

WORKSHOP SUMMARY REPORT

Workshop Title: Roma and Sinti: Participation as a Key to Empowerment

Date: 30th October 2015, 11.30 – 13.00

Panelists / Facilitators:

Speakers:

- Andrey Ivanov, Roma and Migrant Integration Equality and Citizens Rights Department, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights: **The EU Framework for Roma Integration**
- Manuel Weinrich, ROMBAS Team Member (Austria): **ROMBAS: A Study about the Educational Situation of Roma and Sinti**
- Dejan Stankovic, Centre for Education Policy (Serbia): **Empowerment through Roma assistants in the educational system in Serbia**
- Lydia Anstiss, Volkshilfe (Austria): **Project THARA Amaro Than: Labour Market Initiatives for Roma and Sinti in Vienna**

Moderators:

- Jürgen Schick, Federal Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs, Austria, PAC9
- Barbara Willsberger, L&R Social Research on behalf of Roland Hanak, Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection

Summary of the session (max. 200 words)

80% of European Roma live in the 14 countries of the Danube Region, with the strongest concentrations in poor and peripheral regions. Priority Area 9 of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region („Investing in people & skills“), therefore defines the economic and social inclusion of Roma as a crucial objective, in particular for fair access to education and labour markets. The goal of the workshop was to raise the awareness for participation policies of Roma and Sinti in the fields of education, training and employment. Therefore - beside the results from research projects, i.a. the ROMBAS study with a participatory approach together with and for the Roma community - different good practice projects were presented and discussed:

- Pedagogical assistants (former Roma assistants) in Serbia support the teaching process, work individually with and provide additional educational support to Roma students. Currently 170 pedagogical assistants support especially Roma children in primary school. It has to be highlighted that the concept of Roma assistant was formalized in 2012. The evaluation results prove the success and the necessity of such a support.
- The project goal of THARA is the integration of Roma and Sinti into the labour market through counselling, coaching and information. Further aims are awareness-raising in the majority society through Roma culture workshops and developing contacts to the Roma-Community.

Key messages / lessons learnt (max. 200 words)

The areas of education, training and labour market empowerment are playing a crucial role in the empowerment of marginalised groups such as Roma and Sinti and actions range from removing barriers and / or guaranteeing early childhood education to the provision of required skills and competences which are necessary to successfully participate in the labour market and to take an active part in society.

Lessons learnt from the discussed projects prove that a thorough evaluation of target groups' needs and desires is essential to design effective measures with appropriate methods. Furthermore the active participation of Roma as team members is of utmost importance, although the discussion within the workshop pointed out the challenges.

The active participation of Roma project team members working together with team members from majority mainstream society can function as a sort of on-the-job learning and training programme which will produce, in time, highly competent and experienced Roma team members. They, in turn, can pass on what they have learned to a younger generation of Roma team members thus bringing more and more Roma and Romnja into the project environment.

All in all there is much expertise on the local level and there are already many existing projects, but often developed without the participation of Roma. And not every "good practice" proves suitable for every local context, and local actors often lack capacities and know-how to implement models that have been successful elsewhere. Therefore consultation and empowerment measures are necessary.

Moreover, the workshop also showed that educational or work-related issues amongst disadvantaged communities such as Roma and Sinti cannot be solved referring solely to one area of expertise. It needs a common approach from different areas and comprehensive policies to successfully tackle this challenge.

Next steps / recommendations (max. 200 words)

The aim of the workshop was the exchange of good practice projects and to enhance the networks between existing and future initiatives and actors. The discussion impressively demonstrated the need of information and know-how exchange and the necessity of building up networks, but also the necessity of the involvement of Roma.

Recommendations are:

- Better communication of events such as Roma workshops within the Roma Community (and maybe also the possibility of travel reimbursement) and providing opportunities for know-how exchange with a specific focus on this topic
- Active participation of Roma project team members working together with team members from majority mainstream society as a sort of on-the-job learning and training programme
- More success stories from projects, but also from employers of Roma
- Fostering mainstream pilot actions
- More focus on child care projects and educational projects for Roma children
- Key-Message of the workshop: "NOTHING FOR ROMA WITHOUT ROMA"

Appendices:

- PPT Presentations are already online
- Useful links:

- European Platform for Roma Inclusion: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma/roma-platform/index_en.htm
- Rombas Study (only in German): http://minderheiten.at/images/rombas_druck.pdf
- Equal access to education: An Evaluation of the Roma Teaching Assistant Programme in Serbia: http://www.edge-page.net/papers2011/Paper_BATTAGLIALEBEDINSKI.pdf
- Project THARA (THARA Factsheet in German, English and Romanes available as downloads, Website only in German): <https://www.volkshilfe.at/thara>