(2) ARTICLES
WS 4 / 4.1 Promotional material

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

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INTRODUCTION

The PAL project aims to develop a number of goals in education and employment in support of the implementation of national Roma inclusion strategies and the Council of Europe Recommendation on 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 Consortium

ARTICLE 1

Getting to know PAL — TRUST, the key ingredient for inclusion

During the last 10 years the EU has begun to establish a framework for greater protection against racism and racial discrimination for EU community, its citizens which includes Roma. As part of these Directives the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies solicited its member states to adopt national strategies aimed at improving the economic and social situation of the Roma.

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, and aims to develop a number of goals in education and employment in support of the implementation of national Roma

inclusion strategies and the Council of Europe Recommendation on Roma Integration. The overall objective of the PAL project was to clearly engage the EU member states-- civil society and other stakeholder-- to address the exclusion experienced by the Roma community through a programme which focuses on the educational and employment enhancement of the Roma and particularly children in the countries involved through an effort to educate inform and sensitize the teachers, trainers and experts as well the Roma community to the possibilities given the new EU policies and laws.

The design of the PAL project was to create an integrated approach which would offer for many Roma a second chance with over 1800 young Romas of which over 1000 children are affected, focusing on developing capacities for Roma participation at the local level while raising awareness among relevant stakeholders concerning the need to assure annual access to education and employment.

To accomplish these goals, PAL designed a programme that would train, in order to transfer skills on desegregation to trainers and other stakeholders of the community at the grassroots level in order ensure that Roma children and youth would be fully integrated in today's society. The education and employment process--given the previous failures in responding to the cultural bias--focuses on inclusion through dialogue ingraining trust, respect and understanding, going forward through sensitivity and group dynamics workshops, focusing on communication strategies and tools. The dialogue, either indirect, through entities working closely with the Roma community or, directly with the targeted group, helps connect different parts and communities of the society, thus forming a stronger foundation for inclusion.

To achieve this massive goal, the need to develop buy in from the professional practitioners in both sectors through promoting lifelong learning and understanding of the previous experiences of Roma to focus on the skills, was paramount in order to achieve any degree of success.

The workshops and work-throughs were created not only to instruct but also to bring together, through exercises and discussions a clearer understanding when and examining the strengths and weakness in both verbal and non-verbal communications with groups.

The primary goal allowed the communities to begin to talk *with* each other, rather than *at* each other, fostering honest communications that would eventually lead to trust. **The most important finding in this exercise was that _trust_ is the key element for inclusion.**

To achieve this, the practitioners for the Gypsy / Roma / Traveller (GRT) community fostered these specific events that focused on organized advocacy skills that would

allow this group to speak out and clearly communicate the issues encountered and the needs to be addressed.

As a result, the first step was to create the PAL Network, which will carry forward the objectives and ensure the implementation. This network includes the consortium of the PAL project and other interested entities working *with*, or *for*, the Roma community's interests. The main goal, to empower the members of both, the Roma and the larger EU community to be heard as one voice nationally and internationally is seen to be the start of this very exciting initiative come to fruition.

by Dr Arthur Pober, Vice-President SRDA
7 December 2017

ARTICLE 2

Getting to know PAL — the Law, Career Opportunities, and TRUST

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, and aims to develop a number of goals in education and employment, in support of the implementation of national Roma inclusion. In the EU, equality is embedded in its treaties as one of their fundamental values as is the prohibition of discrimination, as it appears in the Charter of Fundamental Rights. As depicted in both EU Law and the European Convention on Human Rights, the Roma community is protected as an ethnic minority. Under both legal systems, the burden of proof, once a prima facie case of discrimination is established, lies with the respondent.

Specifically, within the context of education and its case law, the Court has condemned national segregational practices which consisted of segregation through misdiagnosis due to unsuitable entrance examinations, segregation within the school through creating Roma-only classes, and voluntary segregation through white flight.

As part of this case law, the Court has repeatedly underlined the special status of the Roma people due to their vulnerable situation thereby requiring special protection.

Furthermore, it has also recognized that this form of segregation is indirect discrimination. The courts have gone so far as to accept evidence that can be used to establish a discrimination case pointing to structural discrimination. In so doing, it obliged the States to take positive action measures to address these structural disadvantages caused by past discrimination.

While case law has been able to address these incidents within the area of education, there is no relevant case law regarding employment. This is a result of the fact there is an unwillingness on the victims of discrimination to report alleged

infringements and lack of confidence in the legal system set out by the Racial Equality Directive and its respective effectiveness.

Adding to this is the fact that there is a systematic risk of unimplemented or ineffectively implemented rulings. The underlying social tensions are a pertinent problem, as coping with ingrained prejudices and reservations, with traditional legal instruments being stretched to their limits. All of this culminates in a uniformly recognized lack of trust on both sides.

To address these challenges, the SRDA offered a programme for training and awareness. All the major components of the SRDA training were made part of the practical framework of work-throughs that reinforce the concepts of acceptance and trust, recognizing and appreciating one's strengths and weaknesses as well as cultural sensitivity in fostering better communication and trust.

The SRDA Training programme focuses on how to provide an open and receptive environment to reduce the sense of non-inclusiveness of the Roma population. To create this open communication environment, work-throughs and training sessions focus on exercises that result in acknowledging a lack of information of Roma people regarding their rights as well as their mistrust of the educational system.

In addition, the programme focuses on how to increase the kinds of employment opportunities available, and most importantly, educating both parties on their rights and inclusion strategies to gain further acceptance for all. The training in new technologies and tools available nowadays, open the door to various career opportunities-- they can help to raise awareness by promoting and developing their skill sets and competencies. These technologies are critical since many of the Roma have not had the chance to access education at an early age. Many of these new initiatives place all entrants on a level playing field facing the newest approaches to hardware and software development.

The goal of the training programme is to take the next step to our final objective of a climate of acceptance and trust where by equality and the rights of persons that are enshrined in the Treaty, the Charter and International Human Rights conventions are promoted and protected.

Trust will thus build confidence, and bring together the society as one, in today's international melting pot. Ultimately, trust will bring communication and interaction to the various communities to understand and respect each other, in a more harmonious cohabitation structure.

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by Dr Arthur Pober, Vice-President SRDA
7 December 2017

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