

Looking ahead: Wall Free Europe Breaking the Barriers In Europe

In 2015, 25 symbolic photos will be traveling around Europe as part of the 'Wall Free Europe' Campaign. This photo exhibition, organized by ERGO Network, aims to showcase both physical and mental walls against Roma. The physical walls built in Europe after the opening of the Berlin Wall that segregate Roma citizens from their non-

Roma neighbours will be presented alongside with the mental walls visualising how stereotypes and prejudices in people's minds become walls of discrimination and exclusion towards Roma. The exhibition also portrays people that live behind the walls, how Roma respond to those walls in their lives and try to open the dialogue.

DG Enlargement award

Roma Active Albania (RAA) with a project increasing the capacity of Roma civil society actors and raising awareness about Roma women's issues was given a prize by the European Commission for Roma integration to civil society organisations from Western Balkans and Turkey. The award, given for a first time, honoured the contribution and the valuable work of civil society in supporting social inclusion of Roma people.



The winners were chosen from 21 short listed organisations, mostly working at grass-root level and either Roma-led or having Roma staff members. The selected projects cover diverse areas: from education and children's or women's rights, to housing, employment and health. Among the shortlisted were also Zero Discrimination Turkey and NGO Young Roma Montenegro. OTAHARIN from Bosnia has been also awarded with a project promoting education.

Annual report 2014



ERGO Network Foundation

Brussels office
Rue d'Edimbourg 26
1050 Brussels
Belgium

T: (+32) 2 - 893 10 49

E: info@ergonetwork.org

W: www.ergonetwork.org

Bank: NL72 INGB 0006 8517 74

Chamber of Commerce: 41187598



Young Roma Civic Advocates launching Wall Free Europe Campaign in Brussels

Colophon

Coordination editor

Gabriela Hrabanova

Editors

Ruus Dijksterhuis

Gabriela Hrabanova

Viviana Galli

Matthias Verhelst

Graphic design

Nicolet Pennekamp

Printed by

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ERGO Online

To find out more about ERGO's work, visit:

- www.ergonetwork.org, for detailed information on our approach, advocacy and campaigns
- www.RomaReact.org, an online platform where Roma realities are shared
- Facebook: ERGO Network, RomaReact
- Twitter: @ERGO_Network, @RomaReact



Preface

The report in front of you covers a year that brought in many respects a new start, for ERGO Network and for the European Union and its efforts to promote equality for Roma. When we will be looking back in a few years' time, we will conclude these were the beginnings of a renewed momentum to ending inequality for Roma in Europe.

June 2014, the European elections took place. We proudly welcomed two Members of Parliament with a Roma background: Soraya Post from Sweden and Damian Dr ghici from Romania, as well as other MEPs that made Roma one of their key focuses. Besides, the past year was also hugely important because of the arrival of the Juncker-Commission and the start of the 2014-2020 programming period.

Key work we did in 2014 was to assess the implementation of EU structural funds in the previous period in order to learn what are effective measures and policies targeting Roma at EU, national and local level. Also, we identified interesting tools and programmes relevant for making Roma equal citizens in their countries. And we made steps to develop (participatory) monitoring tools that can help keep governments accountable. This work has been made possible thanks to a Partnership Framework Agreement we concluded with the European Commission. It enabled us to

develop a coherent work program with our member organisations in five EU countries, where we can focus on evidence based policy reviews.

It also supported our key position as an advocate for Roma rights at EU level, where we continue a strong cooperation with other players, including notably Amnesty International, ENAR and the Open Society European Policy Institute. Together with these organisations, we created new and stronger alliances to jointly advocate for partnering with the European Commission to make sure the existing policy frameworks will impact on the lives of Roma.

The Board of ERGO Network

The board of ERGO has balanced membership of Roma and non-Roma. In late 2014, the board decided to change the by-laws and to create the position of co-Chair, so that two individuals could share the responsibilities and tasks relation to this post. Lili Makaveeva – director of Association Integro Bulgaria – was appointed as first co-chair. She has a rich background and tremendous expertise in Roma empowerment, networking, advocacy and research and has been deeply involved in the work of ERGO Network in the past 15 years.



ERGO Network: changes and developments

ERGO Network brings together over 25 Roma organisations through networking, advocacy and campaigning. After a rapid enlargement of our membership base in 2013, we now invested in strengthening common work with the different members and improving the relations among them. ERGO Network aims to make the voice of our members heard in Europe. We bridge the gap between Roma realities on the ground and the 'Brussels' reality. We advocate for better policies and programmes so that they create real opportunities and concrete improvements for Roma across Europe.

ERGO Network is well positioned in the larger EU environment and plays a central role in coordinating the position of different actors with regard to Roma issues. ERGO Network has established relationships with intergovernmental organisations (World Bank, UNDP, Council of Europe, OSCE, OSF and others), the wider (pro) Roma civil society (Eurochild, Eurocities, ENAR, Amnesty International, ERRC, European Foundation Centre and others). This central position provides us leverage and recognition. In addition, we cooperate with a consortium of universities to enhance academic work on Roma empowerment and participation.

Board members ERGO Network

Lili Makaveeva (1st co-chair)
 Vacant (2nd co-chair)
 Adriatik Hasantari (vice-chair)
 Karlien de Ruiter (treasurer)
 Stanislav Daniel (board member)
 Biser Alekov (board member)

Staff

Ruus Dijksterhuis - Executive Director
 Gabriela Hrabanova - Policy Coordinator
 Viviana Galli - Policy Coordinator
 Matthias Verhelst - Research Coordinator
 Paolo Ferraresi - Financial Manager
 Sanne van den Heuvel - Programme Officer
 Irvin Mujcic - Campaign Coordinator
 Alis Alexandra Gusa - Young Roma Professional

Experts

Gyula Vamosi - Digital Expert
 Tamas Dogi - RomaReact website developer
 Simona Toroctoi - Young Roma Professional
 Nicolet Pennekamp - Graphic designer



Collective Intelligence: ERGO Network's Members

Once a year, ERGO Network invites all its members to come together during its Members Platform, where they share knowledge and information, both with each other and with other relevant organisations or individuals who attend as observers. The aim of the meeting is to consult members on the design of its work programme and initiatives and to foster the exchange of experiences in the network.

In 2014, the ERGO Network Member Platform focused on reviewing the functioning of the network. By capitalising the input of its members through dialogue and collective brainstorm (participatory



leadership approach) the meeting aimed to ensure that the network will be more efficient and more responsive to the needs and challenges faced by grassroots Roma. The session turned out to be very good and inspiring exercise: ERGO Network members fully used the space to voice their ideas to shape a better, stronger and more connected ERGO Network.

Grassroots voices represented in Brussels

"ERGO Network should play a strong role in networking by connecting members and making a space for sharing experiences. ERGO should create cooperative environment and invest and create relations in between members at national level"

"ERGO Network should invest in the capacity building of the members, with special focus on youth. ERGO should expand further, support empowerment, represent grassroots groups, organizations, and initiatives."

"ERGO Network should build its expertise by building the theoretical background of pressing issues"

"ERGO Network should play a role in concentrating power of local NGOs (it's voice), and channelling national needs and requirements to the European level; it should help pressure national governments and strengthen national advocacy"

"ERGO Network should realize ongoing awareness campaigns, and play a strong role as a bridge between local, national and international level, monitor Roma inclusion status; it should identify obstacles and create solutions."

"ERGO Network should advocate for Roma related policies, be a strong liaison between Roma and the high level politicians."



European Advocacy

Through its on-going advocacy activities, ERGO Network feeds into the policy debate on equal citizenship for Roma, Anti-Gypsyism and Roma Empowerment. We are pro-actively advocating and intervening at relevant international meetings and events in Brussels and elsewhere. ERGO Network positions itself as a constructive but critical voice in the debate

on Roma in key policy arenas. Part of our effort is to try to reach a consultation process that promotes the contribution of well-prepared and knowledgeable actors. To this end, ERGO Network regularly organises preparatory meetings with (pro) Roma Civil Society organisations ahead of EU level meetings, such as the Roma Summit.

EU Roma Summit

The third European Roma Summit took place in Brussels on 4 April 2014. The main purpose of the Summit was to take stock of progress made on Roma inclusion in the EU since the last Roma Summit of 2010. After our efforts to ensure ensuring proper participation of Roma themselves, they were finally well represented among the 500 or so participants. In each panel – focusing on different challenges for improving Roma integration at local level – at least one speaker was finally of Romani origin. But the Summit had a very formal set-up, with an emphasis on high level representatives. The time for public interaction was limited. Key messages from Summit were touching the lack of funding, lack of Roma involvement in the integration process, and lack of administrative capacity. Some were calling for more accents on the Romani culture and for supporting the European Roma institute.

European Elections Act. React. Impact

For the first time in history, in 2014, the citizens could vote for the President of the European Commission. The main political parties nominated their candidates and by voting in the European elections, citizens not only had the chance to influence the shape of the Parliament, but also to determine who would be in charge of proposing and running EU policies. ERGO network with Young Roma Civic Advocates were mobilizing people to increase Roma turnouts in the election. At the European Presidential debate our hashtag #RomaniResistance became one of the most visible public responses.



Dignity Pledge and Wall Free Europe at the Summit

During the EU Roma Summit in Brussels, ERGO Network members presented the Pledge for Roma Dignity and Wall Free Europe campaign. The majority of panellists joined the call and signed the pledge. We also gathered almost 1000 online signatures. The Wall Free Europe campaign had a unique photo stand at the Summit where participants could express their support for our campaign “I care for Roma Dignity“.

The Roma Dignity Pledge declares that Roma in Europe should be treated with respect, fairness, justice and equality. Equal citizenship for all Roma can only be achieved by eliminating and condemning verbal and physical attacks and discrimination against Roma. Roma need to be listened to, to be included, to be empowered so that Roma can have a sense of pride and self-respect.



NGO Preparatory meeting EU Roma Platform

Ahead of the European Roma Summit, ERGO Network organized a preparatory meeting of the civil society attending the Summit. More than 60 Roma representatives were present at the meeting. Among speakers highlighting the importance of the coordinator of the Roma civil society at the European level was Zoni Weiss, Holocaust survival, who was also invited as key speaker to the Summit. Participants supported the Roma Dignity Campaign.

Informal (pro) Roma NGO coalition in Brussels

EERGO network invested in building a renewed coalition with European level networks and organisations to advocate towards the European Commission for enhancing a structured dialogue. While using the ‘European Code of Conduct for Partnership’ –that describes the terms for participation in the policy process- the European Commission organised a Working Meeting to prepare the European Platform for Roma inclusion in 2014 on 25 November. This meeting allowed representatives from EU civil society, academics and local authorities, international organisations in an interactive and participatory discussion to provide feedback to the approach and agenda of the next platform meeting.

Framework Partnership Agreement with European Commission

Since 2014 ERGO Network is supported by the PROGRESS/EaSI programme through a Partnership Framework Agreement concluded with European Commission's Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. Thanks to this support, ERGO Network was able to implement a rich annual programme which focused on capacity-building of Roma grassroots organisations, advocacy at national and EU level and research.

The work developed around the organisation of National Roma Working Groups in 6 countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and France) gathering (pro)Roma organisations to exchange experiences, implement joint advocacy initiatives and feed into policy processes such as the Country Specific Recommendations and the drafting of operational programmes. The

aim is to establish coalitions at national level which join forces to improve the situation of Roma and actively take part in decision-making processes.

At European level our member organisations regularly met with the relevant Desk Officers and Commission officials to learn more about the process related to the European Structural and Investment Funds and to share their experiences from the ground. The establishment of a Roma Civic Society Working Group which gathers representative from national and local Roma NGOs has been a space where ERGO Network could touch base with grassroots Roma organisations and develop its positions within the Open Method of Coordination, the European Semester and the other processes related to Europe 2020.

CLLD ticks the right boxes

In the 2014-2020 programming period, LEADER received an important update and widening of scope. The LEADER approach sets communities at the forefront of Local Development Strategies and was pioneered to boost rural development. In the form of 'Community Led Local Development', the European Commission now also recommends it for Urban strategies. Moreover, social inclusion has become a priority objective for CLLD.

For ERGO Network, CLLD ticks a lot of the right boxes: community participation in Strategy Planning and implementation; a focus on capacity building; bottom-up policy develop-

ment; combination of hard and soft measures; outreach to beneficiaries (so-called 'animation'); and the presence of accountability and transparency mechanisms at local level.

This was enough reason to spend considerable attention to CLLD in our work in 2014: we have supported our members to explore CLLD-plans in their countries and help them prepare for participation in the formation of Local Action Groups and strategy planning. Because, although CLLD as a methodology holds great promise, it takes local action to realise it. More on what it takes on page 10.

Does it work? Integrated approaches for Roma Inclusion

European structural funds often propose methodologies that incorporate good practice. One of those is the 'integrated approach'. It recognises that the issues Roma communities face are interconnected and should be tackled together. At the start of the 2014 - 2020 EU programme period, ERGO Network and member organisations in five countries undertook a series of case studies to find out how integrated approaches had been used in two specific programs: LEADER and the Housing interventions supported by the European Regional Fund - the so-called Art 7.2 interventions.

As part of the work supported by the PROGRESS/EaSI programme, ERGO Network members in Bulgaria (Integro Association), Czech Republic (Slovo 21, Life Together), France (La Voix des Roms), Hungary (Pro Cseherat), and Romania (PCRM and Nevo Parudimos) looked at the experiences of Roma communities with LEADER and Art 7.2. Both included or encouraged integrated approaches. In LEADER, community participation is fundamental, while Art. 7.2 stipulated housing interventions should be accompanied by integrated social actions for the beneficiary communities.

The findings were overall quite critical. The case studies indicated that few Roma communities had benefited from LEADER. Moreover, even in LEADER areas where Roma were included in the Local Development Strategies, there was mostly no real participation of the community in strategy planning or implementation. The housing interventions studies showed a more mixed picture - while some had failed to materialize at all (as in Varna, Bulgaria), others (in Hungary and France) were more promising: here too, however, participation (or even consultation) of the beneficiaries was limited. In addition, the case studies showed that to develop 'integrated approaches' that really integrate still remains a huge challenge.

The outcomes of the case studies are synthesised in the report "Integrated Approaches for Roma Integration Evidence from the ground", which was presented in December 2014 and is available on our website.

What role for Roma in CLLD?

Community participation is a key aspect of ERGO Network's philosophy: Roma integration is not just about guaranteeing equal access to services, it is about being able to participate in society as equal citizens. Community Led Local Development (CLLD) offers a framework to enable Roma to participate in local level strategies as equal partners.

In 2014, ERGO Network has supported its members to become involved in the CLLD process in their countries: first to understand the approach and identify key actors in the process at national level, where EU guidelines are translated into operational manuals for Local Action

Groups. Secondly, by connecting to local groups that can become active in those Local Groups and seeing what kind of support they need to ensure their voices are heard there.

To organise community participation is challenging, though, also for local authorities – who may not have strong traditions in participatory strategy planning and who often think involving Roma is not possible. Part of our work was therefore, finally, targeted at them: ERGO Network developed a training framework for Managing Authorities and local actors that shows them the way when they want to connect to Roma communities.

CSRs from the Roma perspective

Within its work programme in 2014, ERGO Network also worked for the first time in the frame of the European Semester focusing in particular on the 5 countries which had Country-Specific Recommendations (CSRs) explicitly mentioning Roma: Bulgaria, Romania, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. All recommendations were either related to inclusive education and early childhood care or to employment and the integration of Roma in the labour market.

ERGO Network supported its member organisations in understanding the European Semester process, analysing the National Reform Programmes and Staff Working Documents and disseminate the results of their analysis at European level. The analysis revealed a poor involvement of Roma NGOs in the consultation process, a lack of visibility for the Roma-specific CSRs and weak measures proposed to improve the situation.

ROMAREACT

The RomaReact.org online platform functions as a hub attracting activists and supporters into the debate on Roma active citizenship. In 2014, it served mainly to foster cooperation between Young Roma Civic Advocates (YRCA) and reaching out to an international audience: Roma and non-Roma activists and the general public. YRCA contributed to the platform and increased its outreach also thanks to their further distribution of the articles over their networks.

The RomaReact.org page NEWS was visited in 2014 by 14.680 users out of it was 12.483 unique users, the RomaReact Facebook fan page had 1.628 likes. The highest reach out on Facebook has been in May around RomaniResistance day (6.369) and around the Wall Free Europe campaign in November 2014. There were 122 news articles on RomaReact.org for 2014, each with an average of 52 likes, in total visitors on RomaReact.org clicked 6.347 "like" button. There were also 159 new reports on the map for 2014.

Young Roma Civic Advocates

Young Roma Civic Advocates (YRCA) started in 2014 as a follow up of a successful project Young Roma Civic Advocates. Young Roma in the project were enabled to participate in a mixture of low-threshold advocacy events where the Roma themselves take the initiative and ownership. The youngsters learned about core values like intercultural dialogue, tolerance and mutual understanding between Roma and non-Roma. They formulated concrete advocacy plans based on local test cases. This increased their awareness of the impact of EU policies and created dialogue with relevant institutions. In Bulgaria and Slovakia, many youngsters have been using the opportunity to meet together around the YRCAs and talk about important issues. In Bulgaria the analysis of media on anti-Gypsyism took place and had an enormous impact on the youth organizations. It was a successful issue-oriented advocacy action. In Slovakia, youngsters had for a first time an opportunity to discuss their ideas

Local dimension of Young Roma Civic Advocates

The Roma and non-Roma participants of events and meetings organised at local level become more aware of the need for active Roma citizenship and the core EU values. At advocacy meetings, policy makers and politicians were present, and thus dialogue with them and YRCA was created and fostered. The European dimension of the project is going to continue with the youngsters in the form of the Wall Free Europe campaign, campaign that youngsters developed together with ERGO Network and some of its activities are now supported by the Open Society Foundations.

Training through practice

The Young Roma Civic Advocates (YRCA) took a leading role in the local, national and EU advocacy on active Roma citizenship. They acquired civic competences and became empowered to identify interesting issues, wrote quality narratives and disseminated them through the appropriate channels like social media, public media and online debates to reach out to the larger public -both Roma and non-Roma. They now understand better the EU policy landscape, they established dialogue with different EU and MS level institutions and are able to translate that to member state level.

profiles YRCA

Diesel from Roma Onlus, organised national meeting in Rome to organize Roma youth in Italy. At the youth seminar they drafted a letter to the Italian government to enhance the participation of Roma youth in Roma and Sinti inclusion projects.

Ivanka from Konexe in the Czech Republic organised a seminar with the Roma survivors of the holocaust to raise awareness about the pig farm in Lety u Pisku in the framework of the Roma pride campaign which is also a celebration of Roma diversity.

Vedrana from Amadro Drom in Berlin organised workshops throughout Germany with lively debates on empowerment of young Roma women, the fight against anti-Gypsyism through theatre, music and mass media, celebrated April 8, international Roma day, and organized a flash mob at the Herdelezi festival.

Many of YRCA continue to work in the field after the project finished. Some, like in the Spanish organization, have become a full time employee, while others, like the Czech organisation Konexe, continued to develop the activist trajectory. Importantly, the members of the international group are still keeping in contact and developing common reactions to the happenings in Europe. Moreover, each participant in the project has created strong ties with the national and local level and has organized many debates in public and has been engaged in their local issues.

Zooming on YRCA

YRCA seminars led by Ana from FSG in Spain focused on challenging anti-Gypsyism and the public image of Roma. They coached participants on addressing discrimination in public places, use of social media in tackling discrimination. They also discussed equality issues between Roma men and women in Spain.

Virgil from Integro Bulgaria organised a series of Roma Café events across Bulgaria. Anti-Gypsyism in the mass media has become the major focus. They involved mayors in their discussions to practically change issues coming up. An exciting photo journalism training was held in Varna and Razgrad. On April 8 the US Embassy hosted a photo exhibition.

Ilvia, the Albanian YRCA ran a series of workshops focusing on racism, anti-Gypsyism, minority rights on May 16 to highlight the Romani Resistance day but also on 9 November, the international day against fascism and anti-Semitism.

Wall free Europe campaign

Wall Free Europe is an awareness-raising and advocacy campaign which aims at ending Roma apartheid in Europe. It is run by a partnership of civil society organisations from 4 countries. The campaign was centred around the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November, 2014. This is considered a symbolic date that sparked a new, enlarged Europe based on fundamental European values: democracy, human rights and social inclusion. Since the fall of the Berlin wall, new walls have been erected in Europe to segregate Roma citizens. Mental walls in people's mind also constitute invisible but strong barriers to integration and active citizenship of Roma people and social inclusion.

The Wall Free Europe campaign was kicked off on 4 April 2014, around the EU Roma Summit. Young Roma Civic Advocates supported the campaign by organizing a flash-mob in the city, "some-eat" breakfast and a photo wall inside the Summit venue. An exhibition of photographs from the Hungarian village Bodvalenke was set-up on Albert Square in front of the Summit venue in the center of Brussels.

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November 5, Terry Reintke, Member of the European Parliament (European Green Party) opened the "Wall Free Europe" photo exhibition organised by ERGO Network on the Esplanade of the European Parliament. Exhibition shows the physical walls built in Europe after the opening of the Berlin Wall that segregate Roma citizens from their non-Roma neighbours is presented alongside with the mental walls visualising how stereotypes and prejudices in people's minds become walls of discrimination and exclusion towards Roma. Terry Reintke supported the campaign and said that „Europe cannot accept this type of walls and it's time to turn down the mental walls in our minds“.

“Me, My wall, Our Future”

On the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of Berlin Wall fall, ERGO network and RomaReact.org opened the contest “Me, My wall, Our Future” with the aim of highlighting the voices of young Roma, to map the mental and physical walls that have been built in Europe to segregate Roma Citizens and to

show a possible way to build a better future. The contest targeted young Roma in order to share their stories, their walls and their ideas for a better world and let everyone see – through their own eyes – who the Roma are and help fight anti-Roma prejudice and discrimination.

Financial Paragraph

This paragraph provides a summary from ERGO Network's Annual Report 2014, namely the Balance Sheet and the Profit and Loss Account, and Auditor's Report as well as donations received in 2014, which has been issued by Blömer accountants en advisers B.V.



SUMMARY BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2013 (IN EUROS)

ASSETS	31 December 2013	PROFIT AND LOSS	2013
FIXED ASSETS (Equipment)	1.731,90	INCOME	
RECEIVABLES (Clients and donors)	153.570,46	Net sales	273.257,53
CASH AND SHORT TERM DEPOSITS	181.113,73	Other revenues	1.352,80
DEFERRED CHARGES	1.500,00	TOTAL Operating revenues	274.610,33
TOTAL ASSETS	337.916,09	Exceptional revenues	1.501,49
		Financial income	2.523,50
		TOTAL INCOME	278.635,32
		EXPENDITURE	
LIABILITIES	31 December 2013	Staff	(130.178,27)
EQUITY (Reserves)	210.721,82	Other operating costs	-180.395,62
RESULT 2013	(42.364,00)	Depreciation	-1.642,93
		TOTAL Operating Expenditure	-312.216,82
SHORT TERM LIABILITIES		Other exceptional costs	-8.455,54
CREDITORS	12.123,36	Financial charges	-326,96
TAXES AND SOCIAL SECURITY PREMIUMS	5.847,33	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	(320.999,32)
ACCRUED CHARGES	1.654,88		
DEFERRED INCOME	149.932,70	FINAL RESULT 2013	-42.364,00
TOTAL LIABILITIES	337.916,09		

Donation awarded in 2014

ERGO Network has received support for our operating costs from the European Commission DG EMPL, Open Society Foundations and Bernard van Leer, for the Young Roma Civic Advocates from EACEA (The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency) under the program "Europe for Citizens" and Amnesty International, as well as contribution from Open Society Foundations for the Wall Free Europe Campaign.

Donors and supporters in 2013



Auditor's report

In accordance with your instructions we have compiled the financial statements included in this report 2014 of Stichting ERGO Network, Utrecht, which comprise the balance sheet as at 31 December 2014, the statement of income and expenses for the year then ended and the notes.

Management's responsibility

The distinctive feature of a compilation engagement is that we compile financial information based on information provided by the board of directors of the entity. The board of directors is responsible for the accuracy and completeness of the information provided and the financial statements based thereon.

Accountant's responsibility

Our responsibility as accountant is to perform our engagement in accordance with Dutch Law, including the professional and ethical requirements applying to accountants.

In accordance with the professional standard applicable to compilation engagements, our procedures were limited primarily to gathering, processing, classifying and summarizing financial information. Furthermore we have evaluated the appropriateness of the accounting policies which are used to compile the financial statements, based on the information provided by management. The nature of our procedures does not enable us to express any assurance on the true and fair view of the financial statements.

Confirmation

Based on the information provided to us, we have compiled the financial statements using the accounting policies as included in Guideline RJ 640: Not for profit organisations.

Blömer accountants en advisers B.V.
on its behalf,
Mr. drs. J.N. Witteveen RA
Krijtwal 1, 3430 AA Nieuwegein
The Netherlands