



Amalipe Newsletter

Issue # 4, 2008

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Deyan Kolev was elected a Deputy- Chair of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Demographic Issues

Deyan Kolev was elected a Deputy-Chair of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Demographic Issues from the quota of the non-governmental organizations. This happened at the

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regular meeting of the Council which took place on April 4th and was preceded by a meeting of the Roma Integration Committee at the Council. In both meetings Deyan Kolev received the...

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FOCUS

The Framework Program for Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society

Since 2007 the idea for preparing a new Framework Program for Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society got into the agenda. Initially, this idea was announced by key political persons (the Prime-Minister, the Chair of Bulgarian Parliament) and it was included in the Agenda of the Council of Ministers for 2007. The lack of official information whether the preparation of a new Program had started and who was engaged with it as well as the lack of civil society participation in this process provoked sharp protest of 53 Roma NGOs in November 2007. What is the present state of affairs around the new Framework program?

Is it necessary a new Framework program to be prepared?

There has been no public debate about this question. The preparation of a new Program was defined by the governmental institutions through the Agenda of Council of Ministers for 2007 (and later – for 2008) in which it was included. The lack of public debate was a weak point and it alienated the civic sector from the very beginning of this process.

Of course, serious arguments for preparing a new Framework program do exist. The present Program (approved in 1999) has a time frame of 10 years. Obviously the Roma integration has not happened and the efforts in this direction should continue. It is better for them to follow one general document prepared with consensus by the Roma organizations and the public institutions and approved with broad public consensus.

New Framework Program or updated version of the existing Program?...

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DEYAN KOLEV WAS ELECTED A DEPUTY CHAIR OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR COOPERATION ON ETHNIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC ISSUES

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Deyan Kolev

highest number of votes followed by Mladen Ivanov (Gypsy Europe), Peter Georgiev (Confederation of Roma "Europe") and Nikolay Kirilov (Roma – Lom). In his program Deyan

Kolev appealed for significant changes in the work of the National Council that would guarantee the real participation of the non-governmental organizations in the decision-making process, for improving the work of the Council and making it more operational and more active in participating in the policy making process concerning minorities. He insisted that the position of the NGO Deputy-Chair of the Council should be preserved non-political and should not be used for political, business or other ambitions.

“My election is a success for the non-governmental organizations who have defended the cause of the active and independent civic participation during the last year. It is an indicator for a serious change among Roma NGOs and in the civil society in general.” – Deyan Kolev shared. He thanked the other candidates for the inspiring competition and declared his will for mutual cooperation.

The Deputy-Chair from the quota of the non-governmental organizations is elected from the NGOs members of the Council. In 2007 this position was won by Emil Kalo (“Shalom” organization). The responsibilities of the Deputy-Chair are only mentioned in the regulations of the NCCEDI. They will be regulated in details in an order by the Chair of the Council Vice-Minister Emel Etem. According to the order the NGO Deputy-Chair will participate in the elaboration of the new version of the Framework program for equal integration of Roma, in the elaboration of the new regulations of the Council and so on.

*I was nominated and elected by Roma NGOs (as well as by NGOs of the other minorities) which insisted on **definite change**: change within the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Demographic Issues and change of Roma civic sector. I will do my best to make this definite change happen.*

During the past two years we have often criticized the NCCEDI for lacking real activities and for pressing politically the independent civil society organizations. Definite change is necessary: the Council should start working and should become a mechanism for real participation of civil society (and Roma community in particular) into decision making process. This is the mission the Council is established to fulfill. If NCCEDI does not begin implementing this mission it would become unnecessary and completely useless. In my program I proposed concrete steps in four directions to introduce this change: steps for ensuring the real NGO participation in the Council’s work, for operationalizing the Council’s functioning, for strengthening the NCCEDI participation in preparing policies on ethnic issues and for guaranteeing the independence from political parties’ interference.

Roma civic sector at present does not also fulfill its main mission: to express the interests of Roma community, to advocate effectively before the public institutions for Roma community agenda and to participate in the decision-making process. It meets certain serious problems. One of them is the problem of constituency: many organizations are “pseudo-civil society organizations” (i.e. they do not maintain connections with Roma community and express the interests of donors or political parties) and they often predominate over the civil society organizations. The connections and continuity between the “old” and the “young” generations in the Roma movement is broken. The controversies among Roma organizations prevail over the idea for interaction. The aching problem that indicates the serious crisis of Roma civic sector is the lack of common cause shared by the vast majority of Roma NGOs. At the same time during the past two years a tendency for overcoming these problems and for establishing interaction among many Roma organizations could be observed. I was elected owing to this “new wave” in the Roma movement and I will work for extending it among the vast majority of Roma NGOs. I will look for stimulating the unity and interaction among Roma organizations and for establishing a common cause that would form the core of the new Framework program for Roma integration. I agreed to be elected in order to implement the ideas pointed above. If this appears impossible within the format of NCCEDI I will resign from this position and will explain publicly the reasons.

DEYAN KOLEV



A PROCEDURE FOR THE ELECTION OF NGO REPRESENTATIVES IN THE MONITORING COMMITTEE OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT OPERATIONAL PROGRAM WAS APPROVED

On April 23 and 24, 2008 the Monitoring Committee of the Human Resources Development OP (HRD OP) held its working and second regular meeting, respectively. It approved the Annual report for the advance of the implementation of the HRD OP and the Communication Plan of the Program and authorized the Managing authority to make corrections in the two documents after receiving the comments from the European Commission. A report for the schemes already opened was presented as well as information for forthcoming operations.

The procedures for the election of NGO observers in the Monitoring committee were discussed and approved during the regular meeting of the Committee. The aim of the procedure is to guarantee an open and transparent mechanism for the participation of the civil society in the process of managing and monitoring the resources from the European Social Fund. The procedure is similar to the one already adopted by the Ministry of Finance regarding the National Strategic Reference Framework. It includes declaration of interest from the NGOs, selection of organizations after certain criteria, and election of a representative among the selected organizations. The procedures target organizations in six fields: protection against discrimination; education; Roma integration, health care; science, and social issues. The procedure will be opened in the forthcoming weeks so that elected candidates could take part in the next meeting of the Monitoring Committee in November.

Center Amalipe was also invited and took active participation in the work of the Monitoring Committee.

During the discussions Deyan Kolev proposed that each group of organizations should elect not only an observer but also a substitute to take part in the meetings of the Monitoring Committee. The idea was supported by the Deputy Minister Dimitar Dimitrov who was also a Chair of the Monitoring Committee. It was accepted with consensus by the members of the Monitoring Committee which provided the non-governmental organizations with twice as high a number as representatives. Deyan Kolev suggested also if two representatives of a group of NGOs

receives the same number of votes during the election procedure both of them to be accepted in the MC and participate on rotation principle. This proposal was also accepted although the initial suggestion of the MC was the Committee itself to decide which of the two persons to be included in the MC. This, according to Deyan Kolev would be interference from the side of the institutions in the independence of the civil society.

Two other suggestions were not accepted by the members of the MC. The first one was to include the donors as a separate group of organizations. The argument of Deyan Kolev was that the donors have been an important player in the field of social inclusion and the coordination with them would be an important factor for the success of the HRD OP. In addition, if they were not provided with a mechanism for participation they might try to influence the process of social inclusion by influencing the organizations themselves. According to Krassimir Popov (deputy-chair of the MC) however, the donors do not represent the interests of the target groups so they can not be part of the NGOs. They would have other mechanisms for participation in the work of the MC; according to Decree 182/2006 only representatives of non-governmental organizations might participate as observers in the MC.

The second suggestion that was rejected was for the creation of sub-committees in each of the fields with NGO representatives. The sub-committees would involve all nominated organizations and would discuss statements to be presented at the meetings of the MC. Mr. Popov pointed that this was a good idea and it would be further regulated by a special decision of the MC. He stresses that such sub-committees would not be needed in all the fields but definitely the Roma integration sphere is a field where the broadest possible participation is needed.

More information you can find in our special issue "The Roma and the Structural Funds"

ROMA AND THE STRUCTURAL FUNDS IN BULGARIA

Special Issue No.2
April 2008

CENTER AMALIPE



HEALTH CAMPAIGNS FOR ROMA IN HRD OP

Several activities within the intervention axis 5.3. "Employability through a better health" of HRD OP will start in 2008. Two of them (health information campaigns and a national campaign for early diagnostics of cancer) have special focus on Roma. The schemes will not be grant schemes but measures ...*Continues on the next page*



INTERNATIONAL ROMANI WOMEN SEMINAR TOOK PLACE IN SOFIA



More than 20 Roma women from Central and Eastern Europe took part in the training “Human rights: rights of Roma. Advocacy in the field of healthcare”.

The training took place in Sofia from 14 -20 of April and it was organized by European Roma Rights Center (ERRC) and Open Society Institute – Budapest. Center “Amalipe” was implementing partner of the initiative from Bulgarian side.

During 6 days the participants from Bulgaria, Serbia, Macedonia, Romania, Hungary, together with the lecturers from USA and Great Britain discussed the problems of Roma healthcare and the discrimination prevention by sex and ethnic origin. The Romani women presented important parts of the normative documents of their countries which were about the antidiscrimination and the protection of human rights. They took active role not only as student but also as lecturers presenting their experience.

Bulgarian representatives on the international forum were Milena Ilieva from “World without borders”, Maryana Borisova from “LARGO” and Julieta Evtimova from “Integro” Association. In the end of the training they shared that the exchange of experience in this field was useful for them. They were determined to help Roma and Romani women to use the opportunities provided by Bulgarian legislation in the fields of discrimination and healthcare and to exercise completely their citizens’ rights.

HEALTH CAMPAIGNS FOR ROMA IN HRD OP

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... with direct financing. The beneficiary is the Ministry of Health with its regional branches. It sets serious challenges and preconditions for failure if Roma organizations are not involved in this process. Otherwise the Regional health centers might face the reluctance of the community to answer the campaigns. No one could also guarantee that the community-based Roma organization will freely provide their efforts and resources if this cooperation is not regulated.

Since the beginning of 2008 Center Amalipe together with World without Borders association (Stara Zagora) has started an advocacy campaign for higher efficiency of the health operations directed to Roma. The activities included a series of discussions with responsible persons within the Ministry of labor, the Agency for Social assistance and the Ministry of health. On February 28, 2008 Center Amalipe, World without borders Association, Integro Association and LARGO Association sent a letter to the Deputy Minister of Labor Mr. Dimitar Dimitrov appealing for his support the Roma organizations to be included as equal partners in all activities directed to Roma. In his answer Mr. Dimitrov guaranteed again that they would respect the broad European principle of partnership, civil participation, and empowerment.

As a result the scheme sets as priorities joint activities of state institutions and non-governmental organizations regarding the activities directed to vulnerable groups, especially Roma. The detailed description of the operation however will still be developed so that it guaranteed the partnership of the community-based non-governmental organizations especially in the case when activities are directed to Roma. During the second regular meeting of the Monitoring Committee of the HRD OP the responsible authorities again repeated the engagement that the civil society would be actively involved in this process.

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SESSION OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR COOPERATION ON ETHNIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC ISSUES

The first session for 2008 of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Demographic Issues (NCCEDI) took place on April 4. The new Council membership participated in the session: besides 16 deputy ministers and 7 directors of state agencies 47 representatives of non-governmental organizations (37 of them – Roma or working with Roma) are members of the NCCEDI during 2008. The session was chaired by Mrs. Emel Etem – Chair of NCCEDI and Deputy-Prime Minister.

Several topics were discussed. The team of Ethnic and Demographic Issues Directorate presented its Report about the state of interethnic relations and intercultural dialogue. Roma NGOs representatives reacted to certain statements and conclusions. According to Deyan Kolev from Center “Amalipe” it is a mistake to perceive Roma question only as social one and to foresee the so-called “Roma policies” as “limited in their extend and supplementary to the horizontal social policy in their character.” Roma question is question of deep exclusion: Roma community does not participate in the political, social and economic life that determines the social aspects of Roma issue – pointed Deyan Kolev. Concerning the “Roma policies”, they should be integral part from the horizontal social policy instead of its supplement.

Rumyan Sechkov (S.E.G.A.), Nikolay Kirilov (Roma – Lom) and Georgi Parushev raised similar criticisms. Nevertheless, the report would not be changed - its presentation appeared to be only “for information”.

Georgi Krastev (Head of Roma integration Branch of Ethnic and Demographic Issues Directorate) presented the state of the process of preparing new Framework Program for Roma Integration. He pointed that it should be ready until November when its approval by the Council of Ministers is expected. The Program will have higher normative status: Decree of the Council of Ministers or even Decision of the Parliament as well as financing from the state budget. In response to the requirements of Roma NGOs from November 2007 Ethnic and Demographic Issues Directorate is ready to include a vast number of NGO experts in the Program preparation. That is why Working group and Expert groups in the Program fields will be formed.

Regional discussions will be organized. April 20 is the deadline for NGOs to send suggestions for the

first Program draft. Summarizing the suggestions and public discussions will be the next step.

In the end of the session the representatives of 40 NGOs voted for Deputy Chair of the NCCEDI. Deyan Kolev was elected for this position after competition with Mladen Ivanov and Petar Georgiev.



EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCE: INTELEKO ASSOCIATION - TARGOVISTE

On April 11, 2008 members of IntelEko Association – Targoviste and several Romani women and girls they work with visited Veliko Turnovo to get acquainted with the work of Center Amalipe. The meeting took place in the European Information Center in Veliko Turnovo. Teodora Krumova presented the program Center Amalipe works on with special focus on the educational activities: both, with children and parents. It was not a surprise for the guests since some of the girls in the group have already been part of the Roma culture classes; in addition, one of the members of the team of IntelEko is the deputy school principal of “P.R.Slaveykov” school in Targoviste which is one of the most active and innovative schools involved in the Roma culture school program.

The guests visited the Center for social rehabilitation and integration where Center Amalipe works with the children from the Roma ghetto on Aleko Konstantinov Str. in Veliko Turnovo.

The meeting provoked many ideas: for future joint activities, for other meetings, but most of all it provoked the ambition of the Romani girls who took part in meeting not just to finish school but to come to Turnovo again next year – this time, not as guests but as regular university students.

THE FRAMEWORK PROGRAM FOR EQUAL INTEGRATION OF ROMA IN BULGARIAN SOCIETY

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There has been no debate on this question either and still there is no answer to it. There are arguments for preparing a new document. The situation in Bulgaria has significantly changed for the last nine years and it is necessary actions for achieving integration to be in line with the new reality. Moreover, Bulgaria is an EU member now: this provides new opportunities that should be used for Roma integration and should be envisaged in the Framework program. Finally, three governments ruled the country during the past 9 years but the implementation of the existing Framework program is still close to zero. Obviously, many things in the Program should be changed and re-considered in a new way in order real results to be achieved.

What disadvantages of the present Framework program should be overcome?

Unfortunately, this question was not publicly discussed either. In its Annual Report "Roma Integration in Bulgaria – 2006" Center Amalipe proposed its vision on this issue. Higher normative status of the new document (Decision of the Parliament or at least Decree of the Council of Ministers), financing from the state budget, binding with European funds, establishing proper administrative infrastructure and establishing mechanisms for participation of Roma organizations and Roma community as a whole are necessary for the new Program. They are the cornerstones of this document.

The Roma issue – social or ethnic one?

The main concept that will form the basis of the new Program is yet to be discussed. The argument whether this is a social or an ethnic issue might turn the discussion into a non-productive one. Obviously, the Roma issue has both, social and ethnic aspects. It would not be solved if only social measures are applied or only measures for overcoming ethnically-

motivated discrimination are implemented. The core of the Roma issue is the overall exclusion and non-participation of the Roma community in the public, political and social life; the unrealized modernization of the community which is further impeded today by the processes going on in society and even by the policy of state institutions. The new Framework program should be built on the concept for fostering Roma inclusion in the public, political and social life; for fostering modernization and empowerment of the Roma community, and at the same time preserving Roma

identity and culture. Beside this, Roma issue should be treated not as a problem, but rather as an opportunity for the development of the whole society: the real inclusion of thousands of Roma (most of them young people whose capacity has not been used so far) in the public and economic life will add fresh human resources. The investment in human resources is the best investment..

How the new Framework program will be elaborated?

One of the biggest achievements of the present Program is that it was elaborated with the active participation of dozens of Roma organizations. Today almost every Roma activist will convince you that s/he participated in the elaboration of the Program. It is necessary the new document to follow the same mechanism. Dozens of Roma and non-Roma NGOs and experts should take part in its elaboration. From one side, this would guarantee that the Program will reflect the real problems and needs of the Roma community. From another side, this will create the willing of partnership, unity and engagement with the implementation of the Program.

During the meeting of the Roma Integration Committee on April 23 a mechanism proposed by Deyan Kolev was approved: this mechanism would guarantee the broadest possible participation in the elaboration of the Framework program. The mechanism proposes the establishment of nine working groups in the different fields of the Program with the participation of NGOs, institutions and donors, as well as organizing regional and national discussions of the draft program with the broad participation of civil organizations, informal leaders and other interested parties. The last word will have the Prime Minister Stanishev and the Vice – Prime Minister Emel Etem. The active participation of the Roma organizations however will be decisive to guarantee that the preparation of such an important document is not left only in the hands of technocrats appointed by the institutions.

When the new Framework Program will be elaborated?

The Plan of the Council of Ministers envisages the new Framework program to be adopted in November 2008, so that it is financially backed up by budget 2009. This means that the forthcoming months will be very important for the elaboration of the FP.

A MEETING OF THE ROMA INTEGRATION COMMITTEE AT THE NCCEDI

BULGARIAN PRIME-MINISTERS MET ROMA ACTIVISTS ON APRIL 8, THE INTERNATIONAL ROMA DAY



New Framework Program for Roma Integration that connects, unites and synchronizes the efforts of all institutions as well as the ones of the civil society is necessary. It will be prepared by the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Demographic Issues (NCCEDI) with significant participation of non-governmental organizations.

This was one of the main statements of Mr. Stanishev – Prime Minister of Republic of Bulgaria during the special meeting with Roma activists that took place on April 8, the International Roma Day. MP from Roma origin Toma Tomov, deputy ministers Sasho Filipov and Baki Huyseinov, deputy-chairs of the NCCEDI Miroslav Popov and Deyan Kolev and representatives of more than 20 Roma NGOs took part in the meeting.

The meeting took almost 2 hours and all Roma activists who wanted to make presentations had the chance to do it. Answering their suggestions and recommendations Mr. Stanishev agreed that more Roma should be appointed in the police. It is necessary also all municipalities to prepare their strategies for Roma integration and this could be fostered through normative and legislative changes. The Prime-Minister insisted on the role NCCEDI has to play for coordination and consultation. Its competences in this direction should be strengthened but it is unrealistic to expect that the Council will become State agency of Ministry. The active participation of Roma NGOs in the decision-making process regarding Roma integration is not just desirable but also obligatory – pointed Mr. Stanishev.

The Roma Integration Committee (RIC) at the NCCEDI held its second meeting on April 23, 2008. It has been summoned in reference to a letter by Vice Prime Minister Emel Etem requiring the RIC to appoint 5 Roma members of the NCCEDI and 5 Roma members outside of the NCCEDI to take part in the Analytical group preparing the new Framework program (FP). In addition, the RIC discussed also the overall mechanism for elaborating the Program.

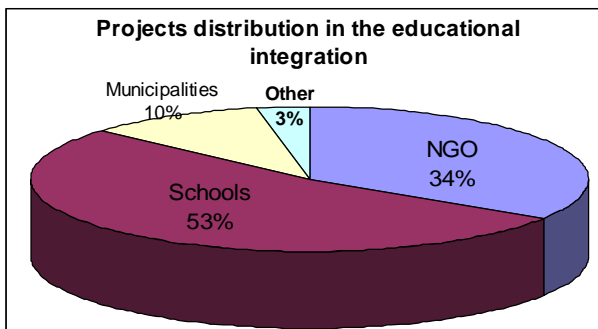
Deyan Kolev within whose responsibilities is the elaboration of the FP presented his ideas for guaranteeing the broadest involvement of the Roma community and the civil society in general in the preparation of the framework document. He proposed apart from the Analytical group required by Ms. Etem the establishment of several working groups in the different fields of the program: education, health, living conditions, protection of Roma culture, protection against discrimination, emancipation of Romani women, empowerment and participation of the Roma community, participation of local authorities. The working groups will be composed of NGOs (both members and non-members of the NCCEDI), institutions and donors. Furthermore, the proposal includes also regional discussions (at least 6 in the six planning regions) and a national discussion. “One of the biggest achievements of the present FP is that it involved dozens of organizations at its elaboration and now every Roma activist can perceive her/himself a co-author of the Program. It is necessary the new Framework program to be elaborated with the broadest participant so that the whole Roma community and civil society to be involved and perceive it as their own program.” – Deyan Kolev underlined. Svetlin Raykov proposed the scheme to be enlarged with including a desk review of the existing integration documents and to be accompanied by municipal discussions.

The Commission approved the presented scheme and the additional remarks. They will be further submitted to the Chair of the NCCEDI and the Prime Minister Sergey Stanishev.

Asen Kolev, Lili Makaveeva, Nikolay Kirilov, Svetlin Raykov and Georgi Bogdanov were elected as nomination of the RIC in the Analytical group. Regarding the NGOs which are not members of the NCCEDI 11 nominations of prominent Roma activists were made. The RIC accepted the arguments of Deyan Kolev that it did not have the moral right to restrict the participation of Roma activists or solely chose organizations outside of the NCCEDI.

THE STRUCTURAL FUNDS AND THE EDUCATIONAL INTEGRATION: RESULTS ACHIEVED; ACTIVITIES FORTHCOMING

In 2007 the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) which is the implementing agency for the educational operations announced 4 grant schemes for the total amount of 23 176 586 BGN. 157 projects were submitted within grant scheme 4.1. "Creating a favorable multicultural environment." 67 out of them have been selected although the contracts still have not been signed. The biggest share of projects belongs to NGOs (27) followed by 21 school projects, 15 municipal projects and 4 other. According to the projects around 17000 students will be involved in activities for overcoming segregation. Within the second grant scheme 4.2. "Let's make the school attracting for young people" the interest has been higher: 689 project proposals were submitted and 256 out of them were approved: 83 NGO projects, 149 school projects, 18 municipal projects and 6 other; they should cover totally around 85 000 children and students in out-of-school activities.



Nevertheless the absolute success of the grant schemes however in 2008 the MES envisages sharply to limit their share in the total number of programs announced: only three out of nine operations will be opened as grant schemes with calls for project proposals; the rest will be for direct financing of institutions preliminary defined. The grant schemes that will be opened in 2008 will be: "Support of PhDs, post-doctoral students and young scholars", "Developing school and university practices", as well as the program for out-of-school activities but this time with twice as bigger budget (16 624 555 BGN). The program directed to desegregation however most probably will not be announced again by the end of the year. As mentioned above the rest of the schemes will be for direct financing without announcing calls for proposals. This measure will be directed to ICT

in education, qualification and career development, support of the delegated school budgets (through training school principals and accountants); developing a system for evaluation of the quality of education and a rating system of the universities; educational services for gifted students and children who lag behind, as well as a scheme for student scholarship (the amount for the latter will be around 40 million BGN).

More information you can find in our special issue "Roma and the Structural Funds"

ROMA AND THE STRUCTURAL FUNDS IN BULGARIA

Special issue No.2
April 2008

CENTER AMALIPE



TRAINING OF POLICEMEN FOR WORK WITH ROMA COMMUNITY



Training of policemen for effective work with Roma community took place of April 17 and 18 in Lyaskovetz. It was organized by Regional Directorate "Police" – Veliko Turnovo. More than 40 police officers all over Veliko Turnovo District too part in the training. Respecting the human rights and engaging the informal Roma authorities and leaders were the main accents in the training.

Deyan Kolev – Chairman of Center Amalipe – had a presentation about the specifics of the Roma groups in all municipalities in the District. He gave practical advices how to engage the informal Roma leaders and – answering numerous questions – he agreed to facilitate this process in many places. He also spoke about the prejudices against Roma and how they could be overcome.



SCHOOL

NATIONAL CHILDREN'S ROMA FOLKLORE FESTIVAL „OPEN HEART” 2008

For fifth year Center „Amalipe” is organizing the National Children's Roma Folklore Festival “Open Heart”, Veliko Tarnovo. This year more than 700 students all over the country (most of them - included in the groups of “Roma folklore” classes in 2007/2008 school year) will participate in the festival.

The aim of the festival is to give the children from different ethnic background the chance to express themselves and to stimulate their interest to learning process as a whole. The festival is going to run within the frames of the Campaign for Anti-discrimination of the Council of Europe and it is going to show that the children from different ethnoi can study and have fun together without prejudices and discrimination. And since 2008 is European Year of Multicultural Dialogue the aim of the festival is also to show that the folklore of each ethnos brings cultural wealth and it is irreplaceable for our existing and communication. The Festival agenda includes attractive presentations of traditions, crafts, music folklore, history, and the culture of Roma people as well as the links and connections between Roma culture and the culture of the other ethnos in Bulgaria.

Craft workshops where traditional Roma crafts will be presented, special children workshops where participants could produce various objects, Mask bal “The heroes of Roma folklore” and many other attractions will accompany the Festival.

Велико Търново, 3-4 юни 2008

The Festival is organized under the patronage of Rumén Rashev MD, Mayor of Veliko Tarnovo Municipality and within the Anti-discrimination campaign of the Council of Europe

„The Roma students attend the Roma folklore classes with great interest because “today is going to be interesting”. During the lessons they stopped to feel ashamed and started to speak freely about their Roma origin, about what they are.”

“St. St. Cyril and Methodius” primary school, Malorad, Vratsa district

“The International Roma Day was a real holiday on the scene of chitalishte “Otec Paisiy” in the village of Orlyak on April 7. The students from “Vasil Drumev” primary school congratulated their parents, the public of Orlyak, and their guests with an impressive concert-spectacle named “Realized dreams”.

“Vasil Drumev” primary school, Orlyak, Dobrich district



More information and pictures from the festival you can find in our special website:

[HTTP://ROMAFESTIVAL.PAGE.TL/](http://ROMAFESTIVAL.PAGE.TL/)



“The activities in the group of “Roma folklore” class in “Yordan Yovkov” Primary School already became antradition. The participants study the main Roma customs, collect authentic data for some of them and in the end they realized them on practice.”

“Y. Yovkov” Primary school, Dobrich city

**OUR DIFFERENT 8TH OF APRIL**

This year we decided that we would not make concerts - we've decided instead to make something different... to provoke people, to open their hearts, to pour out of their all the prejudices, all the un-said words and the disagreements - to make some space for our message... We've decided to make an information campaign... in the center of Veliko Turnovo. As I said we decided to provoke... Our youth (Roma and non-Roma) dressed the colorfull Roma dresses and enthusiastically dashed to break the grey everyday of Veliko Turnovo citizens...

We told them about the Holocaust - about what had been and about what had not been...

We asked them to leave their message to us ... They did it: the journalists and the youth, the kids and their mothers, and the rock-n-roll people...

The Veliko Turnovo municipality also did not forget us - we received special presents from the mayor of Veliko Tarnovo - Dr. Rumen Rashev

Some people were even dressed like us... So we spread 1000 brochures and we received 150 messages.

Has this other 8th of April been remembered?

In the next two days we received three letters from citizens, who had written us provoked by our campaign

AMALIPE HAS STARTED COLLABORATION WITH SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES - BULGARIA

Amalipe has started collaboration with SOS Children's Villages - Bulgaria in Veliko Tarnovo. The members of the social organization have asked Amalipe's team help for solving certain aching social problems of Roma who live in the barracks on Aleko Konstantinov Str. The initiative is implemented within the project "Support of the family. Prevention of abandonment" of SOS Children's Villages - Bulgaria.

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