15 villages.

The Roma community in the municipality of Novi pazar is mostly from the group of Millet. Their mother tongue is Turkish, and the elderly among them can also speak Romani language. By data from the mapping of the Community development center, 1720 people identified themselves as Roma people, 3941 identified themselves as Millet, 12 – remain unidentified.

Two community moderators work in the CDC – Novi pazar – Yusein Shakir and Emilia Aldinova.

Yusein Shakir is a student at the Shumen University "Konstantin Preslavski", IT specialty. *"I work as a community moderator, because I want to modernise the Roma community, so that there will be no illiterate children and to prevent early marriages. I carry out campaigns, lectures, discussions, extracurricular activities and we motivate children to continue their education",* says Yusein.

Emilia Aldinova completed her secondary special education in the Secondary Agricultural Technical School in the town of Shumen. *"It is a pleasure for me to work with the Roma community, to wake up their minds, to motivate young people to continue their education, and increase their health education. On the other hand, I organise Roma parents for participation in lectures, concerning the upbringing and raising their children",* declares Emilia.

The community moderators and the volunteers at the CDC – Novi pazar resolved many cases, such as:

Prevention of dropping-out from school of a secondary school student

They were looked for cooperation by the principal of the Professional High School of Agriculture in the town of Novi pazar. He shared with them that one of the students – G. from 10th grade, despite his good

marks had stopped going to school. The boy lived in a neighbouring village, not in the town of Novi pazar.

The moderators visited the family of the boy, where they faced an unexpected situation. G. lived with his family at extremely miserable conditions. The building, which they used to live in, could hardly be called a home. There were not even basic living conditions – the beds were nailed together from some kind of round timber, there was no furniture. Electricity and water were missing in the building. Mud was everywhere in the so-called house. The moderators learned that the family had nine members. The mother cleaned houses in the municipality, but this job was not regular. The father worked under a programme for temporary employment. His wages were minimal. The minimal pension of the grandmother of G is also added to the income of the 9 – member family. Yet, this money were completely insufficient for the sustenance of all of them. After a conversation with the boy and his relatives the moderators learned that both they and G. wanted him to continue his studies and complete his education. The main problem was the lack of funds for his living – transport, food, school aids and clothes.

What did the moderators do: They returned back to the Professional High School of Agriculture in the town of Novi pazar to talk to the school principal. He again confirmed in front of them that G. was a good student and that he was definitely motivated to study. Having clarified this, their discussion with the principal took a turn in another direction and namely, to search for opportunities for granting a scholarship by the school, and the option to use free transport or a boarding and food facility.

They contacted the Social Service Agency in Novi Pazar and organised a donation campaign amongst inhabitants of the Roma quarter in the town. They had a meeting with the local traders and with the Bulgarian Red Cross to support the family.

Nowadays, G. continues his education. He is already in 11th grade. He has very good results in school. He takes part in the activities of the Centre in Novi pazar. He was accommodated in a boarding facility, and he is provided with a card by the municipality for free transport to his birthplace for the weekends and holidays. This way he keeps the contact with his family. His family is also supported by the CDC – Novi pazar.

Prevention of dropping-out from school of a pupil in the primary stage of education

By signal of a teacher from the N.Y.Vaptsarov Primary School in the town of Novi pazar the moderators visited E.M. – a student in 4th grade. For the last month E. had not been to classes. The class teacher was not aware of any excuse for his absences. She had been at the address, where the family lived, but she did not manage to have a talk with them.

The moderators knew the family and visited them on the same day. They knew that the parents of the boy were separated. The boy lived alone with his mother. The father had left the town and lived in another settlement.

Having conversation with the mother of E. they learned that the father lived with another woman on family basis in another town. Lately, he started appearing without warning, taking E. with himself and without the permission of the mother and then, also without warning, returning him. The mother attempted to reach an understanding with the father regarding the frequent absences of her son from school, but with no result. Apart from missing from school E. was negatively influenced by his meetings with his father. After such meetings the boy was disturbed and would not want to talk even to his mother.

On the other hand, the mother admitted that she started losing control over her son's behaviour and that she was not sufficiently respected authority figure for him. In her words, the other respected by her son adult person was his uncle.

After the meeting the moderators undertook the following actions:

- Meeting with the boy's uncle.
- Meeting between the mother, the boy's uncle and the class teacher.
- Provision of support to the mother and to E. through their inclusion in various activities of the Centre.

The boy was back in school. The mother of E. signalled the social service and the father was warned about his unauthorized removal of the boy from school. The boy and the mother took an active part of the creative applied workshop at the CDC - Novi pazar.

Prevention of early marriage

The moderators were again contacted by the Professional High School of Agriculture in the town of Novi pazar. This time it was about two pupils. M.Ch. – a school-boy from 10th grade and F.M. – a school-girl from 9th grade of the same school. The two of them had been friends for many years. However, during the last few months their relationship became more than friendship. They often started skipping school classes. Both of them, in the words of the teachers, had been exemplary pupils and used to have excellent results until recently. For a very short period both of them reduced their marks, and the girl even started to receive poor marks.

The class teachers tried to talk individually with the youths, and with their parents. However, with no result. The young people did not go to school and were to be expelled.

On the same day the moderators met the girl and the boy. They stated firmly that they have decided to marry and that they would not go back to school. On the next day the moderators managed to meet their parents. Before the meeting they had certain apprehensions as to how would be received and how would the parents react to what moderators told them. Both families enjoyed a good reputation and are respected in the quarter. The moderators also knew them as people who followed the traditions of the community and that it would be very hard to dissuade them about something they had already decided. On the other hand, the moderators were afraid that if they were against the marriage of their children, then the conversation with them might make them decide to anyway stop their children from school.

To their relief, both families accepted them without reproach. They understood that the moderators had contacted them for the best for their children. First, they visited the parents of the boy. It turned out that they did not want their son to marry. The same happened in the girl's family. Her parents didn't have the slightest suspicion that their daughter was not going to school and that she had a relation with a boy. In the beginning the girl's father said that his daughter would not go out of the house anymore. But after the conversation the moderators proposed to arrange a common meeting between the two families. They reached at this consent and thus, on a neutral territory, at the CDC, was held the meeting between the moderators and the parents of the two youths. All partici-

pants came to the agreement that both children should continue their education, and then followed a meeting between moderators, parents, the two youths and their class teachers.

Gradually, M. and F. agreed that they would have to postpone the idea of marriage for a later stage of their life, and now they should start regularly attend school and earn back their previous results. Their parents decided that they would not interfere with the relations of the young people, but all should be within the limits of the traditions and that first, they should finish their education, and then, they could create a family of their own.

It's now been a year since these events. M. is already in the 11 grade, and F. is studying in 10 grade. The moderators continue providing both youths with their support. M. is participant in the Sports club, and F. is one of the best leaders within the center's creative workshop for working with natural materials.

Assistance for provision of accommodation for a homeless elderly person

The moderators have noticed that an elderly person was sleeping on the sidewalk of one of the streets in the Roma quarter of the town of Novi pazar. They were the first to bring him food, and then had a conversation with him. M. was 68 years old. For many years he has worked in the former USSR. He was already a pensioner, but his children had not wanted to take care of him for years. In his words: "I now cannot earn so much money, as I used to and they don't want me". Apart from having no place to live /years ago he transferred the ownership to his children/, he could not use his pension, because it had been blocked. Some time ago his personal documents were stolen and two „bad credits” have been withdrawn with his personal ID card . The old man did not know who and why did this. He tried to look for help from various institutions, but to no avail. That is why he was sleeping on the street and feeding himself on alms.

What did the moderators do:

- First, they organized a donation campaign in the neighbourhood and provided him with food, temporary accommodation and clothes.
- They accompanied the elderly man to the healthcare office for a general check-up of his condition.

- They organized a meeting with the representatives of the Municipality of Novi pazar aiming at obtaining assistance for accommodation.
- They held a meeting with the social service regarding the possibility of issuance of a new personal ID card; opportunity for application for accommodation in a social service.
- They held a meeting with the representatives of the credit institution, which approved the credit.

They worked for more than three months on this case. After the efforts, they managed to arrange for issuance of new personal ID card to M. During the procedure for new documents, the elderly man was taken care of by the Municipality of Novi pazar, by the moderators of the CDC and by the Women's Roma Association “Hayachi”. Once M. received his new personal ID card, the moderators filed the documents for application for accommodation in the Home for elderly people. At the same time documents for de-blocking of his pension were prepared. Because it turned out that there were no free places at the Home for elderly people on the territory of the municipality of Novi pazar, the moderators of the Centre looked for the assistance of their colleagues from the network of Centres in the country, operated by Amalipe Centre. With the support of their colleagues from the Centre in the town of Kamenno, M. was accommodated in the Home for elderly people in Chernomorets village. The home was managed by a partnering NGO – non-profit making association Verniyat Nastoynik (the True Guardian), and provided free transport for M.

The moderators believed that they have successfully resolved the case. And then M. appeared at their doorstep at the Centre. He said that he missed them. Besides, in the Home there were rules that he was not accustomed to. And they did not allow him to smoke – it was bad for his health. However, the moderators told him that all rules were for his good. In several days M. returned back to the Home in Chernomorets village.

Sports club at the CDC – Novi pazar “Sport against violence” or how the sport helps the young people to take the correct decisions in their lives

A sports club functions at the CDC – Novi Pazar for more than a year. The idea for its establishment was originated in the meeting with the youths from the local Roma community and their brimming with energy.

This energy needed to be re-directed in the right direction. Thus came the questions: What can be done for these young people, who are brimming with energy, aggression and strength? How can it be used properly, helping the development of the future personality?

All this took shape in the idea of establishing of a Sports club, to rationalise the free time and energy of the young people from the local Roma community. The sport teaches the adolescent the sense of responsibility, self-discipline, team work skills, mastering of one's emotions, anger management and aggression control. The sport is also a facility for mastering of the infinite capacities we have at our disposal, but rarely use. The systemic practicing of any type of sport turns any undisciplined and weak-willed youth into balanced and purposeful victor.

Sport activities, which are organised provide the opportunity for the young people to meet each other and create contacts with other people. The sports club includes various events: *organising of football games; tennis tournaments; chess tournaments; organising of marches and outings or small walks to nearby destinations.*

Apart from the sports events, the youths from the club often talk with the moderators from the Centre in Novi pazar on questions like: "Why is it important that young people today must continue their education?", discuss topics for prevention of violence, prevention of early marriages, increasing of health culture, etc.

Community Development Centre – Kameno

The Municipality of Kameno is situated in the south-eastern part of the Republic of Bulgaria and it is included in the administrative-territorial boundaries of Burgas District. Its administrative centre is the town of Kameno and it is 20 km west of Burgas. The municipality comprises 13 settlements – the municipal centre - the town of Kameno and 12 villages. The municipality population is 10147 inhabitants, and its composition is mixed. In terms of ethnic composition, the Bulgarian population predominates, followed by the Roma. The largest compact mass of Roma lives in the municipal centre – Kameno. The Roma community in the town is represented by the group of Rudari – 364 people, Millet – 78 people and Dasikane Roma – 68 people. On the territory of the municipality of Kameno live also representatives of the groups of Kaldarashi and Horohane-Roma.

Two community moderators work in the Community Development Centre – **Yordan Stanev** and **Minka Dimitrova**. Both of them are from the group of Rudari.

“Being moderator for me is a pleasure, because as one I can be close to the ones that need my support and I am very glad, when I can be of use to them, both in my field work and in the office or before the institutions”, says Yordan. *“My work as community moderator brings me pleasure. I fell happy, when working with children and seeing their change to good. I am glad that I can help and direct people, who need help”,* adds Minka.

The moderators and the numerous volunteers at the CDC – Kameno resolved many particular cases, such as:

Enrolling to school of a twelve-year-old first-grader

The cases, the moderators at the Centre in Kameno worked were found during their everyday field work. In the same way they found about the case of M. – a 12-year old girl, who was living in one of the marginalised regions of the town of Kameno. In this area of the town the families were mostly of the Roma ethnos, they lived in extreme poverty in illegally built houses. These houses were built mostly of planks, the windows were covered with plastic sheets, there was no electricity or water, and in winter it was almost impossible to heat the rooms. In this part of the town there

were no streets. When it rains or snows, the children wade in mud, in order to get to school or kindergarten. This was one of the reasons, pointed out by their Roma parents, in explanation as to why they stopped their children from going to kindergarten and school.

In one of these houses, the moderators from the Community Development Centre – Kamenno, met M. during their everyday field work. M. was a girl at the age of 12, who has never been to school and has already been prepared by her parents for an eventual marriage. The first task was to explore the motivation of the child and her family to enlist the girl in the school. The mother of M. said that the family had no financial means to send her to school – the father and her son were in the prison, she did not have a job and had no money to buy clothes, shoes and the necessary materials for M. to attend school. M. herself, said that she very much wanted to go to school and did not want to marry at the age of 12 years. M. shared that despite her age, she did not worry going to school along with pupils, who were much younger than her.

All of this helped the moderators to draft their action plan on the case. Then followed a purposeful work with the girl's family aiming at their motivation to enlist the child in the school. The moderators, together with the school and the social service organised a charity campaign for collection of clothes and shoes for children and families in predicament. A separate campaign was also organised under the slogan „Donate your old school bags and notebooks“.

Once M. was enrolled in the school, the Community Development Centre provided two young volunteers, which would help her in preparing and mastering the knowledge acquisition. First, every week, and thereafter – once a month meetings were held in the Centre between the moderators, M.'s class teacher and her mother. These meetings helped following the adaptation of M. in school, her marks and difficulties and identifying the activities, which would provide support for both M., and her family.

The volunteers helped M. in mathematics and in studying the alphabet; thanks to their assistance she quickly learned to read, write and calculate.

Besides the support in school, the girl and her mother were included in the ART club at the Centre, the club in knitting and sewing and in a number of lectures for prevention of early marriages and early births

amongst the Roma girls. Children of both Roma and Bulgarian origin are included in all activities of the Centre, which helps the children in communicating with each other, sharing customs, traditions and building skills for respect and tolerance towards the other. Skills related to responsibility and team work are being acquired. The clubs develop the imagination, stimulate thinking, form skills about self-discipline and create labour and domestic habits, necessary for a future social and employment realization. M.'s mother was assigned tasks related to the work of M. in the club, stimulating this way the relation between mother and daughter, and the mother was thus involved in creation of a better future for her daughter.

M. finished first grade with "Very Good" final results. She indeed, can read, write and calculate. The moderators engaged her as a mentor of several children, who are to be enlisted in the first grade. M. is already in charge for the girls, who still find difficulties in the activities of the club in knitting and sewing. This way M. feels responsible and useful not only to herself, but also and to her community and her family.

Prevention of child abandonment in specialised institutions

M.A. was of Roma origin and lived in one of the marginalised Roma neighbourhoods of the municipality. During the moderators' everyday field work, the father of M.A. shared with them that they had problem with their daughter. 3 years ago their daughter disappeared and although she was included in the national wanted list, until quite recently no one knew where she was. The girl has lived in Greece and returned pregnant from there. The pregnancy was in the ninth month and she was expecting the baby any moment. The girl was still underage, but in about two months she would turn 18. The parents were afraid that their daughter would abandon the child and return back to Greece where according to them she was engaged in the prostitution business. Having talked to the parents, the moderators learned that they wanted to take care of their future grandchild and support their daughter in raising the baby. They talked to the young girl, who was confused and scared of her pending motherhood and said that she did not want the child and would abandon it.

It was a hard situation. What did the moderators do? They of the Community Development Centre in the town of Kameno, organised an initial meeting at the office of our Centre between the parents of M.A, a

representative of the Child Protection Department and representative of Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Division – Kameno. The girl was not present at this meeting. They wanted to discuss and identify all possible alternatives to cope with the situation and then arrange for a joint meeting with all parties involved, including the girl.

Thus, during this first meeting they analysed the parents' motivation to support the process of prevention of the child abandonment and support their daughter in her role of a young mother. They considered the different option for supporting the family with the help of the Social assistance. They discussed the possibilities for inclusion of the young mother and her parents in various activities of the Community Development Centre – Kameno. Then they set the date of the follow-up meeting, this time with the participation of the future mother, as well.

At the next meeting M.A. came with her parents in the Community Development Centre. In the beginning the conversation was far from easy-going. Gradually M.A. relaxed, maybe because she understood that everybody present wanted to help her, and not judge her for her behaviour and condition. After this first meeting, a series of others followed. Thus, came the time for the delivery, but the girl and her parents were already relaxed and confident that they had taken the right decision and that they had people, who would support them.

Art workshop / Creative workshop

It's now a year since an "Art workshop" operates successfully at the Community Development Centre – Kameno. The initiative of the moderators from the Centre was supported by the Municipality of Kameno.

The idea of establishing the creative initiative originated as a result from the everyday field work of the moderators and on basis of the mapping and analysis of the needs of the local Roma community performed by them. The Art workshop is a type of creative activity, it is a group approach, involving putting into practice of various impressive and expressive methods. The goal of this activity is to stimulate and support expression of the participants' personalities in the conditionality of an artistic context, which is created by their joint efforts. Each participant can through role-playing, metaphorical expression through a drawing, sculpture, creation of scenario and its playing, see something unexpected about

him/herself, view him/herself from another aspect, experiment behaviour or attitude and learn this way something more about him/herself and the others. The participation in the group creative process provides opportunities for experiences, which are concomitant to the processes of growing-up and achieving greater independence. The creative workshop was held once weekly for three hours and is concomitant to the rest of the activities of the Centre.

The Art workshop is a kind of group work with children in the following aspects:

1. Development of imagination, creativity
2. Reduction of the inner pressure
3. Development of positive I-concept
4. Development of self-control, sense of responsibility.

The work methods in the Art workshop are: drawing, applied work, role games, discussions on important for the child topics (relations in the family, motivation for education, overcoming of fears, dealing with aggressive behaviour and building up of assertive behaviour in the society; discussions of important topics, such as the harm from tobacco smoking, prevention of psychotropic substances, building up of proper sexual behaviour, etc.

Age groups:

1. From 6 to 12 years
2. From 13 to 18 years

School for parents

Community Development Centre – Kamenno launched an innovative practice “School for parents” aiming at achieving of real dialogue with the families on the territory of municipality of Kamenno, with special focus on the families of children in risk. The initiative of the Centre was again in partnership with the Local Committee to Combat Delinquency of Minors and Underage (LCCDMU) – the Municipality of Kamenno. The idea of this exact form of work with the local parents originated on basis of the field work within the community and the daily contacts with children and parents.

“The school for parents” is a form of work with the parents, through which the centre aims at increasing of the parental capacity, and inclu-

sion of the parents in supportive activities when working with children and youths. The intervention was built up upon the idea that the moderators need to provide support for the whole family, in accordance with its characteristics, creating and developing this way an adequate communication between parents and children.

In the school for parents they work upon the assumption that the parents have their social experience and that it is namely them that are the important personalities in the life of their children, who can and must transfer their experience in a positive and accessible manner to their children. Still, not always and not all parents have the necessary skills for proper communication with their children. For this reason, at “The school for parents” they’re learning how to be good parents for their children using different interactive methods of work. And as Mrs. Zarkova from the town of Kameno said “No one teaches us how to be parents, and this is the most important role in the life of every mother and every father. Maybe that is why we do not have the skills of a parent, we often cannot cope with different situations from the life of our children and thus, they’d suffer or turn out to be at the wrong places with the wrong people”.

The work with the parents in “The school for parents” is not in the form of meetings of parents. Its work is a type of group work – groups for support of parents regarding their role in the process of support for their children. During the meetings the parents speak about what their children love, what do they fear, where do they have difficulties and what are their strong sides. The discussion comprises also what are the specifics of the child development in the different ages, how shall they communicate with their children depending on their age; how shall they protect them from the various forms of abuse – violence, trafficking, drug use, involving in anti-social deeds, etc.

“The school for parents” operates on the territory of the entire municipality and its work is orientated towards prevention in the sphere of:

- Prevention of dropping-out from school of the Roma children.
- Prevention of early marriages and early pregnancy and births among the Roma girls.
- Prevention of all forms of violence in all of its forms.
- Prevention of deviant behaviour among the adolescent.

Club in knitting and sewing

A Club in knitting and sewing was established at the Community Development Centre – Kameno and it has been operating for a year now. The club is a form of community support within the Roma community itself and a form for development of the local social capital.

Children, youths and women from the Roma and Bulgarian ethnoses participate in the club. The goal of the moderators is for the participants in the club to master and develop their social and labour habits and skills. The participants acquire skills for social communication, for working in a team, for overcoming and resolving of conflicts. Along with the skills for a certain type of work the participants acquire a much wider scope of labour habits; work is being done about development of imagination, about rationalisation of the free time and about the opportunities for self-organisation and mutual assistance within the community.

“The idea of establishing of precisely Club in knitting and sewing, emerged quite unexpectedly – during our field work, say the moderators. During our usual round in the Roma community in the town of Kameno we visited a woman, who told us how from old cardigans she made new ones and thus she could help herself in raising her grandchildren, which had been accommodated at her house by the social workers. Then, the woman admitted that she finds it difficult to communicate with her grandchildren and understand their needs. We were accompanied by our project coordinator, Silvia Boyanova, who proposed to develop a Club in knitting and sewing at the Centre, as a creative form of work with young people and women from the municipality of Kameno. So, the idea became reality – now, at the club young people and women have the opportunity to freely communicate and acquire new skills. The club also provides the opportunity through this common work to stimulate the communication between mothers and children: during the work meetings in the club they would talk on the so-called “taboo-topics” in the Roma community. Apart from all skills, they acquire, the participants are happy that with their work they make happy other people, as well – all of the scarves, knitted slippers, etc. they donate to children and families in hard social status. However, the very participants in the club decide who will receive the made articles.”

Community Development Centre – Pavlikeni

The town of Pavlikeni is situated in Central North Bulgaria. It is only 45 km from the historical town of Veliko Tarnovo and 50 km from the Danube-town of Svishtov. Pavlikeni is a small municipality with around 20 000 people of population, out of which 1/5 are of Roma origin. In the town itself there are two large neighbourhoods – in one of them live Turkish speaking Roma people (Millet), while in the other – Kaldarashi-Roma. There are also Burgudzii, but they are scattered around one of the quarters of the town. A small amount identify themselves as “Bulgarian gypsies”. They live scattered among the Bulgarian population.

The municipality comprises the towns of **Pavlikeni** and **Byala Cherkva** and 12 villages. In the town of Byala Cherkva the predominant population is from the group of Rudari. They speak old Wallachian language and are orthodox Christians. In the rest of the villages the Roma people are Muslim, identifying themselves as Horohane-Roma or Millet. There are also small groups of Kaldarashi and Burgudzii, who live in the villages.

Two community moderators work in CDC – Pavlikeni – Valentin Vasilev and Stefan Stefanov. As part of the Centre there are local clubs for development of the community operating in the villages of Batak, Varbovka, Stambolovo and town of Byala Cherkva. Local moderators work in them.

Valentin Vasilev is a representative of the Muslim Roma (*Horohane Roma*). He completed the secondary professional school in Karaisen village, Pavlikeni municipality. *“I have been working as community moderator, being led by the desire to help our community, and any individuals – for a better professional realisation of each individual in the modern society”*, this is the way Valentin describes his work

Stefan Stefanov comes from the group of Turkish speaking Roma people, called *Millet*. He has a Bachelor degree in History from the Veliko Tarnovo University. *“My motivation to work as a moderator is my desire to help all minority groups for their integration and to motivate them for a better development in the society”*, states Stefan

The moderators at the CDC – Pavlikeni and the volunteer groups resolved a lot of cases, such as:

Prevention of dropping-out from school

The moderators from the Community Development Centre – Pavlikeni were sought for assistance by the principal and the Pedagogical Counsellor of the Secondary Comprehensive School Bacho Kiro in the town of Pavlikeni. It was about the following case: three children from a family from Dolna Lipnitsa village have skipped regular school classes for some time now and there was a real risk for them to be dropped out from school. The children were respectively in the 4th, 6th and 9th grade. School representatives visited the family and had conversations with the parents of the children, but this didn't provide the result desired. The children kept piling absences from school. On the next day, after a conversation with the representatives of the educational establishment, the moderators visited Dolna Lipnitsa village. First, they met the secretary of the Mayor's office in the village. Having obtained primary information about the family, they went to visit the family. The father of the children admitted that he had some financial predicaments and he was not in a position to provide funds for food, clothes and shoes. The moderators explained to him that in case of dropping-out from school, the family allowances would also be stopped, and so the children would fall in the trap of the fate of their parents – with no education and with no chance for finding work. The moderators explained to the parents of the children that the transport to their school is free, since it had been provided by the municipality. Concerning the rest – clothes, food and shoes they decided to look for assistance at different institutions. The Secondary Comprehensive School Bacho Kiro decided that they can pay for the lunch of the children. After the meetings held with the local Lady Club – Pavlikeni, the children received clothes and shoes. All three children were back again to school. Their parents expressed their gratitude.

This case is still being monitored by the Centre in Pavlikeni. Through supportive conversations with the children and supportive actions for their parents (e.g. assistance in searching for a job, arranging of donation campaigns, which will benefit other families with hard social status, as well) the moderators do their best to overcome completely the threat of dropping-out.

Campaign “Plant a tree”

The aim of that initiative was to teach the young generation of habits and responsibilities towards nature, to directly involve youths so that they would know that they had done something good for their birthplace. Furthermore, with this initiative the Centre wanted to demonstrate the positive side of the Roma community. The Roma love nature and invest their efforts to preserve it and keep it clean for the generations. So, with the coming spring in 2012 volunteers and local activists from the Roma community prepared the ground for planting, and planted 22 trees in the park of the municipal town of Pavlikeni and in the yard of the Professional High School of Agricultural Technologies.

The campaign was not an isolated event. It continued in time with many follow-up activities – planting of various shrubs and flowers in the parks of the town, and also in the Roma neighbourhoods. The volunteers at the Centre carried out a series of events for cleaning the town and the surrounding settlements. In this way, the representatives of the local Roma community showed that they have a sense for civil responsibility and that they care about their settlement. This won the confidence of the local institutions in the work of the Centre, and on the other hand supported the processes of rallying and organisation within the local community itself. Because the common goal and the joint work for its accomplishment are the driving force for unification and development of any community.

Celebration of Roma Pride – The Day of the Roma pride

On 7 October 2012 CDC – Pavlikeni organised the Day of the Roma pride. The initiative was part of the common civil initiative of CIDT Amalipe – ROMA PRIDE, which was being held on the territory of the entire country under the heading “I have a dream – to study and live together!”. The objective of the campaign was to represent the traditions of the Roma ethnos, in order to overcome the stereotypes against the Roma people in Bulgaria. That is why the centre organised a huge celebration and exhibition with clothes typical for the different ethnoses, materials and accessories from their everyday life. In Pavlikeni municipality the Roma community is represented by several groups: Rudari, Millet, Dasikane-Roma, Burgudzii and Kaldarashi. Therefore, the mod-

erators from the Centre did their best for each group to be represented with its specific traditions and crafts. To the event were invited guests from the municipality, schools and from other governmental institutions. Among the guests were representatives of the Municipality of Pavlikeni and of the Municipal Council, representatives of social, educational and health institutions in the town, and representatives of the local community. First, they met the guests with a cup of Kaldarash coffee made in the special way. Then, the guests viewed the exhibition, which was situated in the foyer of the community centre in the town. The exhibition comprised traditional objects from the everyday life, craft tools, various garments and adornments. Furthermore, the guests were presented with a musical and cultural program of songs and dances, traditional for the different Roma groups: the Rudari dance “Malaya”, Turkish belly-dance, as well as ring-dances and rutschenitsa.

The event was attended by representatives of the various ethnoses in the town and as it was adequately put: “Differences enrich us! They should not divide but supplement us!”.

Community Development Centre – Peshtera

Peshtera is situated in the South-West part of Bulgaria at 120 km from Sofia and at 35 km from Plovdiv. The population of the town is 17 000 people, who are representatives of different ethnoses: Bulgarians, Roma people, Turks, Wallachians, etc. The municipality comprises one town – the municipal centre – Peshtera and two villages. In the town of Peshtera there are two Roma quarters, which are situated at the two ends of the town and are populated by a total of 9500 Roma people from different groups. About 4500 people live in Lukovitsa quarter. They are representatives of the groups of Millet, Koshnichari (basket-makers) and Kalaidzii. Pirin quarter of the town of Peshtera has population of 4000 people, identifying themselves as Millet.

Angelina Demirova is a community moderator at the Community development Centre – Peshtera. She has secondary special education and her speciality is Sewing Industry Operator. *“It is a pleasure for me to work as a community moderator, most of all, because I love challenges, and my work is very hard and full of challenges. It makes me feel immense satisfaction, when I manage to help a person, who needs the help provided. Every smile on people faces gives me strength to continue and makes me feel useful and complete”*, is how Angelina describes her work.

Severin Stefanov is also a community moderator at the CDC – Peshtera. He has secondary professional education. He has grown in Lukovitsa quarter, he speaks both Roma and the Turkish language. Quiet and focused, Severin is extremely dedicated to the field work in the two Roma quarters of Peshtera. He states that for him, the work continues 24 hours a day, because he lives with the problems of the people and the need of support for their development.

CDC – Peshtera can also boast with tens of successfully resolved cases, such as:

Reintegration of a child in a family environment

In the beginning of the autumn A.K. from the town of Peshtera turned to the moderators asking to accompany her to the Child Protection Department. After the divorce with the father of her two children, A.K. was left with no financial funds and left for Germany. The children remained

at their father on the agreement that once settled in Germany, the mother would take them at her place.

Soon after she left, her ex-husband filed an application for temporary accommodation of one of the children at a Home for raising and educating children deprived of parental care with the motive that he had financial difficulties. This temporary measure however, became permanent. The father did not show any desire for the reintegration of the child.

The mother learned from relatives what her ex-husband had done. She came back to Bulgaria and with the help of close relatives of hers she managed to file the documents and get the child back. She intended to take her children and leave again for Germany with them. But upon taking the child out of the social institution, it was ruled that the child should not leave the country for the following 6 months. This was part of the measure for protection “reintegration in the family environment”.

So the mother began wandering about the institutions, in order to find out what hampered her from living with her children outside the country. She waited for the 6-month period to pass and asked the moderators to help to help her going back to Germany with her two children, where she was provided with secure job and a place to live.

The moderators from the Centre visited the Department for Child Protection – Peshtera, where they were explained that in case of reintegration a certain procedure for monitoring and assessment of the parental capacity of the mother was to be followed. Thereafter, the Department should prepare detailed report and on basis of their assessment they should issue permission for the children to leave the country. Moreover, in order to take the children out of the country the consent of the father of the children would also be required.

The role of the moderators from the Centre was mostly to support the efforts of the mother to cope with the process of reintegration of the child in the family environment, by helping her implementing the prescriptions of the social workers and on basis of this to achieve positive social evaluation of the parental competence of the mother.

The moderators believe that they successfully managed to cope with this case, because the social service provided the permission for the mother to leave the country together with her two children. A mother was given back the opportunity to live with her children.

Enrolling in school

During the summer campaign “All in class”, the goal of which was to motivate the children and their parents to visit school, in one of the Roma quarters of the town of Peshtera the moderators came across a family with six children. Four of the children were at a visible school age, but since they were all home, the moderators concluded that the children did not go to school. To their surprise, it seemed that four of the six children, who were subject to obligatory education, had never been enlisted and had never actually been to school.

The family was extremely marginalised. The children were raised under miserable conditions. Their dwelling was rather a hut. There was no electricity and water. It was visible that the children did not take regular showers. So, they were dirty, and their clothes were in very bad condition.

The oldest of the children was 11 years, and the youngest – 3 years old. The children lived with their parents under extremely miserable conditions. They had personal GP, but only two of the children have had immunisations.

The moderators talked to the parents and tried to encourage them to enlist their children to school. The father was firm that he would not let his children study, that there was no point in education, and that with or without it, they would still live in poverty. The moderators tried to explain to him that under these miserable conditions of life and if he failed to enrol his children in school, he risked that at any moment the social services could come and take the children from him. Furthermore, living in this way, he did not contribute anything for the development of his children.

The communication between the moderators and the father was very hard. That was why their meeting with the family continued for long time. At the end of the conversation the father was visibly relaxed and promised to think about the conversation. The moderators agreed to visit the family again in several days.

During their second visit at the family, the conversation was relaxed and the father admitted that they have discussed the option for the children to study, but they had no means to provide for everything necessary for school. The family lived on herbs, fruits and walnuts collection. They had no permanent income. They also had no personal documents, which did not allow them to apply for social assistance. It also turned out that

the family were not residents of Peshtera. Several years ago they came from the nearby town of Batak and had no registration. Their dwelling was also built outside the regulation boundaries. The children were visibly enthusiastic that they would go to school.

What did the moderators do:

- They accompanied the children and the mother to the Polyclinic in the town of Peshtera in order to perform the necessary immunisations and examinations of the children.
- They had a meeting with the management of two schools in the town of Peshtera to enlist the children in school.
- They had multiple meetings with representatives of the Social Assistance Directorate in the town of Peshtera to explore the options for support for the family
- They accompanied the representatives of the Department for Child Protection, Peshtera, in order to get acquainted with the case and undertake measures for provision of support in a family environment.
- They also had a series of meetings with representatives of the Municipality of Peshtera, regarding the opportunities for support of the children and their parents.
- They organized and carried out a donation campaign aiming at collection of clothes, shoes and food to support the family.
- They turned for assistance from experts from the education, social and health services from the Intersectoral Task Force, created within the project “To touch the untouchables”, at the Amalipe Centre.

On many occasions the moderators visited the family and managed to convince the parents that the best for their children was to be enrolled to school. So, the two senior children went for the first time to school at respectively 11 and 10 years of age. Due to some problems with the certificates of birth of the two younger children their enrolment was postponed a while. Several weeks later they also were enrolled in school.

They continued with the donation campaigns and the support for the children and the family. The moderators and the teachers work jointly on their adaptation in school. They included the children in various activities at the Centre and in the preparation of materials for the campaigns they carried out. Their work will be long and extensive and will require uniting the efforts of different institutions for prevention and protection.

Community Development Center – Thessaloniki

“*Barabery*” means “*together*” in the dialect of Romani language spoken by Roma group *fichiri* who inhabit Thessaloniki in Greece. In fact, the word is from Turkish origin and shows that the Romani language spoken by *fichiri* Roma (who are former Muslims) absorbed also many Turkish and Greek words.

The Roma Community Centre *Barabery* was established in the Roma community (*mahala*) Dendropotamos, 6 km far from the centre of the city of Thessaloniki. The Centre was established in the facilities of the Association of Roma Women in Dendropotamos. For the crewing of the Centre two women mediators were selected, trained and employed.

The Centre developed broad set of activities mainly among Romani women and children from marginalized families

“Cinema evenings”: video projection at Baraberi for children and youth

The target group of this activity was the children of the so called “fitsira” families. Fitsira are the families living in shacks in the suburbs of the neighbourhood. Their children are in general unwilling to join in any activity happening outside their region: even if this means that they have to go 500m further at BARABERI centre. At the same time for the community moderators it was an important task to make them will to participate in activities outside the *mahala* (neighbourhood) in order to avoid segregation and marginalization.

There had been attempts by the moderators to set arranged meetings for the video projection so as the children to be motivated on their own. Twice these meetings were arranged and nobody appeared. What finally worked was the moderators picking the children up from their neighbourhoods. The problem that then appeared was the great number of children wanting to join, that they couldn’t fit at the centre.

So the cinema evenings were split in two days and everybody finally enjoyed. The play showed was a circus performance by Cirque Du Soleil “Ka”.

Gypsy night Cultural Event

The Gypsy night initiative was similar to Roma Pride organized by the CDCs in Bulgaria. It aimed at showing the richness of Roma culture to the majority population. The Gypsy night took part at the Block 33, which is a wonderful place where concerts are often organized. There was Roma traditional music from Roma musicians, “Kimeniotes”, and “BOGHALE”, and a famous Roma singer Kostas Iliou. The Roma dancing fascinated the people. The girls and women who were dancing were aged from 13 to 45 years approximately. The women were wearing traditional Roma clothes with intensely colours.

Photo exhibition (on Roma by photographers of the city) allowed to people to learn more about Roma life and their culture. The photos were from Roma communities Dentrepotamos, Agia Sophia and Peraia. Another part of the celebration that deserved the attention of all visitors was the View Documentary “OTE KAI BESAV” (where I live) that gave the opportunity to enter the house and the lives of these people. In the place where the festival was held a representation of a Roma house was made, which showed how the houses were in the past. In addition, there was an exhibition of Roma delicacies made by female volunteers. The attendees were excited by the foods. They liked the whole process which allowed them to attend the traditional way of cooking.

The Music Event was attended by 200 to 250 people approximately. All people enjoyed dancing, singing and learnt more about Roma and their culture. It gave the opportunity to get into Roma houses and their life.

Improving the health

The health status of Roma from Dentrepotamos is a serious challenge since it is significantly lower compared to the one of the majority Greeks. That is why the community moderators invested significant efforts for activities with aim to improve the access to quality health care services.

“Healthy diet and food” lectures were organized by the Centre. They were presented at the primary school of the community by a nutritionist. 25 school children aged 7 to 19 years attended the lectures. “PAP TEST and mammography” lecture presented by midwives and gynaecologist from the local Health centre had the attendance of 12 women aged 20 to 50

years old. “Vaccines and childhood diseases” lecture presented by volunteer doctors of Medicines Du Monde had the attendance of 7 women aged 20 to 40 years old, all of them mothers or grandmothers already.

The Centre organized also Doctors’ visits. Medicines Du Monde visited the centre 3 times for free examination of the citizens of the community. Within the people examined there were also women possible victims of violence that have asked the doctors for the possibility of psychiatrists visiting their family and talking with their husbands. The doctors realized door to door visits and suggested also to the women periodical appointments and free check with the psychiatrists in the offices of Medicines Du Monde.



Community Development Center – Tirgu Muresh

Muresh is the county in Romania with highest percentage of Ramoni speakers. The Roma population there is close to 10% and is composed by several different groups. Some of them – like *Gabor* – are conservative and traditional, they maintain their traditional Roma cloths as well as certain patriarchal habits, such as early marriages. Many Roma in the region are trilingual speaking Romanes, Hungarian and Romanian.

The Community Development Centre established by Liga pro Europa was situated in Tirgu Muresh. It worked with Roma communities from Band and Apalina. Two community moderators, namely Alexandra Berchi and Reghina Moldovan were appointed after public procedure.

Campaigns for combatting early marriages

Since the early marriages are serious issue among some of the Roma groups in Muresh county, the Community Development Centre organized campaign for preventing early marriages. It included diverse set of stakeholders: Roma leaders, school principals and teachers, social workers, experts in county administration and others. Numerous events were organized, such as:

- On the 20th of February 2012, a field trip was undertaken by the community moderators for the dissemination of the published materials and meeting with informal leaders in the Apalina community, where traditional early and forced marriages, as well as school drop-out are frequent due to poverty situation. The moderators met the vice-mayor of the municipality of Reghin to involve the institution in affirmative actions for community development. They planned together all following events with the campaign for preventing early marriages.
- On the 2nd of March 2012, a preparatory meeting was held in the community Petelea with local authorities and Roma leaders to prepare the meeting with school pupils and parents.
- On March 9, 2012 a community based event was organized in the school of Petelea, with the participation of Roma children in the school, teachers and parents, attended by 30 individuals. The themes

tackled were: disadvantages of early marriage and the importance of education.

- On March 10, 2012 a preparatory meeting was held with the local administration of Sângeorgiu de Mureş for organizing a workshop with the pupils, teachers and parents from the Roma community.
- On March 23, 2012 a workshop was organized in the school of Sângeorgiu de Mureş with 25 pupils, their teachers and parents on the disadvantages of early marriage and the importance of education. During these visits the materials published were disseminated in the community.
- On the 6th of April 2012, a meeting took place with the representatives of the religious cults in the town of Sighişoara about the influence of the church in Roma communities and their role in stopping the early marriages and supporting the local development.
- On the 21st of April 2012, a workshop was organized in the school of “Serafim Duicu” with the participation of 25 Roma pupils and the psychologist of the school to combat early marriages and school drop-out.

National civil campaigns

Apart from the daily activities for resolving particular cases, the field work and organisation of community events, the Community Development Centres carried out numerous campaigns. Their objective was to make the wide public aware of the contribution of the Roma people to the national and European culture, as well as to help in overcoming of anti-Roma stereotypes and prejudices.

Day of Roma culture and pride – ROMA PRIDE

On 24 September 2011 a criminal conflict between a Roma person and a Bulgarian in Katunitsa village, Plovdiv district was followed by anti-Roma demonstrations and outrages all over the country. The danger for *a criminal conflict to turn into ethnic one was quite real*. During the events in Katunitsa the Roma neighbourhoods all over the country lived in fear and panic. Thousands of **Roma children were stopped from school** and hundreds of Roma people did not go to their jobs for fear of being victims

of mob rules. The worst was the situation with the Roma people, who studied and worked outside the Roma quarters.

During these days the community moderators from the Community Development Centres in the municipalities of Byala Slatina, Etropole, Peshtera, Novi pazar, Kamenno and Pavlikeni acted as promoters of the dialogue and tolerance between institutions, local authorities and the local population. The moderators were in constant contact with the Roma population. Thanks to the quite adequate reaction of the moderators from the Centres and to the responsible institutions, the school classes in the respective municipalities were timely renewed, and the people from the Roma neighbourhoods were provided with protection.

The civil initiative “Roma Pride-the Day of Roma pride” was organised one week after the events in Katunitsa, in response to the violence in the country. The campaign went under the heading: “I have a dream: to study and live together”.

On 1 October a series of events were organised all around the country within the campaign, among which – exhibitions, giving away flowers, child paintings and essays, written by Roma pupils and calling for peace and understanding. Since October 2011 this initiative has been performed every year, and has turned into one of the symbols of the Community Development Centres, as well as an expected and loved event by all inhabitants of the respective settlements. The initiative is part of the municipal plans for regional development and is thus acknowledged as an annual community event.

Day of the mother tongue

In February 2012 the Centres in the six pilot municipalities under the project in Bulgaria, organised the European day of the mother tongue. Moderators from the Centres organised pupils, teachers, and representatives of the municipal authorities and of the local community from the six municipalities to carry out the initiative. The events on the occasion of the Day of the mother tongue were performed in the buildings of the respective municipalities. Large posters were made, on which all citizens could personally draw their hand and write inside it in their mother tongue their personal message to their fellow citizens.

It wasn't by accident that the location for carrying out was the building of the respective municipality – this would demonstrate the importance of every single language along with manifestations of respect, forbearance and tolerance. Several goals were set by the initiative: to encourage multilinguality; to inform the local community about the importance of studying of foreign languages and mother tongues and to promote the diversity of the scope of the studied languages; to encourage studying foreign languages and mother tongues in any age; to popularize the rich language and cultural diversity in Europe and to increase the level of intercultural understanding.

16 November – DAY OF THE TOLERANCE

On 16 November 2012 the Community Development Centres in Byala Slatina, Etropole, Peshtera, Novi pazar, Pavlikeni, Veliko Tarnovo and Kameno organised community events under the heading “Tolerance means to respect each other”.

In all settlements, in front of the buildings of the respective municipality were installed posters, on which the citizens and guests of the settlements were invited by local activists to leave their messages and wishes for respect and love among people. Youths–volunteers at the Community Development Centres, were giving away to the passers-by red hearts with messages for tolerance. The red hearts – symbol of love between people with message for respect and acceptance of the other and the smiling young people, with a hand reached out holding a heart managed to turn the otherwise cold and gloomy day into a day brimming with warmth, humanity and goodness. Simultaneously with the campaigns in front of the local municipalities, in some of the local schools were held discussions “Tolerance means to respect each other”, after which pupils, teachers and parents left their messages.

Here is part of messages:

“The tolerance cannot come out of nowhere, unless we wanted it to. When we show tolerance among each other, there should not any different people in this world because we are all equal – no matter what we are; what religion we profess, whether we are poor or – rich.”

“The sun shines upon us all.”

“In life, be human and love all humans around you!”







CHAPTER 4

ROMA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NATIONAL ROMA INTEGRATION STRATEGIES: ENSURING POLITICAL ATTENTION

The implementation of the project “*Promoting participatory field-work at grass-root level in marginalized and traditional Roma communities*” coincided with one of the most important developments in the Roma integration process: namely, the preparation of National Roma Integration Strategies all over European Union. On April 5, 2011 the European Commission published EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies. In June 2011 it was also approved by the European Council. The communication required all EU member states to prepare/update their National Strategy for Roma Integration and set certain requirements for these documents. In addition, the proposal for new European funds regulations published by European Commission on October 6, 2011 proposed the existence of NRIS as ex-ante conditionality before all EU member states. Until March 2012 all EU countries (except Malta) prepared and approved their NRISs.

The project “*Promoting participatory field-work at grass-root level in marginalized and traditional Roma communities*” as well as other civil society initiatives prepared comprehensive set of suggestions for promoting the field work in Roma community, in particular of the Community Development Centres in the respective National Roma Integration Strategies and Action plans. Incorporating these suggestions would provide the necessary political attention for strengthening the field work at grass-root level in Roma community using the community development approach.

The project partners organized different kind of advocacy activities to ensure that the community development approach will be included in

the NRISs in Bulgaria, Romania and Greece. The success was different since the consultation process and the involvement of NGOs and Roma community in the preparation of the documents also differed. Below we provide the case of Bulgaria since it is indicative for the numerous ups and downs in the preparation process, the diverse forms of NGO involvement and the different ways for incorporating the community development approach.

The entire set of Roma Integration documents

After long and controversial consultation process Bulgarian Council of Ministers adopted National Strategy of Republic of Bulgaria for Roma Integration (NRIS) and Action Plan (AP) on December 21, 2011 (The Decision of Council of Ministers was published at the beginning of January: 1/05.01.2012.) Following the requirement of Roma NGOs the Strategy was also discussed in the Parliament and approved with Decision of the National Assembly from March 1, 2012. In this way Bulgaria approved for first time Roma integration document with decision of the Parliament that was significant step ahead since all previous Roma integration programs were adopted with acts of the executive power.

The NRIS required all municipalities in Bulgaria to prepare and adopt Municipal Roma Integration Annual Plans. During the second half of 2012 the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues (NCCEII) as contact point for the NRIS initiated process of preparing the Municipal Plans. Its necessity was announced during the conference “The National Roma Integration Strategy – one look at the next programming period” organized by Centre Amalipe, the Minister on EU Funds Donchev and the NCCEII on June 15. In October and November pilot exercise was implemented in 3 municipalities in Sofia-district: Ihtiman, Dolna Banya and Slivnitsa prepared their Municipal Roma Integration Plans for 2013–2014, at the same time District Strategy of Sofia-District for Roma Integration 2013–2020 was also prepared and approved. This exercise was steered by the Secretariat of the NCCEII, with participation of all relevant district and municipal institutions, NGOs and Roma activists. Centre Amalipe and the Community Development Centres in Dolna

Banya and Etropole were among the most active participants in the process.

On November 15, 2012 the Deputy Prime-minister and Chair of the NCCEII issued instruction package for preparing Municipal Plans and District Strategies for Roma Integration. The package contained also template for the documents required. The instructions envisaged two-stage process:

- preparing Municipal plans for 2013–2014: until the end of January 2013, later this deadline was extended to the end of February 2013;
- preparing Municipal plans for 2015–2020: until the end of 2014.

Until the end of February 2013 almost all municipalities in Bulgaria prepared and approved their Municipal Roma Integration Plans. All 28 districts approved District ones.

As part of the entire set of integration documents, special Appendix “Programs for implementation of the NRIS” was proposed by Centre Amalipe and a broad group of Roma NGOs as a result of suggestions gathered during four national conferences organized in October 2011. The Appendix contained programs with envisaged financing from state budget and European funds (mainly HRD OP and RD OP). In this way it ensured the funds necessary for the NRIS implementation.

The fate of this Appendix was rather indicative. It was proposed by the Roma NGOs in the working group that prepared the NRIS in 2011. Nevertheless, it was not approved (neither rejected) by the Council of Ministers and its status was rather unclear. During 2012 Amalipe and other Roma organizations tried to raise the question with the status of this Appendix and undertook advocacy efforts for its approval. Finally it was updated and approved at the end of February 2013 by the Interministerial Task Force for Resources Provision of Roma Integration. The Appendix is divided in two parts: programs during the current programming period and programs in the new programming period (2014–2020). It contains 45 proposals for programs that will be funded with EU funds (“Human Resources Development” Operational Program, “Regional Development” Operational Program, “Science and Education” Operational Program, “Good Governance” Operational Program and the Rural Areas Development Program), the state budget, the EEA Financial Mechanism and the Bulgarian-Swiss program.

The advocacy activities undertaken

Participation in preparing the National Roma Integration Strategy:

The process of preparing the National Roma Integration Strategy in Bulgaria started in July with Order of the Prime Minister N 185/22.07.2011 for forming Working Group for the NRIS. According to the Order the National Strategy had to be prepared by Working group that included representatives of all relevant institutions of the executive power (at expert, not at political level) and Roma NGOs. All the organization that support the Community Development Centres in Bulgaria (Centre Amalipe, World without Borders, New Way and others) were included in the group as well as certain other Roma organizations. It was envisaged that the National Council for Cooperation of Ethnic and Integration Issues would see the entire process of Strategy preparation. The Roma organizations took active part in the work of the Working group. In some of the subgroups – for example in the sub-groups for education and health care – Roma activists were the main driving force.

National conference “Good practices for social services in Roma community” – the conference was organized in October 2011 by New Road – Hayredin (one of the organizations supporting the Community Development Centres) with the support of Centre Amalipe and with the purpose to advocate for incorporating the practice of CDCs in the National Roma Integration Strategy. Over forty experts and politicians, representatives of leading Roma NGOs, national, regional and local institutions participated in the conference. Among them were representatives of all key institutions engaged with the preparation of the Strategy: the Secretariat of National Council for Cooperation of Ethnic and Integration Issues, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, National Employment Agency, State Agency for Social Assistance, representatives of the municipal power. The key organizations that participated in the working group for preparing the NRIS also took part in the event. The conference was held on October 27 (Thursday) in Vratsa. The experience of CDCs was presented by the moderators from Byala Slatina and by Deyan Kolev, the project manager. All the participants agreed that this experience is promising and negotiated its incorporation in the National Roma Integration Strategy.

National forum “The National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Roma integration (2012–2020) – one look at the next program period”: The forum was organized by Centre AMALIPE, the Deputy Prime Minister and Chair of the NCCEII Tzvetan Tzvetanov and the Minister on EU funds Tomislav Donchev. The event was high-level political forum and was attended by the Minister for Management of European Funds Tomislav Donchev, the Minister of Regional Development Lilyana Pavlova, the Minister of Health Desislava Atanasova, the Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Policy Zornitsa Rusinova, the Deputy Minister of Education Petya Evtimova, the Deputy Minister of Agriculture Svetlana Boyanova, the head of the European Commission Representation in Bulgaria Zinaida Zlatanova, the Chairman of the National Association of Municipalities Todor Popov, district governors of 24 regions, representatives of NGOs from the Commission for Integration of Roma to the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues and others.

The resources provision for the National Strategy for Roma Integration through European funds and the planning of the integration policy at municipal and regional level were the main topics discussed during the forum. The plenary sessions drafted the steps that should be undertaken for the practical implementation of the NRIS – binding with EU funds at national level and starting concrete implementation activities at municipal and district levels. The forum also outlined the forms of partnership between Roma NGOs and state institutions for implementing the Strategy.

The idea for preparing a set of standardized Integration interventions with methodology and financial standard (such as Community Development Centres and others) as well as the idea for preparing Local / Municipal Roma Integration Plans were announced during the conference.

Participation in preparing the Municipal Roma Integration Plans: Since June 2012 the Community Development Centres and Amalipe initiated participatory process of preparing Municipal Roma Integration Plans. In June 2012 training of local activists in every municipality was organized to get them informed, to brainstorm ideas for Municipal plans and to make them engaged with the process. At the end of July a special camp was organized for municipal officials, other stakeholders (school principals, GPs), Roma leaders and community moderators from the

CDCs. They were informed about the necessity for preparing Municipal Roma Integration Plans and started to think together how to organize the process at municipal level.

In September the community moderators from CDCs organized local meetings in the biggest villages in the 11 municipalities where Amalipe has formed CDCs to inform the local communities and to get them involved.

This participatory process gave good results. One of the municipalities – Dolna banya – was included in the pilot exercise for preparing Municipal plans organized by the focal point for the NRIS in October – November 2012 and was pointed as the best example for preparing the Municipal Roma Integration Plans. In 9 out of 11 municipalities with CDCs the communities were activated and managed to influence the process. In addition, Centre Amalipe assisted many other municipalities as well as district governors to prepare Municipal Roma Integration Plans and District Strategies for implementation of the NRIS. As a result these documents included the community development approach and the CDCs.

Participation in the Interministerial Task Force for Resources Provision of Roma Integration: the Working Group for Resources Provision of Roma Integration was suggested by Amalipe and other Roma organizations in the process of preparing the NRIS and was formally established with order of the Prime Minister P-193/02.08.2012. The Group is established at political level: it is chaired by the Minister on EU Funds and is composed by Deputy-ministers and executive directors who chair the Managing authorities and Intermediate bodies of different operational programs. This is important asset and precondition for taking important political decisions. Another important asset is that the Group incorporates also representatives of Roma NGOs elected after special procedure of nominations. In this way the Roma participation in this political level Group is guaranteed.

After its establishment the Group started active work in two important directions:

- ensuring standardized financial instruments for integration: the idea for preparing methodology and financial standard for several models called “Integration Interventions” was proposed by the Roma NGOs

- and approved by the Group. In addition, during the session from December 11, 2012 the Group approved the first two Integration Interventions, namely the Community Centre and Intervention for Decreasing the Early School Leaving. Methodology and financial standards will be prepared for these interventions as well as for several more. After this, funds for their concrete applying will be ensured with the support of HRDOP, REDOP, RADP;
- updating and approving the Appendix “Programs for Implementation of the NRIS”: as pointed above the Appendix is the most concrete part of the NRIS aimed at ensuring the necessary financial resources for its implementation.

The community development approach in the Roma integration documents

The National Strategy of Republic of Bulgaria for Roma Integration and the entire set of integration documents that follow it could not be assessed unequally. Some of their parts are much better developed than the others that reflects the controversial and at the same time inclusive way of their preparation. As a whole the Strategy applies approach that follows principle 2 Explicit but not exclusive targeting from the Ten Basic Principles for Roma Inclusion approved by the Council of European Union. It sets national goals in 6 fields (education, health care, living conditions, rule of law and anti-discrimination, culture and media) that further continues the main priorities from the existing Roma integration documents and are recognized by the stakeholders who work for Roma integration. At the same time the integration targets and possible activities set are numerous and without clear accent that stresses the necessity of Municipal Roma Integration Plans with clear accents.

Owing to the advocacy activities developed by the Roma organizations, the NRIS and the following integration documents incorporate certain community development elements and establish preconditions for implementing a broad set of community development activities:

- the CDCs are officially recognized as successful practice and included in the National Roma Integration Strategy: in addition, the Strategy also applies the community development approach;
- the Interministerial Working Group for Resource Provision of Roma Integration chaired by the Minister of EU Funds approved special Integration Intervention “Community Centre” and methodology & financial standard for it will be prepared. This is important precondition for further extending the practice of the CDCs since would provide the chance for establishing Centres in all municipalities they are needed,
- the Action plan “Programs for NRIS implementation” approved in February 2013 contains program for establishing CDCs all over Bulgaria. Following this, certain amounts would be provided for establishing Centres in all municipalities they are needed,
- In addition, possibilities for supporting CDCs are included in the draft for the next Human Resources Development OP

CHAPTER 5

ROMA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PERIOD 2014–2020: ENSURING THE RESOURCES NEEDED

The project “*Promoting participatory field-work at grass-root level in marginalized and traditional Roma communities*” as well as other civil society initiatives prepared comprehensive set of suggestions for promoting the field work in Roma community, in particular of the Community Development Centres in the documents from the so-called “European semester” for the next planning period 2014 – 2020. Incorporating the Roma integration topic in the European semester would provide the necessary political attention and resources (including financial ones) for strengthening the field work at grass-root level in Roma community using the community development approach that proved its efficiency and effectiveness. This is a huge opportunity for the Member states and for the Union to advance in achieving inclusive growth developing the human potential of their Roma citizens.

The recommendations below are within the context of Bulgaria. Similar set of suggestions are necessary also for the other countries with significant Roma population.

Recommendations for the design of the new Human Resources Development Operational Program (OPHRD)

On 6 October 2011 the European Commission published a proposal for a new Regulation of the ESF. Although the proposal is to be discussed and voted by the European Parliament and the European Council, which could lead to major changes in the body, it sets the guidelines for the development of new programs co-financed by the ESF.

It can be certainly stated that the draft ESF regulation will set the subject to the use of EU funds for activities aimed at Roma integration to a new, higher level.

There are several important proposals in this direction:

- Art. 4, para. 2 requires that “At least 20% of the total resources of the ESF in each Member State shall be allocated to the thematic objective - Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty.
- Art. 3, para. 1 C offers a specific area of intervention “Integration of marginalized communities such as the Roma” within the priority “Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty”: it should be stressed that Roma are the only ethnic group explicitly mentioned in the Regulation. The proposal for targeted intervention, supporting Roma integration is unique and very positive – it gives a clear signal of the need for the use of a targeted approach.
- Art. 4, para. 3 introduces the requirement for thematic concentration of interventions, “in terms of the less developed regions, Member States shall concentrate 60% of the allocation to each operational program on up to four investment priorities ...”: i.e. the adoption of this part of the Regulation (which is quite disputed), Bulgaria will have to concentrate 60% of the resources of the new HRDOP on 4 areas of intervention.
- Art. 6 provides a basis for effective participation of NGOs in the implementation of programs co-financed by the ESF: par. 1 allows “participation of the social partners and other stakeholders, in particular non-governmental organizations in the implementation of operative programmes as specified in Article 5 of Regulation (EU) № [...], can be in the form of global grants ...”. In addition, para. 3 requires “To encourage adequate participation of NGOs and their access to actions supported by the ESF, in particular in the field of social inclusion, gender equality and equal opportunities, the managing authority of an operational program ... ensure an appropriate amount of ESF resources for capacity-building for non-governmental organizations”.

It is essential that the new regulations by the Structural Funds also introduce the so called “Conditionality” – if they are adopted by the European Council, of course. Part of them is the REQUIREMENT that

each State has to approve National Roma Integration Strategy, in accordance with the framework of the EU Roma Strategy, announced on April 5, 2011.

Taking into account these aspects of the draft ESF regulation, and having the fact that from March 1, 2012 Bulgaria for the first time has a national strategic document for the integration of Roma, approved by the Parliament, it is necessary for new HrDOP to enable opportunities for funding Roma integration policies – in particular, the implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategy. For this purpose it is necessary:

Inclusion of investment priorities “Integration of marginalized communities such as the Roma” and turning it into one of the four main priorities of thematic concentration: The specified priority is to provide resources and tools for implementing the National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Roma Integration (adopted by Decision of the Parliament 01.03.2012). It should therefore be a key investment on priority axis “Reducing poverty and promoting social inclusion” or be defined as a separate priority axis.

Indicative activities for this investment priority could include:

- Integrated interventions combining education, employment, social services and health services.

- Activation of the local Roma communities to participate in the implementation of integration interventions.

- Formation of public-private partnerships for the implementation of municipal plans for Roma Integration and Regional strategies for Roma integration: According to the National Strategy for Integration of Roma each municipality must prepare annually Municipal Integration Plan. HrDOP will allow these to be constructed and operated in a manner similar to local development strategies (Leader approach in RADP): with the participation of NGOs and business administration in the municipality and real engagement with the local community.

- Implementation of municipal plans for Roma Integration and Regional strategies for Roma integration.

- Implementation of sectoral and cross sectoral Integration Interventions (ScSii): Integration types of interventions are interventions that follow a well-defined methodology and financial standards. These are social and health centres, health mediators’ desegregation initiatives, cen-

tres for community development and others. (A more detailed description see below.)

- Methodological and organizational support for the implementation of integrative interventions, Municipal plans for Roma Integration and Regional strategies for Roma integration Roma inclusion as a targeted group, as well as examples of activities for Roma integration and other investment priorities.

- Include a chapter “Fields of action regarding Roma community” in the new HRDOP and clear indicators and indicative budget for implementation of the measures in this chapter: This will emancipate the allocation of funds for Roma integration by the political situation and create more secure conditions for the implementation of impact indicators in the Roma community.

- Create conditions for the participation of the most vulnerable regions and groups: it could be achieved through various means such as setting specific schemes aimed exclusively at the most vulnerable regions and micro-regions, providing technical assistance to increase the absorption capacity of European funds, etc. This should be regulated in the text of the HRDOP.

- Create conditions for the inclusion of organizations working in the Roma community as a beneficiary under some of the schemes: implementation of HRDOP will be more successful with more active involvement of Roma organizations. Their definition as a beneficiary under some measures targeting Roma and the delegation of the larger projects of Roma organizations (by analogy with the delegated funds under Axis 2 of the social partners in this period) will make HRDOP more effective for Roma people. Basically it is imperatively necessary considering the low number and low capacity of institutions responsible for the integration process.

- Inclusion of the institutions involved in the process of Roma integration as a direct beneficiary of the new HRDOP : Currently such institutions are the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues / NCCEII Secretariat and the Centre for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities (structure of Ministry of Education);.

Inclusion of investment priority “Capacity building of stakeholders” through which resources should be allocated to build the capacity of in-

stitutions involved in the process of Roma integration and NGOs: This priority should include the following activities:

- Support for capacity building of NGOs to carry out joint activities with institutions in the areas of employment, education and social sphere
- Capacity building of NGOs working in marginalized communities, such as the Roma to build public-private partnerships to implement policies for the integration of local, regional and national levels.

Recommendations for the determination of sectoral and cross sectoral Integration Interventions

The idea of setting Integration interventions is beyond the scope of HRDOP and refers to the overall formulation and implementation of policies for Roma integration and to the sustainable funding through the state budget, HRDOP, RDOP, RADP and other programs. The description of the idea of setting Integration interventions is included in a separate chapter.

Recommendations for the next Regional Development Operational Program (RDOP)

It is necessary the new RDOP issues related to improving the field-work in the Roma community to be set by appropriate analysis, measures, sample activities and indicators. To achieve this objective the following is necessary:

Ensuring the participation of the Roma community in the development of new RDOP

- Inclusion of Roma NGOs representatives and experts in the field of Roma integration in the working groups preparing new RDOP.
- Conducting special discussions with Roma NGOs, experts and leaders in the new program.
- A discussion of the Working group to resource Roma integration with EU funds is necessary.

For the possibility (including through allocation of adequate financial resources) for implementing nationwide integrated intervention for improving the living conditions of marginalized groups

Pilot scheme “Support for the provision of modern social housing for vulnerable, minority and low-income populations and other disadvantaged groups” has the potential to create a comprehensive model applicable in a number of municipalities. The results of this pilot measure should be aggregated and analysed. In view of its slow start, this is unlikely to happen before the end of the planning of the new RDOP. However, the new program needs:

- To allocate resources for such an integrated intervention, while preserving its main characteristics - a combination of “hard” and “soft” measures, cross-financing, anti-segregation character;
- It is necessary for the “hard” measures to combine not only the construction / renovation of social housing, but also to repair the educational, social and cultural infrastructure in the neighbourhoods, where social housing will be built;
- In addition, activation and participation of local communities should be ensured through targeted activities (e.g. establishing a community centre, etc.).

For the possibility (including through allocation of adequate financial resources) for implementing nationwide integrated intervention for improving the living conditions and infrastructure in Roma neighbourhoods

The presence of Roma neighbourhoods is an objective fact that cannot be changed. Deconcentration of most of them is practically impossible. Therefore, dispersion and removal of groups from these areas should be complemented by efforts to regulate and improve the infrastructure and housing conditions in the separated Roma neighbourhoods.

Integrated intervention in this field must contain the elements of the above-described intervention and should be supplemented by:

- Activities targeted to alleviate the physical accessibility to other districts and central parts of the city.

- Renovation of social and cultural infrastructure.
- “Soft” measures for de-ghettoization.

Introduction of “ex-ante conditionality” associated with the integration of Roma

It is necessary, at national level, to introduce conditionalities to municipalities wishing to participate in the implementation of RDOP analogically with introduction of conditionality to the Member States. Some of these conventions should be related to the integration of Roma, for example:

- Availability of the Municipal Plan for Roma integration / implementation of NSRIBR.
- Presentation of project proposals using funds from RDOP for implementation of the municipal plan.

Introduction of delegated budgets for interventions in areas with marginalized groups

RURAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (RADP)

In terms of the RADP 2014–2020:

- To analyse the Roma communities’ part of disadvantaged groups in rural areas and to lay down additional program-specific indicators and quantified objectives, targeting Roma in the development of RADP 2014–2020.
- To provide appropriate monitoring indicators for Roma population – number of Roma population to use the constructed objects / equipment, and related services - cultural, sports, such, regarding the use of information and communication technologies, etc., number of members of the community applied for measures related to the development of agriculture, forestry and others.
- To include representatives of Roma organizations in working groups to develop the program and later in the Monitoring Committee in order to involve Roma organizations as active partners and participants and to improve opportunities for Roma integration.

TOWARDS COMPREHENSIVE POLICY FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AT GRASS-ROOT LEVEL OF ROMA

Declaration from the International conference

“Community Development: a Key for Roma Integration”⁵

We, representatives of NGOs, independent experts and institutions working for the social inclusion of Roma.

Having regard to the fact that:

- Protection of human rights and social inclusion of vulnerable groups are among the basic principles of the European Union.

- Roma are Europe’s largest minority, and integration of Roma community is one of the main strategic tasks facing Member States and the Union as a whole.

- Successful integration of Roma meets many challenges at national and European levels. Among them at national level highlight the need for greater commitment to targeted action for Roma integration (including the use of EU funds in this respect), for investing the necessary financial resources in activities for social inclusion of Roma, for development of appropriate administrative infrastructure of the process of Roma integration in most European countries, for establishing strong and multi-layered mechanism for monitoring the implementation of Roma integration activities, for real participation of Roma organizations and Roma community as a whole in the planning, implementation and evaluation of policies targeting Roma. Although the EU member-states had to meet these challenges in the National Roma Integration Strategies (prepared as answer to the EU Framework for NRIS), and although all member-states submitted their NRIS, many of them do not cover the challenges above in the proper way or much should be done for converting the good intentions from the NRISs into real actions.

Among the challenges at European level highlight the need for stronger European monitoring of the member-states’ commitment to Roma

⁵ The conference was held in Sofia on December 11, 2012 as final event of the project “Promoting participatory field-work at grass-root level in marginalized and traditional Roma communities”. More information see at:

<http://www.amalipe.com/index.php?nav=news&id=1417&lang=2>

integration, for establishing an appropriate administrative infrastructure (including increasing the competences of the European Roma Platform), for binding the usage of EU funds (especially ESF, ERDF and EAFRD) with Roma integration and fostering member-states to use more funds for Roma and others.

All these challenges should be addressed through appropriate action by national governments, regional and local authorities, European institutions and civil society (including Roma organizations):

- many Roma communities, especially traditional and marginalized ones, continue facing problems as forced and early marriages, unequal treatment of women, early school leaving (especially among the girls) and so on. These problems are not rooted in the essence of Roma culture, they are remnants from the patriarchal habits that are typical for many traditional ethnic groups all over the world and indicate that the process of modernizing Roma community is still not finished;

Considering also that the project *“Promoting participatory field-work at grass-root level in marginalized and traditional Roma communities”* in Bulgaria, Greece and Romania clearly demonstrates that community development approach and investment in community development activities is necessary for overcoming the traditional (patriarchal) practices, for supporting the modernization processes in the Roma community and for activating the communities to take part in the process of Roma integration. The project demonstrated also that establishing Community Development Centres is the right framework for community development activities since the CDCs apply:

- social work at grass-root level in Roma community, including the provision of specific community-based services;
- innovative approaches for mobilizing and involving local Roma communities, incl. support for the educated and successful Roma and their commitment to community work;
- cooperation and joint actions of the institutions working in the Roma community at the local level (social, educational, health and other institutions), NGOs, Roma authority (formal and informal).

WE CALL UPON all stakeholders: national and European institutions, regional and municipal authorities, intergovernmental organizations, civil society and the Roma community **FOR:**

1. Strong and comprehensive national policy for Roma integration that takes into consideration the community development approach and supports community development activities: all EU member-states with Roma population approved their National Roma Integration Strategies answering the EU Framework for NRIS from April 5, 2011. This was a good first step. However, there is *strong need of concrete and forward-looking measures to implement these documents: with clearly defined financing, proper administrative infrastructure, multi-layer monitoring and mechanisms for engaging the civil society and Roma community itself*. It is also necessary these documents, as well as the overall national policy for the Roma to incorporate the community development approach and activities at grass-root level among their main methodologies and scope of actions. *Support for establishing Community Development Centres* that follow the pilot methodology tested within “*Promoting participatory field-work at grass-root level in marginalized and traditional Roma communities*” project should be integral and indivisible part from the national Roma integration policy.

2. Strong and comprehensive European policy for Roma integration: The European institutions should continue their support and political guidance for the member-states to implement the National Roma Integration Strategies submitted. Robust monitoring mechanism is necessary at European level. In addition, the Commission should continue building its administrative framework for supporting the process of Roma integration, including to extending the competences of European Roma Platform.

3. Linking the overall European cohesion policy and agricultural policy with stronger support for the Roma integration and especially for Roma community development activities: the new draft Regulations for ESF, ERDF and EAFRD proposed by European Commission on October 6, 2011 suggest the existence of NRIS as ex-ante conditionality, require 20% of ESF to be used for social inclusion, propose special area of intervention “Integration of marginalized communities such as Roma”

and opens space for community-led initiatives. These are positive ideas and we call upon for their final approval.

We also call for more active role of the Commission in negotiating the national operational programs and Rural Areas Development Programs. For example, the Commission could negotiate with the Member states that the countries with significant percentage of Roma population should include “Integration of marginalized communities such as Roma” as one of the main investment priorities in their ESF-funded operational programs, the RADP should benefit the integration of Roma in the rural areas, the share of EU funds contribution for the NRIS implementation should be included in the Partnership contracts and so on.

4. Ensuring more European and national funds for strengthening participatory field work at grass-root level in marginalized and traditional Roma communities within the framework of 2014–2020 period: in Bulgaria the project *“Promoting participatory field-work at grass-root level in marginalized and traditional Roma communities”* as well as other initiatives of civil society lead to preparing comprehensive set of suggestions for financial back up of the field work in Roma community, in particular of the Community Development Centres in Bulgaria. We call for implementing this set of suggestions during the process of preparing the next planning period 2014 – 2020 in Bulgaria.

We also call for preparing similar set of suggestions for Romania and Greece.

Abbreviations

CDC	Community Development Centre
NCCEI	National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues
HRDOP	Human Resources Development Operational program
RADP	Rural Areas Development Program
RDOP	Regional Development Operational Program
NRIS	National Roma Integration Strategy
EEA	European Economic Area (Financial Mechanism & Norwegian Financial Mechanism)
REI	Regional Education Inspectorate
RHI	Regional Health Inspectorate
MPHAT	Multi – profile Hospital for Active Treatment
WCAC	Work Capability Assessment Commission

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THE HEART OF THE COMMUNITY

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