



Report regarding Roma participation experience (A1)

Two focus-groups were held: one in Cluj-Napoca (05.02.2015) and one in Timișoara (12.02.2015), aiming at gathering information about previous Roma participation projects and experiences. A total of 19 participants attended this meeting (6 male and 13 females) (see lists of participants).

Focus-group meeting lasted for 1h45' and contained 5 phases:

- Phase (a) duration 10 minutes – explaining the general objectives of the project and of the current meeting;
- Phase (b) duration 20 minutes – introducing the participants;
- Phase (c) duration 50 minutes – personal experiences of the participants concerning Roma and projects;
- Phase (d) duration 15 minutes – interaction between participants, discussions
- Phase (e) duration 10 minutes – summarizing and consolidation of the information

Phase (a)

Participants were explained that PEER project is an international consortium of several partners (universities and NGOs) from Romania and Europe aiming at developing and sustaining participatory projects of young Roma or youth with disadvantaged socio-economical background. The success of the project depends on multiple factors, including their willingness to offer information on their previous experiences. A brief information sheet about the project with contact details of the Romanian team was given. They were explained that results of this meeting will be used in writing/developing a manual that is going to be tested throughout all the country-partners. Also, issues regarding anonymity and confidentiality were discussed (e.g. attendance sheet that needs to be signed will be used only for reporting the activity, but their names will not appear in the protocol).



Phase (b)

All the participants from Timișoara were recruited by mediation of West University of Timisoara. We submitted the requirements, and had little control of the people who actually attended. Therefore, out of the 10 participants, only 2 were Roma (one female highschool student and one male activist at Roma Party), 2 were graduate students (1 male and 1 female), and 6 were undergraduate social work students that were involved in different activities/projects with Roma during their studies (1 male and 5 females). The youngest participant was 16, and the oldest 47. The mean age of the participants was 23.8 years.

Participants from Cluj-Napoca, were recruited by Sergiu Raiu who mediated the relationship with the participants and sent electronic invitations. 9 young people attended, all of them having experience in working with children and young roma at different organizations. They are volunteers or professionals al Asociația pentru Incluziune Socială, Brigada Civică Cojocna, DGASPC or students at social work program.

Phase (c)

Roma in Timișoara faces a special situation. There are around 2100 roma person residing in Timișoara, and they are comprised into two main groups:

- *The rich ones* that are living in the city center in the building taken abusively after 1989. Participants described that many of the buildings in the historic city are taken by Roma and transformed in Roma houses (the legality they managed to do this is often questioned). Unlike Roma from the south part of the country or from Transylvania, Roma residing in Timișoara do not engage so often in street altercations or get in conflict with the authorities, the reason being the good relationships with key-persons from the City Hall or from the judicial system. The manner they managed to get the buildings is using other persons, lawyers or notaries, most of them having a double citizenship (Romanian-German). These roma living in the city center get public attention by the media when having different celebrations when they display the opulence.
- (2) *The poor ones* that are living at the edge of the city.



The biggest problem Roma population faces is discrimination on multiple levels: economic, school, health system.

There were several initiatives targeting Roma population:

- School after School (*Școala după școală*) aims at reducing early school abandonment rate by offering Roma children access to education facilities and programs. This program was a success and it is currently working in some public schools, but also is offered by some NGOs.
- Shoe box – is an initiative that was organized by social work student association and is in place every year around winter holidays.
- Roma Party Association Pro Europa offered several programs targeting Roma and appeared as the most important player on the market. It developed a program where they offered qualification or re-qualification in several areas and also supported Roma in finding a job. They also offer a program School after school for children and they help people having a music band
- Other active NGOs are SCOP, Bethany and Aeropagus, but the main problem is that there is a lack of solidarity among them.

Roma children and youth are involved in the activities of various NGO's, but the problem is that there are just a few institutions that specifically target them. Most of the activities involve support them in difficult situations.

Participants from Cluj-Napoca have a quite rich experience in working with Roma or young people. Participation is defined as involvement, openness and proper motivation. Proper motivation to get involved can be obtained by satisfying the immediate needs of the children (if at the end of activity they receive something, a prize, an excursion, they are more engaged). Another idea that emerges is that by always giving them or promising them

they will receive something, they will become dependent. Two initiatives appeared as important for the focus of our project/meeting:

- Cojocna* Civic Brigade is a civic initiative group of Romanian, Roma and Hungarian youth from Cojocna. It was founded in September 2014 and its members were trained in advocacy, civic involvement, human rights, and civic journalism. They are supported to develop at least 10 civic initiative aimed at improving the life of Cojocna community. So far they have three such initiatives in which they involved citizens of Cojocna (including children): planning street trash containers, public café (together with residents and representatives of local authority youth debated the priorities and the future development of the commune as they see it), and multicultural days (concerts, drawings, creative games etc.). they have a website where all their projects are public (<http://www.maimisto.ro/>).
- Association for Promoting Social Inclusion (APIS) has several projects targeting disadvantaged populations. At the moment they have a project called Closer to School aiming at promoting inclusive education for Roma children. A new project for two Roma communities that will soon start refers to providing basic health package. Their activities are also posted on their website (<https://apisromania.wordpress.com/>).

Phase (e)

The discussion held with participants from Timisoara highlighted the lack of targeted initiatives for Roma youth. There are a lot of prejudices and discrimination against them. The current project is seen as an opportunity to show the other that children can too get involved and produce a significant change in their life and in the life of other.

For participants from Cluj-Napoca, participation for (roma) children/youth means active involvement, but closely related to a certain type of rewards. The potential to participate is related to their desire to get involved, the presence of a person willing to listen and to offer them information and skills. The power of example is an important trigger for change.

* Cojocna is a commune near Cluj-Napoca



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL JUSTICE

Directorate A
Unit A.4: Programme management

PEER

Participation,
Experiences and
Empowerment for
Roma youth



Appendices

1. Attendance sheet

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