

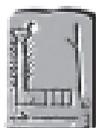
**AMALIPE CENTER FOR INTERETHNIC  
DIALOGUE AND TOLERANCE**

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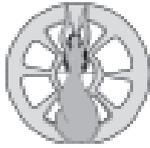
# **ANNUAL REPORT**

## **For the activity of Amalipe Center**

### **in 2014**



**АСТАРТА  
Пловдив  
2015**



**AMALIPE CENTER FOR INTERETHNIC DIALOGUE AND  
TOLERANCE**



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# 1 AMALIPE CENTER FOR INTERETHNIC DIALOGUE AND TOLERANCE

## AMALIPE CENTER FOR INTERETHNIC DIALOGUE AND TOLERANCE

is the biggest Roma organization in Bulgaria. At present Amalipe is the only Roma organization that implements activities and maintains regional and local structures in all regions in Bulgaria. The headquarter of the organization is situated in Veliko Tarnovo, but through the volunteer groups of Youth is Tolerance, Community Development Centers, local parent clubs Amalipe is represented in more than 150 towns and villages throughout the country.

The organization is implementing activities to improve education, health and socio-economic status of Roma community at local and national levels; activities to overcome anti-Roma discrimination and stereotypes consolidated by the approach to development and empowerment of Roma community. The organization plays a central role in organizing a Roma civic movement and advocating before the state and EU institutions. Amalipe Center participates in consultative structures that formulate key public policies. Some of them are the National Public Council on Education consulting the Minister of Education and Science, Public Council of Veliko Tarnovo District and similar council in 12 other districts. Organization's representatives, who have been chosen by the Roma NGOs, are members of the Monitoring Committees of the Human Resources Development OP, Education and Science for Smart Growth OP, Rural Development Programme, the Partnership Agreement, Good Governance OP and Regions in Growth OP. In these consultative bodies Amalipe is a preferred partner of the relevant institutions and an active participant that implements solutions in the interest of the Roma community.

Amalipe Center is the only NGO from Bulgaria that participates in the work of the European Roma Platform.

## OUR VISION, MISSION AND LONG-TERM GOALS

Amalipe Center **believes** in equal integration of Roma in society based on the preservation of Roma identity, mutual understanding and solidarity between Bulgarians and Roma. **Our mission** is to stimulate modernization and empowerment of the Roma community in Bulgaria for its active participation and equal access to resources and development processes, with priority focus on access to quality education, quality health care and social services.

**Long-term goals** of Amalipe are:

- To nurture capacity within the Roma community for access to development by increasing the educational level of Roma children and youth.

- To strengthen Roma community self-organization.
- To increase the participation of Roma in decision-making processes.
- To stimulate more consistent and responsible public policies providing for increased access of Roma to education, quality healthcare and social services, monitoring and feedback for improving political measures and practices.

**Our approach** for achieving these goals includes:

- Implementing innovative methods and practices at local level: in each area that we work on, we apply practical models that we personally monitor.
- Systematizing the practical results of the pilot initiatives of partner organization in order to include them in the national policies.
- Advocacy activities before institutions at national, regional and local level to extend and institutionalize best practices tested by Amalipe and other organizations.
- Advocacy activities before institutions at national level to form a stable model of Roma integration and to accelerate the integration process.
- Development of a network between organization's units and partner organizations that could apply nationwide certain practices, as well as to advocate before the local and national institutions.
- Analysis preparation, monitoring and assessment of the existing policies related to Roma integration.

## THE ORGANIZATION IN 2014

In 2014 the Amalipe Center continued its main activities from the previous years and further expanded. An important new element was the foundation and activation of Parental clubs in 137 towns and villages. This not only helped our educational programme and the change in schools we work with, but also provided a chance to work in the community on the territory of almost the whole country.

We expanded the diversified the activity of Youth Volunteer Groups for Tolerance in six major cities in Bulgaria, as well as in the municipalities where our organization has centers for community development (11 municipalities throughout the country). Bringing together young people from Roma, Bulgarian and Turkish origin, the youth groups reached thousands of representatives of the most important generation and through involving them in activities for forming tolerance, dialogue and friendship. What is more, they brought in the organization energy, genuine enthusiasm, innovative ideas and belief that there are better days to come. The community moderators from the Centers for Community Development, local clubs and voluntarily groups within them reached hundreds of families in the Roma neighbourhoods in order to inspire them with hope that they can change their lives, to activate and to organize them.

Another important moment in the organization's activities in 2014 was the strengthening of the network of 170 schools with whom we work closely to reduce the dropout and increase the quality of education. Gradually, they became a united network that is

capable of changing the entire educational system towards further inter-culture and attention to the needs of each child. Most of these schools already have the Amalipe spirit and open themselves to the local communities, becoming one of the mechanisms to accelerate community development.

Thus, in 2014 Amalipe covered all geographic regions, and is currently implementing in 26 districts. This led to a further broadening of Amalipe's regional and local structures. In order to work more effectively in the regions and to expand our activities throughout the country, we have prolonged the work of the regional pedagogical coordinators: one coordinator in each of the 6 planning regions. In order to reach in a more effective way to the local communities across the country, we have prolonged the work of the existing 10 centers for community development, where local clubs for community development were established (in the bigger towns and villages of the respective municipality), such as women and youth voluntarily clubs. Furthermore, we have continued the operation and widened the youth structures in 6 districts in order to reach and engage young people to the cause of Roma integration.

Thus, at present Amalipe is the only Roma organization in Bulgaria that has its own local, district and regional structures all around Bulgaria. We have established these structures with three objectives:

1. To support more effectively our partners (schools, municipalities, local organizations, activists) and the local communities we work with.
2. To effectively implement activities throughout the country: gathering the effectiveness of various community groups, youth groups and schools we are aiming at activating local communities, expediting the modernization and development of the Roma community in various regions of the country, and supporting the establishment and actual implementation of the national policy for Roma integration.
3. To establish a network that brings together the efforts of thousands of Roma and their friends – energy that could wind up the wheel of Roma integration.

The increased scope of work has led to the involvement of a relatively large number of the organization's employees – 72 people (out of them 40 are on full working day and 32 work part-time). It is Amalipe's pride that our employees work with employment contracts, following the requirements of the labour legislation. Working as a team in which each person performs a specific task and assists the others, the people of Amalipe have contributed to the success of the ongoing initiatives.

The organization also relies on more than 220 volunteers who have been systematically involved in activities and campaigns. Organized in voluntary clubs, they became a motive power, and very often initiators and faces of most of the campaigns. Young people wearing Amalipe Center T-shirts became a symbol of the awakening life and will for voluntary work on important public issues. Considering the fact that Roma community can generate volunteering is one of the positive news brought by the Amalipe clubs.

Furthermore, more than 100 experts and field workers from different fields were invited and also participated in the activities of the organization. Colleagues from the local Roma organizations have contributed to the good work of the Community Development Centers and youth volunteer groups for tolerance: the idea of these structures is to work together and support, and not to compete with local Roma organizations. Doz-

ens of other experts participated in different activities across the country organized by Amalipe. This way we united the efforts of Roma and non-Roma, in order to achieve the mission of intercultural dialogue, tolerance and friendship.

In 2014 we faced a new challenge: to continue the operating of the Community Development Centers and youth groups for tolerance after finishing the projects through which they were established (in January 2015). After carrying on conversations with the relevant municipalities, almost all of them agreed to cover the wages of community moderators and to delegate to Amalipe their supervision and management. In the municipality of Pavlkeni we started implementing this model in November 2014.

The willingness of municipalities to take their part in continuing the work of Community Development Centers does not only show their high assessment of the effectiveness of these structures. It gives hope that the model of a multifaceted community work can be extended and expanded so as to exceed the project principle. This will be one of the major challenges that Amalipe Center will face in 2015.





## 2

## INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION AND EDUCATIONAL INTEGRATION IN 2014

Education is the most important prerequisite for the realization of any modern person, and educational integration is the key element to the whole process of integration and empowerment of the Roma community. Therefore Education is an area in which Amalipe Center has been working since its establishment, and in our activities we reach schools, teachers, parents and students across the whole country. Without any exaggeration, we can say that currently Amalipe is the leading Roma educational organization and one of the major NGOs working for modernization of Bulgarian education system.

Our main cause here is to turn the school into a place where every child can find himself or herself, a place where every child to believe s/he may be excellent student, a place to get a chance to dream and be a person! This is the basic approach that Amalipe Center applies in its educational activities. A key element of this approach is the introduction of intercultural education (with a focus on the introduction of classes on „Ethnic Folklore – Roma Folklore”) as a means of preserving and renewing the cultural identity of the Roma community, as well as mutual understanding and tolerance formation between children of different ethnicities. Thus helping to improve the quality of education and modernization of the Bulgarian education system – intercultural perspective is an integral part of this process.

On the other hand, we work hard for Roma children and youth to attend school regularly: our dream is for all Roma children to complete not only primary, but also secondary education, after which many of them to continue their studies in universities and colleges. Qualified Roma, having secondary and university degrees are a reliable basis for what we call „integration”.

We achieve our cause and set goals in education together with an extensive network of 170 schools and 137 Parental clubs, as well as the local clubs we work with. We achieve them through the implementation of several programs.

### **I. Decreasing the dropout rate of Roma children Program “Every student can be a winner” (part II)**

#### **Duration**

November 2013 – July 2015

#### **Financial support**

Trust for Social Achievement

## What

The program is multi-faceted school intervention, which is implemented at national level in 24 districts of the country. It was launched in 2010 with the financial support of the America for Bulgaria Foundation (through „Reducing of Roma children drop out of school” project), and from November 2013 – Trust for Social Achievement Foundation (through „Every student can be a winner” project).

The basic concept of the program is that the dropout problem is a pedagogical problem and pedagogical means are needed to overcome it. The social activities (such as providing free lunch, breakfast, etc.) are not sufficient, nor basic, but complementary. A change in the overall school environment is needed: change in teaching methods, curricula, organization of the learning process in interaction with parents. Interactive and intercultural education is the best pedagogical basis for overcoming the drop-out: an example for this can be the efforts of the schools that have adopted elective courses „Ethnic Folklore – Roma folklore”.

The main objective of the program is to reduce the school dropout of Roma children in compulsory schooling age. The activities are also aimed to tackle the problem with the large number of absences, low grades at school, a relatively small percentage of Roma continuing their education in secondary schools (high schools), not participating and involving of Roma parents in school life and school management structures.

Currently, the program includes 170 schools across the country and we plan to increase their number in the coming years.

## How

The methods we use, together with the schools involved in the program are aimed at transforming the school into a well-functioning system that activates students, teachers, parents and contributes to the development of the local community. *The school program for dropout prevention and keeping children in school* is a main tool for planning the activities on keeping children in school. Describing the objectives and the target group on which each school wants to act, they decide on their own what specific actions will be implemented to retain and attract children, depending on the specific problems they are faced.

Each school program should include activities in the following areas:

1. Training of all teachers to work effectively in a multicultural environment: in 2014 we continued to use the approach „teachers training teachers” as it was carried out through a cycle of municipal and regional conferences for sharing experiences, and completed by the National Conference „Intercultural Education as a Mean for Retention of Roma Children in Schools”.
2. Introducing intercultural education: by means of elective courses „Ethnic Folklore – Roma folklore”, extracurricular activities in the classes of the compulsory subjects.
3. Activities for the empowerment and involvement of parents: Depending on the specifics of the parent community and school, these activities may include:
  - Establishment of an active School Board and inclusion of Roma parents.
  - Creating parental club of active parents in order to involve them in solving problems related to children at risk of dropping out and inclusion in the processes of decision-making.

– Organizing community discussions/parental lectures and “School for Parents” on actual issues, etc.

In most cases, the Parental club appeared the most appropriate form of engaging and empowering parents. In 2014 there were created or strengthened 137 parental clubs. Amalipe Center organizes a training cycle for the chairpersons of these parental clubs - from February to March and from October to November in order to increase their capacity to organize the activity of the clubs. Subsequently, the chairpersons carried out discussions with parents from their schools on three issues: „Rights and obligations at school”, „Roma and Roma groups” and „Prevention of early marriages”. In most clubs, a real organizational life was in full swing...

4. Establishment of a student parliament and other activities to activate the students – with students of mixed ethnic participants (where possible) for the active involvement of students in school life; their engagement and empowerment for making decisions concerning their stay in school; support for early school leavers.

In 2014 the process of forming student parliaments/councils was completed in all 170 schools that were included in the program. There were elections; student governments were established; students began to seek their participation in the organizational life of the school. An integral part of it is their efforts to contribute to reducing absenteeism and dropping out of their classmates.

5. Peers helping peers (mentors): through this practice, students who have achieved good results at school are included as mentors/tutors for students who have problems with dropping out (poor grades, absenteeism for various reasons, problems with other students, etc.). In 2014, there were student-mentors in more than half of the schools involved in the program.

6. Individual work with students facing the risk of dropping out: Preparing a profile of the students facing the risk of dropping out; preparing a portfolio of each child studying elective course „Ethnic Folklore”, which includes materials for the work and development of the child, etc.

A new approach in the work on the program in 2014 was to designate 10 pilot schools that face the most serious problems in attracting and retaining Roma children. Concentrated intervention is carried out in these pilot schools: through the regional pedagogical coordinators, who visit the pilot school once a week, training of all teachers, green school for students from grade 4 and 7, etc.

## Where

In the past 2014, 170 schools from 21 districts took part in the program. At the end of the 2013/2014 school year, the number of pupils, involved in the schools working on the program was 36 259, of which 22 326 Roma students. Among them, 2931 students are studying in ten pilot schools where the project has the most direct intervention. The total number of students in the target groups – 4, 7, and 8 grade was 11 185, and 3595 students were studying the elective course „Ethnic Folklore – Roma folklore”.

## Activities

- Training of all teachers to work effectively in a multicultural environment. During the 2013/2014 school year, there were trained over 200 teachers.

- Introduction of the elective course „Ethnic Folklore – Roma folklore”. Nearly 3600 students studied „Ethnic Folklore – Roma folklore”.

- Activities for active involvement of parents in school life: there were established or strengthened 137 parental clubs, and they held over 300 lectures on topics like „Rights and obligations at school”, „Roma and Roma groups” and „Prevention of early marriages”. In 17 school boards Roma parents took part, too.

- Activities for activating the students: There were created 156 Students parliaments. Over 800 student-mentors assisted the retention and increasing the learning motivation of their classmates.

- Celebrating „Vasilitsa 2014” (Roma New Year) in state institutions, ministries and embassies in Sofia. 248 students took part in the initiative and they visited over 25 institutions.

- A collection of the National Conference „Intercultural Education as a Means to Reduce Early School Leaving” reports was published. The purpose of the conference was to show the best practices of „Reducing dropout of Roma Children from School” program, to expand the area for promoting the best practices and innovations applicable in the Bulgarian school. Over 70 reports and presentations were presented.

## What we achieved

- The number and percentage of dropped out from school children was reduced: from 0.76% for the previous year, to 0.63% at the end of 2013/2014 school year. For comparison: in the same schools, the dropout rate was 2.47% before they started participating in the program.

- The dropout rate in our target group (the 4, 7, and 8 graders) has been reduced from 0.67% to 0.3% of the total number of students (in 2013/2014 school year): a level that is much lower than the national average.

- In 108 schools, involved in the project, there is not a single dropped out student. In the pilot schools, the dropout rate for the last year was 1.15%, and in the end of 2013/2014 it dropped to 0.85%.

- In the 2013/2014 school year, in schools working on the project, the maximum number of unexcused absences for a student is 10.5. A significant reduction of absenteeism can be seen among students included in elective course „Ethnic Folklore – Roma folklore” – 4.78 unexcused absences for the entire school year for a single student. The percentage of the students who have continued education in secondary schools is 78%.

## In the eyes of students, parents and teachers

*„I participate in the „Roma folklore” elective course with great pleasure. These classes are my most pleasant, because here I learn a lot about our culture and customs. During these classes we can dance, show what we are able to, give everything from ourselves in order to be well liked.”*

**Lyubomir Lyubomirov**, 6th grade,  
„Bratya Miladinovi” Primary School, Cherna village, Dobrich district

*„In one village the school is a very important institution and we, the parents, always try to help as far as we can. We are glad that our teachers and the director are*

*interested in our children and comply with our opinion. The teachers visit our homes, talk to us. We keep close relations with both the teachers and the school director.”*

**Tyurkyan Ali Sally,**  
parent of „Bratya Miladinovi” Primary School, Cherna village, Dobrich district

*„My attitude is in extremely positive direction, because after the involmment of our school in “Reduction of Roma children drop out of school” program, the drop-out number is minimized, i.e. there are no dropouts. Parental involvement in school life brings the school closer to the family environment and that makes the students to be more responsible for the learning process.”*

**Ivelina Hristova,**  
a teacher at „Tsanko Tserkovski” High School,  
Nicola Kozlevo village, Shumen district

## Evaluation of the implementation

„Based on the collected and analyzed information from the main and control sample among the three target groups – teachers, students and parents, we can conclude that the results and achievements of the project „Every student can be an excellent student” are in compliance with the objectives and create a working model that changes the whole school environment, contributes to reducing school dropouts and changes the attitudes of the main persons concerned who have a direct influence to the process of education and training of children – namely, teachers and parents ...

The Amalipe Center team have successfully built and adapted the concept and model for working in a multicultural environment in Bulgaria, moreover, together with other partners and school communities have created the conditions for its successful implementation in practice...

...

The results of the research show that the project „Every student can be a winner” has the potential to become a national program using the achievements so far and carefully selecting the form of applying this model...”

**Global Matrix and Proxima Consult,** *Evaluation of the implementation for the project “Every student can be an excellent student”* February-March 2015

## II. Project “Ready for school – 2014-2015”

### Implementation period

June 2014 – July 2015

### Donor

Trust for Social Achievement

### What

Since June 2014 Amalipe Center is a contractor of the project „Ready for school 2014/2015” in the region of Veliko Tarnovo District, the municipalities of Strazhitsa,

Polski Trambesh, Zlataritsa, Elena, Lyaskovets and Gorna Oryahovitsa. The project has been developed and is implemented at national level by the „Trust for Social Achievement” in cooperation with the Strategic Impact Evaluation Fund of the World Bank (SIEF) and the research institute „Poverty Action Lab” (PAL). The project activities will be implemented during the 2014/2015 school year.

According to the methodology probated by the TSA, during the project will be paid kindergarten fees, providing additional incentives based on regular attending the kindergarten, and improved access to information for families of vulnerable communities with children from 3 to 6 years old will be provided.

## Why

The expected effect of implementing these measures is a significant increase in enrollment and attendance of children from vulnerable groups in kindergartens. As a consequence, these children will improve their cognitive and social skills. This in turn will increase their chances for better education and better jobs in the future. For the past seven years Bulgarian has registered achievements in attending kindergartens by children – by 73% it has increased to 83%, but the participation of children from disadvantaged communities, especially Roma, is only 40%. Often these are children who would most benefit from education in early childhood.

## Where

Before the beginning of the activities hereunder, „Open Society” conducted a research of the sites form implementing the project and selected the final beneficiaries. Places, where project activities are carried out, were chosen by lot in the presence of representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science and the National Association of Municipalities in Bulgaria.

The project is implemented with the help of 23 local partner organizations in 240 towns and villages, and each of them includes one of the following four types of interventions: free education, free education plus a BGN 7 voucher for full attendance of children in kindergartens, free education plus BGN 20 voucher 20 for full attendance and information sessions, specifically designed discussions with parents about the benefits of education in early childhood. The distribution of interventions was chosen by a public lottery.

Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance „Amalipe” executes the project in 16 towns and villages in the territory of 7 municipalities in Veliko Tarnovo district. In the particular towns and villages there are implemented different components in order to assess the impact of different interventions and based on a control study, carried out for the first time in Bulgaria, for checking which of the proposed approaches is the most effective.

**„Free education” component** (i.e. paying kindergarten fees) is executed in: „Faith Hope and Love” Kindergarten, town of Pavlikem; „Children’s World” Kindergarten, town of Gorna Oryahovitsa; „Angel Karaliychev” Kindergarten, town of Strazhitsa, and „Forget-me-not” Kindergarten, village of Petko Karavelovo.

**„Free education plus a BGN 7 voucher” component** is executed in: „Atanas Nedelchev” Kindergarten, town of Byala Cherkva; „Fairy World” Kindergarten,

village of Maysko; „Happy childhood” Kindergarten, village of Konstantin; the kindergarten in the village of Tsarski Izvor, Strazhitsa municipality.

**„Free education plus a BGN 20 voucher”** component is executed in: „Night-ingle” Kindergarten, town of Zlataritsa; „Sunshine” Kindergarten, village of Varbitsa, Gorna Oryahovitsa municipality; the kindergarten in the village of Varbovka, Pavlikeni municipality; „Happy childhood” Kindergarten, village of Dobri Dyal, Lyaskovets municipality.

**„Information sessions”** are executed in the following towns and villages: Gorna Oryahovitsa, Byala Cherkva, Polski Trambesh, village of Varbovka, village of Tsarski Izvor, Village of Kamen, village of Vinograd, village of Petko Karavelovo.

Through implementing the project activities, apart from the financial support for families, it is proved that the increased participation in the early education has subsequently long-term effect and impact on the educational and personal achievements of a person. Through the informational meetings, which are held with parents, it is provided the opportunity for discussing issues related to early childhood education. Parents go to the kindergarten not just to take or get their children, but also to make themselves familiar with the process of learning and playing of their children; they attend open classes, sports events and celebrate public holidays. Through the implementation of the project activities, it was also achieved carrying out dialogue and discussion between parents, local community and local municipal administration on issues concerning the improvement of the facilities in kindergartens and providing free of charge kindergartens or opportunities for fee reduction for kindergartens.

## What we achieved

- Participants in information meetings and discussions – 419 people from the local parent community in 7 towns and villages.

- Held joint meetings between the parent community and the local authorities in the municipalities of Zlataritsa, Strazhitsa and Pavlikeni. The issue of reduction/elimination of kindergarten fees was put forward there; providing free of charge medical examinations for enrollment into a kindergarten; providing free of charge transport from the village or town where there is no kindergarten to the relevant institution.

- In „Fairytale World” kindergarten, village of Maisko, Elena municipality there was opened an additional group so children could be able to enroll there under the project. Moreover, the kindergarten was repaired in order to provide additional space for study area and bedroom for another group. Repair works were entirely carried out by Elena municipality.

- The mayor of Gorna Oryahovitsa municipality issued an order for the removal of the fees for children from vulnerable groups using the services of “Children’s World” kindergarten, residential district of Kaltinets, Gorna Oryahovitsa.

- In Zlataritsa municipality, the mayor submitted a proposal to the city council for canceling the fee for attending the kindergarten. The proposal was accepted, and since 1.01.2015 it is in force. All children attending kindergartens in the municipality of Zlataritsa are exempt from fees.

## In the eyes of the parents

*“There should be a unified state policy in relieving of kindergarten fees and to hold meetings with parents at local community level and at national level. We are convinced of the benefits of early childhood education, but the fees are prohibitive for families, especially for the inhabitants of economically weak regions (as most rural communities in our country are).”*

And in conclusion:

According to Nobel Prize winner in economics James Heckman, for the benefit of the economy, it is important that there is equal access to education, because undeveloped human potential is burden that gives if a workforce unprepared to compete in the global economy. As Hackman, and other scientists state that every dollar invested in high-quality education in early childhood produces between 7% and 10% return on investment on annual basis.

## III. Scholarship program for students at secondary level

### Period

September 2010 – August 2015

### Donor

Trust for Social Achievement

### What

For the fourth consecutive year Amalipe Center implements a program for supporting disadvantaged students at high school. The program „Equal opportunity – access to secondary education” helps children with textbooks and covers transport costs if they live in a place, which is different from the city they study in. By this opportunity young people from many villages have a chance to continue their education in their desired school. The program is funded by the Trust for Social Achievement.

For the 2014–2015 school year, 97 candidates were invited on interviews. 67 of them were approved and they received full support, and another 10 were left as reserves. They received free textbooks. In addition, another 8 students were supported by Amalipe.

### Why

One of the main objectives of the program is to support education in secondary level of students who are highly motivated to study but face serious financial difficulties for it. At the same time, as this is not a social program, but one aimed at supporting Roma educational integration, a prerequisite for the inclusion of pupils in it is that they engage themselves in activities for motivating their peers to continue their education. On the other hand, there are supported schools involved in the program of Amalipe Center for reducing dropout of Roma children from school – „Every student can be an excellent student”. Scholarship students who graduate can count on advice and infor-

mation from the educational experts at Amalipe Center on the opportunities and how to apply to universities in Bulgaria and in Europe. The beneficial effect of the program is best seen among children who are involved in it for more than one year. They become more responsible for their studying process and more active in terms of personal development and also in their relations with their peers.

### What have we achieved

During the past 2013-2014 school year 63 high school students were supported. 88% of the students enrolled in the program reduced their absenteeism and became more active at school and at the extracurricular activities. 79% of them improved their success and increased their motivation for continuing education. The average grade of the students in the program for this school year is very good 4.99. For comparison, the average grade of the scholarship students during the 2012–2013 school year was Good 4.00: i.e. there is an increase of one mark.

For the 2014–2015 school year the high-school students approved to be supported were 67. For the first school term, according to reports, among the scholarship students there is observed increased activity and engagement in organizing information campaigns, as well as actively volunteering in the Centers for Community Development Centre at Amalipe. There was an increased interest in the studying process, while at the same time absenteeism was reduced. It is obvious that the program positively affects the regular school attendance and active participation in classes. All this shows that the program is achieving its objectives and the results are positive.

In January 2015 there was a training of scholarship students under „Equal opportunity – access to secondary education” program. The aim was that the students would get more information about the program and about what is expected of them, namely the participation in organizing various campaigns and commemoration of Roma holidays such as Roma Pride 8th April, Vassilitsa and others. They discussed the possibilities of each of the scholarship students for helping to both younger students and their peers and to motivate them to continue their education. It was proposed to be held meetings in informal groups at particular dates. So far, in 5 towns and villages where there are scholarship students of the program, there have been established youth groups.

### In the eyes of others

*I participate in the program for second year and I am delighted with the unique opportunity provided to participants. My impressions to the overall performance of the program are really very good. It gives me the opportunity for complete development, as well as an amazing way to achieve a number of successes. It makes me responsible in every respect and teaches me independence. Organizing trainings for scholarship students, it gives me the opportunity for self-expression, a legendary way of getting to know different people and develop my communicative and cooperative skills.*

*I hope that the program will continue to fill the lives of high school students with a lot of success and excellence. Let Amalipe Center continues to support all participants by provoking them to make a step forward! I'm sure each of us can do that ...*

**Borislav Petrov**, town of Knezha

# 3

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY MONITORING

Roma integration is a process of modernization and development of the Roma community. The Roma community itself has the capacity not only to participate actively, but also to be a driving force in this process. Therefore the approach to community development (as opposed to compensatory approach for providing assistance to groups that cannot achieve on their own their development) should be leading in the efforts for Roma integration.

Community development is an approach that Amalipe Center applies in all its activities. In order to structure the efforts to accelerate the development of the Roma community, since 2011 the organization has developed special know-how – Community Development Centers, systematizing experiences of various types of community centers, established by many different organizations. In 2014 in the country with great success are working ten Center for Community Development in the municipalities of Peshtera, Novi Pazar, Etropole, Byala Slatina, Kameno, Pavlikeni, Veliko Tarnovo, Strazhitsa/Lyaskovets, Dolna Banya and Knezha. Local clubs for community development and volunteer groups were established within them that helped for further strengthening of the most vulnerable parts of the Roma community. In addition, applying the approach of community development in 2014, we established 137 parental clubs in villages and towns across the country. In that way, at present Amalipe is among local communities throughout most parts of Bulgaria, giving impetus to the development of the community.

The community monitoring of services provided locally is part of the approach to community development and empowerment efforts for the Roma community. In 2014 we continued and expanded into new municipalities the activities for community monitoring of health services. At the end of the year we applied this practice in education stimulating a part of the parental clubs to begin monitoring of educational services.

Although the approach for community development is applied in all programs of the organization, in 2014 we intentionally enriched this approach through two projects.

### **I. „A step forward – empowering young people and women from local Roma community” project**

#### **What**

The project is a two-year initiative launched in February 2013. It is implemented in Bulgaria, Spain, Romania and Hungary by Amalipe Center (leading organization), Roma Center for Health Policies „Sastipen” (Romania), Roma women association „Drom Kotar Mestipen” (Spain) and the „Colourful Pearls” Association, Pécs (Hungary) as part-

ners. The project is funded by the Directorate General „Justice” of the European Commission under Daphne III program.

In 2014 the project activities were focused on strengthening the Community Development Centers and the position of Community Moderator – through establishing and development of local clubs, different voluntary groups (youth, women and leadership) and training of local activists.

### Why

For four years now Amalipe Center has been working on creating and strengthening a new type of integrated service, community-based - Center for Community Development (CDC). Through its network of CDC are supported the development processes of the local Roma community. In 2011 6 CDC were opened on the territory of Bulgaria, in the municipalities of Peshtera, Novi Pazar, Kameno, Etropole, Byala Slatina and Slatina. There are two community moderators who work at each center.

In 2013 at the Municipal Centers there were established 15 more Local clubs for development in larger towns and villages in the municipalities with a predominantly Roma population. The activities of the local clubs are organized by a local moderator, who works in the particular Roma community. In this way, in 2014 a total number of 24 community moderators worked at municipal and local level for developing capacity of the local Roma community. At a municipal center level and to each of the local development clubs there operate one Leadership, one Youth, and one Women group.

### Why

Amalipe Center, through the network of centers and local clubs for community development, set itself the task of working to improve the social potential of local communities (with emphasis on young people and women from the Roma community). CDC is an integrated service that includes social, health, information and educational activities on site. Accepting the fact that the Roma community in Bulgaria is in the process of intense change and modernization, the centers and local clubs for development work to overcome the most acute problems that the community is faced, and mobilizing leadership in it.

#### **Activities of the Centre for the Development of Community:**

- Mobile work (social work on site) finding cases, work on „primary intervention”, establishing initial contact; mediation between the local community and institutions.
- Identifying and assessing the needs of vulnerable and minority groups from the local community, on the grounds of which risk assessment is prepared and appropriate activities for prevention and intervention are taken.
- Participation in the process of drafting the municipal plans for the integration of vulnerable groups.
- Representation and advocacy of young people, women and families receiving services from CDC before other state, administration authorities and NGOs.
- Prevention of early marriages and early birth rate among young people from vulnerable and minority groups (with particular focus on Roma girls).

- Prevention of school dropout and increasing the motivation of children from vulnerable and minority groups to attend school.
- Increasing the motivation of children and young people for lifelong learning and education, and women from vulnerable and minority groups for inclusion in literacy programs and increasing their education.
- Social work for the restoration and strengthening the connections between children and their families and support for dealing with conflicts and crisis in family relationships.
- Organization of cultural events and celebrate traditional holidays, as well as information discussions with the purpose of improving health education, social competencies and educational status of young people and women from vulnerable groups.
- Organizing discussions and campaigns focusing on women's rights and the rights of children in order to become familiar with their basic civil rights and obligations.

### **Community moderators work to increase the local social capacity and as a result of this there are:**

- There are 21 Youth groups created to work with young people from the local Roma community in six municipalities. More than 1000 young people have been involved.
- There are 21 women's groups established in six municipalities in the country and there are over 400 women involved.
- There are Leadership groups created, with a total number of 124 participants.
- There have been trainings to improve local social capacity of local activists within the 21 places in six municipalities. The total number of participants was over 1000 people.
- There have been 69 campaigns for raising awareness about accessing health, social and educational services to Roma youth and women. That covered 12 000 people.
- There have been community discussions with representatives of local authorities and state institutions on social, health and educational issues – 1200 people from the local Roma community participated in these discussions.
- There have been made profiles of 21 settlements, with the purpose of preparing and planning activities aimed at increasing local social capacity.
- There are proposals prepared and submitted in six municipalities to include specific Roma related activities to be provided in the municipal implementation plans of the National Roma Integration Strategy.

### **Campaigns**

- „Back to School” campaign – it takes place in the summer months when there is school summer holiday. The goal is visiting the families and the particular institutions related to education in order to help as many Roma children as possible to enter the classrooms on 15th September (beginning of the school year).
- „Increasing Health Awareness” campaign – twice a month the moderators, with the assistance of local health workers, organize and conduct health lectures, indicated as questions of present interest as a result of the daily work in these places.
- „I want a better future” campaign – making young people from the community familiar with the opportunities for continuing education.

- „Give Your Hand” campaign – charity initiatives for raising clothes, shoes, school supplies to support children and families in need in order to prevent Roma children to drop out of school.
- „Early Marriages Prevention” campaign – organizing lectures and events in order to reduce early marriages and prevent early pregnancy among Roma families.
- Putting sealants on children’s teeth from 6 to 9 years old in order to prevent dental caries.
- „Be Empathetic” – a campaign on AIDS and HIV.
- „Life Without Smoke” campaign – about the dangers of smoking.
- „For More Beautiful Birthplace” campaign – wherever CDC were established, the local community has become active and has been carrying out permanent campaigns for cleaning and rehabilitation of the living area.
- Establishing Sports Clubs to the Community Development Centers with the idea for young people to build team skills, communication skills and self-improvement.
- Establishing Art Studios to the Community Development Centers with the aim of giving a meaning to spare time and developing imagination and thinking; prevention of dropping out of school, prevention of aggression and violence among young people.
- Celebration of the traditional and national holidays, as a method for uniting and the local community.

#### **Successfully resolved individual cases:**

- 79 cases of prevention of dropping out of school.
- 28 children and youngsters reintegrated in school.
- 19 cases stopped early marriages.
- 56 children enrolled in preschool groups.
- 34 children enrolled in first grade.
- 156 children enrolled in kindergarten.
- 105 cases of assistance for access to social services and social programs.
- 110 adults enrolled in literacy courses.
- 270 cases of access to health services (free screening for uninsured persons).
- 30 cases of included in programs for training and retraining of adult for obtaining a profession.
- 21 cases of support for inclusion in programs to improve the social skills of adults;
- 29 women who have started work.
- 30 women who passed through the course of foreign language learning.

#### **The work of the moderators and CDC through the eyes of the others:**

*„As a school director, I need the community moderators. I see that the neighboring municipality are jealous of it, and if they can, they will take them from us. In neighboring municipality there is a close Roma community, creating many problems. There, if a child is to go to school, the parents must be negotiated for half an hour each morning, and the outcome is still unpredictable. It is very difficult there. While we have already been working with moderators for 4 consecutive year from the Center for Community Development, and Roma parents themselves already have a different understanding of the need for education of their children. There is a seri-*

ous need for such people to work with the local community - with children, parents, their surroundings.”

**Dobrin Dobrev,**  
Director of Nikola Vaptsarov Primary School, Novi Pazar

„Through their work, the community moderators from the Center for Community Development have managed to unite all local institutions - social, educational, health, local government and even the police. There is no more working on the piece on occurred cases, but representatives of all institutions gather, discuss, even argue, but we always find a solution. This is thanks to the work of community moderators.”

**Maria Ivanova,**  
councilor and director of the kindergarten “Sunshine”, town of Kameno

### Assessment of the implementation

„The project „A Step Forward – empowering young people and women from local Roma community” includes all elements required for developing and functioning of modern Community Development Centers , meeting the challenges facing local communities. The services provided within the project and the results are innovative policies for social inclusion in Bulgaria and can be identified as good practice, which is worth to be disseminated and multiplied...

The community development, as a concept, and the Community Development Centers as a model for providing integrated services based in the community are innovative practice, which has already proved its efficiency within the project „A Step Forward – empowering young people and women from local Roma community”.

**Ivan Krastev,** *Independent assessment of the implementation of the project „A Step Forward – empowering young people and women from local Roma community”, January 2015*

## II. Program for community monitoring of healthcare services

### Period

2011 – 2015

### Donor

Open Society Foundation – New York and Budapest

### What

The Program for Community Monitoring of Healthcare Services provided at local level has started at the beginning of 2011 and has already been working for four years for the improvement of the access to healthcare of Roma and other groups in the countryside. This is an initiative which general aim is to implement the **community moni-**

**toring of healthcare services** in order to strengthen the community development and advocacy from the highest to the lowest level which will give the local communities the opportunity to participate in the local policies and the processes of local-level management, improving the Roma health services and status in a long-term plan. In 2014 the community monitoring model was expanded to several other municipalities, stated below, and another two organizations took part in the process.

The model follows the methodology of community monitoring through the so called „**community inquiry**”, including periodical (twice a year) consultation with the local communities about the health services they receive and their quality. We supplemented this with two more elements. The first one is **the community mobilization and building groups of activists in the community** which precedes the „community injury”. During the recent years, the program has achieved its goal to create, test, evaluate and apply a mechanism for **mobilizing the local community** in seven different towns and villages on the territory of Veliko Tarnovo, Gorna Oryahovitsa and Pavlikeni municipalities where initially started the implementation of the program. The results show that the method works successfully for the mobilization of the local communities for solving issues in the field of healthcare. The community mobilization is helped by a range of campaigns, where major initiators are the local people and community moderators at the relevant Community Development Centers . This helps the community to become united and mobilized about one common idea, related to local people’s health.

The second element is the **advocacy activities** before the local and regional health institutions. All activities are accompanied by the work of juvenile and female groups which is an important part both of the community mobilization and the advocacy.

In 2014 the model continued working successfully in other municipalities and regions in Bulgaria. „World without Borders” and LARGO Association applied successfully the community monitoring of health services respectively in Stara Zagora and Kyustendil. The analysis of the activities of all organizations providing community monitoring shows that the general operating model is applicable equally successfully in different environments, with only small adjustments are required in respect of certain work approaches. It is of course necessary for yet differing communities and areas. For example Amalipe Center works in smaller towns and villages, less urbanized, small municipalities, villages, far from the district city. At the same time, our partner organizations in Stara Zagora and Kyustendil apply the model in district cities, large Roma neighborhoods which environment is incomparably different from that in the villages. This is indicative of the fact that the developed and tested model in Veliko Tarnovo and the established know-how can be multiplied in other regions as well.

Our team keeps looking for people with civic position, with potential, ready to work for the health of their community and who believe that the things depend mainly on them, on their participation and active citizen’s position. These people become community moderators, local moderators and volunteers who implement the community monitoring on a local level.

## What have we done

In 2014 the program continued working in the municipalities of Veliko Tarnovo, Gorna Oryahovitsa, Lyaskovets, Pavlikeni Strazhitsa, Knezha, Dolna Banya. Specific towns and villages where activities were applied were: Kaltinets living area (Gorna Oryahovitsa) village of Ledenik, village of Vofolei (Veliko Turnovo Municipality), village of Batak, village of Varbovka, village of Stambolovo, town of Byala Cherkva (Pavlikeni municipality), village of Enitsa, village of Brenitsa and town of Knezha (Knezha municipality, Pleven district), village of Kamen, village of Vinograd, village of Dobri Dyal (municipalities of Strazhitsa and Lyaskovets), and town of and Dolna Banya (Sofia District).

In 2014, two surveys were conducted using the “community consultation” method. This includes surveys from door to door and aims to evaluate the access to healthcare of respondent women and how they evaluate the quality of some of the health services. Some of the questions concern the **health insurance status, women’s and children’s health, access to emergency, hospital and primary care.**

In the first survey in June 2014, 917 respondents took part, and in the second one – 776 – women aged between 16 and 55, while the survey was held by nearly 30 volunteers who were previously trained to work with questionnaires and the particular issues.

For the purposes of the program, in the project towns and villages Amalipe Center opened local Community Development Centers, whose activities are coordinated by the municipal Community Development Centers, situated in the relevant municipal towns. The Centers work on the problems concerning the issues of community mobilization and support the process through which the problems of individuals to be identified as community problems, which is the first step in dealing with problematic issues.

Another main objective of the Community monitoring of health services is to promote the interaction of local people with health authorities at a local level and this includes GPs and dentists, hospitals, regional health inspection and centers for emergency medical care, because citizens are the ones who must hold the institutions accountable for the quality and accessibility to healthcare. In this respect, the last year there was achieved significant success. There were a number of joint activities and public events that were organized by local people and health institutions in their respective villages and municipalities. From being just precedents, these joint events between residents and health authorities became traditional part of community life.

Although the access to health care in small towns still faces many challenges, there is a significant success in many aspects. A positive development that should be highlighted is that in Veliko Tarnovo, where the central office of the organization is and where it first began monitoring the implementation of health services, there has been no case of encroachment on a medic by a patient. This was reported by community workers and nurses working in the healthcare system. The lack of conflicts and confrontations between doctors and patients in places where Amalipe teams work with the communities shows that the applied approaches have an effect on improving the access to healthcare and this makes the interaction between the two parties more effectively.

## What have we achieved

The efforts of local activists for improving the access to health services has already given results. For example, in the towns and villages where the program works, the community moderators themselves initiate campaigns which they carry out in close partnership with medical professionals – practitioners, general practitioners, nurses and other professionals.

A successful example is the results in Pavlikeni Municipality as well. For example, the local moderators work for linking the local plans for Roma integration (as part of the National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Roma Integration) to activities in the field of healthcare. One of the specific things that the residents of the village of Batak asked the municipality and the mayor was the repair and restoration of the dental clinic in the village, as there has not been any for 30 years. This initiative is now close to its successful end – repair works were made, the necessary permits were obtained and the cabinet will start working in 2015. Furthermore, there was a tender procedure for deciding the dentist who will work there. The general wish of all residents was that Dr. Zlatkae Kueva to be their dentist and she was the one that won the tender.

Again, in the municipality of Pavlikeni, in the village of Stambolovo and the town of Byala Cherkva there were conducted free medical examinations by the ophthalmologist Dr. Vutev. He found problems in more than 100 uninsured patients. Dr. Vutev managed to arrange the provision of free of charge glasses. This initiative was helped by Amalipe Center too. The glasses were distributed at the beginning of 2015.

These are small, but very important for people success at local level. They give local communities the confidence that these processes depend on them.

Thanks to the work of community moderators together with doctors and representatives of health authorities, a number of experts have begun conducting group meetings with the community in order to prevent major diseases – cancer, neurologic, ophthalmologic, infectious, and others. This signals a high degree of community mobilization and increased interaction between local people with health authorities. Thus, during this year were held dozens of campaigns concerning various diseases.

Each new community consultation registers improvement in the quality of health services, especially enhancing the interaction between local people and health institutions. With a high degree of certainty we can say that this is due to the actions taken within the project rather than the overall improvement of health services and access to healthcare in Bulgaria.

# 4

## HEALTH CARE AND HEALTH INTEGRATION IN 2014

In 2014 the health care system and access to healthcare faced a number of new challenges. The reform process has continued being held back because of the unstable political situation and repeatedly changed governments and health ministers respectively. The system continues to be chronically underfinanced, and a number of hospitals continue to be in a great debt. Access to timely and quality health care of a large part of the population continues to be poor. In addition, the understanding that the health system and its financing are rather a burden for the state budget, than an investment has deepened during this year.

Emergency medical assistance is not provided in an equal way with due attention and care to patients of different ages, from different ethnic groups and to more seriously ill patients. Often there is overt discrimination on grounds of age, ethnicity and degree of disability. The duties of medical establishments remain perfunctory when they have to comply with the religion, traditions, beliefs and opinions of the patient during hospitalization. These are facts confirmed by expert organizations working in the field of health care. The system has been shook by scandals that undermined, on the one hand, the work of emergency aid, and on the other hand, the relationship between doctor and patient. The permanently unreformed system with underpaid staff has accumulated a lot of negatives on itself by the most marginalized communities, which traditionally have the worst access to health care. This has led to encroachment by patients on doctors and conflicts between the two parties, which have grown into political disputes. Political figures tried to turn the problem into an ethnic one, but this has provoked opposition from dozens of NGOs and civil society organizations, including Amalipe. This was the beginning of a new dialogue – between the Ministry of Health and organizations working on health issues in the Roma community. The newly established dialogue had to reassure the parties that there is going to be a reform and it should satisfy not only the employees in the system, but all Bulgarian citizens irrespective of their ethnic origin.

Timely access to health services remains a challenge for the most vulnerable Bulgarian citizens – living in isolated regions, away from the municipal or district center and persons belonging to ethnic minorities, especially the Roma.

Another negative trend which prevailed in 2014 was the wrong model, imagined and presented by a number of experts – to reduce the cost of the NHIF by reducing the number of hospitals in the country. Such an idea could only worsen the already poor access to health care, particularly in isolated areas. The expenses of the NHIF will be reduced not with reducing hospitals but with reducing hospitalizations.

In addition, the provision of health services in the Roma community in the settlements themselves also face serious problems, especially in rural areas (where more than 66% of Roma in Bulgaria live) as well as the largest Roma neighborhoods (ghettos). The insufficient number of GPs in towns and villages with Roma population limits

the ability of Roma to gain permanent health care close to where they live as in some villages the doctors work two days a week, for example. Another trifling problem is the lack of health provision within the Roma population due to impossibility for paying regularly health insurance and due to low health knowledge.

Against this environment and circumstances Amalipe Center has continued its efforts to improve the welfare of Roma community in regard to health care. The organization continued work on a number of programs aimed at a wide range of activities that complement themselves. Furthermore, they aim at mobilization of the community, changing attitudes inside and outside the communities, building bridges among the different stakeholders in the healthcare field instead of providing services. Only this would bring sustainable change in badly damaged relationship between doctors and patients, and this would contribute to the modernization and development of the community that should be able to personally interact with health authorities and healthcare providers. On the other hand, our efforts were directed towards health education activities, especially for women and children. Through our work, we encouraged the initiative of local communities organized around the Community Development Centers to be generators of ideas about how health awareness of the community to be improved and prevention to take a greater part of people's lives than emergency aid.

## **I. Program 'Prevention and control of HIV/AIDS'**

**Component 7:** „Reducing vulnerability to HIV of young people at greatest risk (age 15-24) by increasing the range of services and programs aimed at youth” for the area of Veliko Tarnovo District

### **Donor**

The Ministry of Health, Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB, and malaria.

### **Why**

The need for activities in the area of sexual and reproductive health care on the territory of Veliko Tarnovo District, and in the country in general, is necessitated by the fact that health education of young people on sexual health is very low. It is a fact that the youngest people who live in non-urbanized rural areas have significantly more limited access to good education. Furthermore, the youngsters from the traditional Roma groups consider the theme of sexuality a taboo and it is rarely discussed at home.

### **What**

Centre „Amalipe” has worked on the Program for prevention and control of HIV/AIDS coordinated by the Ministry of Health and its Component 7 since 2010. The activities and services of the Programme „Prevention and control of HIV/AIDS” are organized in 9 components. This organization aims to ensure the execution of integrated and balanced approach to fight against HIV/AIDS through prevention, diagnostic, treatment, care and support for the people affected by the disease. Component 7 works for prevention and decrease of the vulnerability to HIV among young people at the highest risk (14-25) by increasing the services and programs directed to youngsters.

## How

19 non-governmental organizations in different cities of Bulgaria work within Component 7 of the Program. They have youth volunteer clubs for prevention and control of HIV/AIDS. There is such club at Amalipe Center, Veliko Tarnovo. The activities of the volunteers consist of providing information campaigns and materials aiming to reach the most vulnerable young people as well as to distribute health-educational materials and condoms. Another main activity of the volunteers is the fieldwork: reaching the young people in their natural environment, consulting them about sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS, methods of protection from unwanted pregnancy and motivation for testing. The volunteers also conduct trainings on sexual and reproductive health based on peer-training method by passing on what they have learnt to other young people. The volunteers conduct trainings led by educators – specialists in the given areas, too.

The activities within Component 7 of the Program include: outreach work among young people at risk; a team of peer educators; maintaining a club/center for peer educators and providing information and materials about safe sex practices; reaching a maximum rate among young people at risk in the region; helping young people at risk over 16 years for HIV testing, motivation to reduce risky behavior.

## What have we achieved

According to our summary data for 2014, there are 1315 young people reached, an increase of 350 in comparison with 2013. During the campaigns 1789 people were reached. During the campaign activities, fieldworks and training 7167 condoms were given as well as 3276 health educational materials. In various trainings on sexual and reproductive health issues, training was provided to 70 young people aged 14-25 years, 20 of them – children from institutions.

## Advocacy for continuation of the program

In 2014 Amalipe actively participated in a coalition of organizations fighting for finding sustainability and financing activities under the program after 2015 with provided funding for this.

According to an agreement between the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria and the Ministry of Health, Bulgaria received a grant for the implementation of activities under the “Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS” program until 2014. The activities during 2015 will be funded with unexecuted program costs that will be deferred, and at the end of 2015 the funding of the program will be fully completed.

That is why in 2014 a group of organizations took the first steps towards the **advocacy initiative**, balancing between political changes and frequent changes of governments and ministers. The Committee of the Initiative, as later the group of organizations was named, includes: „Initiative for Health” Foundation, Sofia, „Health without Borders” Association, Sofia, „Health and Social Development” Foundation, Sofia, „Hope against AIDS”, Sofia, „National Patient Organization”, Sofia and Amalipe Center. 34 organizations initially joined the initiative, and their number is growing. Subsequently, basic steps for activities were drawn for seeking contacts with the responsible institutions so that the proposals of the organizations to be addressed. Specific activities started in the first half of 2014, but all attempts did not reach successful results because of the

fact that only in one calendar year there were three different governments in power. The „Oresharski” government was dismissed in August and replaced by a caretaker government, which was followed by the regularly elected government of Boiko Borisov, which has been operating since the beginning of November, 2014. This stability enabled us immediately to seek contacts with the responsible ministers, and the actual advocacy activities will be realized in 2015.

## **II. Scholarship program for medical students of Roma origin: advocacy training and other activities carried out by Amalipe together with students**

### **Donor**

**Roma health project, Open Society Foundation – Budapest**

### **What**

A scholarship program for Roma students in the medical universities and colleges gives the opportunity to young, educated and highly motivated young people from Roma background to develop their knowledge and professional experience in the sphere of Healthcare for the sixth subsequent year.

In 2009, which was the first year in Bulgaria, 23 students in medical colleges and universities were supported. During the second program year they became 57. In academic year 2011–2012 eighty Roma students received help for their education in Medicine and other medical subjects, while in 2012/2013 they were 77. In 2013/2014 the students who participated in the programme were 64. During the academic 2014/2015 there were about 60 students were supported.

### **Why**

With the implementation of the program, the initiators Roma Health Project of OSI, Budapest, Roma Education Fund and Open Society Institute, Sofia aim to improve the quality of the provided health cares and to overcome the acts of discrimination in the system of healthcare by giving examples to follow, which can motivate the young Roma to choose a career in the field of healthcare. Through the programme has also been increased the number of employed Roma in healthcare system - those who were students in the first years of the programme are already part of the system and treat Bulgarian citizens in various types of units of the system – from primary health care to hospitals.

### **How**

The programme, which is first of its kind in the region for support of medical training and education of young and ambitious Roma is made up of several mutually reinforcing components:

- scholarships for students in higher medical schools, professional schools and colleges as well as doctors graduates that cover their tuition fees and living expenses;
- mentoring of scholarship students by tutors/mentors;

- training on advocacy for both the scholarship students and their tutors;
- public presentation and promotion of the programme.

A partner in the programme during all the years of its implementation in Bulgaria is Amalipe Center. It executes the advocacy component, the central event of which is the Summer Advocacy Camp. It annually gathers all students participating in the programme.

Traditionally, in the summer of 2014 there was held **advocacy training** in the field of Roma health. Dozens of Roma students and prospective students of medicine and those who want to study medicine or medical specialties participated in the training. There, besides the young people, took part their teachers and mentors from various medical universities and colleges across the country. The total number of participants **exceeded 75 people**.

The aim of the training was to acquaint young people with the history and culture of the Roma in Bulgaria, with the main documents for Roma integration (focusing on documents in healthcare), thereby raising sensibility of trainees towards the efforts for improving the health status of Roma community.

Traditionally, the training combined theoretical and practical activities where students learned new things, worked on site and participated in volunteering activities after severe flooding, that had caused many regions disaster.

The theoretical part of the camp met the students with representatives of medical professional and patient organizations and other professional associations. Together, they discussed not only problems in the field of Roma health, but how they could contribute as future young professionals to improve the health system in Bulgaria. Together they discussed what the vision of the reform in the health system should be.

The fieldwork of the future doctors and medical specialists has always been part of the education on advocacy and aims to give them the opportunity to learn about health issues in communities, which they had worked in. The fieldwork this year was executed in three neuralgic neighborhoods, where Roma live: **residential district of Asparuhovo, Varna, in the town of Nikolaevo, Stara Zagora District, and Emergency Ward – Gorna Oryahovitsa**. Divided into three groups, the students there worked on site and provided various basic health and medical interventions.

At the same time, another part of the students had an unusual experience in their work on the site as part in an international initiative in **Auschwitz, Poland**. On August 2 the less popular Roma Holocaust is honoured, and in 2014 it was the 70th anniversary of it. Although Bulgaria is among the very few countries that saved all their Jews and Roma, we showed solidarity with the grief of others who did not have this destiny. Nearly 1000 young people from all over Europe participated in the initiative near Krakow. Students of the programme for supporting Roma studying in medical universities and colleges and the Tolerance Youth Groups („Youth is tolerance”) at Amalipe were the Bulgarian representatives there.

The presentation of the Bulgarian group impressed the forum participants: they showed a flash mob and theater-forum about their activities. The head of the Unit „Roma coordination” in the European Commission Lina Papamihalopolu personally congratulated them for the work of Amalipe Center, Bulgaria and wished them to be the

new face of the Roma community, to help other young people overcome stereotypes towards Roma, and many other Roma to become doctors.

### **Advocacy for continuation of the programme**

Back in 2011 Amalipe Center initiated advocacy activities for continuation and expansion of the programme with funds from the Bulgarian government. It is our pride that they achieved the desired result: it was agreed to continue the programme with funds from the Component „Health” of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism in Bulgaria (the component is managed by the Ministry of Health) and will include key components – scholarship, mentoring and advocacy training .

In 2014 the actual implementation of this agreement began. The Ministry of Health announced a tender for the execution of the programme, as the set parameters included expansion to 130 students. In December the scholarship competition was announced.

It was achieved a unique example of a continuing scholarship programme for Roma students with funds managed by the Bulgarian government. It creates a precedent for a result-oriented support for the most vulnerable, in terms of education, community in the Bulgarian society<sup>1</sup>.



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<sup>1</sup> According to the census in 2011, Roma with higher education are only 0.5% of self-identified as Roma. According to expert estimates, the percentage of Roma graduates is significantly higher, but many of them identify themselves as Bulgarians or Turks. However, the Roma with higher education are significantly fewer in comparison not only to Bulgarians, but even with the other large minority – Turkish.

# 5

## COMBATING ANTI-ROMA STEREOTYPES AND PREJUDICES

Strong anti-Roma stereotypes and prejudices and ignorance of the Roma and their culture are some of the reasons that rooted discrimination against this community. The lack of public support for Roma integration policies is one of the main obstacles to their implementation.

Prejudices against Roma exist on the part of the majority, but we do not search fault in it, because we think that moral categories apply to every individual, not a group of people. By all activities that aim to combat anti-Roma stereotypes and prejudices, we strive to promote tolerance and understanding between Roma and non-Roma by mutual understanding and collaboration.

In addition, during the past 2014 year we implemented targeted activities to overcome stereotypes and prejudices against Roma among the most important target group – young people, namely.

### Project

Youth is tolerance – overcoming anti-Roma stereotypes among young people

### Period

02.2013 – 01.2015

### Funding

European Commission, Fundamental Human Rights and Citizenship Programme

### Why

Project „Youth is tolerance – overcoming anti-Roma stereotypes among young people” aims to combat racism, xenophobia and anti-Roma attitudes based on traditional and new stereotypes among young people aged 14 to 25 years. The project aims to promote mutual understanding and tolerance.

### How

Within the project was created and tested a comprehensive model for combating racism and anti-Roma stereotypes among young people in Bulgaria, Romania, Greece and Hungary. It used the method „peers influencing peers” which actively engage young people with a wide range of activities to overcome stereotypes: campaigns, training of peers and other activities. Activities were implemented by volunteer youth clubs / groups „Youth is tolerance”, covering one city in Romania, Greece and Hungary, as well as six areas in Bulgaria – Veliko Tarnovo, Blagoevgrad, Vratsa, Burgas, Plovdiv and Shumen.

### What

Together, young people from different ethnic groups united in the clubs „Youth is tolerance” fight against anti-Roma attitudes and negative stereotypes, xenophobia and

racism. Since the beginning of the project the young people organized: campaigns, trainings and other public activities to promote tolerance and understanding. Young people from voluntary clubs had team meetings every week to discuss upcoming activities, as everyone had the opportunity to offer ideas for organizing club events.

Within the program was established concept for the development of youth volunteer groups, which described in detail the activities, target groups, how to reach them and their activation. Data has been collected in each of the four countries on existing documents and materials concerning anti-Roma stereotypes, discrimination and tolerance. Sociological research on stereotypes of young people in terms of ethnic, religious minorities and other nationalities living in Bulgaria was made in Bulgaria before launching the activities of volunteer groups. The study showed that the majority of young people shared mostly negative stereotypes towards Roma, the lack of real contact with young Roma and lack of information were the main reasons for the large social distance. The study showed influence channels among young people – personal networks / contacts and the Internet. This determined the methods used for impact.

An international camp for training young people from the four participating countries on how to reach out to their peers and to open their hearts for tolerance was held before starting the actual work of voluntary groups.

Since the autumn of 2013 youth voluntary groups launched a series of campaigns and training of peers using the „Manual of tolerance” which contains valuable information and practical advice.

With much enthusiasm and open hearts in 2013, and in 2014 youth clubs registered a total of 214 peer trainings (highschool and university students) on modules that were identified after the survey. Trainings in six areas in Bulgaria acquainted volunteers with Roma history and culture, with the objectives of the project, how to break down negative stereotypes and to influence other young people to be more open and more tolerant to ones that were different from them.

In all the activities during the past year we were looking for the participation of various institutions that relate to youth, tolerance, education and the fight against discrimination. For the successful implementation of the activities we have engaged over 60 professionals from the health, educational and social institutions, dozens of non-governmental organizations and local and national authorities.

The events that occurred within the project were campaigns (in places where young people congregate, in schools, in the city center), trainings, press conferences and other public activities. More than 140 campaigns and public activities happened in the 2013 and 2014 in the four countries involved in the project. Those events touched nearly 23 500 people, 120 journalists, and the number of young people who were reached, exceeded 3000. Campaigns calling for tolerance, understanding and respect, organized by youth clubs were „Roma Pride”, „Day of Tolerance”, the campaign „Life is like a mirror – smile and you will get a smile back” and others.

To ensure rapid spread of information and news about events organized by the project we have created Facebook groups, pages and website.

## Results

Members of the youth voluntary clubs’ Youth is tolerance” managed to unite, irrespective of ethnicity and differences, in the social cause to overcome anti-Roma stereo-

types. Volunteers were from different ethnic groups, but that did not prevent them from becoming friends, from having fun while doing things for the benefit of the whole society. They encouraged other young people to tolerance and understanding, and achieved good results. They realized over 140 campaigns that reached 23,500 people. The young people held 214 trainings on tolerance for students and affecting over 3000 peers.

Since the beginning of the project so far and during 2015 volunteers organize joint campaigns and trainings on tolerance, which helped them to break some of their stereotypes and to show others that they also can do it. They really can!

### **In the eyes of others**

*When we are different and work together, things happen, sometimes even beyond our expectations in a positive aspect. The campaign, which we did – „Life is like a mirror – smile and you will get a smile back”, proved this and made me think that surrounded by problems, we do not find time to smile, but we have to. The flowers are different, but when you see them together, they are far more beautiful!*

*Each volunteer, involved in the project „Youth is tolerance” found friends, shared opinion, adopted by others with respect. We are one big family! We learn each other’s good and try to sow it on fertile ground to grow a seed of Tolerance. This project enables many young people to be heard, to share ideas and to implement them together. Moreover, one finds oneself in a different environment, where tries to think realistically, shakes out of stereotypes and looks at things in a different way - from a better angle.*

**Nikolai Benchev, 26, Veliko Tarnovo**

*My participation in the project, I can say that had a positive impact on my thinking in this regard that the imposition of racism is a big mistake. We have our place on this earth, as well as minorities have their place on it. No matter whether we are Bulgarians, Roma or other, we all have the right to be happy.*

*With the activities of the project, we, the volunteers of Club „Youth is tolerance” are trying to attract more people to grasp the truth about discrimination and that its imposition is a huge mistake.*

**Violetka Petrova, 18, Vratsa**

*I participated in the project „Youth is tolerance,” because I was fascinated by the idea of improving the microclimate in our society. Activities and campaigns, that we organize unite young people like us, they are invaluable and give a kind of feel of belonging and fulfillment!!! I hope my contribution to the project is positive, and the whole project is the beginning of something bigger. I also hope for a complete change of bad stereotypes enshrined in our nation... and why not this project to leave a lasting trail for a truly better world!”*

**Miroslav Stoynov, 26**

*I became a part of the Club of tolerance in Burgas, because I want to help people have a better life and to show that I am part of society and I can be tolerant and accept people as they are. I realized that if I want to change people, I must first*

*change myself. I managed to change, to figure out where I was wrong and not rashly judge people. I became more responsible due to my participation in the project. I am glad that people perceive our activity very positively.*

**Hristina Bozeva, 17, Bourgas**

*What I liked in the club „Youth is tolerance” was the friendly and warm relationship between members, striving for a better future for all young people. I like that there were different initiatives and campaigns to promote the club and its purpose – namely tolerance between ethnic groups in Bulgaria. I think the club achieved results in supporting Roma integration in Bulgaria.*

**Simona Petrova, 18, Shumen**



# 6

## VOLUNTEERS IN ACTION

Wise people say that tragedies bring people together. So we thought in the first days after the tragedy in Tarnovo, Dobrich and Asparuhovo (and all those places that were damaged by the flood in June 2014). Then social networks, and some media were flooded, but not from natural flood, but from mud, which is not less-killing - the mud that sows hatred and set people against each other. And most likely, those who sow hatred, haven't been to the place of the tragedy, because they would hardly going to write all this if they had seen with their own eyes the mother who asked: „Do you know what it is to lose a child?”

Our volunteers saw it with their own eyes and experienced it with their hearts, because to be hurt you have to have a heart. If you have no heart, you would not leave your convenient place – session, work, family, rest on Saturday and Sunday to help unknown people. And contrary to everything that has been written, Roma volunteers were there. Yet in the first days after the flood, a group of young Roma people from Novi Pazar and Shumen were on eof the first helping in „Asparuhovo” neighbourhood.

Volunteers to the Community Development Center - Novi Pazar and the Youth Club „Youth is tolerance” – Shumen, established by Amalipe, grabbed their enthusiasm, willingness to help and most of all – humanity, to help some of the most suffering in the neighborhood - residents of „Rose Valley.”

Our volunteers continue to provide support to victims in flooded areas. On June 24, they helped in the following locations:

**Kilifarevo:** twelve volunteers from the Community development centers in Veliko Turnovo and Pavlikeni took part in cleaning the four houses on the „Krajbrezhna” street. By the words of one of the owners „What this organization did today was ten times more than what any other did before them”. Volunteers continued their work in Kilifarevo in the coming days.

**Varna and Dobrich:** Volunteers from the Community Development Center - Novi Pazar, Etropole and Kameno and Youth Club „Youth is tolerance” – Shumen and Burgas took part in cleaning the school „L. Karavelov” – Varna, and volunteers from local clubs for community development in the villages of Tarnava and Tarnak, Byala Slatina municipality, helped victims in Dobrich.

Volunteers did not divide the people that they helped on Roma and Bulgarians, they helped them all, because there are only PEOPLE in tragedies. Just as humanity is just HUMANITY!

Here's what was written by Sylvia Stantcheva, coordinator of the Youth Club „Youth is tolerance” – Shumen:

“Tragedy! Horror! Pain! Death! Those words cannot describe the situation in which we were immersed today! I cannot find stronger words to describe the feelings that

views from Asparuhovo neighbourhood raised in us! We did not do much, but all were very grateful to us. They called us friends! People! We went home satisfied that we were useful that we have shown sympathy that we were just HUMANS!”



# 7

## PRESERVATION AND RENEWAL OF THE ROMA CULTURE AND IDENTITY

A guiding principle in the work of Center Amalipe is to support the preservation, promotion and renewal of Roma culture and identity. This principle is respected in all programs and activities of the organization. We perceive the integration not as assimilation/acculturation, but as a chance to upgrade and modernize the Roma culture.

Through its activities Amalipe contributes to the formation of contemporary Roma culture. Contemporary Roma culture and identity must continue the traditions of Roma folklore, but in terms of the needs of the modern Roma who has rejected the patriarchal habits without denying the ethnic identity. Contemporary Roma culture should be broadly defined to include the identity of groups such as Millet, Rudari and others without being perceived as „second class” or „non-genuine” Roma.

The preservation and renewal of Roma culture and identity cannot just happen by itself. Instead a concerted effort in this field is required. Moreover, such activities are particularly compelling, as the objectively ongoing process of modernization, combined with strong anti-Roma stereotypes and prejudices among the majority lead to the fact that many educated and integrated Roma deny their identity and willingly assimilate themselves. The formation of contemporary Roma culture and its promotion and powerful tool to stop the assimilation among educated young Roma. Therefore in 2013, continuing the practice of previous years, Center Amalipe organized:

### I. Children Roma Festival „Open Heart”

#### What

For the eleventh consecutive year CIEDT „Amalipe” held the „Open heart” Roma Children Festival – an arc of song, dance, smiles and friendship... with no end!

Expected for a whole year by students, teachers and youths, the festival filled the streets of Veliko Tarnovo, chased away the rain clouds (which were an integral part of the landscape three weeks before the event) and brought the colorful rainbow of traditions of Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Hungary and Macedonia .

More than 2000 students and young people from 114 schools, community centers, clubs and centers were in Veliko Tarnovo between 6th and 8th June. They were welcomed by many guests, friends and partners. Among them were the Deputy Mayor of Veliko Tarnovo, Gancho Karabadzhakov Her Excellency Vanessa Calvert – Ambassador of the Republic of South Africa in Bulgaria, Andrey Iliev – Deputy Governor – Veliko Tarnovo District, Baki Hyuseinov – Vice President of the Commission for Protection against Discrimination, Hristofor Ionov – Director of „Konstantin Kisimov” Theatre,

Sarah Perrin – Executive Director of the Trust for Social Achievement, Karina Fortuny – Director of „Educational Opportunities and Achievements” programme, Eng. Rozalia Licheva – Head of the Regional Inspectorate on Education, Veliko Tarnovo and many others.

## Why

The festival aims to give children of different ethnicities opportunities and to encourage in them a lasting interest in the learning process as a whole. The main goal is showing that the folklore of each ethnic group brings its cultural heritage and is indispensable to our existence as a unified nation. The festival targets the preservation, development and promotion of Roma culture and folklore, as well as the presentation of the folklore and culture of other ethnic groups in Bulgaria. Its purpose is to bring children from different ethnic groups to the same stage united under the common idea – „World is for everyone”.

## How

Smiling, colorful like the rainbow, with various costumes ... the children and young people, as well as the groups who had arrived from the Centers for Community Development, went to the meeting place for the start of the Festival parade. This year, the inclusion of a marching procession in the programme attracted great interest from the participants and media. Although being a side event, organized for the first time, it brought together many citizens of Veliko Tarnovo. Much spirit was brought by the performances of the Brass bands from the town of Byala Slatina and „St. Cyril and Methodius” High School from the town of Zlataritsa, who led the procession and skillfully interwove song rhythms by Goran Bregovich, Bulgarian folk dances and ethno rhythms from foreign countries. Each school carried proudly a sign of its patron, and in front of the municipality building, the announcement of participants caused great emotion and joy.

The stage programme for the first festival day passed with dances, songs, exhibitions of workshops, many emotions of the children’s faces on the stage and in the marching procession along the main street „Vasil Levski” in Veliko Tarnovo. The special guests from Pecs, Hungary, managed to fascinate the audience with very fast rhythms of Hungarian Roma dances. They created an attitude that the second day of the festival would be even more interesting and splendid.

The following days – Saturday and Sunday were even more colorful, even more interesting, even richer of workshops and suits. After considerable debate, the entire team of Amalipe Center decided – we would risk and trust the weather, and few clouds would not spoil the mood: the festival continued in the open air, in front of and around the fountains in Marno pole park, in the center of Veliko Tarnovo.

Together with the festival programme, the participants made crafts workshops: before the guest’s sight they made spindles and spoons, traditional dishes, restoration of customs, painted pictures...

Three days of a festival, three days of fairy scene, three days of friendship and wonderful mood. It is difficult to tell if you were not part of the atmosphere, if you have not seen the shine in the eyes of the children, if you have not heard the beating hearts with emotion of the teachers – leaders of groups!

More about the festival can be found at:

<http://www.amalipe.com/index.php?nav=news&id=1969&lang=1>

### **In the eyes of others**

*„Achieving high success rate of students at school is a prerequisite for their participation in the National Children Roma Festival “Open Heart” in Veliko Tarnovo. This is a very good and working incentive for each student, and is also tested in time. By studying the tales, holidays, customs, songs from the Roma folklore and emphasizing its connection with the folklore of other ethnic groups, it is aimed that each child will find a place in the classroom and in the school as a whole. The child aims together with their parents not to be ashamed of their origins – rather, based on it, to enrich the school life.”*

**Daniela Stankova**, Director of „Bratya Miladinovi” Primary School, village of Cherna, Dobrich District

*„The festival is a prestigious event which, I am confident, brings people together, contribute to the development of intercultural dialogue and encourage children to achieve better results in school. The festival days give new, lasting friendships and joint creativity.”*

**Prof. Aneliya Klisarova** PhD, Minister of Education and Science

## **II. ROMA PRIDE – Day of the Roma Pride 2014**

### **What**

For the fourth consecutive year Amalipe Center organized the celebration of Roma Pride – the Day of the Roma culture and pride. This is an initiative of the European antiracist movement EGAM (European Grass-root Anti-racist Movement), which is implemented simultaneously in 15 European countries, and Amalipe Center is the Bulgarian partner.

### **Why**

To show a wide audience that Roma have their pride and because of that the Roma community has contributed and will continue to contribute to the development of national and European culture. The campaign also aims to combat anti-Roma stereotypes and discrimination.

### **How**

In the days between 4th and 8th October 2013 various activities were carried out that aroused great interest and gathered a lot of people.

This year the Day of the Roma pride gathered hundreds of students, teachers and citizens from over 15 cities in the country. The campaign for the celebration of the „Roma pride” was held under the motto „I have a dream – to study and live together”.

## Who

Center Amalipe took part in the campaign by the activities of the centers for community development together with the local clubs for development, schools working under the project „Reducing the drop-out of Roma children from school” and for the first time – the youth clubs for tolerance established under the project „Youth is tolerance – combating anti-Roma stereotypes among the young people”. Exactly the youth groups for tolerance were the core of the initiatives.

## How

Hundreds of students, teachers, representatives of institutions and individuals from across the country participated in the campaign to celebrate Roma Pride - Roma Pride Day 2014. It was held from 6th to 12th October with readings of works written by Roma writers, presentation of traditional dishes, costumes, crafts, exhibitions of paintings and antiques from the Roma lifestyle, distribution of informational materials, discussions, collecting wishes from passers-by and many other activities and surprises.

The youth clubs „Youth is Tolerance” from Shumen, Blagoevgrad, Bourgas, Plovdiv, Vratsa and Veliko Tarnovo joined the initiative, together with the Centers for Community Development – Amalipe’s structures founded in 10 municipalities, in 8 districts and local clubs for development, as well as schools from across the country. Thousands of flyers were given to people, made especially for the occasion. The materials presented less-known facts about the Roma in Bulgaria: for example, celebrities of Roma origin, historical facts about Roma, etc. There were made posters with the name and the slogan of the campaign, too.

All materials are available at:

<http://youthtolerance.eu/index.php/bg/materiali>

Further information about the celebration of Roma Pride in different cities of the country can be found at:

<http://youthtolerance.eu/index.php/bg/novini/251-roma-pride-2014-bg>

## III. Vasilitsa 2014 – Roma Culture Day

### What

On January 14, 2013 for the fifth consecutive year Amalipe has kept the tradition of celebrating Vassilitsa which is not only the beginning of the New Year according to the old Roma tradition (and in the past Bulgarian tradition as well), but also as a day of Roma culture. At the very beginning of the New Year, Center „Amalipe” along with nearly 170 schools, centers for community development in 11 municipalities and volunteer groups held over 100 events across the country and under the motto „Rebuilding bridges between us”.

### Why

The purpose of Amalipe and our partners across the country was to present to the public the wealth of Roma culture, folklore relations between Roma and Bulgarians and

common hopes for a more successful and „healthy” year. The campaign objective was to make young Roma acquainted with Roma traditions during Vasilitsa.

## How

The campaign was carried out with events in Sofia and across the country.

Sourvakars from 25 schools participating in the programme „Reducing the drop-out of Roma students” visited Sofia, where they were met by the Prime Minister Oresharski, the Ministers of Education, Labour and Social Policy, Health, Regional Development, Defence, the Deputy Ministers of Culture and Interior, the President of the National Assembly, Mr. Mikov, the parliamentary group of GERB. Virtually all institutions which we addressed invited our sourvakars, which was a sign of respect to Roma traditions and recognition of Amalipe.

We were warmly welcomed by the ambassadors of Britain, the USA, Norway and Belgium, our partners from the Trust for Social Achievement, UNICEF, the „Open Society” Foundation, the National Network for Children Foundation, „Intelday” Foundation and others. They all received sincere wishes for health and success as well as insistent suggestions for steps that must take to accelerate the integration of Roma.

More information about the events in Sofia can be seen at: <http://www.amalipe.com/index.php?nav=news&id=1833&lang=1>

In the country, there were organized over one hundred and twenty events: school events, concerts, etc. Students visited and wished a Happy New Year Regional Education Inspectorates, Regional Health Inspectorates, Regional Inspectorates „Social Assistance” and municipal councils throughout the country. They also reminded that educational integration efforts require targeted support.

## What have we achieved

For one day, all Bulgaria lived with the rhythm of the Roma culture. Together, schools, community centers and voluntary groups made Vassilitsa reach thousands of Roma and non-Roma, including places where this holiday was not celebrated for many years. Vassilitsa went out of the reticence of the patriarchal family and became the Day of Roma Culture.

In addition, it was a challenge for us to coordinate over 130 events a day. The success of the campaign showed that Amalipe Center and the partner network of schools and community groups can reach every corner of the country.

## IV. International Roma Day – 8th April

### What

On the occasion of April 8th – International Roma Day, Amalipe Center organizes various initiatives throughout the country. The campaign was carried out under the motto „The sun shines equally for all”, and the Youth clubs „Youth is Tolerance”, the Centers for Community Development, dozens of schools and institutions took part in it.

## Why

On April 8, 1971 in London began the first World Roma Congress. Since then, this day is celebrated as the International Roma Day. Without exaggerations, we can say that it is a symbol of Roma awakening of the painful transition from patriarchal to modernity for the Roma community. Roma civil movement is an important participant and engine of this process, and that is why 8th April is marked by hundreds of NGOs across the world.

## How

All „Youth is Tolerance” clubs and Centers for Community Development participated in the celebration of the Eighth April by a wide range of diverse events, information campaigns, debates in universities, displaying films about the Roma Holocaust, sports events, etc. Over 100 schools also organized events that presented to the students and their parents why we celebrate Eighth April.

Detailed information can be found at:

<http://www.amalipe.com/index.php?nav=news&date=10.04.2014&lang=1>

Part of the campaign was the conference that Amalipe organized together with the Ministry of Education. To it, the Education Minister, Prof. Klisarova discussed with Roma students, studying at medical universities, the challenges of Roma students and how precisely they to become the new face of the Roma community.

Further information can be found at:

<http://www.amalipe.com/index.php?nav=news&date=08.04.2014&lang=1>

# 8

## INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL RECOGNITION

This year Amalipe received several high national and international awards for its work and results achieved during the year.

On October 23, 2014 in Villa Detsius in Krakow for the eleventh time were held the annual awards for outstanding merit in the field of human rights and contribution to the promotion of peaceful existence of communities, religions and cultures, named after the High Commissioner for Human Rights of the United Nations (2002–2003). There are two categories within which are determined exclusively prestigious annual awards – individuals and organizations. This year the international panel of judges looked over 39 candidates from around the world.

Amalipe Center was awarded in the organization category. The organization received this high international recognition for its work to promote intercultural dialogue and integration through education, for mobilization and promotion of the Roma community to continue their education, to support the campaign for violence prevention and early marriages as well as contributing to building civic identity and tolerance in the Bulgarian society. Amalipe Center is the first Roma organization, and the first organization from Bulgaria, winner of the award. During her speech on receiving the award (the ceremony was held within the international conference „The Power of the Powerless – Revised”), Theodora Krumova stressed:

*“Receiving this award is a great honor, not only for us as an organization, but also for our communities. This is their honors that have shown that change is possible. This is also a motivation to move forward, because there are three things that can help the powerless become strong:*

- *solidarity*
- *vision for a better and peaceful world*
- *and the belief that you can be the change that will bring closer this better and peaceful world”.*

The award in the name of Sergio Vieira de Mello, High Commissioner for Human Rights of the United Nations was created on the initiative of the organization Villa Detsius in 2003. Its aim is to reward individuals and organizations with outstanding contributions to the protection of human rights, democracy and tolerance. The award is given to a person and a non-governmental organization, which can be from a different part of the world by a board of judges composed of a representative of the President of the Republic of Poland, the High Commissioner for Refugees, Ambassador of the Federative Republic of Brazil in Poland; Ambassador of Sweden in Poland, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland, Institute of National Remembrance, the Polish Commissioner for Human Rights, embassies and other international organizations in the sphere of human rights protection.

The laureates received a diploma and a statuette of Sergio Vieira de Mello, created by the famous Polish sculptor Andrzej Renesse. The award had financial dimension as well. Amalipe Center decided to use the award to support students who fail to cover the fee for education and at the same time actively work to promote Roma inclusion, intercultural dialogue and tolerance.

Sergio Vieira de Mello was born in Rio de Janeiro in 1948, studied philosophy and humanities at the University „Pantheon Sorbonne” in Paris. Still a student, he began to cooperate with the United Nations to enter fully in the activities at the seat of the Chief Commissioner for Refugees in Geneva. He participated in numerous humanitarian and peacekeeping actions including in Bangladesh, Sudan, Cyprus, Mozambique and Peru. In 1981 he became senior political adviser to UN peacekeepers in Libya. Between 1983-1991 he was a chairman of the Office of the Chief Commissioner, Head of the Regional Bureau of Asia and Oceania, and Head of Department of International Relations. During the years 1991–1996 he participated as a special envoy of the Chief Commissioner of the UN refugees in Cambodia. In 1996 he was nominated as Assistant Chief Commissioner for Refugees and in 1998 assumed his post in New York as Chief Deputy Secretary for Humanitarian Affairs. By this time he participated as special UN envoy in Kosovo and in the years 1999–2002 he was the Chief Representative of UNCTAD in East Timor. On 12th September 2002 he was nominated for the post of High Commissioner for Human Rights. In May 2003, participating as a special envoy of the UN General Secretary, he went on a mission in Iraq. He was killed by bombing of UN headquarters in Baghdad on 19th August 2003.

On 20 November, at a ceremony held at the Presidency, twenty-five advocates for children’s rights – civil society activists, journalists, teachers and UNICEF organization, were honored by the President Rosen Plevneliev. The award was presented for their outstanding contributions to the promotion and protection of children’s rights in the Republic of Bulgaria, as well as on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the UN Convention on Children Rights. Among the honoured was the chairman of the Center „Amalipe” Deyan Kolev.

“We walked a long long path from the conviction that every child has his/her rights to concrete reforms and projects that were financed by European funds, said President Plevneliev. Much has been achieved but much remains to be build and to be done, planned reforms are going to be implemeted – in juvenile justice, education, health”, said Rosen Plevneliev. The Director of the National Children Network George Bogdanov thanked emotionally on behalf of the winners. He noted the great work done by the example that there were 30 000 children in institutions by the time he started working with children in the mid-90s, and today they are only 4000. At the same time, Mr. Bogdanov did not save the many challenges remaining: the serious problem with child poverty, every second child is poor.

„I accept this award as a recognition not only for me and Center „Amalipe” but for all who work for better education of Roma children”, said Deyan Kolev in receiving the Honorary sign. „I would like to thank you for what you do!” replied President Plevneliev. He also wished to visit a school that works with the organization and to be assured in the achieved results.

In 2014 Amalipe Center continued the preparation and publication of analyzes, reports, collections, books and newsletters. They summarize the experience in different areas of the organization, offer verified patterns in the practice, evaluate the situation of Roma and integration policies, present Roma culture and history. We consider it as a very important part of our activities: the summary and the sharing of experience carries it through the time and space limits and makes possible its extension and expansion to change more lives.

In this regard, during the past 2014 Amalipe Center published:

### **Brochure on „Intercultural education and educational integration”**

It presents the operating results of Amalipe Center and the schools involved in the programme „Reducing the dropout of Roma children from school” during 2010–2013: both in numbers and as particularly solved cases. The brochure examines the multidimensional school intervention model, implemented within the programme with its core elements. It is shown how it changed individual schools and led to achieving higher educational results. There are many concrete examples and photos presented.

The brochure was printed in Bulgarian and English. The Bulgarian version can be found on the educational page of Amalipe Center at:

<http://romaeducation.com/images/education3.compressed.pdf>

### **Collection “Reports from the National Scientific and Practical Conference „Intercultural Education As a Means of Reducing Dropout of Roma Children from School”**

On 25 and 26 June 2013, in partnership with the University of „St. St. Cyril and Methodius” Amalipe Center organized the first National Scientific and Practical Conference “Intercultural Education As a Means of Reducing Dropout of Roma Children from School”. Its aim was to bring together academics and practitioners in the field of intercultural education: teachers, university professors and other educational experts. It also aimed to provide a platform for the efforts of hundreds of teachers working for the prevention of dropping out of Roma children, to present the experience they had gained, the difficulties they had encountered, and especially the successes they had achieved. The collection contains reports from the conference.

The book is printed in Bulgarian and can be found in the section “Publications” on the website of Amalipe Center:

[http://www.amalipe.com/files/publications/Conference\\_book.pdf](http://www.amalipe.com/files/publications/Conference_book.pdf)

## **The brochure „When dreams come true: personal stories of Roma students in medical universities”**

Tells the personal stories of Roma students studying in medical universities in Bulgaria. They share the difficulties they had encountered in the process of education, but also the successes they had achieved. Some of these stories are happy, but others are rather sad, or at least touching... Nevertheless, they show dedication to education and the success of a group of young people who have chosen to dedicate their future to health care. What their motives and good examples to follow were, you will find out of their personal stories, as well as about their desire for them to be the good example for those who will follow them.

This edition also provides information on the scholarship programme for medical students and graduate doctors of Roma origin. You will read about the Advocacy Training too, which is annually organized by Amalipe Center. In the week-long activities of training, young people worked on building life skills for their future work of people who will bring a change in their communities. That is why we called them the White Swallows!

The brochure was printed in Bulgarian and English. The Bulgarian version can be found on the Health page of Amalipe website:

[http://www.romahealth.com/images/publications/When\\_dreams\\_come\\_true\\_BG.pdf](http://www.romahealth.com/images/publications/When_dreams_come_true_BG.pdf)

## **“White Swallows – 3” film**

Presents the scholarship programme for medical students and doctors graduates from Roma origin with an emphasis on training in advocacy, organized by Amalipe in July 2014 through the stories of some of the students and lecturers. Through a mosaic of personal stories, the film shows how the programme and training on advocacy help Roma youths to complete one of the most difficult subjects and to maintain their connection with the Roma community and their identity.

The film can be found at Amalipe’s YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/CenterAmalipeMedia>

## **The film about the community monitoring of health services**

Presents the process of community monitoring of health services, implemented by Amalipe Center in Bulgaria with the support of the Public Health Programme of the Open Society Foundation.

Using footages from towns and villages the region of Veliko Tarnovo and interviews with key participants in the process, the film presents the main stages in the process of community monitoring and the results achieved.

The film can be found at Amalipe’s YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/CenterAmalipeMedia>

## **Kindness textbook**

This is no ordinary textbook containing ordinary stories – not only because it is a textbook about kindness... This is a textbook that shows the reader how to achieve their dreams, no matter who they are, where they were born, where they live and how it is named...

The textbook was written by the children studying at Primary School „G. S. Rakovski”, the village of Golyamo Novo, Targovishte District. They tell what kindness

is for them and what good deeds they have committed. Before the reader's eyes, the village forests come alive, as well as the village fountain, the black dusty streets, where good people walk on, doing good deeds every day. The book presents the world of the Roma child living in the village – where the asphalt road ends, but the highways of kindness and friendship begin.

The book is printed in Bulgarian. It can be found in the “Publications” section on the website of Amalipe Center:

<http://www.amalipe.com/files/publications/KnigaGoliamoNovo2.pdf>

In 2014 we continued our practice to publish **analyzes on topical issues of integration policy**: e.g. analysis of the Partnership Agreement, the new Operational Programme “Human Resources Development”, etc. They can be found in the „Publications” section on the website of Amalipe Center:

<http://www.amalipe.com/index.php?nav=publications&lang=1>

In 2014, we continued to publish **the Amalipe monthly newsletter**. The bulletin presents the activities realized in the month, information on the development of policies for Roma integration and analysis. The newsletter is printed in Bulgarian and English, and it is available on the website of Amalipe Centre, in the “Newsletter archive” section.

In 2014, the Centers for Community Development – Pavlikeni, Knezha, Dolna Banya and Veliko Tarnovo launched publishing **the Community newsletter** – every three months. It presents the events of the activities of the centers and local clubs. Special emphasis is placed on the efforts for community monitoring of health services. The articles are written by community moderators and local volunteers.

Many **flyers, brochures, leaflets** and other materials were prepared and printed as supporting the core activities of Amalipe Center. They are available in the sections “Materials” or “Publications” at the web pages maintained by the organization:

Centers for Community Development: <http://romadevelopment.org>

Innovative forms of employment in the Roma community: <http://romaprogress.org>

Youth is tolerance: <http://youthtolerance.eu/>

Roma Education: <http://romaeducation.com>

Roma health: <http://www.romahealth.com>

Amalipe's main webpage: [www.amalipe.com](http://www.amalipe.com)

# 10

## ADVOCACY FOR ROMA INTEGRATION AND INCLUDING POLICIES

Advocacy is one of the most important ways in which civil society organizations can influence the formation and implementation of public policies. For years, advocacy has been one of Amalipe's strongest areas of work, and the Organization has been recognized by national and European institutions, foreign embassies in Sofia, as well as by the civil society as the most active and successful Roma advocacy organization in Bulgaria.

Due to the continuous political instability, the last 2014 was one of the most difficult for effective advocacy, especially with regard to Roma integration: it turned out to be even more unfavorable for advocacy in comparison with the previous 2013. European and national parliamentary elections were held then and during most of the time the country was in election campaign. Three governments changed again, one of which – interim government. The participation of two ultranationalist parties/coalitions in the elected National Assembly in October (one of which supports the government) led to a sharp strengthening of anti-Roma rhetoric which further deteriorated the environment for advocacy.

At the same time 2014 was crucial for the development of the new programmes that will put the EU funds to use in 2014–2020; The Partnership Agreement (approved in early August), “Development of Human Resources” Operational Programme (approved on 28th November), Operational Programme “Science and education for smart growth”, Operational Programme “Regions in growth” were finalized, the development of the Programme for Rural Development was further advanced. In the absence of political will for targeted actions for the implementation of the National Strategy for Integration of Roma, as well as in view of the fact that the national budget has never financed the serious implementation of the integration policy (even in years of economic growth), European funds seem to be a fundamental tool not only for funding but also for setting the guidelines for the implementation of the National Roma Strategy.

Also in 2014, the new municipal plans for Roma integration 2015–2020 had to be prepared, the importance of these documents is enhanced by the fact that the National Strategy for Roma Integration relies on a decentralized way of application, in which leading are the activities on local and municipal level. Furthermore, municipalities are a key beneficiary of the new operational programs.

Recognizing the importance of these challenges and their responsibility as one of the leading advocacy Roma organizations, Amalipe focuses efforts on ensuring the inclusion of the Roma issue in the new operational programmes and to the development of quality municipal plans for the integration of Roma.

## Prerequisites

Advocating for a particular cause presupposes partnership and joint actions of many parties concerned. Advocacy for Roma integration is even more collective task of Roma and non-Roma organizations working in different regions and different issues. So critical was the support and partnership of the Association “World without Borders” – Stara Zagora, Association “New Road” – Hairedin, Association “Sun for All” – Peshtera, Roma Academy for Culture and Education – Sliven, Roma Foundation “Iskra” – Shumen, Romani women “Hayachi” – Novi Pazar, Association “Imeon” – Asenovgrad, the “Open Society” National Network for Children and many other organizations in Bulgaria and the National Roma Center (Macedonia), Romani Criss and Sastipen (Romania), the European Roma Information Office (Brussels), etc.

Of utmost importance to us was the support that demonstrated the ambassadors of the US, UK, Belgium, Norway and Poland, participating in forums organized by Amalipe. Some of them visited the office of Amalipe in Veliko Turnovo, others – our offices in the country, which was a sign of mutual trust and willingness to work together.

An important prerequisite for the success of the advocacy activities was the credibility of the institutions – on national, local and European level – towards Amalipe’s activities. Indications of this was the fact that ministers and deputy ministers from all three governments that ruled Bulgaria in 2014 responded to our invitation and participated in forums and events organized by Amalipe. In celebration of Vassilitsa – Roma New Year in January 2014, Amalipe groups were adopted by the National Assembly Chairperson, the Prime Minister, six ministers, deputy ministers and ambassadors (see: <http://www.amalipe.com/index.php?nav=news&id=1833&lang=1>), and this level was maintained in 2015 too. Key deputy ministers and ministers participated in all advocacy forums organized by Amalipe throughout the year.

European Commission representatives also participated in Amalipe’s forums, some of them specially traveled to Bulgaria for this purpose. The organization continued to be invited to meetings of the European Roma Platform - the highest European forum on Roma.

Advocacy implies participation in institutionalized mechanisms for decision-making. In 2014, representatives of Amalipe participated in working groups for preparation of OP “Human Resources Development” (OP HRD), OP “Science and education for smart growth” (OPSESG) and the Rural Development Programme (RDP). This enabled us to effective advocacy regarding these programmes, resulting in approved OPHRD and OPNOIR include almost all proposals of Roma organizations. In the elections for participation in the new MC of our representatives were elected members of the Committees of OPHRD and OPSESG, which will allow us to participate in channeling funds from these programmes for measures supporting the implementation of integration policy.

## Advocacy at national level

In 2014 advocacy efforts of Amalipe on national level were in the following directions:

**1. Turning on the issue of Roma integration in the new operational programmes / programme for rural areas in a way that will provide significant resources for the implementation of the National Strategy for Roma Integration**

1.1. The OP “Human Resources Development”: In 2012, Amalipe’s president – Deyan Kolev was elected representative of NGOs working for Roma integration in the Working Group for preparation of the new OP “Human Resources Development”. After consultations with other organizations, we formulated several key demands to the new OPHRD: inclusion of investment priority “Integration of marginalized communities such as the Roma” as one of the main priorities in the programme, including the possibility for funding municipal plans for integration and of integration interventions on OPHRD, more serious engagement of NGOs in the process of implementing the new OPHRD.

Throughout 2014 Amalipe defended the targets: through participation in the activities of the Working Group and by organizing advocacy forums and workshops. As a result, as well as good cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and DG “Employment” of the European Commission, the targets were achieved. The approved on 28 November OPHRD includes investment priority “Integration of marginalized communities such as the Roma”, within which will be supported integrated projects including activities in four areas – improving access to employment, access to education, access to quality health and social services (compulsory components) and development of local communities and tackle anti-Roma stereotypes. This investment priority will prioritize support for integrated projects for the implementation of municipal integration plans submitted by municipalities, NGOs or other institutions. Partnering with organizations based in the community will be a prerequisite for this type of integrated projects. The investment priority will be financed with an indicative resource of BGN 130 million, which may be increased in the course of implementing the programme. Indicators measuring the impact in the Roma community were also included in some of the other investment priorities, which is a prerequisite for directing additional resources for Roma integration.

It could be say that in the section on Roma, Amalipe and other Roma organizations in the full sense of the word co-authors of OPHRD: almost all of our proposals were included. Without exaggeration, one can say that the approved version of OPHRD does not need any considerable improvements in the overall inclusion of the subject of Roma integration. The programme creates the necessary preconditions, without guaranteeing that they will be used: the latter will depend on the activity of the Monitoring Committee and the parties concerned in it.

More information about OPHRD and how it will support the integration of Roma see the section “Publications” on the website of Amalipe:

<http://www.amalipe.com/files/publications/OPHRD.pdf>;

1.2. With regards to OP “Science and education for smart growth”: the national decision for this programme was made in January 2013. In September 2013, the President of Amalipe Deyan Kolev was invited to the working group preparing the programme.

In 2014, gradually we managed to pass all requests of Roma organizations concerning the programme. The draft of OPNOIR from the end of 2014 (which was subsequently approved by the European Commission) containing a separate priority axis 3 for educational integration. It included an investment priority “3.2. Socio-economic integration of marginalized communities such as Roma”, which will be supported by a wide range of projects for educational integration. The potential beneficiaries of such projects will be municipalities, NGOs, schools / kindergartens, and there will be required on a partnership of the three groups. The set indicative activities fully comply with the Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities. Especially important success, achieved as a result of the undertaken advocacy is a relatively large allocation of financial resources – nearly BGN 200 million – for the implementation of investment priority 3.2. In addition, policies for educational integration will be supported by some of the other investment priorities.

More information about OPNOIR and how it will support the integration of Roma see the section “Publications” on the website of Amalipe

It could be said that OPHRD and OPNOIR create the necessary basis for the financing of so-called “soft part” of activities to implement the National Strategy for Roma integration. The service of Amalipe Center and partner NGOs for this cannot be denied

## **2. Election of representatives of Roma NGOs in the Monitoring Committees of the new operational programmes**

In 2014 the Managing Authorities of the different operational programmes organized elections for NGO representatives in the new MC. Amalipe and other Roma organizations actively participated in them.

As a result of the elections, Amalipe’s representatives were elected members eligible to vote of the Monitoring Committees of OPHRD and OPNOIR, and our partners and other Roma organizations became substitutes:

OP “Science and education”: Deyan Kolev (Amalipe) was elected representative of Roma organizations in the Committee and Milena Ilieva (NGO “World Without Borders”), Albena Kostadinova (SF “Indi-Roma”) and Teodora Koleva (Foundation social cohesion and inclusion) for deputies;

OP “Human Resources Development” Teodora Krumova (Amalipe) was elected representative of Roma organizations in the Committee and Spaska Petrova (Association “New Road” – Hairedin), Gancho Iliev (World without Borders) and Dr. Stefan Panayotov were elected deputies

Programme for rural development: Julia Grigorova was chosen for a member of the Monitoring Committee

In addition, proposed by Amalipe Roma organizations and other applications were included in the committees of the OP “Regions in Development” OP “Good Governance” and the Partnership Agreement. This is an important prerequisite for effective advocacy in relation to the operational programmes over the next seven years.

### **3. Updating the Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and students from ethnic minorities**

By order from 17.06.2014 of the Minister of Education and Science Prof. Klisarova, there was formed a working group to develop a strategy for educational integration of children and students from ethnic minorities 2014 -2020, and the plan for its implementation. The chairperson of the working group was Deputy Minister Mukaddes Nalbant and Vice-President Dr. Joseph Nunev. The group included 37 experts from MES, other institutions of the executive, the academic sector and NGOs of ethnic minorities. Roma organizations were represented by Rumyan Rusinov (Center for Public Policy and Advocacy) and Deyan Kolev (Center “Amalipe”).

Updating the Strategy and Action Plan continued throughout the year and is expected to be fulfilled in early 2015. Deyan Kolev actively participates in the activities of the group, preparing specific proposals to the text of the document.

#### **Advocacy at the local level**

In 2014, one of the important advocacy highlights of our activities was the development of municipal plans for the integration of Roma (MPIR) 2015-2020 NSRBIR requires all municipalities to develop their Municipal integration plans. In February - April 2013 almost 220 municipalities have adopted their MPIR for 2013 or 2013-2014. Unfortunately, most plans did not provide new activities, but only summarized existing ones and many of the activities were without a budget. However, these plans were a good start for transferring integration policy at the local level.

In 2014 Center “Amalipe” in partnership with NGO “World Without Borders” – Stara Zagora, Association “New Road” – Hairedin, Roma Academy for Culture and Education - Sliven and Association “Faithful Guardian” – Burgas, undertook activities for accelerating the development of new MPIR 2015-2020. Our goal was to urge a wide range of municipalities to develop local plans in a way that will turn them into real working documents. An additional objective was to encourage the Secretariat of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues such as National Contact Point for Roma strategy to engage themselves with this process.

Initially, the Secretariat of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues (SNCCEII), which is the national institution coordinating the development of municipal plans for the integration of Roma do not undertake activities that prompt municipalities to develop their municipal plans for 2014-2020, and even insisted on delaying the process. To urge municipalities and SNCCEII, Amalipe and our partners organized a cycle of regional conferences as follows: TSMEDT “Amalipe” organized conferences: Veliko Tarnovo: February 28; Burgas: March 11; Pazardzhik: March 17; Shumen: 25 March. NOP “World without Borders” organized a conference in Stara Zagora on 17 March, the Association “New Road” organized a conference in Vratsa on March 27, and Roma Academy for Culture and Education – Sliven on 29 March

Those events were attended by the Deputy Minister of Education Ivan Krastev, representatives of the Managing Authorities of the OP “Development of Human Re-

sources” OP “Science and education” relevant district governors (or their deputies), dozens of mayors, councilors, Roma activists. As a result of the held conferences 18 municipalities began drafting their Municipal plans for Roma integration 2014–2020, while SNCCEII decided to recommend to all other municipalities to begin to draw their plans according to the proposed model. This was a special meeting of SNCCEII with all district governors which took place on 30-31 May in Albena. The chairperson of Center “Amalipe” Deyan Kolev was invited to participate in the meeting and presented the experience of the partners. The presented by him materials were sent to all district governors.

As a result of actions taken, Veliko Tarnovo became the first municipality in Bulgaria which approved its integration plan for the period 2014-2020, another in July. Since the change of Oresharski’s government and the subsequent early parliamentary elections actually stopped the process, and in December Amalipe and our partners in this endeavor organized training of local Roma activists in 20 municipalities in order to formulate proposals to municipal plans and planning activities for “defrosting” the process. We planned new regional conferences in January 2015.

## Advocacy at EU level

In 2014 Amalipe continued to participate actively in advocacy activities at European level. While the focus of the work of the organization remains in Bulgaria - at local and national level – we also welcome the fact that as a Member State of the European Union Bulgaria comply with the decisions of the European institutions. By this is particularly concerning the use of EU structural and investment funds, which are negotiated between the Bulgarian government and the relevant Directorates General of the European Commission.

Guided by this understanding, in 2014 we set the following advocacy goals at European level:

### **1. Active involvement of the European Commission to include the issue of Roma integration in the new operational programmes in countries with large Roma populations**

All year round, Amalipe maintained close contacts with the directorates of the European Commission related to key operational programmes and Rural Development Programme: we conducted workshops, send comments and suggestions. In the face of the European Commission we found a reliable partner and ally. Our successes in OPHRD and OPNOIR was due largely to the cooperation, which we met in the face of DG “Employment” of the European Commission;

### **2. Contribution to the Commission’s commitment to control and monitor the implementation of national strategies for Roma integration by Member States of the EU**

In November 2013 Amalipe sent its assessment of the implementation of the National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Roma integration within the procedure announced by the European Commission in order to collect “feedback”. Throughout

2014 we continued to send opinions and information. The contribution of Amalipe was highly appreciated and most of the proposals in it were included in the Monitoring Report of the European Commission on 4 April 2014. Furthermore, Centre Amalipe is one of two Roma organizations throughout the European Union, explicitly referred to the successful practice report. For more see:

<http://www.amalipe.com/index.php?nav=news&id=1925&lang=1>

Despite the dynamic and unstable political environment, despite the strong anti-Roma rhetoric, Roma integration was on the agenda of the institutions and the public in 2014. Many necessary steps were not taken, but at the same time there were established some preconditions for the implementation of the National Roma Strategy in the upcoming years. The inclusion of the Roma issue in the new operational programmes and the choice of Roma representatives in the Monitoring Committees was a key success. Elaboration of municipal plans for Roma integration was another important point. Amalipe was an active participant or even the main initiator of the most important events in the field of Roma integration in 2014. Currently, the organization's role as a major partner in defining and implementing of policies for Roma integration is recognized by all institutions.

We will continue our advocacy efforts in all directions started in 2014. These steps should be continued and developed. It should be pointed out that they can form a suitable basis for the implementation of policies for Roma integration, but not to ensure the implementation of these policies. For the last necessary social consensus and political will, the factors that influenced, but not determined uniquely by the advocacy of civil society organizations.

### **In the eyes of others**

*“Proposed by NGOs from Group 1 – Social organizations working for the integration of minority ethnic groups and immigrants, the civil sector was included as a partner in the implementation of state policies for social inclusion. The proposals of the group also supported the formulation of the target groups, and the inclusion of the implementation of regional and municipal strategies for Roma integration in the guiding principles for the selection of operations in the same investment priority.”*

Operational Programme “Human Resources Development”, p. 259

*“An example of effective partnership in planning of operational programmes is the activity of Amalipe. Much of the texts concerning the Roma in both programmes financed by the European Social Fund in Bulgaria (OPHRD and OPNOIR) are taken from proposals submitted by Amalipe ...*

**Kiril Kiryakov**, DG “Employment” of the European Commission

## PROFIT AND LOSS STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR 2014 ON THE NON-PROFIT ACTIVITY

Expenses title	Amount – in thousand levs (BGN)		Income title	Amount – in thousand levs (BGN)	
	Current year	Previous year		Current year	Previous year
a	1	2	a	1	2
<b>I. Operating expenses</b>			<b>I. Operating income</b>		
<b>A. Expenses on regulated activity</b>			<b>A. Income from regulated activity</b>		
1. Donations			1. Income from onerous donations	1281	1835
2. Other expenses	1275	1836	2. Income from perfect donations		
<b>Total A</b>	<b>1275</b>	<b>1836</b>	3. Membership fees		
<b>B. Administrative expenses</b>	6	6	4. Other income		
<b>Total group I</b>	<b>1281</b>	<b>1842</b>	<b>Total A</b>		
<b>II. Financial expenses</b>			<b>Total group I</b>	<b>1281</b>	<b>1835</b>
5. Foreign currency exchange rate losses	0	0	<b>II. Financial income</b>		
<b>Total group II</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	5. Interest income	2	7
<b>V. Total expenses</b>	<b>1281</b>	<b>1842</b>	<b>Total group II</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>VI. Result</b>	2	0	<b>V. Total income</b>	<b>1283</b>	<b>1842</b>
<b>Total (V+VI)</b>	<b>1283</b>	<b>1842</b>	<b>Total (V):</b>	<b>1283</b>	<b>1842</b>

Financing received in 2014 r. from :

