

Roma empowerment: lessons and potentials

Narrative report of the workshop held
at Corvinus University of Budapest on 30 May 2013
Funded by the European Academic Network for Romani Studies

The workshop brought together young, motivated, and experienced Roma and non-Roma researchers, activists, and professionals to critically reflect upon existing forms of Roma participation and to explore effective practices of participatory policy formation, research, and empowerment.

Applicants were selected on the basis of the three criteria stated in the call: experience with Roma-specific bodies, programs, initiatives; willingness to critically reflect on their own experiences and to develop case studies; good command of English. The selected participants: Ana Rojas Rivadulla, Elvis Memeti, Jekatyerina Dunajeva, Iulian Stoian, Elena Mihalache, Oleksandr Shvaiun, Ildiko Petru, Valery Novoselsky, Lidia Balogh. The travel and accommodation costs of the five Roma participants were covered from the EARNNS grant.

Selected applicants shared before the workshop concrete cases of Roma empowerment and elaborated them under the guidance of the three trainers (Margaret Greenfields, Martin Kovats, Will Guy). The cases were presented and discussed at the workshop. We are planning to publish these cases later. The following cases were discussed:

- Roma Identity in Formation: A Case Study of Kalderash Roma in a Russian School; Katya Dunajeva -Department of Political Science, University of Oregon, USA
- Regional Empowerment of Roma; Elvis Memeti - Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Macedonia
- The case of Roma groups from Calarasi County. An overview of Roma empowerment; Elena Mihalache - Romanian Social Development Fund
- The impact of waste on the population from Pata Rat- Cluj Napoca; Ildiko Otvos - Wassdas Foundation
- The Role of the Internet in the Empowerment of the Roma Nation; Valery Novoselsky - Roma Virtual Network
- Roma Women's Empowerment; Ana Rojas Rivadulla - Federation of Roma Women Associations KAMIRA, Córdoba
- Empowerment of Roma in Ukraine; Oleksandr Shvaiun - Roma of Ukraine Initiative Program manager, International Renaissance Foundation
- The e-Citizenship paradigm “ a possible model for vulnerable group” inclusion; Iulian Stoian - National School of Political Sciences & Administration, Romania

The workshop was preceded by another workshop on Theoretical Approaches to Roma Empowerment (29 May) and a policy-oriented conference for a broader audience (31 May). The participants of the two workshops joined each other's presentations thus Roma activists and professionals had a unique chance to reflect on academic research and to get feedback from young researchers.

The organizers (Andrew Ryder; Crina Marina Morteau; Iulius Rostas; Marius Taba; Marton Rovid) solicited the online evaluation of the workshop. Some feedbacks we received:

- Academic trainer: *Very optimistic after seeing the new generation of researchers and activists coming forward*
- Workshop participant – *[I liked the] opportunity to better understand problems Roma communities are facing on the ground beyond researches, academic articles, etc.; the pro-active approach proposed by Martin Kovats by involving and encouraging participants to express their opinion related to 3 case studies presented*
- Workshop participant - *It was great to hear and share so many ideas in this area. Particularly enjoyed meeting and hearing from so many Roma researchers and intellectuals and their findings from the respective states.*
- Workshop participant - *The thing I enjoyed most about this workshop is that it brought together academics, new and more established, working on the Roma to exchange ideas on an important theme.*
- Workshop Participant - *it was a rare and precious chance to meet such experts and learn from them in personal interactions and share our thoughts with each other as a working community.*
- Workshop attendee - *Broad range of issues raised; face to face interaction between academic and advocacy crowd*

The organizers plan follow-up activities

- Maintaining and updating the homepage of the event : <http://romaempowerment.wordpress.com>
- Producing a summary report of the event to be published online
- Editing a volume based on the presentations of the event

Photographs





