

REPORT

Sharing experiences from the Study Tour - Award for Roma Integration Information event

April 20th 2015, hotel TCC Grand Plaza, Skopje

CONTENTS:

1. Introduction
2. Report from session on experiences, usefulness and follow-up open topics from the Study Tour – Award for Roma Integration
3. Report from session on opportunities for support to Civil Society Organisations
4. Information and media coverage
5. Recommendations for the future

Annex A: Agenda

Annex B: Participants List

Annex C: Presentations

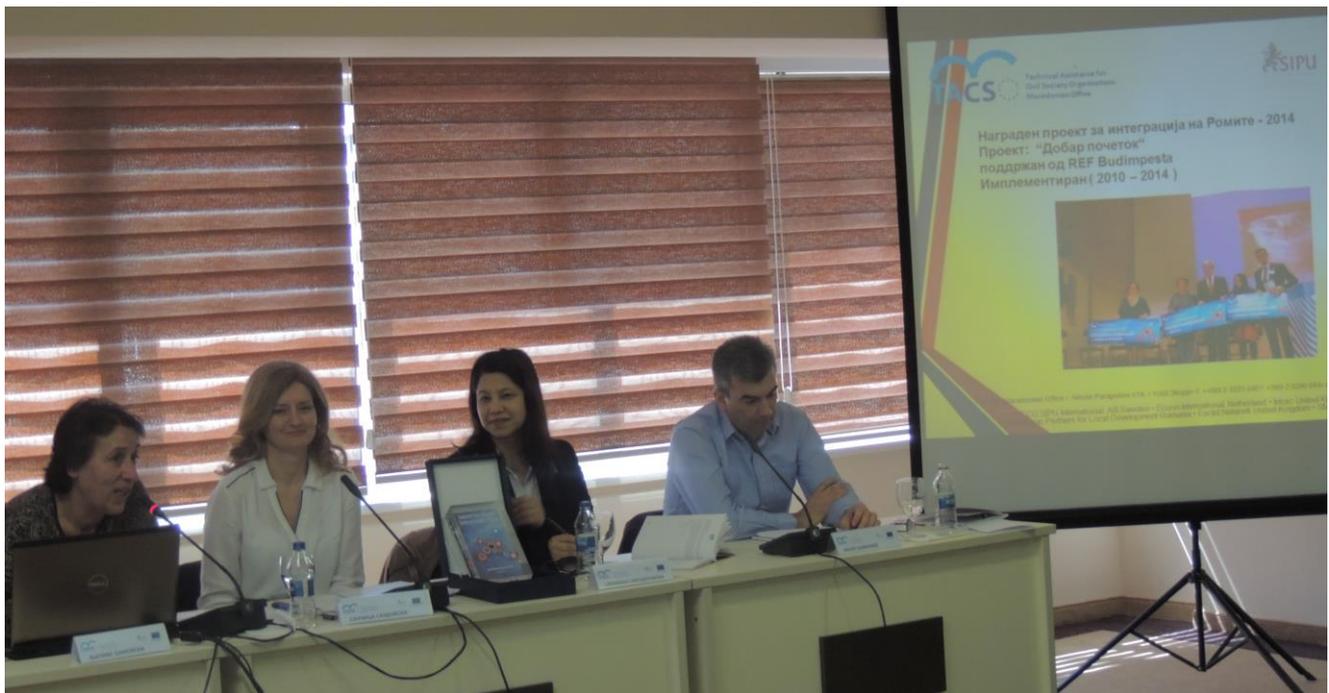
1. Introduction

The objective of this information event was to share the experiences from the “Study Tour – Award for Roma Integration” part of the “People to People” component of the TASCOS project. The study tour was conducted from 29th September to 1st October 2014 in Brussels. During the Study Tour the “Award for Roma Integration 2014” was awarded to organisations working on the Roma integration issue in Western Balkans and Turkey. Twenty one organisations were shortlisted for the Award and seven of them were winners. Among the winners was the Center for Integration "Ambrella" from Macedonia, for its project "A Good Start", supported by REF Budapest and implemented in the period 2010-2014.

At the event, the study tour participants shared information, experiences and gained knowledge from the study tour. The event was a great opportunity for sharing experiences and presenting the road to success of the organisations whose projects were nominated for the “Award for Roma Integration”. In addition, the “Project Generation Facility (PGF)” was also presented at the event as one of the components of the “MtM-Making the most of EU funds for Roma” initiative. The participants were given information how potential EU-funded beneficiaries with projects for Roma benefit can receive the necessary consulting support. Also they were thoroughly introduced to the “People to People” component and its opportunities for the civil society organisations.

The Informative event resulted with increased participants’ interest, especially regarding the possibilities for support, but also for cooperation among themselves and gathering as much information as possible. Also some problems were mentioned, mostly located in the rural area, where the organisations working on Roma issues could intervene.

There were 39 participants, mainly CSOs’ representatives.



2. Report from the session on experiences, usefulness and follow-up open topics from the Study Tour – Award for Roma Integration

Sunchica Sazdovska, the TACSO Resident Advisor opened the session, welcomed the participants and briefly presented the TACSO project. Further on, she gave introductory information about the “Study Tour – Award for Roma Integration” held in Brussels and introduced the speakers: Ljatife Sikovska and Gordana Rodic, Center for Integration "Ambrela”, Sebihana Skenderovska, National Roma Centrum and Vasil Davaliev, Microcredit Foundation Horizonti.

Sebihana Skenderovska, Coordinator of the Health Program from National Roma Centrum, began with her presentation on international, EU institutions and organisations working on the Roma integration issue. First, she introduced National Roma Centrum a 10-year organisation targeting Roma people who are facing barriers in exercising their rights. Further on, she presented the project “From Increased Voice to the Improved Health Care Access” which was one of the nominees for the “Award for Roma Integration 2014”. The overall objective of this project is to promote equal access to reproductive health care for Roma women and economically vulnerable women in Macedonia, and it was conducted in 6 municipalities. Mainly Sebihana’s presentation was focused on the institutions and the organisations they met during the Study Tour and different experiences and knowledge they gained from it. The study visit participants learned in more depth about the work of the European Commission, in particular the Directorates dealing with Roma issues. DG Enlargement presented the Civil Society Facility and "the most frequent mistakes in budgeting and writing EU projects". Also they were introduced to the work of many international organisations such as: ERIO – European Roma Information Office, ERGO- European Roma Grassroots Organisation Network, European Center for Roma Rights, ENAR- European Network Against Racism, ERTF- European Roma and Travelers Forum. During the Study Tour, participants had the opportunity to visit the European Parliament. Sebihana pointed out the meeting with Soraya Post, Swedish Roma woman, member of the European Parliament as the most interesting part of the visit. Soraya shared her life story with the participants and her everyday fight for the Roma voice to be heard through civil society organisations. Besides the Parliament, they had opportunity to visit the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Open Society Foundation, FOJER regional integration centre where they exchanged experiences with the mediators who help people on issues such as education, health, employment and are financed by the state. Sebihana ended her presentation with the experiences from the Roma Dignity Centre.

Vasil Davaliev, Executive Director of the Microcredit Foundation Horizonti continued the session with his presentation on opportunities for networking, promotion of organisations and the importance of the open call "Award for Roma Integration". He began with a brief overview of the history of Horizonti, and from their mission he specifically underlined the following part: ensuring sustainable and continued access to financial services to economically active population with low income in Macedonia, mostly members of the socially excluded and marginalized groups. He also mentioned the services they offer: microcredits for small family businesses, individual farmers and microcredits for housing, as well as their country level coverage. In this part of the presentation, special emphasis was put on past results in servicing Roma population which is a target group covered from the very beginning with 35% participation in microcredit activities, and over 15.000 given micro credits. Vasil noted that 50% of the families living in the Municipality of Shuto Orizari have obtained at least one loan from Horizonti, and the rate of repeated customers is significantly higher than the rate of customers from the other communities. Horizonti has conducted trainings for Roma women in the area of strengthening business skills and financial education (for around 250 clients). The second part of the presentation was dedicated to the "Award for Roma Integration". Their project "Innovative Microfinance Services in Contribution to Self-employment, Integration and Social inclusion of Roma Women Entrepreneurs " was one of the three nominated projects from Macedonia. The main motivations for applying for the award were all the achievements for the past 15 years, especially those for the Roma population. Further on, Vasil explained the call format and gave information that 50% of the nominated projects were in the domain of education. Other nominated projects were in the domain of human rights, personal and health protection and self-employment. Vasil has evaluated the whole Study Tour as an excellent opportunity for promotion of the organisation to EU Institutions, organized on high and professional level, and the actual nomination is perceived as a great recognition of the work and contribution to social inclusion and integration of the Roma population. Finally, the biggest gains for Horizonti from this Study Tour were: the increased interest about the model of micro financing of Roma women for initial and existing small businesses by applicants from Kosovo and Turkey, and the invitation for Horizonti to be part of the EU documentary film for promotion of Roma rights from representative of the EU Commission.

The last presentation in this session was from the organisation winner of the "Award for Roma Integration 2014", **The Centre for Integration "Ambrela". Ljatife Shikovska together with Gordana Rodikj** presented the model of a successful initiative for Roma integration, the position and influence of civil society organisations. Ljatife started with a presentation on her organisation from its early beginnings calling the whole story: "From volunteerism and enthusiasm to the prestigious Award for Roma Integration". Ambrela is mostly active on local level in the Municipality of Shuto Orizari, and is focused on education, health and human rights. The ongoing projects and activities were presented, including the project "GLOW" Multiethnic Camp for Girls (13-17 years), supported by the American Embassy and Peace Corps. The Centre for Integration "Ambrela" won the "Award for Roma Integration 2014" with its project "A Good Start – Increased Participation in Early Childhood Development in Shuto Orizari". This project is supported by the REF Budapest and implemented in the period 2010-2014. A survey of 350 families was conducted within the project, and the obtained data were used for further activities. In addition, the following results were also mentioned: visits to 1500 families, 75 workshops with parents for awareness raising, ensuring kindergarten for 300 children, personal documentation for 1350 persons free of charge, 1232 immunized children who have never been vaccinated or were vaccinated irregularly. Also, within this project, a Library for toys was opened as a new approach, where children with their parents can rent toys for a certain period of time. The quality of toys is high, and their value is 6000 euros. There is an employee in the Library who is helping children to develop their motor skills while playing with toys. Ljatife said that the benefits from this award are great. She specifically noted the increased rating and visibility of the organisation as well as its recognition by target groups, institutions and donors. The cooperation with the nominated organisations from the Western Balkans continued after the Study Tour and Ambrela has already applied for a project with

one of them and will meet another one at the end of the month. At the end of the presentation they sent two key messages:

- Roma integration is possible only with mutual support of the state, the European Union and of course the society where Roma population live.

- They encourage all social, political, cultural and economic factors to give unreserved support to Roma integration because everyone benefits from that support, not only Roma people.

Gordana Rodikj addressed the following questions to all participants: What direction do Roma organisations take, and how to overcome the current status quo of their action?

She also invited everyone who knows Roma girls at the age of 13-17 years to encourage them to apply for the above mentioned project GLOW, multi-ethnic camp for girls, where, among other things, the girls will be able to improve their English.

In the discussion that followed, participants expressed satisfaction from the establishment of the Award for Roma Integration as a model for breaking down stereotypes and showing that Roma can also have successful stories. Participants showed concern that compared to the past when many Roma organisations have been active, today only few are successful. Some of them are professionalized, but there is a lack of activist organisations that rely on volunteers. The need for strengthening such organisations was emphasized. TACSO was asked to enable more representatives from these organisations to visit Brussels and to see how the large and successful organisations operate.

3. Report from session on opportunities for support of civil society organisations

The second session was opened by **Valentina Chicheva from the Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation** with her presentation: "Making the most of EU funds for Roma, Project Generation Facility (PGF)". MCIC is implementing this program in the country and the presentation was a good opportunity to inform attendees about the opportunities that are available to CSOs dealing with the Roma integration issue. Project Generation Facility (PGF) is one of the components of MtM- Making the most of EU funds for Roma. MtM is an initiative that aims to connect the goals of social inclusion of Roma with the EU developmental resources and aims to harmonize the obligations of governments to the needs of Roma communities. The main role of PGF is to help the potential beneficiaries of EU funds which do not have sufficient human and financial resources and experience in developing applications relevant to Roma communities. PGF is supported by the Open Society-Budapest and national partners for implementation of this project in Macedonia are Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation (MCIC) and Initiative for Social Change (InSoC). Valentina presented the PGF services and the enduring benefits of these services for CSOs that support or advocate Roma. Quantitative data on PRF achievements in Macedonia in the period from 12.2011-03.2015 were also presented. During this period, 162 project ideas were generated and 135 applications were submitted to EU and other donors. The number of approved applications is 28 and the total amount of generated funds is 2.507.351\$. Partners that implement this project in Macedonia should maintain a proportion of 1:8 costs versus generated funds, or their costs should be eight times smaller than the income generated from the approved applications. Most of the obtained projects are about employment, human rights, advocacy and education, and the largest number of beneficiaries of these funds are Roma women. Valentina informed that 3 municipalities (Shuto Orizari, Kumanovo and Debar) obtained support from this program. Two schools are built in Kumanovo and Debar, where besides Roma children there are also pupils from other ethnic groups. At the end, Valentina suggested everyone to visit the PGF website (www.prf.org.mk) for all the necessary information.

The presentation encouraged several questions. Participants asked about the support that Municipality of Shuto Orizari obtained from this program. It was clarified that in Shuto Orizari a strategy for local economic development (2014-2020) was developed which was adopted by the Council. There are two consultants located in this municipality who provide assistance in the application process. More details about the type of services that PGF offers were asked, along with the information whether online services are offered.

Valentina explained that the services offered consist of reviewing the idea in terms of a particular call, joint development and joint preparation of a specific application. The consultant is providing technical assistance in the preparation and giving advice on the relevance of the application. Also, after the application is approved and in case the organisation has no implementation capacities regarding the administrative or financial part, a request to MCIC office can be submitted for additional support.

At the end, **Sunchica Sazdovska, Resident Advisor of the project Technical Assistance to Civil Society Organisations (TACSO)**, gave her presentation on the People to People (P2P) component of the TACSO project. She noted that People to People component is an important element for achieving the main objective of TACSO “improving CSOs capacities and strengthening their role in the participatory democracy”. Since 2013, the TACSO project is responsible for this component. Specific objectives of this component are: introduction to EU institutions, EU key policies, legislation and programs and facilitating communication and networking with other national organisations and organisations from the region and EU, as well as encouraging partnership building. Sunchica informed about the target groups and the three types of activities under this component: single-benefit events, multi-beneficiary events for countries from Western Balkans and Turkey and semi-multi beneficiary events. In addition, she introduced the methodology, the approach for selection of topics and participants, location, number of participants, as well as the logistics and costs of implementation of these activities. She suggested following the calendar on TACSO’s web-site (www.tacso.org) where open calls are announced. At the end of her presentation, she informed in details about the next study tour on fundamental rights and anti-discrimination.

After the presentation, the participants asked for the mailing list to be sent to the participants on the informative event for their further mutual communication, collaboration and information. Representative from ecologists association was interested if any of the participating organisations were familiar with the Roma issues in rural areas and asked for more activities in Kratovo region for solving the existing issues. It was suggested organizing events where organisations can give their suggestions. It was clarified that the TACSO project frequently organises focus groups for identifying CSOs’ needs.

Participants continued discussing informally at the cocktail as well.

4. Information and media coverage

Invitation for participating in this event was posted on the TACSO’s web site and Facebook page. During the event, information and pictures were posted about the event on the TACSO Facebook page and those were seen by 2.429 Facebook users.

5. Recommendations for the future

Roma organisations are in a need for strengthening their organisational capacities and learning about good EU and international practices. The need for mutual informing, cooperation and networking was noted from the participants.

The approach of including study visit participants with specific follow-up tasks on national level was motivational for them and gave them recognition. Further on this approach was also beneficial for wider range of CSOs. Thus, it was recommended to continue with such practice.



Annexes

Annex A: Agenda

Sharing experiences from the Study Tour - Award for Roma Integration Information event

20th April 2015, hotel TCC Grand Plaza, Skopje

Agenda

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| 10:45 - 11:00 | Registration of the participants |
| 11:00 - 11:10 | Opening and Introduction
Sunchica Sazdovska, TACSO Resident Advisor |
| | Experiences, usefulness and follow-up open topics from the Study Tour – Award for Roma Integration |
| | International and EU institutions and organisations working on the Roma integration issue |
| 11:10 – 11:30 | Sebihana Skenderovska, National Roma Centrum
<i>Presentation and discussion</i> |
| | Opportunities for networking, promotion of organisations and the importance of the call "Award for Roma Integration" |
| 11:30 – 11:50 | Vasil Davaliev, Microcredit Foundation Horizonti
<i>Presentation and discussion</i> |
| | The model of a successful initiative for Roma integration and the position and influence of the CSOs |
| 11:50– 12:20 | Ljatife Sikovska and Gordana Rodikj, The Centre for Integration "Ambrela"
<i>Presentation and discussion</i> |
| | Coffee break |
| 12:20 – 12:40 | Opportunities for support of civil society organisations |
| | Making the most of EU funds for Roma, Project Generation Facility (PGF) |
| 12:40 – 13:00 | Valentina Chicheva – Macedonian Center for International Cooperation
<i>Presentation, questions and answers</i> |
| | People to People (P2P) component of the TACSO project |
| 13:00 – 13:15 | Sunchica Sazdovska, Resident Advisor of the project for Technical Assistance to the Civil Society organisations (TACSO)
<i>Presentation, questions and answers</i> |
| 13:15 – 13:30 | General discussion and conclusions |
| 13:30 – 14:00 | Cocktail |

Annex B: Participants List

Sharing experiences from the Study Tour - Award for Roma Integration Information event

20th April 2015, hotel TCC Grand Plaza, Skopje

	Name/surname	Organisation	City
1	Aleksandra Severkoska	Children's Embassy for all children in the world	Prilep
2	Asan Seferi	Akademia	Tetovo
3	Blagoj Panev	Marija Kiri	Tetovo
4	Blagorodna Shopova	National Council for Gender Equality	Veles
5	Borce Jovanoski	Association for assistance to social excluded people and risk groups Skorpion	Prilep
6	Vesna Garvanlieva-Andonova	Center for Economic Analysis	Skopje
7	Gabriela Dimovska	Center for Economic Analysis	Skopje
8	Goce Ilievski	GARD – Civic Association for Recreational Movement	Skopje
9	Elena Ristevska	Trade Union of the Agency for Food and Veterinary	Skopje
10	Irena Velkoska	Association for protection of children's rights	Skopje
11	Jovan Damjanoski	NGO "Prerodba"	Kicevo
12	Marija Chapragoska	Children's Embassy for all children in the world	Prilep
13	Merlina Redzepova	Ternipe MK Delcevo	Delcevo
14	Mirjana Trajkova	SOZM	Veles
15	Muhamed Mujovik	Foundation Tolerance	Skopje
16	Petar Stojanoski	Children's Embassy for all children in the world	Prilep
17	Romina Kajtazova	NGO KHAM Delcevo	Delcevo
18	Rubinco Arizankoski	Association for assistance to social excluded people and risk groups Skorpion	Prilep
19	Samir Bajrami	ATLAS FOUNDATION	Debar
20	Hasan Idrizi	Anglunipe	Tetovo
21	Vase Davaliev	Microcredit Foundation Horizonti	Skopje
22	Valentina Chicheva	Macedonian Center for International Cooperation	Skopje
23	Jasmina Chaushoska	Macedonian Center for International Cooperation	Skopje
24	Tatjana Minovska	Macedonian Center for International Cooperation	Skopje
25	Nikola Ivanovski	Together Macedonia	Bitola
26	Gordana Rodikj	Ambrela	Skopje
27	Verica Krzevska	InSoC	Skopje
28	Ljatife Shikovska	Ambrela	Skopje
29	Jeleanor Martinkovik	ZSR Skopje	Skopje
30	Ervin Redzepovski	National Roma Centrum - Kumanovo	Kumanovo
31	Ashmet Elezovski	National Roma Centrum - Kumanovo	Kumanovo
32	Sebihana Skenderoska	National Roma Centrum - Kumanovo	Kumanovo
33	Selma Idrizi	Secretariat for European Affairs	Tetovo
34	Nahida Zekirova	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy	Skopje

35	Atilan Etemi	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy	Skopje
36	Aneta Pechipajkovska	Youth Forum - Bitola	Bitola
37	Blashko Mitkovski	Eko-skop	Skopje
38	Ibadetka Cupeska	Roma Centre Sastipe	Berovo
39	Vasilka Jovanovska	Association for protection of children's rights – Day center for children on the street	Skopje
40	Suncica Sazdovska	TACSO	Skopje
41	Valentina Atanasovska	TACSO	Skopje