



PROJECTS PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION OF THE ROMA PEOPLE AND OTHER DISADVANTAGED GROUPS IN FOUR EU MEMBER STATES

IMPROVING THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF THE ROMA COMMUNITY: EDUCATION, HEALTH, VOCATIONAL EDUCATION, AND HOUSING



These three girls from the Roma community in Stara Lubovna, eastern Slovakia, are receiving support and tutoring in a community centre funded by Switzerland. © SDC

The Roma are the largest ethnic minority in Europe. Many of them suffer social exclusion, discrimination, poverty and unemployment. The majority of Roma people have no access to education or healthcare. With its contribution to the enlarged EU, Switzerland is supporting improvements in the living conditions of the Roma in those EU member states in which they form a large minority: Hungary, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania.

Of the 10–12 million Roma in Europe, half live in countries within the EU. Their background is a difficult one, as evidenced by the EU's 2011 Roma regional survey data study. On average, some 90% of the Roma interviewed in the survey live below the poverty line, and one-third report that they are unemployed. (EU, Roma Regional Survey Data, 2011)

Switzerland supports education, vocational training and employment, housing and healthcare projects in Hungary, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania. These projects either focus specifically on the Roma and other disadvantaged groups, or include the Roma within their target group. They place particular emphasis on working with these communities and getting them involved. Combating discrimination is another key aspect of these projects.

PROMOTING EDUCATION AND EARLY LEARNING

Switzerland is committed to ensuring better access to education, with priority given to integrating Roma children socially into national school systems. The focus is on early childhood development and learning to prepare children for school, as well as for additional support and tutoring for school-age children. The aim is to improve how Roma children perform at school, thereby enabling them to progress to secondary education and in turn giving them better job prospects. The survey data shows that only 15% of the young adults surveyed had completed secondary school or some form of vocational training. The SDC works with local NGOs, local authorities and Roma communities. For example, in Slovakia Switzerland is supporting ten community centres in the east of the country which are helping almost 8,000 Roma children and young people get ready to start school or offering them additional tutoring.

ACHIEVING EMPLOYABILITY AND LEARNING TO THINK ENTREPRENEURIALLY

The high level of unemployment in the Roma community is not due to inadequate education alone, but also to the discrimination that the Roma people face when looking for work. The objective is to improve their access to the local labour market. In addition to providing support for education, Switzerland is also committed specifically to promoting a system of vocational education and training and to encouraging self-employment among the Roma people. It is also supporting action against discrimination.

For example, with a project in Romania, Switzerland is helping Roma craftsmen and women in a number of villages to adapt their skills to serve the tourist market, to formalise their business models and to expand their sales into new locations. At the same time, the project encourages entrepreneurial thinking, which offers a further opportunity to increase incomes and reduce poverty.



As part of a project in Romania, Roma communities are receiving specialist expertise, as well as materials, to enable them to renovate their homes and install sanitary facilities.
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HEALTH AS A DRIVER OF WELFARE AND PROSPERITY

One in three of the Roma citizens in the survey's 35–54 age group says that they suffer from poor everyday health. Switzerland is engaged in providing a better basic level of healthcare, and is supporting a range of measures to promote public health. Its projects inform and educate children and adults alike about a variety of topics such as diet, hygiene and certain illnesses. Adults also receive support and advice with family planning, parenting and health insurance. In Bulgaria, for example, four medical centres are being set up in segregated Roma communities. Individuals from the Roma population are also being trained as community health workers to provide information and support.

IMPROVING HOUSING CONDITIONS

On average in Roma households there are two or more people to one room, and some 45% of the Roma people live in homes lacking at least one basic facility such as an indoor kitchen, toilet, or shower/bath, or electricity. Switzerland is therefore helping to improve the housing conditions of Roma communities, with an emphasis on access to water and power, sanitation, renovating dilapidated housing, and providing additional living space. In Romania, Switzerland funds a project which assists Roma families with repairs to their houses, and helps them to gain access to water, power and sanitation. The project is being conducted in partnership with the local authorities.

THE PROJECTS IN BRIEF

OBJECTIVE

Improving social security, Promoting economic growth and improving working conditions

TOPIC

The social inclusion of minority communities

COUNTRIES

Hungary, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania

PARTNERS

NGOs and local authorities

STARTING POINT / BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Roma are the largest ethnic minority in Europe. Many of them suffer social exclusion, discrimination, poverty and unemployment. In addition, the majority of the Roma population have no access to education or healthcare.

The European Commission has adopted an EU framework for national Roma integration strategies, to improve their social inclusion and integration in EU countries. Each member state has drafted its own national strategy to integrate the Roma and other disadvantaged groups. All projects supported by the enlargement contribution are in line with the countries' own national strategies.

OBJECTIVE

Switzerland is working to improve the living conditions of the Roma people in Hungary, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania, where they form a large ethnic minority, and is funding projects to improve housing conditions, education, healthcare and vocational education and training opportunities.

ACTIVITIES

- Education: Improving access to education with grants, after-school programmes, and the promotion of early learning
- Vocational training and employment: Support for income-generating activities and a broader range of vocational training opportunities
- Housing: Improving living conditions for the Roma people (kitchens, sanitation, and water and power suppliers)
- Health: Improving access to healthcare and advice; providing information on health issues

TARGET GROUPS

The Roma and other disadvantaged groups in Hungary, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania

COSTS

Total budget
CHF 30,74 million

DURATION:

2009–2019
(Differs according to project)