



Bucharest, December 14th, 2010

PRESS RELEASE

Romani CRISS marks history for the health mediation program **Zurale Romnia** - Association of Health Mediators

December 12th 2010 is a landmark for the history of health mediators and for Roma communities in Romania, because it's the date when the first Association of Health Mediators – Zurale Romnia was established. Romani CRISS took this initiative during the national meeting of the health mediators in Romania, organised by CRISS, where 150 mediators from 39 counties participated.

Thus having representative for the entire country, the mediators unanimously agreed upon creating the association and signed to become founding members. The Steering committee is formed of Steluta Batar – President, Florina Busuioc, Letitia Stoicescu and Lacramioara Georgescu – vicepresidents, Ana Nastase – secretary and the following members: Lucia Codreanu, Radita Simion, Gabi Enache and Elena Stanciu.

„I wished for this association to exist since 2005, so that we can become a force. We have already concluded that, on our own, everybody in their locality, cannot do much. Practically, history was written by having this association. The second chapter of history. The first chapter was written in 2002 when Ministry of Health issued Order 619 on approving the functioning of the health mediator occupation”, declared Steluta Batir, president of Association of Health Mediators – Zurale Romnia.

In 1997 Romani CRISS was implementing a project where 7 mediators were trained. Currently, there are 430 health mediators¹ who work in local Roma communities across the country, trained by Romani CRISS and employed by the local authorities. The mediators facilitate non-discriminatory access of people from the Roma community to public health-care services; cultivate trust between health/ medical authorities, local administration agencies and beneficiary. They also contribute to informing the medical staff about ethnic traditions specific for the local Roma community they work in.

*„The health mediation program is designed and created by Romani CRISS. **It is the sole initiative of a Roma nongovernmental organisation that turned into public policy**, with a continuity of over 9 years, already”,* declared Magda Matache, executive director.

„Unfortunately, the decentralisation of the public health system created many problems in hiring or, better said, not hiring the health mediators by the public authorities. Thus, Romani CRISS facilitated the establishment of this association in 2010, with the aim of empowering the health mediation network. Let's not forget that the National Agency for Roma reported to the European Commission the setting up of a professional association “Health mediators’ Order” in 2008, which never happened, in fact. And now, the representatives of Roma Party put pressure upon the mediators not to participate to this meeting and not to set up the Association, thus violating their rights to association. It is a reason more to empower the health mediators and to have their activities continued, objectively, without being controlled or pressured upon, but only for the benefit and interest of the community members”, added Mrs. Matache.

¹ Before the decentralization process began, 570 health mediators were active across the country.