

Project Description

“Roma help Roma” (Hungary) Training and Employment of Roma School Coordinators in the disadvantaged area of Hungary



Goal of the project

The goal of the project is to offer training and employment opportunities for young Roma people in marginalized social position, who previously dropped out of education and employment. As a result of this new approach, these young people become Roma School Coordinators and help the integration of Roma students at schools. With this innovative approach, Roma help Roma in the school settings, resulting in a new way of dealing with the problems arising in the education of Roma children and that of dealing with the problem of unemployment and marginalization of the Roma.

Project Implementation /Innovation in Project Idea/

Providing employment for socially disadvantaged young Roma, while teaching them, and offering them future work is a new way of looking at the situation of Roma. The aim of the employment of Roma Coordinators is that the institutions employ professionals, who become their trained helpers and that of the teachers in creating good relationship and cooperation with the parents, communicating Roma culture at schools, and solving problems arising throughout the local implementation of integrated education.

The students participating in the project, while reaching graduation, can choose from four NTR professions (even more than one) depending on their motivation, skills, and academic achievements. The professional training is extended with the following two important subjects for each profession: Introduction to Roma Culture and Ethnicity, and The Methodological

Questions of Integrated Education. Employment takes place simultaneously with the training at schools that have been developed into inclusive workplaces.

The participating schools are situated in the North-East and South-West part of Hungary. These are the most disadvantaged areas of the country with the highest rate of unemployment and the highest representation of Roma people; therefore, we chose our partner schools in small, marginalized communities at such locations. Most of the Roma teacher assistants live in the selected communities; therefore they are familiar with the local social, cultural and ethnical conditions.

The innovative elements are the following

- Socially marginalized Roma young people help socially marginalized Roma children. This is the first time that such a project takes place in Hungary, and potentially all over the world
- The learning process for the employed young Roma takes place in an alternative way, independently of the school schedule through the support of mentors and the teachers of the school.
- The program is accompanied by continuous mentoring, that is the coordinators are supported by two mentors at their schools, who provide help in learning, and in the accomplishment of practical tasks. These are amplified with a regional professional forum providing advocacy and opportunity for the exchange of professional experience, thus training and employment are embedded into an optimized supporting and monitoring system.
- According to our evaluation system the efficiency of the program relies on the permanent engagement of the target group in the project; moreover in the applicability of the program in employment on a structural level. Therefore, a significant number of socially marginalized people would be reintegrated into the labor force.
- The product of the program might be a new profession; mentoring, as an alternative solution for out-of-school adult education. In the program this role is fulfilled by schoolteachers involved from the part of the participating schools; however, the mentoring activity is not linked to any school settings. The mentors have a key role in the implementation of the civic education courses, and the practical elements of vocational training. They also provide models for positive accepting behavior towards the Roma teacher assistants for their school environment.

Results

In the first phase of our program (from January, 2006 till September, 2007) 35 Roma teacher assistants are employed at 20 primary schools with the support of 42 mentor teachers. The Roma teacher assistants involved receive monthly salary from the Ec-Pec Foundation. The assistants have a wide variety of duties at the schools to support the educational integration and improve academic achievements of Roma students, as well as the cooperation between Roma families and the school. The operation of such an innovative program can be the source of certain conflicts at the selected institutions. The schools, the teachers, the parents and the children need to cope with a new, given situation, which requires a thorough learning process from each stakeholder in order to apply the program. Therefore, the secondary target group of our project consists of the school principals, the school staffs and decision makers at local municipalities having influence on the process of education.

At the next stage of the project (2008-2009) we intend to motivate local municipalities to create favorable circumstances for the future employment of the assistants at schools by identifying and allocating resources for their financing. Thus, the schools will be able to employ them as work force already trained and adapted to the local circumstances. We would also offer anti bias training for the staff of the local public institutions. We believe that training of the local community creates a better relationship with the Roma.

Financing

Date	Activity	Financial background
2006-2007	Employing Roma school coordinators	117 600 EUR for 35 coordinators
2008-2009	Training of the local community for creating good relationship with the Roma	3 200 EUR for one community

Innovation in Public Perception

Initiatives for integration are always coming from individual efforts, thus sustainability depends on personal motivation that could create long term co-operation if we are able to harmonize needs and sources, balance challenges and silent work. A project like this – besides the appearance in the media - could not only reconstruct a small part of a society's network but could affect our whole attitude towards life and could overwrite our conceptions related to responsibility.

Media appearances so far:

- press conferences
- radio: Radio C, Info Radio
- TV: M1
- Press: Népszabadság, HVG
- Internet: szocháló.hu, nepszabadság online, www.ecpec.hu, www.questionofknowledge.com, www.romakoordinator.hu
- Fairs: V4 international project fair, CIVILIÁDA – civil fair

About Ec-Pec Foundation

The Ec-Pec Foundation was established in February, 2001 and has been operating country-wide with 200 schools and over 20.000 children. Its main mission is the promotion of the child-centered Step by Step program in different educational institutions, kindergartens and primary schools in order to support the integration of disadvantaged children and children with special needs into the public educational system. Ec-Pec Foundation is a member of the ISSA (International Step by Step Association) network operating in 30 countries. The Foundation's main field of operation is providing teacher trainings, complex school improvement programs in order to of introduce the philosophy of inclusive pedagogy in public education, which is the most efficient method for the social integration of children:

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