

## Community work with marginalized groups

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Ladies and gentlemen

Tackling poverty and social exclusion is conditioned by the political acceptance of such phenomena as the priority problems of society. Mainstreaming of poverty and social exclusion is an important stimulus to improve cooperation on horizontal and vertical level (between different tiers of government and self-government), as well as the intersectoral level (between public administrations, NGOs and private sector). Integrating social inclusion policies requires the strengthening of responsibility and motivation of individual actors to participate in solving these problems. If measures to help vulnerable groups are to be effective, it is necessary that exactly these groups of the population identify themselves with the measures.

According to the census of Roma ethnicity in the year 2005, 130,169 Roma live in the Region representing 17% of the total regional population (766,012 inhabitants). The region has 541 Roma communities, which are not integrated among the population. These are segregated and separated communities, mostly of rural type.

Roma groups are significantly heterogeneous, and can not be classified and passportized by the unified methodology. High degree of social exclusion and high poverty risk is common to all groups. Roma groups themselves undertake no self-protection activities to reduce existing poverty and to participate in the society. They are apparently linked with the system of social benefits as a source of income.

Special attention in addressing poverty issues we pay just to the issue of marginalized Roma communities as a most numerous marginalized group in the territory of the Kosice Self-governing Region.

European Community law through the various directives prohibits racial discrimination in employment, education, social security, health care, and housing and in access to goods and services. Progresses in implementing the measures in those areas we evaluate in the context of European social inclusion process, which aims to significantly help eradicate poverty in Europe.

In addressing Roma issues we long prefer complex approaches with emphasis on their long-term impact in all areas of social life. Concepts include the latest knowledge and trends in solving the problems of Roma in all spheres of social life based on humanistic approaches and the citizenship principle. We focus on the needs and interests, which are among the critical determinants of the new system to improve their socio-economic integration. Let me briefly introduce one of the

programs aimed at marginalized groups of Roma by one of the tools of community work namely centres of community services.

### **The program addresses the following issues:**

- What is the most optimal option of creating a network of community services centres? What financing and geographic location of them is optimal and what is the possibility to apply the "Business model" for them or their partners?
- What legal aspects are necessary for the creation, provision and operation of community services centres at regional and national level?
- What interconnection of community work with local governments, public authorities and NGOs is possible and desirable in the Kosice Self-governing Region?
- What interconnection of community services centres with the institutions working in the social economy, such as social enterprises, with supported employment agencies, local career counselling centres and others is possible and desirable?
- What services does a community service centre have to provide and what subjects are to be complementary or cooperating?
- How to solve the clients' problems of community service centres? Work methods and forms for their leadership and organizing social change?

### **The general objectives of the program**

- Social deprivation reduction through a permanent community social work and social services.
- To prevent: crisis situations in communities, deprivation deepening, increase the culture of poverty, closing the communities, their isolation from society and the growth of socio-pathological phenomena in the target group.
- Creation of an integration system of marginalized groups.

### **Specific objectives of the program:**

- **build structures for changes organization in Roma communities and in the overall system of social life in the community.** The Roma communities are mostly of the connection of several families where ritual purity is only within the family. This hampers cooperation throughout the Roma community.
- **effect on community members, so that they can make their living by working and once in social care use social care benefits and contributions to the statutory purpose.** Predatory approach and philosophy on the principle of "be" differs Roma citizens from the rest of the community, which takes the principle of "have". A different approach to the property requires changes in the strategy of this area.

- **take measures to improve personal hygiene and health of children and adults.** Life in the settlements is reflected in the deterioration of sanitary and uncouth health. Strengthening the access to sanitation and health services is only mitigation of the impacts associated with life in such settlements.
- **improve children's school attendance and develop a system of transition to secondary schools according to individual abilities.** Being of foreign language, different cognitive strategy, the low value attributed to education, family environment which does not support children's education, are just some of the limits that affect the education of Roma. These are conquerable barriers.
- **search a model of school education and extracurricular education for those groups that fail in the current education system.** Training will focus on gaining skills necessary for craft performance. Provide such education that enables also application to the labour market.
- **organize meaningful use of leisure time, especially among children and youth.** Roma community environment is designed to receive male and female roles by children so that they can learn the common way of life and manage to meet expectations. Extension of this social space can be organized through organised forms such as Roma Scouting, extra – school activities and so on.

#### **Other objectives include:**

- support gaining habits and skills required for proper use of dwellings and for relationship to the environment,
- gaining of household management skills and improvement of the household members nutrition,
- initiating development of community processes in the community and community building based on solidarity,
- minimize the existence of individual and group risks associated with living in socially disadvantaging environment,
- initiation of family rehabilitation and strengthening of values bound to the environment of Roma families.

#### **Implemented activities:**

In the analytical part, we realized:

- Audit of Roma communities, including audit of Roma civil activities and Roma leaders, operating in those territories.
- Project subjects audit whose participation in the project is essential.
- Mapping of social services in the municipalities that joined the project.
- Mapping the technical and building facilities to perform community work.

The Kosice Self- governing Region has adopted a strategy aimed at addressing issues of marginalized groups and thus the Roma communities.

The project is just one of twelve modules, which are prepared for the implementation of intervention in Roma communities. Given program only covers one of the tools we intend to use when working with Roma communities. Integration of Roma through education and active participation in the working world is becoming a sine quo non. Stratification of Roma communities paves the way to Roma – entrepreneurs to employ Roma from their communities. This model is developing slowly and requiring support.

The problem of community work in the Roma community is forces and resources that would be capable of achieving changes in their daily lives. In our view, local authority, which orders services in the NGO sector, is the executor of changes. It regards the execution of those tasks that are covered by the authority competence and the competence of a civil society.

In conclusion, let me define some recommendations for practice:

- Complete the type of community work as social work of the government using existing non-governmental organizations operating in the segment.
- Establish standards for community work and social services as well as tools to implement them as executive units of government.
- To influence educational and occupational structure of the Roma communities as a starting point of social change.
- To affect employment in Roma communities through social entrepreneurship and active participation of the Roma as employers.
- To influence the formal and informal structure of the Roma community, especially since this structure affects its development.

Thank you