



UDRUŽENJE  
ROMSKIH STUDENATA

# Lessons Learned from Working with Most Marginalized Roma in Serbia towards Labour Market Integration



UDRUŽENJE  
ROMSKIH STUDENATA

## **Roma Students Association**

- Founded in 1999 at the University of Novi Sad
- Emerged from the 1990s student movement in Serbia

## **The Unique Role of Roma Students**

- Recognize the transformative power of student activism as such in society changes
- Promote a new image of Roma: Competence, Academic excellence, High culture achievements
- Oppose stereotypes of Roma as merely folkloric, performative and community with culture of entertainment character

## **Driving Change Within the Roma Community**

- Encourage internal transformation
- Abandon archaic cultural patterns
- Promote a selective approach toward tradition and preserve only those values that have with lasting significance



## Association of Roma Students Today

Focused on:

- **Policy analysis & development**
- **Shadow reporting**
- **Advocacy**
- Brings together **students** and **academically educated Roma**



UDRUŽENJE  
ROMSKIH STUDENATA

From 2016 to 2024, we focused on employment-related policies aimed at increasing the participation and activity of the Roma community in the labor market and entrepreneurship, in partnership with German development cooperation—specifically, the agency of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH."



UDRUŽENJE  
ROMSKIH STUDENATA

## Effective Labour market Integration Approach Development (2016–2024)

- Tested **various methodologies** and **approaches**
- Goal: identify the **most effective model**
- Focus: support for **hard-to-employ Roma individuals**
  - Long-term unemployed Roma (more the 2 years without job)
  - Returnees/failed asylum seekers from EU countries
  - Secondary School dropouts
  - Individuals without completed elementary education
  - Persons without any qualification or work experience



UDRUŽENJE  
ROMSKIH STUDENATA

## Services/Measures Provided to Unemployed Roma man and woman

- Outreach and information on employment opportunities
- Career guidance and counseling
- Support in completing primary education
- Organisation of Vocational trainings
- Mediation in employment
- Support for self-employment / starting own income generation activity
- Workplace adaptation support after finding employment



UDRUŽENJE  
ROMSKIH STUDENATA

## Impact of the provided services:

- Close to 1340 Roma man and woman are covered with various services
- 117 Roma beneficiary found employment as direct consequences of mediation in finding employment
- 385 persons have completed vocational trainings in following professions: Velders, Excavator drivers, Hairdressers, Bookkeepers, Forklifters, Cooks, Pastry chefs, Pedicurist / Manicurist-Nail technician
- 127 Roma have completed elementary schoold for adults
- 37 Roma man and woman have started their own income generating activity/bussiness
- 7 secondary school drop outs sucessfully enrolled again in school





















EDUKATIVNI  
CENTAR

dodjeljuje

## SERTIFIKAT

kojim se potvrđuje da je polaznik/ca

Zorica Milovanović

uspješno savladao/la

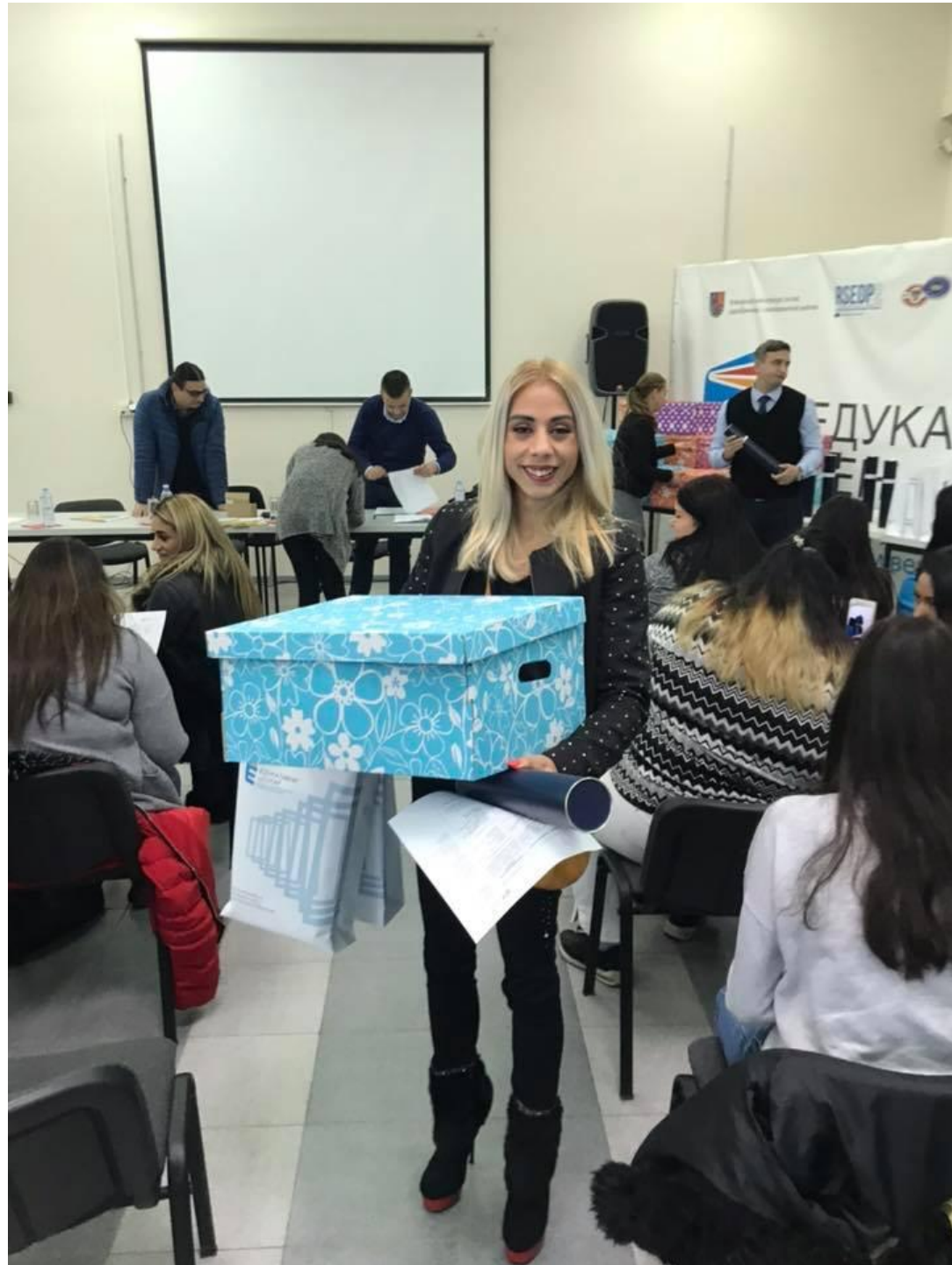
OBUKU ZA POČETNIKE U POSLOVANJU

u periodu od 21. maja do 25. maja 2018. godine

Direktor:

  
M. Milovanović













UDRUŽENJE  
ROMSKIH STUDENATA

In 2023 recognition of Association of Roma Students Roma employment effortst have been recognised by Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of Serbia and we have been invited to conceptualise developed approach in form of Handbook for employment advisors as step toward institutionalisation.



UDRUŽENJE  
ROMSKIH STUDENATA

## Key fundings

What this methodology for Roma integration in labour market recommends/stands for?

-What works and what doesn't in approaching Roma employment?-



Министарство за људска и мањинска права  
и друштвени дијалог



немачка  
сарадња  
DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT

Sprovedeno od strane:

**giz** Deutsche Gesellschaft  
für Internationale  
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH



UDRUŽENJE  
ROMSKIH STUDENATA

Active employment policy/active job search narrative  
showed to be ineffective on most marginalised unemployed Roma  
community members



**UDRUŽENJE**  
ROMSKIH STUDENATA

## Positive Role Models

- Use success stories from the Roma community- employment advisors from Roma community
- Share role models with whom users can identify
- Builds trust, motivation, and self-belief
- Employment = opportunity for self-actualization

## Continuous Support

- Employment mediation works best when:
  - Counselors provide regular job updates
  - Support beneficiaries in job applications
  - Track results and encourage beneficiaries
- Help beneficiaries adapt to workplace expectations ensuring longer job retention and work satisfaction



UDRUŽENJE  
ROMSKIH STUDENATA

## Employment advisors as Core Resource

- Confidence and trust building
- More effective if they come from the Roma community
- Act as role models, mentors—not just advisors
- Shift from “counseling” to **mentorship concept**

## The Power of Group Support

- Group work boosts motivation and beneficiaries persistence
- Social support networks are vital for Roma Peer environment = safety and belonging
- Example best training outcomes in sence of low drop out when:
  - Participants live, eat, and train together
  - Group encourages those at risk of dropping out



Министарство за људска и мањинска права  
и друштвени дијалог



немачка  
сарадња  
DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT

Sprovedeno od strane:

**giz** Deutsche Gesellschaft  
für Internationale  
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH



UDRUŽENJE  
ROMSKIH STUDENATA

## Cultural & Economic Sensitivity

- Understand the **social and family context**
  - Many rely on informal work to support their families
  - Ensure financial compensation during training
- Not high enough to be the reason to join certain service
- But enough to offset survival income loss for the family



Министарство за људска и мањинска права  
и друштвени дијалог



немачка  
сарадња  
DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT

Sprovedeno od strane:

**giz** Deutsche Gesellschaft  
für Internationale  
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH



UDRUŽENJE  
ROMSKIH STUDENATA

Over 40,000 Roma in Serbia have main income through collection of raw/scrap materials. Waste management legislative reforms in Serbia do not recognise these workers as occupation, and there is risk that majority of them will lose basic income in this process. This might produce new waves of migration of Roma asylum seekers of in Western European countries. Similar situation in in other Western Balkan countries. Therefore, we urge Serbian government to be advocated from EU countries to tackle this question and find way to integrate collectors of raw materials in waste management reforms in Serbia and WB countries, as way to prevent new Roma asylum seekers wave coming to EU.



UDRUŽENJE  
ROMSKIH STUDENATA

Association of Roma Students

[www.urs.co.rs](http://www.urs.co.rs)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qr4V0G  
LcvC4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qr4V0GLcvC4)