

Anne Lise Fosslund og Elsa Døhlie



DIAKONHJEMMET HØGSKOLE

RAPPORT 2013/4

# No quick fix

*Roma in Romania. A European challenge*



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Diakonhjemmet Høgskole

# **No quick fix**

**Roma in Romania  
A European challenge**

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Diakonhjemmet Høgskole

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## Foreword

The background for this assessment was first and foremost the increasing number of temporary migrants arriving in Norway from Southern Europe and the Balkans. Many were Roma people and the majority of them came from Romania. They came to Norway to beg and look for work. A Terms of Reference was prepared by Norwegian Church Aid. This report covers the findings from the assessment.

At an early stage we decided to focus on Romania and the aim of the assessment was:

*Based on solid information gathered in Norway and abroad, present a recommendation to the leadership of NCA for a renewed engagement for and together with Roma in Romania, identifying mode of operation (partner), kind of programme and creating a platform for application for EU and / or EEA funds.*

The assessment took place both in Norway, e.g. with a mapping of Norwegian church actors and their involvement for the Roma, and in Romania. Before travelling to Romania some mapping had been done as to geographic areas to visit and potential partners. Two – three partners were added under way.

In addition to visiting Bucharest, the team travelled to the region of Molodova, the areas around Bacau and Roman and to Transilvania and Muramuresh with the cities of Cluj Napoca and Baia Mare. The Conference took place in Bucharest.

The Team identified at least 4 well organized and trustworthy organization both in Transilvania, Maramuresh (north) and in Moldova (north east). Our mandate was to identify organizations that had a strong focus on Roma, although not working exclusively for Roma.

With the view thematic programme we saw the need to work in an integrated way with elements of various NCA thematic programmes. This means that the programme will not stand out with one or two preferred thematic programmes. The recommendations to NCA from the team is not included in this publication.

We would like to thank politicians and colleagues in Romania and in Norway who shared their knowledge, experience and information with us and not at least the hospitality from the Roma people we visited in Romania

Oslo, May 2013

Anne Lise Fossland

Elsa Døhlie

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## 1. Introduction

*The issue of the Roma<sup>1</sup> is a European challenge. There is no quick fix to this problem. If you aim at three years' programmes, you may just forget it.*

This was a greeting to our team when we first met with the Roma adviser to the Prime Minister of Romania, Damian Draghici. After two weeks' visit to Romania, after being exposed to Roma's conditions in the country and having visited several programmes targeting Roma population, we agree with this statement.

### 1.1 The Aim of the Assessment and the Team

#### **The aim:**

*Based on solid information gathered in Norway and abroad, present a recommendation to the leadership of NCA for a renewed engagement for and together with Roma in Romania, identifying mode of operation (partner), kind of programme and creating a platform for application for EU and / or EEA funds.*

#### **The Team**

Anne Lise Fosslund, NCA Advisor, Elsa Døhlie, Associate Professor at Diakonhjemmet University College and Iulian Bulai, advisor, accompanier and translator to the Team (see annex 1)

### 1.2 Why an assessment?

Late 2012 three events related to the issue of Roma in Europe in general and the Roma migrants arriving in Norway in particular coincided. Firstly, considering the Roma challenge in the Norwegian context over the last couple of years and the engagement of churches and related organizations for the Roma in Norway, NCA staff at Head Office felt that there was a growing need for NCA to open up for a renewed engagement for Roma in their homeland, possibly in Romania. Secondly, NCA was approached by representatives of the Diocese of Oslo, "Hjerterom" – who asked whether it would be possible for NCA to take charge in applying for EEA funds for Roma projects first and foremost in Romania. Thirdly, the NCA Board requested, for their meeting in November 2012, a presentation of how NCA has been and is engaged for Roma in Europe. A Memo to the General Secretary was accordingly prepared not only giving an overview of such engagement but adding a recommendation for an assessment to look into possibilities for a new Roma programme. The Board expressed their appreciation for such an assessment to take place and passed the following decision in its meeting on November 26, 2012:

***“Norwegian Church Aid and the Roma people: Information was shared on NCA’s programme in the Balkans and the plan for the programme to be phased out in the course of 2013. However, contrary to the decision on phasing out, NCA has decided to do an assessment on whether to and, if yes, what and how may the organization contribute with the view to assistance to the Roma, preferably in Romania. NCA does not work with Roma in Norway. The Board expressed appreciation about the decision on conducting an assessment.”***

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<sup>1</sup> The use of Roma as a designation for all groups of Roma, gypsies and other such ethnic groups is contested. In Romania we learned that some of the ethnic groups of concern prefer not to be called Roma, simply because they are not Roma. "Gypsy" would be fine with them. However, to be politically correct in Norway, we have decided to use "Roma" as a general term. However, depending in particular on time in history and contexts, Gypsy may be used.

A Terms of Reference for the assessment was prepared. (Annex 2)

### **1.3 NCA experience from work with Roma in Europe**

After the wars in the Balkans (1991-1999), NCA was engaged in work, both through direct implementation and working through partners, for and together with Roma in several countries – with the main focus in Kosovo (before and after independence), Serbia and Macedonia – and some in Albania. The NCA Area Office was closed down in September 2009. In 2013 only one country with partner cooperation in the Balkans is left, Serbia, where a programme (Roma Resource Centre) implemented by Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization (EHO) is into its last year of funding through NCA.

Through the involvement for Roma, NCA has gained valuable experience, both how to and not to work to improve the situation for this group of people. In the NCA target areas in the Balkans, Roma are refugees or IDPs living under dire circumstances. Some Roma are rich, a very few extremely rich, but the main observation is that they belong among the poorest of the poor. Roma is not a homogenous group, and there are many contradictions in describing the life of the Roma: Roma cling to their cultures – and they have lost their culture. Roma think of the day today, they steal and sell – and they are law-abiding citizens, have settled down for decades and live in neighbourhoods similar to any other middle class neighbourhoods. Roma are discriminated, marginalized and victims of violence everywhere. The Roma want to be free and live, forcibly or according to own choice, at the fringes of society. They prefer to live in small dwellings together with their own clan. Building block of houses for their resettlement in Kosovo was certainly not an easy solution. In the end, after all the discrimination, many consider themselves as victims, a status that is not conducive when working for their own, brighter future. In the end, always staying utterly poor, they suffer from a poverty syndrome; they have given up and live for this day only. What has been, is gone, today is now, tomorrow is another day?<sup>2</sup>

## **2. Background**

### **2.1 Brief history of Roma living in Norway**

With the ending of the slavery (1856) in Romania, the first Roma group came to Norway. Today about 700 Norwegian Roma live in the country. Since 1998 Roma has had an official status as national minority. This implies that Norway has recognised specific rights to secure the culture identity and language of the minority. However, the Norwegian society's way of dealing with this ethnic group has a long and shameful history.

A report from the Norwegian Helsinki committee (2009) about Roma history in Norway and violation of the Roma human rights makes a strong impression. It is somehow ironic that this has happened in a country that internationally speaks loudly and proudly about human rights. The history however describes a policy that had as an overall goal to remove Roma culture and ways of living from the Norwegian society. The policy was partly based on race-hygienic or religious arguments or by

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<sup>2</sup> Information based on personal experience (ALF), programme reports, Lunestad (2012)



pointing at the need of getting rid of the "travellers" lifestyle and what was considered as public disturbance. Neither was there any political show down with the assimilation policy after the Second World War.

The oppression of Roma was comprehensive and systematic over a long period of time. The destruction consisted of personal damage, social problems and undermining of culture. Many ethnic minorities kept their identity in secret. Children did not learn about their culture and language. More than 1500 children were taken away from their families and put in orphanages or foster homes. Women were sterilised and lost control over their own bodies. The policy was strongly discriminating and there was a negative and stigmatised opinion that was spread to the total population about the Roma. The gist of the report was to compare the international categories of crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing with the violations of the Roma / Gypsies in Norway. The conclusions drawn were that the scope of crimes did not fulfil the criteria and the policy had not been ethnic cleansing, but rather to make the Roma become proper Norwegian citizens.

Quote from a presentation of the report: *"The report concludes that the perpetrations did not constitute crimes against humanity in a legal sense, but that several of the elements covered by these international categories of crimes were present in Norwegian politics, among other by systematically separating children from their parents and forcibly to sterilize members of the group. One of the main recommendations in the report is to establish a truth commission concerning perpetrations towards Romani people/Tater<sup>3</sup> for which the Norwegian authorities are responsible. Such a truth commission will throw light on all perpetrations committed by Norwegian authorities towards Romani people / Tater, and will contribute to laying a solid basis for the present strategy in relation the Romani people / Tater e.g., support to cultural survival and to combat discriminating attitudes and practice".<sup>4</sup>* (The Norwegian Helsinki committee, 2009)

## **2.2 Roma in Europe and Romania – "Bury me Standing!"<sup>5</sup>**

Since mid-1700, and mainly through linguistic research, it has been found (though the scholarly still disagree among themselves) that the Roma / Gypsies originally came from India, and to a large extent their travels through various countries may be traced through the Romani language. They arrived in Europe around 1250, and right from the beginning and up to this day the ethnic group has been stigmatized, discriminated and excluded from society. The Roma are considered to be Europe's largest minority. According to estimations between 10 – 12 mill Roma live in Europe.

### **2.2.1 The situation of Roma in EU and Romania - some survey results**

Of those surveyed in a report (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2012, UNDP, 2012), one in three is unemployed, 20 % are not covered by health insurance, and 90 % live below the poverty. Many face prejudice, intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion in their daily lives. They are marginalised and mostly live in extremely poor socio-economic conditions. This undermines social

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<sup>3</sup> "Romani people/Tater" is used by the Helsinki Committee for the group referred to in the report.

<sup>4</sup> Translated by ALF

<sup>5</sup> The title of Isabel Fonseca's book and a quotation in the book, *Bury me standing. The Gypsies and their journey* (1995): "Bury me standing. All my life I have been kneeling down (page 328, Norwegian edition)

cohesion and sustainable human development, hampers competitiveness and generates costs for the society as a whole<sup>6</sup>.

The findings raise key questions about both fundamental rights protection and the real impact of social policies concerning Roma in employment, housing, healthcare, social services and education. The evidence shows that the nature of the challenges many Roma are facing in the EU requires policy responses which articulate development efforts within a rights-based approach.

Below we present the average findings to specific conditions in Romania compared to EU countries:

#### Education:

- on an average, only 50% Roma children surveyed attend pre-school or kindergarten; In Romania 45% attends.
- during compulsory school age, 90% or nine out of 10 Roma children aged 7 to 15 are reported to be in school; In Romania 78% or eight out of ten reported to be in school or more than 20% do not attend school at all.
- participation in education drops considerably after compulsory school: only 15 % of young Roma adults surveyed complete upper-secondary general or vocational education. In Romania only 10% complete

#### Employment:

- on average, fewer than 33% or one out of three Roma are reported to be in paid employment; In Romania the figures are approximately the same, 30% reported to be in paid employment

#### Health:

- one out of three Roma respondents aged 35 to 54 report health problems limiting their daily activities; in Romania almost one of two or 45% reported the same.
- on average, about 20 % of Roma respondents are not covered by medical insurance or do not know if they are covered. In Romania 50% of the Roma population is not covered.

#### Housing:

- on average, in the Roma households surveyed more than two persons live in one room; in Romania 2,5 people live in one room.
- about 45 % of the Roma live in households that lack at least one of the following basic housing amenities, namely indoor kitchen, indoor toilet, indoor shower or bath and electricity. In Romania 85% live in houses that lack at least one of the amenities.

#### Poverty:

- on average, about 90 % of the Roma surveyed live in households with an equivalised income below national poverty lines; in Romania the figures were around 85%
- on average, around 40 % of Roma live in households where somebody had to go to bed hungry at least once in the last month since they could not afford to buy food. The figures in Romania were 60%

#### Discrimination and rights awareness

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<sup>6</sup> The FRA Roma pilot survey (2012) covered Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, France, Greece, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain

- about half of the Roma surveyed said that they have experienced discrimination in the past 12 months because of their ethnic background; in Romania 25% said that they had experienced discrimination.
- around 40 % of the Roma surveyed are aware of laws forbidding discrimination against ethnic minority people when applying for a job. The figures in Romania were 25%.

As we see, the conditions for Roma in Romania are in many ways worse than for Roma in EU countries as such. This specifically pertains to education and housing.

### 2.2.2 Short historic glimpses

It is difficult to estimate the number of Roma living in Romania; figures vary from 619.000 to 1,5 mill<sup>7</sup>. This is partly due to individuals not being publicly registered, or that quite a few do not disclose their identity as Rom. Many Roma are thereby stateless people. The figures are accordingly based on estimates.

Written documentation holds that *atsiganos* - around 1200 – were the forefathers of today's Gypsies or Rom. They may have been immigrants or slaves (Engebrigtsen 2012). In 1445 comes the first report about "import" of slaves in grand style when Prins Vlad Dracul imprisoned 12000 individuals in Bulgaria "who looked like Egyptians" and brought them to what constitutes Romania today. The slavery with buying and selling lasted up until 1856. "Cigan" had previously been referred to people with a needed skill or who were musicians. Now the word referred to a social class, the slavery class. When slavery - and serfdom (1863) - was abandoned, many of the Roma people did not have anything to fall back on. Farmers could own land, Roma not. Ownership of land gave the right to citizenship, Roma accordingly not. During the time of monarchy / principality every Roma was considered a foreigner, due to the fact that in the principalities a "native" was simply an owner of land.

Holocaust<sup>8</sup>, in Romani language called *porrajmos* (*the great devouring*): The lack of focus and research on the fate of the Gypsies during Holocaust is almost an enigma. The reasons could be several. At the beginning of the 1930's stereotypes were many both about the Jews and the Gypsies. However, the propaganda in Germany mainly hit the Jews, because the Gypsies were already considered as outcasts – scary, criminals, connected to witchcraft. The Enlightenment opened up for Jews in education and trade, in which they succeeded. The Gypsies shied away from assimilation (including education). For the Nazis the Jews were more of an interest compared to the Gypsies who were a small, almost invisible group. In Hitler's writings the Gypsies are mentioned only two times. Several countries have been unwilling to disclose documentation on *porrajmos*. But even when disclosed and studied, the Gypsies often remain as footnotes. In Germany a law court set 1943 as the year of racially based prosecution. Previous security measures were justified by the Gypsies being of an "asocial character". Only in the 1960'ies German law courts changed the year to 1938. However, 1943 was the year when the extermination gained momentum: Auschwitz!

<sup>7</sup> The Norwegian magister in Romanian literature Svanhild Naterstad (2012) even mentions 2.5 mill

<sup>8</sup> This part is mainly based on Fonseca, p 262ff and Naterstad p 92ff. Translation into English of quotes from Fonseca's book made by ALF

Most Roma know little about their history apart from the fact that they have been prosecuted. Their "own "forgetfulness" is not due to weakness, rather to a sort of optimistic stubbornness"... *"When the Jews have responded to prosecution and expulsion with an imposing industry of remembrance, the Gypsies have, with their peculiar mixture of fatalism and will (or ability) to live in the Now – made forgetfulness an art"* (Fonseca, 1995, p 297). As with the Jews, the disabled or mentally ill people, the Gypsies were put in ghettos, were transported to work camps or extermination camps, and they were victims of gruesome medical experiments. Even in the camps the Gypsies were separated from the rest of the captives. Figures showing the Gypsies' fate during *porrajmos*, or prosecutions before, during and after World War II, remain as estimates: Between 250.000 and 500.000 were killed in Europa<sup>9</sup>. The Romanian War Crimes Tribunal holds that the number in Romania is 38.000.

Time is, however, changing and the Roma are since the mid 90'ies showing signs of a collective identity. And for the first time they wish to commemorate *porrajmos*. In 1994 the US Holocaust Memorial Museum conducted their first commemorative ceremony for Gypsy victims.

During Dictator Nicolae Ceausescu's Communism, the Roma were assimilated in society by force. They were not allowed to continue with their tradition of travelling and with their traditional handicrafts. Gatherings of all kinds were forbidden. As a result, their culture was weakened. On the positive side, the authorities worked for housing for all, education for children was made obligatory – and work, very often in heavy industry. *"After 1980 there were – officially – no Roma in Romania. None the less, ethnic Roma were the first to loose their jobs when the enormous state factories were shut down after 1990"*(Naterstad,2012 p92)

After the fall of Ceausescu in 1989, which put an end to Communism, atrocities against the Roma soared. Houses were burnt down and Roma families were chased from one place to the other. The police were passive. *"Life was better before the revolution. We did not have problems before Ceausescu died. This is democracy for us. George Bush should come here and have a look at our democracy. Why does not the US help us?"*<sup>10</sup>

With the fall of Communism the Roma had the right to land under certain criteria, but there were bureaucratic obstacles, applications were "lost", and the offer turned out to be worthless. One could ask: "Are the Gypsies nomadic "by nature", or is this what they are because they were never allowed to settle?" (Fonseca, 1997)

There was a collapse of the economy, the judiciary and infrastructure in the country. Thousands of Romanians left the country, many of them Roma. In spite of difficulties in being allowed to stay in various countries, many of the migrants remained abroad. Many stranded in large groups here and there almost giving up hope of continuing their journey. *"I wandered in and out of railway stations for five days and did not see one family making themselves ready for travel. The little movement there was, went eastwards: A small stream of people who had been chased away from the German border.... Maybe it was because I am myself a Jew and found myself at a Polish*

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<sup>9</sup> Ian Hancock, Director of the Programme of Romani Studies and the Romani Archives and Documentation Centre in Texas holds that the number of victims is underestimated; could be 500.000 to 1,5 mill

<sup>10</sup> Man from a village where the Roma had lost their houses. Isabel Fonseca p 207 Norwegian edition

*railway station [no longer in use]: The crowds of broken down people and the bare platforms and the excrements, the mud and the cold and the feeling of captivity and an inevitable fate that made me think of another Polish final station: Auschwitz."* (Fonseca, 1995, p 225,) This happened around 1995.

In 2007 Romania became member of the EU. After the revolution in 1989 and particularly in connection with the EU membership, a number of measures have been taken in order to improve the situation in Romania, and Roma's both legal and political situation has improved. However, with *"the economic situation together with this social group's total lack of basic education, migration is the most rational solution for many of them"* (Engebrigtsen 2012, p27)

### **3. Temporary Roma Migrants - Assessment in Norway**

The assessment in Norway was for the most part done by ALF in fairly close communication with the various stakeholders and through reading of relevant documentation.

According to estimation around 1000 (the City Council gives the number of 2000) migrating Roma come to Oslo every year, most of them from Romania. Being citizens of the EEA they have the right to come to Norway and to stay for three months. Many stay for longer periods of time earning money through collecting bottles, selling of goods or begging. There has been a heavy debate in Norway ever since countries in Eastern Europe were included in EU. Often this group of people has been linked to petty crime and thereby directly or indirectly stigmatized as criminals. There have been serious accusations of organized begging and trafficking and of faking reasons for begging. There are such examples; however, studies have shown that this is not the overall, correct description of Roma in Oslo. (Antirasistisk Senter,2012; Engebrigtsen 2012; Salvation Army 2007). Those who come are poor people who have no jobs, who have families to support, who leave their children with grandparents to earn money in the richest country in Europe. Even the Deputy Chief of police in Oslo has declared that he does not believe that the begging is organized. (Anitrasistisk Senter 2012, p8) A lot of good initiatives are taken to alleviate the situation of the Roma in Oslo and elsewhere. Still they are being harassed, and targeted with racist behaviour.

#### **3.1 Bishop of Oslo – Network**

We start with the most recent piece of information. Upon return from Romania the Team was called for a meeting for representatives of individuals and organizations involved in work for temporary migrants in Norway. The meeting was a follow up of a similar meeting held in January and was chaired by the Bishop. Present were representatives from City Mission with "Rom for Rom", Oslo Diocese with "Hjerterom", from various parishes in and immediately outside Oslo / "Grupperom" in Haslum, the Salvation Army, "Evangeliesenteret", Church of Norway Council on International and Ecumenical Relations (MKR), and Norwegian Christian Council. We were invited to give a presentation mainly of our travel to Romania. The meeting was informed that NCA had not taken any formal decision on involvement in Romania and the presentation was accordingly overall and without recommendations.

The meeting unanimously expressed their appreciation of NCA now looking into possibilities for a programme in Romania. Among others City Mission stated that having NCA on board in this challenging situation would give their work legitimacy. The work in Norway can only be considered as temporary solutions. Work in Romania could contribute to stabilizing the situation for Roma and create opportunities for sustainable living conditions in their own country – in the long run.

The meeting also informed that through contact with municipal and state Government bodies, it is clear that engagement by NGOs is very much welcome. The day of the meeting coincided with the Ministry of Justice presenting their plan of action and solutions in the increasingly challenging situation with Roma beggars in the country.

### **3.2 Various initiatives taken on the Norwegian Scene**

Here follows a list of organizations / resource persons contacted and which activities they have launched

- City Mission: Has just started a programme called "Rom for Rom" with improvement of basic needs and rights, behaviour change among the Norwegian public, challenging authorities and other stakeholders to consider activities for Roma; "Møtestedet" – café with free food.
- Salvation Army / "Fyrlyset": Dinner, shower and washing of clothes three times a week; overnight stay when temperatures go below -10C; is planning small scale projects in Romania through Romania Salvation Army
- "Evangeliesenteret": Dinner three times a week; church service (Rumanian translation) and food after service.
- Caritas Norway: Assistance to find jobs; not specifically targeting Roma. Has little contact with Caritas Romania or Catholic institutions in the country.
- Diocese of Oslo: "Hjerterom"; strong involvement by the Bishop to meet the challenges in a dignified way and with focus on human rights.
- Diocese of Borg: The Bishop informed about possibilities for cooperation between municipalities in Norway and Romania; mentioned "Evangeliesenteret" in Fredrikstad serving breakfast to Roma living close to the garbage dump; would like to be involved in church activities in Norway
- Diocese of Sør Hålogaland: Active in lobbying towards the Norwegian Government for measures to be taken; example initiative with inviting Roma to stay in his garden.
- Diakonhjemmet University College: Contract between NCA and Diakonhjemmet University College exists. Elsa Døhlie, Associate Professor, acted as consultant for the assessment team during travel to Romania. Is active in networking and would like to establish cooperation between Norwegian diaconal institutions where the College can offer technical/professional support.
- "Folk er folk": Selling of magazine on the street; political activism on behalf of the Roma.
- Eurodiaconia: Meeting in the Prague with special focus on Roma: Some contacts established, particularly with Diaconia Romania which receives funds from ACT Alliance member churches. Eurodiaconia as a church body has an important focus on lobbying for development of country strategies for Roma.

- OSCE, Knut Vollebæk: Three most relevant focus areas: Registration and civic documentation, education and representation (who speak on behalf of the Roma?). According to plan, Vollebæk will take up a new position as leader of a Government appointed committee for minorities in Norway, hereunder Roma. When asked about possibilities for EU funding, he referred to the EEA funds, even if stating that there are huge amounts of EU funds for Romania.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department for EEA funds. Referred to:
- The Norwegian Helsinki Committee: Acts as the link between MFA and Norwegian NGOs on EEA funding. Provided information about important documentation – among other their own report from 2009: "Norsk romani-/taterpolitikk. Fortid, Nåtid, Fremtid".
- Most important documentation, in addition to the NHC's report: City Mission / Hildegunn Brattvåg (2007) "Folk fra Romania som tigger I Oslo"; Ada Engebriksen (2012) "Tiggerbander og kriminelle bakmenn eller fattige EU-borgere"; Antirasistisk Senter (2012) "Tilreisende Rom i Oslo"; Isabel Fonseca (1995) "Begrav meg stående – sigøynernes reise"; Svanhild Naterstad (2012) "Romania" (see annex).

### **3.3 Lessons learned – present situation in Norway**

- There is a wide consensus among church-based NGOs that bringing NCA on board in work for and together with Roma in Romania, would give the NGOs legitimacy for their work in Norway. All agree that the main thrust should be in the countries where the Roma come from – mainly Romania. (Even Government entities express their appreciation of Norwegian NGOs being involved in Norway)
- The police inform that petty crime has increased with the influx from Romania, but it seems that they have not managed to certify whether the criminals are Rumanian or Roma. The Deputy Chief of Police has stated that there does not seem to be organized begging.
- There are signs that Norwegian criminals, maybe in cooperation with a Rumanian (not necessarily a Roma) exploit the Roma by requesting stolen goods as payment for housing and thereafter sell the goods for their own profit.
- There is petty crime, trafficking, organized begging (where people land in the hands of loan-sharks) and individuals who appeal to the givers by acting invalidity or illness.
- However, research tells that Roma coming to Norway are here to beg or to find work; they are in need and beg to support their families. Begging in Norway pays. The overall picture is neither about organized begging, trafficking or other criminal acts, but about poor people who tries to find money to support their families.

## **4. Assessment in Romania, April, 2013**

The timing of the travel to Bucharest was decided in order for the Team to participate in the launch of EEA funding for NGOs. This launch is part of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2009 – 2014 implemented by a consortium consisting of three Rumanian organizations. (Civil Society Development Foundation (CSDF), Environment Partnership Foundation (REPF), Resource Centre for Roma

Communities (RCRC)) The allocated amount under this call for proposal is 30 mill EURO, often called "Norwegian Funds", however, Iceland and Lichtenstein are also included in the funding. Hundreds of Romanian NGOs had applied for participation in the conference, out of which around 200 were admitted. Norwegian NGOs were between 25 – 30. It goes without saying that 30 mill EURO through three years is not a big amount of money when considering the numbers of NGOs interested in applying for funds.

#### **4.1 Meetings in Bucharest**

The two first days in the country gave us time to set the team (we met Iulian for the first time in Bucharest), acquaint ourselves with the city, arrange meetings and conduct meetings. We met the advisor to the Prime Minister on Roma issues / now senator, representatives of Caritas Romania, Open Society (Soros) Foundation, UNICEF.

- The Senator was a well-educated and energetic man, drawing a dark picture of corrupt NGOs, describing the need for involvement with the Roma and promoting his ideas for Roma projects. Later during our stay he showed us what could be called ghettos in Bucharest and introduced us to individuals working against domestic violence and for human rights for women and children.
- Caritas Romania's General Secretary informed about a well-functioning and professional organization which was involved in advocacy and overall administration of the work done in the dioceses in the Country. The dioceses are, however, more or less independent entities. The Gen. Secr. did not seem to be well informed about the work in the individual dioceses.
- Open Society Foundation was a "missing link". We had been informed that they would be the main NGO to receive EEA funds from Brussels, and we wished to learn more about the EEA funding mechanisms. This was not correct, but we learned that the organization was a solid one and they had an interesting project component for housing.
- UNICEF informed about the status of children in Romania. In addition to their main focus, children, UNICEF works for the most deprived – mainly Roma in poor, rural communities by way of developing intervention models. Roma programmes should have an integrated approach looking at social needs, education, health, job creation and housing. And it is important to work complementary with the local governmental systems.
- Back in Bucharest after our travels we had a meeting at the Norwegian Embassy. Information was shared about the situation in Romania and our findings so far.
- On the very last day of our stay we meet representatives of AidRom (the Ecumenical Association of Churches in Romania). At the conference we were introduced to the Director and the Deputy Director, both from the Orthodox Church – Philanthropy. ALF visited their shelter for victims of violence in Bucharest. The time was too short to discuss more in-depth on programme cooperation, but the NCA idea could be to link the central Philanthropy to the Orthodox Church in Roman. (Ref to that section below.)

##### **4.1.1 Lessons learned at the outset of our stay in Romania**

Already at the very beginning of our stay, we learned that there are good, dedicated and trustworthy organizations working for the most deprived people in the country. We also learned that when working for and together with Roma, we have to work in



an integrated way, e.g. according to need: Basic social delivery, education in the way of support to drop-outs in elementary school, support to high school students; job creation including skills training and adult literacy - and housing.

## **4.2 Roman and Bacau Areas**

We arrived in Roman in the late evening of April 10<sup>th</sup> and was accommodated at the Franciscan Brotherhood's Social Centre

### **4.2.1 Mayor of Roman**

The Mayor, Laurentiu Dan Leoreanu, informed about an application handed in to EU for a nursery to be run by the municipality. The idea was to create job opportunities for unemployed, mainly Roma people. He was concerned about the situation of Roma in the town, however, he had somewhat vague solutions for housing, e.g. "Olympic Village". (See 4.2.2 and 4.2.3). Contacts had been established with the NGO community, and he was strong on a four-party cooperation needed between the Municipality, the Franciscan Brothers, the Orthodox Church – presently through one priest and quite a few volunteers, and Roma community leaders.

### **4.2.2 Franciscan brothers – Roman**

The Social Centre is not exclusively for Roma children, but for the most poor, and accordingly many are Roma.

- The Social Centre was placed in a nice compound with partly rebuilt farmhouses from Communist time. It included
  - kindergarten, 30 children (2013)
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Chance School, (Primary School, Class 1- 4: 16 children (2013), drop-outs from school and who get special care and assistance in learning, but also hygiene training, health services and food. 40 children attend summer camp every year.
  - Playground
  - The cantina served hot meals for the children and for other needy families - up to 100 people A large part of the food was made from products from the brothers' farm
  - Psychosocial and health assistance.
  - Brick factory
  - There were people with a professional background as pedagogues, health personnel, including a doctor who came once a week.
  - The Centre had been involved in house construction for needy families, 18 houses in all in three different villages. 5000 EURO per family. Electricity and area plan had been arranged for.

The place was very well run. The employees / volunteers were for the greater part women, but we could see that the leadership of the Centre could have benefited from a stronger focus on women. The reproductive health aspect was there and the rights for women and children, however, according to our observations, this needs to be strengthened. The Brothers were looking into possibilities to fund skills-training for Roma at public institutions.

The annual budget for the Social Centre was approximately 100.000 EURO.

- The Nursery: The Brothers had bought the nursery for a reasonable price a couple of years ago. There were 15 hectares of land including a greenhouse. There were only ornamental plants for sale in the nursery and the only aim was to sell plants as income for the Social Centre and the other institutions (mentioned below). The land is rich and we saw a great potential for horticulture, and if possible, to train and then give / sell plants to the Roma for them to plant in their home-gardens - according to ecologically sustainable methods.
- The Theological Institute and Secondary School: The visit here was somewhat outside our field of interest, but it was useful to meet with the Headmaster and to learn about the well run institution.
- Close to the Institute were a bakery and a farm with a farmhouse for 23 milking cows, calves, a few sheep and goats. It was a bit "disappointing" to learn that the milking was fully automatized in order to be able to cut down on staff. The possibilities for job creation were accordingly not there. Around the farmhouse there was land for produce of fother and another greenhouse for vegetables. The aim was again to produce meat, bread, milk and vegetables in order to make the Franciscan institutions self-sustainable – a good principle, but not conducive with the view to the Roma job opportunities.
- "The Olympic Village" is a place for Roma families to where they have been more or less forcibly moved from the centre of Roman town: 4 long cowsheds where there used to be 100 cows in each cowshed, now they hosted 50 families in each; 1800 individuals in all, 1200 children. Crude partitions had been put up inside each shed. There was one, leaking tap of water in each unit, 4 toilets and 4 showers in a corner of the compound outside. (We did not have a look inside). We met the Roma foreman and were invited into a room very nicely kept. However, most of the rooms were dreary and crowded. Some children were nicely playing outside, but many stayed inside the fairly dark rooms. The voluntary nurse had a room where she could receive patients and expecting mothers. And the doctor came there from time to time. We could see a great need for reproductive health activities, for hygiene training, for improved child care (ICDP<sup>11</sup>), and for basic education. The children were actually having free transport to school, and several of them were at the Social Centre. The place could be given some basic improvement of construction, without making it a preferred place to stay. The Roma need to get out of there! We discussed the idea of makeshift improvement and then finding a plot of land to where the families could be moved little by little, start with the most motivated! This place is an example of utter poverty where many of the grown-ups have given up – the poverty syndrome! (Additional on Olympic Village under "Orthodox Church - Roman")
- The village of Valea Seaca – the "Norwegian Village" is situated close to Bacau town, and the Roma live at the far end of the village. The Franciscan Deputy Provincial accompanied the Team to this village. There were between 1000 – 2000 Roma living here. It was said that each of the families would send 1 – 2 family members to Norway to beg or earn money. We met some of them. They could earn 150 to 200 NOK a day, and sent money to their families every month. The return transport cost 500 EURO and was organized by a driver. They were

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<sup>11</sup> International Child Development Programme

allowed to pay back the money in instalments, and it is questioned whether they stay indebted to the bus-driver for longer periods of time.

The houses in the village were poor, and people were definitely poor. But the good thing to see was that several of the houses had small kitchen-gardens. The forest was nearby. Discussing with members of families, it was admitted that they would rather stay permanently in the village than travel to Norway. It was hard to get work, but with skills training and job creation activities, their situation might improve. The vegetable gardens were mainly for own households, but they could be interested in learning more about new methods with the aim of getting income. When asked about the possibilities for honey production, we were informed that this area was ideal for apiculture, many from elsewhere in the region came to place their beehives close to their village during the honey production season. It was said that the children went to the local school, however, when Iulian just by chance asked a 12 year boy who seemed to be quite bright to read the capital letters on a number plate of a car, he did not manage.

We met with the local pastor and were told that in this part of the village they were all pentecostals. Apparently there had once been a Baptist missionary visiting the village. When questioned, the pastor informed that his "theological education" was to go to church, to sing in the choir and to pray on his knees. Awareness on denomination is not a necessity! Low-church activities seem to appeal to and have influence on their social life.

**Outreach services:** The Brothers were considering to start out-reach services in Baia Mare and in the neighbouring Republic of Moldova - right across the border from the Centre. If it comes off, development of a programme in Baia Mare will have to be considered at a later stage, preferably in cooperation with Caritas Baia Mare. The Republic of Moldova is not included in the present EEA call for proposals, even if it will be administered from Roman.

#### **4.2.3 The Orthodox Church in Roman**

Already during the meeting with the Mayor of Roman the name of the Orthodox priest, Father Popovic, came up. Also the Brethren informed us that they had good cooperation with him. He is a dedicated person working for the poorest in Roman and at the same time a scholar, teaching at the Franciscan Theological Institute. He had a clear ecumenical attitude (in sharp contrast to the Patriarch).

- The Church runs a day centre with 40 children – half Romanian, half Roma. There are 25 volunteer teachers and students.
- 2 years ago the priest had started a centre for Roma children in "Olympic Village". The biggest problem now was transport to the village. Teachers were brought here and the idea was also to bring food. A room was set aside as a chapel in the village. (We did not see it when we visited, the key was with the priest, otherwise all equipment would be stolen!)

Fr. Popovic informed that the Mayor clearly wants the village to be dissolved. When asked, he said that arrangement for housing is possible – if funds were found. It is quite difficult to work with the grown ups. Several of them have given up, and there is a lot of misuse of alcohol and stealing – in particular among the men. As for the women, he would like to bring forward their "positive sides" and had a plan to try to

develop their traditions with singing and dancing – "A school for Women". The many children per family are a challenge. Maybe it represents a legacy from Communist time in that for each new-born baby the mother gets 200 RON (around 350 NOK) every month the two first years, and from 2 years of age every child gets 40 RON. One could ask whether having a baby is a kind of a short term income generation for poor families. With a smile the priest said that funerals where many Roma gather, gives a good opportunity to talk about soap and water!

#### **4.2.4 Caritas – Iasi**

We met with the leadership of Caritas in Iasi. They run social care activities for children, elderly and poor people – among other a children's home. However, they had very little focus on Roma and guided our interest towards people in need in general, and invited us to come with them to see the life of people in Romanian poor villages outside Iasi. Caritas Iasi did not seem to be interested in a programme with increased focus on Roma. The organization was accordingly ruled out as a potential partner for NCA.

#### **4.2.5. Ideas for consideration – Roman and Bacau**

- The Franciscan Social Centre and nursery
- Support to Social Centre with a more clear focus on reproductive health – in addition to hygiene, ICDP, women's and children's rights. Continued support to the nurse working both at the "Olympic Village" and at the Centre. Work with the parents for cooperation on children's schooling
- Development of the nursery in the way of horticulture and training of poor people who live in villages with a small plot of land around their houses.
- Skills training through public institutions.
- The village of Valea Seaca. Projects in this village could be run through the Franciscan Provincial in Bacau.
- Job creation / skills training
- Development of vegetable gardens - horticulture and apiculture
- Follow-up of children and their schooling / engage parents
- Reproductive health; women's and children's rights.
- Support to the cooperation between the Orthodox Church and the Franciscan Brothers should be strengthened. Programme elements run by the Orthodox Church could be:
  - Basic improvement of the constructions in Olympic Village
  - Lobbying for land for resettlement of the residents of Olympic Village.
  - Planning together with the Municipality and the Roma leadership for house construction. Look for funding for housing – either through the Municipality or another launch for EEA funding, the Children and Youth Programme?
  - Build capacity and have a strong focus on reproductive health and child care (ICDP)
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Both the Franciscan Brotherhood in Roman / Bacau and the Orthodox Church in Roman are considered by the Team as potential NCA partners.

## **4.3 Cluj and Baia Mare**

### **4.3.1 Diaconia Romania, Cluj - village of Mera and the Social Centre<sup>12</sup>**

The team met with two members of staff, Agnes Pattantyus and Michaela Onea, Diaconia Cluj, to get an introduction to their work and to present NCA. Diaconia target people in need, elderly and children some of them Roma. Diaconia started to work with Roma children in 2001. They run social centres and homes for elderly.

We visited Mera a village 30 minutes outside Cluj with 1000 Hungarian and a 400 Hungarian Roma population. The social centre started in 2008 and they were still expanding with new buildings and activities. The centre had a home for elderly and activities for children and their families mainly Roma. The centre was based on community development activities for the whole village in order to integrate the Roma population. The social workers had done a great job to get all Roma children registered in order for them to access the healthcare system. We visited the centre for children, youth and their families and had a tour in the village. The centre and their employees were well organised with preschool teachers, social workers and healthcare givers for the elderly living in the centre, housekeepers and cook.

- Preschool activities ( 24 children)
- After school activities (30 children)
- Support to pupils at secondary school in Cluj (only 3 at the moment)
- Literacy classes
- Summer camps
- Food deliveries and cantina
- Mothers groups / seminars for parents
- Healthcare, general practitioner
- Community development programme
- Mera days

There were several improvements in the Roma village after 10 years of presence: Cleaner around the houses and public areas, maintenance and better housing standard, street lights left without being broken, no criminal environment. Most children went to school, early marriages no longer existent.

Future plans by Diaconia:

1. Expand activities for children and youth
2. Transport for kids going to secondary school in Cluj
3. Social/ unemployment office to help people to find a job
4. Social enterprise: to make money out of what they are already doing like plastic recycling, adult literacy, beading workshops.

### **4.3.2 City of Baia Mare – Craica - The factory- 3 blocks of flats - A social centre**

We met with Mayor Catalin Chereces and Social director and priest, Gavra Bogdan, Head of department for social services. And we visited 3 areas where Roma population in Baia Mare live, a municipality based social centre and land for new houses. The mayor was young and ambitious and did not believe in inclusion in the

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<sup>12</sup> Director Arthur Sarosi, Agnes Pattantyus and Michaela Onea

European way, he said. The Roma want to live together in ghettos in big cities. He wanted to promote that and give possibilities for them to settle outside the city. He did not believe in integration in the EU way of understanding. Roma have their own culture. We cannot destroy their type of living. However, the municipality did not have sufficient money and manpower to solve the Roma problem. No Ngos were involved as far as we could recognise.

The social director had 600 employees and a budget of 6 mill EURO. Polices and resources are needed to support the municipality to make an inclusive policy for the Roma population in Baia Mare. This partnership with only public entities is not for NCA. We informed the mayor that NCA's policy is to partner with faith based organisations as our main preference, and asked whether it would be possible for the Municipality to enter into cooperation with Caritas Baia Mare. To this we did not a clear answer.

An idea for this municipality would be to partner with a municipality in Norway and benefit from a broader partnership and collaboration, for example Bergen Municipality that already has been involved in some small health activities and a centre for exceptional illnesses.

Craica: 300 families used to live in this place in sheds without running water, toilets, bathrooms or electricity and under extremely bad conditions. Approximately 100 families were still living in the area waiting for better housing conditions.

The factory: 200 families were moved last year to a factory building still with very bad conditions but a little bit better than the sheds. On the top floor there was a small Pentecostal/ Baptist chapel where the Roma gathered for sermons and prayers 2-3 times a week.

Blocks of flats and the wall: We visited outside 3 big block of flats - without electricity, water and bathrooms, very bad conditions. Outside the blocks a 1.60m high wall had been built to protect the children from the traffic in the street. This wall has been debated also on internet and might be seen as a symbol of exclusion. However we did not see the wall as provocative as others. However, in our opinion the general living conditions are far more critical than this wall.

Social centre: The mayor stated that the municipality did not have funds to build new houses for this population. But the municipality had just opened a social centre for Roma and other poor people with several activities:

1. Kindergarten
2. After school activities
3. Library ( more than 70 attending the facilities per day)
4. PC room
5. Showers and washing machines
6. Literacy classes
7. Overnight sleeping facilities for children taken care of by child protection officers
8. Cantina

The centre had just opened and social workers, preschool teachers, teachers and psychologist were screening families to find participants to benefit from the different activities. The centre was for poor people independent of ethnic background. Roma would be the majority of the users.

Future plans from the mayor:

- Build 5 new blocks for Roma and other poor people with better standard within the city.
- Move Roma to land outside the city for Roma that want to build their own houses and cultivate small plots of land with vegetables etc.

#### **4.3.3 Caritas social centre Baia Mare**

We met with the head of the social centre. The centre is based close to Craica and blocks for Roma and poor Romanians. The centre runs a well organised programme targeting children and youth. Well integrated hygiene program for children, mothers and youth. Special focus on young mothers to support their caring abilities is a new component from what we have seen before. Reproductive health can easily be included in this programme. Focus on children from poor families and Roma children are strongly represented, however, no exclusive Roma strategy. They underlined that it is better to focus on a smaller group and give a comprehensive input instead of having the resources spread thinly around.

An integrated approach with:

- Kindergarten ( 40 children)
- After school activities ( 30 children)
- Groups for young teenagers, young mothers and for boys
- Washing machines, showers for children and mothers with focus on personal hygiene
- Summer camps

The centre employed 2 pedagogues, 2 social workers, psychologist, 2 kindergarten teachers and 9 volunteers through YMCA partnership. The Franciscan brothers hired facilities on the second floor. The rent was used to support the social centre. The brothers supported the social centre at religious holidays and to celebrate religious feasts and special days, otherwise no collaboration.

#### **4.3.4 Ideas for consideration - Cluj and Baia Mare**

Mera village and the catchment area for Diaconia Cluj Roma related programmes, is with a Hungarian speaking population (the area was under Hungary up to second world war and still Hungarian is the local language among a greater part of the population). The Roma community is too small and less needy than other groups observed. Diaconia has close links to Germany, Hungary and other European countries. They have just recently been accepted for Swiss funding.

The municipality of Baia Mare could be an option if NCA could partner with the Orthodox Church in collaboration with the municipality – and maybe also AidRom member, the Orthodox Church / Philantropy. There is a huge need for better housing for big groups of Roma in the area. The Mayor has identified land for building houses together with Roma families.

Caritas Baia Mare could expand their activities but did not present any interest at this time.

The Team did not in the end consider Diaconia Cluj or Caritas Baia Mare as relevant partners in this phase.

However, as the Franciscan Brothers is considering having outreach activities for Roma in Baia Mare, maybe there could be possibilities for engagement at a 2<sup>nd</sup> phase, with cooperation between Caritas and the Franciscan Brothers – and the Municipality.

## **5. Lessons learned from the assessment in Romania**

From programme visits and information from stakeholders, politicians, professionals and Roma themselves we will summarize main lessons learned as follows:

1. The focus on Roma populations was based on the overall aim to give Roma access to basic rights and in the long run integration in the wider Romanian society. This may take 2 – 3 generations.
2. All NGOs and public institutions underlined that it is not a good solution to work for and together with Roma exclusively, or to make parallel systems for the benefit of the Roma. The local demography and not ethnicity decided to what extent the Roma were included in their programmes. For this reason there are several organizations working mainly for Roma people, or who have the Roma as their main target
3. Social centres based on community-work, community participation and integrated approach might give a better inclusion of the Roma. To work with a holistic approach in a small village makes it possible to see changes over time and create models for the Roma population
4. We recognize that it is a challenge for the greater Romanian communities to accept the Roma culture and way of living. The Roma population is stigmatized.
5. We confirmed what we in the outset assumed:
  - Roma are among the poorest of the poor and stigmatized as a group.
  - Working with children and education: Pre-school and support to formal education (classes one to eight – and beyond) (2<sup>nd</sup> chance and after school activities: Probably the most important factor with the view to integration and poverty reduction of Roma.
  - Housing with WASH,
  - horticultural and maybe apiculture activities. Allow the Roma to stay together in small communities integrated in larger communities by way of schooling, job opportunities and IG.
  - Women and children: Hygiene, reproductive health, psychosocial support, how to raise children and domestic violence. (ICDP concept)
  - Adult literacy classes for parents
  - important to offer activities for children outside the close Roma community in order for them to be positively stimulated in another setting different from all the poverty and negative environment



6. It pays to be a beggar, both in Romania and in Norway. "Why should I work, if I can earn just as much money through begging?"
  - Orthodox Priest in Roman: Stealing is a sin, begging is accepted and not connected to stigma among Roma.
  - It is unclear for us to what extent there are organised criminal networks behind the beggars. We did not get any clear picture on this issue compared to various research that we had access to (Engebrigtsen, 2012 a.o.).
7. There is a need for advocacy
  - Within the Roma community: Women's and children's rights. Rights to basic services
  - Towards the Romanian authorities at various levels
8. The Orthodox Church (87% of population) has little diaconal activities. One explanation is that the churches have to reconstruct holy sites and congregational life after Communism. However, some activities are now about to take place. Here is a potential for cooperation between churches, for building diaconal services and for voluntary assistance.
9. Roma people are religious people, most of them formally belonging to the Orthodox Church. However, many attend services at local Pentecostal /Baptist (?) churches. Very little confessional understanding, and pastors with almost no theological education. Low-church activities seem to appeal to Roma's religious life and also have an impact on their social life.
- 10 It has been confirmed from various sources on different levels in the society that among other EU funds, have not reached the targeted communities. However, initiatives are now taken to deal with this challenge. A Ministry for EU funding has just recently been established.

## **6. Overall conclusions**

There is "no quick fix" to improve the living conditions for Roma population. Partnership and programming together with local faith-based NGOs should have a long term perspective and commitment.

Programmes for Roma have to be integrated and not based on ethnicity but poverty and identified needs. It is important not to build up parallel systems, but support systems with the aim of integrating Roma into the established systems already existing in Romania.

The programmes should focus on children, youth and women as main beneficiaries. Whenever possible, skills training both for men and women should be initiated. Selection of families willing to make a difference in their lives - models / pilot activities – is recommended.

Choice of partners with transparency and capacity to manage funds is important as well as the organization's experience and capacity to create a difference on the ground.

It is important – if possible – to work in areas from where Roma travel to Norway. These activities could be models or pilots to strengthen a positive partnership

between Norway and Romania and the Roma and Norwegians. This might also strengthen the advocacy work needed in Norway to fight the stigma and discrimination towards Roma population - both the Norwegian and Romanian Roma.

There is also a sound need for strengthening the Human rights aspect in all Roma programmes with main focus on children and women's rights. All programmes have to be according to a right-based approach. Advocacy for land and housing might also be considered within the framework of rights and advocacy programmes.

***The former President of the Czech Republic, Vaclav Havel, stated that "the Gypsy problem is a litmus test of a civil society."***

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## Annex 1

### **The team**

**Anne Lise Fossland**, NCA Advisor. Various assignments at Head Office and abroad. From early 2005 to late 2007 she was the Area Representative in the Balkans. Presently she has responsibilities for follow up of programmes in countries where there is no NCA representation, among other, countries in Europe.

**Elsa Døhlie**, Associate Professor at Diakonhjemmet University College. Teaches Bachelor and Master Degree students in international social work/Diaconia. She has published a variety of articles and books in the field of international of social work. She is also an expert in the International Child Development Programme (ICDP). Elsa is member of the NCA emergency roster with assignments in Pakistan / Afghanistan and has worked for two years as NCA Country Representative in Malawi. There is an agreement on cooperation between NCA and Diakonhjemmet.

**Iulian Bulai**, advisor, accompanier and translator to the Team. He studies for a Master's Degree in Art – for the time being living in Beijing as an exchange student. He is Rumanian, has lived several years in Norway and speaks fluent Norwegian. He has worked in the Oslo Diocese of the Church of Norway among other in outreach activities among Roma operating in the streets of Oslo. Bulai played an important part in facilitating for the travel, however, he has not been included in the deliberations between Elsa and Anne Lise as regards choice of partners and programme elements.

## Annex 2

### **TERMS OF REFERENCE Assessment of Possibilities and Options**

**For**

### **Norwegian Church Aid's Renewed Engagement for Roma People in Europe**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

##### **Background**

With the fall of President Ceausescu in Romania in 1989, there was a collapse of the economy, the judiciary and the infrastructure in the country. This resulted in thousands of Romanians leaving the country to other European countries – among these Roma and other groups of gypsies<sup>13</sup>. In spite of difficulties in being allowed to stay in the various countries, many of the migrants remained abroad. When Romania became a member of the EU in 2007 and the borders between countries in Europe were opened, a new migration started, and Norway received high numbers of temporary migrants, many of them Roma, who came to look for work or to beg. The migrants have increased in number to a considerable degree over the past two years. The Roma belong among the most marginalized group of minorities in Europe and have through several hundred years been victims of discrimination and persecution. A large number of the Roma continue to live under harsh and poor living conditions in their home countries.

As in other European countries the influx of temporary migrants has become a serious challenge in the Norwegian society in the way of how to secure basic rights for poor EU citizens. The borders are open, begging is legal, however, practical solutions for work opportunities, how to tackle begging, accommodation, sanitation facilities or mere shelter in the cold of winter are hard to come by.

Public initiatives have been sought to some little extent, NGOs, not in the least faith based / churches and church organizations have taken initiatives to mitigate the needs of in particular the Roma. Mentioned may be The Salvation Army, The City Mission, the Diocese of Oslo, South Hålogaland and Borg, Church of Norway, with among other the activity through "HjerteRom" - and various other initiatives taken both by private persons and various churches in different parts of the country.

After the wars in the Balkans, NCA was engaged in work, both through direct implementation and through partners for and together with Roma in several countries – with the main focus in Kosovo (before and after independence), Serbia and Macedonia. The NCA Area Office was closed down in September 2009. In 2013 only one country with partner cooperation in the Balkans is left, Serbia, where a programme (Roma Resource Centre) implemented by Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization (EHO) is into its last year of funding through NCA.

##### **Three coinciding events**

Late 2012 three events related to the issue of Roma in Europe in general and the Roma migrants arriving in Norway in particular coincided. Firstly, considering the Roma challenge in the Norwegian context and the engagement of churches and related organizations for the Roma in Norway, NCA staff at Head Office felt that there was a growing need for NCA to open up for a renewed engagement for Roma in their homeland,

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<sup>13</sup> In the following and for practical reasons "rom" / "roma" will exclusively be used for the various groups of people who could be called gypsies.

possibly in Romania. Secondly, NCA was approached by representatives of the Diocese of Oslo – "HjerteRom" - who asked whether it would be possible for NCA to take charge in applying for EEA funds for Roma projects first and foremost in Romania. The representatives were willing to assist and to share their experience from working with Roma. Thirdly, the NCA Board requested, for their meeting in November 2012, a presentation of how NCA has been and is engaged for Roma in Europe. A Memo to the General Secretary was accordingly prepared containing an overview of such engagement and adding a recommendation for an assessment with the aim of looking into possibilities for a new Roma programme. The information with the recommendation was presented to the Board. (Attachment no 1)

### **NCA Board decision**

In its meeting on November 26, 2012, the Board passed the following decision:

**"Norwegian Church Aid and the Roma people:** Information was shared on NCA's previous programme in the Balkans and the plan for the programme to be phased out in the course of 2013. However, contrary to the decision on phasing out, NCA has decided to do an assessment on whether to and, if yes, what and how may the organization contribute with the view to assistance to the Roma, preferably in Romania. NCA does not work with Roma in Norway. The Board expressed appreciation about the decision on doing an assessment."

### **ASSESSMENT**

**Aim of the assessment:** Based on solid information gathered in Norway and abroad, present a recommendation to the leadership of NCA for a renewed engagement for and together with Roma in Romania, identifying mode of operation (partner), kind of programme and creating a platform for application for EU and / or EEA funds.

#### **Information gathered in Norway**

- Through among other:
  - The City Mission
  - Salvation Army and other Protestant churches outside Church of Norway, e.g. The Baptist Church
  - Church of Norway – various dioceses / congregations – Oslo, Borg, Sør Hålogaland
  - Diakonhjemmet
  - Caritas Norway
  - Individual resource persons
  - Various documentation
- Mapping: From which areas in Romania do the Roma come to Norway
  - Contact with organizations / individuals as under above point.
- Identification of organizations engaged for Roma in Europe
  - Participation in EuroDiaconia, meeting in Prague, February 14 – 15, 2013
  - Contact with member organizations in ACT Alliance engaged in work for Roma people
- Mapping of NGOs working in Romania in poor communities with high percentage of Roma people
- Identification of financial resources / process for project application
  - Contact with Norwegian MFA, Department for EEA
  - Contact with OSCD on EU funding
  - Meeting / communication with the Norwegian Helsingfors Committee / Coordinator between the Norwegian MFA and NGOs / Civil Society in relation to EEA/NGO funds.

#### **Assessment in Romania**

- Based on information gathered (as above) travel to Romania beginning of April 2013
  - Mapping / visit to international / national organizations working with Roma people. Among other Open Society Foundation, the organization which will be the overall recipient / responsible for EEA funds in Romania.
  - Visit to relevant Governmental institutions
  - Visit to Norwegian Embassy
  - Visit to and discussions with local organization working in poor communities with high percentage of Roma. – Franciscans; Diaconia Romania (other?)
  - Visit to project areas and projects
  - Assessment of possible partners' / NGOs with the view to capacities for project planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting
  - Participation in donor / partners conference after release of EEA call for proposals on April 18, 2013.

#### **REPORTING**

- Maximum 10 pages – plus annexes
- Information gathered before travel to Romania with findings and preliminary conclusions on further assessment
- Information gathered in Romania with findings
- Conclusions and recommendations for an NCA engagement for Roma people in Romania:
  - Mode of operation / identification of partner: Work either through - option 1) ACT Alliance partner or option 2) direct NCA engagement with partner(s)
  - Identification of type of project / thematic programme
  - Identification of place of operation in country
- As a result of the report / assessment: Together with partner in Romania: Application for EEA funds

#### **TIME-TABLE**

- Information gathering in Norway: January / February / March: 10 workdays
- Participation in EuroDiaconia meeting in the Prague: February 13 – 15, 2013
- Two weeks travel to Romania 1st half of April 2013, including partners' conference April 18. 2013
- Reporting with conclusions and recommendations through two weeks after travel - 5 days net work-time.
- Application for EEA funds two months after release of call for proposal in Romania (indicated date for call: Mid April 2013)











DIAKONHJEMMET HØGSKOLE

Diakonhjemmet Høgskole har røtter tilbake til 1890, og er en virksomhet under stiftelsen Det Norske Diakonhjem. Høgskolen har 2500 studenter og 200 ansatte, fordelt på studiesteder i Oslo og Rogaland.

Høgskolens faglige fokus er diakoni, verdier og profesjonell praksis.

Formidlingen er en viktig del av samfunnsoppdraget til Diakonhjemmet Høgskole. Publikasjonene fra høgskolen skal bidra til dette ved å skape dialog med praksisfelt og samfunn. I tillegg skal formidlingen være med på å omsette FoU-resultater i praksis.