

# Tools for Improving Employability of ROMA

No 1

Common

## *Project Report*

### Introduction

Throughout recent years there has been a range of activities addressing high unemployment among the Roma in many European countries. However, Roma situation at large has not changed substantially regardless of the political attention paid to it lately. In certain cases, new and innovative approaches have been invented or applied at the micro-level in strengthening the mechanisms for

inclusion of and support to those Roma who try to enter the labour market. Nonetheless, much of the positive experience so far remains confined within local communities or within project teams. There is an increasing need for learning from each other and for an improved circulation of the first hand knowledge.

### About Project

The aim of the partnership is to share the successful methodologies and tools of support used in increasing employability of the Roma. This learning partnership pays its main emphasis on direct exchange of experience that could best enable relevant actors to improve their performance in stimulating changes among the impoverished and marginalized segments of Roma communities.



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## Project Partners



SOPA is a non-profit organisation established in 2006 in Vilnius. The mission of the organisation is to ensure equal opportunities for socially excluded people to participate in work and social life. The core activity is job mediation

services for people from socially vulnerable groups (such as people with disabilities, long-term unemployed, Roma). The mediation is organised according to the method of Supported Employment which consist of assessment of skills, search of job places, job analysis and matching, job coaching and after care when the person is employed. The individual

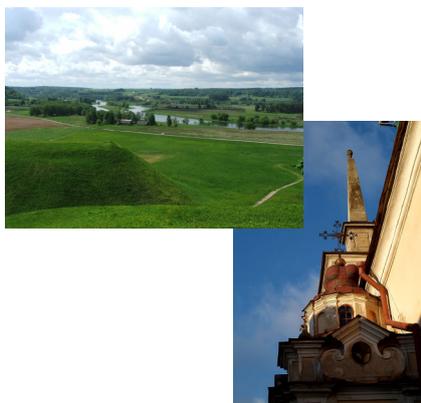
counselling of the unemployed and mediation between the person and employer/working environment is of the great concern for better insurance that the person not only get a job but also maintains it.

SOPA is a coordinating organisation of the project.

[www.sopa.lt](http://www.sopa.lt)



**LITHUANIA**



The public institution Vilnius Roma Community Centre was founded in July 2001 as a result of implementing the State Programme of Roma Integration to Lithuanian Society for 2000-2004. RCC was opened on September 3rd, 2001. The aim of the Centre is to help Roma community living in Kirtimai camp to integrate into Lithuanian society.

RCC organises its activities solving concrete tasks and seeks:

- to change members' of Roma community standpoint on the process of integration to the society;
- to help Roma people to evaluate their own problematic situation and show the ways of solving problems;
- to organise permanent activity and upbringing of children and teenagers, using RCC resources and space;
- to form and stimulate motivation of Roma children, teenagers, their parents, and families to education and self-upbringing.

[www.roma.lt](http://www.roma.lt)



Milan Šimečka Foundation is one of the oldest NGOs in Slovakia, founded back in 1991. Since then we have been mostly engaged in human rights education, building democracy and minority issues. In the present the main areas of foundation's work are: Multicultural Education, Roma Program and Holocaust Research and Education.

Roma Program is the major program of the foundation. We follow two main approaches: community development and Roma public policy. We have broad network of partners around Slova-

kia, mostly in the eastern Slovakia regions. We also co-operate closely with international organizations, in particular with European Roma Rights Centre (Budapest) and Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (Geneva).

Since 2005 we started to implement Roma employment specific projects. The major one is Local Labour Counselling Centres (funded by EQUAL) that developed new methodology of labour counselling and built network of

5 counselling centres. We also directly managed one of those centres, in village Hermanovce, where we have been implementing community projects in years 2000 – 2007. Besides that, we have been involved in transnational project managed by International Helsinki Federation, European Roma Rights Centre and European Roma Information Office entitled Roma and Sinti Participation for Effective Policy in Employment and Education. Our role was to conduct survey on discrimination in labour market and organize a round-table at the national level.

[www.nadaciamilanasimecku.sk](http://www.nadaciamilanasimecku.sk)



**SLOVAKIA**



## The Netherlands



Dutch Sinti and Roma Organisation focuses on the capacity building and empowerment of minority groups in general, and, more specifically, the Sinti and Roma (grassroots organisations on municipality level), to influence policy and promote interest in the culture of the Sinti and Roma. On the European level, organisation works in the promotion of good practices and information exchange, for example, in the field of educational and/or vocational projects. Among other activities Organisation is working in creation of employment opportunities for Sinti and Roma youth.

## FlexPay®

FlexPay is a private company established in 1999. It is a very specialised employment agency supplying temporal contracts to the long-term unemployed and to the handicapped, as well as arranging work placement schemes for young people. FlexPay works closely with the social service

departments of local councils, with integration agencies and with other organizations involved in helping people to get back to work. FlexPay operates throughout the Netherlands. FlexPay also organises training programmes for job hunters which help job hunters to work more efficiently and effectively in finding work for unemployed people. Flex-

Pay has trained many job hunters from a number of larger integration agencies in the Netherlands. As an extra means of support, FlexPay also secures the help of experts in finding work for unemployed and handicapped people.

[www.flexpay.nl](http://www.flexpay.nl)



WerkAdvies BV is a private company that was founded in October 2003. WerkAdvies is specialized in starting new businesses for people with a social or physical disability. WerkAdvies has developed a method of coaching and training where the client is learns to use and develop his or her skills. The coaches/consultants have

between 4 and 15 years experience in this field of work.

Besides coaching and training of starting entrepreneurs WerkAdvies also develops business concepts for difficult social groups who are standing at the sideline of social participation.

Insurance companies assign WerkAdvies to examine the possibility of small companies surviving when the owner becomes ill or suffers from the consequences of an accident. When there are possibilities WerkAdvies intervenes and tries to save the business.

[www.werkadvies.com](http://www.werkadvies.com)



Stichting Rechtsherstel is a national organisation set up by the Dutch government to offer compensation to victims of the Second World War.

Over the last several years, the foundation has focused on the introduction of projects which serve a collective goal.

These projects concentrate on improving participation in Dutch society. In starting projects, the foundation sets

its sights primarily on local government.

Together with the municipality, the foundation develops and finances projects in education, training, social work, participation in sports, cultural experience and, of course, places a focus on helping people to find jobs.

The foundation zeroes in on the Sinti and Roma populations which first came to the Netherlands during the Second World War.

[www.srsr.nl](http://www.srsr.nl)

## Outcomes of the Partnership

### Mobility activities

11-14th February, 2008

The first meeting of project partners was organised in Bratislava. Partners participated at the international conference "Roma Employment – Challenges and Barriers" organised by Milan Šimečka Foundation. Also partners discussed the activities of the Grundtvig project.

29th March - 1st April, 2008

The second partnership meeting was organised in Vilnius on the subject "Tools of Improving Employability of Roma". March 31<sup>st</sup> the international seminar "Effectiveness of Roma Inclusion into Labour Market: Main Tools and Main Drawbacks" was organised in Vilnius, aimed to introduce foreign experience to the Lithuanian organisations and policy makers

18th - 21th May, 2008

The third partnership meeting was organised in the Netherlands. Partners were introduced with the policies of Roma education and integration at the municipality of Veldhoven. FlexPay introduced project "Transvak" for the unemployed Roma to be educated as truck drivers and get employed.

26th - 29th October, 2008

The fourth partnership meeting took place in the Eastern Slovakia. During two days the partners had the possibility to visit social enterprises, see Roma integration activities in Kecerovce village.

5th - 8th April, 2009

The fifth partnership meeting took place in the Netherlands. During two days the partners had the possibility to visit several municipalities in Woensdrecht, Weert, Stein, see examples of working self-employed Roma and Sinti, visit Sinti camp in Stein. Partners had possibility to see businesses run by Roma and Sinti, such as making caravans, running garage, sport club, selling old cars.

12th-15th July, 2009

The sixth and the final partnership meeting was held in Vilnius. At the seminar in Social Support Center partners finalised their experiences, introduced partnership for social workers and job mediators. New projects for Roma employment were presented.



## Results and products

- ◆ Commonly made country reports describing situation of Roma in Lithuania, Slovakia and the Netherlands as well as activities done during the project.
- ◆ Project of training truck drivers in the Netherlands
- ◆ Pilot test of Supported Employment model for unemployed Roma in Lithuania
- ◆ ESF project „Face Roma: Innovative ways of Roma inclusion into labour market“ in Lithuania
- ◆ Project photo gallery at <http://picasaweb.google.com/roma.partners>

Among other things photo gallery include examples of employed or self-employed Roma in different countries



Rob van Maanen with a very special tool, picture made in a do-it-yourself garage in Weert (you hire the complete garage and fix your car by yourself). A Roma owner!

5 Roma adult learners (4 from Lithuania and 1 from Slovakia) participated at the partnership visits. For them it was a possibility to broaden horizon, see Roma living conditions in other countries.

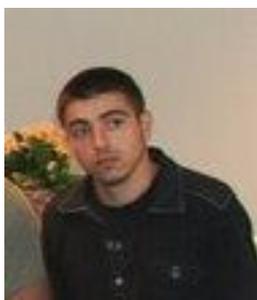
## Impact on learners

- ◆ increased language skills
- ◆ increased social skills
- ◆ increased motivation
- ◆ increased self-confidence
- ◆ increased knowledge about partner countries and cultures
- ◆ increased knowledge about situation of Roma in different countries

## Impressions

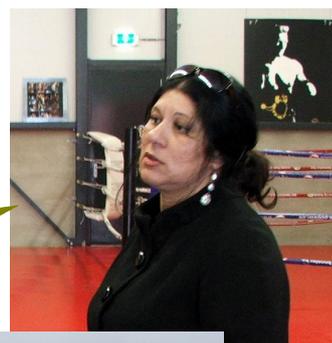
Aleksandras:

“In Holland I met Roma Julius from Slovakia. We were at the Gipsy talent show, it was interesting, although there is big difference between their and our style of dancing”



Zoluska:

“Visit to the Netherlands made huge impression on us, me and Kristina. We met local Roma. They live in very good conditions, most of them work. In comparison with Lithuanian situation of Roma, it's as the heavens and the earth”



Július Pecha , social field worker Kecerovce:

During partnership meetings, I have learned new information about the situation of Roma in Europe.

What was the most inspiring for me in my work as social field worker is, that there are Roma, as in Lithuania, who have even more problems with integration into major society, have troubles with getting employed, discrimination there is even more visible.

Even though there is only approx. 3000 Roma in Lithuania and the situation could be quite easy to change, I saw only few people who work with Roma and who have the will to help them. I spoke to Roma in the biggest settlement in Lithuania and got several information that were not presented even at the conference. As, for example, that Lithuanians accept better Roma as drug dealers than as workmates in common work. At the end we have visited a restaurant where a Roma woman works. When we asked the owner if his clients know that there is Roma working, he answered that he would be happier if no one knew about this fact, since he could loose customers. This man also told us, that Roma women are very uncertain workers and that sometimes for one workplace he needs several women per month, because they don't want to work.

The Roma in Lithuania have really problem to survive, I perceive the situation of Roma in Slovakia better, regarding the possibilities.

The visit to the Roma in Holland was to me as a vision to the far future of Roma in Slovakia.

Regarding the self employment possibilities they have really a lot of possibilities and opportunities. In Holland, there are a lot of people who want to work with Roma and help them. From my point of view, they have a perfect mechanism, which really helps them to decide freely.

What I really did not understand was that when the Roma have the possibility to move to the brick houses they don't use it and keep on living in caravans.

After discussions with local Roma I started to understand some of their attitudes and got the feeling that they feel more Roma than those in Slovakia.

When it comes to evaluation of both visits, I can say, that they have open my eyes and now I see a lot of things differently. I realized that there are Roma who have much worse possibilities to integrate, but also those who are ahead of us. I also got several ideas of what to do to improve the situation of Roma in Slovakia. It gave me new power to seek for new possibilities and chances in solving everyday problems in Roma settlements in Kecerovce.

I was very happy that I could speak Romanese with Roma in Holland and Lithuania, see and feel belonging to the nation for what I am really proud of.



## Impact on staff

- ◆ increased language skills
- ◆ increased motivation
- ◆ increased project management skills
- ◆ increased knowledge about partner countries and cultures
- ◆ increased knowledge about the possible ways to tackle Roma employment problem



Grundtvig learning partnership inspired us to move on with Roma employment. We saw that there is a possibility to succeed with united efforts and common willingness for real change. Although no one can expect fast and easy results, it's worth to start.

Jurgita Kuprytė, project coordinator

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## Grundtvig Learning Partnership

The Grundtvig Learning Partnership is a framework for small-scale co-operation activities between organisations working in the field of adult education in the broadest sense. The partnerships focus more on process, and aim to broaden the participation of smaller organisations that want to include European

cooperation in their education activities.

In a Grundtvig Learning Partnership trainers and learners from at least three participating countries work together on one or more topics of common interest to the co-operating organisations. This exchange of experiences, practices and methods con-

tributes to an increased awareness of the varied European cultural, social and economic scene, and to a better understanding of areas of common interest.



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