

## ★ Roma Employment initiative (REI) project

### CROATIA

Roma employment initiative  
Municipalities of Cestica, Petrijanec  
Starting date: 28.11.2010

#### Context

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The Roma Employment Initiative (REI) project addressed the issues of Roma unemployment, public awareness of Roma employment programmes, Roma employment and Roma social/economic exclusion.

The project provided the necessary training to Roma persons and disseminated employment information to them, so that they could develop their skills, be informed of employment benefits, and become more employable. The project disseminated information to employers which increased their awareness of the National Programme for Roma in Croatia, employment measures for Roma, and Roma employment issues. These actions resulted in increased skill levels among the Roma population and increased awareness of Roma employment measures and issues among employers. This has improved the social and economic inclusion of the Roma population within the wider community.

#### Description

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The Project had lasted for 1 year. There were two main activities in the project: Training Roma persons in recycling, textiles, carpentry and small business development; and creating and implementing an employer and Roma awareness campaign. The Croatian Roma for Roma Association was responsible for the coordination and implementation of the project as well as activities of all other partners. Roma persons were trained in various areas to increase their skills, establish businesses and be attractive employee candidates. To increase Roma interest in work, Roma persons were informed through an employer and Roma awareness campaign of the benefits of employment and the National Programme for Roma measures. Building employers' awareness of the Roma workforce was emphasized through the distribution of various materials and means of communication (radio, website, newspapers). That was used to inform employers in the Varazdin region of the quality of the Roma workforce and employment measures under the National Programme for Roma.

#### Means

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Project budget was 108.326,13 EUR, of which 95.695,30 EUR came from the financial support of the EU programme PHARE 2005 (via a contract with Central financing and contracting agency at Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Croatia). « Croatian Roma for Roma » Association cofinanced 8.000 EUR, while the rest was cofinanced by project partners: Varazdin County, Open Community College Varazdin, municipality of Cestica and municipality of Petrijanec. They all participated in co financing by working on the project.

#### Financial partners

The project has been submitted for funding under the EU PHARE 2005 fund, « Active Employment Measures for Groups Threatened by Social Exclusion. » The programme financed 89,5% of the project. The Croatian Roma for Roma Association, Varazdin County, the Municipality of Cestica and Municipality of Petrijanec and the Open Community College of Varazdin financed 10,5% of the budget

## Assessment

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The First problem that occurred was that Roma people did not realize and understand what EU financing meant. They all expected that they would receive the money and that they could do with it what they wanted. Not all of the Roma trainees finished primary school, but they all had at least 3 grades of primary school, so the trainers had to adjust their education to their level. It was very hard to find employers who accepted Roma people, which were needed for them to finish the practical part of their education. They were very sceptical because of their earlier negative experiences with Roma people. That was the reason also why there was a very low interest among potential employers for the seminars on national employment measures, which give them incentives while employing Roma people.

There were positive aspects; 30 Roma people were educated in various professions. There were 4 workshops. All participants passed the Small Business Development education; it lasted 16 days in Strmec Podravski elementary school. After that Roma people decided which workshop they want to participate and finish in. 11 participants finished recycling, 10 participants successfully passed carpenter assistant education, and 9 women were educated in sewing (12 days theoretical education and 20 days of practical education for each workshop).

Open Community College Varazdin awarded the participants with diplomas that would help them when searching the job and ensure that they are included in the wider community.

## Estimation by the leader

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On the national level, the Office for National Minorities published its Draft Roma Decade Action Plan: 2005-2015. As well, the national government has created the National Programme for Roma. The REI project implemented them by training Roma persons, building employer awareness of the Roma workforce and National Roma employment measures, and building Roma awareness of the benefits of employment. The added value of the REI project was that it increased Roma employability and workforce competitiveness, and built employer awareness of Roma issues and programmes. As a result, employers will hire more Roma persons, Roma poverty and unemployment is decreasing, and there is increased interaction between the Roma population and the wider community.

## Target group

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Target groups in this project were: Roma trainees from Varazdin County, Croatia (participants in training programmes: small business development, textiles, carpentry and recycling), members of Croatian Roma for Roma Association, members of Open Community College Varazdin

## Presentation of the Partners in the project

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The lead partner of the Roma Employment Initiative (REI) was the Croatian Roma for Roma Association.

The project partners were Varazdin County, Open Community College Varazdin, Municipality of Cestica and Municipality of Petrijanec.

The associate partner was the Croatian Employment Service – Regional office Varazdin

Varazdin County was partner on this project and it had already launched projects for Roma. Roma are also included them in Regional Operating Programme (ROP) of the county. Their role in the project was to coordinate and plan within the project management team in improving the awareness of Roma employment programmes/issues, employment opportunities, and benefits. Varazdin County helped to build public support for future activities focusing on Roma social and economic inclusion.

The Municipality of Cestica and Municipality of Petrijanec were project partners that were experienced in working with Roma persons, due to the fact that a significant number of Roma live in Cestica and Petrijanec (Strmec Podravski). They helped them to integrate into the community and to lower the unemployment rates in the area.

CONTACT

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