

# PARTNERS NEWSLETTER

PARTNERS BULGARIA FOUNDATION

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## Roma integration through the prism of the new EU Framework



On April 19, 2011 Partners Bulgaria Foundation organised a round table-discussion on the challenges and opportunities related to the development of effective EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies.

The event was organised within the framework of an initiative led by Partners for Democratic Change International to facilitate an open dialogue between non-government organisations and state and local authorities regarding specific dimensions of the issue at national level and recommendations, which could be addressed to experts at European level.

The goal of the round table was to provide a platform to discuss current challenges to Roma inclusion in Bulgaria; outline opportunities and concrete steps,

## “Go Lightly” – adolescents reduce their carbon footprint

The project mission to train children and adolescents on the issues of climate change and its impact at local, national and international level. The project also

ensuring effective implementation of the forthcoming national strategy and draw key messages, reflecting a comprehensive vision for ethnic integration. The event hosted representatives of government and non-government actors, among which the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues; Commission for Protection against Discrimination; Ministry of Labour and Social Policy; Ministry of Education, Youth and Science; Social Support Agency; Open Society Institute; Roma Education Fund; “Arete” Foundation; “Largo” Association; “Ethnotolerance” Association; Human Rights Project; academic representatives and others.

The discussion was opened by Dr. Daniela Kolarova, director of Partners Bulgaria Foundation, who presented the overall framework of the initiative taking place in five members of Partners for Democratic Change International (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia). After the introduction, MEP Iliyana Iotova presented the work of the European institutions towards developing the EU framework and commented on its priority areas.

The results from the round table held in Bulgaria together with the recommendations from the other participating countries will be presented to members of the European Platform for Roma Integration and Members of the European Parliament (in particular the Committees on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs and Employment and Social Affairs). The round table was organised with the support of Open Society Institute, Sofia.

encourages young people to rationalise the link between climate change, poverty and child rights. In the long-run, the project aims at helping adolescents assume an

active civic position related to the interconnectedness between climate change and environment protection, as well as regarding effective tackling of climate change.

**The project activities** include direct work with teachers and adolescents – currently in Bulgaria there are 33 participating schools in eight cities – Sofia, Plovdiv, Pazardzhik, Varna, Bourgas, Shoumen, Targovishte, Veliko Tarnovo and Vratsa. Our overall goal is to encompass more than 30 schools, a minimum of 30 teachers and more than 3 000 children between the ages of 14 and 18 years.

There is no formal requirement regarding the number of students from a given school, their school grade (9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades) or the academic profile of the teachers. We also encourage the participation of minority representatives. In the second and third years of the project, school can continue working with students who participated in previous years and they might also encourage the involvement of new students from the targeted age group.

Until now the project team reached many accomplishments:

§ **We developed and adapted seven modules** related to climate change, underlying causes and influence, how different countries are affected and what they could do to mitigate negative impacts, how local communities are affected by climate change and what it is to be an “active citizen”. These modules can be included as complementary resources to regular academic subjects or as extracurricular activities. Their format is flexible and depends on the specific profile and activities of a given school and the interest of teachers and students.

§ **An interactive web-based platform was launched**, which assists learning and exchange between teachers and young people from the different countries participating in the project. ([www.mtl-cec.org](http://www.mtl-cec.org))

§ **We conducted trainings for teachers on how to use and benefit from the modules**

§ **A Youth Climate Network was created** – one person from each city has been selected to attend Active Citizenship training and assist the organisation of a campaign at local level. As a result, the climate network carried out a public campaign “Save Today to Have

Tomorrow” with a focus on the importance of separate waste collection. As part of the campaign, 31 schools received special recycling bins and participated in a poster competition.



§ **We delivered desktop computers to schools within the project.**

§ **We launched a small grants scheme** – all 33 schools have the opportunity to apply for funding of campaign ideas under two types of mechanisms – small grants mechanism and active citizenship grant. The latter also requires the participation in an advocacy training and support to teachers and youth leaders to become “agents of change”. The first training of this kind was carried out on March 25-27, 2011.

Various climate change-related events in schools and local communities (including small projects, competitions, etc.) and support to policy development are some of the forthcoming project activities.

One of the main **advantages** of the project is its scope, which includes students who had no previous access to academic and training materials on climate change and how young people can contribute to reduce the negative effect of changing climate.

This is why, we believe that our project will help **enhance school curriculum and extracurricular education programmes** and allow teachers and students to **connect and share experience** with their counterparts in the UK, the Netherlands, Kenya, Malawi and Senegal. This experience will help **broaden their perception and understanding** and

provide them with **new ideas and view points** on the topic of climate change and how **young people and**

**schools can be actively involved.**

## Supporting children and adolescents with emotional and behavioural challenges



In January 2011 Partners Bulgaria Foundation launched the project **“Positive approaches to prevention of violence against children”**, aimed at elaborating a comprehensive model for support to children with emotional and behavioural challenges and establishing a safe environment for their development. The current project is a continuation to a previous three-year initiative to address adequately the need of this specific group of children.

In the period 2007–2010 the team of PBF developed and introduced a comprehensive methodology for work with children with challenging behaviour (from 3 to 12 years of age) and trained specialists from the Municipalities of Danita and Samokov to apply the innovative work method.

Within the framework of the current project, the foundation will build on its previous achievements by expanding the target group and enhancing the quality of the intervention methods. The objective is to increase the age group to include children between the ages 3 and 18 years and children with special needs.

In order to accomplish the project objectives, the Resource Centres in Dupnitsa and Samokov will continue their activity from the previous project phase. Each of the Resource Centres employs two psychologists who provide the following community-based services:

- § individual consultation of children and adolescents with behavioural challenges in the age between 3 and 18 years
- § consultation of parents
- § positive support to families
- § provision of information and guidance for management of challenging behaviour to parents, teachers and specialists working with children
- § field work – provision of support within an institutional framework (schools, kindergartens, state-run institutions, etc.)

In the forthcoming three years, the team will focus its efforts in the following priority areas:

**§ Raising the capacity of professionals working directly with children.** The team is set to elaborate and introduce methodology in support of children with challenging behaviour, which includes crisis intervention techniques (physical intervention), prevention measures and others. This activity involves training of a large number of local specialists in employing an innovative approach in their work. After the training, the specialists will be able to benefit from a long-term support system provided by the project team and designed to assist them in managing concrete cases in their practice.

**§ Working directly with children and families.** The project objectives are also to be achieved through the provision of long-term consultation of children and families at the specialised Resource Centres in Dupnitsa and Samokov. The children, adolescents and their parents will have access to quality psycho-pedagogical support provided by trained and experienced specialists. Each of the Resource Centres employs two psychologists who provide individual consulting and positive support to families.

**§ Developing parental support groups.** The project identifies the family as a fundamental resource point for encouraging positive changes in the life of a child with behavioural challenges. This is why, the project team will also work with families to provide them with a

series of specialised trainings and increase their capacity to manage challenging behaviour. Moreover, the trainings will provide a platform to establish contact with other parents and share experience. The parental support groups will be assisted by a PBF specialist and parents will be able to use a web page with resources on positive parenting.

**§ Developing local policies and strategies addressing children with challenging behaviour.** The

project team will work actively to raise the attention of state expert groups to the situation of children with emotional and behavioural challenges. In this regard, the foundation will present evidence-based information and recommendations to the government bodies in order to foster the improvement of services provided to these children.

The project will run for three years with the financial support of the OAK Foundation.

## Young volunteers contribute to human trafficking prevention efforts



On February 11 and 12, a seminar on prevention methods of adolescent-related risks for volunteers was organised. The peer education method was presented at the seminar, which was facilitated by three volunteers and a team leader from the Resource Centre of Partners Bulgaria Foundation in Kjustendil. The event was organised together with the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and with the financial support of Hanns Seidel Stiftung.

The goal of the seminar was to provide an opportunity for the volunteers of the Local Commissions for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings to get to know each other and to explore their needs and possibilities related to their community work. In the beginning of the seminar the young people identified themselves by developing their personal coat of arms based on who they are now, their peers and community and how they see themselves in two years. All the young people were quite creative and set a constructive working atmosphere for the rest of the seminar.

The priorities of group work were to acquire and strengthen human trafficking prevention skills and develop an active network of young volunteers working in this sphere in their home cities. The focus of the seminar was to allow the volunteers to rationalise their potential, share work methods and achievements, appreciate group work in planning volunteer activities and develop an effective volunteer network. The event ended with a certificate awarding ceremony by the deputy prime minister and chairperson of the National Commission, Mr. Tsvetan Tsvetanov.

## Prevention of adolescent-related risks through the peer education method

The “Adolescent-related Risks and Dangers” Manual has been elaborated within the framework of the regional Child Trafficking Response Programme, phase III, managed by Save the Children in Albania. The project goal is to set effective models for prevention and support to children at risk or children victims of trafficking. “Adolescent-related Risks and Dangers” has

been published with the support of the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. The Manual offers different exercises on nine thematic areas and provides guidelines for the **conduct of peer-to-peer sessions**.

**Peer education** is a strategy, tool or communication channel used by people who share similar age, background and interests to communicate messages. While it can be used for a variety of age groups and populations for various goals, peer education has been widely used as one approach in prevention programmes and raising the awareness on certain problems. The overall objective is to help adolescents develop the knowledge, attitude, beliefs and skills required to engage in healthy behaviours.

**Here are some of the advantages of the peer education method:**

§ Peer educators can access hard-to-reach groups if they have a similar profile.

§ The adolescent development theory confirms that peer groups are highly influential and young people are more likely to accept information from peers rather than from adults.

§ Peer educators themselves experience positive benefits by attaining knowledge and leadership skills for their own professional development.

§ Peer education programmes are community-based interventions, which can link adolescents to other community services.

§ Peer education is flexible and complementary. Programmes of this kind are rarely implemented independently and are often part of a bigger initiative, which cuts across different organisations, sectors and/or state institutions.

“Adolescent-related Risks and Dangers” has been compiled with the active participation of programme volunteers in order to guarantee that the publication is not only informative, but also interesting and useful to young people. The Manual can also be used by teachers and other specialists who encourage active adolescent participation both within and outside the school curriculum.



## Religious Tolerance and Anti-Discrimination

In February, Brussels-based CEJI organisation (A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe) organised a training of trainers on religious tolerance and anti-discrimination, which also provided an opportunity for a staff member of Partners Bulgaria Foundation to take part in.

The goal of the training was to set a platform for the participants to share their experience and get acquainted with the different cross-cultural and religious dimensions of contemporary society. The objective was not only to identify existing stereotypes and prejudice, but also to shed light on the opportunities to foster an inclusive environment, which fully reflects religious and cultural diversity nowadays.

The training is conducted within the framework of the Belieforama project, whose main aim is to support the development of communities of practice among experts

in different areas and to encourage cooperation on issues of religious and cultural tolerance at national, regional and local level in Europe.

