



ROMANI CRISS  
Centrul Romilor pentru  
Intervenție Socială și Studii



ASOCIAȚIA ROMÂNĂ  
DE DEZBATERI  
ORATORIE  
ȘI RETORICĂ

## Youth against discrimination Project

From May 2008 until February 2009, Romani CRISS – Roma Center for Social Intervention and Studies, in partnership with ARDOR - Romanian Association of Debates, Oratory and Rhetoric is implementing “Youth against discrimination” project, with the financial support of Trust for Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe.

Recent studies show that Romanian society, at all levels, still doesn't accept all their citizens as persons with equal rights and this opinion is reflected also in actions or inactions that lead to discrimination of certain groups<sup>1</sup>. For instance, more or less than half of the Romanian population consider that the Roma people, the sexual minorities and HIV/ AIDS infected people are undesirable neighbours.<sup>2</sup> Fifty percent of the population would not accept a gay person or a Jehovah witness to work in the same place as them<sup>3</sup>. Another study, carried out on members of Romanian Parliament, reveals that 60% of them still believe that Roma people are a setback for Romania's image and that interethnic conflicts between Roma and Romanians are caused mainly by Roma's antisocial behavior.<sup>4</sup>

Starting from these facts, the “Youth against discrimination” project aims at civic engagement and mobilization of high-school students in publicly debating and policy changes towards issues such as acceptance of Roma people, HIV/AIDS infected people, sexual minorities.

To this end, the two project partners will organize a series of 30 public debates in highschools across the country, to raise awareness on the topics of the project. The debate format used – policy debate – challenges the students to identify problems in their environment and to propose complete and realistic strategies to solve these problems. In

---

<sup>1</sup> See the jurisprudence of the Romanian National Council for Combating Discrimination – [www.cncd.org.ro](http://www.cncd.org.ro)

<sup>2</sup> Public Opinion's Poll, *October 2007*, Soros Foundation, Romania.

<sup>3</sup> Poll on tolerance realized by Institute for Public Policies

<sup>4</sup> [http://accept-romania.ro/images/stories/atitudinea\\_parlamentarilor\\_romani\\_fata\\_de\\_discriminare.pdf](http://accept-romania.ro/images/stories/atitudinea_parlamentarilor_romani_fata_de_discriminare.pdf)

Project financed by



Trust for Civil Society in Central & Eastern Europe

this way, not only that the students will be discussing and addressing with their peers discrimination issues, but they will also need to be thinking of ways to solving (or alleviating) these problems. Additional to these debates, the project will include 6 regional debate competitions and one national competition, where the best young people will compete for the award on debate on antidiscrimination. Approximately 1500 students and teachers will get involved in these activities.

Solutions to best fight against discrimination within the school and society, in general, will result also from the essay contest among the high school students. The ideas of the young people in the project will be presented in a public debate with the Ministry of Education's representatives. 3500 copies of a kit of best practice on debates in the field of anti-discrimination will be distributed in over 30 high-schools across the country.

The project shall end with a Fair of Diversity, put together by and with artists that promote an acceptance of diversity or who are, themselves, representatives of a discriminate group: refugees, inter-ethnic music bands; there will be tents that represent all kinds of discriminated groups in Romania: representatives of civil society, each expert on an area, to present information to the public, which would be able to go and visit all the tents; projection of relevant movies, TV spots. The fair will take place in a central place, such as in front of the National Theatre in Bucharest, for many people to participate in.

The main results of the project would be:

- a) Increased awareness, through the 30 debates, 6 regional and 1 national debate competitions, the fair and the kit, especially amongst high-school students.
- b) Change in attitude and behavior. We are confident that once students will be confronted over an extended period of time with deep research and solid argumentation as to why bias and prejudice are an impediment in personal and professional development, as well as incompatible with human rights and promotion of diversity, their attitude and behavior towards minorities (of all kinds) will change – so as to become more tolerant towards them and more active in preventing discrimination.

Contact persons:

Cezara David, project coordinator, Romani CRISS ([cezara@romanicriss.org](mailto:cezara@romanicriss.org), mobile 0723.818.413).

Emanuel Beteringhe, debate coordinator, ARDOR ([emi\\_bete@yahoo.com](mailto:emi_bete@yahoo.com), mobile 0721.272.422).

Project financed by



Trust for Civil Society in Central & Eastern Europe

Project financed by



Trust for Civil Society in Central & Eastern Europe