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**On 1st of March the National Assembly approved with full majority a National strategy for Roma integration.**

A desire of Amalipe and our colleagues from the Roma civil sector came real - strategy to be approved by an act of the Parliament. Now the greatest challenge for the new strategic document is not to repeat the destiny of the previous one - no funding, a minimum commitment of institutions and performance close to zero. There are prerequisites for a different scenarios: European Commission gives clear signs that will monitor how actively are implemented the adopted strategies, Roma integration is set as a priority for the new programming period, etc. The most important prerequisite, however, is the activity of the Roma community and Roma NGOs. Center "Amalipe" gives and will continue to give its decisive contribution in this direction - both on national and European level. This is our chance and we should not miss it: for a better future of Roma and all Bulgarian citizens in our country!

**CENTER AMALIPE PARTICIPATED IN A ROUND TABLE ON ASSESSMENT OF THE NATIONAL ROMA INTEGRATION STRATEGIES IN PRAGUE**

“...The EU-Framework for National Roma Strategies: Visions and Realities, Opportunities and Challenges for Roma Integration in Central and Southeast Europe..." was held on 2-3 May, 2012 in Prague, Czech Republic. Bulgaria was represented by Momchil Baev from Center Amalipe and Maria Metodieva from OSI – Sofia. The conference was an opening event in a long-term European Liberal Forum project regarding the Roma challenges in the EU. The aim of the project is to formulate policy recommendations for ALDE fraction in the European Parliament as they believe that the situation of Roma minorities is deteriorating and needs more political attention both on national and EU level. The opening workshop (round table) gathered experts from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria, Netherlands and Italy who provided reports on the current situation.


**HEARING ON M&E OF THE NATIONAL ROMA INTEGRATION STRATEGIES TOOK PLACE IN BRUSSELS**

Representatives of European Commission, Fundamental Rights Agency, member of European Parliament, national governments of Bulgaria and Romania, European Roma organizations, OSF UNICEF and other stakeholders discussed how to build comprehensive, multilayered and participatory monitoring and evaluation system of the National Roma Integration Strategies. This happened during the Hearing “M&E of the NRIS” organized by AMALIPE Center for Interethic Dialogue and Tolerance (Bulgaria), Romani CRISS (Romania), National Roma Centrum (Macedonia), European Roma Information Office (Brussels) in cooperation with European Economic and Social Committee. The event took place in Brussels on June 26. The time of talking is over, now is time for action, said Lina Papiamichalopoulou, Head of the Non-discrimination policies and Roma coordination Unit, DG Justice, European Commission in her opening speech. The role of civil society in preparing and assessing the National Roma Integration Strategies has been massive.

**MINISTERS, GOVERNORS AND ROMA ORGANIZATIONS DISCUSSED THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL ROMA STRATEGY**

The resource coverage for the National Strategy for Roma Integration through European funds and the planning of the integration policy at municipal and regional level was discussed at the conference “National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Roma integration (2012-2020) – one look at the next program period”. The conference was held on June 15 at the Central Military Club – Sofia and was organized by the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues, the Minister for Management of European Funds and the Center for Interethic Dialogue and Tolerance “Amalipe”. The conference was attended by the Minister for Management of European Funds, Tomislav Donchev,

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**KHERE( AT HOME)**

**VOLUNTEERS AT K7 CLUB - VELIKO TARNOVO BREAK RECORDS AND FIGHT AIDS WITH THE LARGEST PATCHWORK INSTALLATION**

Volunteers from Veliko Tarnovo installed a huge flag made by the method “patchwork” depicted with red ribbon and size 8/12 meters from Stambolov bridge as a sign of solidarity with those affected by HIV / AIDS. With this initiative, the campaign organized by Center for Interethic Dialogue and Tolerance “Amalipe”, Regional health inspectorate - Veliko Tarnovo, Veliko Tarnovo Municipality and Fashion design high school on the occasion of World AIDS Candlelight Memorial Day, is over. For three weeks, around 20 volunteers and students from several schools in the city with the help of experts from RHI, took shifts in sewing together pieces of fabric into a flag, which consists of old tags. The symbolism of the individual pieces sewn together is not randomly chosen, because we want to show that more people united together, can achieve much more. Idea of our work is not different organizations to divide and everyone to do something by piece, but to do something together to reach out a larger number of people,” said Momchil Baev, coordinator of the health program at “Amalipe”. The Campaign this year includes more educational meetings in schools on sexual and reproductive health, including sexually transmitted infections and HIV. A comprehensive approach to the issue is very useful for everyone, but especially for young people. Georgi Georgiev of Humanitarian School “St. Cyril and St. Methodious” is a...
HEARING ON M&E OF THE NATIONAL ROMA INTEGRATION STRATEGIES TOOK PLACE IN BRUSSELS

Following the assessment of the strategies submitted, we published Communication from May 21 and a staff working document. They identified not only strengths but also weaknesses in the strategies: M&E is a m o n g t h e m . M r s P a p a m i c h a l o p o u l o u outlined that now there is strong political commitment of the heads of member states as well as of the different DGs in the C o m m i s s i o n t o w o r k f o r implementing the NRISs. Now we all are at one the same side and it is time to act, concluded the Head of Roma Coordination Unit. The participants were also welcomed by Akos Topolanszky from EESC who expressed the strong support of this highest level structure for representation of social partners and civil society to the process of implementing the NRIS. Alina Covaci from Roma Health Project of OSF explained the reason to support the Hearing: civil society should contribute to the NRIS M&E through shadow reporting, budget monitoring, community monitoring and other forms. Deyan Kolev from AMALIPE stated that the purpose of the hearing is very practical: to stress the attention on M&E and particularly of Health issues in the NRIS and to propose concrete suggestions for improvement. M&E chapters are the weakest ones in the NRIS submitted. They envisage only data collecting and ignored its very limited effectiveness during the previous years. That is why it is of crucial importance to set M&E framework at local, national and European levels that guarantee civil society participation and Roma participation in the process. Kolev stressed also that it is an remarkable fact that the Hearing is organized by 3 national Roma organizations (AMALIPE, NRC, Romani CRISS), European Roma Information Office and EESC and that all key stakeholders take place in it. Ivan Ivanov, Director of ERIO concluded that submitting NRIS is a good first step but many other following steps should be undertaken. They should be done together with Roma community and civil society organizations.


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MINISTERS, GOVERNORS AND ROMA ORGANIZATIONS DISCUSSED THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL ROMA STRATEGY

the Minister of Regional Development, Liliyana Pavlova, the Minister of Health, Desislava Atanasova, the Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Policy, Zornitsa Rusinova, the Deputy Minister of Education, Petya Evtimova, the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Svetlana Boyanova, the head of the European Commission Representation in Bulgaria, Zinaida Zlatanova, the Chairman of the National Association of Municipalities Todor Popov, governors of 24 regions, representatives of NGOs from the Commission for Integration of Roma towards the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues and others.

The integration of the Roma must be recognized as a true inner necessity, not as something that is ordered from Brussels, said Minister Tomislav Donchev in his opening speech to the conference. He said that the integration of ethnic minorities is one of the government’s key priorities and it is long-term rather than short-term, which is visible from all the program plans and strategic documents. However, there is a deficit at the policy level and even well known hypocrisy: a lot of talks and reports but little actions. After decades of efforts in the sphere of integration Bulgaria can boast with good working models in many areas like education and health. Difficult, however, is the problem with the housing policy where there are several complex issues but no simple answer. Our efforts in this direction, first of all, is to create a good working model for all the cities where are similar problems, said the Minister. He stressed the need of a system of financial stimulations for the implementation of integration policy which will definitely be embedded in the program documents for the use of the European funds during the period 2014 - 2020. An enormous challenge for improving the access to quality healthcare to all citizens regardless of their ethnicity, social status or residence comes up for the Bulgarian health services, said Health Minister Desislava Atanasova. Particularly acute is the problem among Roma. She added that the Health Minister released funds for the prevention of various diseases among Roma each year. Successful practices are the network of health mediators, the activities of social health centers in Roma communities and the annual free mobile screening equipment supplied under the PHARE program, said the Minister. We highly appreciate the partnership with Amalipe and other Roma organizations, stressed Petya Evtimova, Deputy Minister of Education, in her opening speech. As a result of this partnership there were several operations for the educational integration of the Operational Program “Human Resources” developed and announced. The logical continuation of a good cooperation is the inclusion of an intercultural education standard in the new law on school education as well as many other positions that create a comprehensive legal basis for the educational integration. In his speech, the chairman of Center “Amalipe”, Deyan Kolev, said that the Roma are an unused opportunity for Bulgaria. “38 % of Roma in Bulgaria are young people. Imagine them all young and educated – what a motor for the Bulgarian economy it would be”, said Kolev. According to him the energetic Roma spirit is a chance to infuse a fresh blood in the Bulgarian national body. Integration policy is neither social welfare for the poor and uneducated nor policy for community development. Not all Roma are in need of integration policy – at least one third of Roma today are better educated and integrated and a challenge for all of us is how to involve at least some of them in the active implementation of the integration policy, said Kolev.


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THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION ORGANIZED A MEETING ‘ASSESSMENT OF THE USE OF EU FUNDS FOR THE NATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR ROMA INTEGRATION’

Representatives of the European Commission, Bulgarian Government and NGO's working for Roma participated in a Stocktaking meeting ‘Creating a basis for assessing the use of the EU Funds for the National Strategies for Roma Integration’. The meeting was held on May 22 in Sofia. It was organized by the European Commission as a subsequent event after a 4-day summit ‘Contribution of the EU Funds for Roma integration’ held in Sofia, Tarnovo and Burgas on June 21-24, 2011. The meeting was moderated by Peter Stub Yurgenson, director of the European Social Fund. The Bulgarian Government was represented by the Minister of Management of EU Funds, Mr. Tomislav Donchev, Deputy-Minister of Labor and Social Policy, Mrs. Zornitsa Rusinova, Deputy Minister of Education, Mrs. Petya Evtimova and experts from the Managing Authorities of OP ‘Human Resources’ and OP ‘Regional Development’. On behalf of the civil sector in the meeting took part Deyan Kolev, Stela Kostova, Lili Makaveeva, Rumyan Sechkov, Rumyan Rusinov, Sergi Karakashev, Malina Georgieva and Gancho Iliev. Bulgaria boasts a conceptual clarity on Roma integration: we know what we want to achieve and this is enshrined in the National Strategy for Roma, said Minister Donchev at the opening Donchev. Good news is also that resource provisioning is not so serious problem and there are funds available from EU, Switzerland, Norway, European Economic Area and the Bulgarian state budget. In a few days will be formed an Interagency Group to resource Roma Integration. Not such good news is that in some key areas there are still not clear concept models; there are such in the education and health priorities but there is still not successful model for sustainable improvement of living conditions of Roma, Minister Donchev said. Therefore a year ago it was initiated a pilot intervention that will be implemented in Vidin, Dupnitsa, Burgas and Devnya, and will include not only construction of housing but also ‘soft’ measures to improve the access of education, employment and social services for the residents. The main problem facing the implementation of a comprehensive integration policy has no clear public support, said Donchev. In order the majority to not be blamed, it’s us the politicians who take the responsibility to explain the need of the Roma integration. I dream to see the integration policy as a dream of the majority and as a recognized need, finished his address Tomislav Donchev. In their speeches representatives of Roma organizations accepted on the problems facing the implementation of the National Strategy for Roma Integration, adopted by the Bulgarian Parliament. Deyan Kolev stressed that the Strategy is adopted with consensus and can hardly be disputed, but the Action Plan of the Strategy has not significant added value. From totally 120 operations, 71 are without funding and the rests are budgeted on the level where there are. A serious weakness is that the application ‘Programs for implementation of the National Strategy for Roma Integration’ which was proposed to link the Strategy with the absorption of EU Funds, was not accepted – we hope that the reason for this was an administrative weakness and not lack of political will, said Kolev.
FOCUS

NGO WORKSHOP ON ADVOCATING COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL ROMA INTEGRATION STRATEGIES TOOK PLACE IN BUDAPEST

The workshop served as a follow-up to the meeting in November 2011, which brought together NGOs and partner institutions carrying out advocacy projects to influence the EU Framework process on developing National Roma Integration Strategies. The meeting aimed to provide an opportunity to reflect jointly on the experiences, progress and lessons learned in terms of research and evidence-based advocacy related to NRIS processes. Through small group and plenary discussions, participants addressed a number of questions related to process, outcomes and future plans concerning monitoring, reporting and advocacy related to National Roma Integration Strategies. The organizers stressed that the meeting was not meant to be a reporting session on the projects, nor an expert meeting on content of the strategies. Rather, the meeting aimed to be a space for self-reflection and learning both for Roma Initiatives and participating NGOs and partners on how to improve and strengthen advocacy efforts concerning national Roma integration strategies in the future. In the first session participants presented some of the main achievements of their projects. On behalf of Center Amalipe Momchil Baev presented the main three points that the organization has achieved on advocating the National Roma Integration Strategy: The National Roma Integration Strategy was approved by the Parliament; this would not be done without the project implementation. The request for approving the Strategy via Decision of the Parliament was raised for first time during the first conference organized by the project consortium in Sliven and repeated during the other events organized by the consortium. Initially it met resistance from the government representatives but finally was approved and BG Roma Strategy was the only one approved through decision of the Parliament:


SCHOOL

TEACHERS FROM THE PROFESSIONAL HIGH SCHOOL IN TECHNIQUES AND LIGHT INDUSTRY IN OMURTAG WERE TRAINED HOW TO WORK WITH ROMA PUPILS AND TOOK PART IN THE 'LET'S CLEAN BULGARIA FOR 1 DAY' CAMPAIGN.

From 11 to 13 May in Lyaskovets was held the second training of the teaching staff of the Professional High School in techniques and light industry – Omurtag which topic was 'How to work in a multicultural environment'. The training was organized by Amalipe Center in the framework of ‘Together at school in our free time’ project which is implemented by the Professional High school and funded by ‘Human Resources’ Operational Program. Besides this type of training there are monthly meetings – training where participants discuss methods and means used for keeping Roma children in school. They discuss the work on the specially developed individual plans, prepared for every single pupil who is at risk of dropping-out as well as how to include the Roma parents in the school life. Amalipe Center is a partner of the school in its efforts. The aim of this outside of Omurtag training was to be made an evaluation and analysis of the achievements so far and to be determined the progress of the project objectives’ implementation. There was taken an overview of the concrete results for the number of children dropped-out and unexcused absences. As a positive and supporting part of the problems solutions were mentioned the school excursions, visits school with the same professional training, including ‘Folklore of Roma – Ethnic Folklore’ Program as a vocational school subject and developing profiles of children who are at risk of dropping-out. A high appreciated was also the cooperation with Amalipe Center and...
According to an old folk custom, the school day began with the sounds of the hymn ‘Go nation revived’ Early in the morning children filled the school yard with much laughter and joy. They carried in their hands bouquets of flowers for their teachers and to crown the Thessalonian brothers Cyril and Methodius. Traditionally, volunteers from the school teams with their leaders began to howl huge wreath of peonies, roses and tulips, which placed at the entrance of the school. Guests filled the school yard. After the kind invitation of the hosts, all the guests were seated in the school gym where the ceremony took place. It took place in several stages. The first stage was a rich literary and musical program prepared by the children club "Friends of speech and the scene" led by Stanka Toneva and children from the club "Dance of Nations" led by Vesselina Cherpokova. The school is a basis school for a second year in the program of Center Amalipe ‘Reduction of Roma children dropping out of school’

Second stage of the ceremony was the solemn handing out certificates to students from first grade who ended school year. The little students gladly received their first certificate accompanied by a colorful booklet with stories to read in the summer, served them by the school principal - Mrs. Blagoeva. The third stage of the celebration was the announcement of nominees for the awards: - Director, teacher and student of the year. Mrs. Krasimira Blagoeva, Principal of the school was nominated as Principal of the Year by the Union of employers in the public education system in Bulgaria and was awarded with honorary diploma and medal. Teacher of the Year was nominated Ms. Maya Zdravkova – teacher in History and Geography and class teacher of grade 7. Student of the year became Embie Fari Ali from grade 7. All they received their solemn awards on a special ceremony in the municipality of Sadovo where they were awarded personally by the municipal Mayor. Prizes were distributed also to students who have shown results in sports, literary and musical contests and competitions. The celebration ended with a memorable photo of the participants, guests and hosts. Especially exciting was the common memory images of retired and current teachers of the school.

SHARING OF GOOD PRACTICES ON 'REDUCING OF ROMA CHILDREN DROP-OUT' PROJECT

The Regional Educational Inspectorate and 'Vasil Levski' Elementary School, village of Karadzhovo organized a workshop which is part of the annual 2011/12 plan of the inspectorate. Topic of the workshop was creating a tolerant multicultural environment in the Bulgarian school and sharing of good practices from 'Reducing of Roma children drop-out' project. The organizers of the event addressed an invitation to the school principals from the town and the area of Plovdiv to share their experience, impressions and realized educational activities for integration. The meeting was held on May 4, 2012 and it took place in the school gym. It was attended by Mrs. Iv. Kirkova – head of the teachers' teams. The workshop was opened by Mrs. Kirkowa with pleasant words and wishes for more joint workshops. Presentation of 'Good a successful practices in Vasil Levski' elementary school' presentation was presented in a very interesting way by the principal of the school – Mrs. Krasimira Blagoeva. She showed the whole work done during the creation of the school till nowadays. With a great interest was watched the specially created for the project movie 'The Mission Amalipe' through which the guests learnt about the good practices of different project schools. Part of the movie heroes are also teachers and pupils from the school in Karadzhovo. The meeting ended fruitfully for all the participants.

THE SCHOOL 2011/2012 YEAR HAS FINISHED

During the school 2011/12 year 'Oets Paisiy' Elementary School from the village of Ravna Gora and 'Peyo Yavorov' Elementary School from the village of Krushevetos were included in 'Decreasing the drop out among Roma children' project realized by Center Amalipe, Veliko Tarnovo. The teachers' teams of the both schools have planned a several extracurricular activities and forms of workshop with pupils, which to prevent the drop out and to decrease the absences. Involved in the program were also the parents as active members of the established parent clubs and successful partners of the teachers regarding the school life. During the school year the joint initiatives of parents, teachers and children were many: Open Doors Day, Exchange of Good Practices between the two schools, The Day of the Tolerance and many others. As a final of the work during the school year the two pedagogic teams had prepared a big celebration in the school yard in Ravna Gora. Students had a lot of guests; among them were the mayors of the villages, the Chair of the Municipal Council – Sozopol, and the main educational expert of the municipality of Sozopol. Both schools reported excellent results from its work program for prevention throughout the school year: no dropouts and absenteeism are minimized. In this school year both teaching staff are continuing work on the program.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 'AGAINST THE FORCED MARRIAGES'

In May 2012 Center Amalipe took part in an international conference in Vienne, Austria called ‘Against the violence’. It was organized within the framework of 'Sheroes' project by ' Orient Express' – NGO dealing with Roma immigrants and women who have need of help and information regarding problems in the family, violence, forced marriages. Main goal of the conference was to increase the awareness about the violence and it was directed to professionals working in this sphere as well as sharing of good practices, represented by the project organization within the 'Sheroes' project. Also the partners had to represent the activities they have used to overcome those problems in their own countries. Center Amalipe was represented by Teodora Krumova and Tanya Vanova. They presented a power point on the early marriages in Roma communities and the good practices Amalipe is offering for years to overcome the problem. Particular attention attracted the publications of Amalipe issued within Prevention of early/forced marriages project – report about the situation in Bulgaria regarding the early marriages, books telling personal stories of women and a movie called 'Life is beautiful' which shows the different point of views on the problem and the role of the Roma women in nowadays society. The conference was also attended by the other project-partner organizations from France, Romania, Great Britain and Germany. Showing good practices continued with discussion in which part took representatives of state institutions working in this problem in Vienne. A few words saying that good results are obtained when there is good cooperation between NGOs and institutions, said the Vienna city councilor representing Women. The day the international conference was held in was set out for ‘Anti-forced marriages Day’. That was done by Trio Mara, a musical trio created by women-immigrants in Austria. For one hour they made all the audience to think about the meaning of the word 'women' and what exactly its meaning is!
THE EMPLOYMENT AGENCY ANNOUNCED A CONTEST

On June 1, the Employment Agency announced a competition for recruitment of 100 mediators work on the project “Improving the quality of services provided by the EA for citizens and businesses with a focus on vulnerable groups in the labor market” - “To succeed together.” Mediators will work in the labor offices, as a priority in their work will be working with unemployed Roma. Office “labor mediator” will serve job-seekers (priority disadvantaged groups in the labor market - young unemployed, long-term unemployed persons, persons with disabilities, unemployed, Roma and others.) and will contribute to the enlargement of employers who use the services of LOD. During the project implementation process and proceed to the appointment of more employment intermediaries - encouraging non-Roma and Roma in the labor offices, to date, through the national program of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy “Activating inactive” are employed 81 Roma mediators and schemes of the operational program “Human Resources” are employed 250 people. In July 2012 pending the appointment of additional 100 labor mediators in labor offices, the Amalipe's team helped to the candidates. Once the call for new labor mediators was published on the website of the Employment Agency, the project team disseminated the information through its website and through social networks. There was developed methodological literature for candidate mediators and was facilitated application process of 36 Roma candidates and increased their chances of employment.

PREPARATORY MEETING FOR ROMA PRIDE 2012 TOOK PLACE IN SOFIA

From June 28 to July 1 an international meeting of the European Grassroots Antiracist Movement (EGAM) based in Paris, France was held in Sofia. Over 20 participants from Denmark, Norway, Poland, Serbia, Croatia, Hungary, France, Italy, Romania and Bulgaria participated in the preparation of Roma Pride 2012 and presented the activities of their organizations to combat racism and discrimination. Bulgaria was represented at the meeting by the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee and the Center for Interethnical Dialogue and Tolerance – Amalipe, Veliko Tarnovo. During the meeting the president of the European Grassroots Antiracist Movement, Mr. Benjamin Abtan, presented what happened in Europe during the Roma Pride 2011, which was held simultaneously in many countries in Europe on October 1, 2011. Roma Pride is an international initiative of EGAM which targets the Roma in Europe to organize initiatives, to show that they are proud of their origin and to attract public attention regarding the problems of the largest minority in Europe. Mr. Abtan stressed the success of the campaigns conducted in Bulgaria and Romania by Amalipe, Bulgaria and Romani Criss, Romania. Atanas Stoyanov from Center Amalipe presented the work of the centers for community development during the Roma Pride 2011. Later on he held a presentation about the Roma history. Krasimir Kanev of the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, Rumyan Rusinov and Josif Nunev were also guests at the meeting and presented the life of the Roma during socialism, as well as their personal stories as Roma leaders. Ms. Maria Metodieva of the Open Society Institute, Sofia presented the National Strategy for Roma Integration of the Republic of Bulgaria 2012-2020. Furthermore, representatives of organizations - members of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues at the Council of Ministers presented their experience in projects targeting Roma in Bulgaria. As a sign of tolerance the participants of the meeting held in Sofia participated in the Sofia Pride on June 30. Numerous initiatives are expected to be organized this year for the Roma Pride 2012 which will take place on October 7. This includes exhibitions of paintings and works related to the Roma issue (Poland, Bulgaria), political petitions (Denmark), children's concerts (Italy), demonstrations (Romania) and many others activities. As a common European initiative stands the Roma Film Week where it is expected to be screened various films on Roma issues.

For Bulgaria, Center Amalipe planned numerous events at local level through its centers for community development. In addition, the organization will launch a special research this year with the aim to find people in the Roma community who are successful in different spheres, proud of their origin and not afraid to show it. Amalipe will invite the selected Roma to the general national meeting in October.

ROM-UP! : ROMA INCLUSION THROUGH QUALITY AND SUCCESSFUL EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES

From May 31 to June 2, 2012 in Barcelona, Spain was held the first partner’s meeting under the ROM-UP! Project: Roma inclusion through quality and successful educational practices. Aim of the meeting was to gather the project partners who to discuss in details the realization of the project, the selection process of successful educational practices and the following actions. Representatives of Center Amalipe were Teodora Krumova and Gabriela Dainalova. The project is funded with the support of the European Commission under “Life Long Learning Program” for one year: from April 2012 till March, 2013. 8 European partner NGO’s are involved into the project’s realization. The main goal of ROM-UP! is to create an International Romani Network aimed at raising awareness of the successful educational experiences that have already been scientifically proven to be effective in the promotion of the social integration of Roma children and all the students in general, in terms of pursuing educational success. The specific objectives of the project are: Disseminate successful educational experiences in promoting Roma education; Develop strategies to carry out successful actions in the participating countries (Spain, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania and Ireland); Involve Roma in the selection of good educational practices carried out in their communities; Establish networks of coordination between the coordination, Roma communities and education agents in order to overcome Roma educational exclusion. ROM-UP! project will contribute to achieve the main goals expressed in the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020, offering explicit, detailed and concrete successful educational measures in the education area to be transferred and implemented in different European contexts. This will involve a tangible improvement of Roma people's life conditions, specially, the most vulnerable. The project will offer concrete successful measures in order to ensure that all Roma children have access to quality education, ensuring primary school completion, reducing the number of early school leavers and promoting the access to the tertiary education.

http://www.rom-up.eu/project.htm

KHERE (AT HOME) continued from page 1

VOLUNTEERS AT K7 CLUB - VELOK TARNONO BREAK RECORDS AND FIGHT AIDS WITH THE LARGEST PATCHWORK INSTALLATION

volunteer for a long time. He expressed his position on volunteerism as follows: "We must learn to be empathetic to people's problems and in particular to those who have HIV / AIDS. For our activities we do not receive remuneration but happiness in the eyes of people when we help them is reward enough and reward for us as volunteers. And this work must go on and more people to engage in it.”, Georgi said. With this initiative, young people made an appeal for the inclusion of mandatory health education in schools, including sexual and reproductive health, and expressed sympathy for those affected by HIV / AIDS. World AIDS Candlelight Memorial Day is commemorated every year on the third Sunday of May. Globally, on this day hundreds of thousands of people of over 1200 organizations in 115 countries participate in the largest and oldest event associated with HIV / AIDS. For the first time this day is commemorated on May 2nd 1983 in San Francisco and New York, when there were first AIDS cases. In Bulgaria registered cases of AIDS were only several thousand. In Bulgaria, the day is commemorated since 1992. International campaign slogan this year is "Promoting Health and Dignity Together". In the Republic of Bulgaria by 16.05.2012, there were a total of 1532 registered persons with HIV infection. Since the beginning of 2012 newly registered HIV-positive are 59 of whom 43 men and 16 women. Of them 50% are under the age of 29 years. This year we again see a worrying trend - more than half of newly registered cases of HIV are young people, of which 44% were 18 to 29 years. This year we again see a worrying trend - more than half of newly registered cases of HIV are young people, of which 44% were 18 to 29 years.

http://www.candlelightmemorial.org

AIDS - Promoting Health and Dignity Together

29 May 2012
Health Tax

Anyone who has not paid his health insurance, lose the right to sell a home or car. Changes in health Insurance Tax Code are offered to the National Assembly by the Government. The idea was launched by the new health minister Desislava Atanasova at her inauguration. The latest figures show about 1.5 million Bulgarians do not have health insurance. They are not entitled to free treatment, but only access to emergency care. The new measure would create additional difficulties for people whose employers have not paid their health insurance. They are not considered uninsured, but can't prove it with a document.

The medical fee is 2.90 lev

The size of the fee will be determined by the Council of Ministers. Under current law the fees were equal to 1% of the minimum wage - that is 2.70 lev. After May 1 the minimum wage jumped from 270 lev to 290 lev and that will increase the fee for the doctor's office. Health Minister Desislava Atanasova, however, objected and insisted on changes in the law. The bill envisions the elimination of the obligation to pay health insurance contributions by compulsory insured persons who apply for health insurance scheme of the European Union.

Pregnant 15-year-old Roma girl in serious condition after complications

A 15 year old pregnant Roma girl is accommodated in the resuscitation of the Hospital "Dr. Ivan Seliminski" - Sliven after complications - the patient's condition is serious. She is in resuscitation, pregnant in the fifth month. "At 14 she got pregnant and now all the complications of her pregnancy are going through the written medical laws." There are subsequent complications that resulted in serious condition, which she is in now - with respiratory and heart failure, with polyserositis. Roma organizations should have active participation because lethal cases will become more and more. They should gather their people and tell them what is baby, where childhood ends and where motherhood begins. In the opinion of the doctors, the law should punish the fathers of future babies as abusers to stop their acts. Responsibility must be beard by the parents of young mothers.

Free examinations for tuberculosis in 28 regional centers

"Open Doors Week" was held in twenty-nine district hospitals for diagnosis and treatment of tuberculosis in the period 4th to 8th of June 2012. The initiative is organized by the Ministry of Health and is fulfilled by the program "Improvement of Tuberculosis Control in Bulgaria", financed by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. The aim is to raise public awareness of Tuberculosis and to allow everyone free access to health services. As an organization coordinating the Program's Component 5, Amalipe also conducted open doors week in conjunction with Specialized Hospital for Active Treatment of pneumo-physiatric diseases "Dr. Treyman." Hundreds of needy were covered and also 93 people from the area had received additional medical tests.

Examinations and tests among the Roma population were carried in nine districts in 2011

Total of 11,465 tests in a mobile clinic among the Roma population were carried out in nine districts of the country in 2011. In 2353 cases are detected diseases or abnormalities in laboratory tests and they are set for further diagnosis and treatment. According to information from the conference "National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Roma Integration 2012-2020 " - towards the next programming period. There are health education activities and campaigns included as well, said Desislava Atanasova.
Amalive welcomed representatives of the Bulgarian-Swiss Chamber of Commerce during the Chamber's workshop with business representatives from the region of Veliko Turnovo. On 16 June, Mr. Boni Bonev, Chairman of the BSCC, Vasil Radoynovski, head of the BSCC Secretariat and other members of the Chamber visited the Community Development Center for Veliko Turnovo established by Amalive and equipped with some of the computers donated by the Municipality of Lausanne and the Swiss Embassy within Restart project. Teodora Krumova presented in detail the activities of Amalive, the organization successful practice to introduce intercultural education and the prevention of school dropouts, the work of the Roma community development centers and the Roma Children's Festival "Open Heart", which has already become a tradition in the cultural calendar of Veliko Turnovo. She stressed that the Roma community has great potential which is not used so far: according to data from the last census 38% of Roma are young people, which is huge potential for Bulgarian economy. The guests showed particular interest in the specifics, traditions and culture of the Roma community in Bulgaria. They spoke with the Community Moderator for Veliko Turnovo Teodora Vasileva, Angel Angelov and Gabriella Danailova (field workers) and Momchil Baev, Coordinator of Health Programs in Amalive.

THE LITERACY COURSE FOR ADULTS STARTED IN LEVSKI

12 adults from the town of Levski started the literacy course for adults from the joint project of the Ministry of Education and the Employment Agency “New Chance for Success”. The course started on June 18 and continues to November this year. When completed successfully the participants will receive a certificate of primary education. The training takes place in the Elementary School “Hristo Botev” in Levski. At the same time 11 people have started literacy courses for adults in the village of Obnova, reported the Roma labor mediator from the job center in Levski, Mrs. Penka Merakova. The training there takes place in the school “Neofti Rilski”. The details of the program explained Mrs. Merakova. Everybody with a minimum age of 16 and without a completed level of education can participate. The training groups should contain at least 10 and not more than 15 students. Students within the program from all around the country will receive four 4 Leva per day. Those 4 Leva per day are provided by the job center in Levski for the travel costs, if there are any. The participants in the program will temporarily suspend their visits to the job center, because they have to sign a certificate for attending the classes regularly. This does not mean an interruption of their registration in the job center. They retain their status of an unemployed person looking for work. Educational materials for older students are provided by the schools. The difference between the new program “New Chance for Success” and the old “Program for Literacy and Education of Roma” is that all students will get a real certificate of graduation issued by the Ministry of Education and not just issued by job centers like before.

THE COMMUNITY MODERATORS FROM BULGARIA VISITED THE CENTER FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN TARGU MURES, ROMANIA

The Community Moderators of six centers for community development in Bulgaria visited the Center for Community Development in the city of Targu Mures, Romania. The visit took place on June 21 and 22 under the project “Promoting integration at local level among traditionally marginalized groups of the Roma community”, funded by the Daphne Program of the European Commission. The purpose of the visit was that community moderators on both sides could exchange their experiences and learn about the problems regarding the Roma community in the Province of Mures, Romania. The Bulgarian side was welcomed by Mrs. Smaranda Enache, President of the Liga Pro Europa, Romania and partner of Center Amalive in the implementation of the project. The presentation of the project’s activities was later presented by the Romanian Community Moderators themselves: Alexandra Bershi and Regina Moldovan. Early marriage and dropping out of school are the most serious problems for the community in Mures, Romania, the moderators reported. The community has preserved its tradition and customs, including the vicious practice of early marriages. The most of the efforts of the community moderators in Targu Mures are directed to this basic problem. For this purpose they organize lectures in schools with students, parents and young mothers about the importance of education today. The organization of such events takes place in collaboration with school principals, local government, Roma health and school mediators, and Roma leaders. Another problem area is the housing – the lack of paved streets and sanitation, as well as containers. The participants had the opportunity to meet Mr. Zelariu Petru – the regional leader of the Roma party which party is the only one represented in the Romanian Parliament. Mr. Petru said that in his province 33 Roma were elected as municipal councilors in local elections last week. He stressed the importance of the preliminary agreements directed to development and investment in the Roma community which his party signed with the candidate-mayors and today, after the elections are validated. ‘Mayors must keep their promises before the elections regarding Roma otherwise they will receive a protest vote’, said Petru.


WE LIVE IN A CLEANER BULGARIA

We live in a little more clear Bulgaria and this is fact after all the Centers for Community Development and over 30 partner schools of the Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance Amalive joined the campaign ‘Let’s clean Bulgaria for one day’. The campaign began in the morning throughout the country and despite the bad weather in some regions of Bulgaria it wasn’t terminated.

Regardless of the bad weather the volunteers from the village of Batak and the village of Varbovka as well as volunteers from the two Roma neighbourhoods of the town of Pavlikeni participated actively in the ‘Let’s clean’ campaign. In Batak the cleaning started from the Roma neighborhood and continued down to the village center so the cleaned distance reached about 1 km. Engaged in the task were all students, teachers and municipal employees from the village of Batak. The volunteers from Varbovka cleaned the center, the children ground, the garden and the park around the Youth Club there. There efforts were supported also by the students from the local ‘Philip Totyu’ Elementary School and by the local administration as well. Very actively involved were also the residents of both Roma quarters in Pavlikeni – ‘Kalderashi’ and ‘Millet’. They very carefully cleaned the streets where there were many papers and plastic waste. In Byala Slatina the cleaning began at 9 am and the volunteers gathered at the playground situated in the Roma neighborhood of the town. At the campaign were involved the Initiative Group to the Center for Community Development, Byala Slatina and the local councilor Mr. M. Emilov. Volunteers were given bags and gloves provided by the Municipality of Byala Slatina. The first they did was to clean the site of paper and plastic and after that there were skillfully assembled slats for the park benches. Also there were reinstated the extracted from the ground litter bins. Once all the bins and benches have been restored the youth volunteers have taken up their painting. For this purpose each volunteer had brought with him a brush. By this initiative and voluntarily way the Roma community in Byala Slatina once again proved that they wish to improve their living environment and that they are able to organize themselves for good initiatives. The Community Moderators said that there are going to be mounted cameras for a better control. The Center for Community Development in Kameno, Burgas district which joined the cleaning campaign. Volunteers were given T-shirts with the motto: ‘A step forward. Everyone can do it!’ After being handed out bags and gloves cleaned were the sidewalk in front the Pensioner’s Club and the space in front of the Red Cross. The oldest volunteer in the campaign was the 70-year-old grandfather Atanas. The total rubbish was collected in 45 bags and the larger garbage which couldn’t be put into bags was reunited and later – shipped of by the municipality. In Peshtera, a few days before May 12, were glued invitation-announces informing all the community members about the campaign and how to participate into it. Cleaning is done in the Roma neighbourhoods.22 volunteers cleaned Zdravets street in Lukovitissa. Especially from the both regions were provided municipality excavators.

A CONFERENCE ON 'MEDIA AND ADVOCACY' WAS HELD IN POMORIE

Training on 'How to coop with media and advocacy' designed for community moderators from the Centers for Community Development in Bulgaria was held in Pomorie from May 28 to May 30. Over 30 people across the country attended the 3-day meeting whose main purpose was to give knowledge on how to behave in front of media, to give radio and TV-interviews, how to write press releases, and how to build relationships with regional and national media. The meeting was attended by the community moderators from Byala Slatina, Kameno, Etiropole, Pavlikeni, Peshtera and Novi Pazar as well as by representatives of towns where centers are not officially opened yet: Kneza, Strazhitsa and Radnevo. Besides the media issue during the meeting in the coastal town was severely affected the advocacy topic on policies related to the integration of Roma in Bulgaria. Mrs. Teodora Krumova – Vice-Chair of the Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance Amalipe, Veliko Tarnovo gave a presentation on the National strategy for Roma Inclusion 2012-2020 approved by the Bulgarian Parliament. Krumova pointed out the main priorities within the strategy. At the meeting became clear that each municipality in Bulgaria is going to develop a mandatory municipal strategy for integration of minorities, a report on the implementation of it will be presented annually to the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integralerional Issues. An addition to the community moderators the meeting was attended by several representatives of Roma NGO's such as 'A Sun for All' – Peshtera, 'A New Road', Hayredin, 'World without Borders', Stara Zagora, and 'The Faithful Steward', Burgas. Organizer of the meeting was the Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance Amalipe under 'Promoting fieldwork at grassroots level among traditional and marginalized Roma communities' project funded by Daphne Program of the European Commission.

ST. GEORGE'S DAY / HEDERLESI

St. George's day / Hederlesi is a feast that all Roma in Bulgaria celebrate. There's no other – St. Basil’s day, Petylovdien, Easter, Baram, Barry Bogorodica are celebrated only by some Roma groups and are unknown to the others. Perhaps the reason the biggest celebration to be precisely St. George's Day is that in early May when the meadows and forests are lush green, the rivers are filled with water, cold weather is behind and one can believe that evil is past and it's time for happiness and life. Also there comes a lot of work - St. George's day gives the beginning of the warm season - but the old Roma knew that the work brings wealth. That's why they were not scared of work, and celebrated its coming. They believed that celebrating St. George's Day by dozens of large and small rituals, they help to bring the best. This belief in the advent of better has kept our ancestors over the centuries has been their mainstay, helped them continue through forests, rivers and continents. Let us today, St. George's Day / Hederlesi make a wish the faith never leaves us that better days will come: for each of us Roma in Bulgaria! With our hard work we help that happen - every day of our work is St. George's Day!

NINTH CHILDREN ROMA FESTIVAL “OPEN HEART”

The National Children's Roma Festival “Open Heart”, Veliko Tarnovo, was held for the ninth consecutive year. On June 9-10, 2012 park “Marno pole” in the old-capital-town turned into a stage for over 1300 participants from 94 different groups with a various ethnic background coming from all over the country and all of them being included in the EPA “Ethnic Folklore – Folklore of Roma” or another activities aiming educational integration. The celebration was opened by the Mayor of the Municipality of Veliko Tarnovo, Mr. Daniel Panov. Another officials at event were: Anna-Marie Villamovska – Secretary on the issues of Science and Education to the President’s Administration, Mrs. Sarah Perrine – Program Director in “America for Bulgaria” Foundation, Mr. Simeon Blagoev – representative of the Ministry of Culture, Mrs. Maria Atanasova – head of the regional directorate “Social Assistance”, Mrs. Krasimira Zhelyazkova – head of “Regional development” direction to the Municipality of Strazhitsa, Mrs. Tanya Radochay – representative of UNICEF for Bulgaria, and the special guests: prof. Ahbijit Das - India and Mrs. Erin Howe - New York!

MORE ABOUT THE FESTIVAL YOU CAN READ IN THE SPECIAL EDITION WHICH IS DISTRIBUTED SEPARATELY FROM THIS NEWSLETTER.

A WORK-MEETING ON ‘PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION OF ROMA YOUNG PEOPLE IN MARGINALIZED RURAL COMMUNITIES’ PROJECT

From May 11-13, 2012 in the Complex ‘Lesoparka’ near Lyaskovets we held a work-meeting under the project ‘Promoting social inclusion of Roma youth in marginalized rural communities’. The meeting was attended by representatives from the municipalities of Kneja (Pleven District), Radnevo (Stara Zagora), Lyaskovets, and Strazhitsa (Veliko Turnovo); representatives from the Bureau of Labor, the Regional Office of Social Assistance, representatives from schools and Roma NGOs working in the above communities and our partners from Macedonia – National Roma Centre Kumanovo. At the beginning of the meeting, Deyan Kolev, the Chair of Amalipe, welcomed the participants with a “Welcome to the big family of Amalipe”, stating that the organization is currently partnered with over 100 schools, dozens of municipalities, regional inspectors of education, health and the Regional Office of Social Assistance in implementation of joint activities to support the development of the Roma community. First, Kolev shared the main purpose of this meeting, which was followed by speeches by other representatives of Amalipe, Georgi Atanasov and Julia Grigorova, who presented the main vision and objectives of the project. Then, Sylvia Boyanova, Project Coordinator, presented the project, “Promotion of fieldwork among traditional and marginalized groups of the Roma Community.” This project was also implemented in the municipalities of Kneja, Peshtera, Etiropole, Byala Slatina, Pavlikeni and Novi Pazar. The success of the activity centers of community development and community moderators in these municipalities aroused great interest and many questions from participants. The work in the Roma communities in the selected municipalities such as tasks and activities of the Centers for Community Development were presented in the workshop. The participants had the opportunity to share their past work experiences in the community; to seek joint solutions of different cases; to exchange ideas and to address specific problems of the Roma community focusing on the youth. During the workshop, special emphasis was placed on overcoming the problem of unemployment among youth. Along with all activities related to the work-meeting, the Amalipe team also conducted interviews with candidates to fill positions for municipality moderators. As a result, there will be selected, and employed community moderators in all of these municipalities.

DIRECTORATES OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM THE SIX REGIONS WORKING ON THE PROJECT – VELIKO TARNOVO, PAVARZHTIK, VRATSA, SHOUМEN, SOФИА-СИТИ AND BOURGAS

The coordinators’ meeting under the project “To Touch the untouched: Combating traditional and new Anti-Roma stereotypes”, implemented by AMALIPE Center (financed by the EU Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme) took place in Veliko Turnovo between 16 and 18 May 2012. The meeting was attended by representatives of the Regional Inspectorsate of Education, Regional Health Inspections and Regional Directorates of Social Assistance from the six regions working on the project – Veliko Tarnovo, Pazardzhik, Vratsa, Shoumen, Sofia-City and Bourgas. The event was organised in connection with the finalisation of the first stage of the activities, consisting of 7 training modules, in which were trained a total of 180 public officials and field workers from the sphere of health care, education and social activities. The questionnaires filled in by trainees give a good idea of the outcomes of this work. 85% of the participants respond that they would like more trainings of this type to be organised, the same percentage reply they feel prepared to become trainers. 60% underline they would like to have more role-play of concrete situations during the sessions, as this exercise proves to be very helpful in their daily work. Last but not least, for the project team the most satisfying outcome is the change in the stereotypes and attitudes towards the Roma pointed out in the questionnaires.

A COORDINATING MEETING UNDER THE PROJECT "TO TOUCH THE UNTOUCHABLES, COMBATING TRADITIONAL AND NEW ANTI-ROMA STEREOTYPES"

The coordinators’ meeting under the project “To Touch the untouched: Combating traditional and new Anti-Roma stereotypes”, implemented by AMALIPE Center (financed by the EU Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme) took place in Veliko Turnovo between 16 and 18 May 2012. The meeting was attended by representatives of the Regional Inspectorsate of Education, Regional Health Inspections and Regional Directorates of Social Assistance from the six regions working on the project – Veliko Tarnovo, Pazardzhik, Vratsa, Shoumen, Sofia-City and Bourgas. The event was organised in connection with the finalisation of the first stage of the activities, consisting of 7 training modules, in which were trained a total of 180 public officials and field workers from the sphere of health care, education and social activities. The questionnaires filled in by trainees give a good idea of the outcomes of this work. 85% of the participants respond that they would like more trainings of this type to be organised, the same percentage reply they feel prepared to become trainers. 60% underline they would like to have more role-play of concrete situations during the sessions, as this exercise proves to be very helpful in their daily work. Last but not least, for the project team the most satisfying outcome is the change in the stereotypes and attitudes towards the Roma pointed out in the questionnaires.