

Fostering inclusion for the Roma

Context

A significant portion of the population is at risk of poverty and social exclusion in most Eastern European countries. The Roma are among those most affected in this regard. Compared to the majority population of the respective country, they experience an above-average incidence of poverty and joblessness and have a significantly lower level of education. Roma communities often have limited access to public institutions and services such as education and medical care, as well as to public infrastructure like electricity, water or sewage disposal.

In many countries of Eastern Europe, anti-gypsyism and discrimination are among the leading reasons why efforts at social inclusion had so far failed.

In the new phase of the Eastern Europe regional programme, HEKS/EPER is therefore focusing more on combating anti-gypsyism and discrimination. In the preceding programme phase, models for inclusive education, job market access and for improved living conditions were successfully developed and will be continued and embedded in local institutions.

Objectives, priorities, activities

The aim of the regional programme is for Roma and other disadvantaged people to be able to enjoy the same rights and opportunities as the majority population and to participate actively in society.

The aim is to secure for Roma minorities and other disadvantaged population groups the same access to public infrastructure and services as the majority population through advocacy work. Roma children are being integrated into the existing education system and nurtured at the appropriate level. Thanks to extra tuition, active parental involvement, school development projects in primary schools and





a secondary school scholarship programme for young people, ever more young Roma are completing mandatory schooling. This enhances their prospects of employment and a steady income. The regional programme also aims to secure better housing for the affected population. In close cooperation with municipal authorities and local communities, settlements and houses are being legalised, refurbished and connected to public infrastructure.

To combat structural discrimination, anti-gypsyism is being mainstreamed and discussed institutionally, among service providers and in public. Roma communities are simultaneously being empowered to recognize and report discriminatory practices.

Target groups

The beneficiaries of project activities include underprivileged population groups and especially Roma communities in Kosovo, Serbia, Romania, Hungary, southern Slovakia and in the Transcarpathian region of Ukraine.

Partnerships, networks, alliances, memberships

In Kosovo HEKS/EPER works with the following entities: Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians (VoRAE), Roma Education Fund (REF), Terre des hommes Lausanne, and Skat St. Gallen. The partner organisation in Serbia is the "Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization" (EHO), which is also supported by "Skat" St. Gallen. In Romania HEKS/EPER works with the FAER Foundation, Diakonia Christian Foundation, Filantropia Alba Julia, and the Resource Centre for Roma Organisations CRCR. In Hungary, Slovakia and the Ukraine, HEKS/EPER works with the local Reformed Church.

HEKS/EPER on the ground

HEKS cooperates directly with local partners. Work in Romania is under the responsibility of a coordination office there.

Topics and working approach

Priority fields of action are advocacy and outreach work, education, housing improvement, job market access, and encouraging participation and civil society engagement.

HEKS/EPER also fosters regional cooperation between its partner organizations and other stakeholders and networks so as to further develop and share innovative approaches and to undertake joint networking and lobbying at the European level and in the region.

Region:

Kosovo, Romania, Serbia, Hungary

HEKS/EPER No.: 302.013

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