EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS IN THE SOCIAL INCLUSION OF THE ROMA MUNICIPALITY OF SLIVEN, BULGARIA

Radost Kostova, Vice-mayor
The Municipality of Sliven consists of 44 towns and villages. Population: 137,437, 102,295 of them living in the municipal city. From the last updated information published by the National Institute for Statistics (2001), the municipality of Sliven has the highest percentage of roma population in Bulgaria – 13.5%. The roma population living in the quarter “Nadezhda” is in fact one of the biggest roma ghettos in the country with 20,000 inhabitants.
THE PROBLEMS THAT WE WANT TO SOLVE...

... together with roma NGOs are:

- Increasing the educational level of roma children;
- Equal access to quality education;
- Improving the living conditions, infrastructure;
- Improving the access to health services;
- Reducing the unemployment.
In 2004 the Municipality of Sliven was the first Bulgarian municipality that created a Roma department with 4 persons. Together with Roma NGOs they made the following strategic documents:

- Municipal Programme for the integration of the children and the students from the ethnic minorities in the educational system within the period 2004-2006
- „Strategy for the integration of the minorities in Sliven Municipality“
The Municipality of Sliven is working since a long time in partnership with:

- Roma NGOs – Roma Youth Organization, Foundation “Roma Health”
- roma experts;
- volunteers;
- non formal leaders from Sliven
LONG TERM POLICY OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF SLIVEN FOR THE INCLUSION OF ROMA COMMUNITY
Increasing the educational level of roma community

• „Desegregation“ – education of roma children in mixed classes;
• Multicultural trainings for working in mixed classes for the teachers from the host schools;
• Helping the students that want to go to the university.

In the budget of the Municipality of Sliven for 2009, 3 400 Euro was dedicated for the transportation of the roma children to the schools.
Popularization of Roma culture

Including the Roma important dates in the cultural calendar of the Municipality of Sliven. Financed activities from the budget of the Municipality of Sliven:

- 8-th of April, The International Roma Day
- Financing the Roma children’s wind orchestra “Karandila”
- Traditional competition for Roma poetry “Usin Kerim”.

Municipality of Sliven, Bulgaria
Active measures of the Municipality of Sliven in partnership with roma doctors for the prevention of social important diseases and prophylaxis:

• informational campaigns;
• prophylaxis visitations;
• immunization campaign against measles disease over the territory of Sliven Municipality;
• training and appointment of 5 roma health mediators for working with the community
“MULTICULTURAL MIDDLE – GUARANTEE FOR QUALITY EDUCATION


№BG051PO001/07/4.1-01/38

Municipality of Sliven, Bulgaria
THE MAIN AIM OF THE PROJECT

... was the implementation of a model for improving the intercultural dialogue in a multiethnical middle in the school and consolidation of cultural tolerance by the cooperation and mutual understanding between the different ethnical groups from Sliven Municipality.

Municipality of Sliven, Bulgaria
...ACTIVITIES

- Bought and distributed to all the 350 roma pupils the necessary school material – notebooks, pencils, books etc.;

- Realization of a seminar for the parents called “The school – source of knowledge”. 114 parents participated.
A council was created in which take part:

- Parents of the pupils from different ethnic minorities;
- Representatives from the Municipality of Sliven;
- Representatives from the Educational Inspectorate of Sliven;
- Directors of the host schools that participate in the project.
A Methodic Book for multicultural education “The road of roma people” was edited and distributed in the schools.
At the moment in 8 host schools pupils and teachers work with the Methodic Book which includes subjects as:

- “Roma people and Europe”;
- “Roma fairy tales”;
- “The work of my parents”;
- “My family”;
- “Roma dresses”;
- “Roma symbols”.
During the realization of the project “Multicultural middle – guarantee for quality education, we succeeded to include 811 persons:

- 350 roma pupils;
- 134 teachers;
- 327 parents.
CONCLUSION

The Municipality of Sliven works actively with roma organizations, experts and important actors for the social inclusion of roma people in the life of the city. Sliven is the capital of roma people not only because of the highest percentage of roma people living in the city - 13.5%, but also because of it’s reputation to be the city with the biggest number of roma persons with higher education – teachers, journalists, doctors, economists, engineers, musicians.

I’m glad that I’m taking part in the cultural diversity of our city and that we can work together with the representatives from the roma community.
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Thank you for the attention!

Radost Kostova, Vice-mayor