

Case name: Integrated Project for Social Inclusion for Vulnerable Groups in Burgas, Sredets and Malko Tarnovo (BULGARIA)

‘wow factor’	For the moment, the wow factors are all related to the skilled municipal team and their good partners. The institutionalization of this project may work well in Burgas because of the experienced municipal team that could easily take over the project and claim ownership beyond the end of the programme. Because of the serious engagement of the municipality and its partners, the future financial support with delegated budgets may not be an issue – the municipality is capable of competing for these central level budgets and it is likely that they will ensure the budget, once they could demonstrate a well-functioning programme.
1. Subject/issue	<p>Integrated approach to Roma inclusion through pre-school, education, healthcare and cultural empowerment. Pre-school, education and healthcare services are coupled with infrastructure programmes – in other words, services will be delivered in improved facilities (kindergartens, schools and medical centers).</p> <p>The project is led by the municipality of Burgas but is implemented in partnership with 2 other municipalities, a Roma foundation, a primary school and a media foundation. The financial support consists of a combination of Swiss (85%) and Bulgarian funds (15%) and is managed in cooperation with 3 Bulgarian ministries: MLSP, MES and MH.</p> <p>This programme is an attempt to closely cooperate with central and local authorities, and in fact vest it within local authorities, so that sustainability and continuity is ensured (funding from central or local budgets, trained municipal human resources, established partnerships lead to a gradual transition of the project into the municipality which receives later financial support from the central budget).</p>
2. Sector, Country	<p>Sector: Education, early childhood development, healthcare, medical services, mediation, cultural integration, empowerment, education and medical infrastructure</p> <p>Country: Bulgaria, Municipalities of Burgas, Malko Tarnovo and Sredez</p>
3. Background, antecedent	The project started in June 2015 and its duration is 3 years. It is funded by the Bulgarian-Swiss Cooperation Programme within the “Programme for promotion of social inclusion of Roma and other vulnerable groups“. The project’s total budget amounts to 2,613 544 BGN and it is implemented by the Municipality of Burgas in partnership with the Municipalities of Sredets and Malko Tarnovo, „Regional Roma Union“ Foundation, „Hristo Botev“ Primary School in Pobeda neighbourhood – Burgas and „Off Media“ Foundation.

	<p>The target groups are compact Roma communities in the district Pobeda in Burgas and the villages of Zvezdec and Sredec. The communities are both urban and rural.</p>
<p>4. Objectives</p>	<p>The project focuses on improving the living conditions of Roma and other vulnerable groups by providing easier access to and better quality of educational and medical services as well as promoting their cultural identity. Additionally, the programme attempts to support integration through inclusive community work, education, health prevention and primary health care. The Swiss approach is integrated – combining education, health and empowerment - in all its locations and activities.</p>
<p>5. Current Status</p>	<p>The programme entails the following activities which are expected to have a comprehensive impact and effect on targeted communities and focused actions in select schools, kindergartens and medical centers:</p> <p>A. Early Childhood Development and Education</p> <p><i>Activity I. „Improvement of the access to preschool education“</i> Construction of an additional building for pre-school education at “Hristo Botev” Primary School in Pobeda Neighbourhood – Burgas Repair of an existing kindergarten in the village of Zvezdets, Municipality of Malko Tarnovo. Providing part-time childcare services for children aged 3-4 Development of individual programmes for personal development of the children in preschool age. Development of parenting skills and counselling of parents, whose children attend or are about to attend kindergarten by setting up „Active parent“clubs in all locations.</p> <p><i>Activity II. „Access to education and educational opportunities“</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of additional study activities in all-day groups, extracurricular education and interest-oriented groups, as well as, individual and group work for students in grades 1-4. • Developing parenting skills and counselling of parents of the children from 1-8 grades by organizing „Responsible parent“clubs in the municipalities of Burgas and Sredets. <p><i>Activity III. „Extracurricular activities and creation of opportunities for community development“</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repair of premises in „Hristo Botev 1937” Library Meeting Centre in Pobeda Neighbourhood to set up interest-oriented work among the children and young people from the Roma community and their parents. • Overall repair of a building in the town of Sredets, with the purpose of establishing a Centre for community

	<p>development (CCD).</p> <p>B. HEALTHCARE</p> <p><i>Activity I. "Access to primary healthcare services"</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training of 6 health mediators in the municipalities of Burgas, Sredets and Malko Tarnovo. • Training of medical specialists from the centre for pre-school education in Pobeda neighbourhood, Burgas, the Centre for community development in the town of Sredets and „Alen Mak“ kindergarten in Zvezdets • Providing better environment for the work of a new general practitioner by repair and equipment provision of medical offices in the segregated neighbourhoods – in the Centre for Community development in Pobeda Neighbourhood, Sredets, and the village of Zvezdets, Malko Tarnovo. • Inclusion of Roma from segregated neighbourhoods in primary healthcare by means of health mediation. • Organizing free prophylactic examinations of people without health insurance and of those with difficult access to healthcare facilities. <p><i>Activity II. "Improvement of reproductive and maternal health and importance of family planning"</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production and distribution of brochures and information flyers to enhance health awareness • Information sessions and discussions by health mediators in the settlements with Roma population. • Distribution of contraceptives and 3ynaecological examinations. <p><i>Activity III. „Child health and access to pediatric services"</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultations for children on acute diseases and for the purpose of prevention. • Series of discussions with young mothers about the importance of immunizations. • Inclusion of children subject to immunization by motivating parents to use health services and/or setting up temporary immunization points.
<p>6. Key-Stakeholders and their Roles / Responsibilities</p>	<p>Municipality of Burgas – major lead role – management</p> <p>Kindergartens and schools – active players incorporating mediators’ work , providing teachers</p> <p>One community center – additional after-school classes</p> <p>2 medical centers in Sredets and Zvezdec – providers of medical screenings, family planning work, preventive health education through attached mediators</p>

Capacity Building and Sustainability	<p>The Programme will provide training, exchanges and mentoring for municipal officers, teachers, mediators, doctors and NGO activists. Hopefully, this will lead to improved skills and continuity.</p> <p>Hopefully, the municipalities could ensure the delegated budgets to support schools, kindergartens (staff and infrastructure). Medical centers are expected to fund the additional services themselves.</p>
8. Institutionalization (if any)	The programme will be transferred to the leadership and management of the municipality and will be continued within kindergartens, schools and medical centers. The 3 Ministries are expected to provide funding for the continuation of the started programme – as they are currently part of the Swiss-Bulgarian Cooperation Programme.
9. Interfaces / Need for coordination with other key issues	The programme needs to be better coordinated with EU projects and funding locally, and also in the planning stage of new EU programmes.
10. Recommendations / important issue	The fact that the programme is implemented as a joint Swiss-Bulgarian one at the level of central institution and local authorities makes it theoretically more sustainable. But the engagement of these authorities needs to be built and is not to be expected to happen automatically. Outdated administrative ways and approaches as well as lack of skilled labour and sometimes insufficient number of workers are also valid hurdles.
11. Why is this a good practice? Reflection and learning	<p>We cannot at this point claim that this programme will for sure bring good results. But for the moment, the following factors are in place to ensure that the practice may be a good one:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skilled and committed leadership of Burgas municipality • Good partnership network and cooperation • Integrated approach • Practical and clear tasks and actions • Focus in specific locations and on specific roma communities • Preliminary planning of passing over the programmes to the key partners and planning the delegated budgets
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