Investing in our future: What work(s) for young Roma?

Top 10 Best Practices of Roma Youth employment

European Roma Grassroots Organizations Network, 2017
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Executive summary

Together with its member organizations ERGO Network conducted research on employment of Roma youth in five EU countries: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. The aim of the research was to understand the causes of the low Roma youth employment rate and to inspire policy makers and practitioners to invest in employment opportunities for young Roma. The research used a mixed method approach – it combined desk research, field work and a questionnaire. This chapter specifically reflects on the results of the desk research. The aim of the desk research was to collect information on the different employment measures/projects/ programs/initiatives, which can be considered best or promising practices and which Roma youth are eligible for. The desk research resulted in 22 employment practices targeting Roma youth of which we selected the ten most promising.

We could observe several categories of actors involved in providing different types of support for Roma employment: Roma NGOs, mainstream NGOs, international institutions and organizations and furthermore the private and the public sector. Besides this, we could also notice that most of the measures support processes before entering the labour market, while others create self-employment opportunities or aim to integrate Roma in mainstream employment or support the improvement of employment opportunities, including promotion of autonomy and an empowering environment. There are also measures that support conditions for integrating work and career opportunities for young Roma and those that link education and training to employment. Another set of observations refers to different types of employment promoted by the measures. On the one hand, those with low levels of education are directed to settle in physically demanding jobs, whereas educated Roma are supported to get employed in public institutions or other types of desk jobs.

The selected best practices demonstrate that if enough investment is done, it can have successful results. Despite the fact that data shows a low percentage of Roma employment, there are employment measures that work for Roma. There is a need for different actors to come together and ensure that the right to a decent job becomes a reality for Roma. Some of the examples below are a proof for the EU member states that it is worth investing in good examples of employment measures targeting Roma. Not only institutions and decision-makers are targeted here; through these practices we also want to encourage young Roma to fight the barriers of antigypsyism in their search for a decent job. This is also a signal for EU institutions that measures targeting the employment of Roma youth should continue with dedicated funding in the Post 2020 EU Roma policy.
Background

Considering the multilevel governance approach in the European Union, on the one hand we have EU youth employment initiatives with no binding character on the Member States; however, they expressed their explicit commitment to enhancing youth employment. At the national level on the other hand, either through these EU initiatives or because of other national priorities, Member States put in place their own national strategies and measures for youth employment (e.g. National Employment Strategy 2014-2020). In theory, Roma youth should be eligible to benefit from these youth employment measures in their countries of residence, explicitly or not.

The Juncker Commission puts strong emphasis on ‘Jobs, Growth, Fairness and Democratic Change’ that resulted, for instance, in the Youth Employment Initiative. However, these measures have difficulties to address so-called hard-to-reach groups, including young Roma. Different actors responsible for implementing employment policies and measures, like employment offices, training consultancies and education centres, are not equipped to reach out to Roma and/or are affected by institutional racism and shortcomings. The lack of an ‘explicit but not exclusive’ approach for this mainstream policy or its inappropriate application leads to a mismatch between the needs of young Roma and opportunities that the services offer.

Youth unemployment is one of Europe’s big challenges. For young Roma, it is often a persistent struggle, enhanced through common aspects of Roma social exclusion, including substandard education and direct or indirect discrimination on the labour market. Equality of opportunities for young Roma would be fair and just, but also a smart economic choice: it would be an effective way to improve growth prospects and respond to the demographic challenge of rapidly ageing populations in EU Member States. Investing in young Roma can break the cycle of poverty, discrimination and exclusion. It can yield high returns and can deliver the kind of lasting change that many policies and programs have so far failed to achieve.

The European Commission midterm review of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies shows that despite growing national employment levels, changes in Roma employment levels are small or even negative. The rate of young Roma not in education, employment or training (NEET) has risen in almost all Member States with high Roma population. The EU-MIDIS II report finds that only one in four Roma aged 16 years or older reports ‘employed’ or ‘self-employed’ as their main activity. Roma women report much lower employment rates than Roma men – 16 % compared to 34 %, whereas 72 % of young Roma women belong to the NEET category, compared to 55 % of young Roma men. The paid work rate for Roma aged 20-64 is 30 %, which is well below the EU average of 70 % in 2015. The situation of young people is substantially worse: 63 % of Roma aged 16-24 were not employed, in education or training at the time of the survey, compared with the 12 % EU average on the NEET rate for the same age group.

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1 This is confirmed by the mid-term evaluation of DG Employment ‘Better engaging with non-registered NEETs and the low-skilled’, the EP Motion for a Resolution on the Assessment of the EU Youth Strategy 2013-2015 and the EUROFOUND report ‘Exploring the diversity of NEETs’.
2 COM (2017) 458
Research - Investing in our future: What work(s) for young Roma?

1. Context

In order to understand the underlying causes of the low Roma youth employment rate, but also to inspire practitioners and policy makers to invest in employment opportunities for young Roma, ERGO Network, in cooperation with its member and partner organisations, engaged in a fact-finding research in five EU countries: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia.

Considering the most likely characteristic for young people to get a job, it was agreed to focus on different profiles of young people given a certain level of education. The profiles of young people vary from disadvantaged youngsters living in remote rural areas to highly educated young Roma in capital cities. For each profile, the specific context of employment for Roma and good or promising practice examples of youth employment measures have been defined through desk-research. For each profile, a number of good practice examples was selected and then “reality-checked” with young people and professionals on the grassroots level through focus groups and interviews.

In addition to the desk and the field research, an online questionnaire has been developed to triangulate the fieldwork (more specifically the qualitative research done through the focus groups), but also to reach out to other Roma young people, who due to logistical practicalities (time resources, etc.) could not be interviewed and engaged directly in the research. This paper’s specific focus is on the results of the desk research, while the questionnaire results have been presented in ERGO’s publication “Investing in Roma Youth: What work(s) for young Roma? - Results from an online questionnaire”, whereas the field work (interviews and focus groups) has been presented in a final report combining all the research steps.

This research is an important component of a campaign that ERGO Network prepared to mobilize support for investing in employment opportunities for young Roma. The campaign was launched in November 2017 - at the ERGO Network Public Event, where the results of this research were presented for the first time, and at the EU Roma Platform 2017 through specific campaign activities centred on views and messages of young Roma themselves, explored and developed at the ERGO Summer Academy. The Academy took place in August 2017, and gathered a group of around 20 young Roma who spent six days of training and debate to explore one of the most challenging issues, namely the access to the labour market for Roma young people. The participants explored the issue from different angles and discussed what employment measures work for Roma youth.

2. Aims and objectives

In a nutshell, the aim of the research is to map barriers and opportunities for Roma youth employment, but also to explore useful and promising employment measures and practices for young Roma in different contexts, which can further inspire practitioners and policy makers to invest in or support employment opportunities for young Roma.

Considering the low employment rates among Roma in general, the aim of the desk research was to collect information on the different employment measures/projects/programs/initiatives (hereinafter measures), which can be considered best or promising practices and which Roma youth are eligible for, regardless of their level of education or residence. ERGO Network aimed to explore useful and promising employment measures and practices for young Roma and “reality-check” them
together with young people, employment offices and employers in order to give recommendations to policy makers on how to better invest in employment measures for young Roma. This document is the result of one of the research phases and it aims to present some of the best practices identified by the ERGO partner organisations.

3. Concepts

Why best/promising practices when we know most of the programs do not work?

Most of the programs targeting Roma do not work as intended! However, evidence-based policymaking uses the best available research and information on program results to guide decisions at all stages of the policy process and in each branch of government.

What do we mean by best practices?4

- Research Validated Best Practice: Program, activity or strategy that has the highest degree of proven effectiveness supported by objective and comprehensive research and evaluation.
- Field Tested Best Practice: A program, activity or strategy that has shown to work effectively and produce successful outcomes and is supported to some degree by subjective and objective data sources.
- Promising Practice: A program, activity or strategy that has worked within one organisation and shows promise during its early stages for becoming a best practice with long-term sustainable impact. A promising practice must have some objective basis for claiming effectiveness and must have the potential for replication among other organizations.

What do we mean by youth?

Current political definitions of “youth” by European countries and EU institutions comprise age groups of 18 to 30 or, in some cases, of 15 to 25. In our research we referred to youth as a wider category of people between 14 and 30 years old.

5. Methodology

The desk research has been conducted with the help of ERGO Network members from five countries:

A. Slovo21, Prague, Czech Republic (www.slovo21.cz)
B. Roma Advocacy and Research Centre, Skalica, Slovakia (https://romadata.org/)
C. Pro Cserehát Association, Budapest, Hungary (http://www.bffd.hu/)
D. Autonomia Foundation, Budapest, Hungary (www.autonomia.hu)
E. Nevo Parudimos, Romania - Reșița, Romania (www.nevoparudimos.ro)
F. Associatia CRIS, Prahova, Romania (http://www.asociatiacris.ro/)
G. Integro Association, Razgrad, Bulgaria (http://integrobg.org/)

4 Source: https://www.acf.hhs.gov/
Desk research guidelines have been developed and distributed among the ERGO Network members at the end of April 2017. The main idea was to shape the desk-research based on a number of profiles, which would cover a variety of Roma youth based on their level of education and geographical area, varying from disadvantaged young people living in remote rural areas to highly educated young Roma in capital cities. The identified profiles are the following:

a. Primary school grade or lower, rural area
b. Primary school grade or lower, segregated, urban
c. Primary school grade or lower, urban
d. Secondary education, semi-rural
e. University, rural
f. University, urban

For each profile, the specific context of employment for Roma (labour market characteristics, socio-economic situation, etc.) and good practice examples of youth employment measures were defined through desk research. The provided guidelines to the partner organizations centred around a common set of questions focusing on aspects such as the responsible institution/organisation for implementing a measure, source of financing, partners, the profile of young people it covers, the type of employment it aims to enhance, the target group (e.g. age, female/male ratio, geographical location, etc.), and the eligibility criteria for being part of it. A second set of questions focused on the aims and goals of the measure and its intended outcomes, but also on what it consists of (e.g. job shadowing, job application writing), its components or phases, and its duration. Most importantly, we focused on the extent to which the agreed indicators/targets have been achieved and on the perception of the users/beneficiaries of the measure.
Top 10 best practices of Roma youth employment

By the end of June 2017, all desk researches have been completed, resulting in 22 Roma employment practices (see Appendix 1). Based on the pool of identified practices, we could observe the following categories of actors involved in providing different types of support for Roma employment:

Besides this, we could also notice that most of the measures:

1. Are support processes before entering the labour market: training, certified qualifications, professional counselling, labour mediation, etc.
2. Create self-employment opportunities: facilitating the access to employment, continuous professional mentoring etc.
3. Aim to integrate Roma in mainstream employment (not only low paid jobs).
4. Support the improvement of employment opportunities, including promotion of autonomy and an environment that is empowering.
5. Support conditions for integrating work and career opportunities for young Roma.
6. Link education and training to employment.
The Roma Police Fellowship Programme (RPFP) aims to support Roma young people in their secondary education to become police officers.

The program started in 1996 in the Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County, located in the underdeveloped North-Eastern region of Hungary, with the original aim to help the social advancement and integration of young Roma. The secondary purpose of the program was to reduce the increasing labour shortage at the police.

In the past 20 years, the RPFP became a nationwide programme; however, even today the originator Borsod County achieves the best results by concluding several scholarship contracts every year.

The applicants must have Hungarian citizenship and residence, at least medium level of learning performance, a clean judicial record, settled family circumstances, a good physical and health status and they have to provide a written declaration stating their Roma origin. Last but not least, the applicants have to declare their intention to complete their secondary education and to take the entrance exam to a Police Vocational Training School with the intention of completing it and afterwards engage in permanent employment at the Police (for at least 2 years).

Taking the advantage of the RPFP scholarship programme, the Borsod Police headquarters as the most successful user of the scheme has concluded about 60 scholarship agreements to date.

This year four of the scholarship holders started the Police Vocational Training School following a successful entrance examination. Beyond a safe future and safe permanent employment, the job may mean and symbolize much more for young Roma. As probably the highest-ranking Roma police officer argues:

“Being a policeman presents a viable career path: You have job security, health insurance, and the ability to obtain a loan to buy a house — all things that are out of reach for most Roma. In addition, it has a symbolic power - for a Hungarian citizen to see a Roma patrolling or responding to a crime, it sends a powerful message.”

The issue of promoting Roma young people to become police officers in general seems to be kept high on the agenda of the Police. Besides the discussed RPFP scholarship programme there are a number of other supporting programmes financed from different resources, among them also a scheme targeted to young Roma women.

Annual conferences on the topic invite all relevant stakeholders to discuss problems and share best practices. The programme is also supported by a special body called Fraternal Association of European Roma Law Enforcement Officers and by a Hungarian NGO called National Association of Roma Police Officers.

As a result of the different targeted supporting measures, some hundreds of Roma are estimated to be among the Police ranks. In Borsod County their ratio is estimated at around 9-10%, similar to the estimated 9 % size of Roma minority in this area.

**County Police Headquarter**

Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County

Hungary
The Pro Ratatouille Garden Programme (PRGP) is designed and implemented by the Association Butterfly Development (Pro Cserehát Association) in a small district of Borsod County town centre. It is a community-based organic agricultural programme for disadvantaged Roma and non-Roma, which aims to disseminate sustainable development models among small settlements. This type of community-based agriculture helps the development of community awareness, decreases unemployment, fights malnourishment and introduces a healthy and sustainable lifestyle.

The program started in 2012, and as of 2017 it was running in four villages in the region and in further two settlements in Pest County. In practice, the village programmes include adult education as well as employment, nutritional and community building activities. The programme was developed in the spirit of agro-based social business. This approach emphasizes the importance of agriculture-based rural development, fair distribution of the goods produced, community based innovation and business development.

The participants of the programme are disadvantaged individuals, regardless of ethnic identity, employment status, age and gender. Anyone who wishes to acquire the skills needed for organic vegetable production and who wants to support their families with healthy vegetables week after week can join the programme. Roma and non-Roma, unemployed or not, retired people, mothers with young children and youth are all represented.

The program can contribute to the direct livelihood of the participants and generates an income both to individuals and to communities. It provides bio-gardening skills and general social skills, e.g. cooperation, discipline, self-organisation, etc. The participants are empowered, strengthened and in addition they are grateful for the abundant healthy vegetables contributing to their subsistence.

As the programme has very good results and local recognition, Association Butterfly Development would like not only to maintain it, but also to expand it to more villages, and probably to other regions and countries. To be able to reach this, it is necessary to create an upscale action plan. The program meets the characteristics of problem-solving, cross-cutting approaches, and also complies with the Sustainable Development Goals; therefore it is very much suitable for dissemination at a larger scale, providing the necessary means.

**Butterfly Complex Development**
Pro Cserehát Association
www.bffd.hu
The aim of the project is the social integration of young people up to the age of 29, registered at the Local Labour Offices of the National Employment Agency through their inclusion in employment and by providing training for vocational qualification and key competences – foreign languages and digital competence.

The project started at the end of 2015 and will end in 2018. It is supported financially by the European Social Fund - Youth Employment Initiative, through the Operational Programme Human Resource Development. Some of the partners include the companies ET Grigor Kupandolsky–Grishasmil, Manov Construction, KOMOSS Ltd., and Chakarov – Davidkov Association.

The project aims to facilitate the transition from education to employment for unemployed youth who will get their first or a new chance to work, new or improved professional knowledge, skills acquired in the workplace, professional qualifications and key competences in foreign languages and digital competence (if necessary for the particular employer).

To achieve the objectives and results of the project, the following activities are implemented:

- Selecting young people to be included in subsidized employment, as well as in professional trainings or trainings for attaining key competences in foreign languages or digital competences.
- Conducting trainings for the acquisition of professional qualifications or key competencies.
- Selecting young people for inclusion in subsidized employment as well as for inclusion in vocational training.
- Informing and directly hiring young people who do not need any training and providing mentoring to those young people for a period of three months.
- Subsidized employment of people from the target groups in different departments of the participating companies for up to 6 months.

The project belongs to the intervention category called ‘sustainable integration into the labour market of young people, in particular those not in employment, education or training, including young people at risk of social exclusion and young people from marginalised communities, including through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee’.

National Employment Agency
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The aim of the project is to facilitate the access to the labour market and to avoid social exclusion and marginalization through training and intensive measures of personal development. The project consists of counselling services, vocational training and business support.

The target group for this project were 100 vulnerable Roma, 100 young people with disabilities, 100 youngsters above 18 years old who left the institutionalized system of child protection, 175 people employed in the local public administration and 300 women from the West Region (4 counties) and Bucharest.

The main project activities were:
- Accreditation of professional training courses in cleaning and health care for elderly people
- Delivery of the courses according to the target groups’ needs
- Financial support to business stakeholders in order to employ the project's beneficiaries.

Generally speaking, the project aimed to enhance the long-term basic employment of the target group in fields such as services, mainly health and cleaning. During the project's activities the employers involved were awarded incentives through subsidies.

In total, a number of 775 people have been trained and counselled, from which 600 have been requalified and employed.

The project was financed by the European Social Funds in Romania for a period of 18 months (POSDRU 165/6.2./S/143143 from 29.04.2014). The Romanian Business/Patronate of Bucharest was one of the partners.

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The Association of Young Roma has been operating since 1999. Since 2004, its members have been involved in social entrepreneurship and regional development. In 2008, the association established the Horehronie Multifunctional Center in a former school building as a community laundry - a social enterprise in the village of Valaská, near Podbrezova.

The project was supported by the Programme of Active Citizenship and Inclusion, Ekopolis Foundation, Foundation for Children of Slovakia, and EEA Grants.

The word social enterprise is perceived rather negatively in Slovakia due to various causes. It is important, however, that this type of business with a social focus is supported by the state, as in this way the state can develop more systematic activities in economically weaker regions with high unemployment.

Head of Young Roma Association

The 20-room multifunctional centre employs 24 people, including some with disabilities. Some are employed on a permanent basis. Employees are people from the community, Roma and non-Roma, or people who are unable to find a job.

The project aims to give a chance to disadvantaged, long-term unemployed people to get a temporary job. It generally targets Roma from the Banská Bystrica region, even though the company is based in Valaska. Among the potential candidates are also young people who could not find a job after their studies because of being Roma.

They were selected in cooperation with the Unemployment Office in Brezno.

The beneficiaries of this measure receive training on how to use washing machines, how to put together laundry and other important things related to the job and then have a safety training at work. Besides these, there are also activities that focus on training and education in general and community development activities.

The participants in the project are paid for a period of only 6 months; however, after these 6 months, the company is able to pay some of them a normal salary, because the project became a social enterprise.

This project creates employment opportunities for disadvantaged long-term unemployed people with low-level education.

Some of the people who were involved in the measure are still working for the company while others found other jobs. The beneficiaries of the project are satisfied, thankful, and became financially independent. One of the most important aspects of the project is that it is a chance for disadvantaged, long-term unemployed people to get a temporary job.

In 2016, the Horehronie Multifunctional Center from the Slovak Impact Hub was awarded the Best Social Business Award.

Young Roma Association
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Slovensko, EU
Equality of opportunity - U.S. Steel Košice, Slovakia

This project with the goal of decreasing the unemployment rate in the Roma community has been running since 2002. First the company offered job opportunities for the Veľká Ida inhabitants. At present, the Košice city districts Lunik IX and Šaca are also part of this project.

(Source: http://www.usske.sk)

The project participants are employees of the municipalities and work on temporary assignments under an agreement with U. S. Steel Košice. Usually they target unemployed Roma with elementary education and low skills as well as young Roma between 18-30. The selection process for this project is based on personal knowledge of the applicants by the local mayors, community and social workers. Project participants carry out work appropriate to the level of their qualifications.

The project is fully supported by the U.S. Steel with its corporate social responsibility approach. Partners in this initiative are districts of Košice and small municipalities close to Košice, the Salesians Parish and other community centres from target localities.

U. S. Steel Košice also supports primary education. The company works with primary schools in the places of residence of the project participants and with the Salesians Parish where they award the most active pupils in learning, extracurricular activities and regular attendance through an elaborate motivation system.

The project tackles a real local problem. It reduces the high unemployment rate, improves the economic situation and living standards of people living in generational poverty, and enables a smoother integration of Roma and their children into society.

- People who have been long-term unemployed gain a regular income and can ensure better housing and living conditions for their families
- Programme participants better understand the value of education for their children through the activities of their employer targeting primary education.
- Multiple corporate activities support learning and education of the project’s participants and their children.
- Children of employees are motivated and encouraged to get an education, which in turn gives them a higher chance of success on the labor market.

So far, the participants are very satisfied; they appreciate the possibility of getting additional benefits from the company, e.g. wages paid in advance, rewards, etc. One of the merits of this project is that people who have been long-term unemployed can now gain a regular income and can ensure better housing and living conditions for their families, and they also have a better understanding on the value of education for their children.

U.S. Steel Košice
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The Bridge to Business Programme connects the labour market of the private sector with educated young Roma from Bulgaria and Hungary who seek quality jobs in a fair environment. It facilitates the access of young Roma (18-35) with at least high school education and a successful matriculation exam to high qualified jobs in the private sector, which correspond to their education and qualification.

The Programme is part of the project Bridging young Roma and Business – Intervention for Inclusion of Roma Youth through Employment in the Private Sector in Bulgaria and Hungary. The project is supported by the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation ("EaSI") 2014-2020. The project is carried out by the Open Society Institute Sofia in cooperation with Autonomia Foundation (Hungary) and the Central European University (Hungary).

An important component of the programme is the prevention of school drop-outs for secondary education students. The programme offers mentor assistance for students in the last two years of education. It provides additional activities to ensure the successful passing of the final exams, as well as organises motivational public events, meetings with representatives of business organisations, meetings with representatives of universities, meetings with successful representatives of the Roma community, etc.

The programme works in close cooperation with representatives of the private sector who are interested in employing educated and qualified young people regardless of their ethnic origin.

The initiative aims to cover at least 150 young people of different regions of the country and to provide them with an integrated and customized service. The main goal of the programme is to ease the access of young Roma to positions in the private business sector that fit their education and qualification.

The Bridge to Business Programme consists of four main parts:
1. Career orientation;
2. Facilitating contact with employers that have expressed interest in the initiative;
3. Various types of training, depending on the needs of the participants;
4. Mentoring during employment.

Even though the programme is in its early stages, so far it shows the promise of becoming a best practice with a long-term sustainable impact. This is due to the individual needs based approach of the project, but also to the range of private actors interested in enhancing their social responsibility.

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The main objective of the project was the empowerment of vulnerable groups of Roma, or more broadly people at risk of poverty willing to develop a business.

Vulnerable people are not offered enough opportunities to actively get involved in the economic and social life of their community. Due to their high degree of poverty and low educational level, they are considered to be at the margins of society. Therefore, the Mozaic project proposed a set of interventions that contributed to improving the living conditions of vulnerable groups from Filipestii de Targ and Varbilau in Prahova County, Belciugatele in Calarasi County and Cilbia in Buzau County.

The project is part of the Local Development Plans of two municipalities from Filipestii de Targ and Varbilau and is financed through the Norway Grants.

On the one hand, the project aimed to include the Roma voice, needs and interests into the local action plans. As such, the access to goods and services in the community was made available through introducing the specific needs of the Roma communities into the local development strategies; needs that have been identified in the local action plans developed in a participative manner. On the other hand, the project aimed to support the local economy through training and consultancy for local citizens interested in generating income for their area.

The project was implemented for a period of three years in which the partners identified and recruited potential Roma entrepreneurs. Then, in a second phase, vocational training was provided on how to develop a business plan, what is entrepreneurship and specific legislation in this domain.

The next phase was the development of a community organisation that functions as a social enterprise. Once everything was set up, the participants filled a funding request and then implemented their social entrepreneurship initiative.

The local community received support in developing income generating activities based on the efficient use of existing resources and on coaching for drafting funding requests, depending on the specific needs that have been identified at local level.

Thus, 12 persons were trained in public participation and community development techniques, 30 people attended life skills development courses and entrepreneurship training, and 4 social entrepreneurship initiatives were founded in four different localities. They work in the field of agriculture and are led by Roma and non-Roma.

**Pestalozzi Foundation**

Tepes Voda, 22,
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Integrom Program - Autonomia Foundation, Hungary

The project aims at developing a new model to facilitate Roma employment in the private sector. The Boston Consulting Group in cooperation with Autonomia Foundation and several large companies in Hungary initiated the programme.

The programme pilots a new approach for Roma integration through promoting employment in the mainstream business sector. The main idea of the programme is to facilitate access of Roma to non-physical jobs in market-leading companies that represent higher level employment opportunities. It is largely implemented through coordinated Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities of various actors – large firms, training and assessment companies, consultancy companies and NGOs.

It targets young educated Roma aged 18-35 with secondary or higher education who are unemployed or overqualified for their current job. In 2014, the programme trained 60 participants, out of which 15-20 were subsequently employed at partner firms.

The project assists the recruitment and employment process by:
- identifying relevant positions at the participating companies;
- adjusting various company procedures to make open positions accessible for Roma (sensitive recruitment, affirmative action, etc.);
- recruiting and screening potential Roma employees;
- preparing candidates for the recruitment process;
- assisting employers in creating an inclusive environment, helping new employees to integrate into the company environment, minimizing drop-outs;
- facilitate partners networking.

So far, the pilot phase involved:
- Five market-leading companies enrolled as employers
- 20 Roma assisted in finding employment in these companies
- Methodology and model for Roma integration through promoting employment in the mainstream business sector tried and distilled
- Cooperation between 10-15 various organisations (employer companies, training, recruitment and consultancy firms, NGOs and Roma colleges) established
- New CSR strategies developed or strengthened that have tangible impact on Roma integration.

Integrom program has been managed by Boston Consulting and Autonomia Foundation; since 2017 it is managed by Boston Consulting. Autonomia Foundation has redefined the concept and started a new project called HRom.

(Source Facebook: Integrom Program - Nagyvállalati munkalehetőség romáknak)

Integrom Program
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The project aimed to contribute towards improving the integration of vulnerable, inactive and discouraged individuals on the labour market by improving their competitiveness and creating conditions for permanent employment.

Generally speaking, it consisted of key competence training and subsidized employment.

The project was part of the OP HRD strategy of Bulgaria and was supported by the Operational Programme "Human Resource Development", MC Priority 1 "Encouraging economic activity and development of the labor market towards inclusion” and has as partners the Probuda 1961 Community Center and LARGO Association.

During its three years of implementation, the project aimed to:
- Provide intermediary services to vulnerable, inactive and discouraged individuals in order to register them in the Labor Bureau of Kyustendil and including them in programmes for training and employment,
- Provide individuals with new qualifications through participation in professional trainings for the public administration profession,
- Provide internships to individuals that have successfully completed the professional training.

At the end of the project 30 people have successfully completed professional training for the public administration profession, and 24 people have practiced in the profession through internships.
Conclusions

Based on the pool of identified practices, we could observe several categories of actors involved in providing different types of support for Roma employment. There are Roma NGOs providing assistance to Roma youth, there are mainstream NGOs, international institutions and organisations but also the private sector and the public sector.

Types of support measure:
- We could notice that most of the measures are support processes before entering the labour market: training, certified qualifications, professional counselling, labour mediation, etc.
- Others create self-employment opportunities: facilitating the access to employment, continuous professional training, mentoring etc.
- Some others aim to integrate Roma in mainstream employment (not only low paid jobs) and
- Support the improvement of employment opportunities, including promotion of autonomy and an environment that is empowering.
- Last but not least, there are measures that support conditions for integrating work and career opportunities for young Roma, but also to link education and training to employment.

Another set of observations refer to the different types of employment the measures promote. On the one hand, those with low level of education are encouraged to settle in physical jobs (mainly construction, services), whereas educated Roma are supported to get employed in public institutions and professional jobs.

The current document has aimed to provide an insight into promising or best practices in the field of Roma youth employment and inspire further investment in Roma youth employment. These practices show that if enough investment is done, it can yield successful results. Despite the low percentages of Roma employment, there are employment measures that work for Roma.

It is worth mentioning the role of the partners in such measures, mainly employers (private sector) but also public institutions and NGOs and their impact on the success of such measures. There is a need for different actors to come together and ensure that the right to decent work becomes a reality for young Roma. The examples above are a proof for national governments that it is worth investing in good examples of employment measures targeting Roma. This is also a signal for EU institutions that measures targeting the employment of Roma youth should continue with dedicated funding in the Post 2020 EU Roma policy.
Appendix

Best Practices Collection (Name of the practice, responsible organization, country)

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<tr>
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<th>Responsible Organization</th>
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<td>The Association of Young Roma</td>
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INFORMATION AND CONTACT

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ERGO Network

The European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network (ERGO) is a network of Roma and pro-Roma NGOs across Europe and advocates for better policies for Roma in Europe, combats antigypsyism and empowers Roma activists.

www.ergonetwork.org

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