



Amalipe Newsletter

Issue # 11-12, 2008

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OBSERVER



The Roma organizations united around the submitting of the Framework program for Roma integration into the Bulgarian Parliament

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NEW OPERATIONS CONCERNING ROMA INTEGRATION IN THE HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT OP

“The financial crisis requires the resources provided from the European social fund to the Member states to be used more purposefully and concentrated. The vulnerable groups should be a special focus of these interventions because they would be most affected by the crisis! We have to invest more in their qualification and employment, in order to overcome the negative impact of the crisis over

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FOCUS OF THIS ISSUE MORE THAN 100 ORGANIZATIONS HAVE DISCUSSED THE FRAMEWORK PROGRAM FOR ROMA INTEGRATION

It is necessary to go ahead from planning integration to experiencing real actions for Roma integration. This should happen through normative and financial backup of the integration policy and through broader decentralization in order to include municipalities, civil society organizations and Roma community in the process.

These were the main conclusions from the National meeting of Roma NGOs and NGOs working for Roma integration “Strategies for our common future”. It took place on December 9 in Sofia. The forum brought together more than 120 participants all over the country that made it one of the biggest Roma NGO meeting for the past decade. It was initiated by a broad group of Roma activists, representatives of some of the most active Roma organizations in Bulgaria: Deyan

Kolev (Center “Amalipe”), Lilia Makaveeva (Integro Association), Dimitar Georgiev (Human Rights Project), Nikolay Kirilov (Roma – Lom Foundation), Milen Milanov (Diverse and Equal Association), Gancho Iliev (World without borders Association) and Sasho Kovachev (L.A.R.G.O). The meeting was logistically organized by Center “Amalipe” with the support of MATRA KAP program of the Embassy of the Netherlands. Media partner was Drom Dromendar Newspaper.

The meeting was opened by HE Willem van Ee, Ambassador of the Netherlands. He underlined that social inclusion and human rights are EU pillars. Roma are the biggest minority in EU and EU engages itself more and more with the process of Roma integration without replacing the role of the ..

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ROMA NGOS ELECTED OWN REPRESENTATIVES IN THE MONITORING COMMITTEE OF HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT OP**NEW OPERATIONS CONCERNING ROMA INTEGRATION IN THE HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT OP***Continues from p. 1*

Deyan Kolev (Center “Amalipe”) was elected by consensus for observer in the Monitoring Committee of Human Resources Development Operational Program (HRD OP). Radostin Manov (“Diverse and Equal” Association) was elected also by consensus for deputy observer. This happened after a procedure opened by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies during a special meeting of Roma NGOs that had expressed interest to take part in the election procedure and had covered the formal criteria. The meeting took place on November 11 in the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP).

In July MLSP (Managing Authority of HRD OP) announced a procedure for election of observers from the civil society in the Monitoring Committee. Civil society organizations were divided into 5 categories (one of them was defined as “organizations that work for the integration of Roma community); each category had to elect by consensus one observer and one deputy. The organizations had to cover certain formal criteria to be eligible to participate in the elections: to be registered as “organizations that work in public interest”, to have at least 2 years of experience, to have realized projects with EU financing, to have experts with knowledge on EU funds. Thirty three Roma organizations applied with their own nominations and this was the category with highest number of nominations. Special Commission elected by the Monitoring Committee shortlisted only 7 out of them as “candidates who cover the formal criteria”. During the meeting the shortlisted candidates elected by consensus Deyan Kolev and Radostin Manov.

Both of them pointed as short-term priorities to work for opening call for proposals within all measures that have “Roma” as target group (at present there is no open calls within some of them that makes them un-useful) as well as to establish Sub-committee “Integration of Roma Community” with participation of NGOs and institutions. They engaged themselves to inform permanently about the work of the Monitoring Committee all organizations that had expressed interest to elect an observer

vulnerable groups.” This was underlined by Mr David Coyne , Director of Directorate A “ESF, monitoring of the national policies and coordination”, DG “Employment, social affairs and equal opportunities” of the European Commission at the opening of the Second regular meeting of the Monitoring Committee of the Human resources development Operational Program. The meeting took place on November 27 in Sofia. Around 50 participants: representatives of various institutions, social partners and observers from the non-governmental sector took part in it. It was attended also by representatives of the European Commission.

The opening of eight new procedures was approved at the meeting. Some of them are “Integration of children and students from ethnic minorities in the educational system”, “Literate courses for adults”, and “Support of the education of children and students with special educational needs.” The “Integration of minority children” scheme is a continuation of the call announced last year “Creating a favorable multicultural environment...” The new call is for projects for educational integration from 50 000 to 390 000 BGN. The aim of the operation is to support the successful social and educational integration of children from minority origin through improving the conditions for equal access to education and fostering the motivation towards education. A broad range of activities will be supported: improving the environment in the accepting schools, work with drop-out children, activities for preserving the cultural identity of the children and for popularizing the culture of the different ethnic groups, training of teachers, information campaigns, and so on. The eligible applicants would be NGOs, municipalities, and schools; the partnership of at least one school is required. The budget of the scheme is 6 million BGN.

NGOs can apply also for the grant scheme “Support of the education of children and students with special educational needs.” It would support inclusive education of children with special educational needs through creating supporting environment, developing programs for professional education, special trainings of teachers for work with children with SEN, change of the attitudes in society and so on. The projects might vary between 50 000 and 390 000 BGN. 10 Million BGN will be distributed within this scheme. The applicants might be NGOs, schools and municipalities.; the participation of at least one school is required. NGOs will not be able however to participate in the scheme “Literate courses for adults”. It would be a scheme for direct management from the Ministry of Education, Policies in the general education Directorate. It is envisaged 10 500 adults to pass through 5-month courses in schools selected by the Ministry of Education. They will receive a forth-grade diploma for elementary education which will give them the opportunity to participate after this in qualification courses.

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NEW OPERATIONS CONCERNING ROMA INTEGRATION IN THE HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT OP*Continues from p. 2***POSITION TAKEN BY THE OBSERVERS FROM THE GROUP OF THE ROMA NGOS**

Deyan Kolev and Radostin Manov elected as an observer and deputy observer, respectively from the group of Roma NGOs presented the following position during the second regular meeting of the MC of the HRD OP:

1. A requirement to announce a grant scheme for educational integration of Roma children: at the end of October Deyan Kolev had a series of discussions with Mrs Gerdzhikova, EU funds Directorate in the MES insisting that the grant scheme for educational integration should be announced again. After a negative response Mr. Kolev had several discussions with the Managing authority of OP (the MLSP) who were highly supportive. In further discussions between the Managing authority and the MES the arguments of the Roma NGOs had been accepted. As a result the Roma educational process will receive 6 Million BGN.

2. Regarding "Integration of children and students from ethnic minorities in the educational system": during the meeting on November 27th, Deyan Kolev proposed the following in concern to the criteria of the scheme:

- including activities for 'Integration of Roma children from segregated into mixed mainstream schools' in the eligible activities; this type of activities had not been included up to now in the proposed range of activities. Deyan Kolev underlined that desegregation is a focus of the Strategy for educational integration of the MES and this issues should be explicitly included. The suggestion was accepted

- increasing the budget of the scheme: the Roma representative pointed that in 2007 part of the quality project were not financed and in order to avoid this the budget of the scheme should be increased. No concrete answer was provided to this suggestion.

3. Regarding the scheme "Literate courses for adults": Deyan Kolev proposed the scheme to be opened as a grant scheme so that schools, NGOs and others could apply as well on a competitive principle. He suggested if finally the scheme is left as a scheme for direct financing the partnership of NGOs to be a must since they can achieve the motivation of adults to get involved in these courses as the practice has shown. He pointed that 10 500 people to be reached for one year is unrealistic: most of the illiterate adults are either abroad, or have a job. He recommended that a proper form is found to organize the courses which is

flexible enough for people who work (most of the beneficiaries of this operation work in the grey economy and few of them could afford to leave their families without a living in order to attend the courses if it is not in a convenient time and form). Furthermore, without the participation of NGOs to motivate the people to participate in the course, the scheme would fail.

These suggestions have not been accepted by the representative of the MES. She pointed that NGOs should not be included as an obligatory partner to motivate the participants. According to her the illiterate people will be motivated by the local Labor offices. The Roma representatives pointed that they would continue with their efforts to convince the representatives of the MES that NGOs should be actively included in this process.

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH MET ROMA ORGANIZATIONS

Representatives of nongovernmental organizations working in the field of health integration of Roma met the Bulgarian Minister of Health Evgenij Zhelev MD. The meeting took place on November 5, 2008. It was organized following an open letter sent to the Minister by the organizations at the beginning of October. Representatives of "World without Border" - Stara Zagora, Center Amalipe - Veliko Turnovo, Minority Health Problems Foundation - Sofia, Health and Social Development Foundation and Deyan Kolev as Deputy Chair of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Demographic Issues took part in the meeting.

Dr. Zhelev received information about the work of the non-governmental organizations for improving the health status of Roma. It was underlined that serious record of mutual cooperation between NGOs and the Ministry of Health has been accumulated already in regard to fight with TB, HIV/AIDS and for improving the general epidemiological situation in the country. The Minister of Health highly assessed the achievements of the Roma organizations. He stressed that their role is crucial for transmitting the information and activities between the regional structures of the Ministry of Health and the different Roma communities.

The opportunity for further supporting the work of the Roma health mediators in the communities will be discussed together with the Ministry of Finance in order to provide sustainability of the initiative and the activities for prevention.

Minister Zhelev expressed his support for establishing a Consultative council at the Ministry of Health and for

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**THE MINISTER OF HEALTH
MET ROMA ORGANIZATIONS**

finding the best way for Roma representation and participation in policy-making of programs and

policies for Roma health or having an impact on Roma health situation. Deyan Kolev underlined that the establishment of a Consultative council would not be in contradiction to the National Council for Cooperation in Ethnic and Demographic Issues. It would rather support the creating of straightforward policies for health integration of the Roma community. Minister Zhelev agreed that the two structures would not be in contradiction and he would do his best to speed up the creation of the Consultative council. The next steps from here on will be to discuss and agree on its structure, mandate and activities.

**TRAINING FOR EXPERTS WORKING ON ROMA
ISSUES IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

The National Association of Roma Working in the Public Administration renewed its activity. This happened during a meeting that took place on November 7 in Veliko Turnovo. District and municipal experts who work on Roma integration took part in the meeting. They discussed how to renew the work of Association for preserving the expert positions on Roma integration in the public administrative structure, how to establish an effective network of Roma civil servants and how to foster the process of Roma integration. New Board of Managers was elected: Sasho Kovachev (expert on EDI in District administration – Kyustendil), Valentina Sandeva (District administration – Pernik) and Boyan Avramov (Deputy mayor of Valchedrar municipality). All participants elected also Sasho Kovachev for Chairman of the Association.

Deyan Kolev, Deputy Chair of the NCCEDI congratulated the participants. He advised the Association to preserve its unity and to become the unique representative body of Roma civil servants. He expressed also his opinion that NCCEDI should support the work of the Association and should perceive it as a partner.

**THE EUROPEAN POLICY FOR PUBLIC HEALTH:
INCLUSION OR EXCLUSION OF ROMA IN HEALTH
SPHERE?**

The 16th European conference of public health took place in Lisbon from November 5th to 8th, 2008. The aim of the conference was to provide forum for exchange of ideas and experience in the field of public health and innovations in Europe among politicians, academics, and people working on the field. Several of the parallel sessions were dedicated to migrants in Europe and the challenges they meet approaching health services. Unfortunately, the program of the conference showed that although health is one of the accents in the agenda of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, Roma are still not an accent in the health issues agenda of the European Union no matter how serious the problems of Roma health are. The latter were underlined again during a special session organized within the conference by the Public Health Program of Open Society Institute – Budapest. The session was dedicated to health problems of Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. Teodora Krumova (Center Amalipe, Bulgaria), Tara Bedar (ERRC, Budapest), and Sebihana Skenderovska (National Roma Centrum, Macedonia) took place in the session. Teodora Krumova presented the results from the research on the health status of Roma women in Bulgaria, carried out at the end of 2007 with the support of the Roma Health Project of OSI – Budapest and the advocacy campaign provoked after by the research for including Romani women health issues in the health operations of Human Resources Development Operational program. She underlined that the participation of Roma themselves in designing these policies, their implementation and evaluation were a key factor for their sustainability and efficiency.

The worsened health status and the problems Roma face in the field of education, employment and living conditions are another reason to follow the priorities of the Lisbon strategy; not to underestimate social inclusion compared to economic measures stressed Teodora Krumova at the meeting the representatives of Roma organizations had with Andrzej Rys, Director of Public Health and Risk Assessment Department in DG SANCO. Andrzej Rys was interested in the advocacy campaign carried out in Bulgaria for including Roma issues in the strategic documents of the Operational programs. He shared that this was a successful model which could be multiplied in other countries as well.

Another issue discussed at the meeting was the new communication document to be prepared. It would focus on overcoming inequality in the health field. Mr. Rys agreed that DG SANCO should have more active policy regarding the Roma community. He took the engagement to organize a special working meeting on overcoming the health inequality in the Roma community when preparing the communication document.

**THE COUNCIL FOR ROMA
INTEGRATION WITHIN THE MINISTRY
OF LABOUR HOLD A SESSION**

The second session of the Council for Roma Integration within Ministry of Labour and Social Policy for 2008 took place on November 13 in Bankia. It was chaired by Baki Hyuseinov, National Coordinator of the Decade of Roma Inclusion. Seventeen representatives of Roma NGOs took part in the meeting.

The main topic discussed was the actualization of the National Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion. All participants expressed opinion that prompt actualization is necessary since most of the activities envisaged in the Action Plan are for 2005-2007. Many suggestions for new activities were raised.

Baki Hyuseinov pointed that the Action Plan will be renewed this is defined by Decision of the Council of Ministers from July 24th in which the competences of the National Decade Coordinator are also defined. Roma NGOs will be engaged as active participants in the process.

In his statement Deyan Kolev, Chairman of Center "Amalipe" pointed that all activities in the Action Plan should be backed up with real financing: from the state budget, structural funds and other sources. According to him Roma NGOs and Roma community as a whole are fed up with "general political messages" and pragmatic actions backed up with financial and human resources are necessary. He raised many concrete suggestions about the "Education" part of the Action Plan

SESSION OF THE NCCEDI

The fourth session of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Demographic Issues for 2008 took place on December 20th in Council of Ministers Hall. More than 60 representatives of the main institutions of executive power (most of them presented by deputy ministers) and non-governmental organizations took part in the session.

2009 should be the year of real actions for Roma integration - Emel Etem, Deputy Prime Minister and Chair of NCCEDI said. During 2008 we saw how successfully the Council could work since NGOs are active. But we need also to make the institutions of the executive power more active. Emel Etem asked all ministries to present information about their planned activities for Roma integration and the financing of these activities until mid-January. In this way a concrete Action Plan will be prepared which is one of the main suggestions of Roma NGOs. Mrs Etem appealed also to NGOs to use the Council as instrument for implementation of their goals and not to use only international forums and conferences. It is necessary in

**OPEN HEALTH FORUM
BRUSSELS, 10 - 11 DECEMBER 2008**



Open Health Forum took place in Brussels on December 10 - 11, 2008 organized by DG SANCO of the European Commission. The aim of the Forum was to present and put on discussion the major initiatives and campaigns of the European Commission in the field of health care, especially the initiatives within the campaign "Europea for patients." As a follow-up of the Lisbon meeting on November 5 - 8 with Andrzej Rys part in the Open Health Forum took also Teodora Krumova (Center Amalipe), Tara Bedart and Ostalinda Maya (ERRC, Budapest), Sebihana Skenderovska (National Roma centrum, Macedonia) and Eva Foldes (Public Health Program, OSI - Budapest).

The health problems of Roma were raised in the three working groups following the plenary session. Major accent was put on two aspects: differentiating Roma from migrants (the European health policy at the moment speaks mainly about migrants and not about Roma or national minorities) and including Roma themselves in elaborating policies directed to raising the health status of vulnerable groups in Europe.

Although the representatives of the European commissions stressed several times that the care about the health of the national citizens (no matter to which ethnic group they belong) is a responsibility of each Member State, many of the participants opposed this. Antonia Parvanova MD, Bulgarian MP, underlined that it is not enough to speak only about trans-border rights of patients, but about patients at all, because these are one and the same people. Teodora Krumova drew the attention that in this respect the European Commission has the responsibility to recommend to Member States to pay special attention to the health status of the vulnerable groups as the Roma community since they would be most affected in the context of a global crisis as the one now; Roma will be first affected by the crisis also in the health care system

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SESSION OF THE NCCEDI*Continues from the previous page*

2009 to make the NCCEDI more efficient and working, E. Etem wished.

The Deputy-Minister of Health V.Tzekov gave information how the mobile technique supplied within Phare program was used for Roma health integration. Around 35 000 prophylactic examinations would be done until the end of 2008, the same number was planned for 2009. The Ministry of Health has dedicated 700 000 BGN in 2008 and 730 000 BGN in 2009 for this purpose. The health mediators were of great usage and helped the examinations very much, said Mr. Tzekov. He also explained that in July the Ministry of Health prepared Action plan for Implementation of the Health Strategy for Integration of Vulnerable Minority Groups Representatives. Deputy-Minister Tzekov agreed with the recommendations of Deyan Kolev (Deputy Chair of NCCEDI and Chairman of Center "Amalipe") to consult this document with Roma NGOs in advance as well as to make Ministry of Health more active in defending the position of Roma health mediators. "Health mediators will be financed in 2009 and in the following years as well. This is a question of negotiations between Ministry of Health and Ministry of Social Policy from which budget this position will be backed up." –said Mr. Tzekov.

The Deputy-Minister of Regional Development presented the implementation of the National Program for Improving the Living Conditions of Roma. He stressed the necessity of more active behavior of municipalities and gave as an example the fact that although municipalities were provided with the opportunity to prepare specific rules for making terrains and buildings legal only 11 municipalities used it for making legal their Roma neighborhoods. Few municipalities apply with projects before Ministry of Regional Development for improving the technical infrastructure in the Roma areas. Deputy-Minister Mihalevski proposed to organi-

ze – together with NCCEDI – regional forums of municipalities with purpose to present the opportunities of the National Program for Improving the Living Conditions of Roma.

Active discussions about the preparing of new Framework Program for Roma Integration took also place. Miroslav Popov, Deputy Chair of NCCEDI indicated that until that moment mainly NGOs were active but the engagement of institutions was also necessary. The realistic term for adoption the Program is in the eve of April 8, pointed Mr. Popov. Roma NGO activists rejected this idea since this is also the eve of parliamentary elections and would make the Program part of the election campaign; it is necessary the document to be prepared in February at last. Deyan Kolev pointed that the will of tens of Roma organizations expressed during the National meeting of Roma NGOs on December 9 and included in the Declaration for real actions for Roma integration is the Program to be adopted with Decision of the Parliament and concrete Action plan 2009-2010 backed up with financing to be adopted by Council of Ministers. Deputy Prime-Minister Etem replied that concrete Action Plan with financing will be prepared in January-February and its implementation will be felt during the first months of 2009. But adoption of the Framework Program by the Parliament is hard to happen within this Parliament since the elections are coming. It was decided the Program and the Action Plan to be finalized in February and voted in the Council of Ministers in March 2009.

The preparation of the Annual Report for NCCEDI activities in 2009 was discussed in the end of the session. It was agreed NGOs to take part in the process and to send their suggestions until the end of January. The suggestions will be summarized by Ethnic and Demographic Issues Directorate

MORE THAN 100 ORGANIZATIONS HAVE DISCUSSED THE FRAMEWORK PROGRAM FOR ROMA INTEGRATION*Continues from p.1*

member-states in this process. Most probably the European Council will adopt a declaration for improving the situation of Roma in Europe during its session on December 11-12 Ambassador van Ee said. The participants were also welcomed by Mr. Baki Hyuseinov – National Coordinator of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, and by Mr. Miroslav Popov, Deputy Chair of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Demographic Issues.

After intensive discussions the participants approved Declaration for real actions for Roma integration. Through it they require Bulgarian Parliament to adopt strategic document that define the basic principles of the policy for Roma integration; the Council of Ministers to adopt operative Action Plan and this document to be backed up with financing from the state budget, clear administrative responsibilities of the institutions engaged and concrete mechanisms for participation of municipalities, NGOs and roma community. The Declaration was signed by 71 organizations. It will be sent to the Parliament and the Council of Ministers. The participants discussed suggestions for the key areas in the strategic document for Roma integration – education, employment, health care, living conditions, Roma culture, Roma women and Roma participation.

The Meeting was organized in the eve of the International Human Rights Day

DECLARATION FOR REAL ACTIONS FOR ROMA INEGRATION IN BULGARIA

We, representatives of non-governmental organizations and experts who work for Roma integration,

Expressing our deep belief that:

Roma integration is one of the main national priorities which fulfillment will make Bulgarian society fairer, more inclusive and more advanced;

Roma integration is in accordance with the basic irrevocable values and principles of European Union;

Roma integration is process of development and modernization of Roma community as specific and integral part of Bulgarian nation: it aims at raising educational, social, economic, health and living status of Roma in order to achieve the one of the majority of Bulgarian citizens;

Roma integration is not assimilation: preserving and renewing Roma identity is irrevocable part of the integration process;

Roma integration is a common task of central and municipal institutions, non-governmental organizations and civil society;

Roma integration could not happen without active participation of the Roma community at all levels of this process: from planning through implementing to monitoring and evaluation;

Roma integration could not happen without special purposeful actions for its fulfillment: it is necessary to invest financial, human and administrative resources;

Roma integration process should be realized in a way that takes into account the local specific of the problems and requires active participation of the local authorities;

Roma integration process should take into account the diversity of Roma community and the fact that different social layers and groups within Roma community exist. This requires additional efforts for applying tailored approaches in accordance with the layers and groups of Roma community.

Special concern should be paid to the integration of vulnerable groups within Roma community that are object of multiple discrimination: for example Roma from the big Roma ghettos, Roma from the rural areas, Roma women, Roma youth, etc.;

Roma integration process has not achieved the results expected by Roma and by the majority until now. At the same time certain positive achievements have been gained;

The reasons for the lack of success of Roma integration process up to now are in the low normative status of all documents for Roma integration, lack of financing, unclear administrative engagements, lack of/inefficiency of the mechanisms for civil society participation, Roma participation and participation of the local authorities;

The existing Roma integration documents approved by 3 Bulgarian governments compile a good basis for the integration process. It should be updated and completed with real financing, clear administrative responsibilities as well as with effective mechanisms for participation of civil society, local authorities and Roma community;

Strengthening and accelerating Roma integration process is one of the main tasks Bulgarian society should fulfill now;

It is necessary to go ahead from planning to implementing Roma integration through real Roma integration actions.

We call upon Bulgarian institutions to continue the efforts for Roma integration – together with the civil society and with Roma community as well as to dedicate additional concern and efforts for strengthening and fostering Roma integration process through undertaking the following measures:

1. A strategic document that defines the longterm state and sustainable policy for Roma integration to be adopted by Bulgarian Parliament: this document should continue the principles of the FPEIRBS from 1999 and should be adopted as Decision of the Parliament;

2. An Action Plan for Equal Integration of Roma that defines the concrete measures for the Roma integration process during the next couple of years should be adopted by the Council of Ministers: this document should be in accordance with the principles of FPEIRBS, the Roma integration documents in the field of education, health care and living conditions approved until now and with the Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion. It should be adopted as Decree of the Council of Ministers;

3. Effective mechanism for monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of documents from p. 1 and 2 to be established: it is necessary this mechanism to be provided with enough administrative competences; Roma community and Roma organizations should take part in it;

4. The documents from p. 1 and 2 should be adopted with: financing ensured (from the state budget and from the structural funds), clear administrative responsibilities, mechanisms for civil society participation, Roma participation and participation of the local power. Our firm opinion is that without ensuring these elements the documents would not be implemented. We would not engage ourselves with their preparation, approving and implementation;

5. The documents from p. 1 and 2 should contain measures in priority fields such as education, employment and economic development, health care, living conditions Roma culture, anti-discrimination, integration of the vulnerable groups within Roma community (Roma from the big Roma ghettos, Roma from the rural areas, Roma women, etc.), Roma participation. It is necessary the suggestions prepared by Roma organizations with consensus to form the core of documents from p.1 and 2 in their priority fields;

6. The documents from p. 1 and 2 should be prepared with the real participation of Roma NGOs and NGOs that work for Roma integration;

7. The main principles of the documents as well as of the other Roma integration documents approved up to now should be mainstreamed in the basic law and the normative basis that regulate the main fields of Bulgarian public life.



MEETING OF MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS “EDUCATIONAL INTEGRATION IN THE CONTEXT OF DELEGATED SCHOOL BUDGETS”

The municipalities and the National Association of the Municipalities in Bulgaria should be more active in the process of educational integration of Roma kids. The efforts for educational integration can be backed up at municipal level through incorporating additional component “activities for Roma pupils’ integration” in the formula for defining delegated school budget. This would provide “fresh money” for activities in the so-called “accepting” schools. Approving Municipal plan for educational integration backed up also by the municipal budget is another step in this direction. The National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria should take active part in the preparation of the updated Framework Program for Roma Integration and to propose a decentralized way of implementing it: national institutions should dedicate significant amount for co-funding municipal strategies for integration and to control rather than to manage the process. The new Public Education Act should incorporate points that support the efforts for educational integration and Ministry of Education and Science should overtake the other more active institutions.

These were some of the main conclusions from the National meeting of municipalities “Educational integration in the context of delegated school budgets”. It took place in Veliko Turnovo from 3 to 5 of December. The meeting was organized by Center “Amalipe” Municipality of Veliko Turnovo and the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria (NAMRB). Thirty-two representatives of municipalities all over Bulgaria – members of the Commission for Education of NAMRB took part in the meeting. It was financed by EUMAP program of Open Society Institute – Budapest.

Teodora Krumova presented the conclusions of “Equal Access of Roma to quality education” report of the EUMAP program of OSI – Budapest. Deyan Kolev

spoke about the implementation of these conclusions in the context of delegated school budgets. He insisted on the concrete mechanisms for dedicating additional financial resource and for approving good municipal plans/strategies for educational integration. Kosta Bazitov (Deputy Mayor of Varna Municipality and Chair of the Commission for Education of NAMRB) gave as example the Strategy for Educational Integration of Varna Municipality that is backed up with 200 000 BGN per a year. He presented the main points in the discussions of the new Public Education Act. At present there is no official draft – pointed Mr Bazitov. He engaged himself as member of the commission for preparing the draft to propose and advocate for incorporating points for educational integration in the new Act. Romyana Iordanova (Director of Education Directorate of Veliko Turnovo Municipality) spoke about the successful experience of Veliko Turnovo for incorporating additional component “integration of minority students” in the formula for defining delegated school budget. She proposed the other municipalities to use this experience.

Boyan Zahariev made a presentation about the project of Open Society Institute – Sofia, Center “Amalipe” and the National Association of Roma in the Public Administration “Making more funds for Roma”. Technical assistance for preparing projects for Roma integration financed by EU funds will be provided to NGOs, municipalities and schools within this project. He appealed to the participants to use the opportunities of this project. Mariana Bancheva (expert in Ministry of Education) presented the call for proposals “Let’s make school attractive for the young people” within Human Resources Development OP. Training for basic skills for preparing projects for educational integration within this call was carried out.





CENTER FOR INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION WAS OFFICIALLY OPENED IN VELIKO TURNOVO

TRAINING OF TEACHERS HOW TO WORK IN MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

36 teachers from schools in Veliko Turnovo passed the first modul of a training for efficient work in multicultural environment. Most of them educate children in the four



The Center for Intercultural education was officially opened on November 19th 2008 in P.R.Slaveykov Primary School in Veliko Turnovo. The Center was created within the project “Introducing intercultural education and equal access to quality education in Veliko Turnovo Municipality” financed by Human Resources Development Operational Program. The function of the Center will be to support the work of teachers working in multicultural environment, to facilitate the contacts between the school and the parents, as well as to provide methodological support to teachers for developing lessons with intercultural elements.

A series of trainings within the same project are held in the Center. The trainings are called “Effective work with children and parents in multicultural environment.”

The project has been realized by Center Amalipe in partnership with Veliko Turnovo Municipality and four schools since the beginning of 2008/2009 school year. It will continue until the end of 2009. The four partnering schools are P.R.slaveykov Primary school – Veliko Turnovo, Hristo Smirnenski Primary school – Vodoley, St.Ivan Rilski Primary School – Balvan and Vasil Levski Primary school – Ledenik.

Schools partners of Center Amalipe and Veliko Turnovo Municipality in the project “Introducing intercultural education and equal access to quality education in Veliko Turnovo Municipality” financed by Human Resources Development Operational Program.” The training took place on November 13th in the center for Intercultural education. The two lecturers were Teodora Krumova and Ivelina Ivanova.

Through a number of interactive games the lecturers got the participants acquainted with intercultural education and with the most wide-spread prejudices towards “different” children. Special attention was put on prejudices towards Roma children and the ways these prejudices and stereotypes to be overcome in the pedagogic work.

Until the end of November the participants passed two more moduls of the training: on roma culture and traditions and on practical including of intercultural elements in the regular school classes.

OPEN LESSON “BULGARIA – FATHERLAND OF ALL BULGARIAN CITIZENS: CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

An open lesson “Bulgaria – Fatherland of all Bulgarian Citizens: Customs and Traditions” carried out in St. Ivan Rilski Primary school in Balvan on December 11, 2008. The goal of the lesson was to form in the students a sense of Bulgaria as a fatherland of all Bulgarian citizens no matter of their ethnic origin, to enrich the knowledge of the students about the official national holidays and the traditions, customs and feasts of the different ethnic groups living in Bulgaria and as a result to form in the students attitude of tolerance and civic consciousness. The lesson was held within the project “Introducing intercultural education and equal access to quality education in Veliko Turnovo Municipality” financed by Human Resources Development Operational Program. Parents and teachers from the partnering schools were guests of the lesson. During the beginning of the lesson all participants were greeted by Deyan Kolev, Chairman of Center Amalipe and Rummyana Yordanova, Director of the Educational Department in Veliko Turnovo Municipality. The tea-



feasts, they summarized the common elements in the celebration of the feasts by the different ethnic groups in Bulgaria and jointly found what their contribution is for shaping the national cultural identity.

cher Tsvetelina Taeva showed how interactive techniques might be used in a regular lesson in multicultural environment. The children and their parents shared how they celebrate the





BRIGHT RUG

CHRISTMAS



8TH DECEMBER

Christmas is one of the biggest Christian feasts celebrated by more than two billion people all over the world.

It is celebrated also by the Christian Roma in Bulgaria. Few people know that Roma from the Burgudjii groups are from the few Roma groups who celebrated the feast twice: once on December 25 but more solemnly on January 7th following the old calendar style. The day is called "Kolada". The celebration of the feast is not different from the official Christian tradition except that it is obligatory to put on the Christmas table soup made of white bean and boiled wheat. There should be also red wine. A candle is lighted and after the table is incensed forgiveness is asked from the elderly people in the family.

Oh... whatever we speak... it is great to be a student! Occasions for celebrations? As much as you want: exams taken, exams not taken, birthdays... M-m-m...? I was about to forget the biggest occasion for celebration for each student in Bulgaria - December 8th, the Student day!!!!

Congratulations to all students: Roma and non-Roma. For those who are still hesitant whether to study or not... **WHAT DO YOU WAIT FOR?**

P.S. It is good that there are cameras nowadays. Usually we hardly remember the evening of December 8th J J J

KURBAN-BAYRAM

This year one of the biggest Muslim feasts Kurban Bayram happened to be on the same date as the Students Day... so it was hard to choose where to go first. It is good that as students we are used to do several things at once. This year we celebrated Kurban Bayram together with the children from Ledenik village included in the project of Center Amalipe financed by the Human resources development OP.



We are still fresh before the celebration



The preparations for the feast had started yeat on the previous day, December 7th. Together with the informal leader of the Roma from Ledenik we went to the neighbouring village to buy the sacrificial ram. The imam said a prayer and the animal was prepared for the feast: red color was put on its skin and its three legs were ritually tied. The last one was left free. On the next day the children took us to their houses and showed us how the feast looked liked through their eyes.

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