



# Amalipe Newsletter

Issue # 2, 2009

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# OBSERVER



Local Government  
and Public Service  
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**THE PLATFORM  
PROJECT:  
THE REGIONAL  
PARTNERS HAVE  
BEEN SELECTED**

A meeting of the OSI Expert Committee for selection of regional partners within the Platform project took part on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009. The members of the Committee selected five Roma organizations from all applicants for regional partners of the project led by Open Society Institute - Sofia. The chosen organizations are as follows:

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## STATEMENT OF CENTER AMALIPE REGARDING THE PROPOSAL OF THE SPECIAL WORKING GROUP ON THE NEW VERSION OF A ROMA STRATEGY

On February 27<sup>th</sup> the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Demographic Issues published on its website the proposal for a Framework program/ National Strategy for Roma Integration prepared by the Special working group. The work of the group was boycotted by the Roma organizations. You can find below the Statement of Center Amalipe regarding draft document prepared by the institutions.

The draft proposed contains certain positive principles and ideas mainly in the sections "Education", "Living conditions", and "Improving the legal basis" as partly in some of the other sections. At the same time it contains weaknesses which make it inappropriate for a program document (even less

## UPDATING THE ACTION PLAN FOR THE DECADE OF ROMA INCLUSION

Through a special letter dated February 2<sup>nd</sup> the National Coordinator of the Decade of Roma Inclusion Baki Hyuseinov requested Roma organizations to prepare suggestions for updating the Action Plan of the Decade of Roma Inclusion. Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance "Amalipe" sent suggestions to chapter "Education". It proposed certain concrete activities, amounts, terms and responsible institutions for implementing these activities. It also proposed Roma NGOs to be included in the working group that would summarize the suggestions and would prepare the updated Action Plan.

Integro Association also sent recommendations and concrete suggestions.

for a strategic document) for the Roma integration process. In addition, the draft contains clearly discriminative texts which turn the draft document into an unacceptable paper. The texts included in the educational chapter fairly reflect the proposals made so far by the Roma organizations and the Ministry of education.

At the same time the document contains serious weaknesses:

1. *Lack of clear structure and a unified approach:* the different chapters follow different structures – some of them are constructive but some of them are chaotic; they are rather bulk of separate sentences and ideas without clear structure (e.g. "Roma and culture" and so on). The different chapters follow different and even controversial approach when discussing Roma integration

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### THE PLATFORM PROJECT: THE REGIONAL PARTNERS HAVE BEEN



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1. *North-West Bulgaria* – Roma Lom Foundation: overall result – 427 points;
  2. *North-East Bulgaria* – Consortium with leading organization Integro Association, Razgrad: overall result - 463 points;
  3. *South-West Bulgaria* – Consortium with leading organization “Liberal alternative for Roma Sivic Union” Association (LARGO) – Kyustendil: overall result – 377p
  4. *South Central Bulgaria* – Roma Plovdiv Foundation for Regional Development: overall result – 387 points;
  5. *South-East Bulgaria* – World without Borders Association, Stara Zagora: overall result – 391 points;
- The team of Platform for project creation program thanks all the 18 applicants and kindly asks them to participate in the process for elaborating local project proposals.

#### SCHOLARSHIPS FOR ROMA MEDICAL STUDENTS

RHSP of Open Society Institute – Budapest and Roma Education Fund announces call for applicants for a scholarship program for Roma medical students. The applicants should be either medical students or applicants for medical universities and colleges in Bulgaria for 2009/2010. More information can be found at [www.osi.bg](http://www.osi.bg) and <http://romastudents.org>

#### RMUSP SCHOLARSHIPS FOR ROMA STUDENTS

The Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program of OSI – Budapest announces call for applications for Roma students enrolled in legitimate universities during school year 2009/2010. The scholarships are for one year with an opportunity for renewal. The applicants should apply or be enrolled in a BA, MA or PhD program as fulltime students. The deadline is 15 April 2009. More information can be found at [www.osi.bg](http://www.osi.bg) and <http://romastudents.org>

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### ROMA ORGANIZATIONS PROTEST AGAINST THE EXCLUSION OF ROMA COMMUNITY FROM PREPARING NEW FRAMEWORK PROGRAM FOR ROMA INTEGRATION

At present the new Framework Program for Roma Integration is being prepared in a way that excludes the civil society organizations and Roma community, violate resolutions and recommendations of European institutions and tends to make use of the new document in the election campaign. This was one of the main messages of the coalition of Roma organizations in Bulgaria during the press-conference that took place on February 15 in Sofia. Deyan Kolev (Center “Amalipe – Veliko Turnovo), Lili Makaveeva (Integro Association – Razgrad), Stefan Panayotov, MD (Health of Roma – Sliven), Radostin Manov (Diverse and Equal – Sofia), Dimitar Georgiev (Human Rights Project – Sofia), Gancho Iliev (World without Borders – Stara Zagora) and Kadrin Hasanov (Civic Union of Roma Movement) took part in the press-conference.

Deyan Kolev explained that during 2008 Roma organizations took active part and were the driving force in preparing the updated Framework Program. ‘We insisted on several ideas and principles, Kolev said: the new Program should be adopted with Decision of the Parliament, financing from the state budget should be provided for Program implementation, concrete mechanisms for participation of municipalities, civil society and Roma community should be guaranteed.’ Following these principles, the Roma representatives in the Working group for preparing the new Program proposed integral draft for the Program and asked for discussing it in the Working group. Instead of this, Deputy Prime-Minister and Chair of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Demographic Issues (NCCEDI) Emel Etem issued Order P-13/23.01.09 and took the process back to its beginning. The participation of Roma NGOs in the Working group was sharply reduced from 16 to 4 organizations and the deadlines for preparing the Program were postponed until the time of the election campaign (end of April). So far Emel Etem has refused to submit the draft prepared by the Roma NGOs for discussion in the Working group. As a result the Roma organizations refused to take part in the sessions of the Group after its new composition had been announced. Answering a journalist question Deyan Kolev explained that the Chair of NCCEDI has not consulted him as Deputy Chair for composing the new working group. According to him the new Order broke at least two decisions of NCCEDI.

In turn, Lili Makaveeva presented the resolutions of the European Parliament and the recommendations of the European Commission which underlined civil society participation and participation of Roma community in preparing and implementing strategies for Roma integration. She insisted that Order P-13 of Deputy Prime-Minister Etem violates the decisions of the European institutions as well as

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**ROMA ORGANIZATIONS PROTEST AGAINST  
THE EXCLUSION OF ROMA COMMUNITY  
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PROGRAM FOR ROMA INTEGRATION**

one of the basic democratic principles – cooperation between civil society and state institutions.

D-r Stefan Panayotov insisted that the participation of Roma organizations until January 2009 had been very constructive. The good will of Roma to take their responsibility in the process was rejected however by the political leadership. Nevertheless, we would continue fighting for the idea for civil society participation and civil society monitoring of Roma integration activities, D-r Panayotov insisted.

Dimitar Georgiev underlined that the current developments are an example of Roma exclusion by the side of institutions and political parties. He said that not only the ruling parties but also the opposition excluded Roma and this would make Roma more radical.

Gancho Iliev pointed that Roma organizations had reacted immediately after the attempt Roma community to be excluded from the process of preparing the new Roma strategy: a special letter with request for a meeting had been sent to Deputy Prime-Minister Etem and to Prime-Minister Stanishev. Since such meetings were refused, Roma organizations would ask for support President Parvanov and would inform the European Commission, European Parliament, Council of Europe and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

**STATEMENT OF CENTER AMALIPE REGARDING THE PROPOSAL OF THE SPECIAL WORKING GROUION THE  
NEW VERSION OF A ROMA STRATEGY**

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Issues; this makes the text eclectic which is unacceptable for an official document.

2. The text is based on the wrong vision that *Roma are mainly a social group and the Roma issue is only a social issue*. Although some of the chapters do not follow this concept, it is clearly underlined in the preamble (named “Social integration of Roma: a national task”) as well as in most of the chapters. This vision is irrelevant for the real situation in Bulgaria: Roma in Bulgaria are an ethnic group with clearly expressed ethnic identity; moreover, the discrimination against Roma is not only socially but ethnically motivated. In addition, the text proposed deviates significantly from the vision of the European commission for the character of social inclusion. We have to underline that the vision implied by the draft document for a Roma strategy is inefficient and ineffective regarding the possible decision it would evolve.

3. The draft document *does not provide an opportunity for a targeted intervention for Roma integration*. This practically dooms the process: due to the huge social and ethnic gaps between Roma and the majority in certain areas targeted interventions are imperatively needed to guarantee the equal opportunities and the achieving of real integration.

4. *The new document ignores the efforts made in the recent years in the Roma integration process*. For example the Health chapter states that no studies exist at present and interventions in the health field should start only after a detailed survey is carried out. It does not take into account that several such studies have been carried out in the last couple of years. It proposes “volunerey health meadiatorš without taking into account the practice of the health mediators which has already proved its efficiency and has absorbed a lot of European money.

5. One of the significant weaknesses of the text is that *it offers rather ascertainments and intentions than decisions and priority actions*: there is serious threat this document to turn into just another paper which would lead to a change.

6. The text perceives *the Roma community as a passive object of integration*. The “Roma participation” Chapter proposed by the Roma organizations in January was cut down and the Roma participation has been completely excluded as an approach. This contradicts a number of EU documents recommending the active Roma participation in elaborating and implementing policies for Roma inclusion, for example the Resolution of the European Parliament from January 3<sup>rd</sup> 2008 and so on.

7. The draft proposed by the institutions *practically excludes any straightforward actions for Romani women emancipation*: the Romani women chapter proposed by the Roma organization in January was also cut down and the gender principle is not included as a cross-cutting issue. This contradicts the ideas of the International initiative Decade of Roma inclusion and a number of EU documents (the Resolution of the European parliament on the situation of Romani women, etc.)

8. The text proposed by the special group *does not take into account the global crisis and its impact on the integration process*.

As a conclusion we have to say that the text of the Special group contradicts the present Framework program for equal integratin of Roma into Bulgarian society adopted in 1999 and the draft proposed by the Roma organizations in Januray 2009. It is a serious step back from all the achievements for Roma integration. The text proposed could not and should not be a basis for the Roma integration policies in the forthcoming years. It is necessary to build a version which would included the positive texts from both documents, the one proposed by the Roma organizations in January 2009 and the one elaborated by the Special group in February 2009.

The whole text of the **Statement of Center Amalipe can be found at [www.amalipe.com](http://www.amalipe.com)** (in Bulgarian)



### NEW COMPOSITION OF THE NCCEDI

Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance “Amalipe” will be a member of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Demographic Issues for forth year. Other Roma NGOs also remain members of the Council: Integro Association, World without borders, Roma-Lom Foundatn, Confederation of Roma “Europe”, Guylchai Foundation, and so on. In the new composition of the Council there are however first-year-members organizations: Diverse and Equal Association, Kupate, etc. 57 NGOs in total are approved for NCCEDI members in 2009; 34 out of them are Roma NGOs.

The new composition was defined through Order P-23/19.02.2009 of the Deputy-Prime Minister and Chair of the NCCEDI Emel Etem. The Order also defines state institutions that are members of the Council: 24 ministries and state agencies represented by deputy-ministers and agency directors. The National Coordinator of the Decade of Roma Inclusion Baki Hyuseinov however is not included in the new composition of the Council.

### ST. VALENTINE'S DAY EXHIBITION



Center Amalipe took part in St. Valentine's Day exhibition. The Roma children from Aleko Konstantinov Str. in the old capital made a pile of Valentine cards. The incomes of the charity exhibition will be used for buying materials for children's classes.

The volunteers of Center Amalipe – Maria, Philip, Any, Stefka and Mitko also took part in the preparation of the Valentines cards. Beside this the girls put on traditional Roma clothes specially for the event which was on 12-th and 13-th February 2009. The initiative for the Romantic celebrating has been organized for second year in the building of the Municipality of Veliko Tarnovo. Its main organizers are Center for community support, Center for social rehabilitation and integration, Crisis center for victims of traffic - Balvan and many other social institutions form the old-capital-city.

### THE PLATFORM PROJECT IN POLSKI TRAMBESH

As a regional partner of Open Society Institute in the PLATFORM project, Center Amalipe visited the municipality of Polski Trambesh and the mayor of the city G.Chakarov. The meeting was organized together with Chair of the local Roma organization Roma-Zaedno Ivan Siderov, with mayors and school principals in the villages of Radanovo and Strahilovo. The Roma integration problems and the major priority axis for integration in the Municipality were discussed at the meeting. The participant debated around possible projects for Roma integration which could be supported within the PLATFORM project.

The Municipality has been partnering with RomaZaedno and Center Amalipe for years. Nevertheless, the Roma integration in Polski Trambesh faces serious challenges: educational, social-economic and infrastructural. One of the most serious problems is in the village of Radanovo where according to the mayor the Roma children drop-out from school before graduating primary education. Many of the Roma in the municipality are unemployed or work in the so-called 'grey' economy. Infrastructural problems concern almost all villages in the region: most of the Roma neighbourhoods are badly planned - села: ромските махали са в голямата си част неблагоустроени – there are no roads, sewerage, children playgrounds and so on. The major part of the neighbourhood in Radanovo is out of regulation and the buildings do not comply with basic building requirements. The village mayors expressed their wish to prepare projects for the National plan for development of rural areas (measures 321 – 322). Serious obstacle however is the requirement for advance technical documentation (surveys, plans and projects) which requires a lot of money – the mayor of Polski Trambesh underlined. There is such documentation available but it is for the main streets which dooms Roma neighbourhoods to be left again out of the attempts for improvement.

It was agreed during the meeting that several integration projects will be prepared together with Polski Trambesh municipality for the Human Resources Development Operational Program and the National plan for development of rural areas. The preparation of these projects will be supported by the PLATFORM program with the participation of the local Roma communities, leaders and organizations.

The PLATFORM project for generating projects “The Structural funds as a means for the equal integration of Roma” is implemented by a consortium led by Open Society Institute – Sofia in partnership with Center Amalipe, the National Association of Roma working in Public administration and the Resource center for decentralization and local development.



# SCHOOL

## A PUBLIC LESSON IN VASIL LEVSKI SCHOOL IN LEDENIK

Ms. Albena Angelova showed her guestshow to teach a mixed class in an intercultural environment. The title of the lesson was “Writing a small hand-written letter „u” and “Chunga – Changa” – a Turkish fairy tale. The lesson was held in a mixed class from 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade in Vasil Levski Primary school of Ledenik.

The public lesson was held within the project for introducing intercultural education financed by Human Resources Development Operational Program. All teachers from the partnering school, Rumyana Yordanova, Director of the Educational Department of Veliko Turnovo



Municipality were among the guests of the lesson.

Ms. Angelova demonstrated her pedagogical skills for working with 14 kids from two different grades which is not a rare practice in some of the small village schools. During the lesson the children spoke about the different customs of Roma Turks and Bulgarian while introducing the major idea of the fairy tale which is that the birth place is the best place in the world. During the lesson the teacher combined Power Point presentation, interactive games and techniques and made the children be the active participants.

## We present you ...

# Hristo Botev Primary School - Dunavtsi

Hristo Botev Primary school of Dunavtsi (Vidin region) has built during the years good traditions for providing quality education for all children based on the principle of equal access to quality education combined with social integration. For years the school has been successfully integrating Roma children providing them with equal chance for future realization. As a result there is a good environment in the school, an atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect. One of the priorities in the work of the teachers in the school is giving all children (both, Roma and Bulgarian) skills for intercultural socialization during the Roma folklore and culture classes created within the program developed by Center Amalipe.

The diversity in the ethnic composition of the groups helps for the mutual exchange of values; the children learn to accept the different cultures and respects the cultural differences.

The Roma folklore and culture classes are composed of students from the fifth, sixth and the seventh grades from both, Roma and Bulgarian origin. All children have a lot of talents in the field of arts, literature, music, and folklore.

The aim of introducing the Roma folklore and culture classes in the school curriculum is to create an efficient model for teaching the children ethnic tolerance, pride and friendship, as well as to attract the children and motivate them for better school results through studying Roma culture. The focus of the work is collecting folklore examples from the birth place of the children and in this way getting to know the different ethnic groups living there.



Our work is connected with:

- Roma fairy tales, stories and legends
- Calendar and family feasts of Roma in Bulgaria
- Roma music

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## WE PRESENT YOU HRISTO BOTEV PRIMARY SCHOOL IN DUNAVTSI VILLAGE

## Hristo Botev School Kocherinovo



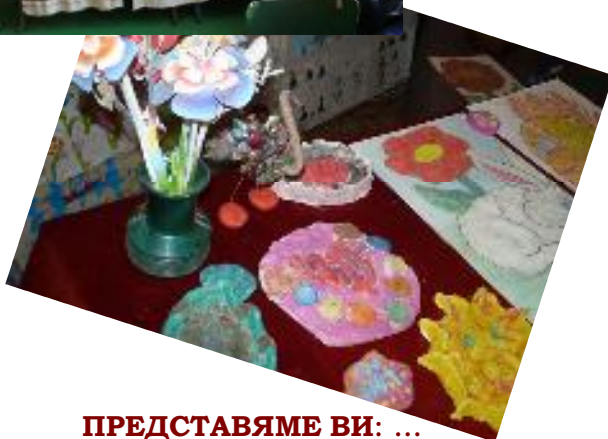
The Roma folklore and culture classes became very popular in our school and have brought to a number of positive results: enriching the school life, positive attitudes and welcoming environment, as well as making use of the free time of the students.

We have presented the work of the Roma culture classes in front of the parent community in Dunavtsi in February 2009. We are very proud that we contribute for the educational integration of our children.

this class. This preserves the relation of the students with the school long after they leave it. For example the alumni from 2005 have painted the wall in the front corridor of the school. They have drawn a pile of bricks where every student and the teacher have written their names. Even the radiators in the corridors are painted joyly in white and green. The classrooms are a good example of using interactive tools: you can see how even the Math and Chemistry cabinet can be arranged in an interesting way. So it is not a coincidence that the students have rated their school with one of the highest marks in [pomagalo.com](http://pomagalo.com). But it is enough of talking: it is better to let you yourself see how the classrooms look like.



*Svetlina Valcheva*  
Roma culture  
teacher in  
Hristo Botev  
Primary School of  
Dunavtsi



### ПРЕДСТАВЯМЕ ВИ: ... СОУ "ХРИСТО БОТЕВ" -ГР. КОЧЕРИНОВО

We will present you now, or rather show you a school which fully illustrate the phrase which has become so popular in Bulgaria recently: "the school – a desired territory of the student". This is Hristo Botev Secondary School of Kocherinovo (Kyustendil district). Because in this school every student has his or her own territory. The school environment is very vivid. The class rooms are painted in a non-traditional way by the students themselves which creates a relaxing surrounding and really turns the school into a desired territory. Every alumni class receives a place in the school where it could leave something to remind the rest of the students about ...





## THE ROOSTER'S DAY FEBRUARY 2<sup>ND</sup>

Following the old tradition the Musician Roma from Zlataritsa celebrated the Rooster's Day on February 2<sup>nd</sup>. This is a celebration for the boys in the house and every family which has a male child should cook a rooster for his health. The custom remembers about the time of the Turkish empire when male children were forcibly taken from their families for the Ottoman army. The custom is still preserved today so every house should slaughter a rooster to mark the salvation of the boys. Then a mark is made from the blood of the rooster on the boy's forehead – to bring health. After this the cock comb is nailed on the door to remind that “the rooster has saved the Gypsy kin.” The meat of the rooster is to be eaten only on February 2<sup>nd</sup> therefore it is often distributed among relatives and neighbours.

Although the Rooster's Day is a celebration of the boys, the girls are also not forgotten. Special cookies are prepared for them called *tiganichki*.

Asen and Reni Gagovi from Zlataritsa have been our hosts for the celebration this year. They have a boy also but the feast this year was dedicated to their daughter Adi who is only 10 months old. Nevertheless, there was also a rooster for the boy as well and the sacred blood of the bird would keep all children healthy during the year.



You can see more information and some videomaterials at [WWW.AMALIPE.COM](http://WWW.AMALIPE.COM)



The students from Peyo Yavorov Secondary school in Straldzha organized on February 27<sup>th</sup> a celebration of the *Kukeri* feast in a Bulgarian and a Roma house. The *Kukeri* are frightening masks prepared to chase away the evil ghosts and bring health and prosperity to the houses they visit. This year the students from the school which is part of a Phare project “Improving the situation and integration of minority groups in vulnerable position with special focus on Roma” included also an intercultural element. Besides the multiethnic composition of the *kukeri* group (composed of both, Roma and Bulgarian students) the frightening figures visited a Bulgarian and a Roma houses. They were guests in the home of the 10-year-old Asen in the Roma neighbourhood in Straldzha. The group showed there a *kuker* is dressed and the following fertility ritual. They blessed the inhabitants of the house and their neighbours and played a ritual folk dance.

The school is preparing also a representation of St. George's day again in a Roma and a Bulgarian house. All the teachers involved in the project and the school principle share that this type of activities and joint events increase the tolerance among the students and their parents, raise the motivation for education of the Roma pupils and contribute for a more tolerant ethnic school environment.

The *Kukeri* group from the Straldzha school is preparing now for their next participation which will be in the Sixth Children Roma Festival “Open heart” organized by Center Amalipe which will take place on May 30 – 31, 2009 in Veliko Turnovo.

**AMALIPE CENTER FOR INTERETHNIC DIALOGUE AND TOLERANCE**

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