



BRIEF & RESULTS

Roundtable: Virtual Event/Skype

'BARRIERS TO THE LABOUR MARKET: A VICIOUS CIRCLE'

"Fighting discrimination and anti-Gypsyism in education and employment in the EU" (PAL) - JUST/2014/RDIS/AG/DISC/8115

**Date: 14 September 2017; Time: 14.00-16.00 CET
(8am NY, 1pm London, 2pm Brussels, 3pm Bucharest)**

Organized by: The Center for Social Responsibility in the Digital Age
SRDA www.srda.eu

The 4th SRDA-PAL Roundtable, 'Barriers to Labour Market: A Vicious Circle', was held on Skype, the 17 Sept 2017, and is the last SRDA event to complete an activity required by the PAL project under Work stream 3 / 3.5: Implementation of Empowerment Services for Non-Discrimination and Roma-integration.

The PAL project, 'Fighting Discrimination and Anti-Gypsyism in Education and Employment in EU' (PAL) JUST/2014/RDIS/AG/DISC/8115, is funded by the Rights Equality and Citizenship Programme.

The roundtable was organized by SRDA, Partner in the PAL Consortium, and brought together representatives from the academic, policy & regulatory fields from the UK, Romania and Belgium. In total, there were 6 participants.

The roundtable participants had the chance to discuss the topic 'Barriers to the Labour Market: A Vicious Circle' from the educational standpoint, during a two hours session. They shared important information about the way the educational field works for the Gypsy/Roma/Traveller (GRT) communities in the represented countries (the reference to Roma, in most European countries, is inclusive of Gypsy/Traveller).

It was acknowledged that inclusiveness of these groups within the educational system did not reach the same level of acceptance everywhere and is insufficient in developing the best approach to effect improvements.





Discussion covered the variances endemic within different systems, including the legal problems encountered by the Roma community: participants shared their diverse experiences, describing what had been accomplished and where potential improvements could be made.

The discussion also covered:

- The ECtHR case 'D.H. and Others v. the Czech Republic' concerning discrimination of Romani children in the education system including:
 - o addressing systemic discrimination
 - o the challenge of getting the community itself
 - o insistence that the community must become engaged
- Ten years ago, the EC started a programme, assigning a lot of money and devoting a lot of time to resolving the problem. In the end, there was no change (e.g. CZ case, assigned 1 mil EUR);
- Sharing past and present experience from educating and training the Roma community.

As with previous roundtables, the importance of dialogue and collaboration across European countries was stressed several times, and again, everyone agreed.

SRDA believes that interactive result-driven roundtable sessions are most beneficial and may be organized with a minimum to no-cost (no overhead). If well managed (timeline/follow-ups: periodical update reports, actions with close deadlines etc), they may be the answer to improving consensus around Europe.

Concluding remarks

1. **Early on educational efforts** - Investment in early childhood education is key, and should start from a young age, even before first grade. GRT families should be assisted with raising their children in the spirit of integration through education. This will also raise potential employment opportunities, creating progress in growing a financially independent GRT community;
2. **Inclusion assistance of Roma community** – The inclusion approach from different angles of the Roma community is very important, and needs to be looked at relative to the overall picture, with determined actions
 - a. at community level (groups, parents, teachers...);
 - b. taken by the government;
 - c. at middle level (between teachers and education itself);
3. **Keeping people engaged** – The politics of Roma inclusion through education across Europe, the allocation of proper funding, and the direct engagement teachers involved in GRT education should all be encouraged to share their





experiences. Transnational collaboration is very important, especially in the educational, and hence, the employment field;

4. **Education, education, education & Inclusion** – 1. There is a strong need of change in the hearts and minds of teachers; 2. Teachers must be given a clear definition of what 'inclusion' / 'inclusive education' means;
5. **Building Trust** – It is vitally important to build trust among different ethnicities in the classroom; teachers should be the first to insist on this, and to assist with its implementation;
6. **Teaching Method** – There should be a different system altogether for engaging GRT students in education
 - a. the ways / approach;
 - b. educational practices;
 - c. the need for diversity training;
7. **The Model** – We have the ingredients, why not provide a 'model' for schools around Europe (e.g. a programme developed in the UK, by professor Mark Penfold, (micro-teaching) implemented in CZ). The dissemination process and sustainability may be ensured by the networks in place, which cover the social responsibility issue of anti-discrimination / integration;
8. **In partnership with the Roma community** – Tackling changing needs should start at local level, with a focus on the discriminated community. There should be a 'services' package— and the focus on integration (education & employment) should have a natural follow-up progression.

Some of the concluding remarks may seem contradictory, but the overall result was one of positive consensus.

Action

SRDA is taking responsibility for a new in-house project: 'Roma Community Anti-Discrimination and Inclusion Through Education & Employment'

There will be set in place a monitoring mechanism as well as a periodical timeline for organizing Roundtable discussions with stakeholders, European institutions' representatives, academics, NGOs... from across Europe (using the model of the PAL project (3.5) Roundtables).

Deadline - The project will start in January 2018, when SRDA will have set in place the required mechanism.

