

4th AER Award Communicating Europe

2010



des Régions d'Europe
of European Regions
lung der Regionen
de las Regiones de Europa
delle Regioni d'Europa

**Vrancea County Council
Romania**

**„Your identity – a chance for
equal rights“**

4th AER Award Communicating Europe

Application form

Please complete the following application form in English and try to be as brief and concise as possible when describing your project. Regions can submit two pieces of supporting material with their application (please do not send more). Only one application per region will be accepted.

Please note that the Jury's decision is final.

General Data

Category

(Please choose only one category)

1) Communicating the new European Citizens' Initiative

2) Communicating received European funding

Project name

"Your identity – a chance for equal rights"

Name of the Region

Vrancea

Type of institution

Local administration

Number of employees in 2010

100

Regional Population

390.596 inhabitants

Person in charge of project

Ramona Sclavone

Address

1, Dimitrie Cantemir Street, 620098, Focsani

Telephone (including country code)

0040.237.213.057

Fax

0040.237.212.228

Email

contact@civrancea.ro

Website of project

www.civrancea.ro

Questionnaire

1. Summary of the Project

- a) If you were to tell a journalist about your project, what would you tell her/him? How would you summarize the project for her/him?

Vrancea County is located in the Southeastern part of Romania and has a population of almost 400,000 inhabitants. The network of localities includes, next to the county's residence town, the municipality of Focsani and the municipality of Adjud, the cities of Marasesti, Panciu, Odobesti and 68 communes (331 villages).

In Vrancea County, according to the **Population Census from 2001 and the situations from the County Department of Statistics Vrancea** from the total of 387.632 inhabitants, **6.831 have declared that are roma citizens**, 1884 of them living in the urban area and 4.929 in the rural area. This figure is not the exact one, as the roma citizens either do not declare as belonging to this community, or aren't registered, they don't have identity documents and aren't included in the Census Office.

From the **situations from the County Public Office of Census Vrancea** results that in 2006 at the local public Community desks of population census have come a number of **170 Roma citizens** in order to be **legalized**, and in 2007 by sending the mobile team in 4 localities from the county, there were released ID documents for **1221** persons.

Also, in 2006 and 2007 were **legalized**, through actions of verifications and court trials regarding the late registering of birth, **78 persons that didn't have birth certificate**.

This means that, except the persons that aren't in the statistics regarding the population, in Vrancea County exist a significant number of Roma citizens that aren't registered, do not benefit of their rights and, as a consequence, they do not have access to education, medical care, labour market, social assistance.

The lack of legal identity, with the effect of exclusion from any right, affects an important number of Roma citizens.

If we look at a comparative analysis of the statistic data we see that, **at the Population census from 2002, 535,140** from the persons interviewed have said that are Roma citizens, while certain **researches done on representative samples** at national level estimates their number at **1,500,000**. **This means that** through the numeric dimension, the Roma community is, next to the Hungarian one, one of the most important minorities from Romania and as a difference of almost 1,000,000 persons is represented by Roma citizens that do not have ID documents, they do not have citizenship or rights associated to them and do not exist from an administrative point of view in relation to the state's authorities.

In relation with **the lack of ID documents**, **The Barometer for Roma's Inclusion**, realized by the Foundation for an Open Society in the period October 2006 – January 2007 reflects the following situation:

-**3%** from the Roma persons **have never had a birth certificate**, this being the most serious form of formal exclusion;

- **3%** from the respondents have declared that **they have never had a bulletin or an ID card**;

- **14%** from the Roma citizens have declared that they have lost at a certain moment the birth certificate and **16%** have lost the ID Card.

By applying a simple calculation we can see that **36% from the Roma citizens** that have been interviewed within this research realized by the Foundation for an Open Society **do not have identity document**. The consequence of this fact is **the social exclusion**. And the situation is more serious as the statistic data show that the young population is significantly more affected by the lack of legal identity than the adult population.

A person, regardless the group to which belongs, minority or majority, **that hasn't been registered at birth** do not exist from an administrative point of view, in relation with the Romanina authorities and as a consequence he cannot have official or authorized relations neither with public, nor with

private partners. More than that, he cannot be considered citizen of Romania and so, he cannot benefit from the rights associated to the citizenship.

The Roma citizens that have been registered at their birth, but that do not have a birth certificate or ID card are exposed to the risk of social exclusion because, although they are Romanian citizens, they cannot prove it. The lack of an ID document leads to the impossibility of interaction with the state authorities and the total exclusion from the rights derived from the statute of citizen: the social assistance, social insurances, the right to political participation, employment in a legal working place.

Consequences:

- Limiting the access to education – Referring to this aspect, the Barometer for Social Inclusion reflects the fact that amongst the Roma citizens without education, approximately 10% do not have a birth certificate and an even bigger percentage do not have ID cards. The education deficit has as immediate consequences the access' blocking to the qualification in other jobs that the traditional ones and a small participation in legal economic activities.

- The difficult access to medical assistance of the members from Roma community

The sanitary system from Romania is based on social health insurances, trying to cover a wide range of health needs of the population. From this perspective, the members from the Roma communities that do not have ID documents have a problem, because as they do not have the possibility to get employed legally, they can't obtain the quality of insurant and remain outside the system. And the exclusion from the public health system leads them into the situation of being unable to benefit from medical services in case of getting ill.

- The impossibility of the access on the labour market

The fact that the members of Roma community that aren't legally registered have no professional qualification and the traditional jobs developed by them are no longer included in the offer from the labour force market leads to their marginalization. Most of them work without a work card, which means not only the lack of a stable income, but also more seriously, the lack of unemployment and pension insurance.

The Roma citizens represent a special situation from the rural area without ID papers, as most of them have no land property (the only source for survival for most inhabitants from the rural area), and the impossibility of the access to the work market has repercussions on their social life.

- The fact that 3% from the Roma citizens have no ID document excludes almost 47,000 persons (half of them children) from the children allocations, emergency helps and social insurances. They do not vote, they can't become members of an organization or can't be elected in public functions. They can't even get married legally or to create ID documents for their future children.

Consequences and risks for the society:

- Traffic of persons, illegal adoptions;
- Incomplete realization of political rights;
- Incomplete realization of social and economic rights.

The lack of the ID documents for the Roma citizens and their social exclusion resulted from this lack represent problems of public interest that Vrancea County Council, the Association "Rrom pentru Rrom" and the Public Department for Census has proposed to solve with this project.

A first stage in this project was represented by the meeting with the representatives of the Roma community, that have been informed on the actions that are going to be organized, emphasizing the importance of these actions for improving the Roma's situation and facilitating the active participation to the economic, social, cultural and political life. This meeting has had as a purpose, beside informing in what concerns the programs of activities, the stimulation of interest of the Roma communities representatives in what concerns the problem targeted and assuring the participation of the members of the community represented at the project's activities. In this stage information were obtained about the persons from the communities targeted through this project, information concerning the Roma citizens that do not have ID papers.

The second stage was represented by the development of the **awareness raising actions** on the entrance of legality, which were conducted in the localities Marasesti, Adjud, Homocea,

Tamboiesti, Racoasa, Vulturu, Sihlea, and Maicanesti. The criterion for choosing the target areas was mainly the number of people registered in Roma settlements.

According to the situations from The County Department of Statistics Vrancea, at **The Census form 2002**, from those almost 1,200 inhabitants from **Marasesti 223 are Roma citizens**, but this figure do not correspond to the reality because **their number is over 3,500 persons (according to the data offered by the Mayoralty of Marasesti)**. The persons that are not included in the official statistics whether didn't declare as being Roma citizens, or weren't legally registered and have no ID papers. The situation of the Roma citizens without ID papers is as serious as at the level of the community that they are coming from, the poverty is generalized, in the context in which in Marasesti is registered the highest rate of unemployment from Vrancea County.

The differences between the Roma citizens included in the statistics and the real situation (according to the data offered by the local authorities from the localities mentioned above) are noticed also in the other localities from the project: **Adjud (800 in compare to 499)**, **Panciu (700 in compare to 55)**, **Homocea (3250 in compare to 0 persons declared at the Census from 2002)**, **Tamboiesti (1400 in compare to 444)**, **Racoasa (550 in compare to 59)**, **Vulturu (432 in compare to 211)**. In these localities the Roma citizens have a precarious material situation and this fact is due mainly to the fact that, as they did not have ID documents they couldn't get employed legally, they have a low income and a high level of not participating on the labour market.

The third stage from within the project has been **legalizing the Roma citizens** by going with the mobile team of the Public Department for Census in the localities marasesti, Panciu, Adjud, Tamboiesti, Racoasa, and Vulturu. The Roma citizens without ID papers have been photographed and all the necessary data were collected in order to elaborate the ID paper.

The persons that couldn't be legalized from different reasons, such as the absence from home in the day when these activities were developed, have been taken into account and were introduced in a data base in order to be contacted by the specialists from the Public Department for Census, in order to release the ID documents. In this situation will be include the persons that have no birth certificate, documents of civil status and property. The information will be collecte by the volunteers of the Association "Rrom pentru Rrom" with the support of the representatives of Roma community.

The Roma citizens that have no birth certificate, fact that puts them in the impossibility of having an ID card, represent a special situation. In this category are the minors, but also the adults, persons that do not exist from an administrative point of view in the relation with the Romanian state and cannot benefit from the rights associated to the citizenship. In order to remedy this situation, the persons without a birth certificate have benefited from free judicial assistance in order to start a trial action regarding the late birth registering. After delivery of the court, the provisions of the mayors of the seven cities covered will be issued birth certificates. In case, the process of late registration of birth is found that some people have no medical certificate will be ascertaining forensic expert (anthropological measurements). This process will require support and social workers in localities Marasesti Adjud Panciu, Homocea, Tamboiesti, Racoasa, Vulturu, who know the problems of the members of the community in which they develop the activity.

After completion of the activities of awareness and legality were elaborated statistics that contained conclusions and recommendations based on the identified problems in Roma communities. These materials have been forwarded to local public authorities and specialized NGOs and followed their involvement in the process of social inclusion of Roma in Vrancea County and to improve their situation by providing access to all the rights associated with citizenship.

It was specially emphasized the problem of the Roma citizens without property documents, problems that can be solutioned through trials or decisions of the local county.

By all these actions and the involvement of all those responsible for this project it has been ensured the solutioning of the problems connected to the lack of identity, marital status and

ownership of Roma settlements from Marasesti Panciu, Adjud, Tamboiesti, Racoasa, Vultur and facilitated their active participation at the economic, social, cultural and political life.

- b) Why should the journalist write about your project? Is it original? Is it innovative? (Please state three points)

This project was an original and innovative one, from the fact that it has been the first intervention realized at a county level that reunited all the public institutions, the specialized services and the NGOs in order to solve a social problem that hasn't been on the public agenda until then. Due to this project were also consolidated the collaboration relations between the NGOs, the representatives of the Roma community and the public institutions involved in the project, with an important impact on solving the other problems identified by the project team members in the Roma communities.

Unlike the classical methods of formal legality, the project was based on campaigns with mobile stations in Roma communities and the direct communication with target group members. Furthermore, all fees for issuing identity documents and marital status were incurred in the project budget.

In the same time, we have been the first institution from the county that has been involved in solving the cases of late registration of birth (Roma citizens that have never had birth certificates and that did not exist for the Romanian from an administrative point of view), from the moment of their identification, until the release of the birth certificate, involving in this project the responsible factors.

In this way, trials that last for several years (due to bureaucracy) have been finalized in the 10 months of project.

This one and the other results registered by the team that has assured the project's management has made the project "Your identity – a chance for equal rights" to be declared a successful project and it has been presented as an example of good practice in the final brochure of the Programme "Accelerating the Implementation of the National Strategy for Improving the Roma Citizens Situation", being financed through PHARE funds.

Please give details:

- c) When was the project launched and what were the most important steps?

The project "Your identity – a chance for equal rights" has been launched on January 18th, 2008, and it lasted until November the same year.

The main stages of this project have been:

- ❖ The partners' meeting and the project team creation
- ❖ The promotion of the awareness campaign and legalization of the Roma citizens (seminary for project's presentation, meetings with the Roma representatives, promotion in the mass – media, promotion on the website of Vrancea County Council – www.cjvrancea.ro)
- ❖ Acquisition of technical means and stationary.
- ❖ Elaboration of informative materials
- ❖ Offering information service and legalization of Roma citizens
- ❖ Informing the public opinion and the institutions responsible about the problems of the Roma communities from the areas whose targets are in the project
- ❖ Monitoring and evaluating the project
- ❖ Disseminating the project's results

d) How is the project managed and who is involved in the project?

Vrancea County Council has assured the management of this project.

The project has been implemented in partnership with the following institutions: The Public County Department for Person Census Vrancea, The association "Rrom pentru Rrom" Panciu and the local councils Adjud, Marasesti, Panciu, Homocea, racoasa, Timboiesti and Vulturu.

The project team was formed of:

- Project manager: Vrancea County Council
- Financial person in charge – Vrancea County Council
- Person in charge with Rroma citizen's communication – the association "Rrom pentru Rrom";
- Person in charge for releasing the ID cards and the marital status documents – The Public County Department for Persons Census;
- One legal adviser.

e) How large is the budget of your project and how is the project funded (EU, regional budget, private institutions or other)? Please give concrete numbers.

The total amount of the project has been of 26,153 €, of which UE and Romanian Government contribution has been of 21,923 €.

f) How effective is your project? (Budget relative to the number of people reached)

We can consider that this project has been a real efficient one, as the grant has been small, but the impact has been important.

We are telling this because **were legalized** with ID and civil status documents **1,113 Rroma citizens**. Were also initiated and finalized 5 actions of late birth registration, 2 trials for name offering and two trilas for transcription of the birth certificate emitted abroad.

Other activities developed within this project:

- 16 information sessions referring to the implications of the lack of ID and marital status documents and the legalization procedure with these documents;
- 10,000 leaflets and 2,000 brochures realized and disseminated;
- 2 sociological researches accomplished in order to identify the problems of the Rroma communities and the level of understanding/awarness of the information offered;
- 1 situation of the Rroma people from the target locality, citizens without ID and marital status documents.

g) Do you have means to measure the impact of the project? If yes, please state how.

Methods for measuring the project's impact:

- **Questionnaires for evaluating the campaign** that have been distributed after every information activity and after finalizing the project. It has been realized also a project feedback, being underlined the way in which were reached the objectives proposed and the estimated results.
- **The analysis of the image of project's development in the media**, for 9 months, by realizing the media dossier during the project's implementation, in order to quantify the number of articles referring to the activity and the way in which the media sees these actions. As the media is an important factor regarding the public opinion, a great importance was given to the image and publicity created to the project in the meadia, the implementing team realizing a media file referring to the project.

- **The analysis of the information obtained through monitoring**

It was watched:

- The number of participants at the activities of information and awareness;
- The number of informative materials distributed;
- Number of people made legally by issuing identity cards;
- Number of Roma citizens who had acquired the birth certificate, after the court action brought by the Public Service for People census;
- Number of statistics handed over to the local authorities by the representative NGOs;
- Number of mass media issues;

h) Is the communication interactive? If yes, please state how.

To streamline the communication process in the project, this one has received an interactive character, in that :

Meetings were held with representatives of Roma communities Marasesti Adjud Panciu, Homocea, Tamboiesti, Racoasa, Vulturu. During these meetings the project was presented and the timing of development of the activities, focusing on the importance of implementing this project for the communities that they represent. This phase of the project was very important considering the role and influence that the representatives of the Roma has in their community. Through these discussions with them the main focus was to stimulate interest from project activities, involvement in organized actions in communities they represent and ensuring Roma participation in activities.

Meanwhile, on the website of Vrancea County Council was introduced a section with information about the project goals, objectives and details of activities. In this way were available to various institutions information about the project, about the situation of the target group observed in work done on site, chart unfolding awareness and implementing activities legally, data on the number of Roma without identity papers and number of persons recorded in the Records of the Public Service for Persons Census after project implementation.

The interactive character of the communication has been assured also by the fact that the representatives of Vrancea County Council, of the Public office of person census and the Association "Rom pentru rom" went in the communities targeted in this project in order to star the activities of awareness and to legalize the Roma citizens without ID or marital status papers. Specifically, representatives of the Association "Rom pentru Rom" have presented the Roma communities the way in which the ID papers will improve their personal situation.

Subsequently, experts from the Service for People Census have explained the procedures for the review. Leaflets were distributed and accessible information about the steps that must be followed for issuing birth certificates, marriage and identity cards.

A special situation was that of Roma citizens who had not had a birth certificate, which puts them unable to take possession of the ID card. In this category are the children, but also some adults, people who were not in terms of office in relation with the Romanian state and could not enjoy the rights associated with citizenship. To remedy this situation, those people without birth certificates were granted legal aid for the start of action on late registration of birth. After delivery of the court were issued birth certificates. In certain circumstances it has been made also forensic expertise. In this process was requested support from social workers who knew the problems facing the communities in which they operate.

i) Will the project be repeated either in your region or in others?

The project will be extended, according to the sustainability plan for a period of 3 years, also for other localities with Roma citizens from the county.

At a national level, we must precise that the project has been declared a successful one, being presented as a good practice for other local authorities.

j) What efforts did you make to attract the media? Has the media been actively involved in your project? Please state how (Regular briefings, press releases, media partnerships or other)

The project has had a great echo in the means of local information, as the project has been presented as a successful one, through its activities succeeding to solve a big problem of the local Roma communities, the one of identity and legality.

The involving of media existed in all the phases of the project's implementation:

- *The project has been officially launched through a seminar where all the local media has been present. During this meeting the project "Your identity – a chance for equal rights" has been presented, as well as the routes for legalizing the members of the roma communities.*

At this meeting were present:

- Representatives of the local newspapers "Monitorul de Vrancea" and "Corect", the TV stations "Atlas TV" and "Diplomatic TV" and the Radio station "Radio Dada";
- Representatives of the local authorities, of the General Department of Social Assistance and Child Protection Vrancea, representatives of the Roma communities, partners and project's implementing team.

In this occasion were distributed leaflets and information on the project and the Brochure "Mechanism of the formal exclusion of the Roma citizens", in which were included information about:

- The rights of the Roma people as citizens of Romania and of the European Union;
- The problems that appear due to the lack of ID and marital status papers and modalities for obtaining them;
- Case studies.

- *During the activity **Promotion of the awareness campaign and legalizing the Roma citizens**, an important stage for the project's evolution was "The promotion of the media activities".*

The seminar "Public opinion and responsible institutions information about the problems of the Roma communities" took place at Vrancea County Council, in which were presented the results of a research done in a previous period in order to identify the problems of the Roma community's members, others than the one determined by the lack of ID and marital status papers.

The information presented during the meeting mentioned above was reflected in the media and on the websites:

- Columns published in the daily newspapers "Monitorul de Vrancea" (21st, 22nd of June 2008) and "Corect" (23rd of June 2008) ;
- News broadcasted and posted on the website "Radio Dada" on Friday, the 20th of June 2008.
- News posted on the websites www.ziare.com and www.adevarul.ro, on June 20th, 2008.

An informative material referring to the seminar organized at Vrancea County Council and the way in which the activities for improving the situation of the Romas from the county will be

continued through the implementation of another project, "The education makes the difference" was posted on the website of the Association "Rom pentru Rom"

The activities developed within the project "Your identity – a chance for equal rights" - for social integration and improvement of Roma citizens' status – have contributed to offering an award of excellence for the president of Vrancea County Council (article published in the daily newspaper "Monitorul de Vrancea", on October 20th, 2008).

We have to precise that, in parallel, all the project's activities have been published on the website of Vrancea County Council, at the "News".

- *The local media has represented the main instrument for disseminating the project's results.*

The dissemination of the project's results has been done during a closing seminar, within which was presented the evaluation report for the project's activities, being emphasized the level of reaching the objectives and the estimated results, and also the modality in which will be assured the project's sustainability.

At this seminar were present the following:

- Representatives of the local newspapers "Monitorul de Vrancea" and "Ziarul de Vrancea", the TV stations "Atlas TV" and the radio station "Radio Dada";
- Representatives of the local authority, of the General Department of Social Assistance and Child Protection Vrancea, Vrancea County Education Inspectorate, partners and the project's implementing team, volunteers from IBO Italy.

During this meeting were distributed also informative materials (brochures) that contain information on the activities accomplished, the difficulties that have been encountered, the problems seized in the Roma communities, good practice examples, modalities for assuring the project's sustainability, contact data for the institutions involved in the project.

- k) Which target group does your project address? How are stakeholders involved (citizens, youth, young, old, academics, media)?

Target group: the Roma citizens with ages between 1-60 years and 7 localities from Vrancea County.

Final beneficiaries: 1.113 Roma citizens without ID papers, from which 550 are women and 563 are men.

From the civil society, the project benefited from unconditional support of the Association « Rom pentru rom ». This NGO has a central role in achieving effective project activities by virtue of their actual information about lifestyle, communication and cultural elements of the Roma population.

The volunteers from this Association went on site, talked to the Roma citizens, informed and determined to overcome the reserves generated by smooth educational and cultural specificity and open against the authorities' intention to provide them a chance and an ID.

- l) What kind of media response have you had to the project? Please state concrete figures, e.g. number of articles, TV, Radio.

The media response for this project is reflected in the project's results, as it follows:

1. The results of the activity of project launching::

- Project promotion in 2 local daily newspapers and 3 radio and TV stations;
- Stimulating the public opinion interest in the Roma citizens' problems;
- Informing the Roma citizens from the target localities on the route of the project's activities;
- 100 brochures and leaflets distributed.

2. Results of the activity of Promotion of the awareness campaign and Roma citizen's legalization:

- 1 press release sent before the seminar for disseminating the project's results;
- 2 news published on Vrancea County Council website;
- 10 media articles published in the local media and on the specialized websites;
- 3 news referring to the project and broadcasted on the local TV and radio stations.

3. Results of the activity of result dissemination:

- 1 press release realized and sent to the local media;
- Project promotion in 2 local daily newspapers and 2 radio and TV stations;
- 200 brochures distributed;
- Informing the public opinion on the project's results.

GOOD LUCK!

Assembly of European Regions
6, rue Oberlin
F-67000 Strasbourg
www.aer.eu