

Advocacy campaign for including Roma issues in the EU strategic documents

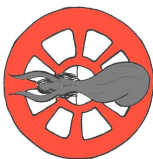
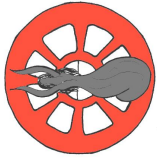
THE ISSUE

One of the major priority fields Center Amalipe works in is advocacy for including Roma issues in the mainstream agenda. Special accent in this work is guaranteeing Roma participation and solving Roma problems within the process of EU integration.

In May 2006 Center Amalipe and Open Society Institute, Sofia, started an advocacy campaign for including major issues related with Roma integration in the strategic documents regulating the EU Structural funds absorption in Bulgaria. In the following months 46 Roma NGOs and a number of Roma experts joined the campaign. The success of the campaign and its importance for the development of the civil society in Bulgaria in general has been explicitly acknowledged by the Bulgarian Minister of Finance Plamen Oresharski during the ceremony for signing the National Strategic Reference Framework. In the second half of 2007 and in 2008 the campaign was continued with efforts for including Roma experts within the Monitoring Committees of European funds structures in Bulgaria.

RESULTS ACHIEVED: Human Resource Development OP

1. Roma are defined as specific target group in three priority axes of the Program related to employment, health care, and social protection;
2. There are six operations where Roma are a specific target group: two in the field of employment, one in education, two in social protection, and one in health care.
3. The Program contains a specific chapter “Areas of assistance with regard to the Roma community”
4. The Program contains qualitative and quantitative indicators for assessing the impact on the Roma community
5. NGOs are included as beneficiaries in all operations directed to Roma integration
6. NGOs are included as possible leading beneficiaries in the so-called “program extensions” that define the concrete calls for proposals
7. A number of concrete and accurate texts connected with the socio-economic and educational situation of the Roma community in Bulgaria are included in the Program.
8. The position “Observer in the Monitoring committee elected by NGOs working in the Roma field” is officially recognized. Deyan Kolev (Chairman of Center “Amalipe”) was elected by Roma NGOs and was included in the Monitoring Committee of HRD OP
9. In 2007 and 2008 several call for proposals for Roma integration activities were announced and financed with significant amount of money



RESULTS ACHIEVED: National Strategic Reference Framework

1. Including a special chapter “Roma minority”
2. Including Roma as a specific target group of intervention and objective reflection of the situation and the problems of the Roma community
3. Taking into consideration the most aching problems of the Roma community and mainstreaming them in all spheres: education, health, social sphere, housing, IT, and so on.
4. Acknowledging all the key documents directed to Roma integration and adopted by the Bulgarian government.
5. Explicit acknowledgment within the document of the efforts of Center Amalipe and the other Roma organizations which have organized and carried out the campaign.
6. Representative of Center “Amalipe” was officially included in the Monitoring Committee of NSRF after official procedure of elections

«Written comments were received on the NSRF from Roma organizations such as Amalipe, especially contributing to the sources of information used. In addition over 45 Roma organizations have provided formally and informally comments on the different parts of the text of the Human Resources Development Operational Programme. In conformity with the partnership principle the comments and recommendations have been reviewed and about 90 % of them have been accepted and integrated in the programme.» (NSRF, p.195)

ACTIVITIES OF THE CAMPAIGN:

1. Uniting Roma organizations around a common platform: the process was initiated by Center Amalipe together with elaborating the first suggestions to the strategic documents.
2. Elaborating suggestion for changes in the strategic documents. The process has been highly transparent and participatory: representatives of 47 organizations, as well as Roma experts and civil servants working in public administration participated in it.
3. Advocacy activities before the Bulgarian institutions responsible about the elaboration of the documents discussed above.
4. Advocacy activities before the European institutions: Public discussion in the European parliament in Brussels, Working meetings in DG Employment, social inclusion, and equal opportunities, and so on
5. Elections of Roma representatives in the Monitoring committees.

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