

Carpathian Foundation RomaNet Program Evaluation Study 2006



HUNGARY • POLAND • ROMANIA • SLOVAKIA • UKRAINE

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Executive Summary

Promoting ethnic minorities' rights and change throughout financial assistance and capacity building programs are complex and difficult endeavors. Their consistency and final success require vision, strategy, and inspiration. It's like setting up a row of falling dominoes whilst contemplating alternatives with the philosophical serenity of the game of chess. You knock over the first piece, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over to a predictable end. Therefore, you could have a beginning of a process that would have the most profound influences. What chess teaches us is that you must sit calmly and think about whether the chosen options are the right ones and if there are other, better alternatives.

The estimated number of Roma people living in each of the four countries included in the Carpathian Euroregion is as follows:

- ⊙ Hungary – 550,000 – 600,000
- ⊙ Romania – 2,000,000 – 2,500,000
- ⊙ Slovakia – around 500,000
- ⊙ Ukraine – 80,000 – 100,000

Taking into account the total population of each of the four countries it can be considered that Hungary, Romania and Slovakia are characterized by an important number of Roma inhabitants, while the Roma minority in Ukraine can be considered a not very large one.

Regardless of the dimensions of the Roma population, in each of the four countries Roma people suffer from discrimination, low level of education, high unemployment, difficult (or even lack of) access to medical services, and very poor housing conditions. In terms of discrimination it seems that the most difficult situation could be met in Slovakia where the effects of Vladimir Meciar's nationalist policies still persist, as Roma ethnics suffer not only from the attitude of other ethnic groups but also from the attitude of public servants or even public administration. On the other hand, Roma people in Romania had to confront a deep discriminatory attitude of the majority of the population, mostly reflected in the early '90s period.

This report shows the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation team concerning the Carpathian Foundation's RomaNet Program during 2002-2005.

The evaluation was conducted in February – April 2006, in all four countries where the RomaNet Program was developed (Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine), and is based on information/data collected using the following methods:

- a) the study of existing documentation related to the Carpathian Foundation's RomaNet Program (grantees' technical and financial reports, promotional materials, as well as other materials produced either during or after the grant implementation – in connection with the program and its associated projects);

- b) the analysis of regional/national reports and other materials related specifically to the RomaNet grants or the Roma communities in the above-mentioned countries, produced by other organizations or individuals;
- c) individual interviews with representatives of RomaNet grantees, as well as with Carpathian Foundation staff from the country offices in Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine;
- d) quantitative data collection questionnaires, filled in by the grantees;
- e) personal observation and opinions from the evaluation team, acting as observers.

The key conclusion of this evaluation report is that the Carpathian Foundation's RomaNet Program was a significant and rich experience that achieved remarkable results.

Therefore, there is no doubt that the Carpathian Foundation's RomaNet Program has, in general, met its overall objective of encouraging and motivating trans-frontier / cross-border cooperation between Roma organizations that are addressing common issues related to Roma in the Carpathian Euroregion.

Due to the fact that the methodology which was applied to the Carpathian Foundation grants has been quite simple (due to the Carpathian Foundation's policy), lots of NGOs – at least at the beginning of their activity – were able to access funds and that can be mentioned as one of the most important achievements of the RomaNet Program. The results of the projects, achieved as a part of the RomaNet Program, are in most cases impressive.

Moreover, almost all the grantees highly appreciated the valuable flexibility and supportiveness showed to them during their projects' development.

On the other hand, the high accessibility of the Carpathian Foundation's grant program created the possibility for projects with not very efficient or logical plans to have access to funds. For instance, projects combining activities that usually do not have anything to do with each other were supported within the program.

The Carpathian Foundation's strategy towards Roma NGOs and their programs, in the framework of the RomaNet Program has been fully understandable. The CF grantees repeatedly mentioned their appreciation for the support they benefited from CF during the recent years.

Concluding, we value the approach of the Carpathian Foundation, yet not with disregard to findings, conclusions and recommendations presented in the current report.



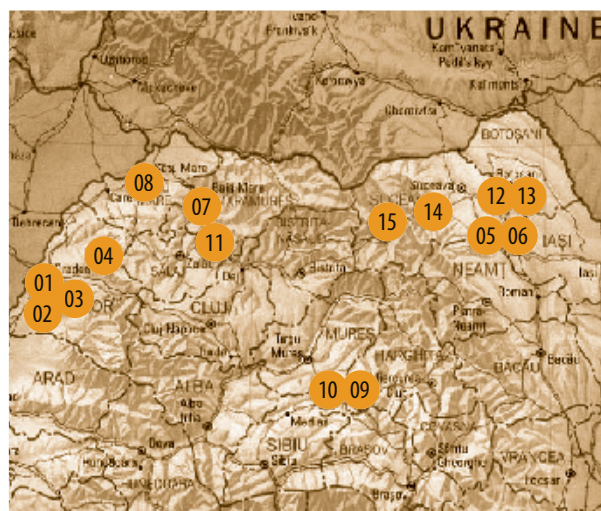
The RomaNet Projects

RomaNet projects in Hungary



1. **The Ózd Blue Gull Music Association**
"The Ózd Blue Gull Music and Dance Festival"
2. **Ózd Roma Association / Roma Minority Self-Government**
"International Roma Cultural and Sport festival in Ózd"
3. **Ózd Roma Association / Roma Minority Self-Government**
"Link 2"
4. **The Ózd Foundation for the Tábla School**
"Heart, Soul, and Language – Know No Boundaries"
5. **Amaro Trajo Cultural Foundation of Roma**
"Wandering School of Glinda" (project 1)
6. **Amaro Trajo Cultural Foundation of Roma**
"Wandering School of Glinda" (project 2)
7. **EU-Roma National Association**
"Together for strengthening Local Democracy"
8. **Professional Association of the Roma Leaders – Bagamér Member Organization**
"Together Against Poverty – RomaNet Program"
9. **The Carpathia 2000 Cultural Association**
"Training and educating Romanies in the 3rd Millenium"
10. **Romany Minority LSG**
"The Reading Camp"
11. **Erdőkövesd Roma Minority Self-Government**
"1st Northern Heves – Gemer Days"
12. **The Sátoraljaújhely Romany Preservation of Tradition Association**
"The VIII International Romany Dance Festival"
13. **Organization for the Protection of Interest of the Unemployed and the Underprivileged in Ózd and its Neighbouring Areas**
"Sharing the Methods of Skills and Capacity Development Applied in Practice by the 'Pedellus' and the 'Mentor' for the Education of the Roma Children"
14. **Ózd Career Orientational Foundation**
"Art Without Borders"
15. **Cultural Association of Roma Youth**
"Roma Community House"
16. **"Compass" Economic Development Club**
"Good Solutions Training Program", "Without Borders International Art Camp"

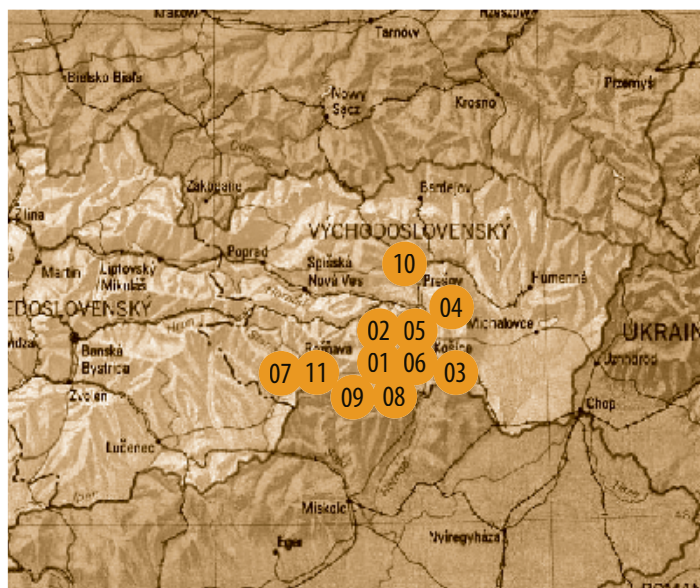
RomaNet projects in Romania



1. **Ruhama Foundation**
"A New Vision – A Better Life"
2. **Social Community Administration**
"Romanian Hungarian Cross-Border Cooperation of Roma Leaders"
3. **Social Community Administration**
"Resource Center for Roma Communities"
4. **Sălard School and Town Hall**
"Roma People Socialization in the Rural Education Process"
5. **Lingurarii Association**
"In A Better World"
6. **Lingurarii Association**
"Roma in the 3rd Millenium"
7. **Friends of Museum Association**
"Active Methods in Social Integration of Roma in the Carpathian Euroregion"
8. **LADO Satu Mare**
"Leader for Roma Community"
9. **"G" Association**
"A Behavior Model Towards Multicultural Values Promotion"
10. **Artera Foundation**
"Roma Crowd"
11. **Cehu Silvaniei Town Hall**
"Clothes Maker Job Training for Young Roma in Motiș Village"
12. **ADC Inter Active Borcoi Cornel Ioan**
"Community Development Caravane"
13. **Association for Promoting Community Safety**
"Counseling Center for Citizens"
14. **Gura Humorului Town Hall**
"Roma Information And Counseling Center"
15. **Micu Mărgăritar Foundation**
"Together For A Better World"



RomaNet projects in Slovakia



1. **ETP Slovakia**
"Support and Development of Economic Activities of Roma"
2. **LUCIA Romani Women's Association**
"Increase of Qualification and Improvement of Work of Members in the Association"
3. **Village Buzica LSG**
"Buzica - Krasznokvajda – Cross-border Cooperation for Solving Problems of Roma Minority"
4. **Civic Association Future of Young People**
"Job Opportunities for Roma"
5. **Civic Association TRIVAL**
"Rodas peskero drom – We're Looking for Our Way"
6. **Amare Roma – Our Roma**
"We can do it!"
7. **Union of Roma Youth and Children in Slovakia**
"About Us and With Us"
8. **Projekt Schola**
"Desintegration and Advocacy of Roma in Education"
9. **Civic Association Roma Respect**
"Golden Pearl"
10. **Children of the Sun – Čhave Kamoro**
"Children of the Sun"
11. **Cultural - Educational Organization Roma - Gemer**
"Carpathian Roma Company"

RomaNet projects in Ukraine



1. **Roma NGO "Rom Som"**
"Holding of first International youth festival-conference of Roma art Rom Som"
2. **Transcarpathian Regional Gypsy Association Romani Zor**
"Roma power"
3. **Transcarpathian Regional Gypsy Association Romani Zor**
"Development of Watchmakers Skills as a Traditional Roma Activity for the Economic Development of Roma Communities in the Carpathian Euroregion"
4. **Mukachevo City Cultural-Educational Roma**
"Sunday School and Stadium for Roma Children of Mukachevo District"
5. **Uzhgorod district civic organization of Transcarpathian Roma Cultural-Educational Society "Romani Yag"**
"Revival of the First in Transcarpathia Roma Folk Band Rumelay"
6. **Transcarpathian Roma Cultural-Educational Society "Romani Yag"**
"Holding of Roundtable for Journalist of Roma Mass Media of Ukraine, Slovakia and Hungary"
7. **Civic organization "Bakhtalo Drom"**
"Promotion of Social-Economic Development of Roma Communities of the Carpathian Euroregion"
8. **Civic organization "Bakhtalo Drom"**
"Professional training for young Roma"
9. **Congress of Roma of Transcarpathia "Pralipe"**
"Development of Roma Community Initiative, Establishment of Roma Self-Governments in Roma Settlements"
10. **Vynogradiv District Roma Cultural-Educational Society "Romano Drom"**
"Establishment of a Medical Consultative Center for Roma"
11. **Transcarpathian regional youth society of orphans "Dolya"**
"Roma Farmstead on the Tourist Route"
12. **Transcarpathian regional Youth Society of Roma "Romani Bakht"**
Roma Sunday School in Village Syurte, Uzhgorod district"



The RomaNet Program

Hungary

Overview of the findings

In Hungary, as well as in Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine, data regarding the Roma population vary according to different sources. The 1990 census refers to 143,000 persons, whilst other estimations vary from 250,000 to 800,000 Roma – authoritative estimates situate their number between 400,000 and 600,000 people.

Hungary's rapid integration within the European Union, as well as the progress towards a functional market economy, led to a crisis in industrial sectors such as the mining and construction. These were sectors, which offered employment to most of the Roma (largely employed as unskilled / unqualified workers).

Roma people in Hungary, as the ones in neighboring countries – although to a lesser degree – still confront themselves with serious problems, mainly in four major fields:

- ⊙ Education – segregation and discrimination in schools, numerous drop-outs, false diagnosed children as being mentally impaired;
- ⊙ Employment – low qualification, employers with illegal employment practices, lack of education reducing their chances for employment, society prejudices fueling the wide-spread stereotypes on Roma ("criminal Roma", "work-shy");
- ⊙ Housing – discrimination in accessing housing, poverty and extreme poverty (living at settlements and slum-type housing);
- ⊙ Health – due to lack of education, poverty & extreme poverty, discrimination; mention has to be made about life expectancy, which is the lowest compared to any other ethnic group.

The fall of communism had both positive and negative effects on Hungary's Roma population. On the positive side, Roma – like the rest of the Hungarian population – can now enjoy new political and economic freedoms. On the other hand, due to the new freedoms, prejudice against Roma is expressed more openly. This takes the form of graffiti on walls, racist literature and attacks by hate groups, including skinheads, and racist statements by political figures. The government's efforts to address the situation are resented by other Hungarians due to their cost at a time when unemployment is high and government social programs are being cut back. In the economic sector, Roma suffer the highest rates of unemployment – they are generally the first to be fired and the last to be hired.

Similar to situation elsewhere in the region, the group suffers from various historical disadvantages, official discrimination, and popular prejudice¹. The Roma continue to be among the poorest in the



Volunteer from the project "Wandering School of Glinda" in Mátészalka, working with children in an elementary school in Hájduhadház, Hungary

country. Their birth rates are much higher and their average expected life span is significantly lower than the national average. The current unemployment rate for the Roma is 60-70% percent and there are reports of discrimination in both hiring and firing. There is also open discrimination in education. Many villages populated by the Roma have no schools, health care or municipal services. The problem of poverty among the Roma is continuously growing at a time when the government is cutting back on programs for the poor. Their access at many private facilities, especially bars, is frequently restricted and there is discrimination in housing.

Despite better anti-discrimination laws, the Roma have considerable difficulty in enforcing their rights. Roma leaders complain of harassment of the Roma by police up to and including severe beatings. In the light of these developments, physical protection from racially motivated attacks still remains at the top of the group's demands. Other demands include greater economic opportunities, better education, access to higher status occupations, improved living standards. Improved education and cultural opportunities for Roma are also frequently voiced as important demands.

Hungarian Roma are represented by a number of conventional political parties and organizations, including the Roma Social Coalition (an organization, consisting of 19 Roma organizations), the Independent Interest Association of Gypsies in Hungary etc. In addition, since 1993, Hungary has been experimenting a very innovative minority self-government system. The 1993 "Rights of National Minorities Act" guarantees the 13 historic minorities living in Hungary the right to establish local and national self-governments. Under the law, these minorities could establish elected bodies that would represent their interests and serve as partners for the government at the local and national levels. The primary role and authority of these self-governments are in the fields of education and culture. Despite good intentions, there are numerous problems of or-





ganizational and financial nature concerning the self-government system. Some Roma politicians complain that the present system does not reflect the diversity of Roma society as the current election rules make it possible for one organization to form a politically homogeneous national self-government, excluding smaller yet influential organizations. In fact, some argue that the system has actually sharpened differences between broad-based Roma organizations and those organizations led by charismatic leaders but enjoying the support of only a small layer of intellectuals. Although in Hungary there are about 200-300 Roma civil organizations, their activity is hindered by strong financial difficulties. Various donors carried on programs to solve Roma issues. Among them: International and private organizations (United Nation Development Program, World Bank, European Commission, Soros Foundation, Autonomia Foundation, Network for Democracy – DemNet), Government funding (ministries, Public Foundation for Modernizing Public Education, National Foundation for Employment – OFA, National Institution Health Prevention – NEVI, NEKH, National Public foundations etc.).

Hungary is the most active participant and the host of the Decade of Roma, declared by George Soros and his network of “Open Society” organizations in Eastern Europe in 2003, in co-operation with the World Bank (whose main aim is to ameliorate the situation of the Roma through active works in four main directions – la-

bor occupancy, living environment, healthcare and education). Significant support for the improvement of the situation of the Roma population in Hungary, their education and access to the labor market was given by the EU throughout the PHARE Program. For instance, during 2003, funds were attracted from the Roma Social Integration PHARE program – ITS budget was of EUR 3,350,000. Domestic partner support reached EUR 850,000. When compared to the above-mentioned donor procedures, RomaNet beneficiaries generally considered the Carpathian Foundation's financial and bureaucratic procedures to be user-friendly and flexible.

During our research and field visits, some of the main issues concerning the future of Roma-related financial and technical assistance were clearly pointed out. The main areas of concern were assessed as follows:

- ⊙ Predictability and sustainability (in general, many past projects for Roma have failed because of a lack of sustained financing, not only from institutional donors);
- ⊙ Scale (overall previous and present projects tend to be rather small, and the donors seem to stick to such an approach);
- ⊙ Professional approach – with particular emphasis on evaluation (previous projects have not been appraised in advance or evaluated afterwards according to strict standards of the donor organizations);
- ⊙ Policy relevance (previous projects have been ad-hoc and not linked to policy frameworks or systemic reforms underway in Hungary);
- ⊙ International nature (experience can be transferred from one country to another, appropriately modified, and there could also be multi-country operations);
- ⊙ Advocacy, explicit and implicit (effective operations suitable to an appropriate policy environment).

Main observations and recommendations for CF projects in Hungary

In Hungary, all the Carpathian Foundation's grantees were visited and interviewed either within the evaluation process or before.

The Carpathian Foundation has invested a lot in the Hungarian culture area, through the grants provided within the RomaNet Program. It is obvious that culture – including revitalizing and preserving Roma traditions among young Roma people, is one of the areas where the need for financial support is strong. The cultural events organized due to such financial support could be of very high impact, especially when the media covered well those events, and many people participated or at least heard about them. However, the efficiency of supporting a yearly event only once, by providing an amount of funds representing a small percent of the total budget of that event is disputable. Such grants contributed to the hosting of that specific event but not to either its improvement from one year to another, the organizational or framework development, or, even better, to increasing the sustainability of the host organization.



It was the case of the “*The Sátoraljaújhely Romany Preservation of Tradition Association*” which organized every year the *International Romany Dance Festival* (otherwise a very spectacular and well-appreciated event), and received a grant for covering some of the costs of its 2002 edition. The *Ózd Blue Gull Music and Dance Festival* seems to be a similar example, although in that case the Carpathian Foundation’s grant represented much more for the budget of that festival (compared to the case of the above-mentioned *International Romany Dance Festival*).

One of the main conclusions – based on the data and information resulted from the interviews and questionnaires – is that most of the grantees followed the project planning submitted in the proposals, not only in terms of developed activities but also in terms of budgetary constraints – this aspect has to be mentioned as a positive one. The Hungarian CF grantees highly appreciated the flexibility and supportiveness showed by the Carpathian Foundation staff both in the phase of proposal assessing and during contract development, as well the support that the Foundation showed them beyond the contract.

Recommendations

Taking into account the opportunities open to organizations acting in the field of improving the situation of Roma communities, which arouse since Hungary is a member of the European Union, as well as the whole framework of the grant programs available for the Roma communities, the following recommendations should be taken into consideration (in conjunction with the arising assistance strategic plans developed by governmental agencies and other institutional bodies):

- ⊙ The program’s orientation to the young and less experienced organizations (especially the ones acting in poor communities) should be preserved by keeping the flexibility of the application methodology. On the other hand, if the Carpathian Foundation still aims to the objective of improving the sustainability of those organizations, the financial support provided to them should be more oriented to institutional development projects consisting of:
 - a. training activities aiming to:
 - improve the leadership and organizational management of the (potential) grantees;
 - improve the members’/employees’ skills in terms of strategic / project planning, writing proposals, public relations & communications, overall NGO management;
 - citizen/ community participation, development of public-private partnerships and networking.
 - b. technical assistance on:
 - strategic / project planning;
 - public relations;
 - improving relationship / partnership potential with local public authorities and public institutions;
 - fundraising at local and institutional levels.



Roma dance festival in Ózd, Hungary

- c. improving the logistics (e.g. very few of the grantees have offices).
- ⊙ Although the Carpathian Foundation might keep supporting some of the organizations on a longer term, it could ask for match funds raised by those grantees from other sources for every USD received from CF; in this way, CF could contribute once more to the self-sustainability of those organizations. The Hungarian NGOs acting in Roma field (including non-Roma NGOs) are most likely to manage this process much easier than similar organizations from the other three countries – taking into account the legal instruments they can use but also the economic situation of the country and their stage of development.
- ⊙ The Carpathian Foundation should consider partnerships in cases when similar events are proposed in the same location (and, possibly, in the same time) e.g. three organizations in Ózd which developed the same project in different shapes and configurations – a Roma tradition festival. Organizing similar events by different organizations diminishes the impact whilst the necessary resources increase dramatically. In the same time, converging efforts into one strong partnership would bring easier public support and local government involvement.



The RomaNet Program

Romania

Overview of the findings

The information concerning the number of Roma in Romania is confusing. While some refers to a population of 409,723 (1992 census), other data presents a number of 1 million or 2.5 million persons.

The Roma population in Romania faces numerous problems. Among them, poverty, lack of access to education, difficult access to public health care, high unemployment rate, lack of housing, discrimination etc. The changes that took place in Romania after the fall of communism created new opportunities for its citizens including the Roma population but it also generated a general decrease in the standard of living. Statistics show that the Roma paid the highest cost: while 24.4% of Romanians are affected by poverty and 9.3% by extreme poverty, 75.1% of Roma are affected by poverty and 52.2% by extreme poverty).

Roma NGOs were established in Romania since 1990 for the improvement of living conditions in Roma communities but also for obtaining different rights by political actions. Frustration due to poor results obtained through the political actions lead to an increasing number of NGOs founded by Roma persons. Numerous Roma organizations were created, but many of them present a tendency to compete to one another instead of cooperating. Many ambitious projects started having objectives to set up a network of Roma NGOs but poor or no result was achieved.

The Roma issue was addressed by many donors starting from 1990. Among them, the following should be mentioned: the European Union, Open Society Foundation Romania and Soros Open Network, United Nations Development Program, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, International Organization for Migrations (due to the lack of identity papers – a serious issue in Romania – Roma may be considered migrants de facto), Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Romanian Government (the contribution to the improvement of the Roma situation came up as a mandatory matching fund to EU funding), the Carpathian Foundation, Permanent Mission of the World Bank in Romania etc.

Generally, the donors' approach towards Roma issues was perceived initially in the context of programs for civil society organizations, later programs focusing on Roma or disadvantaged (Roma being the most disadvantaged population).

Comparison among procedures applied by various donors in the region reveals that the key element that makes the difference among procedures is the source of funds. When funds originate from public budgets, an extremely bureaucratic system results in highly complicated and rigid procedures – the EU funds standing above all. Private funding was much more flexible. The Carpathian Foundation's RomaNet Program presented the simplest procedure of all. While this was the most positive aspect observed during the evaluation of the program, making grants accessible to small organizations (that rarely if ever accessed other funds), the size

of grants lead to financing a large number of organizations, difficult to be monitored (in terms of time-consuming and cost-effectiveness).

Various information sources about the RomaNet Program were available to potential applicants: the internet (CF's site and other sites), the press (articles about activities supported by the Carpathian Foundation), publication in specific magazines, from other grantees, direct information offered by CF staff etc. Information tours (info-sessions) would have been desirable, though, in order to also assess potential grantee response and solve on-the-spot application issues.

Most projects visited in Romania addressed issues relevant for the RomaNet Program: organizing study tours for disseminating Roma initiatives and good practices in the Carpathian Euroregion countries, allowing other organizations to learn and adapt the initiatives in their countries (i.e. the project proposed by the Gymnasia School in Sălărd), joint cross-border events and programs, promotion of economic development (i.e. the "Romanian-Hungarian Cross Border Cooperation of Roma Leaders" project developed by the Social Community Administration – ASCO in Oradea).

The evaluation team managed to contact and visit all the Carpathian Foundation's grantees in Romania except for one – "G" Association from Odorheiu Secuiesc.

The first important conclusion that rose from the evaluation was that while many of the projects were based on logical and articulated plans (those developed by LADO, Ruhama Foundation), there were some other consisting of only one activity (such as a visit to a cultural / historical site – the project developed by the Friends of the Museum Association).

The projects were generally implemented according to the plan, efficiently within the budget boundaries, additional support being attracted when necessary.

The impact of the projects on the community was generally according to the size of grants and to the problem addressed. Those projects targeting a well-identified problem seemed to be more motivated in solving it (e.g. Roma People Socialization in the Rural Education Process, Gymnasia School, Sălărd). There were also opportunistic projects, addressing a problem based more on a general impression than on real needs of the community (Romanian-Hungarian Cross Border Cooperation of Roma Leaders – ASCO, study tours – Gymnasia School, Sălărd) or even worse, confirming needs which are not real (Resource Center for Roma Communities – ASCO).

On different occasions, the projects affected the cross-border cooperation in a larger community. It is the case of Gymnasia School in Sălărd, where although the relationship between partners broke, mayoralties continued.

The frailest link of the projects – that reflects on a larger scale on the program itself – is their sustainability for various reasons.

The flexibility of the program led to financing small organizations with poor experience in project implementation. While this had a positive aspect (giving the opportunity to small and/ or inexperienced organizations), it has also weaknesses (incapacity of these organizations to design a sustainable project, difficulties encountered in attracting funds for continuing the actions, difficulties in establishing partnerships and networking etc.).



Main observations and recommendations for CF projects in Romania

Observations

The first important conclusion that rose from the evaluation study was that, while many of the projects were based on logical and articulated plans (i.e. those developed by the Romanian League for Human Rights – LADO, Ruhama Foundation, the Sălard Gymnasium), there were some others consisting of only one activity (such as a visit to a cultural/historical site – the project of the “Friends of the Museum” Association).

There were also projects (as one of the two projects developed by “Lingurarii” Association in Oneaga, Botoșani) that included very useful services provided to some of the Roma community members but combined in an inefficient way. To continue our example, the “Roma in the third Millennium” project developed by “Lingurarii Association” aimed at improving the work capacity of the organization (by teaching its members to use a personal computer) and maintaining the old Roma traditions. In fact, we can speak about two separate projects (although with one, unique “joint” budget), since the two goals were so far away from each other.

Among the projects funded in Romania, one would have had the chance to stand before all others as a “model”/best practices project, but unfortunately, it had less relevance to the RomaNet grant scheme and was totally disrupted from its context. The “Resource Center for Roma Communities”, implemented by the Social Community Administration (ASCO) / City Hall of Oradea did not propose any relevant activity in the context of RomaNet Program and, moreover, was not implemented according to the plan. It proposed no sustainable development and did not bring any benefit for the target communities.

The sustainability issue was one of the most serious weaknesses of the projects developed in Romania within the RomaNet Program, since very few of them continued after the end of the Carpathian Foundation grant. While there are some grantees who continued their relevant activity after finishing the RomaNet Projects (LADO, Gymnasium in Sălard), but not in the field of those projects, there are some others who practically stopped their activity when the CF grant ended. They were not able (or did not have the interest) to raise funds or additional assets from various other sources (“Lingurarii” Association, for instance, showed high commitment for continuing to provide services to their beneficiaries, but they need still need full training and technical assistance for becoming able to identify and access other sources of funds). Another situation is even worse: the projects developed by ASCO – according to the interviewed persons – were not even planned to continue, from the very beginning.

However, based on the data and information from the interviews, from the questionnaires filled in by the grantees, as well as from direct observation, the conclusion would be that most of the grantees followed the project plans included in the proposals submitted to CF



not only in terms of developed activities, but also in terms of budget – this being a very positive aspect.

Last but not least, all Romanian grantees highly appreciated the flexibility showed by the Carpathian Foundation both in the proposal assessment phase and during the contract. The support of the Foundation seemed to go beyond the financial aspects of their contractual relationship.

As mentioned above, the small grants provided by CF through the RomaNet Program were an excellent opportunity for many small NGOs – acting in the field of improving the situation of Roma communities – to gain precious experience in planning and developing projects, in improving their visibility among potential beneficiaries and target groups, to start providing services to those beneficiaries or even start their activity (for some of them).

One must take into account that many of the grantees are at the beginning of their activities and/or very little experienced, and that they could hardly approach other grant programs, developed by other donors. Among the panel of grantees, there were also some experienced organizations (“Ruhama” Foundation and LADO) which used the RomaNet Program opportunity in order to match their project funds and enlarge their activity.

Nevertheless, it has to be taken into account that one of the most important objectives, which the Carpathian Foundation aimed to achieve through the RomaNet Program, was to increase the sustainability of the grantees. In terms of this aspect, it has to be mentioned that the small budget of the projects, combined with their conceptual and planning aspects have hardly contributed to the improvement of those organizations’ sustainability. In most cases, almost all funds were spent directly on organizing activities or providing services in the benefit of the organizations’ beneficiaries whilst very little amounts were invested in the development of the organizations themselves.



Recommendations

Taking into account the whole framework of the grant programs available for Roma communities in Romania, as well as the profile of the Carpathian Foundation as a donor / grant programs manager, the following specific recommendations should be followed in the case of Romania:

- ⊙ The program should continue to be oriented to the young and less experienced organizations (especially the ones acting in poor communities). On the other hand, the financial support provided to those organizations should be more oriented to institutional development projects consisting of:

a) training activities aiming at:

- improving the leadership and management of the potential grantees;
- improving the members' / employees' skills in terms of strategic planning, project planning, writing proposals, public relations & communications (in general), as well as in the field they operate.

b) technical assistance on:

- strategic and project planning;
- public relations and marketing;
- improving relationships with local public authorities and public institutions;

- working in partnership with local public authorities and other stakeholders;
- raising funds at the local level.

c) improving logistics.

- ⊙ In terms of the grants dedicated to developing projects, the applicants should be asked (and assisted in order) to establish clear goals, understandable and measurable objectives, as well as very clear and detailed activity plans, in close correlation with the stated objectives.
- ⊙ The Carpathian Foundation should assess the possibility of providing larger amounts as grants – especially to those more experienced organizations (i.e. LADO and Ruhama Foundation), taking into account that projects having budgets between USD 2,000 - 3,000 are not very likely to have an impact within the community / beneficiary groups. Clear evidence for the sustainability of those projects should be also asked from the applicants;
- ⊙ Although the Carpathian Foundation could constantly keep supporting some of the organizations on a longer term, it should also do its best to determine those organizations not to become dependent on CF's funds. One of the solutions which could be taken into consideration is to ask for match funds raised by the grantees from other sources.



The RomaNet Program

Slovakia

Overview of the findings

Although the situation of certain segments of the Roma population in Slovakia is different, generally the Roma proclaim to be the most disadvantaged and sometimes most discriminated part of the population. Estimations show about 350,000 - 400,000 Roma living in Slovakia (the official census is mentioning app. 80,000 people who determined themselves as Roma) – and approximately three quarters of these people live in an integrated way in cities and villages, whilst one quarter live in isolated settlements with poor housing and infrastructure. In these isolated settlements, the majority of Roma families face systemic barriers to their development. These barriers include unemployment and severe poverty, lack of marketable skills, economic exploitation, dependency on state assistance, segregation in education and – related – low levels of education, sharp deterioration in health and severe undernourishment of the children because of lack of access to medical services, exclusion from political / public participation, police harassment, and social & political isolation from the rest of society. Living conditions in Roma neighborhoods are often poor, with housing shortages and badly maintained infrastructure. Exacerbating these daily problems is the general lack of political cohesion among Roma groups, a situation that has often been exploited.

Only in recent years, the concentrated interest and criticism from EU institutions forced the Slovak government to start more efficient social, health and education policy to help Roma integration. While there has been significant foreign and domestic assistance aimed at Roma integration, further progress, deeper impact and increased inclusion of Roma in the design of local and national policies on integration is still needed. The major deficiencies relate to the lack of skills and structures in order to ensure that integration initiatives succeed beyond the short-term. The institutionalized ways of addressing the underlying ethnic tensions and stereotypes that destabilize communities and prevent cooperation toward shared goals are also problematic.

In Slovakia, there are approximately 250 registered Roma NGOs, approximately 40 of them with ongoing leadership and executing regular – more or less systematic – activities. The main issue is the inability to collaborate among organizations and create sustainable networks and partnerships within the sector but also cross-sector. In the future, the ability of diverse Roma and non-Roma groups and organizations to work in close co-operation is critical to the functioning of communities and success of the planned programs.

Besides the Carpathian Foundation's RomaNet Program, many donors with focus on Roma programs are present in the country

(like the Open Society Foundation, for more than 10 years lasting efforts, ETP and Ekopolis – part of Your Land programs, funded by USAID, and Trust for Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe, Pontis Foundation etc.). At the same time, increasing support is coming from public institutions and government agencies (such as the Slovak Government, EU Commission in Slovakia through the PHARE Program, the Social Development Fund, the World Bank, UNDP etc.). Only in the last years, a more systematic effort was directed in order to monitor the efficiency of these investments. All studied reports clearly show that in situations where funding was not conditioned by cross-sector collaboration (agreements between NGOs or local Roma communities and the local governments), the outputs of these efforts have not been sustained and the impact (the outcome) was minimal.

In broad media, Roma issues are roughly discussed and there is an increasing effort to provide information also about the projects of Roma organizations. This is possible through regular weekly broadcasting in Slovak public TV and local radio broadcasting in Prešov, throughout NGO information channels like the Roma Press Agency, ChangeNet portal, throughout Roma newspapers – such as Romano Nevo Lil and others.

Equal rights policies are declared and do exist on local and national levels, but the implementation of such policies is insufficient and incomplete. In Slovakia, the situation looks more optimistic at the lower levels of government. The Roma representatives feel that the local government, particularly on questions of general daily survival, better represents them. However, additional resources for innovative solutions are hard to obtain from national governments. Creating sustainable participatory mechanisms such as conciliation commissions, roundtables and co-operative planning initiatives, have implemented existing but dormant policies – similar to the Hungarian model of the Roma Minority Self-Governments or the Czech model of Roma Advisory positions.

Factors that were most frequently mentioned by the interviewed (crucial to be solved in order to improve the situation of the Roma in Slovakia):

- ⊙ There is limited possibility in continuing with good and well tested pilot projects, the NGOs are starting new projects again and again, instead of continuing and multiplying the good ones;
- ⊙ Increasing poverty because of the new social policy from the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs leads to sharpening old problems – especially for the Roma population living in isolated settlements;
- ⊙ Large support programs from the EU (structural and humanitarian funds) are inaccessible for the majority of regular Roma NGOs – the information from Bratislava is late and incomplete, there are no



supporting programs to mediate these programs for skilled Roma NGOs. Whilst having private donors in the country in the past (Open Society Foundation, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, but also few smaller governmental programs from international institutions like the ones developed by the US Embassy, NPOA programs, the Dutch Matra Program etc.) the situation seemed easier for small and medium-sized NGOs;

- ⊙ We are witnessing an increased level of Roma segregation (school classes in ethnically mixed schools and the whole primary schools start to be either Roma or non-Roma), Roma children are more and more isolated. Because of majority interests in many cities, the Roma population is effectively pushed away from the centers of the cities and are offered cheap but low quality housing in isolated, remote areas. That will lead to even bigger isolation and more difficult problems in the near future;
- ⊙ Local government representatives talk a lot about the importance of helping Roma, but not much is done in reality in the vast majority of cities and villages of the Carpathian region.

Main observations and recommendations for CF projects in Slovakia

Consequences of Slovakia's accession to EU for the Roma NGOs and their projects

The policy towards minorities, anti-discrimination regulations, and the constant focus on the socially excluded are becoming priorities of the official Slovakian agenda. These areas are carefully monitored, and government on all levels declares their willingness to advance some steps to work in this area. The analysis of the current reality shows that Roma NGOs quite frequently do not have much information about these efforts and partly are not prepared to execute the large and very complicated administrative projects, funded e.g. by the European Social Fund (ESF). The future efficiency of Roma NGOs is critically dependent on their ability to participate in large programs funded by Slovak government agencies (as the Social Development Fund), and other EU-funded long-term programs. The scope of the Carpathian Foundation's RomaNet Program cannot satisfy the ultimate infrastructural needs, and other requirements for addressing such large-scale changes.

Still, the RomaNet Program may play a crucial mediation or catalyst role in order to help Roma NGOs find an adequate approach in these circumstances.

Recommendations:

- ⊙ Part of the Carpathian Foundation's support might be arranged in such a way, where other donors match CF support – as a strong condition to make the project sustainable. (e.g. the NGO would be eligible to receive support from CF if they provide 20-40% matching for the same project from local governments, public agency, or other private donor e.g. Ekopolis, Community Foundation, Trust for Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe etc. Establishing expectations to fulfill this condition in Slovakia was not fully realistic 4-5 years ago, but nowadays it became practical.
- ⊙ Slovak Roma NGOs are in most cases too small and too inexperienced in bureaucratic procedures needed to manage large ESF funded projects. At the same time, they have an advantage – for these projects, large international collaboration of the NGOs from the EU member states and non-member countries is a pre-condition. Probably most of the Carpathian Foundation's former grantees do not have the required administrative capacity to lead such projects. Nevertheless, a network (consortium) of CF grantees with small technical help mediated by CF would have this capacity. The Carpathian Foundation may play a very important catalyst role in such cases (e.g. convene some roundtables for CF grantees to discuss these issues, and offer a consultant to help the NGOs from 3-4 countries to prepare such large joint projects). One of the more experienced Roma NGOs in Hungary or Slovakia may take a leading role in that process.
- ⊙ Skilled leaders and perspective NGOs have emerged in the past, partly due to the Carpathian Foundation's RomaNet Program. Therefore, more of such efforts are no longer needed in order to root the starting Roma NGOs. A more advanced phase in their funding should follow. The projects that enable Roma NGOs networking, creating partnerships, and sharing knowledge should have much stronger priority. The specific programs focusing on education and re-qualification, and developing job opportunities are needed very much. Nevertheless, CF should insist that only the projects that already have the sharing/networking/information-exchange component implemented will be supported.
- ⊙ Some Slovakian Roma NGOs (similarly like Hungarian Roma NGOs) have good experience in professional work with media and developing partnerships with the local government. These lessons should be shared – especially with their Ukrainian Roma NGO peers. Projects with "knowledge exporting" character in media and local government collaboration should expect support.
- ⊙ Looking for good projects and reliable Roma NGOs is still very important in Slovakia. The Roma NGOs need to be trained in sustainability issues. Co-operation of the Carpathian Foundation with good Roma NGOs is clearly giving them credibility in the community. It can also help them to find future sources and possible partners for co-operation.
- ⊙ Small grants are helping especially small NGOs in rural areas to implement some of their good ideas in the com-



munity. However, the Carpathian Foundation could also be the initiator of the replication of good projects in other communities.

- ⊙ The Carpathian Foundation brings very important cross-border exchange of experience. This is done in Slovakia only by CF. Interconnecting the programs and linking cross-border co-operation programs would bring many new ideas for Slovak Roma NGOs. The Hungarian experience is especially replicable and demanded in Southern Slovakia.
- ⊙ The Carpathian Foundation is probably the one and only donor where grant applications can still be handwritten. This supports the ground level ideas and activists.
- ⊙ A very good idea would be to leave topics and areas of support open so that the applicants would not write projects in order to come to desk research conclusions but rather to realize the ideas of ground level activists.

Need for co-operative advocacy efforts of Roma NGOs in collaboration with non-Roma NGOs

Some of the past advocacy programs in Slovakia were not as efficient as expected (e.g. the Open Society Institute's initiatives or NDI work with Roma political leaders). These programs were connected too much with political factors, tried to use only confrontational approaches, and were isolated from other non-Roma NGO efforts.

The influence and prestige of the Carpathian Foundation's RomaNet Program may increase if Roma NGOs could try to influence national public policies and regulations in a more efficient way. At the national level, co-operative mechanisms might be incorporated into advocacy strategies. Much more complex effort should be given to promote the constructive representation of Roma communities in the media and to increase awareness of the broader public about the situation of the Roma and the ongoing efforts to improve their condition. Grant programs are not so effective if they are not accompanied by co-operative planning and broader participation of Roma NGOs in their planning phases. Successful projects are not so influential if they are not adapted for replication in other communities. Replication should be based on the existing local and regional/national resources in order to support those models of good practice.

The Carpathian Foundation did a very good job in informing national communities about what is happening in the neighboring counties of the Carpathian region. In Slovakia, this was considered as one of the most important contributions of this program. CF's efforts should continue also in the area of sharing experience in models of co-operative advocacy efforts of Roma NGOs and models of collaboration with the non-Roma NGOs in other countries.

Recommendations:

- ⊙ CF might think about the possibility to organize cross-country co-operative advocacy trainings: major national Roma advocacy groups may share experience of how they pursued their advocacy campaigns in co-operation with other actors, in a co-operative (non-confrontational) manner;
- ⊙ CF might stimulate – using the Slovak, Romanian and Hungarian experience – the organization of National Roundtables for priority issues (housing, discrimination, etc). Roundtable participants should include high-rank regional and national government officials, and both Roma and non-Roma local leaders. These roundtables might also serve as a base venue for the regular evaluation of CF's experience and lessons learned from the RomaNet Program;
- ⊙ Preparation of joint strategies with local community foundations and NGOs in East Slovakia could help to find good local programs and activists.



The RomaNet Program

Ukraine

Overview of the findings

Like other post-Soviet nations, Ukraine is also undergoing a politically unstable transition period. Adopting a market-based economy and a true pluralist political system is accompanied by severe social and economic depression. Dismantling of the previously stable system has caused an unprecedented increase in poverty, social differences, unemployment and crime rates. The consequences of the transition changes do not affect all parts of society equally and, as in its neighboring countries, the Roma had to face much stronger social exclusion than the other parts of society. Little has been done in order to smoothen the adjustment of Ukrainian Roma to these new, unfamiliar conditions. The situation in rural areas of the Ukrainian provinces differs a lot from that of larger cities. A small part of the Roma has adapted its lifestyle to these informal, new living rules, but their standards and philosophy lack accepting control and regulations. The vast majority of the Roma live in remote settlements, in rural communities, and have experienced enormous pressure, therefore they became the most vulnerable part of the Ukrainian society. In Ukraine, the system of distribution of social subsidies for the socially excluded seems to work very poorly. Subsequently, a large part of the Roma population does not receive these subsidies because of missing documents, ineffective (or absent) welfare system, irregular and frequently changing regulations.

The dividing lines between various groups of Roma living in Transcarpathian Ukraine (Hungarian Roma, Slovak Roma, Olah Roma etc.) and their isolation from the Roma minority movements and Roma self-organization (happening mostly in Central Ukraine) seem to be more visible than in the neighboring countries.

It is very hard to deliver assistance and work in such an environment where basic data about the general situation is missing. The information about the number of Roma living in Ukraine varies from 40,000 (mentioned by few official statistics) to estimations of some international NGOs of almost 400,000 (with approximately 14,000 Roma living in the Transcarpathian region). Similarly, when it comes to the number of registered Roma NGOs, there is no valid official source to refer to, therefore estimations vary from 22-24 NGOs to almost 80.

Besides the Carpathian Foundation's RomaNet Program, not many foreign and almost no domestic donors with focus on Roma issues are present in the country. Soros Foundation programs and the Dutch governmental and private support are probably the most influential – from the long-term perspective. Few relatively isolated German foundations are providing small support for projects; USAID, UNDP, World Bank focus mostly on large societal issues – such as poverty, AIDS prevention, forced prostitution, environmental issues. The International Organization for Migration pursued some useful projects connected

with humanitarian help distribution to the descendants of Holocaust victims. Support from public institutions and local government agencies is minimal, and the local businesses are barely interested in this area of work.

In the media, Roma are generally misrepresented – there is almost no visible discourse connected with Roma issues happening outside small circles of the interested Roma community. Undemanding debates and less complex discussions can be found in the only one regular Roma news provider, Romano Yag.

It certainly seems that for public bodies and politicians, the Roma become a target of interest only in pre-election periods.

Factors that were most frequently mentioned by the interviewed (crucial to be solved in order to improve the situation of the Roma in Ukraine):

- ⊙ Increasing unemployment and almost no possibility to get jobs for the youth and for women;
- ⊙ Increasing poverty – especially for the Roma population living in isolated settlements;
- ⊙ No possibilities for practical qualification training (apprentices) of Roma youth;
- ⊙ Violation of civic rights, especially from the police and judicial system (unjustified police detaining Roma without evidence, detainees humiliation, corrupt practices of the police);
- ⊙ Deteriorated health measures of Roma youth, mostly because of hygienic malpractice, malnutrition, missing health principles information (and, as a consequence, dramatic increase of tuberculosis, HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases) mainly in Roma settlements;
- ⊙ Increase in drug addiction, especially as concerns Roma youth;
- ⊙ Poor quality of medical services and bribe habits for access to health services (corruption and exclusion of Roma in accepting them as patients and as concerns patient care in the medical system);
- ⊙ Poor quality of education, mostly connected with missing infrastructure in educational institutions for Roma children;
- ⊙ Visa and customs barriers that isolate and almost block travel possibilities to neighboring countries for work or exchange of goods and information.

Surprisingly, there are also some other identified problems that seem to create trouble, but they were not so frequently mentioned²:

- ⊙ Limited access to information and contacts with the more developed neighboring countries and with minority regulations mediated by EU programs;
- ⊙ Too much politicized Roma representation (mixing the role of political parties and NGOs);
- ⊙ Communities operate in a traditional hierarchical way





- using rather the influence of strong leaders' contacts and relationships than transparency, sharing information and learning from each other;
- ⊙ Unbearable housing situation, no direct or indirect government support for families in order to improve their living conditions;
- ⊙ Weak and fragmented Roma NGOs, with almost no advocacy influence, because of missing collaboration, disintegration and missing critical skills (like coalition building, effective communication, leadership, group dialogue facilitation, negotiation, conflict management, and building networks).

Main observations and recommendations for CF projects in Ukraine

Sustainability of the NGOs and their projects³

The most serious issue in the case of RomaNet-supported Ukrainian NGOs is financial sustainability. For the vast majority of small NGOs, the Carpathian Foundation grant was the only source of support in that period, and the NGOs became fully driven by the CF grant in their financial management. For larger NGOs, which received support also from other sources, the funds were not used in a matching format and the organizations could not plan their future too much. These NGOs' idea of organizational development

was to move from one grant to another, without considering the "frozen" periods of no funding, when the organization stopped its functioning. Strategic thinking in such organizations is either missing or not planning more than 1 year of activities. We could easily receive the same mourning answers to our questions from different NGOs: "funding depends on donors..."; "we do not know what will happen after the elections..."; "please, tell the donors that they should..." etc.

In one case, the Carpathian Foundation decided to support an originally planned project in the branch organization, but the "mother" organization of the proposed grantee decided to manage the project by itself – CF supported them. In two other cases, the former leader of the project was replaced by a new one. Although these were disputable issues, affecting the organizations internally, we consider this a normally acceptable situation, in a not very much established Roma NGOs network.

With the exception of two NGOs, none of the others received substantial funding from local governments; nevertheless, this support was depending on previous close relationships with specific deputies or administrators. Sometimes the word "partnership" was mentioned by grantees, but we did not witness any evidence of *real partnership* between NGOs and the local government.



The Carpathian Foundation's past strategy towards Roma NGOs and their programs in the framework of the RomaNet Program in Ukraine is fully understandable. The CF grantees were repeatedly mentioning appreciation of how much the CF support enabled them to transform part of their dreams into reality in recent years. In effervescent times, with a relatively weak NGO base, there is no other way to provide support except to focus on relatively older and more experienced NGOs in order to ensure the networking base, peer support and organization survival. If sustainability will be one of the next goals of the RomaNet Program, few recommendations related to partnership support, set of conditions for funding and capacity building should be included for future thinking.

Recommendations:

- ⊙ More visible and diverse strategies for supporting new (starting) Roma NGOs and older, relatively more experienced NGOs might be adopted. For the "older" organizations, one of the objectives for funding might be that their dependency on Carpathian Foundation grants will be not encouraged. That might be achieved by some regulations, such as: CF funding will not be the prevailing resource for organizational survival – the organization may receive funding only up to 50% of the previous year budget), NGOs should be encouraged/conditioned to look for other sources of funding more specifically etc.;
- ⊙ Introducing self-financing approaches for NGOs in Ukrainian conditions might be supported in a more direct way (roundtable discussions, introducing small-loans program that would support grant activities, trainings and consultancy on self-financing possibilities together with other non-Roma Ukrainian or Carpathian NGOs). Most probable reaction from these NGOs will be that it is "too soon" for such ideas in Ukraine. However, there are signals that this is happening also with some other Roma NGOs in Ukraine and if the first steps in supporting self-financing will not happen now, in few years it might be "too late". Valuable experience and possible help may be envisaged from neighboring countries (e.g. NESSt efforts in Hungary);
- ⊙ There is too much dependency of starting NGOs on influential Roma leaders in Uzhorod. Complaints by Roma leaders from Mukachevo, Vinohradiv, and other small cities were heard repeatedly – their ideas are to be supported only after the approval of the influential Roma leaders in Uzhorod. Special programs (similar to the Slovak Ekopolis program "Your Land") to stimulate emerging young leaders should be thought of;
- ⊙ Some grants should be awarded not only for a specific project of a specific Roma NGO, but to support networking, mutual information, coalition development and further education of the majority of Roma organizations. If there is no way to find one Roma NGO that has enough informal authority and credit towards the others, this task might be sustained by the Carpathian Foundation itself

(in that case, CF may fulfill a facilitation role for Roma NGOs for the next 2-3 years, or subcontract a Ukrainian consulting institution that might be able to help).

Capacity and professional functioning of Roma NGOs

The results achieved as part of the RomaNet Program are in the majority of cases impressive. There is substantiation of real help to suffering children, education of Roma youth, strengthening cultural identity etc. A reason which was frequently mentioned as being highly stimulating and supportive was the coaching and informational support offered by the Carpathian Foundation local coordinators⁴ in the past years. The fact that support was mediated throughout personal visits and regular contacts was crucially important.

In the same time, it should not be forgotten that the capacity and professionalism of these Roma organizations did not reach, in average, the standards of other comparable Ukrainian NGOs.

In most of the Roma NGOs supported by the Carpathian Foundation, the usual project documentation (reports, newspaper articles, written evidence on project results, proceedings from important events etc.) was missing. Maybe it was not lost, but the project coordinator usually had difficult time in finding the respective documents. Similarly, most of these NGOs declared an amount of employees and volunteers that regularly contribute to NGO work, which seemed to be larger than reality. A good point was that well-educated non-Roma are usually incorporated into the work of Roma NGOs, but some of these activities might have been done also by young Roma. Surprisingly, the inclusion of such young activists into project activities seems to be an unusual event. The majority of CF-supported NGOs did not formulate own longer-terms plans.

Some of the grantees do not understand how the foundations (similar to the Carpathian Foundation) are operating. They do not understand the circumstances to be met in order to become eligible for support, what are the accountability principles etc. One of the leaders was seriously complaining about the "unjust" behavior of a foundation representative (other than the CF), because he used funding in a different direction than the one written in his proposal – instead of the creation of a children musical orchestra – planned and approved in the grant proposal – he bought food for the children, considering this to be a better cause. The foundation stopped funding his organization. He did not understand what was wrong with his approach and was sincerely surprised by what happened. He tried to persuade us that "every time it is the foundation, not the grantees that influence where the money should go".

Most of the Roma NGOs were not able to limit their own mission and define their own priorities. We asked a Roma NGO's staff (composed of 2-3 people) to share with us their organizational priorities. The answer (often repeated by other organizations) was: "education of children, but also youth and adults, re-qualification programs, hygienic and health education for everybody, legal attorney work and lobbying for law change and women issues and supporting housing and spreading Roma culture... We are prepared to do whatever the donors will pay for..."



Recommendations:

- ⊙ The majority of visited grantees were underestimating the importance of further training and education, NGO budgeting, project management and strategic planning. Although apathetic attitudes towards training are understandable (from a sociologist's point of view), the Carpathian Foundation's programs need more prepared recipients. Completing further practical trainings (in strategic planning, budgeting, project management etc.) should be a pre-condition to become eligible for receiving further support.
- ⊙ A study trip program, visiting similar organizations in Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, and Poland should be continued and even increased. The knowledge and practical gains of such activities were assessed as very useful.
- ⊙ The Carpathian Foundation should repeatedly deliver information that it does not have the capacity to support infrastructure projects, and that its support could be a good learning experience for larger programs funded by other donors. Although this has been continuously reiterated, many grantees still do not understand it.
- ⊙ The most successful results were achieved in small measurable projects. It certainly seems that 3 small grants (up to \$1,000), with a very specific focus, might have a larger and sustainable influence than other grants (up to \$4,000), which try to cover almost everything. For the following years, a significant portion of the grants program might be composed of smaller ones, but only with very specific, realistic and measurable objectives.
- ⊙ It is very hard to plan any long-term strategy for a Roma NGO network if crucial data is missing. More and more Roma NGOs declare they possess the most recent accurate data and statistics on the number of Roma, on social issues, health, housing and educational situation in settlements, but when it comes to real summative statistics, we had trouble to find a source of reliable data. A "think-tank type" institution or program in this area is clearly missing. The Carpathian Foundation may think about the possibility to use some of the think-tank institutions or independent consultants that may meet here and there, and systematically refresh the on-line information concerning the recent situation in the Transcarpathian region (or, alternatively, support a comparative study about the situation of the Roma in the whole Carpathian region). The priority should be given to issues such as:



- what were social policies in the past towards the Roma and socially excluded in the countries of the Carpathian region (successes, failures);
- how the Roma political representation influences the status and position of Roma in societies (lessons learned);
- what is the real number of Roma settlements and what is the current situation of adults and children living there (e.g. some comparative studies done by the United Nations Development Program may be used, or similar research to the one done in Slovakia by the World Bank may be repeated for the Transcarpathian region);
- what are the measures promoted by international organizations and domestic advocacy efforts that may change the Ukrainian public agencies' attitude towards Roma programs in order to become more supportive (lessons learned from the Hungarian situation – app. 15 years ago).



Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

It is our conclusion that the Carpathian Foundation aimed to support small organizations by developing programs and projects to the benefit of Roma people by providing them small grants.

By providing those small grants, CF aimed at:

- ⊙ supporting some of the projects of those organizations (and, therefore, responding to the needs of the Roma communities);
- ⊙ contributing to the sustainability of those organizations.

Due to the fact that the methodology which was applied to the CF grants has been quite simple (due to the Carpathian Foundation's policy), lots of NGOs – at least at the beginning of their activity – were able to access funds and that can be mentioned as one of the most important achievements of the RomaNet Program.

Moreover, almost all the grantees highly appreciated the valuable flexibility and supportiveness showed to them during their projects' development.

On the other hand, the high accessibility of the Carpathian Foundation's grant program created the possibility for projects with not very efficient or logical plans to have access to funds. For instance, projects combining activities that usually do not have anything to do one with each other were supported within the program (e.g. a project aiming to revitalize the Roma tradition and providing computer skills among Roma youth).

The relationship between the Carpathian Foundation and its grantees during project development was appreciated by most of the grantees, especially due to the flexibility showed by the Foundation.

Although one of the objectives aimed by the Carpathian Foundation was to increase the sustainability of the grantees, lack of continuation of the projects has been the weakness of the RomaNet Program. Quite small number of the grantees managed to prove that they either continued or made good use of the projects or activities started throughout the RomaNet Program. Taking into consideration that most of the projects did not need matching funds, they might have been continued throughout local authorities / community support. However, there are few examples of sustainable projects in all four countries, and the evaluation team considers that some of the hindering factors which led to this situation were: the „flexibility“ and simple & quick selection process, as well as the lack of efficient monitoring tools (before-, during- and after-project development or special events).

The most serious issue noticed is the financial sustainability of the projects and of the NGOs. The majority of the visited NGOs did not formulate their own longer-term development plans. On the other

hand, some of the grantees do not really understand how the foundations are operating. They do not understand the conditions that should be met in order to become eligible to receive support, and what are the accountability principles.

For most of the small NGOs, the CF grant was in that time the only source of support and the NGOs became fully dependent on the CF grant for that period. If sustainability becomes one of the major goals of the RomaNet Program, few recommendations linked to partnership support and few of the set conditions for funding and capacity building will be adopted for future thinking.

The Carpathian Foundation's past strategy towards Roma NGOs and their programs in the RomaNet Program has been fully understandable. The CF grantees repeatedly mentioned their appreciation for the support they benefited from CF during recent years.

The results of the projects achieved as a part of the RomaNet Program are in most cases impressive.

At the same time, it should not be forgotten that the capacity and professionalism of those Roma organization grantees did not – in average – reach the standards of other comparable NGOs.

The Ukrainian experience shows, for instance, that in terms of most of the Roma NGOs, the usual documentations concerning the project (reports, newspaper articles, written evidence on project results, proceedings from important events) have been missing even 1 or 2 years after the end of the project. In most NGOs, the declared amount of employees and volunteers that regularly contribute to the NGO's activities seemed to be larger than reality. It was good that also well educated non-Roma are usually incorporated into the work of the Roma NGOs, but some of these activities might have been done also by young Roma. Their inclusion within the planning and implementation phases did not seem to be a common action.

The RomaNet Program in the context of structural assistance to the Roma

Following the interviews with Carpathian Foundation grantees and staff, and after deep analysis of the data on the Roma communities' situation, NGOs and other various programs, we may consider – a well-known issue – that the main problem affecting the Roma is poverty.

Europe's Roma population is estimated at 7 to 9 million people. Romania is the country with the highest – by far – number of Roma, ranging between 1 and 2 million (up to 2,7 million estimated by some sources). Nearly 80% of the total Roma population lives in EU candidate countries and new member states. Poverty rates for Roma range between four and ten times the ones of non-Roma in Hungary and Romania (nearly 40% of Roma in Romania live on less than \$2.15 per day!).

Roma poverty is multifaceted: they are often deprived of the resources for adequate living conditions, but also lack access to education, the labor markets, social and health services, and channels for participation in society.

The degree of poverty varies between targeted countries, between urban and rural areas, and across different types of Roma communities and so do the underlying causes. What we may observe is common



characteristics and therefore common issues to be addressed – which are education, employment, health and housing.

Many donors, concerned by the situation of the most disadvantaged minority, addressed the problem by starting grant giving programs in the targeted countries. There are many similarities regarding the grant programs addressing the Roma situation in the countries where the RomaNet Program was implemented, with specific objectives according to the particularities of each country, as presented in the individual overview of findings in the present report. There is an exception to this conclusion, namely the Ukraine, where scarce external funding and almost no domestic funds are available to improve the Roma condition. In Ukraine, with such scarce financing, the RomaNet Program was a bubble of oxygen that obliges to future action for improving the critical situation of Roma.

In Hungary, various donors carried on programs to solve Roma issues. Among them: international and private organizations (the United Nations Development Program, the World Bank, the European Commission, Soros Foundation, Autonomia Foundation, Network for Democracy), and government funding (ministries, Public Foundation for Modernizing Public Education, National Foundation for Employment – OFA, National Institution Health Prevention – NEVI, NEKH, national public foundations).

In Romania, the Roma issue was approached by a many of donors starting from 1990. Among them the following should be mentioned: the European Union; Open Society Foundation Romania and Soros Open Network; United Nations Development Program; United Nations High Commission for Refugees; International Organization for Migrations; Charles Stewart Mott Foundation; the Romanian government; Carpathian Foundation; Permanent Mission of the World Bank in Romania etc. Generally, the donors' approach towards Roma issues was initially in the context of programs for civil society organizations, later programs focussed on the Roma or disadvantaged population.

In Slovakia, a relatively large number of donors with focus on Roma programs were present in the country (such as the Open Society Foundation, ETP and Ekopolis – part of the Your Land programs funded by USAID and Trust Fund, Pontis Foundation etc.).

At the same time, increasing support was and is coming from public institutions and government agencies (programs such as the ones developed by the Slovak government, the European Union Delegation in Slovakia through PHARE programs, Social Development Fund, World Bank, United Nations Development Program etc.).

In Ukraine, besides the Carpathian Foundation's RomaNet Program, not many foreign and almost no domestic donors focus on Roma programs in the country (Soros Foundation programs and the Dutch foundations / government programs are probably the most important from the long-term perspective, few relatively isolated German foundations are providing smaller funding of projects, USAID, UNDP, World Bank, IOM. Public institutions, local governments' and government agencies' support are minimal.

A comparison among procedures applied by various donors in the region reveals that the key element that makes the difference among procedures is the source of funds. When funds originate

from the public budgets, the extremely bureaucratic system results in highly complicated and rigid procedures – the funds from the EU standing above all. Private funding was much more flexible. The Carpathian Foundation's RomaNet Program presented the simplest procedure of all. This was the most positive aspect observed during the evaluation of the program – making grants accessible to small organizations (that rarely if ever accessed other funds).

The RomaNet Program, while having its weaknesses, proved to complement larger grant giving programs by building confidence of small organizations and underdeveloped communities, increasing the co-operation of these beneficiaries with local authorities and increasing exchange of experience between Roma organizations and communities. In some projects, it acted as a catalyst in improving co-operation of wider local communities between countries.

This aspect needs to be highlighted, since major programs address Roma problems in general at a macro level, insisting less on the community level. This leads to a considerable setback of large programs in achieving the desired impact.

Another conclusion is that following several programs implemented in the targeted countries, and due to the complicated selection procedures (especially in the case of public budgets) the donors do not (and, therefore, cannot) focus sufficiently on small and underdeveloped organizations, these becoming just necessary eligibility elements in the selection processes, with extremely negative impact on equal and equitable partnerships and sustainability (the process does not build competencies of small organizations and initiative groups and sometimes leads even to tensions between communities and local administration).

The Carpathian Foundation's RomaNet Program, due to its flexibility and approach, if continued, might increase the capacity of smaller actors, presuming the program will continue and will be improved in terms of selection process, building capacities, improving impact evaluation, and enforce sustainability measures.

Cross-border co-operation in the Carpathian region was also a distinct element of the CF's RomaNet Program that differentiates it from other grant programs. This aspect was largely neglected by other donors addressing the Roma situation and again had a positive particularity of stimulating exchanges of experience between countries. These practices led to notable results in some cases that need to be encouraged in the future. The real experience exchange should be envisaged in the future and thus increase program impact.

Another issue that considerably diminished the impact on the Roma population was the lack of correlation of donor programs. This led to the overlapping of fundings and reducing the sustainability of the previous funding (grantees concentrated less on preceding projects due to an understandable opportunism). Only later donors observed the problem and tried to find corrective measures and implement them (as did the Donors Forum in Romania and the initiative known as the "Roma Decade").



Relevant indicators

Distribution of projects by areas

Note: Each project was included in one area only.

Project areas	Hungary	Romania	Slovakia	Ukraine	Total
Projects related to economic development issues	1	4	4	5	14
Projects related to vocation and culture	14	5	7	8	34
Total	15	9	11	13	48

Projects related to economic development issues

Note: One project may be included in several categories.

Projects in country	Quantitative indicators (direct outcomes)			Qualitative indicators (benefits resulted from direct outcomes)		Impact indicators (changing attitudes of target groups at the society level, policies influences etc.)	
	Training courses & workshops	Projects implemented in rural areas	Young people and women involved	Increase access of Roma people (on the labor market)	Creating Roma structures (income generation activities)	Long term partnership with local authorities / partners in neighbour countries	Increase self-esteem and take over prejudices
	I1	I2	I3	I4	I5	I6	I7
Hungary [4]	1	0	0	1	1	0	1
Romania [10]	0	3	0	1	0	3	3
Slovakia [12]	4	0	2	4	2	0	0
Ukraine [11]	2	1	0	4	4	0	0
TOTAL	7	4	2	10	7	3	4

Projects related to vocation and culture

Note: One project may be included in several categories.

Projects in country	Quantitative indicators (direct outcomes)			Qualitative indicators (benefits resulted from direct outcomes)		Impact indicators (changing attitudes of target groups at the society level, policies influences etc.)	
	Training courses & workshops	Projects implemented in rural areas	Young people and women involved	Increase access of Roma people (to social services)	Creating Roma structures (civic and vocational)	Long term partnership with local authorities / partners in neighbour countries	Increase self-esteem and take over prejudices
	I1	I2	I3	I4	I5	I6	I7
Hungary [40]	6	1	9	3	3	8	10
Romania [13]	3	3	2	4	0	1	2
Slovakia [16]	2	0	4	0	1	3	6
Ukraine [25]	2	1	4	4	2	4	8
TOTAL	13	5	19	11	6	16	26

Distribution of project coverage per country and area of work

Country	Area	
Hungary	Economic development issues	11%
	Vocation and culture	42%
Romania	Economic development issues	27%
	Vocation and culture	14%
Slovakia	Economic development issues	32%
	Vocation and culture	17%
Ukraine	Economic development issues	30%
	Vocation and culture	27%



Comments on the indicators

The indicators were measured during the data collection phase from the RomaNet grantees based on the data acquired from the interviews and the few questionnaires received. Our opinion may be considered as subjective, yet they count as independent points of view on the specific, measurable results of the program.

From the first table which presents the distribution of granted projects by areas, in the four countries targeted by the RomaNet Program, it is easy to observe that most of the actions concerned vocational and cultural issues (especially in Hungary and Romania), whilst economic development issues were tackled more in Slovakia and Ukraine. This reflects directly in the sustainability of these projects, which was quite low or non-existent. On the other hand, the two countries with less problematic institutional issues were Slovakia and Ukraine, as shown by the larger number of economic development related projects.

By analyzing the figures provided in the second table – containing the projects related to economic development issues – we may observe the large number of projects which deal with increasing the access of Roma to the labor market and creating Roma structures; this is definitely a remarkable result of the RomaNet Program. On the other hand, the limited number of projects which took into consideration (lasting) partnerships with local authorities tell a lot about the incapacity of incipient Roma structures to access resources from the local governments (except for three projects in Romania). At the same time, these figures show a lower involvement of young people in the grantees' activities.

The third table – concerning projects related to vocation and culture – shows a different distribution of projects into the previously mentioned categories. Here we observe that most projects dealt with increasing self-esteem and overcoming prejudices – as cultural and vocational projects stimulate such attitudes immensely. Also, the young people seem to like these types of activities more than the other ones – a significant number of projects involved young Roma. Even so, in this case, creating structures which could have continued long-run or would have diversified the CF-supported activities seems to be a difficult job for the grantees. Projects were scarcely developed in rural areas.

Partnership with local authorities was effortlessly developed, as such projects are easy to include within the framework of local events.

The final table shows the distribution of project coverage per country and area of work – it shows that the RomaNet Program had its most balanced approach in Ukraine, whilst in the other countries the approach was clearly directed towards vocational and cultural projects (Hungary) or economic development issues (Romania and Slovakia). Although the RomaNet Program acts indirectly on such issues, the networks it created, as well as the exchange of experience, were a good starting point for the induction of later initiatives.

Finally, according to the evaluation team, these indicators invoke the rethinking of the RomaNet Program, as the low or high number of projects which cover certain relevant areas for the Roma community (cf. the ones presented in the four tables) could suggest a program based on separate components (areas of interest) or eligibility criteria.

Recommendations

- ⊙ For the future, the Carpathian Foundation should strongly take into consideration the idea to **provide larger grants**, and therefore to limit grantees to a less challenging (in terms of institutional development) number. In this way, the Foundation might contribute in a more efficient way to the development of important, sustainable and visible projects. Small grants predominantly help undersized NGOs in small villages to implement some of their good ideas in the community and thus those types of grants should not be totally ignored, although they should not represent a priority anymore.
- ⊙ Although (as mentioned before) the program should continue to be accessible to young and inexperienced Roma NGOs, **the application selection process should be based on higher standards**. The applicants should be asked to bring reliable proof that they would ensure the sustainability of the granted projects and not still ask for funds at the end of the Carpathian Foundation's support.
- ⊙ The compatibility between the need for keeping the program oriented to the young and inexperienced NGOs and the need for increasing the standards in terms of the application-methodology / application-selection process might be solved by providing training to those young NGOs and/or even consultancy.
- ⊙ Part of the Carpathian Foundation's support could be arranged in such a way, that it would **match other donors' programs** – this may be a good condition to make the project sustainable (e.g. the project would be eligible to receive support if the applicant organization provides 20-40% matching funds for the same project from local governments, public agencies or other donors). **Partnership with the local governments** should also be encouraged.
- ⊙ **Field evaluation for all projects** are highly recommended. Risk factors could be reduced if *ex-ante, on-site, field evaluation* would be made for all projects selected for funding. Such a process could avoid the financing in any way of projects that are not based on improving beneficiaries' condition or which are artificially built in order to obtain funds.

Roma NGOs from all four countries are generally too small and too inexperienced in bureaucratic procedures needed to manage large projects (for instance, EU-funded ones). At the same time, they have an advantage – since in these large projects, international collaboration of the NGOs from both EU member states and non-member countries is a precondition. Probably very few of the Carpathian Foundation's former grantees have the required administrative ca-





Members of the evaluation team at work

capacity to lead such projects. However, a **network** (consortium) of Carpathian Foundation grantees, with limited technical help mediated by the Carpathian Foundation, would have this capacity if they cooperated. The Carpathian Foundation could play a very **important catalyst role** for such cases: convene a few roundtables for Roma NGOs in order to discuss these issues, offer a consultant to help NGOs from 3-4 countries to prepare a join project, and advise on the experienced Roma NGO which should take a leading role in the process.

Since there are already enough skilled leaders of Roma NGOs in all four countries, there is **no effort needed in order to root the starting Roma NGOs**. A more advanced phase in their funding might follow. The projects that enable Roma NGOs networking, creating partnerships and sharing knowledge should have much stronger priority. The specific programs focusing on education and re-qualification, and programs focusing on establishing job opportunities are still required very much, but the Carpathian Foundation should insist that only the projects having the sharing/networking/information exchange component implemented would be supported. An alternative program should also be considered for increasing the capacity of these small organizations (throughout direct assistance for organizational management, fundraising, community participation, partnership and networking, self-sustaining activities etc.).

Some Roma NGOs from all four countries (including some of the RomaNet grantees but not only them) have good experience in working with the media and developing partnership with local governments. Those **lessons should be shared** – especially with the other Roma NGOs. Projects with “knowledge exporting” character in media and local government collaboration area should be definitely supported and promoted.

Roma NGOs strongly need to be trained for sustainability. Co-operation of the Carpathian Foundation with good Roma NGOs is offering them a large degree of credibility and visibility in the local community. It can also help them find future sources of support and possible partners for co-operation.

The Carpathian Foundation could be the initiator of the **replication of good projects in other communities**. Maybe a spe-

cific program (or sub-program) in this respect should be thought about. The Carpathian Foundation also brings very important cross-border exchange of experience. By interconnecting the programs and linking the projects, the focusing on cross-border co-operation would give excellent ideas to Roma NGOs. It was noticed that the Hungarian experience as well as some Romanian cases are replicable and demanded in for instance, Southern Slovakia.

The Carpathian Foundation is probably the only funding institution where **grant applications can still be submitted in a handwritten form**. This is supporting the ground level ideas.

It is very good to leave **topics and areas of support open** so that the applicants do not submit proposals in order to meet the ideas of some experts, instead, the Carpathian Foundation should respond to the ideas of ground level activists.

If possible, the Carpathian Foundation should **facilitate the process of needs assessment**, and avoid financing similar projects in a large number in the same area (as it was the case in Ózd in Hungary or Uzhgorod in Ukraine). Partnership should have been encouraged instead. Support in preparing projects and in implementing them (even for other donors) is clearly sought by the beneficiaries.

The Carpathian Foundation should also further **enhance its approach to grant giving**, which should mature by perceiving the grant scheme as a whole, instead of a sum of individual projects. The foundation should request a better presentation of the identified problems the Roma population is confronting with, either during the project assessment phase, or before.

Special support should be shown in order to **increase the advocacy capacity of Roma NGOs**. Numerous Roma organizations were created in the targeted countries in recent years, but many of them present a tendency to compete with one another instead of co-operating. Many ambitious projects started having among the objectives a network of Roma NGOs, but poor or no result was achieved. The Carpathian Foundation has the necessary resources and information to find a better approach to partnership, and build capacities in order to achieve cooperation at the local and national levels.

CF should increase its involvement in **drafting policy recommendations and / or influencing political decisions regarding Roma**. In Ukraine, this is especially strongly recommended.



The Case Studies



Four case studies were included in the evaluation, namely:

- ⊙ Amaro Trajo Cultural Foundation of Roma – “Wandering School of Glinda” (Hungary)
- ⊙ Ruhama Foundation – “A New Vision – A Better Life” (Romania)
- ⊙ Amare Roma/Our Roma – “We can do it!” (Slovakia)
- ⊙ Civic Organization Bakhtalo Drom – “Professional Training for Young Roma” (Ukraine)

These case studies are the result of deeper investigation. The methodology used to gather information was the focus group.

The Hungarian case study tells the story of the most successful RomaNet Project in Hungary, a project which tried (and subsequently succeeded) to create a mobile group of teachers, who travel to selected schools in Hungary and Ukraine, and spread good practices in education of the young Roma, helping them to have an overview on the world and on their own future.

The Romanian case study offers a glimpse of a project developed in order to accelerate cross-border co-operation and exchange of experience among Roma people from small rural communities in Romania and Slovakia. The ideas and commitment of the activists involved in the project transformed this small project into an un-

forgettable experience, which guided the involved communities in their future development.

The Slovak case study deals with a project which is a very good example of cooperation between the representatives of the Roma community, the state and the local government – the result being the creation of a group of Roma Citizen Patrol in the village of Moldava nad Bodvou.

The Ukrainian case study shows how a CF-funded project offered the chance to a Roma craftsman to visit a Roma NGO in Slovakia and, from that starting point, developed the “shoe-making initiative group” which later registered as a Roma Association called “Bakhtalo Drom”.



Case study no 1

Amaro Trajo Cultural Foundation of Roma, Mátészálka, Hungary

Project title: "Wandering School of Glinda"

The "Wandering School of Glinda" was one of the RomaNet projects where everybody had high expectations. The evaluation team was eager to meet the "traveling hillbillies" of education and learn from their diverse experience and good ideas. Regrettably, our expectations were not met, not as we would have thought at the beginning, however, the experience of meeting the people involved in this project was more than a pleasant surprise.

The main goal of this project was to establish and develop the Wandering School of Glinda – consisting of a group of Roma teachers who wandered around the region, visiting selected schools in Hungary and Ukraine, in order to help Roma children to have an overview on the world and find their own picture of the future.

The schools which were involved were mainly established in remote villages and in strictly Roma populated settlements. The courses were based on getting to know professional handicrafts such as goldsmith's craft, model making, pearl tacking, board games and other programs like watching video, cooking or baking cakes etc.

At the same time, the project team developed the Glinda (Mirror) Magazine, which is a quarterly auxiliary educational material for Roma and non-Roma youth at the age of 6-14 (mainly for elementary school students).

The project initiator (the Amaro Trajo Cultural Foundation of the Roma in Mátészálka) suffered many changes since this project has started. As the people who set up this NGO are gifted and talented in teaching and craftsmanship, it was clear that at one moment in time, these people will have to either develop the foundation to reach self-sustainability, or find other place(s) in order to practice their skills.

Erika is working as a volunteer in the foundation and never thought the Wandering School will end, *"It's not here. It's not happening again. But we're conscious that the lessons learned and that the project's legacy of openness and common values has to be taken further on to the schools in Hungary"*. Erika was not involved in the original project, but she is the guardian of the gate, the storyteller and one of the many people on whom this project had a strong influence.

A strange meeting with what was left from the spirit of the project, and a team of committed volunteers and Roma children, was convened in one of the few primary schools in Hajdúhadház. We arrived in the middle of the craftsmanship workshop and the children were building small but pretty necklaces, using all sorts of recyclable or non-recyclable materials.

The children provided, beyond the shiny laughter and enthusi-



Young children learning handicrafts by playing and having fun

asm of the youth, a dose of reality and clean air, which invoked the spirit of the Wandering School. Their happy gathering and funny responses to our questions seemed to re-create the jolly atmosphere and intensity of the Glinda sessions.

"We are fighting all the time, and the teachers frequently punish us. We don't like school, because we have too much to learn. We would preferably spend our time singing and dancing. We also like to draw and make nice necklaces". On the other hand... *"we have good marks, and we only stay at home when we are sick."*

"We liked the teacher (from Glinda) very much because she had long hair. She looked like us. She taught us a lot of nice and interesting things, and we would really want to call her back. She did not punish us".

"We also liked that we learned English. And now, with Erika, we make nice necklaces and we paint our stuff at schools".

For many months, the children asked about the Glinda school and its teachers. But the Glinda School is now only the internet, and its activities may be recreated under a "club" format. A web site is dedicated to the people who made this project possible, as well as and the spirit of volunteering. People may gather again and start the project all over again any time, by the impulse given by an e-mail - maybe not only with handicrafts workshops, but also with theatre, music, all sorts of interesting things. This shows how easy such activities can start again from scrap and how strong the links created by the project are.

What is really important, is that the school no longer exists, the teachers are now in different corners of the country, but the spirit and the commitment of the ones involved in it are still alive. And kicking!



Case study no 2

Ruhama Foundation, Oradea, Romania

Project title: "A New Vision – A Better Life"

Bihor county is one of the most special areas in Romania as regards the situation of the Roma community. Although this county is among the few ones in Romania with the lowest unemployment and highest development rates, the social situation of the local population is not glorious. Accelerated economic development has many positive facets, yet one of its few underachievements relates to a more discrepant and visible marginalization of the non-qualified work force.

One of the most desolate views anyone could have while traveling throughout the Bihor countryside is the Roma ghettos, usually situated at 1-2 km outside the villages – with houses built from clay, without electricity, water or heating.

Batăr and Tinca are among the villages, which do not make an exception to the above-mentioned situation. Despite the marginal efforts of some organizations and local activists, there are no plans and no solutions to the problems yet to be found in order to get things moving in the area. Regardless whether they are Romanians, Hungarians or Roma, all experience the same difficulties – the lack of basic economic development and/or slow change in local structures and attitudes towards social progress.

The experience of the Roma community is, nonetheless, the most painful and hopeless.

Any tentative project / action / program / effort at the local level, or even those coming from governmental or private funding, has to face the same indifference and the huge bureaucracy of the public administration. The problems do not need identification – they are clearly visible even without visiting these communities, they are engraved in the desolate and bleak attitudes of the concerned individuals, they come with a pessimistic approach, which tells everybody that there's no tomorrow.

There are issues beyond the lack of a new vision, or of a "different" model within the community. Left alone in this turmoil of unsolved troubles, Roma and non-Roma leaders are unable to develop a coherent approach to "solid state" development programs in order to create or improve the existing living facts.

This situation affects a number of 4,000 people living in these communities situated in the South Western part of Bihor county, leading to severe social consequences in the near future.

The "Ruhama" Foundation, one of the few Romanian NGOs dedicated to solve Roma issues (and probably the only active NGO with strategic views in this respect in Bihor county) developed in 2003 a project of cross-border co-operation and exchange of experience which aimed at helping these specific communities.

A partnership with a Slovak NGO – "Spolnoc Minoritas" – was established in Eger, on the occasion of a conference organized by the Carpathian Foundation. The "Spolnoc Minoritas" NGO deploys suc-

cessful social, medical and economical activities in the rural area of Svinia, in Southern Slovakia. Their programs are addressing 650 Roma people from that village, and by now have significantly contributed to a considerable decrease of the poverty and illiteracy in their area of interest.

Eight leaders and significant Roma community members from an array of communes situated in the South Western part of Bihor county (including Tinca and Batăr) were offered the possibility to visit their Slovak counterparts and establish a network, to gain skills to initiate projects and programs for their Roma constituency. The visit in Slovakia was, nevertheless, an occasion to see how others perform in face of tough social problems, lack of infrastructure and different ways of life. The results, which improved their self-confidence in their own resources and possibilities, still go beyond any measurable indicators, as it can easily be observed in this case study.

The Slovakian Roma presented to the group the same problems, the same needs, the same shameless attitudes towards local economic development. On the other hand, they showed different outcomes: a clear housing policy for Roma families, solutions to combat illiteracy, community recognition for cultivation of traditional values, community police comprising Roma etc. These were outcomes, which still seem far beyond the control and potency of the Romanian activists...

"The Roma were discriminated, are still discriminated, and there's nothing we can do about it."

"There is still a chance for the young ones... they still have the energy and the vigor to envisage a new start. The old generation, my generation, is hopeless. We cannot change, and we cannot offer a change. We cannot even offer an alternative, the system is stuck in its own weaknesses and there is no instrument that could fix it. «Good people» run away from the rural communities, they know there is nothing left to do".

In Tinca, there is a special situation as concerns the Roma children in school. In other neighboring communities, such as Oșorhei or Borș, the Roma children experience social marginalization and reluctance from the part of other children, parents and even teachers. In Tinca, however, the Roma children "suffer" from positive discrimination. They have their own class of 20 children. Ten out of twenty children come regularly to school. The interesting fact is that this class was supported by private funds and the teachers' payment and other expenses were covered out of generous donations. On the other hand, the donation does not last forever, and the teachers have decided to finalize this endeavor as volunteers. The teachers' efforts were not enough to mobilize the Roma children, therefore in the final stages of the school year the teachers had to improvise a meals-on-wheels service in order to make sure the children come to school. The class had an unique character – there were children of all ages, between 1st class and 4th class, and the teachers' purpose was clear – not to have illiterate children



reaching higher classes.

It is wonderful to see how such anonymous initiatives, which remain “invisible” to the public opinion but which are outstanding in the poor social landscape of Bihor county, are perpetuated as a result of a small intervention at the local level (such as the “Ruhama” Foundation project). This is the result of the good interaction between people with the same background of local needs from different countries, with a constant exchange of experience, and, of course, with shared values which do not need special support in order to be cultivated.

Beyond the dazzling experiences of the volunteer-teachers lays the fear of futility, the sense of not knowing where to start and when to finish.

During the visit in Prešov, people were really amazed by the houses and their related housing / education program. Whilst isolationist tendencies still rear their ugly face within local development plans in Romania (Roma people are to be evicted from the buildings which serve as home in the historical centers of several municipalities), the serenity of co-operation and normal relationship between the Roma and Habitat for Humanity, the organization which helped them build their houses in Slovakia, was a different issue animating the group.

The lack of possible solutions to be adopted in Romania, in order to profit from the observations and the experience taken from the visits in Slovakia, is unfortunately undermining the efforts of the activists. Solutions are easy to find, but the necessary support is still hard to obtain. In Tinca, the Roma community benefited from an investment, which brought them running water in their humble dwellings. One year after this progress, the water was cut off because people could not pay the bills.

On the other hand, if Roma people try to get a job, they are refused or receive the lowest-skilled and most badly paid work. The alternative is to stay at home and do nothing, whilst the monthly welfare support sometimes reaches the amount proposed as salary. Is re-qualification the answer? Is education the right thing to do first of all? Should the Roma be prepared in advance for a close-to-normal way of life so that they may be easier accepted at work? These dilemmas are real, and they became community constraints at the county and even at the regional level. A possible answer, which is likely to develop solutions, may come from the grass-root activists and from their rapid response action.

The Roma ghettos in Bihor county look the same as they were two years ago. It is high time to get the trained and committed people into real action, support them and understand their frustration. In brief, the project’s resulting experience was a revelation and something to be remembered, but the problems of the community are far from being tackled.

Focus group participants:

Marian Daragiu, Director, “Ruhama” Foundation, Oradea

Mircea Badea, Social Referent, Tinca Town Hall

Dănuț Covaciu, citizen of Batăr commune

Ghiță Fekete, citizen of Batăr commune

Case study no 3

Amare Roma – Our Roma, Moldava nad Bodvou, Slovakia

Project title:
“We can do it”

This project is a very good example of cooperation between representatives of the Roma community, the state and the municipality. This could serve as a good example for other municipalities. In the beginning there was just an idea to do some regular patrol in the big Roma community in Moldava nad Bodvou. They created a group of Roma Citizen Patrol. As the head of the town police of Moldava nad Bodvou said, “Roma will never take seriously the repression, but if it goes from inside of the community, it is not taken as a dictate.” Later, the patrol became more as an advisor for daily problems of the people in the Roma community.

They were called by the members of locality to solve small conflicts between the neighbors. Later, they started to take care about the life of children in the community. They became to cooperate more deeply with school to solve the problems of playing truant. Together with the school and the Jekhetane Roma NGO they started to do educational programs for children aimed on hygiene and socialization of small Roma children. In the cooperation with the local hospital they helped to do the regular vaccination of all the children in the community. One of their main successes was that the number of children who sniffed on the streets dropped drastically. They started to cooperate with the new social workers in the Roma community.

They solved some of the very deep problems such as the harassment of some children. The overall cleanness in the town and especially in the Roma part of the town is much more visible. In 2004, the town gave small gardens to some Roma families’ and because of the Roma Citizen Patrols guarding, they collected quite nice harvest last year. In the year 2005 the number of small misdemeanors in Moldava nad Bodvou decreased by 120 cases because of their work.

The program started to be an example for other surrounding villages which have big Roma communities – in Drieňovec, Turňa and Jasov. At this moment, this program continues only in Moldava nad Bodvou and Jasov because the Roma Citizen Patrol in these villages have strong support of the local municipality and Town Police. As Mr.Grulyo said, he has already got a few phone calls asking him for help to create Roma Citizen Patrol in other towns of Slovakia.

Every morning at 8 o’clock in Moldava nad Bodvou, the Roma Citizen Patrol, which consist of 4 people now, come to the Town Police office. Under their supervision, they are discussing about what they will do during the day. The town police understand their very important role. Few days before our meeting, they helped to find the culprit of a small crime (theft). They always solve the problems together with the town police. They get regular training on



how to deal and communicate with people. Moreover, the Town Police regularly monitor their activities. "We can see that they have really got respect in the community. They are regularly called for help by the citizens. They do not behave as a kind of "folkish helper". People respect them," said Mr. Rigo, head of the town police in Moldava nad Bodvou.

The Roma Citizen Patrol members have been selected according to the principle that not primarily 'strong guys', but 'communicative guys' are needed for the job, with a sense for dealing with people and who are really willing to help the people.

The program of the Roma Citizen Patrol started in 2002 financed by the Labor Office, and has been strengthened by the help of the Carpathian Foundation in 2004. The other important donors were the Interior Ministry, the Labor Office and the Governmental Office. Unfortunately, it is still a big problem to find regular financial support.

It is very important that the Roma who were included in this project were interested in keeping this project running even when they did not get real remuneration. This year the remuneration even further decreased. The Roma Citizen Patrol members wash their uniform clothes of the patrol themselves. They pay their lunch themselves. Amare Roma NGO, the initiator of this idea ensured the supply of the clothes and shoes which are passed literally from one to the other. Still, they are very much interested in being a part of this program. All of them started high school education (there is already 30 people who attended this program) and 3 of them already graduated.

The Amare Roma NGO got higher credit in the town. They started to organize education courses for the Roma mothers about cooking and economy budgeting. Together with the school and town police, they are preparing the pre-school education and a special program for youngsters to decrease the number of petty crime. They are preparing special leaflets campaigning against criminality.

It is also very important that the director of Amare Roma, Mr. Grulyo was appointed as the member of the Commission for solving the problems of Roma in Moldava nad Bodvou.

Case study no 4

Transcarpathian Regional Society of Roma "Bakhtalo Drom", Uzhgorod

Project title: "Professional training for young Roma"

This project may document the lesson that project sustainability is not given by strong support from outside the organization but mainly by the independent will of project implementers, their value for personal destiny and bottom-up mobilization.

More than twenty years ago Zoltan Pap has been a typical Roma young man, who during the times of Soviet Ukraine – like thousands others – received the basic apprenticeship education in the shoe-making and shoe-repairing profession. At that time, for the people from his generation having a job and minimal lining subsidy from the state seemed to be guaranteed. The life standard was minimal but bearable, and officially almost equal for everybody. He started to work in the state-owned shoe-repairing workshop, that was offering services to ordinary citizens in the frame of services in so called "Dom Byta" (house of communal services). After the first year of testing own skills in that place, the whole society changed and that influenced also his job. The originally state-owned workshop was privatized and the new owner dismissed the employees as one of his first steps. The usual reaction of thousands of people in similar cases was that they became dependent on the reception of minimal life-saving subsidy from the state, became poor, rooted in helpless attitude and started to get socially more and more degraded.

Not in this case. Zoltan had not very clearly formulated his idea that he could set up his own shoe-repairing workshop with masters and young apprentices that would never be dependent on the state or any other institutional body. The majority of his peers just finished having these fantasies, they gave up, complaining about everything (when Gallup Public Opinion Polling Agency asked Ukrainians in 1990 to determine the most typical personal trait of the Ukrainian people, 42% of the asked people told "passiveness").

In that situation, Zoltan persuaded three former colleagues to stop endless complaining and unrealistic dreams. In repeated discussion, he persuaded his friends from the workshop that instead of waiting for some hypothetical help from outside they should start and do some pro-active steps first. They discovered that the space in one building with shops in the city center with the large square is still not used. They counted carefully what minimal equipment is needed to start/renew the shoe-repairing workshop. They were looking for inspiring examples in this kind of enterprise, but at that time



there was no such experience in the city. There were no similar examples around and nobody to give advice. Zoltan decided to visit (for him unknown foundation with the name Carpathian Found) and presented his vaguely formulated idea about being independent and starting his own small enterprise. He knew nothing about writing projects, he had no understanding about the way foundations operate, what are rules and principles leading their programs. However, after the first meeting he learned that there is somebody listening to his ideas, not depreciating them, not rejecting them. After lots of questions, he was asked to put his ideas on paper and present the project proposal. He trusted that the idea of starting an own workshop is achievable but during his apprenticeship in a shoe workshop he was never taught how to write project proposals, how to frame the ideas in the form of a project cycle, how to prepare the business plans and how to persuade the donors.

The Carpathian Foundation offered him the chance to visit a Roma NGO in Roznava in Slovakia and mediated the information from Hungarian Roma NGOs with similar missions, where the NGOs are offering services to the public. The most important knowledge gained was not so much the technical side of their work but the understanding that the idea of a self-financing project linked with the preparation of young Roma for their future shoe-repairing profession is plausible.

Zoltan presented his first grant proposal and – to his surprise – the project was awarded. Two groups of young Roma are coming every second day to develop skills for the shoe-making profession. During the project period, he equipped a classroom and a shoe-making workshop where a group of 12 young Roma (at the age from 14 to 26) mastered shoe-repairing and shoe-making skills. Most of these apprentice students already had children and were unemployed. Acquiring professional skills was their first step toward having a permanent job and earnings for keeping their families. Two best students from the first group received job at the workshop, five are employed in other shoe repairing workshops of Uzhgorod and three in the district. Some of them are opening

their own small shoe repairing stands offering the services to people passing by. Two former students are involved in seasonal works in Hungary and when they are back at home, they come and are involved in shoe making in “Bakhtalo Drom”.

Zoltan is joking about his own influence on young people studying and working in his workshop: *“I wish they acquired the lifestyle of the “Bachtalo Drom” (Happy Journey), and not the “Bakalo Drom” (Drinking Journey) lifestyle. That’s why I am doing that. And there is a lot of young Roma boys, who are just looking for an opportunity to learn skills and have a regular job”*.

The shoe-repairing shop is visited by Roma and non-Roma. Visitors are pleased by the care and interest devoted to all clients and are happy to use this prompt shoe repairing service. Zoltan received the contract from the Opera dance group to sew over 100 pairs of special leather dancing boots for the whole dancing group and next similar contracts are negotiated. In addition, Zoltan comments: *“I think, we will survive with this enterprise. In the beginning we needed leather and other shoe making material and equipment. And the courage. Without that we would not have been able to start. But nowadays we are not dependent on outer support so much. The income from the service and contracts will help us to sustain. And we plan to educate the next group of apprentices. Without the starting financial support of Carpathian Fund, and without their encouragement, that would be not possible.”*

The success of this project inspired other members of organization to start their own projects. In December 2003, the “shoe-making initiative group” formed and then registered as Transcarpathian Regional Association of Roma “Bakhtalo Drom”, and the Civic Association “Bakhtalo Drom” was transmitted into the women organization. Bachtalo Drom Transcarpathian Regional Association of Roma “Bakhtalo Drom” continues shoe-making activities, but some other former members of Bachtalo Drom start to work with girls and young women. They organized a group of young Roma women that are visiting Roma settlements and delivering peer health education there

Endnotes


¹ Jonathan Fox, Zuzana Jelokova – Minorities at Risk, 2005

² It is not clear if they are not perceived as equally crucial or not fully acknowledged.

³ Nonprofit Enterprise and Self-sustainability Team – non-governmental organization dedicated to finding lasting solutions to systemic poverty and social injustice through the development of social enterprises – mission-driven businesses that increase the financial sustainability and social change impact of civil society organizations.

⁴ Grantees mentioned frequently the helpful consultations of Igor Ilko and Elena Parfenova.



A close-up photograph of a hand holding a single white daisy flower. The flower has a prominent, textured brown center and numerous white petals. The hand is positioned at the bottom, with fingers gently gripping the stem. The background is a soft, out-of-focus field of similar white daisy flowers, creating a sense of depth and tranquility. The overall color palette is warm and monochromatic, dominated by the browns of the flower centers and the skin of the hand, with the white of the petals providing a clean contrast.

The authors wish to warmly thank and acknowledge the valuable contributions and kind support of the following contributors: Pavol Makyš, Boglárka Bata, Iulia Dezső, Rareș Beuran, István Szabó, Florin Moisă.

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