

Funded
by the European Union
and the Council of Europe



COUNCIL OF EUROPE



Implemented
by the Council of Europe

EVALUATION OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND EUROPEAN UNION JOINT PROGRAMME 'ROMED'

CASE STUDY DARNYTSIA REGION, CITY OF KYIV

creda consulting
Creative Development Alternatives

bl
& sanz European value(s)



ROMED
Médiation pour les Roms
Mediation for Roma

UKRAINE, Darnytsia Region, City of Kyiv

The work of ROMED2 in Darnytsia Region (Kyiv municipality) could serve as a pilot for developing effective Roma integration programmes in a large city. The diversity of the community, which includes both a small settlement and a group of Roma families permanently residing in Kyiv, provides an interesting case. The National Project Officer and the local mediator managed in a short period of time to develop effective working cooperation between the Community Action Group (CAG) and the local authorities. Despite challenges in sustaining the work of the Community Action Group, the Darnytsia case offers some interesting examples of how the conditions in the settlement can be improved, how cultural activities can help inclusion, how activities for children can stimulate the civic activity of adults, and how cooperation between mediators and local and national institutions can help develop new state standards for effective social work. It also points to the challenges of running the Programme in only one part of the capital, which is dependent on funding from the overall municipal budget and wider municipality's attitude toward Roma issues and integration policies need to be changed.

Context: problems and opportunities

With a population of over 200,000 people, Darnytsia is among the largest of the ten regions of the city of Kyiv. It has a strong economic base rooted in various industries including chemicals, machine building, transportation and consumer goods. There are over 30 industrial companies located on its territory.

Darnytsia is a multinational region with more than 100 various nationalities. The Roma population is not numerous and consists of around 600 people. Many Roma families live in apartments dispersed in the region. There is also a Roma settlement in the area of Teplovizorna with between 100 and 200 residents, including children. The settlers migrate from Western Ukraine (Zakarpattia oblast) due to lack of employment and insufficient living sustenance there, seeking better access to medical services in Kyiv and more job opportunities. Many Roma women come to Kyiv to give birth as they get better treatment. Roma usually collect metal and other goods from abandoned industrial sites, public waste bins or construction sites.

The key problems facing the Roma community in the region include unemployment, lack of affordable housing, lack of documents and social protection, and discrimination. Many large families have to share one room of ten square metres in size. There is also a lack of vocational training in order to get decently paid jobs. Most Roma are working on the market, as truck drivers or in construction.

In the settlement, there are problems related to sanitary conditions (no showers, no waste collection) and children dropping out of school. In the winter of 2016, there were between ten to 20 children living in the settlement. Since 2016, due to the difficult economic situation in the country, the numbers of families who temporarily migrate to Kyiv increased. This creates tensions between Roma and the local population. The Ukrainian media, often in search of sensationalism, only escalates the situation.

There is no Roma-led NGO in the area, so the ROMED2 National Support Organisation Chiricli plays a key role in serving the community. A non-Roma NGO, "Information and Training Centre" which is linked to the municipality, has started becoming more involved in Roma inclusion. Its leader is also working for the Darnytsia regional administration in the Department of Social Services. The NGO has received funding from the International Renaissance Foundation (IRF) to improve the living conditions in the settlement.

The local social services are increasingly under pressure due to the large scale resettlement of Ukrainian internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the Donbass region. An estimated 20,000 people

from Donbass have settled in Darnytsia, one of the highest concentrations in the capital of Kyiv. Local service providers admit that they have difficulties in giving priority to Roma because of the large IDP community they have to serve.

The Community Action Group (CAG)

The ROMED2 Programme and the district of Darnytsia signed a commitment letter in May 2014. The CAG members in Darnytsia changed during the implementation of the project. The original group included a core of five women living in Darnytsia who left Kyiv in December 2015. Their efforts were mainly directed at legalising their own houses and connecting them to the electricity system. They truly believed that the CAG would be a vehicle to help resolve this issue. Unfortunately, it was a lengthy, bureaucratic and ultimately unsuccessful process which led to the departure of the women from the CAG and indeed the city. The NPO subsequently had to start engaging new CAG members.

In January 2016, a new Community Action Group (CAG) was established from Roma representatives living in permanently in apartments in the region. On average, seven CAG members, four of whom are women, participated in the meetings. The CAG has an active leader who demonstrates interest and support. He is highly respected by the community and has contributed to its development, including leading the initiative to build a church in the area.

The Roma community of Darnytsia is very diverse. It consists of a settlement and Roma families who live permanently in the apartments. This creates two target groups with different sets of problems. While in the settlement there is a lack of basic living conditions and problems with documentation, the permanently-based Roma are struggling more with poor housing conditions, lack of employment and weak integration into the community. There is also a certain tension between the two groups, with some mutual accusations and stereotypes. The National Project Officer and local mediator are aware of these issues and are trying to address them by building links between the two groups. The leader of the new CAG is accompanying the National Project Officer and the mediator to the settlement to help arrange waste collection there. This interaction could help facilitate better understanding between Roma living in the settlement and Roma with permanent housing in Darnytsia.

There is good interaction between the new CAG leader and the National Project Officer. During the meeting with the CAG members, they also expressed their satisfaction with the cooperation with the National Project Officer and reported a positive attitude from the regional administration.

Interaction between CAG and local government

A special working group with CAG representatives and local authorities was created in June 2014. The Head of Darnytsia District I Administration, Mr Gennadyj Sentsov, and the municipal contact person are very supportive.¹ The administration sees an added value in cooperating with ROMED2 because the Programme helps them to improve their access to the Roma community and increase their trust in institutions. It also helps to raise the understanding of Roma issues by the institutions.

Both officials participated in the 13th Annual Meeting of the Strasbourg Club related to refugees. The study visit to Strasbourg was supported by ROMED2. They visited several NGOs working with Roma, exchanged experiences with local administration and brought back to Kyiv new ideas inspired by approaches made by Strasbourg's municipality and local civil society. During the interviews, they mentioned how impressed they were to see how European municipalities are managing the issues related to the new wave of refugees and the systemic approach to addressing their needs in terms of housing, education and employment. The model for developing a stock of social housing was of particular interest to her as it could help solve some of the problems in Darnytsia district. This experience was inspiring and showed new ways of achieving Roma inclusion.

¹ On 26 April 2016 Mr. Sentsov was dismissed from his position.

The key priorities of the CAG are the continuation of the courses for Roma children on culture and Romani language, assistance to Roma women victims of domestic violence, improved access to the pre-school (kindergarten), improved sanitary conditions in the settlement, provision of assistance to families with social housing and assistance with employment benefits and registration. In the medium term, in order to work on Roma inclusion in a strategic way, a Kyiv municipal programme needs to be developed and adopted in order to secure state funding. At the time of this report, the drafting of this programme was only at the inception phase.

The Joint Action Plan for 2015 included activities such as a needs assessment of the Roma community, support to Roma mediators, support to Roma families in difficult situations, and involvement of Roma families in the local competition "Talents of families with many children". The Action Plan for 2016 has not been adopted yet but cooperation between the group and the municipal authorities continues.

The local authorities are trying to address the issue of Roma unemployment by searching for job opportunities which the rest of the population does not want to take. There is a plan for a local municipality project on the renovation of sewage collection and Roma could be offered some jobs there. Although low-qualified work, this could offer more steady income for families.

Results and Impact in the Community

ROMED2 has developed a strong partnership with the local Darnytsia District I Administration and is steadily building trust among the local Roma community. The results of the cooperation are most visible in the areas of building cultural tolerance, improving the conditions in the settlement and developing opportunities from the Roma community to learn their language and traditions.

The settlement, which was regularly targeted in the past by police (including a major eviction on the eve of the Euro 2012 football championships), is now receiving more positive attention from the local authorities. The major issue of waste removal was solved through cooperation with them. An agreement was signed with the local utility company and waste will be removed from the settlement twice a week. Chiricli will pay the service fee and the regional administration will pay the price of the container. The funding comes from individual donations. The local authorities donated a container and waste bags. Roma from the settlement were given the opportunity to bathe and were provided with humanitarian help and medicine in cooperation with the private day centre charity for vulnerable groups "Stefania". The centre provides food, health and medical assistance to the homeless and other people in need. The National Focal Point approached the charity after a radio programme discussion, when one of the listeners suggested this idea. Now many Roma from the settlement know about the centre's work and regularly use its services.

Another positive result in the settlement is the decrease in the number of children who live there during the school year and a reduced number of cases children from the settlement who beg for money. This proves that the educational work conducted by the mediator, social workers and the National Focal Point with Roma settlers is bringing results.

As a result of ROMED2, the administration provided a place for the Roma permanent residents in the Regional Library, where the Romani language Sunday school takes place each week. The courses are getting more popular in Kyiv and parents from other regions of Kyiv have become interested. The school is run by the National Focal Point on a voluntary basis. Currently, around ten children attend the course. The fact that there is a place to convene where the children are occupied allows more time for their parents to work with the CAG. Thus, while the children study, their parents discuss local community problems and plan future activities together with the mediator.

A deliberate effort is made for the increased involvement of children in community life. For example, special invitations for the Christmas party organised by the local administration were sent to Roma families with many children. The children in the settlement were also pleasantly surprised by the visit of the representatives of the local administration dressed as Santa.

To facilitate Roma inclusion, Darnytsia integrated Roma into their annual Rodovid Festival of ethnic minorities. This idea was positively welcomed by the Roma community of Kyiv where the leading Roma theatre came to perform. They were invited each year but only joined when local Roma families could showcase their traditions. Darnytsia District Administration would like to expand this festival and engage Roma communities from all ROMED2 participating municipalities. For International Roma Day in April 2016, the authorities hosted a photo exhibition featuring life stories of various Roma families. A Roma NGO from Odessa prepared the exhibition.

ROMED2 helped improve access to healthcare services. Thanks to the support from the District Administration, local hospitals and local polyclinics accepted Roma without registration papers for treatment and check-ups. The region is known for its good access to medical services for Roma.

In addition, the Programme contributed by joint work on State Standards with the Ministry of Social Policy. The Kiev Social Centre worked on the approval of the Standard together with the Roma mediator.

Darnytsia district is a leader in Kyiv in Roma inclusion and its leadership uses this fact to promote its work. A meeting was convened for all heads of Kyiv district administrations to discuss the need to develop a Roma Action Plan for the city of Kyiv. In November 2015, a representative from Darnytsia shared their experience in implementing ROMED2 at the OSCE National Meeting on Roma Strategy. Many high level officials from different regions of Ukraine attended the meeting.

Another important result is the development of active cooperation with the administration of the City of Strasbourg. The Erasmus Plus Programme has approved an exchange proposal submitted by Chiricli and Darnytsia District Administration for the European Voluntary Service. Starting from September 2016, one Roma volunteer will spend a month in the Education Department in Strasbourg. Roma youth from Ukraine are also included in Strasbourg administration's project for young people, Roma young people from Ukraine will also have an opportunity to participate in project activities organised in Strasbourg.

Lessons Forward

The ROMED2 Programme's cooperation with Darnytsia district is a good model for the implementation of Roma inclusion in a large city. The main factors for success include the political will of the local administration to address Roma issues, a high level of trust in the National Focal Point and the National Support Organisation "Chiricli" led by her, both from the community and local authorities, and a creative approach to facilitating the work of the CAG with Roma by developing a weekend activity for their children.

Some of the emerging lessons and needs for the future include:

- ***The scale of Darnytsia region and the fact that it is located in the capital city of Kyiv creates additional challenges for community mobilisation.*** Large cities tend to be magnets for domestic migration for people in search of jobs and the local Roma community is also very mobile. The diversity of the Roma community (settlement and permanent residents) creates a diversity of needs, which are often hard to combine in one CAG. Therefore, it is important to find the right composition of the group that represents the different interests and needs of the community, whilst being effective and interested in civic activism at the same time.

- ***There is a growing understanding in Darnytsia that violent demolition of the settlement is not bringing lasting results, as Roma simply resettle nearby.*** What is needed is increased state attention and monitoring of the situation, mobilisation of the Roma community, and a coalition of non-state actors, including religious charities and NGOs. More financial resources are required for state centres for social protection to serve the Roma community. This effort should be accompanied by educational work in the community aimed at increasing tolerance toward Roma. The case of the Rodovid Festival is a good example of how stereotypes can be tackled and a more positive image of Roma promoted.
- ***ROMED2 was working in only one district of the city of Kyiv,*** which created certain limitations with regards to the opportunities and scope of such a Programme. Darnytsia's budget is dependent on the municipal budget. Kyiv city has no municipal programme for Roma inclusion and this blocks the effective development of ROMED and the scaling up of its activities. In this respect, the efforts of both Darnytsia's leadership and the National Project Officer to promote the Programme and bring it up to municipal level is a good strategy and should be continued.
- ***Goodwill, determination and commitment of regional authorities are the keys to the successful implementation of the Programme.*** The municipal contact person and the head of administration are determined to advance Roma inclusion and are looking into ways to sustain the work. There is a striking contrast to another region of Kyiv (Golossiv) where there is also a Roma settlement. The head of Golossiv shows no interest in cooperation and is even hostile to Roma issues. Local police regularly threaten the settlement. At the same time, Darnytsia is demonstrating the opposite approach of constructive cooperation with civil society and the community. The fact that a local non-Roma NGO is also getting involved in supporting Roma issues is also encouraging. The National Support Organisation Chiricli and the CAG should try to develop further Darnytsia district's cooperation strategy between all stakeholders in order to avoid competition for funding and conflicting priorities.
- ***Creating useful and meaningful encounters is a powerful means of attracting parents to participate.*** Chiricli's Sunday school for Roma children demonstrates how effective this could be for reinvigorating and stimulating adult participation. It also provides opportunities for more women to participate, while children are occupied with their activities.