



International conference  
**Broaden Horizons**  
Networks and Experiences for Successful Roma Inclusion

## CONCLUSIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

**Broaden Horizons – Networks and  
Experiences for successful Roma  
Inclusion**



e-Roma Resource  
Search, use, share and broaden horizons



Project **FINALLY**  
Financial Literacy for the Roma



Lifelong  
Learning  
Programme

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### Broaden Horizons – Networks and Experiences for successful Roma Inclusion

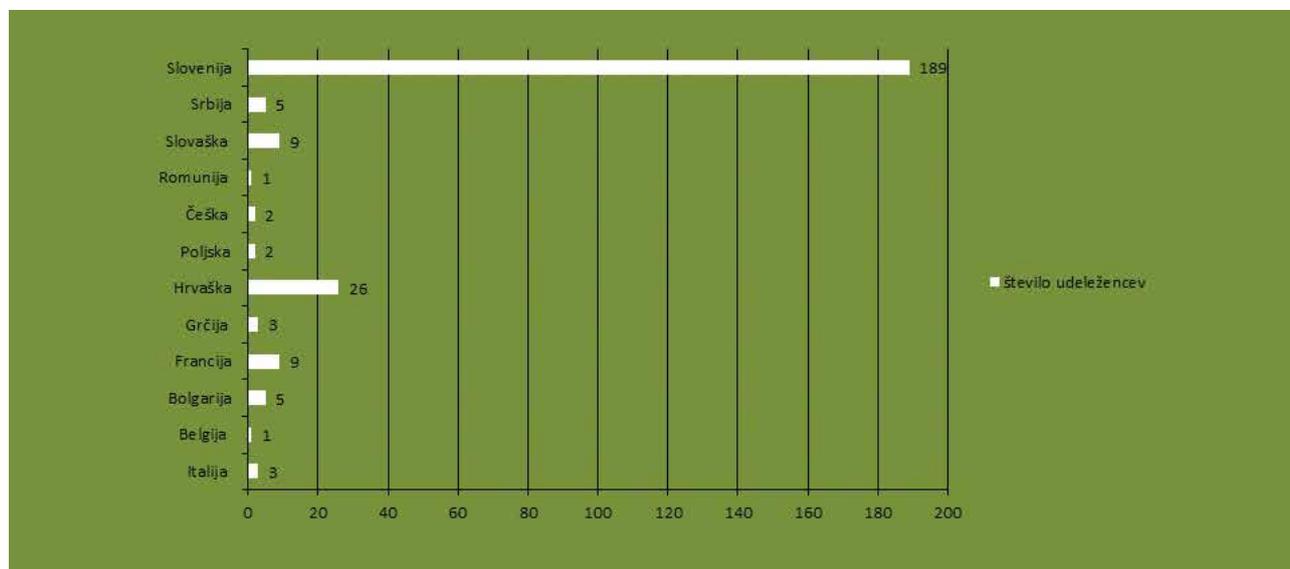
ROn 26 and 27 November 2015, the Development and Education Centre Novo mesto and the e-Roma Resource and Finally project partners organized an international conference in Dolenjske Toplice entitled Broaden Horizons – Networks and Experiences for successful Roma Inclusion, which was supported by the Government Office for National Minorities. The honorary patron of the conference was the President of the Republic of Slovenia Mr Borut Pahor.

With the conference, we wanted to point out the meaning of networking of the stakeholders' dealing with the Roma inclusion, contribute to integration and cooperation between sectors

and institutions, as well as stimulate the exchange of good practices and materials which were created during various European projects.

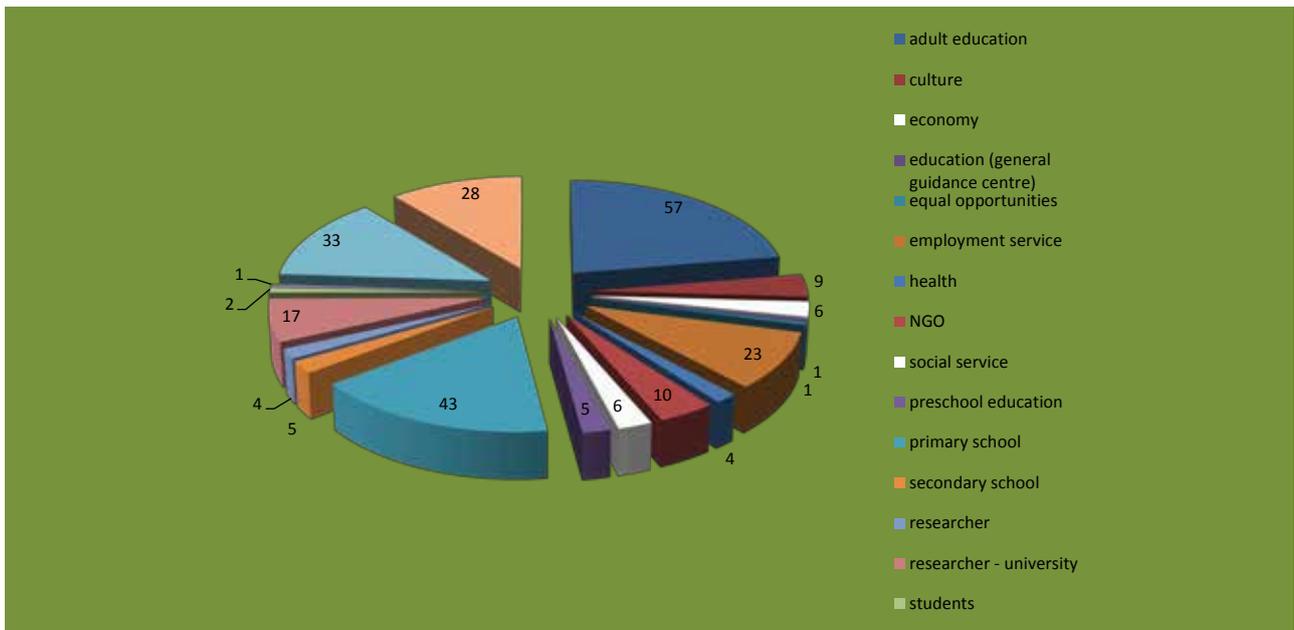
At the two-day conference, more than 90 experts and practitioners presented their experiences – 73 expert papers and 25 projects at the project market were presented, and there was support for contacts exchange and networking available all time during the conference.

255 participants from 12 countries took part at the conference (211 on the first day, and 202 on the second day):



*Participant overview according to countries (Slovenia, Serbia, Slovakia, Romania, Czech Republic, Poland, Croatia, Greece, France, Bulgaria, Belgium, Italy)*

The participants are active in different fields – from policy makers, representatives of government and non-governmental organizations, from experts to practitioners in education, employment, culture, health sector, equal opportunities, civil society institutions, government sector, to volunteers and activists etc.



Participant overview according to their field of expertise

The conference was a good opportunity for everyone to connect in order to perform and cooperate better.

The evaluation questionnaires were submitted by 148 participants. The conference was evaluated with 4.43 out of 5 (organisation: 4.47; content: 4.39). 93% of respondents established contacts with other participants at the conference (30% with 1-3 participants, 28% with 3-6 participants, 21% with more than 6 participants, and 14% with more than 10). Therefore, we reached a conclusion that the main purpose of the conference – exchanging experience and networking – was achieved.

At the conference, organized presentations and a round table took place – the participants were able to exchange experiences, contacts and best practices, but also pointed out some necessary activities of the following years.

## 1. Prejudice und stereotypes – a challenge for all



Today, the European institutions are committed

The conference materials were published on [www.eromaresource.com](http://www.eromaresource.com), each in a language of its presentation. Gradually, all presentations will be translated into Slovenian and English.

Short descriptions of expert contributions at the conference will be edited in a collection, which will also be published on [www.eromaresource.com](http://www.eromaresource.com) and on the conference website. The e-RR project partners will maintain the website for another 3 years after the project is concluded and will provide the materials to everyone who will require them.

to right historical injustice against the Roma and stimulate their inclusion into society. In this regard, international documents and legal acts were adopted, condemning racism, intolerance, and hostility towards the Roma community. Cultural diversity and pluralism are part of a common vision of modern societies, which are based on respecting human rights, ethnic identity and personal dignity of each individual. Unfortunately, in reality we are facing intolerance, hostility and refusal of the different. Above all, such occurrences are enhanced in times of crisis, e.g. mass influx refugees into Europe. Intolerance is expressed in public discourse as well

as privately, reflecting in hate speech, which is hidden in the anonymity of the Internet.

At the round table, we discussed prejudice and stereotypes about the Roma that in hidden or open form influence interpersonal relations among the Roma and other population, and still create conflicts and contradictions in almost all European countries. In everyday life, the Roma are still being discriminated and stigmatized due to their ethnic belonging. Despite progress in many areas of social life and in human rights protection, we are still witnessing the emergence and strengthening of anti-Gypsyism or romophobia.

There were representatives of the Roma community, representatives of the academia as well as providers of educational programmes and activities present at the round table. Such structure enabled us to shed light to this broad field from different aspects and stimulated the participants and the audience to thinking and opinion exchange. A special quality and new value to the discussion was added by the scientific approach of researching racism phenomena and intolerance in society with participants' personal experience.

## 2. How to create and utilise employment opportunities for the Roma?



Inclusion of the Roma is more than just an issue of social inclusion since it has a positive economic impact, especially in the EU member states with large Roma minorities. In many countries, the Roma represent an increasingly large share of school children and a future work force. Effective employment policies as well as individualized and accessible services for the Roma job seekers enable them to realise their human capital and actively and equally take part in the economic and social life.

The main obstacles for a higher Roma employa-

By watching an introductory video of the e-Roma Resource project, a discussion was launched and the reflexion was enriched. The Roma representative pointed out that she does not see the video as discriminatory since it presents one of the activities of the Roma which is becoming an increasingly popular topic also in the majority population. Moreover, the majority population has been pushing the Roma out of this activity. Some of the participants said that the video motivated the viewers to further examine the project content. The participants thought that it would be necessary to find out the view of the Roma community in regard to the video, and respect their opinion.

Participants pointed out in the discussion that it is crucial to learn to live together, and both sides have to make this effort. Roma have to proactively integrate in combatting prejudice, and the public area has to respect the ethic codex, so that examples of good practice are not only subject of good will and understanding of individual providers. Hate speech has to be recognised and designated as an offence, and sanctioned, especially if it takes place in a public institution.

bility appear in the Roma population (i.e. providers on the labour market) but also for employers (customers on the labour market), and are a consequence of the non-systemic dealing with this issue.

Key obstacles on the side of providers (i.e. Roma):

- lack of main competences
- lack of technical skills
- employment is not a value, education/school is not a value
- lack of capital (social connections, financial capital etc.)

Key obstacles on the side of customers (i.e. employers):

- employment discrimination
- lack of workplaces (economic crisis)
- job offer does not match the characteristics of the target group

The speakers and the participating individuals from the audience indicated following priorities for the Roma employment:

- development and implementation of active

employment policy, which will be adjusted to the needs of the Roma community, above all women,

- workplaces according to the characteristics of the target group,
- positive discrimination towards Roma regarding employment in the public sector,
- financial stimulation for companies which hire Roma people,
- promotion of social entrepreneurship among the Roma,
- support and education for self-employment,
- more investment into education programmes for knowledge improvement, key competences, which will increase employ-

ment possibilities for the Roma,

- development of individualised education programmes, which will increase employment possibilities for the Roma, especially Roma women,
- more investment into individualized counselling support and improvement of job seeking skills,
- workshops for career orientation of the Roma,
- occupational training for young Roma,
- acquiring knowledge in financial competences (finance management, increasing income, self-employment).

### 3. Inclusion of the Roma in education



Integration of the Roma into education is a complex issue and it is similar to a great extent in different countries. Everybody who works with pre-school or primary school education programmes is searching for models and solutions for effective inclusion of Roma children into educational process. Seven speakers presented their experiences and pointed out that early integration of Roma children into educational process is one of the most important reasons for combatting their social exclusion, underprivileged position, inequality and poverty. Some speakers mentioned included children having better reading and literacy results. However, later educational achievements could not be proven by early inclusion into education.

Presentations, questions and discussions can be summed up into following findings:

- In the early inclusion of Roma children, their families, above all mothers, play an important role due to their Roma culture. Therefore, work with Roma families should be stimulated.
- Other important factors are Roma community, school with trained teachers, local community, public institutions and bodies as well as organisations dealing with wellbeing of society.

- A lot of effort is needed for good communication and trust between Roma parents and schools, but also building relationships, creating opportunities for cooperation, combatting demotivation and distrust by getting closer and providing systematic activities on all levels.
- For Roma pupils, Slovenian, Croatian, Romanian or any other language of the majority population is in fact their foreign language. Since language is the most important tool of expression and learning, Roma children have difficulties achieving results due to their lack of mastering a language. Therefore, strategies need to be developed to train teachers in preschool institutions and schools to teach language as a foreign language in order to achieve better literacy and opportunities.
- Numerous projects had a vast impact on understanding and developing certain fields of Roma inclusion into education. However, all projects are concluded when the project period expires, even the most successful ones. After the conclusion, things often go back into old tracks. We expect that due to good results good solutions and best practices will be exchanged, and that decision makers on the highest levels of society will enable their continuation but also integration in systemic solutions.
- Speakers who presented projects, good practices or results believed, that complex, consistent, and systematic actions of all players in Roma inclusion processes is necessary. Only in this way, sustainability of changes and achievements in Roma education is possible.

#### 4. Support activities for Roma inclusion



Support activities that were presented in the group emphasize work with preschool children, young adults, parents, and above all girls and women.

The participants pointed out that work with the whole family and stimulating family literacy are very important in order to achieve cooperation between Roma and majority population.

The environment where Roma live has to be integrated into a learning process, getting closer to Roma people so that in their settlements various contents, programmes and support activities are provided – they have to be dynamic, diverse and adjusted to their needs and deficits. Communication needs to be stimulated, social

skills developed, realistic aims set, in order to increase their life quality, spare time activities and contribute to their better self-image.

Also, the following issues were stressed:

- Raising awareness of the parents of school children that learning is crucial for a good social inclusion.
- Training and education for basic activities for Roma inclusion is necessary: hygiene, food, filling out forms, paying bills etc.
- Cooperation between parents, pupils/children and teachers is crucial – leading into lower decrease of Roma in schools.
- Work in multicultural (Roma) environment demands trained teachers, mentors and other participants.
- Great success has been shown in tandems of mentors where one is Romani and the other a member of majority population.
- Besides benefits for children, the benefits for parents need to be taken into consideration, including peer learning help etc.

Let us not forget: we should not divide ourselves into Roma and non-Roma, but cooperate and connect.

#### 5. Policies and activities in Roma health



Health is the most important aspect of Roma integration. Without it there is no education and employment. Prevention is better than cure and it is much cheaper – those working in prevention programmes are fully aware of this fact. However, decision makers need to be convinced. We have learned to write strategies and policies, but still we lack implementation into practice. Seven practices of research, policies and direct

work with the Roma people were presented in the group. We need quality research to act further. Pilot projects show good results that can be integrated into regular activities, e.g. education about Roma culture could be integrated into regular education for medical staff. Understanding what is healthy and what is not, is culturally specific. Those who want to work with the Roma or write policies concerning them, have to know their perception of health.

## 6. Projects for the Roma – sustainability of project results



V skupini je tekla izmenjava izkušenj udeležencev. Exchange of experience on achieving sustainability of project results took place in the group, which is one of the most important parts of each project. The participants believe that there are many ways to cooperate for a long time, if partnerships create close and longterm bounds and develop networks with corresponding stakeholders, including policy makers on all levels - local, regional, national and/or EU.

Sustainability of project results (which cannot always be ensured) has to be provided by transferring them into regular activities of cooperating institutions, but also (as recommended) by attracting attention of institutions included in projects to implement some project results (e.g. implementation of trainings) – in this way utilisation of project results after the project is concluded can be ensured.

Project partners have to inform policy and decision makers in their countries about project results (which have to correspond to local and national aims), present their positive impact on a local, regional, national and/or EU level, and propose allocation of national financial means that could ensure implementation of best measures.

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