

Case study report:
Integrated housing strategies and Roma Community Participation
Case Study on “Article 7.2 Interventions” in Bulgaria

1. Background of the intervention named "Support to provide modern social housing for vulnerable, minority and low-income populations and other disadvantaged groups" under OPRD 2007-2013

With the Regulation №437 from May 19th 2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council an amendment is made in the Article 7, paragraph 2 of the Regulation № 1080/2006 concerning the European Regional Development Fund regarding the eligible interventions in the housing sector in favor of marginalized communities. The main changes are related “to the scope of eligible costs for interventions in the housing sector by supporting interventions to renovate existing or construct new buildings with a focus on people with special needs (marginalized groups)”.

Based on this amendment, with Order № P-123 of the Council of Ministers (CoM) from 16.05.2011, an interministerial working group (IMWG) is set up to develop a concept for integrated project under OPHRD and OPRD for housing for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups as well as to develop a mechanism for coordination with other horizontal policies funded by the EU¹.

On 15.06.2011 the interministerial working group launches a call for concept of integrated project for providing modern social housing for marginalized groups. For the sake of this call, the Management Authority (MA) of OPRD issues “Requirements for Identification of integrated projects to ensure modern social housing for marginalized groups”. Eligible applicants are 86 municipalities in urban agglomerations defined in the OPRD 2007-2013. Within this call are received project proposals by 36 municipalities.

According to the ranking and available financial resources of the scheme (15659106 levs), the selection committee identifies four direct beneficiaries out of the 36 municipalities, namely the municipalities of Burgas, Vidin, Devnya and Dupnitsa, which are invited to submit full project proposals under the scheme BG161PO001 / 1.2- 01/2011 "Support to provide modern social housing for vulnerable, minority and low-income populations and other disadvantaged groups " under OPRD 2007-2013. Other three municipalities (Varna, Peshtera and Tundzha) are ranked in a reserve list in case of release of sufficient financial resources.

The maximum eligible amount of the grant for each project is determined as follows:

N	Concrete beneficiary	The maximum amount of the project in BGN
	Municipality of Burgas	4 490 000

¹ From the Requirements for application under a call for project proposals through a procedure for direct financial grant published at: <http://eufunds.bg/bg/page/58?programme=3&status=1&id=506>

	Municipality of Vidin	4 000 000
	Municipality of Devnya	1 626 000
	Municipality of Dupnitsa	4 909 000

The Management Authority (MA) of OPRD publishes “Requirements for application under a call for project proposals through a procedure for direct financial grant” that provides applicants with detailed information and directions about the institutional frame of the social housing scheme, procedures for the implementation of the scheme, basic definitions, eligibility rules, eligibility of applicants and partners, eligible activities, target groups and etc. The four selected municipalities start with the preparation of the full project application. Among other requirements set by the MA of the OPRD, the municipalities have to prove that they have received the necessary positive public support for the project “to ensure the proper expenditure of funds under the scheme BG161PO001 / 1.2-02 / 2011.”²

This requirement appears a stumbling block for one of the first selected municipalities: Burgas cannot get public support and gives up of preparing a full project proposal – please, see more details for Burgas case in the box 1:

2. The case of Varna

2.1. Social housing project proposal of Varna

After Burgas municipality gave up of the housing project under the Operational Program for regional development, Varna municipality is invited to prepare a project.

The first public discussion is organized by the Municipality of Varna on November 27th 2013. Similarly to what happened in Burgas, it results to a group of more than 100 inhabitants of quarter „Vazrazhdane”

Box 1: The case of Burgas

In 2011, the Municipality of Burgas, together with three other municipalities is chosen by the Ministry of Regional Development to be one of the beneficiaries under Operational Program for regional development, scheme BG161PO001/1.2-02/2011 "Support for providing of modern social housing for vulnerable, minority and low-income people and other disadvantaged groups." The project idea of Bourgas Municipality foresees the construction of a block of flats for 150 people from the targeted groups in the amount of 4.5 million leva in total. In March 2012, the municipality of Burgas launches a public consultation on the housing project, which is confronted by the inhabitants of the Burgas district "Meden Rudnik". They strongly object the idea of building a „Roma block of flats with European resources”. In response to their objection, yet during the discussion, the mayor of Burgas declares the bloc would not be constructed¹. **Roma people do not participate in this public consultation.**

The review of the Operational program scheme documentation reveals that the mayor’s statement is followed by a formal municipality request to the Ministry of Regional Development to withdraw the project at 12.04.2012.

Despite this, the Ministry of Regional Development prolongs twice the final deadline for submitting the project. However, until the end of May 2013 the Municipality of Burgas doesn’t submit a full project proposal.

During this period of 1 year the Municipality of Burgas doesn’t make any new statement or attempts for a public discussion on the topic, regardless the big interest towards it from the side of Media.

An interesting fact in this case is that the announcement of the project doesn’t contain information that the target group is Roma. On the contrary, the published information explicitly emphasizes that “the scheme of the operational program targets social inclusion of disadvantaged and vulnerable people." However, the Minister on EU funds at that time comments publicly that “the purpose of the project is not only **to provide housing for Roma** but they to be trained and get some craft as well”. He also states that “it is a responsibility of the municipalities to ensure the people with job within one year thereafter and that this project is a first one and if it appears to be successful the aim for the next planning period will be to attract more resources, in order to display Roma people away from the ghettos”¹.

Obviously such a message causes negative associations in the society from the communist time when many Roma families were placed in blocks of apartments together with non-Roma families in most of the biggest cities of Bulgaria. Over the years, however, non-Roma families left those blocks, while local authorities in turn abdicated their responsibilities to maintain infrastructure and ensure legality and order in these residential areas until they completely ghettoized.

² From the Requirements for application under a call for project proposals through a procedure for direct financial grant published at: <http://eufunds.bg/bg/page/58?programme=3&status=1&id=306>

from district „Mladost” boycotting the discussion. They refuse to become familiar with the details of the project and declare that they “would not like to live in the same neighborhood with people from the minorities”. The angered citizens put the question: “Why should we build new social housings when in the quarter there is only one kindergarten and there is a lack of crèche, school and a park”. According to the angry inhabitants of the quarter, it is more appropriate to use the area for the construction of a children establishment and “the people in need could be sent back to the former barracks”. In response, the mayor of district „Mladost” states that he also does not support the idea “for accommodating people from the minorities in the social housings but the Municipality should not miss the opportunity to benefit 4 million leva for the construction of the housing, since there are around 2000 inhabitants registered for social houses in Varna” . The first public discussion results in a proposal the district mayor of “Mladost” to continue searching for an appropriate compromise for finding a housing plot. ***Roma are not invited and do not participate in this public discussion.***

Right after the end of the public discussion, the social department of the Municipality of Varna tries to reframe the message so that to remove the focus of the public discourse from Roma. They issue a press-release that the project foresees construction of 40 housings between 40 and 100 square meters each as the idea is to use them for the accommodation of different groups of disadvantaged people – disable people, young people leaving the state care institutions, single mothers, etc.

On December 6th 2013 the Municipality of Varna organizes a round table to present once again the housing project and particularly the criteria for accommodation. The deputy mayor of municipality, D-r Lidiya Marinova, explains that the main requirement for applying is “being a socially-responsible person that will be described in a very detailed contract”. She explicitly emphasizes that “these homes will not compensate people from the Roma neighborhoods whose homes will be demolished but rather it is a hand to those in need who can arrange their lives.” ***Roma people again are not invited and do not participate.***

Despite the round table and the detailed explanations given there, on the 13th of December 2013, during the session of the Municipal Council, group of about 200 dissatisfied citizens present at the councilor’s meeting and introduce a letter signed by 5000 people with a demand for discontinuance of the housing project, as this time their main argument for doing so is their unwillingness to build up the green area. In a response to this statement, the town councilors reassure the citizens that together with the new social housing a new park will be constructed as well. In the end, despite the subscription, the town councilors decide to give their ‘yes’ and start the implementation of the project. ***Roma people are not presented at this session of the Local Council.***

Second session of the municipal council takes place on 13th of January 2014 when the local councilors re-vote their decision and again give their 'yes' for the project³. But this decision of the councilors provokes the displeased inhabitants and they create an Initiative Committee who plans to enter a protest.

³ See the article ‘Citizens organized a protest against the building of social houses in Vazrazhdane’ <http://www.moreto.net/>

Trying to avoid the protest and gain public support, the municipality of Varna organizes a meeting with this Initiative Committee soon after the municipal councilor's session. This time also are invited the ombudsman, representatives of civil society organizations and religions to the meeting. The Municipality's message shows willingness for a dialogue - they claim again that "the implementation of the project will contribute to the qualitative change of the lives of many people from different socially vulnerable groups"⁴. The representatives of the civil society and religions also support this message but despite all this efforts, the Initiative Committee appoints a strike on 23rd of January 2014 – see their appeal below in the box ⁵. ***Roma people are not invited again and do not participate also in this meeting organized by the municipality.***

Our investigation found out that Varna municipality submitted the project proposal to the MA

Box 2 The appeal of the initiative committee against the building of social housing in Varna's district "Vazrazhdane"

"We, the residents of Vazrazhdane (district), will fight against the decision (of the municipality) to destroy the last green space in the area, which was earmarked for a city park. We will fight and return its status of a green area, which was changed tacitly because we do not want neither accommodation of minority groups in the neighborhood, nor depriving us of nature. It is not a mystery for anyone of us exactly which groups are eligible for accommodation and we are all familiar with the "peculiarities" of their life and culture. We will not allow Vazrazhdane of green, quiet and safe neighborhood to become a concrete ghetto. We consider as reckless and absurd such an attempt to integrate minorities when the judicial and law enforcement systems are not working. The resettlement of minorities among conscientious, working and paying bills and taxes citizens is a corrupted, absurd and potentially dangerous experience for the integration of minorities!

We insist the building plot earmarked for this reckless construction to remain intact and together with the adjoining grove to become a park of which our neighborhood has a pressing need!

In this regard, we are organizing a protest, which will be held today, January 23 (Thursday) at 16.30 at the Municipality of Varna"

of the OPRD, which approved it to be financed by Decision №RD-02-36-61/24.01.2014 of the Head of the MA of the OPRD but a contract was not concluded for inability of the municipality to meet the condition of obtaining the necessary positive public support for the project. Thus, by a Decision №RD-02-36-300/20.05.2014 the MA of the OPRD refused the grant to Varna municipality.

2.2. The housing issue of Roma people in Varna

According to the statistics data⁶ there are about 1% Roma in Varna municipality but expert's data shows that real number of the people identified by others as Roma amounts to approximately 8-9%⁷.

⁴ From article 'The dialogue on social housing in Vazrazhdane ongoing' <http://www.moreto.net/> and article "Varna citizens protesting against block for minorities" at <http://www.segabg.com/article.php?id=685560>

⁵ The deputy mayor Lildia Marinova informed us that the subscription list has reached to 20 000 signature by the end of April 2014 and that it was sent officially to the MA of the OPRD

⁶ From the census in 2011 the total number of municipal inhabitants is 343 704 out of which 311 200 responded to the question for ethnic self-identification; of them 3 535 people self-identified as Roma.

⁷ In support of these statements is the fact that just in one of the Varna's neighborhood "Maksuda" live about 15,000 people, which for centuries has been known as "Gypsy neighbourhood" while the local community is named as "Gypsies" or "Roma" by the majority population.

Roma people live mainly in the neighborhood known as “Maksuda” (about 15 000), in districts Asparuhovo (about 6000) and Vladislavovo (about 6000) and in village Kamenar (about 2000).

In all areas populated with Roma exists different housing issues:

- Next to Vladislavovo there is a settlement named “Gabena mahala”, which is out of the urban regulation on the private agricultural land. The first houses have been built in the end of Nineties. Currently there are about 100 houses in different condition – some are solid, others – shanties but all equally are built without construction plan and proper permissions. No regular electricity, water supply, sewerage, waste collection in the settlement. Only few houses that are close to the regulated part of the quarter get illegally electricity from their relatives or neighbors. Last year the district mayor started eviction procedure of these illegally built houses which resulted in demolition of part of the houses in June this year. No strict control is exercised by the municipality for not allowing further illegal construction. Katya, one of the interviewees whose home was demolished in June, shared that within a month after they were evicted new comers started building on their place new illegal house.
- In the past 20-25 years in Maksuda neighborhood also have been built tens of houses without proper papers and permission. The mayor of the district “Mladost” where they predominantly are located also started an eviction procedure and thus this year, in July, after the flood⁸ were demolished tens of houses.
- In all 4 Roma neighborhoods the majority of the houses built during the communist time seemed not to have proper papers and permissions. That is why some district mayors publicly announced that they will be demolished. These houses are within the regulation plan and have regular electricity and water; to some extent the streets are paved and waste collection is performed; the people living in them have regular address registrations and properly issued identity documents. The land, on which the houses were built, is either municipal or private after being privatized in the end of Nineties. In most cases, these homes are overpopulated because they are inhabited by family members from several generations.
- Another problem is that in Maksuda (and to some extent in the other neighbourhoods also) the technical infrastructure needs serious repair, almost no public spaces for recreation and play for children, no places for cultural, community and youth activities; there is a segregated school with 100% Roma students and with lower quality of education. There are para-structures enhancing the anomie in the neighborhood.

The municipality had their first structured talk with the Roma people from Varna in March 2014 after establishment of community action group within ROMACT-ROMED programs of the EC and CoE. *At this meeting for first time they heard Roma point of view for solving the difficult housing issue of Roma.*

⁸ On 19th of June there was a flood in Varna’s Asparuhovo district where 13 people died. Most of the victims were Roma whose illegal houses were swept away by rising water. This issue was used by the municipality to justify their actions as they explained that they demolish and will demolish all illegally built houses because they are danger for their dwellers.

Nikolay Nikolov, member of this Community action group and chair of a Roma NGO shares that “Roma people shouldn’t been seen all as socially disadvantaged people who cannot take care for their families”. The health mediator, Zheman Mehmed, shares that “there are Roma people in need and these are really poor people who are either very young parents who do not have education and profession and cannot find job or who are old Roma people who doesn’t have pension or other incomes”. Pavlin, whose illegal house was demolished in June, says: “I am not a rich man, but I believe I am able to build my house myself. The only thing I need is the municipality to indicate where I can build my house. And, I guarantee that from these people in “Gabena mahala” about 60% will prefer to build their homes themselves. If the municipality asks us, we will let them know that not all of the people like to live in the block of apartments, we rather prefer houses... children to have place to play in the yard...and why we should live no more than 3-4 in one block; we want to live in our community but to have legal houses, to be clean...” After this talk, Pavlin migrated to Greece and he is still there working hard to save money and build home if the municipality allots him a plot and building right.

Unfortunately, majority share of the people, identified by others as Roma, absolutely deny their Roma identity. This situation is strictly controlled by the leadership of the community which in most of the cases is corrupted as the local political leaders serve external to the community interests of political parties or businesses. By this reason, in most of the cases, the community gives up participation in any activity, initiative or intervention addressing Roma as being their target group. When we visited the district Asparuhovo in June where were the victims of the flood, we were approached by few of the local political leaders who angrily told us: “No Roma live here in this neighborhood! We do not want anything that is for Roma; you can go in their settlements and offer your support!”

Similar is the situation in the other communities as well. The process of a refusal by a socially compromised ethnic identity and preference of a new cultural identity among these people makes it really difficult the internal unity of the community, which impede the common addressing of their issues including the housing as well.

2.3. The integrated plan for urban regeneration and development 2014-2020

Varna is one of the 36 cities in Bulgaria that elaborated Integrated Plan for Urban Regeneration and Development (IPURD) 2014-2020, which is expected to get predefined financing under the new OP Regions in Growth (OPRG), financed by the ERDF⁹.

The Integrated Plan for Urban Regeneration and Development (IPURD) 2014-2020 of Varna was elaborated in 2013 by a group of high qualified experts who were paid by the Ministry of the regional development. Despite this qualified team of experts strictly followed the directions of the Ministry for the planning of the Integrated Plan for Urban Regeneration and Development and involved many Varna’s inhabitants in the consultations, ***unfortunately they haven’t manage to reach Roma and involve them in the planning process.***

⁹ In the new programming period 2014-2020 the key financial resource under OPRG (around 60%) is focused on supporting the development of the cities selected as specific beneficiaries under Priority Axis 1 “Sustainable and Integrated Urban Development” of the Program. These are the cities with elaborated IPURD 2014-2020

After the plan was elaborated, it was submitted to the local Council for approval. The approved by the local councilor Plan finally was approved by the Ministry of regional development as well. It is important to mention here that there are three groups of criteria based of which are defined so called zones/areas of impact in each IPURD where the integrated interventions will take place¹⁰. These are:

- areas with predominant social characteristic
- areas with high public importance
- areas with potential for economic development

In accordance with a letter of Ministry of regional development (MRD) sent to the municipality of Varna no changes can be made in so defined impact areas within 10 years after completion of the project.

Based on the problem analyses and assessments, for each area of impact the municipalities have listed groups of projects for the implementation in the IPURD. For instance, these groups of projects could be:

Projects Group: Interventions in Urban Environment

Project Group: Economic development

Project group: Social infrastructure and etc.

From the listed groups of projects in the IPURD it is not very clear what kind interventions exactly will be implemented in the respective area and to what extent the projects are corresponding to the real needs of Roma people.

According to the Varna's Integrated Plan for Urban Regeneration and Development) by 2020 the area of Maksuda Roma neighborhood shall become a "center of important public functions" of the city, while in the Common Structural Plan of the city this part of Varna is foreseen for "mixed multifunctional activities". From these two plans is not clear what will happen with the Roma residents of the neighborhood, but it is clear that the area of the neighborhood is very attractive for future investments as is located closed to the seaside. On the other hand, from the media statements of the "Mladost district mayor became clear that 400 illegal Roma houses will be demolished from the area.

Despite this issue, in the IPURD of city of Varna are planned to build only 150 social housing for vulnerable groups and 100 more for specific target group as persons with intellectual and mental health problems and persons aged 18 years, leaving the institution for children.

The local authority of Varna clearly indicates that the social housing is not particularly targeted Roma but socially vulnerable families who meet certain criteria, one of which is to be registered for municipality housing. The check in this register shows that few Roma are listed in it as one of the main requirements they need to meet is not having illegally built property.

3. The case of Devnya municipality

¹⁰ According to experts from Ministry of regional development, the approved areas of impact show that only 20 cities out of 36 included Roma neighborhoods in these areas. Most often they included Roma neighborhoods in the areas with predominant social characteristic, but there are examples of their involvement in areas with potential for economic development (eg Burgas) or in areas with public functions with high public importance (eg Maksuda neighborhood in Varna).

3.1. The local context

Devnya is a small municipality in the North-East part of Bulgaria, located within Varna region. According to the last census implemented in 2014, the population of the municipality was 8,713 people, inhabiting one city and two villages. The majority of the municipality's residents live in Devnya, which is the center of the municipality- 8,013 people. According to the same census the Roma are accounted to be 519 (7%) from the total of 7,217 people responded the question about their ethnic self-determination. However, in accordance with the expert's estimates, the number of people identified by others as Roma exceeds half of the total population of the city.

Roma live almost entirely in Devnya, one part of them live separately in neighborhoods in the district of „Povelianovo” or in the former industrial district "Chimik", as the rest of the people are scattered in other districts around. The majority of the Roma are Christians who fall into groups of 'rudari', tinkers, Vlachs and others. Few are recognized as 'local citizens' since during the communist time many came from different parts throughout the region advisedly to find job opportunities in large enterprises producing cement, soda, salt, etc. on the territory of Devnya, as well as because of the favorable location of the city – close to a highway, a port and a railway.

The democratic changes that occurred in the country, the privatization and the reconstructions of the enterprises resulted in a significant decrease of job opportunities, as those that remained available required highly-specialized human capital. The majority of the employees working in the enterprises are mainly from Varna and other neighboring cities. Only few of Devnya's residents were working in the enterprises, which lead to a significant rise in unemployment, especially among the Roma community. Their primarily job opportunities became connected with seasonal employment or temporal employment in social programs.

Unemployment, however, appears to be not the only problem in the post-communist years. The lack of normal housing becomes a fast growing problem as well. Although the number of non-regulated households was not big, the number of the ones with ineligible for living conditions was increasing. Some homes did not possess the needed legal documents. A significant number of people, mainly from Roma origin, inhabited the former dormitories of the enterprises, which were currently abandoned. However, as the maintenance of the dormitories was no one's responsibility, the living conditions in them became very bad and therefore far from the concept for a normal home.

Another serious problem is the misrepresentation of Roma in the local government and institutions. Despite the fact they are a significant part of the population, the local council, consisting of 13 people, does not include a single Roma person. There are also no representatives in public institutions which began to change recently since the municipality started appointing Roma within the conduction of various programs and projects.

3.2. Description of the good practice:

Devnya is one of the four municipalities defined by the inter-ministerial group for specific beneficiaries according to Scheme BG161PO001 / 1.2-02 / 2011 "Support for the provision of

modern social housing for vulnerable, minority and low-income populations and other disadvantaged groups " under the Operational Program "Regional Development " of MRD.

The problem of providing housing for the residents of the municipality is very serious for the local government. The municipal housing fit for habitation does not almost exist and the number of families and households that live in completely unfavorable conditions is significant – around several hundred people. Therefore, the local government, in the name of the mayor and his team, are determined to use the opportunities given to them by this scheme to solve the problems of the needy ones.

To fulfill this intention, however, they have to decide on two main questions: 1) to convince the Municipal Council to adopt a decision approving the project to be submitted under the scheme and 2) to convince the local community that such a project will be a benefit to everybody. As there is not a single representative from the minority groups in the municipal council, deciding on activities aiming at the integration of minorities becomes very difficult.

At the same time, according to locally spread rumors, the social housings will be accommodated by Roma people with anti-social behavior: drug addicts, thieves, beggars, including people from neighbor quarters out of the bounds of Devnya municipality. This reinforces the tension among non-Roma and creates their opposition to the project. This, combined with the experience of other municipalities where similar projects have been spoiled by the public (Burgas), makes the local government in Devnya decide that it is importantly to ensure the public support for the project above all.

This is why they start an information campaign "door to door", aiming to provide truthful information about the project and its' possible benefits for the local community, and to attract the largest possible number of supporters of the idea. Teams from the municipal employees and from social institutions whose task is to meet as many residents and discuss with them the intentions of the municipality were being formed. Simultaneously, signatures in support of the project were being collected as well - over 1800 signatures for a short period of time.

Due to the implemented subscription and the persistence of the mayor, who repeatedly submit report to the Municipal Council for the need of such project, the municipal councilors finally decided to approve the project proposal, whose total cost is estimated to be 1 406 112.76 BGN, and a term of implementation -20 months. The subject of the project includes the repair and reconstruction of the municipal building and the provision of 33 lodgings of various sizes and functionality. The selected building is a former student dormitory, which is located in the administrative center of the city.

After receiving the approval of the local community and the City Council, a team of officials in the municipality prepares a project proposal which is further submitted to the Ministry of Regional Development. The project is approved and contracted for implementation on 18.01.2013. In May 2014 the construction works were completed, as the first contracts with tenants were signed on 17.09.2014.

According to the estimates, the lodgings will accommodate 165 people - extended families, poor, disabled and people at risk of poverty, as well as families who previously lived in bad conditions - without electricity or water. More than 90% of the residents are members of the

Roma community. The rent per housing is dependant to it's' size and is calculated based on a price of 11ev per square meter.

The future tenants are provided with additional requirements, established according to criteria, for whose conduction and adoption 8 public meetings were being held with the participation of representatives from all quarters and groups that populate the city and with particular involvement of Roma community leaders. Besides the formal criteria related to the actual condition of the applicant family, criteria related to the tenants' specific responsibilities was established as well- namely: unemployed people must be actively seeking for work, they must be included in the available trainings and literacy courses, as their children should regularly go to school. All of the applicants must choose a personal doctor and take responsibility in the maintenance of the apartments, as for the spaces around them.

The responsibilities of the municipality do not end with the location of the people in the social lodgings. Municipality officials and social service servants periodically visit the new tenants and assist them in resolving certain emerging issues, or help them build tenant-councils, to conduct meetings, and others. Here, an important role play the Roma community leaders who also monitors the implementation of the established criteria and the responsibilities of the new tenants. At the end of each year, each accommodated family will be evaluated and based on this evaluation, the decision for whether to extend their stay or terminate their accommodation contract will be made.

The construction of social housing is part of an integrated project - a model for solving the problems of disadvantaged people and its implementation is subject to the first project of Devnya "Integrated life in the community for children and disadvantaged people from Devnya" by an operational program "Human Resource Development" 2007/2013 - "INTEGRA". By the help of it, around 1,600 of the residents of Devnya will be included in a series of measures for improving the access to employment, education, social inclusion and sustainable desegregation. The project is approved at the end of 2013 and its' preparatory activities are currently concluding with the main activities coming on. The users of the social lodgings are accounted to be the main target group of the project "INTEGRA".

The local government is aware that for the accommodated in the social housing families, paying rent and covering other overhead costs will be a major difficulty. An expected problem is also the moment when families will have to leave the social housing, as the largest period in which a family is legally allowed to be placed in such lodging is 5 years. Therefore, the project "INTEGRA" aims to provide employment and income for representatives of such families by improving their qualifications and helping them within finding a job.

Within the duration of this project, people will be provided with training courses and according to each one's capabilities will be employed in the municipality, not just in the area of cleaning, but in clerk, municipal guard and administrative services. Such first appointments have occurred in various departments such as Territorial and Urban Planning, Clerk and Social activities. On the other hand, through "INTEGRA" the families will be helped, during their stay in the housing, to gain confidence in their ability to solve their housing problem by themselves - either by re-building their own homes or renting one. Actually, the local authorities started discussing opportunities for providing municipal land on a discount price for those who wish to build their own homes.

With a view of conducting the activities of the integrated project, premises are provided in the basement floor of the completely renovated building. According to the plan, the rooms are tailored for the conduction of trainings, consultancy and provision of all kinds of social services, the needs of whom may arise over time. Thus, the access of people accommodated in the social houses will be facilitated at its' most.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

From our observations, meetings and conversations held in Varna and Devnia over a period of 10 months (from January to October 2014), we can draw the following conclusions and recommendations with respect to housing of Roma:

1) The Roma community is not as homogeneous and stagnant as it seems at first glance. It has its own internal dynamics of development and stratification in terms of social status, culture, lifestyle, attitudes and expectations. As a result of these developments meaningful subgroups have been formed that often remain hidden to the outside observers.

2) Unfortunately, often the dynamics of the social (and political stratification) in the community makes it impossible for various subgroups to come to an agreement and cooperation and unite themselves around their common significant issues.

This social heterogeneity of the Roma community and the lack of internal agreement within its members make unsuccessful the attempts of different stakeholders to address the community as a whole in their integration and development strategies and action plans as well as it doomed to a failure the conventional communication strategies and attempts to involve Roma in the consultative process of the authorities.

3) Furthermore, in terms of the strategies for survival or achieving social success, the community groups divided into three groups:

- Deeply marginalized and ghettoized group that represents something as a minority within a minority. Because of their daily struggle for survival and the low horizon of planning, people of this group cannot make their own steps towards change. They have many problems in different areas and therefore they need a competent integrated support from professionals. The policy towards these people should be proactive and initiated by the authorities, institutions, non-governmental organizations, experts. The individual approach to assessment, planning and problem-solving (casework) is necessary to apply with the people / families from these groups. However, even if caring measures be applied to these people/ families, it is absolutely important also the application of the empowering approach, so that they to generate capacity for self-dealing with the hardships and problems. In terms of the housing issue, people from this group are the most relevant for integrated programs for social housing. Their involvement can be at the stage of identification of their individual problems, elaboration of individual plans to meet the issues of the family and in the implementation through participation in employment and qualification programs, parent's courses, etc.

- The main part of the community are people who are oriented to preserve the strong traditions and values of the Roma culture and work hard to provide modest economic prosperity with all the means at their disposal. These people build their homes themselves and prefer to live in the community. They pretend to have legalized houses and plots, improved infrastructure, waste collection, public lighting, playgrounds for children, clean and safe environment in their neighborhoods. These people should be given opportunity to legalize their homes, get ownership on the building plots and supported to build their home. They should be approached and involved in the consultative process about the urban and development planning as well as in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the integrated housing projects.
- Roma educated elite – even though still few, these Roma should be attracted as professionals in the administration, social and labour services, in the school and health care systems, police and court system. They are proactively oriented to the change and work hard to succeed based on their own capacities and efforts but existing social discredit to the Roma ethnicity make it impossible for them to have chance for social mobility as Roma. Their involvement as professionals will create sustainable role models for all Roma, particularly for these from the middle strata of the community who currently miss such successful models. These Roma can be involved also in the expert level of the consultative process of the authorities, which will improve the decision making in favour of the minority groups.

September 2014

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Integro Association is core member of ERGO Network.
ERGO Network is supported by the European Commission's Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI). This publication reflects only the author's view. The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission.

