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Personal presentation: Gabriel Mihai, 37, Brussels, Belgium - 'A genuine giver' (3pgs)

Gabriel Mihai is 37, from Timisoara; Romani-Romanian by birth and Belgian by adoption, he speaks six languages (Romani, Romanian, German, English, Dutch, French) is married and has two children-- a daughter and a son (17 and 18 years old).

A giver and a wise young man whose goal in life is to help others— assisting with integration of Roma community (started from an early age), encouraging education and employment, among all else.

„No job felt degrading, no matter how small” He was always glad and proud to have a job.

Gabriel left Romania for Switzerland when he was four years old. He studied at a German Gymnasium in Zurich and returned with his parents to Romania, in 1994. He then continued his studies at a reputable German High school in Timisoara, where he also learned English; by this time, Gabriel was already speaking four languages. Made friends fairly quickly, and got to be appreciated by teachers and colleagues, alike.

In 2002, Gabriel left Romania for the second time, for Belgium. He immediately started looking for work. He found, at first, various simple landscaping jobs. Later on, he became one of the volunteers with a Belgian organisation looking after the interests of the local Roma Community, and continued with a Mediation stage, in Brussels.

In 2010 Gabriel started working for Foyer, as a Mediator— now, he continues what he started. The work evolved, and together with a dedicated, ambitious and socially responsible team (picture below), he makes the effort to further develop Foyer.

The mother was more supportive than the father-- however, despite the father's lack of enthusiasm (although Gabriel's father never opposed his plans for a professional future)-- he always hoped that his son will pick-up his business, after his retirement.

Being socially responsible, Gabriel started very early, as a goodwill gesture, assisting the Roma community with various small issues related to education and employment. Slowly, he assisted with other social matters, and continued by doing volunteer work, then, mediation at Foyer.

Gabriel's tasks and responsibilities vary from assisting the young Roma with their schooling process, to following with their integration in class (by keeping in close touch with their teachers and family), to joining the team effort on projects helping adults with professional training courses and finding a job. Gabriel values his work, appreciates the leaders & team and believes in the say 'we live and learn', part of his life wisdom.

He also feels that he must give back to the community what the community gave him— a chance to do what he always wanted.



With this in mind and heart, a little bit every day, Gabriel gets positive reactions from his Roma community, on all levels. He gives, before he receives, and this is 'probably the key to people's reactions', he says.

„I would say that 'being a (genuine) giver' is well perceived and appreciated by everyone. Being modest, having your priorities straight, caring about people, respecting them make them reciprocate”

Gabriel feels that landing a hand to someone in need cannot be topped— he gave an example from last winter, when 25 homeless families received assistance; a warm shelter, a warm meal, a place to get cleaned. (Well done, Gabriel! Well done, Foyer!)

Asked if he feels accomplished, he said that accomplishments are part of his every-day-life. He considers himself accomplished every time he solves a problem, sees one of the Roma children finish school, or, simply, making someone on the street smile and answer with an honest 'thank you'. His accomplishments are his satisfactions-- he takes pride in, and is encouraged by, the results of his work, every single day.

His encouragements to the young Roma generation place education, first— he tells them that education should be 'the' priority, that they should dare trust their intelligence, trust their heart, be proud, do not feel inferior, try to integrate, and respect people, because 'what you give is what you receive'.

Same should go for all of us, understanding that respect is a matter of reciprocity-- giving time, acceptance and trust will build mutual respect.

'Were there any role models in your life?' I asked... 'Not especially', he said, 'because the true role models are those close to us and around us'— to start with, the family and friends; his mother, who encouraged him pursue the career he wished for, the father, who, despite the fact that the family business was not continued, he admitted his pride for what his son was doing, and recognised that it was especially important.

... and, last but not least... 'What is fulfilment?'... In his natural, down to earth way, Gabriel considers himself lucky, and blessed with a wonderful family who love, support and respect each other, and a wholesome, professional career. To him, this is fulfilment.

It was a pleasure to meet Gabriel Mihai. 'Thank you for your time, Gabriel, good luck with your work!'

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Gabriel Mihai



The Foyer Team (Gabriel, the second, from right to left)

