

# **ROMANI CRISS**

**Roma Center for Social Intervention and Studies**

## **ANNUAL REPORT 2005**

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## 1. MISSION OF ROMANI CRISS

Romani CRISS - Roma Center for Social Intervention and Studies (RC) is a non-governmental organization, which defends and promotes the human rights of Roma in Romania by providing legal assistance to victims of discrimination and by promoting activities to combat racial discrimination against or exclusion of Roma in all areas of public life.

### *Brief History*

The organisation was established on April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1993, in a period marked by the violent conflicts of the beginning of the '90s. Since the beginning, the organisation addressed the problems faced by the Roma population from a human rights perspective, by using specific tools such as conflict resolution, mediation, litigation, and advocacy.

In addition, Romani CRISS played not only the role of an organisation that criticised public institutions when they didn't meet the law requirements in relation to Roma people, but also tried to support the authorities in their attempt to change the situation. This was realised by providing best practice, which later on was multiplied by the Ministries (the health mediator) or by acting as partners in projects aiming at training officers of various institutions (City Hall, Police) which work with the Roma.

The organisation's activities were based on the following directions:

1. **Rule of law** – RC has documented and monitored cases of discrimination (in various fields), abuse and violence against Roma. In the same time, where tension situations existed in the community, RC succeeded to act as a mediator between the Roma communities and the local public authorities, thus avoiding a possible conflict.
2. **Community development** - RC has engaged in developing confidence-building measures between local authorities and Roma communities. For instance, a series of projects aiming to improve education for Roma children have been developed (the most known is the “Roma children want to learn” campaign). The health mediator institution too, developed by RC since 1998, had very good results and now is taken on and financed by the Ministry of Health budget. Another project worth mentioning is RrAJE (Roma Rights and Access to Justice in Europe), implemented in partnership with “European Dialogue”, UK-based organisation. The project provided an example of how the City Hall could work actively with a quite large Roma community (the Roma community in Botosani city), applying the provisions of the Strategy to Improve the Roma Condition in Romania.  
**Participation in the national and international Roma movement** – by building alliances, acting as a clearing-house for information on Roma-related developments, developing relationships with partner organizations at home and abroad. It has always promoted solidarity at international level between Roma organisations and participated in development of international initiatives, such as the European Roma and Traveller Forum and Decade of Roma Inclusion.
3. **Studies** on the situation of Roma in Romania and the region. RC also became known as a research/ information center regarding the Roma situation. To this end, it collaborated with many national and international institutions, such as the Council of Europe, MRG – Minority Rights Group, OSCE – Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

### *Objectives in 2005*

In 2005, considering the situation in terms of policies for Roma, policies on antidiscrimination and problems faced by Roma, RC's main objective was to prevent and combat discrimination against Roma, addressing mainly the practice and types of discrimination and segregation more often encountered in Romania. Therefore, the following areas of work were addressed in 2005:

1. Discrimination in education – motivated by the high number of cases of segregation reported in the last period
2. Discrimination in housing – considering the period experience of RC in documenting access of Roma to public service, discrimination on housing conditions was included as specific objective of the organisation in 2005
3. Discrimination in access to health care services – with purpose to prevent and combat abuse and discrimination of Roma in this field, by extending the network of health mediators in Romania and by approaching other health issues caused by precarious living conditions in Roma communities
4. Racial violence – continuance of documentation and intervention in cases of discrimination, abuse and violence in Roma communities

Considering these objectives, the organisation is structured on the following *departments*:

#### **Human Rights**

Department coordinator -MARIAN MANDACHE

#### **Health**

Department coordinator -DANIEL RADULESCU

#### **Education**

Department coordinator -MARIANA DINCA; since January 2006 this position is held by GEORGIANA MIHAI

#### **Social**

Department coordinator - ADRIAN VASILE

#### **International cooperation**

Department coordinator - MARGARETA MATAACHE

In 2005 COSTEL BERCUS was the executive director of the organisation; MARGARETA MATAACHE holds this position since December 2005.

## **2. GENERAL DATA ON ROMANI CRISS ACTIVITY IN 2005**

### **A. Partners**

1. Ministry of Administration and Interior – National Inspectorate for Public Registration, Institute for Crime Research and Prevention and the General Police Inspectorate
2. Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family, represented by the National Authority for the Protection of Rights of the Child
3. OSCE/ODIHR – Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues
4. European Dialogue
5. Danish Centre for Conflict Resolution
6. European Roma Rights Centre
7. Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE)
8. Fundacion General Gitano, Spain
9. County Councils, Prefect's offices, City Halls and Roma and non-Roma NGOs from across the country

### **B. Results/ beneficiaries**

1. 2000 persons for which identity and marital status papers have been drawn up
2. 20 documented cases regarding discrimination of Roma in the field of housing
3. 15 intervention cases – discrimination in the field of housing (including letters to the Presidency and the Prime Minister of Romania)
4. 5 cases of discrimination in the field of housing brought before the Court of Law
5. Training of 150 police officers on anti-discrimination
6. Elaboration of a practical guide on preventing and solving conflicts
7. Training of 5 human rights local monitors
8. Monitoring of 58 cases of human rights violation
9. Training of 62 health mediators on tuberculosis prevention
10. Conducting of information campaigns regarding tuberculosis in 35 Roma communities
11. 47 high school teachers trained to work with Roma children who applied on the subsidised places
12. 5 campaigns and 10 information offices regarding the rights and possibilities to enrol to high schools and vocational schools
13. Training of 20 medical personnel on issues of discrimination and human rights
14. Training courses on human rights and discrimination for Roma activists
15. Elaboration of a manual on anti-discrimination measures in Romania
16. Elaboration of an anti-discrimination brochure targeting the Roma communities
17. Elaboration of a manual on discrimination of Roma in the field of housing
18. training of 60 young Roma from NGOs in human rights

## C. Donors

1. Catholic Committee against Famish and for Development (CCFD)
2. Embassy of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland in Bucharest
3. Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
4. Danish Ministry of External Affairs, Danish Fund for Peace and Stability
5. Open Society Institute – Budapest
6. German Embassy in Bucharest
7. Ministry of Health through the Global Fund’s Management Unit and the World Bank
8. UNICEF
9. European Commission – the EU Action Plan to combat discrimination
10. European Commission - “Health and Consumer Protection” DG
11. OSCE/ ODIHR

### **3. DESCRIPTION OF THE MAIN PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED IN 2005**

#### **ROMA CITIZENS WITHOUT IDENTITY. EQUAL ACCESS TO RESOURCES**

The lack of identity papers is one of the main factors that blocks Roma's access to the rights they are entitled to. RC has initiated this project based on the experience gained in a similar project implemented in 2000-2001. The project's objectives were to provide legal and financial assistance to people without identity papers and to conduct raising-awareness campaigns for Roma about the importance of obtaining the identity papers.

The project financed by the Catholic Committee against Famish and for Development and the British Embassy in Bucharest targeted a number of 2000 Roma in 11 counties of Romania (Tulcea, Calarasi, Ilfov, Neamt, Galati, Salaj, Dolj, Giurgiu, Timis, Buzau and Bucharest). The priorities were represented by late registration cases, cases of repatriated children or the ones born abroad and the cases of children with health problems and of school age.

For the project implementation, partnerships at central level (with the National Inspectorate for Public Registration, the National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights and the General Police Inspectorate) and at county level (with the county Councils, City Halls, Prefect's Offices and local Roma organisations) have been signed.

#### **DEFENDING ROMA HOUSING RIGHTS AND CHALLENGING DISCRIMINATION IN ROMANIA**

This complex project, due to the nature of the addressed issue, was one of the first projects in Romania to tackle the housing issue in terms of discrimination. That is the reason why more objectives have been included in order to obtain a solid basis for future interventions in this area. The project aimed to conduct field research, a legal research and a housing manual on living conditions, segregation, statute of residents, residents' freedom of movement, forced evictions and other forms of discrimination. The RC's partner, ERRC elaborated the methodology of the study (see details in the next chapter).

Other objectives of the project were: strategic litigation, publications, and advocacy.

A number of 20 cases of discrimination were documented (the cases were selected in such manner as to cover as many different types of problems as possible) and intervention was applied in 15 of these cases (including 5 strategic cases). The rest of the 5 cases proved not to be discrimination. For the rest of the cases, the following solutions were enforced: in some cases, the dialogue with local authorities was enough to solve the problem; official letters were sent by the partners to the local authorities to ask for an official statement; letters were also sent to different national and international institutions (Presidency, Government, Embassies, and European Commission Delegation in Bucharest) to report severe cases of discrimination; complaints were lodged to the National Council for Combating Discrimination; 5 cases were brought to before the Courts of Law.

At national and international level, RC and ERRC presented patterns of discrimination and abuse in the field of housing. CRISS, ERRC and COHRE elaborated a training manual for NGOs in terms of defending Roma housing rights.

The documentation of negative, but also positive aspects of relation between Roma and authorities in the field of housing and enforcement of several types of solutions in solving the cases are the attributes for this project to be considered a good start for future activities of RC in the field of Roma housing.

## **HUMAN RIGHTS AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT PROJECT FOR ROMA LIAISON POLICE OFFICERS**

The project aimed to reduce the incidence of abusive behaviours of Police representatives against Roma, by training police officers to work in Roma communities.

Following the training course, local action plans were elaborated at level of each County Police Inspectorate, in accordance to the National Strategy on Improving the Roma Condition.

The training for police officers covered the following topics: human rights, conflict management, issues/ characteristics specific to Roma communities, project writing and management.

Other results of this project:

- Elaboration of a practical guide for police officers on the field of human rights and for conflict prevention and resolution in Roma communities;
- Formulation of proposals to include in the Police Academy a similar course, that will lead to the sustainability of the project
- Advocacy activities at level of local public institutions, in terms of their relation to Roma;
- Meeting with representatives of foreign Ministries of Interior to discuss upon the possibility to prolong the project.

The project's partners were: Danish centre for Conflict Resolution, Danish Institute for Human Rights, Regional Facilitation and Negotiation Centre, Ministry of Administration and Interior.

## **MONITORING NETWORK FOR COMBATING DISCRIMINATION AGAINST ROMA**

The project of human rights local monitors continued in 2005. The network was extended by another 5 young Roma and, the already local monitors carried out with the continuous training courses in the field. The cooperation and confidence building between Roma and public authorities was developed by organising 5 roundtables. A number of 20 cases were provided legal assistance and a report was elaborated about the human rights situation in Romania in 2005.

From December to August 2005, 58 cases of human rights violations have been monitored: 13 cases of abuse (3 before the courts of law and 1 before the EChR), 28 cases of discrimination (2 sanctioned by the NCCD, 8 in progress of solving, 4 following to be brought before the courts of law and 4 already before the courts of law), 2 cases of violence between Roma and majority population, 2 cases of abusive fines and 2 cases of sterilisation of Roma women.

## **STRATEGIC INITIATIVE ON ROMA AND POLICING IN ROMANIA**

The project was implemented by RC in collaboration with the OSCE/ODIHR – Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues and European Dialogue. The main objectives of the project were: to carry out a systematic assessment of current Police policies and practices towards Roma in Romania; to develop a joint programme with the Ministry of Interior and Roma NGO's on rights training for Roma, and a guidance manual for police working with multicultural communities; to draw up an action plan to ensure that all aspects of policing relating to Roma communities in Romania attain the agreed standards.

The main activities implemented in 2005 were the following:

- Signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the OSCE/ ODIHR, Ministry of Administration and Interior (MAI) and RC. As activities, the memorandum stipulates: Systematic Assessment of Police policies and practices towards Roma; training seminars for the Roma non-governmental organisations to build their capacity to participate as partners of MAI in the systematic assessment; training for police officers at the local level in view of developing communication skills in the relations between police and Roma.
- A working meeting with the Roma organisations in the country to set up a documentation base upon negative and positive practice in relation between the local Roma communities and Police.
- A workshop with police representatives aimed to familiarise the police officers with the set of minimal standards foreseen in the European Convention for Human Rights (ECHR), developed through the case law of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. The following topics were addressed: Strategic assessment of Romanian Police: operational policies and procedures; Strategic self-assessment on human rights: Operation policies and procedures of Police General Inspectorate; Democratic principles.

Given the importance of this project for the parties, they work on prolonging the Memorandum of Understanding for 2006 too.

## **IMPROVEMENT OF TB CONTROL AT HIGH RISK CATEGORIES OF POPULATION: FIGHT AGAINST TUBERCULOSIS IN ROMA COMMUNITIES IN ROMANIA**

The purpose of the project was to reduce the tuberculosis incidence rate among the Roma population in 4 pilot counties (Calarasi, Galati, Giurgiu Tulcea) and Bucharest – districts 1 and 6 (a total of 35 Roma communities). In order to achieve this goal, information campaigns on tuberculosis were conducted in 35 communities, 10 local meetings and 3 regional meetings were organised and 52 field visits were carried out to monitor the activity of the 62 health mediators trained on TB prevention>

The information campaigns were conducted with the support of the health mediators in the communities where they worked. They distributed informative materials, held open lessons in schools and meetings with the Roma communities.

The roundtables debated issues such as the relation between the Roma and health-care service providers, the difficulties encountered by the family physician when working with the patients, the role of the health mediator, the National Plan of Tuberculosis Control, etc.

With the support of ICCV (Institute for Life Quality Research) a study was also conducted in the 35 communities. The study aimed to identify the needs of the Roma communities in terms of education for health, with focus on TB prevention. The conclusions of the study were that Roma health was significantly influenced by their socio-economic status and the precarious living conditions.

## **STRENGTHENING THE DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY OF THE HEALTH MEDIATOR WORKING WITH THE COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DIRECTORATES**

The project implemented from October 2004 to September 2005 had as general objective the strengthening of the development capacity of the health mediator working at the County Public Health Directorates (PHDs).

Through this project we aimed to improve the relation between the health mediator, family physician and the activity coordinator from the County PHDs by organizing training courses on communication and health mediation, and working meetings in order to achieve the project's general objective, as well as monitoring field visits in regard to the activity of the health mediators working in the Ministry of Health's network. Another aim of the project was to elaborate a joint plan of activities on Roma health, as well as to establish working teams that work on Roma health at local/ county level.

## **ROMA CHILDREN WANT TO LEARN**

In comparison to the similar project implemented in 2004, this project included a new target group: the high school teachers who work with Roma students which applied on subsidised places. They were informed of the Roma in general (Roma history, culture) and of the affirmative measures concept.

It was the first project to involve high school teachers too; the teachers had the opportunity to discover the development potential of Roma students. Forty-seven teachers were selected from the high schools that promoted the affirmative measures for Roma and then trained. The teachers' recommendation was to extend the project in more counties in the next years.

Another project activity was the conducting of an information campaign that targeted the Roma children's parents in 4 counties (Arges, Calarasi, Sibiu, Vaslui) and Bucharest. The parents were informed of the affirmative measures in education. In addition, 10 information offices were established and provided information on the Roma children's rights and options to attend secondary education.

## **REDUCTION OF HEALTH INEQUALITIES IN ROMA COMMUNITIES**

### **“SASTIPEN”**

The purpose of the project was to gather the health information available in Roma community, to compare it with the data referring to the general population and to make recommendations regarding intervention strategies in this area.

The project's specific objectives were:

- To initiate a co-ordinated information gathering process and disseminate results through internet, Annual Reports and other documents on health inequalities suffered by Roma Community and health standards.
- Exchange at national and European level information and best practices and identify health indicators applicable in Sastipen Network partners.
- To analyse and withdraw conclusions on the health status and inequalities faced by the Roma community between main stakeholders (public administrations/ healthcare professionals/ health agents/ Healthcare Networks, etc).
- To elaborate materials for targeted groups containing intervention strategies in the main health areas

Main activities:

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1. Development of a coordinated (qualitative and quantitative) information gathering process regarding the health condition of Roma communities in Europe;
2. Analysis of the Roma health inequalities and elaboration of conclusions: diagnosis, health indicators and positive practice;
3. Training of 20 persons from public health institutions in order for them to provide adequate health-care services to Roma communities;
4. Training of health mediators.

### **TRAILER**

RC, in partnership with European Dialogue, implemented in Romania the activities of this program that was conducted in Bulgaria, Slovakia, United Kingdom, Ireland and Romania. The main activities were:

1. Training of 60 Roma activists and NGO representatives on human rights (theoretical and practical training, anti-discrimination legislation in Romania, the National Council for Combating Discrimination, documentation of discrimination cases);
2. Documentation of 10 cases of discrimination;
3. Elaboration of an anti-discrimination measures manual, that was distributed to all key actors in the field;
4. Elaboration of a brochure on discrimination that was distributed in the Roma communities;
5. Creation of an e-group that included all the activists involved in the project

## **4. RC PUBLICATIONS**

### **Fighting against Tuberculosis in Roma Communities in Romania Evaluation report of the state of fact in 35 Roma communities in Calarasi, Galati, Tulcea, Giurgiu Counties and Bucharest**

Ones of the more important conclusions and recommendations of this study were:

- Exclusion of Roma from public health-care services is the result, mainly, of inequitable geographical distribution of the health-care facilities. The formal exclusion is very low, but the informal exclusion affects the entire population of Romania and is caused by the health-care system's malfunctions;
- The undetected cases and incomplete treatment (people do not follow the treatment until the end) are the biggest problems in terms of tuberculosis within the Roma communities;
- Roma are aware, in general, of the TB characteristics and how they can get infected;
- The solving of the identity papers issue and multiplication of consulting rooms, especially in the disfavoured or isolated areas of the country could lead to a significant improvement of the Roma communities health condition;
- Conducting of information campaigns regarding the clients' rights and obligations, as well as promotion of a minimal health education, in general, could have also a significant impact.

### **Defending Roma Housing Rights in Romania**

The cases of human rights violation in the filed of housing have become more and more frequent. Leaving that aside, the conditions in which most of the Roma live do not meet the minimal standards on hygiene and comfort.

This manual aims to be a guide for the Roma activists who confront with this type of problem. It provides a comprehensive picture of the various components of housing rights, of links between the housing rights and other human rights (right to education, health, etc) and of the various activities that may be undertaken (documentation, monitoring, advocacy, legal action).

The first part of the study defines the right to housing and the main provisions on housing of the domestic and international legislation. Section two describes the strategies to promote housing rights.

## **Political Participation of Roma in Romania**

The purpose of this study was to describe how Roma had been participated to the political life in Romania after 1990. The paper describes the main political structures (and leaders) that participated in the elections and the obtained results, it analyses the election monitoring reports in Romania, as well as the electoral offer made by the main political parties to the Roma. The study was conducted in partnership with “Sanse Egale” organisation in Zalau.

The main conclusions of the study are:

- The Roma haven't have an electoral agenda at the 2004 general elections; the only political structure that made an electoral offer to Roma was the PSD+PUR Union (Social Democrat Party and Romanian Humanists Party);
- After 1990, there have been a great diversity of political Roma bodies, as result of intra-ethnic heterogeneity;
- In some people opinion, the fact that the PSD government took into account only one political Roma body led to the fragmentation of Roma NGOS, but there are continuous efforts to unify them;
- The Roma electorate is characterised by different degrees of poverty, it is stigmatised, discriminated against and, many times, excluded from the social and civic life. Therefore, we have an obedient, easily manoeuvred Roma electorate, which is sensitive to social issues and without believing they may influence political decisions in any way;
- The Roma political decision is influenced by the leaders of each community;
- The main topic to attract the Roma electorate is the promise to solve immediate problems (connection to sewerage system, to power system, etc).

## **Best Practice Guide for Roma Children Education**

The Guide was elaborated within “Steps towards Tolerance” project and represents an important tool for the teachers involved in the education of Roma children. The first chapters explain concepts such as “inter-culturality”, “nouveau education” and “ethnoculture” and the history of Roma in brief.

Chapter III makes a description of the educational policies for Roma children and of the affirmative measures adopted in this field. The following chapter presents practical methods to work with the Roma community and students, on age groups. The Guide ends with a list of textbooks for Roma education.

## **Drug Use Prevention for Roma families Workshop**

This publication provides didactic proposals for mediators who work with Roma parents facilitating suitable ways to approach the subject of drug prevention on a group level with families. The workshop comprises seven sessions: the role of the family in drug abuse prevention; healthy lifestyles as a framework for prevention; risk factors and protection factors in the family; drug information strategy; reflection on entertainment and children's use of free time; the importance of communication with children; the role of parents in the detection of drug problems within the family and the way to approach that problem.

The role of the mediator is to organise information sessions where the parents can freely express their fears about the drug use and to facilitate exchange of experience and ideas between parents.

## **Roma in Romania- Guiding Marks through History**

This brochure financed by UNICEF, Romania is a short journey through the history of Roma in Romania, underlining significant events and personalities. It constitutes a source of information easily to access, not only for teachers, but for all who want to learn essential elements of Roma history and culture.

## **You have the right NOT to be discriminated against!**

This brochure explains in a very accessible language the content of anti-discrimination legislation in Romania (from Governmental Ordinance 137/2000 to Law 27/2004) and lists example of institutions who addressed the National Council for Combating Discrimination and the sanctions applied to the one violating this law.

## **5. ROMANI CRISS IN INTERNATIONAL REPORTS**

RC activity has been acknowledged at international level, too, by mentioning the organisations and its activities in different international reports.

In the US State Department's 2004 Country Report on Human Rights Practice in Romania mentions Romani CRISS nine times. The actions in relation to which the organisation was singularised are:

- RC continued to investigate the 2002 death of Nelu Balasoiu, a Romani man who was found dead in Jilava prison near Bucharest;
- Report of abuses by police officers in relation to Roma;
- Report of the Valu lui Traian commune mayor's threat to expel the victims from the village if they filed complaints or wrote declarations against the police officers who committed abuses during a raid in the Roma community;
- The health mediators program;
- The program on training police officers to work with Roma communities;
- The human rights local monitors program.

In addition, the European Commission Regular Report on Romania's Progress to Accession mention the RC credits for initiating and supporting the training program for health mediators in Romania.