

THE CARPATHIAN FOUNDATION-HUNGARY

BUILDING CAPACITIES FOR EFFECTIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT OF MARGINALIZED ROMA IN HUNGARY

BEST PRACTICES OF EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS



Carpathian
Foundation



2019

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Foreword



Since its inception, the Carpathian Foundation has been paying special attention to the development of disadvantaged, marginalized and primarily Roma communities and their social integration.

From the outset, we run programs to provide financial and professional support to Roma and pro-Roma civil society organizations (CSOs) for the successful implementation of their local development initiatives. Through numerous training courses, meetings and study tours, we strive to foster the capacity building of these non-government actors to allow them to carry out their work as efficiently as possible.

The purpose of this publication is to present and share good practices, projects and civil society organizations implementing them in the field of Early Childhood Development (ECD) in marginalized Roma communities in the north-east of Hungary.

Our Foundation has been cooperating with the majority of NGOs presented in this publication for several years or in some cases for decades, we recognize the value of their work and strive to support their activities with any and all resources available to us.

The main purpose of the program presented here is, among many other things, to help expand the professional arsenal of involved organizations in the field of early childhood development further, so that they can start their development work with families in disadvantaged Roma communities in the earliest year possible.

Boglárka Bata

CEO, the Carpathian Foundation-Hungary

Early Childhood Development

- A tool for reducing social disadvantages



The period from birth to the age of eight (years) is crucial for the completeness and healthy nature of the children's mental, emotional and spiritual development. Strong cognitive and social skills are essential for their success in adulthood. It has been long known, and proven, that

experiences, stimuli and learning in the early years of life, - this is especially true for disadvantaged children - are of paramount importance to the child's development and almost irreplaceable in later life. Therefore, the circumstances in which a child grows up, all the experiences and stimuli that enrich him or her are extremely important in these early years of life, since it determines a child's future life chances and social mobility opportunities. Children living in families in poverty or deep poverty, who, due to deprivation and poor conditions, do not acquire strong abilities and skills in their early childhood, are more likely to find themselves trapped in lower levels of education, precarious employment, and reproduced poverty for a lifetime than their better-off contemporaries.

Interventions in the early years of life are most effective. This is the time when disadvantages, which are not caused by disability or health problems, but by bad conditions, unfavorable life situations, poverty and deprivation, can be best reduced. Éva Szomor and Noémi László (2014), referring to American studies, emphasize that in a stimulus-poor environment the brain of young children are lagging behind in development. According to Mária Gallai (2009): 'Based on the findings of neurological research, it is proven that not only genetic effects, but environmental enrichment and the rich emotional relationship between a parent and a child, are also crucial to brain development. All of these have an effect to the processes in the brain and through them to the intellectual development.'

The quality of children's home environment is naturally closely linked to the socio-economic background, the income situation of the family, housing conditions, parents' education and labor market position. All of these basically determine the home care environment that is

related to the development of children and the quality of their development.

Special educational needs teacher Éva Szomor, expert on the topic, says that early childhood development as external help is most needed where children and families living in poverty and deprivation, where conditions and circumstances - housing, food, clothing, healthy environment - are missing to ensure the proper development of skills and competences. All of these, however, are almost certainly available to middle-class families.

In families living in extreme poverty, due to generational poverty and lack of cultural capital, family roles and patterns that parents can draw upon when raising their children are insufficient.



Children's early childhood development aims to compensate for the lags and deficiencies caused by a disadvantaged background, poverty and low parental educational levels by creating the ideal conditions and circumstances necessary to allow children and their parents to develop, and to perform to the best of their abilities and skills, with complex approach and services for the children and their family.

Programs that flag early childhood development should not only target children, but also their families, as in many cases a family as a whole needs to make up for missed opportunities in childhood, to overcome disadvantages. It is also extremely important to improve the availability and quality of education, social and health-care professionals, institutions and services related to children and families in this field.

It is also essential to encourage cooperation between the affected parties (children, families, professionals), which requires partnership, proper communication and, in many cases, understanding and acceptance of each another.

The description of the program

The primary target group for early childhood are children aged (0-5), of which 17.5 percent are estimated to live below the poverty threshold in Hungary. One fifth (19.7 percent) of 0-5-year-olds live in severe financial deprivation¹, ie. under conditions that are insufficient for their proper development and development of their abilities.

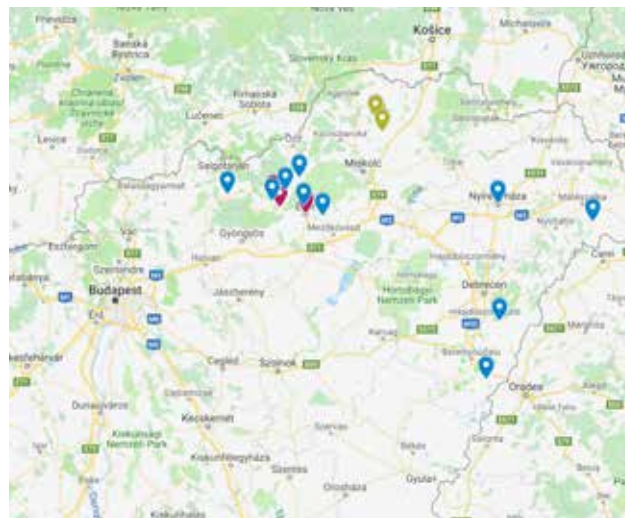
The European Union average is less than half (7.2 percent) of this. In Hungary, nearly one-third (31 percent) of the age group live in poverty or exclusion (the latter is an indicator not only of income and deprivation but also of parents' unfavorable labor market situation).² This represents 182,000 of the total child population of Hungary.

Our program is implemented in the marginalized area of North-Eastern Hungary, where we provide approximately HUF 3.1 million (of cca. 10,000 EUR) non-refundable grants per project for 12 local civil society organizations working for the Roma communities in severe poverty each year in order to provide complex services, to carry out programs in early childhood development and to improve and expand their competences and professional toolkits in the field of ECD.

The supported organizations implement their programs in 16 municipalities in Heves, Borsod-Abaúj Zemplén, Hajdú-Bihar, Nógrád and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties.

The primary target group of the program is 0-8 year-old Roma children with disadvantaged backgrounds, (especially in the 0-5 age range). In a broader sense, however, the targeted children, their families and the whole community are the beneficiaries of the program. Our annual program contributes to early childhood development for nearly 400-500 children less than 8 years of age, living in difficult conditions, in disadvantaged settlements or areas. Within the framework of 12 granted projects, regular skill development programs, excursions and camps are organized for children which are unavailable or hardly available to them in these rural areas.

Parent and family involvement is also an important part of the program: parents' clubs have been established in many settlements. In addition to this, programs help parents gain access to information and services about child-care and education.



Project implementers are also making serious efforts to break discriminatory and exclusionist stereotypes about Roma people.

Within the framework of this program, the staff and volunteer members of the supported organizations can attend professional training courses and study tours abroad.

Our long-term goal is to contribute to the social inclusion of disadvantaged children living in extreme poverty and of the excluded Roma communities.



¹ The indicator is the part of the indicator system of the EU2020 Strategy. Severely materially deprived persons have living conditions severely constrained by a lack of resources, they cannot afford at least 4 out of 9 deprivations items: 1) to pay rent or utility bills, 2) keep home adequately warm, 3) face unexpected expenses, 4) eat meat, fish or a protein equivalent every second day, 5) a week holiday away from home, 6) a car, 7) a washing machine, 8) a colour TV, 9) a telephone. <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database> The indicator is part of the indicator system of the EU2020 Strategy

² Percentage of persons in the general population who are affected by one or more of the relative income poverty, severe material deprivation or very low work intensity. <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>

Vazdune Cherhaja - Rising Stars Roma Women Association Jasmine Toy Library of Nagyecsed



The organization operates in Nagyecsed, one of the most peripheral cities of the Northern Great Plain region, in which cca. one third of the population is Roma.

The purpose of the Association is to promote the integration of disadvantaged Roma people through social, cultural, and educational activities, healthy lifestyle education programs, fun activities, talent development, environmental education, children and youth programs, by organizing and implementing employment promotion programs.

Factors that negatively affect the normal early childhood development and school success of disadvantaged children living in the settlement, and socio-cultural disadvantages are accumulating.

Throughout their program, they facilitate early childhood development for disadvantaged 0-8 year-old, primarily Roma children, improving parenting competencies and promoting the inclusion of families. To this end, they operate

a so-called Toy Library, where they hold children's activities and toys can be borrowed freely so that they can be used by families at home.

For mothers, they organize Tales classes, where moms meet weekly, read a book together, and discuss the lessons of the story. After that, mothers' read the books to their children during the evenings. In a later stage of the project, moms write their own stories. In addition to the individual competence development of the participating mothers, their parental role is strengthened and through joint activities the parent-child relationship is also enhanced, facilitating the early development of children.

In addition to spending leisure time usefully, family days also promote community development and the inclusion of disadvantaged families.

The Igazgyöngy Foundation

Three in One: Baby Mom, Speech Therapy, Tanoda - Implementing Three Programs in Told



The Foundation, established in 1999, is dedicated to talent development, with special reference to disadvantaged Roma children, but they also do field work in the spirit of creating opportunities.

Their complex program is based on three pillars: education, family care, community development, and inter-institutional cooperation. Education covers Art School, Teaching Center of Told, Baby-Mommy Club and Adult Education. The second pillar includes crisis management (e.g. food donation, pediatric drug program), job creation, community development programs, self-sustaining skills development (e.g. bio briquette, program, Szuno project). They also attach importance to the Social Roundtable, where the Roma community is also involved in the discussions. The main location for this development is Told, a small dead-end village of 300 people but its various elements are already used in 16 settlements.

They are running their project at the Toldi Tanoda (Teaching Center of Told), where nearly 35 disadvantaged Roma children attend leisure and development activities. Due to low education level of parents, housing conditions and the lack of certain kindergarten services, children start the school with a high backlog. A program series (Baby-Mommy Club, Preparatory Activities for School (Pre-School Sessions), and Group Speech Therapy Program) have been launched, offering a variety of developmental activities for age 0-8. At the Baby-Mummy Club, young moms can gain useful practical knowledge on parenting and life management issues. They cook together while they learn games, tales, and nursery rhymes with the children. During the Pre-School Sessions, every child receives personalized development through visual aids. In speech therapy sessions, professionals deal with children individually under the coordination of a speech therapist.

This triple program aims to develop parenting competences, to implement Children's Early Childhood Development to help them get into school and in the long run give them school career, access to further education, opportunities for future employment, and adult life.

Abacus Workshop Association

Cháchi Ody (With a pure heart)



The main activity of the organization is Children's Theatre, dramatic education to develop the skills, abilities and personality of children and adolescents (young people) and young adults from 5 years to 26 with the aid of art.

There are a number of disadvantaged and marginalized young people in their groups, who have behavioral learning disabilities or social adaption difficulties. Through their work, the members of this Association create communities both children with problems and their contemporaries with a harmonious family background can find their place and develop their dormant creativity and hidden talent. Not only do they deal with acting, movement culture, singing lessons, speech technics, but also other arts, environmental issues, nature protection, drug prevention, self-knowledge, stress-relieving techniques, career guidance, organizing excursions, and acquiring social skills.

The location of the project is the Roma Kindergarten of Hosszúpályi. The social and socio-cultural situation of the children enrolled here justifies the complex development and talent management as much as possible. Within regular activities, their project develops the skills and abilities of kindergarten children through the means of theatre pedagogy, physical education and physical activities, helping them to socialize and developing positive hygiene and lifestyle habits. The goal is to provide a firm foundation for these kindergarten children to get into school.

During the program, a useful methodology is developed and passed on to the kindergarten teachers; there is also a monthly Parent Club where parents process different topics interactively under the guidance of professionals.

Give me your hand! Association for the Promotion of Equal Opportunities in Education and the Labor Market

Community Tale



The Tiszavasvári-based Association is committed to providing assistance and programs based on real needs for disadvantaged Roma people.

Collaboration and common thinking are crucial within the organization. They consider it important that Roma people become really active participants of their own programs. Their project of Nyíregyháza targets low-income families with small children living in the settlement called Huszár-telep, where the dissemination of early childhood development is important and necessary.

Their main goal to achieve is to provide all children with the facilities for quality playing and developmental opportunities, help them in their early socialization and physical, mental, emotional development, and in the long run, their achievement of school maturity.

At the heart of the program, parents attending with their children at “Storytelling Moms” classes each week receive a storybook they can take with them to continue to talk about at home.

The key element of this program is storytelling. In the Toy Library, children can play high quality games with their siblings and parents to help them develop their creativity and personality. In ‘Playtime’ parenting sessions, the goal is that parents with young children understand the important role of joint play in children’s development. Working directly with children and their parents, helps identify problems early, helps in the acceptance and success of the program.

The Roma Self-Help Association of Cserehát

KidSmile



Established in 2007, the Association organizes community-building programs in the local community center, as well as outings for children, especially for those living in Tomor.

Their members are qualified non-profit managers, so they can provide professional assistance for the so-called start-up organizations. They help established 12 other associations in the county. Their long-term goals include of a 'Roma Resources Center', which could act as a regional management office, bringing resources, jobs and trainings to the area. They also help the illiterate. Organization members also played an important role in the establishment of the Roma Independent News Agency of Cserehát.

Their project aims to launch collaboration between local families in Tomor, Lak, and Homrogd, allowing them to help one another, be better prepared for parenting. In order to build capacities for early childhood development a "Family Day care" has been set up with the help of

local governments, which offers programs for disadvantaged children and their parents on weekends.

Due to the limited availability of physiotherapists and mental health services locally, the program provides regular professional development to local families with the involvement of external professionals.

In many cases, young mothers are not fully prepared for the role of motherhood, so they hold developmental sessions in parenting /child rearing care to local families during the program.

They make their personal meetings complete with online counselling: they have created a Facebook group, in which moms can feel free to ask about their problems, be it parenting, administration, or legal issues.

In regular gastronomy club, young parents receive housekeeping and cooking tips during joint cooking, but these common occasions help to prevent mothers isolating from others and develop their own culture of mutual support.

The SZETA Eger Foundation - Fund for Supporting the Poor

Lets'go together! The 5th Pupil Network in Felnémet



For many decades, the Foundation has been working to promote the social inclusion and mobility of people (especially Roma people) living in poverty.

They work with settlement families on a daily basis. In 1998, they established a settlement-type community center at Béke-telep (suburb of Eger), ensuring their permanent presence and accessibility.

Local Roma women were involved in the work of the community center. Most of them also worked as volunteers in the organization and implementation of the program.

In 2006, they started working in other communities with Roma people living in extreme poverty and segregation and professionally managed ghetto eradication programs in Szomolya, Sály, and Sirok.

Since 2011, development activities have been launched in 7 disadvantaged small settlements and settlement-type community centers were established that became the center of village life.

In 2013, the "Northern Hungary Settlement Network" was established, which currently includes 16 CSOs

from 13 settlements, mainly made of Roma people, with the aim of helping their social inclusion, especially children and young people.

These CSOs are continuously assisted in their work and fundraising activities through human resource development and knowledge transfer.

The aim of their project is to develop the skills and knowledge of children born and raised in a settlement called Béke-telep in Eger / Felnémet to make up for disadvantages they bring from home.

They deal with 4-8 years-olds intensively (4 afternoons per week), developing their skills by using various methods and techniques and expanding their knowledge and awareness.

In addition, children aged 0-3 receive motor (physical) and cognitive skills development in order to prevent problems in school. Parents are also actively involved into these programs.

As a result of the project, it is expected that the involved children will perform much better at school. They would like to monitor them for years with learning support activities.

The Laskó-Spring Association

Let's play and learn together!



Founded in 2013, the Laskó-Spring Association operates in Hevesaranyos, a dead-end village of 590, organizing programs and providing services for the local community, a significant part of which involve poor or/and Roma people.

Their aim is to create a strong local community that can influence and shape the development of the settlement. They receive continuous professional support from the SZE-TA Eger Foundation. The project helps disadvantaged parents and children to develop their skills and expand their knowledge. There are regular activities for children in two age groups: with the 0-3-year-olds they play movement and dexterity games and they base 4-8-year-olds' success on school by developing their visual representation, language expression and memory, mathematical skills, attention/concentration skills. A summer camp

is organized for children aged 6 to 8, where they are taught to swim, among other activities.

The aim of Young parents' and pregnant moms' biweekly group is to expand knowledge of parenting and to strengthen parenting competences, becoming a self-motivated group. Through family care, they help parents manage their daily problems. They also organize Family Day as a special event where parents and children can play together. These programs that address the entire village strengthen community cohesion and develop the local community at the same time.

The Szomolya Hungarian-Roma Association

Rocking you, my girl!



The organization was founded in 2015 on the basis of a local Roma initiative with the aim of improving the quality of life, social mobility opportunities of Roma people, representing their interests, and mediating between them and the non-Roma society (decision makers of the settlement).

Most of their members are local Roma who consider it important to improve their own situation and that of their community. They operate a community center in Szomolya, providing regular services to local families and organizing leisure and community programs. A ghetto eradication program was implemented at the Szomolya cave dwellings and in cooperation with the municipality of Sály. Garbage collecting and cleaning activities were organized in abandoned cellar houses, by which they managed to mobilize the entire Roma community. With the aid of the entire community, the Roma and non-Roma residents alongside a few volunteers, they managed to completely renovate a 'cellar-house' (small, dug-out areas in cliff sides were traditionally very impoverished members of a community would reside). This was done with the aim of restoring it for the community, preserving a part of their tradition and just adding a little more 'life' into the area. They are in a long-lasting professional relationship with the SZETA Eger Foundation.

Szomolya is located in the southern part of Heves County. It is located 20 kilometers from Eger. The population of the village is around 1,600, of which slightly less than one-third is Roma. Most of them have low educational levels, are unemployed and typically live in poor housing conditions. Most of their young people drop out of school and they take their first, second or even third children at a very young age. Young Roma mothers have a very little knowledge of the different stages of child development, a child's age characteristics and needs. In most cases, they know less about those tools and techniques that can help the development of child's cognitive activity and exploration skills. Therefore, the program launched a regular parenting group, in which moms can learn a lot about parenting through group discussions and empower themselves to be more aware of their children's activity. The program also includes regular family assistance, social administration, playhouse activities and family day events.

The Association of Village Builders in Bükkszentmárton

Children's Island



The organization was founded in 2013 in Bükkszentmárton (population: 320) in the Bélapátfalva district of Heves County.

One third of the population in the village is Roma. This settlement is characterized by extreme poverty, high unemployment and the lack of services and institutions. The aim of the organization is to develop the village. They hold regular Round Tables to discuss local problems and to plan their future together with the village leadership. They organize many programs: leisure activities, Children's day, Santa Claus Celebration, flea markets, quiz shows and May Day picnics. The members of the association not only have put in a lot of voluntary work programs, but they also contributed to their success with their own money. In the absence of local institutions, children have to go to other settlements for kindergarten and school to learn, so parents have no daily personal contact with teachers and educators.

In order to promote the proper development of children, their program should be focused on developing on children's abilities and parents' parenting competences. The aim of the project is to help the children to catch up and make the children succeed with regular development sessions by age groups and a summer camp providing childhood development.

They also organize regular group work and training sessions for parents and young adults, where they can expand their knowledge and skills in parenting and child-rearing. Family day events provide an opportunity for the family to spend quality time together and volunteering through programs contribute to the development of the community.

The Association for Community Developers and Local Social Researchers Animator Network for Roma Youth



The Association has provided assistance for the establishment of several CSOs in Eger and with the involvement of Roma Intelligentsia; they participated in a nationwide survey of Roma settlements.

They work with disadvantaged groups, especially Roma and people living in extreme poverty in several small settlements in Heves County (Szajla, Terpes, Pély, Erk, Tarnalesz, Szentdomonkos, Bükkszenterzsébet.)

They work with extensive knowledge: their members include social workers, social educators, IT professionals, Roma community developers, economists and architects. Studies were conducted among people living in poverty, and a communication training program was organized for youth groups. An Animator Network for Roma Youth has been set up, and its members have been given expertise in community organizing.

Their project aims to empower active Roma women and young people living in small settlements to participate in the capabilities building of Roma children. They hold training sessions for women and youngsters coming from 8-10 settlements and based on the knowledge they gain here, they become capable of holding sessions for children in their own settlement.

Another key element of the program is a pre-school group for children launched in the village of Egerbakta and led by a social educator with the constant involvement. Play and competition-based activities improve children's skills and make parent-child relationships better. Meanwhile, a community of mutual assistance has also been formed, in which it is vital that members understand and accept one another.

The Pearl of Tarna Association

Tales from Szajla



The Association was founded to improve Roma people's ability to assert their interests of Ószajla.

Their aim is to promote the improvement of the social and employment of the people living there and to achieve results in the development and improvement of the settlement. Recently, a lot of energy has been invested in community organization, and so, many programs were organized the Day of Szajla, Children's day, Sports Day and May Day. They can rely on their members and volunteers in organizing programs and common thinking. Their members include poor and non-poor, Roma and non-Roma people, but the vast majority of them are Roma people living in Ószajla. Their establishment was encouraged by the "Seven Villages – One Network" anti-poverty program affecting several settlements in the vicinity. Currently, they are receiving professional support from the Settlement Network of Northern Hungary.

There are no public institutions, so children go to other settlements for kindergarten and school. Experience in recent years that children face difficulties in completing primary school; most of them do not finish their secondary education because of school failures. Their aim is to ensure proper foundation for those skills that are required for good school performance. They hold development sessions on different topics for children aged 2-6, while parents edit and illustrate a storybook and learn about the age-specific characteristics and needs of children. In development camp for summer, children together with their parents create, talk and act together. During the program, they welcome the whole community to the Family Day events, where parents actively participate in quiz shows, social games, and joint cooking.

The Association of Roma Minority Representatives and Speakers of Nógrád County

Teensy-Weensy People



The main goal of the organization is to provide support out of school children (oosc) and leisure activities for socially disadvantaged children and young people.

They run an after school activities support program (the so-called tanoda) in Bátonyterenye, Kisterenye and operate a school network in Mátraverebély and Lucfalva. The children and their families living here are struggling with many problems, with the high level of unemployment acting as the catalyst for the vast majority of the social issues in the area. For a child, the Tanoda is not only a place for learning and spending leisure time, but also for warming up and eating.

In many cases, the organization runs family programs, where the family can spend quality time together forget about their problems for a few hours. In addition to this, they started teaching music; a volunteer program has been launched. They conduct a complex rehabilitation program for people living in settlement environment. The organization provides a possibility of serving a sentence (for

those who sentenced to community services) and help the prisoners settle their cases, supporting their environment.

The aim of their project is to help young children from disadvantaged families in Mátraverebély and Lucfalva to develop their physical, mental and social development to have an equal opportunity to start school with their contemporaries from better social conditions.

The program does not focus its attention only on the children, but working with parents is also a key element, creating a supportive community, in which children can grow and develop according to their age. They hold rocking activities for the youngest and their mothers, where moms can learn lullabies, nursery rhymes and games they can play and sing at home with their children. In addition to this, they hold Baby-Mommy club activities for preschoolers and their parents, where parents can get help from professionals and one another, while kids can play a variety of games. The Story Circle takes place with the active involvement of parents. The entire family listens to stories together and read them to their children, there is also a place to rent storybooks.

The main results of the first period of the program



12 PROJECTS
12 SUPPORTED
ORGANIZATIONS

16 PROJECT
IMPLEMENTATION
PLACES



376 CHILDREN
IN REGULAR
PROGRAMMES

56
COMMUNITY
PROGRAMS



157 PARENTS
IN REGULAR
PROGRAMMES

48 WEEKS OF
CONSTANT
ACTIVITIES



9 TRAININGS

5 CAMPS



4 EXCURSIONS/
TRIPS

Presentation of the Carpathian Foundation as the owner of the program

CARPATHIAN FOUNDATION – HUNGARY

Member of the International Carpathian Foundation Network

www.karpatokalapitvany.hu
www.carpathianfoundation.org
www.romanet.hu

Established in 1995 within an international framework, then registered in Hungary as an independent organization in 2002, the mission of the Carpathian Foundation is to improve quality of life of the people living in the Carpathian region, to preserve the social, ethnic, cultural and natural values of the region, to support its sustainable development, especially in border regions.



The Foundation engages in grant-making programs through restricted call for proposals, development programs to support disadvantaged rural areas and communities, carrying out projects and awarding scholarships.

Since our establishment, we have donated nearly \$ 16 million to municipalities and hundreds of non-profit, non-governmental organizations.

The main strategic objective of the Foundation is to develop the region's human resources and to reduce poverty and social exclusion in the interests of development of deprived rural areas, disadvantaged communities and minorities.

The main objectives of our current programs are to support initiatives by NGOs and local communities operating in disadvantaged rural areas, and vulnerable groups and disadvantaged young people, raising public awareness.

Special thanks to Judit Scsavnyiczki and Vincent Boone for their help to make this brochure available in English!

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Websites and project proposals of the supported nonprofit organizations, 2019



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