



European
Commission



EU ROMA
INTEGRATION AWARD
for the Western Balkans and Turkey

*Neighbourhood
and
Enlargement
Negotiations*

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Foreword



Johannes Hahn
European Commissioner
for European Neighbourhood Policy and
Enlargement Negotiations

Roma are one of Europe's largest ethnic minorities, with 10 to 12 million living in Europe. About 1 million of these live in the Western Balkans and 2.8 million in Turkey. They share a rich culture and history that is inextricably linked to Europe, but have also faced a long history of exclusion. Too many Roma are still victims of racism, discrimination, social exclusion or poverty, and improving this situation continues to be a key priority for the European Commission.

Investing in the inclusion, integration and empowerment of Roma – especially Roma youth and young adults – will make it possible for them to play an active role in the integration of their communities. They are not only great potential actors today; they are also the shapers of tomorrow. It is up to us, as European societies founded on values such as equality for all, to assume our responsibilities and safeguard the lives of all citizens without exception.

In 2014, the European Commission launched the EU Roma Integration Award for the Western Balkans and Turkey to raise awareness of the political importance of Roma integration as part of the enlargement process, to enhance the role of civil society, and to show the commitment of the European Commission to the social inclusion of Roma.

This year sees the celebration of the second edition of the EU Roma Integration Award. 13 projects have been recognised for their contributions to the inclusion, integration and empowerment of Roma children and young adults, who represent the future of their communities and are perhaps the best-placed to drive integration forward locally.

These projects have supported a range of activities including a theatre production, the establishment of a youth football club, music and dance workshops, and the awarding of scholarships and internships, leading to increased participation in society and the building of advocacy and self-esteem for all involved.

The great commitment shown by these organisations has already had a tangible impact on Roma integration and should inspire future efforts to continue the good work. By honouring these projects in line with EU principles, and by increasing their visibility and sustainability, we can help improve the lives of Roma communities across the Western Balkans and Turkey and empower them to become active members of their wider societies.

With this award, I am proud that the European Union is highlighting people committed to being today's and tomorrow's promoters of a more inclusive society, drawing on the strength and richness of all its members.

As a follow-up to the Roma Decade, the European Union launched the Roma Integration 2020 initiative¹ for the Western Balkans and Turkey in 2016. Based on the experience and results of the Decade, the initiative aims to build stronger Roma integration policies. The initiative is implemented with the support of the Regional Cooperation Council and co-funded with the Open Society Foundation. Together with partner countries, we are working to provide tangible results on the ground, to improve the social inclusion of Roma into society and to provide support to the most vulnerable groups.

The European Union is also providing substantial funds for social inclusion measures through the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance. Areas of special focus are measures to increase access to education and decrease drop-out rates, to foster employment opportunities, and to improve health and housing conditions, particularly by ensuring access to public services, civil documentation and registration.

¹<http://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/>

Albania

ARSIS, Social Organisation for the Support of Youth

Founded in 2006, ARSIS supports vulnerable and marginalised children, youth and women in Albania, particularly those from Roma communities. ARSIS operates a daily drop-in centre providing temporary accommodation and related services to children and mothers at immediate risk of harm.

Nominated project

Improved educational achievements of Roma and Egyptian 9th grade students and their follow up until high school graduation

Description

The project aims to decrease drop-out rates, boost enrollment and improve academic performance among Roma and Egyptian students in secondary and technical vocational schools in two regions of Albania. It accomplishes this by facilitating the enrollment processes for students, and providing scholarships and mentoring support in the build up to their final exams.

Achievements so far

- 120 students supported by scholarships during the first two years of the project
- 100 students supported each year through mentoring and tutoring
- 600 Roma families involved in the project each year

Find out more

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- 📘 ARSIS Social Organization for the Support of Youth



Institute of Romani Culture in Albania - IRCA

Established in 2011, the Institute of Romani Culture in Albania (IRCA) supports the Roma community by working to increase awareness of their identity and cultural heritage. The IRCA empowers youth, champions equal rights and promotes intercultural exchanges.

Nominated project

Roma mediators advocating for the effective implementation of the Roma Local Action Plan in the Fier Region

Description

The IRCA is active in monitoring the implementation of the Roma National and Local Action Plans, which support Roma integration. The project *Roma mediators* aimed to increase the participation, advocacy, leadership and monitoring capacities of local government, and the completion of internships in local institutions.

Mediator training was carried out to increase leadership skills and the ability of Roma youth to advocate at local institutions. IRCA also supported Roma youth to monitor and advocate for the effective implementation of the Local Action Plan in Fier.

Achievements

- 2 419 Roma supported with access to local institutions
- 50 young Roma community mediators trained, coached and supported
- Assistance provided by Roma community mediators to officials of the Fier Municipality
- 3 young Roma mediators served in liaison roles for various Roma community issues

Find out more

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- 📘 Instituti i Kultures Rome ne Shqiperi Irca



Bosnia and Herzegovina

Citizens Association for the promotion of Roma education - OTAHARIN

OTAHARIN, an NGO established in 2005, aims to increase the educational, social and economic integration of Roma within society. In particular, it focuses on the inclusion of Roma children in the country's educational system.

Nominated project

Sport for social change and education

Description

The project *Sport for social change and education* aims to improve the education and living conditions of vulnerable children through physical and creative activities, including its main project: the formation of Otaharin Football Club.

Using football to help children to overcome their obstacles, develop social skills and become included in society is seen as part of the process of social inclusion. The Otaharin Day Care Centre complements this process with additional classes to develop learning habits for vulnerable Roma and non-Roma children and raise awareness of hygiene and health risks.

Achievements so far

- 84 vulnerable Roma children supported through physical and creative activities
- Football club established with 40 children (of which 28 are Roma) participating three times per week
- 40 scholarships awarded and school materials provided to 36 vulnerable children
- 48 educational workshops, 24 hygiene workshops and 11 workshops with parents organised

Find out more

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- 📘 Otaharin



The Association of Young Psychologists

Founded in 2012, the Association of Young Psychologists is an NGO that encourages the personal and professional development of individuals in order to improve quality of life in the local community. Many of the association's projects focus on Roma children with disabilities in primary and secondary schools, helping them to develop their skills and positive emotional-social relations.

Nominated project

Education for All

Description

Education for All aims to increase enrolment, academic success and school attendance rates for all Roma children.

The project offers an 'extended stay' programme consisting of educational workshops and resources for children, as well as outreach to encourage parents to engage with their children's education. *Education for All* also provides training for teachers to help them support Roma children more effectively.

Achievements so far

- 51 Roma children and 56 Roma parents supported
- Enrolment rate of Roma children in primary schools increased by 40 %
- Retention rate of Roma children increased by 30 %
- School achievement rate increased by at least 30 %

Find out more

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The former
Yugoslav Republic
of Macedonia

Regional Roma Educational Youth Association - RROMA

Formed in 2007, the Regional Roma Educational Youth Association (RROMA) concentrates on youth empowerment and mobilisation through creativity, training and campaigning. The NGO's vision is for young people – including Roma – to promote positive values and actively participate in their communities.

Nominated project

Aids doesn't know about discrimination - Protect yourself!

Description

Sex is often considered a taboo theme among Roma communities, which can lead to low levels of awareness with regards to AIDS, HIV and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). RROMA carried out a survey to assess these awareness levels, with the aim of producing a database for healthcare institutions.

In parallel with the data collection, RROMA started an awareness-raising campaign about AIDS, HIV and STDs and promoted Roma girls as empowered individuals who could lead workshops for their peers on these subjects. In that sense, the awareness campaign was not only improving knowledge about STDs, but also encouraging young Roma to become agents of change in their communities.

Achievements

- 22 young Roma trained as peer educators and youth leaders
- HIV/AIDS awareness-raising workshops conducted in 22 communities and attended by an average of 245 young Roma aged 14 to 18 annually
- 4 400 questionnaires collected and processed assessing knowledge of STDs within the Roma communities

Find out more

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- 📘 RROMA



Roma Resource Centre

The Roma Resource Centre (RRC) is devoted to achieving a multi-ethnic and transparent society by supporting education, promoting the social inclusion of marginalised groups and strengthening the capacities of youth. Its activities are implemented in 36 primary schools in 18 municipalities around the country, with a total of 3 330 children participating in two school years.

Nominated project

Tutoring support for Roma children in primary education

Description

The project *Tutoring support for Roma children in primary education* helps to improve the retention rate and educational performance of Roma children in primary schools.

The project provides additional language and mathematics tutoring, and undertakes activities such as regular attendance monitoring to reduce the dropout rate of pupils. It also supports Roma families by offering educational materials and organising informal meetings to raise awareness of the importance of education.

Achievements so far

Out of the 1 830 Roma students involved in the project in one year:

- 63 % increased their knowledge of the native language
- 68 % increased their knowledge of mathematics
- 38 % fewer students dropped out

Find out more

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- 📘 Roma Resource Centre



Kosovo*

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Advancing Together

Advancing Together aims to create a stable environment for the inclusion of Roma in Kosovo by advocating for human rights and supporting cultural heritage. The NGO upholds the values of equality, inclusion, diversity and social justice, and promotes the educational and socio-economic development of all regardless of ethnicity, social status, religion or gender.

Nominated project

Roma Versitas Kosovo Programme

Description

The objective of the *Roma Versitas Kosovo Programme* is to improve academic performances and graduation rates among Roma in higher education all over Kosovo, while building the advocacy, self-esteem and identity of students.

Through its three Roma Versitas Student Resource Centres, the programme offers tutoring, peer mentoring, thematic workshops and training in foreign languages and information technology. 160 Roma students are expected to benefit from the project over the course of its lifetime.

Achievements so far

- 84 % of participating students successfully passed their exams
- 6 academic workshops developed, including on academic writing and project management
- 24 students successfully completed English/German language courses

Find out more

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- 📌 Advancing Together - AT



Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians

The Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians (VoRAE) is a Roma-led NGO that aims to make Kosovo a home of equal opportunities for all. The NGO supports the integration of Kosovo Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians into Kosovan society by advocating for their rights, living conditions and general situation.

Nominated project

After-School Support through Education Centres

Description

Through 15 Education Centres across Kosovo, the project *After-School Support* helps to include disadvantaged children in mainstream education, decrease school drop-out levels and increase academic performance.

The main activities supported by the centres include homework assistance, language courses and awareness-raising campaigns for parents.

Achievements so far

- 756 children aged 6-14 (48 % girls) supported by 28 full-time staff
- Primary school (92 %), lower secondary school (85 %) and upper secondary school (57 %) attendance rates for Roma children are significantly higher in Education Centre locations than the national average (85 %, 65 % and 30.5 % respectively)

Find out more

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Montenegro

NVO Mladi Romi-Herceg Novi – NGO Young Roma

Established in 2005, NVO Mladi Romi-Herceg Novi implements a number of national and regional programmes and projects aimed at resolving the legal status of Roma and improving their situation with regards to education, employment and housing. The organisation has one main goal: to ensure that all Roma men and women are equal and educated citizens of Montenegro.

Nominated project

Through Education to Integration

Description

The project *Through Education to Integration* supported the delivery of quality education for Roma children in the Herceg Novi Municipality.

By providing after-school classes for Roma children, the project helped to reduce school drop-out rates and improve the motivation and performance of the children involved. The project also held motivational workshops for parents in order to provide support and raise awareness of the importance of education.

Achievements

- School attendance improved for all 70 children directly benefiting from the project
- 1 888 classes and 32 workshops organised for children
- 24 workshops organised for parents

Find out more

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- 📘 Mladi Romi -Crna Gora



Serbia

Association of Roma of the Branicevo district

The Association of Roma of the Branicevo district is an NGO that aims to improve the lives of Roma while preserving their culture and traditions. Its programmes support integration by tackling discrimination and improving working and living conditions.

Nominated project

Support to educational inclusion of Roma at all educational levels and support to self-employment in Pozarevac – ‘Our right to live better’

Description

Our right to live better works to improve educational inclusion and reduce poverty by helping young Roma in the city of Pozarevac. The project supports educational inclusion for Roma children at all levels, as well as active employment inclusion for older Roma youth.

At elementary level this has led to the establishment of extracurricular activities and healthy nutritional habits, while high-school students have been supported through the provision of text books. Graduates have also benefited from business-related skills training and internship opportunities.

Achievements so far

- 60 elementary school children received mentoring support and offered extracurricular activities
- 10 Roma youth received informal training in business-related skills
- 30 Roma youth assisted through internships in public and private organisations

Find out more

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GRUBB Foundation

GRUBB (Gypsy Roma Urban Balkan Beats) has been supporting the social integration of Roma youth in Serbia through education, arts and culture since 2006. GRUBB aims to improve the academic attainment, employment prospects and social integration of Roma youth by giving them a voice and helping them to celebrate their unique cultural heritage.

Nominated project

GRUBB Centres

Description

The first GRUBB centre was established in 2006 to encourage Roma children to stay in school and improve their employment prospects by providing daily tutoring in all academic subjects at primary and secondary levels.

New centres have since been established with a greater emphasis on performing arts, which encourages creative expression through writing, photography and rap music. A GRUBB stage production has also performed in Europe and Canada, helping to promote a positive image of Roma youth culture.

Achievements so far

- More than 700 children and young adults supported in their education
- 96.4 % of GRUBB participants graduated from secondary school in 2015-2016
- The GRUBB show won The Audience Award at the Montreal Jazz Festival in 2011 and continues to tour the world

Find out more

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Turkey

Association for Supporting the Tarlabası Community

The Association for Supporting the Tarlabası Community was established in 2007, as part of the Tarlabası Community Centre (TTM) project in Turkey. The Association is responsible for running the TTM and provides educational, social and psychological support for the residents of the Tarlabası neighbourhood in Istanbul.

Nominated project

Empowerment of Syrian Dom Children

Description

Turkey has been experiencing an intense migration wave due to the war in Syria and the Tarlabası neighbourhood has welcomed a growing number of Syrian Kurds and Doms.

The project *Empowerment of Syrian Dom Children* aims to empower Dom children against discrimination and help them to integrate into their new home. The support provided includes Turkish language classes, psycho-social activities such as handcraft workshops, and peace-building activities involving both Dom and Turkish children.

Achievements so far

- 61 Dom children participated in at least one activity
- 32 Dom children participated in psycho-social support activities
- 53 children attended Turkish classes
- 122 children from Turkey participated in peace-building activities

Find out more

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- f TARLABAŞI TOPLUM MERKEZİ



Mediterranean Roma Associations Federation

The Mediterranean Roma Associations Federation (AKROMFED) was established in 2008 as a fusion of five Roma associations. AKROMFED drives solutions for Roma in the fields of education, employment, health, housing and cultural preservation.

Nominated project

Roma Women to Work, Their Children to Kindergarten

Description

Roma Women to Work, Their Children to Kindergarten was a pilot project that brought an innovative approach to helping young Roma women with children increase their independence and skills. AKROMFED opened a reed-matting workshop – a traditional Roma profession – and provided vocational and self-improvement training for women, along with daily wages. The workshop also included a kindergarten, which offered supervision, pre-school education and food for their children.

After the project had finished, AKROMFED decided to turn the workshop into a private company and took on a number of the trainees as permanent employees.

Achievements

- 3 rounds of training sessions carried out
- 120 women received vocational training and self-improvement training
- 30 women selected to work permanently in the workshop

Find out more

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Photo exhibitions

Beauty is everywhere

Montenegro



Eyes, Rasim Redzepov

Courtesy of the Roma Education Fund – Picture Change 2017

These photos were taken by Roma and Egyptian high school students from Podgorica, during a three-month photography workshop organised in 2016. The workshop helped young photography enthusiasts to master their skills and encouraged them to capture the story of their own lives, their families' lives and the lives of their immediate and extended communities through photographs.

The project was financed by the Roma Education Fund (REF) and implemented in cooperation with the NGO 'Picture Change'.

Our difference is our richness, our unity is our future

Turkey



Suskun / Silent (Third Prize), Emine Toprak

This exhibition is composed of works of art selected as part of a photography contest organised in Turkey in 2016, within the scope of the SIROMA project 'Promoting Social Inclusion in Densely Roma Populated Areas'.

The objective of the contest was to use photography to raise awareness of Roma culture among the wider public, draw attention to Roma people's social and economic participation, and eliminate the stereotypes surrounding Roma people. First prize was awarded to "Yolculuk" (Journey) by Turan TOPALAR, second prize was awarded to "Roman" (Roma) by Alev ÖZCAN and third prize was awarded to "Suskun" (Silent) by Emine TOPRAK .

The SIROMA project has been implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Health, and is co-financed by Turkey and the EU.

