

The North-Vest Network for the participation of marginalized Roma communities in the elaboration, implementation and monitoring of local public policies for inclusive development (N-V NPRP)

FOUNDING DOCUMENT

12.04.2014.

The North-Vest Network for the participation of marginalized Roma communities in the elaboration, implementation and monitoring of local public policies for inclusive development (N-V NPRP, Romanian acronym RPRP N-V) is an informal civic and academic network created in April 2014.

FOUNDER MEMBERS OF N-V NPRP¹

Foundation Desire, Cluj

Foundation Ruhama, Oradea

Association Equal Opportunities, Zalău

Humanitarian Association Together for Them, Baia Mare

Community Association of Roma from Coastei, Cluj

Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca: Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, and the Faculty for European Studies

COLLABORATORS OF N-V NPRP²

Association Romano Butiq from Bucharest

POSSIBLE PARTNERS FROM THE REGION³

National Agency for Roma - Nord-Vest Bureau

North-Vest Regional Development Agency

Regional Pact for Employment and Social Inclusion

Prefectures and County Councils

City Halls and Local Councils

¹ The Network remains open towards other organizations and institutions from the North-Vest Region that want to join it as members.

² The Network remains open towards other organizations and institutions that wish joining it as collaborators from outside the North-Vest Region.

³ These potential partners will be contacted as follows, and the cooperation with them will be agreed on mutually defined criteria. The Network remains open towards other possible partners/supporters.

PRIOR EXPERIENCES OF THE NETWORK'S FOUNDER MEMBERS

The civic organizations, founder members of the N-V NPRP, have extensive and long experience in research and social action in the field of social inequalities, gender and ethnic relations, social and territorial marginalization, human rights, social services, and community development viewed critically in their broader socio-economic and political context. This experience materialized in:

- various anthropological and sociological investigations, academic and other types of publications and programs on these topics, campaigns and other forms of activism against nationalism, racism, sexism, classism and social exclusion, elaboration of policy recommendations regarding housing and socio-territorial inclusion, community facilitation (*Desire Foundation*, established in 1996);⁴
- actions to increase the quality of life of individuals and communities who are facing different social risks, the development of integrated models of intervention to solve the problems of social exclusion, which are promoted as viable solutions for public authorities and private organizations, provision of social services for the disadvantaged, community development, social economy, vocational training and school education (*Ruhama Foundation*, established in 1996);⁵
- activities in multiethnic communities with Roma population, actions strengthening democratic institutions based on respect for citizens' rights, monitoring acts of discrimination against Roma, awareness raising campaigns, actions for school desegregation, development programs in healthcare, civic education, human rights, gender equality, organizing local/community action groups to increase the civic participation of Roma (*Association Equal Opportunities*, founded in 2000);⁶
- providing humanitarian aid and social services to persons, families, social groups and communities in situations of difficulty and marginalization/exclusion, development programs assisting people in crisis situations, like the elderly, the disabled, or the unemployed, running inclusive education programs and volunteer programs, community facilitation to improve partnership between vulnerable Roma communities and local government (*Humanitarian Association Together for Them*, founded in 2010);⁷
- organizational development as grassroots Romani association, community mobilization in order to support demands towards local and national authorities regarding the community evicted from Coastei street, and other individuals and groups under the risk of evictions, participation on local and international activist actions (*Community Association of Roma from Coastei*, founded in 2012).⁸

⁴ www.desire-ro.eu

⁵ <http://www.ruhama.ro/ro/>

⁶ http://www.cdep.ro/informatii_publice/ong.chest_aprobate?f_idc=980

⁷ <http://www.impreunapentruei.ro/>

⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/patacluj>, și <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Asociatia-Comunitara-a-Romilor-din-Coastei/572715146094237>

The academic institutions, founder members of the N-V NPRP, namely the Faculty of European Studies, and the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work at Babes- Bolyai University from Cluj-Napoca, through their academic staff, provided several analyses on Romanian and UE social and public policies relevant to the topic of the Network, and as well as field research on socio-territorial exclusion and marginalization,⁹ school performance,¹⁰ access to healthcare¹¹ and school education,¹² and participated in drafting the chapter proposal "Cluj 2020 - inclusive city"¹³ for the 2014-2020 Development strategy of Cluj-Napoca.

In 2013, Foundation Desire for Social Reflection and Openness from Cluj, in partnership with Ruhama Foundation from Oradea, Association Equal Opportunities from Zalau, Humanitarian Association Together for Them from Baia Mare, Community Association of Roma from Coastei - Cluj, Association Romano Butiq from Bucharest, with the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work and the Faculty of European Studies at the Babes- Bolyai University of Cluj- Napoca, and with the Cluj-Napoca City Hall developed the project "POLROM N-V" – THINK TANK AND CIVIC NETWORK FOR ROMA POLICIES IN THE NORTH-VEST DEVELOPMENT REGION. The project was submitted as a proposal to the NGO Fund in Romania.¹⁴ It aimed at developing two new structures of the institutionalized civil society, whose beneficiaries could have been organizations, citizens and public institutions. Through this project we wanted to create a participatory model of analysis, elaboration and promotion of local and trans-local policies whose contents concerned sustainable and inclusive development because it could generate institutional changes in connection with the most vulnerable social groups, that is Roma communities, subsumed to socio-territorial marginalization, including their rasialized stigmatization by the majority society. The think tank and civic network created and consolidated by the project were supposed being a novelty in the Romanian public sphere due to the fact that they could decentralize the public policy expertize coagulated til now at the central level or in the country capital, and capitalize it at the level of the North-Vest Development Region, disseminating recommendations and models that might be used as well as in other regions and by central public authorities. The project was not proposed for funding by the FDSC, the administrator of the Norwegian funds in this area.

Under these conditions, based on their individual local activities and previous collaborations, but also on their networking intentions expressed by the above mentioned project, Foundation Desire, Foundation Ruhama, the Association Equal Opportunities, the Humanitarian Association Together for Them, and the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, and the Faculty of European Studies at the Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj -Napoca created in April 2014 the N-V NPRP. They decided to start the Network activities on a voluntary basis. The NV NPRP called the Community Association of Roma from Coastei among its founder members, and it benefits from the very beginning from the support of an organizational collaborator from outside our region, Association Romano Butiq from Bucharest.

⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/patacluj>, și <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Asociatia-Comunitara-a-Romilor-din-Coastei/572715146094237>

¹⁰ http://www.ccdcluj.ro/Preuniversitaria/V52012/Plen/Maria%20Roth_Plen.pdf

¹¹ http://www.ispmn.gov.ro/uploads/ISPMN_29_x_to_web.pdf

¹² www.edumigrom.eu

¹³ http://cmpg.ro/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Clujul_incluziv_13_febr2014_FINAL.pdf

¹⁴ <http://www.desire-ro.eu/?p=701>

THE NETWORK'S DOMAIN OF ACTIVITY

Analysis of public policies regarding local (inclusive) development, elaboration of policy recommendations, and facilitation of the participation of marginalized Roma communities on conceiving, implementing and monitoring development programs/projects.

VISION

Inclusive local economic and social development that assures the equal access of all Roma communities, regardless of their social status, assumed cultural traditions and identity options, to decent public services, and as well as their participation in the creation and administration of public resources and decision-making on issues concerning them.

OBJECTIVES

The production and dissemination of vision and know-how as regards solutions responding to diverse local situations and contexts, through connecting local grassroots knowledge with the so-called expert knowledge including the expertise of institutionalized civil society and academics, local public administration, regional, national, European or international institutions.

LOCAL ACTORS WHOM WE ACT WITH

Roma and non-Roma communities

Civil society (NGOs) and other organizations implementing social inclusion projects or development programs

Public institutions and local authorities, including structures created for Roma representation

LOCAL SITUATIONS ADDRESSED BY THE NETWORK

Urban and rural impoverished and marginal districts/settlements that need targeted investments for development in order to solve complex problems of precarious housing, poor public infrastructure, multiple deprivation, insecurity and stigmatization.

Marginalized compact Roma communities that have unequal access to the existing resources of the broader local community in the domains of education, employment, housing/ infrastructure, health, social services, public administration.

Cases of spatial concentration of marginalized Roma groups resulted from socio-territorial exclusion.

Cases of residential segregation that know different degree of isolation from or connectedness to the rest of the locality and are characterized by multiple material deprivations and cultural stigmatization.

Diverse local Roma communities displaying different levels of self-organization and expression of their needs/claims/identity options.

Reduced participation of these communities in the life of the broader society on its various dimensions (social, economic, cultural, politic, and administrative).

The need to be informed about up-to-date normative acts and legislation on housing, employment, school education, healthcare, anti-discrimination, ethnic minorities, social marginalization etc, and on their harmonization so that they could sustain the efforts of marginalized Roma communities to exercise their socio-economic, political-civic and cultural-linguistic rights.

THE APPROACH SUPPORTED BY THE NETWORK

Recognizing the necessity of inclusive local public policies that are politically assumed by the local councils and city halls and are supported from the local budget. Instead of various uncorroborated local projects based exclusively on absorbing external funds, we support integrated, sustainable local strategies of inclusion, that are co-financed by local governments.

Identification of the most suitable solutions for a given local context, based on consulting with and learning from those who are directly experience these local realities.

Linking short-term urgent solutions with medium and long-term plans

Integrated approach:

- recognizing the multidimensionality of social exclusion, taking an intersectional analytic approach and tackling exclusion by the means of integrated measures
- promoting social justice by connecting cultural recognition, economic redistribution and political-civic participation of people and groups assuming and affirming their Roma identity;
- promoting a social, economic and territorial development based on the integrated system of human rights;
- connecting civil society mobilization against anti-Roma prejudices and racism with larger societal concerns on social, economic, cultural and political issues;
- involving diverse local actors in the production of knowledge about local situations, and in the processes of conceiving, assessing and monitoring the impact of social interventions on the affected communities;
- linking up mainstreaming and targeting policy measures that explicitly but not exclusive involve the Roma;
- acting in and with local Roma communities (the empowerment of the community, and in particular of the most vulnerable internal categories), the majority society (creating anti-racist solidarity around joint platforms claiming conditions for *de facto* practicing socio-economic rights), and local authorities (accountability for taking up integrated policies for cohesive and inclusive development).

Equality mainstreaming¹⁵ - a model for social inclusion policies that:

- identifies the structural causes of social inequalities and acts on them (historical, economic, legislative, political, administrative, and cultural causes);
- introduces complex policy actions with transformative effects at the level of causes of (intersectional) inequalities, which proceed on top of both the policy model regarding equal treatment and assurance of formal equality, and that ensuring of affirmative measures dedicated to the improvement of the opportunities of vulnerable groups;
- connects actions for gender equality to those for social equality based on the recognition and respect towards ethno-cultural differences assumed by individuals and groups.

¹⁵Concept discussed in the *TOOLKIT on Programming the European Union Funds for Roma Inclusion in 2014-20*, elaborated by OSI/MtM, March 2014

ACTIVITIES AND ESTIMATED RESULTS OF THE NETWORK

1. Professional-institutional development of the Network and the promotion of local and regional good models in policy elaboration, implementation and monitoring
2. Collection of inter-connected laws, normative acts, administrative procedures affecting diverse domains of life (education and training, housing, healthcare, employment, public administration, discrimination, etc)
3. Guide of working models as what regards finding and implementing solutions of problems in local contexts (including the description of contexts and problems, activities and results, means of quality assessment, etc)
4. Assistance for local authorities regarding the elaboration, implementation and monitoring of public policies for marginalized Roma communities framed through integrated policies (guides, trainings)
5. Participatory research as what regards the elaboration, implementation and monitoring of local public policies with the participation of the affected individuals and groups (designing the methodology; forming the local action groups with the participation of members/delegates of marginalized Roma communities; running participatory activities)
6. The assessment of the impact of development programs and projects on the targeted communities
7. Public communication on the identified local needs, activities and their results (towards authorities, the majority population, and Roma communities)
8. Recommendations for specific guides regarding funds for social inclusion (European Structural Funds, Norwegian funds, etc)
9. Proposals for legislative changes on national level (housing, social economy, national strategy for social inclusion, national strategy for the social inclusion of Roma etc)

ORGANIZATION

The founder members of the N-V NPRP take the role of coordinating some of the activities from above and, through their staff, depending on their interest and capacities, they will be involved in all the Network activities.

External collaborators are invited to take part in the activities of the Network according to their possibilities and interests, and to hold consultations with Network members on concrete matters.

Potential partner organizations may benefit from the resources of the Network and support the promotion of its actions.

Decisions on the objectives and activities of the Network will be taken consensually by the founder Network members.

During its first two years, the coordination of the Network will be assured by Foundation Desire, but later this institutional position might be fulfilled by other founder members as well, according to the consensual decision taken in the Network.

All the products of the Network are jointly owned by the members that contributed to their production (founder members, members joining later, collaborators and partners). The products will explicitly give credit to all those who contributed at their production.

The Network aims to share knowledge and experience with the larger public, to produce policy documents and good practice models as freely available public goods.

In order to distribute the results and outcomes of its activities, the N-V NPRP will make use of an online platform and of other means of communication.