



**Diaconal work with  
Roma among  
Eurodiaconia members**

**A 2015 Overview**

**Eurodiaconia** 

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## INTRODUCTION

In 2012, the Eurodiaconia Roma Network carried out its first survey of members' projects in the field of Roma inclusion. The purpose of this survey was to gain a better overview of the types of activities our members are involved in, and to enable our members to exchange project details and contact information across national borders. The results of the mapping exercise proved to be a valuable foundation for networking and mutual learning.

Three years onwards, Eurodiaconia members have developed and implemented a broad variety of new projects, aimed at supporting Roma in different national contexts in fields such as education, employment, political empowerment and health. For this reason, Eurodiaconia has decided to update its report in 2015.

This report provides an overview of projects run by Eurodiaconia members who participated in the mapping exercise. Whilst the following pages by no means contain an exhaustive list of members' projects in this area, they provide a good illustration of the range of activities being undertaken, and can serve as a fruitful starting point for further diaconal action at national and at EU level.

We hope that the mapping document will serve as a useful tool for those looking for ideas to develop new projects, for those looking for projects partners, or generally those interested in learning more about the broad range of projects and services offered by diaconal actors across Europe. Should you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to contact the Eurodiaconia secretariat at [stephan.burger@eurodiaconia.org](mailto:stephan.burger@eurodiaconia.org).

### Thematic indicators:

Education



Social activities



Counselling



Healthcare



Employment



Housing



Financial Advice



Non-Discrimination



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# CZECH REPUBLIC

## 1. Mozaika/Social activation services for families with children



Organisation: Diakonia ECCB, centre Vsetín

Location: Vsetín, Czech Republic

Contact Person: Marta Doubravová, [doubravova.vsetin@diakonie.cz](mailto:doubravova.vsetin@diakonie.cz)

**Project Description:** The aim of the service is to support families with children facing poverty and social exclusion, and to gradually help them manage their problems through their own efforts in order to ensure independence and full societal participation. The service supports around 60 families, or 300 persons, on a yearly basis. Around 80% of these families have a Roma background. Support is provided on the basis of agreements made with the families; they shape the goals, scope and form of the services. Additionally, events are organised to build bridges towards the wider community and to combat discrimination.

The staff consists of 6 social workers who engage directly with the families. There is one volunteer. Diakonia ECCB cooperates closely with local authorities (it contributes to the communal planning of social services and engages actively in the field of social and legal protection of children) and with other social service providers.

**Challenges and Developments:** Main challenges are securing sustainable funding, the psychological demands of the work, and guaranteeing sufficient mobility for the workers.

Initially, the service was provided mainly in the DECCB's own facilities; nowadays, it is provided mainly in the field. The target area has increased through the purchase of a new car, and non-Roma families have now also started to use the service. The quality of the service has increased by strengthening cooperation with local schools and by supporting the communication between schools and vulnerable families, so as to ensure inclusive education.

Furthermore, DECCB is currently developing a social flat, which could support the integration of families in the field of housing. Unfortunately, due to the limited availability of secure funding, expanding the service scope and introducing new follow-up activities is difficult; even if ESF money is available for this initially, continuing the activities is not possible once the funding stops.

**Funding:** The service has been funded by the DECCB itself and from public resources since 2005: amongst the main financial benefactors are the national Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and the municipality of Vsetín. In the past, some activities were funded by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, by the ESF, and by Norwegian funds.

## 2. Come to kindergarten!

Diakonia ECCB – center Vsetín

Location: Various locations, Czech Republic

Contact Person: Marta Doubravová, [doubravova.vsetin@diakonie.cz](mailto:doubravova.vsetin@diakonie.cz)



**Project Description:** This project provides pre-school education for children from socially excluded families. It also provides training to kindergarten pedagogues and other actors who play an active role in child education, and promotes inclusive measures in the education field. The supported children and parents have a Roma background.

In 2015, the project supported 26 children and 22 parents, organised 9 courses in which 206 persons were trained, and resulted in a publication with recommendations for inclusive measures in the town Vsetín. The project as a whole was initiated by the organisation 'People in Need' and carried by 9 partner organisations in the entire Czech Republic.

The implementation team of Diaconia Vsetín consisted of 4 staff workers and one volunteer. Parents have a say over the activities of the pre-school club, and the implementation team includes one worker from the Roma community. Thanks to nationwide cooperation, DECCB was able to enter into dialogue both with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports at national level, and with the educational department of Vsetín at local level.

**Challenges and Developments:** Apart from funding, key challenges are the development of partnerships with local officials, motivating the schoolmaster and pedagogues for the idea of inclusive education, and identifying effective methods to translate the idea of inclusive education into practice.

The project is a continuation of an earlier DECCB initiative: the pre-school club. The project has improved existing services, introduced new working methods, and promoted cooperation with the local kindergartens and other partners. In the future, DECCB aims to strengthen cooperation with kindergartens in order to be able to support more Roma children, and implement some of its current recommendations for inclusive educational measures.

**Funding:** From 2013 until 2015, this project has been funded in the framework of the ESF through the operation programme 'Education for competitiveness'. In case ESF funding will not continue, the pre-school club can be maintained, and networks can be (partially) developed and sustained as part of DECCB's core activities.



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## FINLAND

### 3. Drop-in Centre Hirundo

Organisation: Helsinki Deaconess Institute

Location: Finland, Helsinki metropolitan area

Contact Person: Anca Enache, [anca.enache@hdl.fi](mailto:anca.enache@hdl.fi)

Comments: Interested in partnerships with European platforms working on Roma rights, Roma women rights, EU citizenship, migrant rights and migrant women rights



**Project Description:** The aim of the drop-in centre is to combat the risk of exclusion and marginalisation among Roma migrants. Approximately 2000 migrants benefit from its services on an annual basis; they are provided with counselling and information in various fields, such as employment and women and child rights. The centre is also involved in advocacy initiatives, voicing the needs and interests of Roma migrants (for example, it has responded to a proposed law on banning begging and made proposals on health services for undocumented migrants), combating stereotypes and emphasising the diversity of Roma culture.

The centre is run by 3 staff members, who are supported by approximately 20 volunteers. Both Finnish Roma and migrant Roma are involved in service provision as workers and volunteers. Activities are planned, implemented and evaluated in cooperation with Roma.

The main project partners are the National Roma Forum of Finland, the City of Helsinki, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Parish Union of Helsinki.

**Challenges and Developments:** Most of the Roma migrants are not supported through the Finnish welfare system, and those with EU citizenship only have a right to emergency health and social services. They do not have access to basic services.

The centre evolved from an outreach project which provided humanitarian aid among Roma migrants in Helsinki. After two years, the drop-in centre was opened, addressing the basic needs of Roma migrants whilst also providing a fixed place where vulnerable individuals are empowered to participate in trainings which can improve their living in Finland and in their home countries. Planned future developments are shared trainings on participatory practices, based on the CABLE (Community Action Based Learning for Empowerment) method, and dedicated women group gatherings.

**Funding:** The centre was created in 2008 and has since been jointly funded by the Helsinki Deaconess Institute, the Social Services Department of the City of Helsinki, and the Parish Union of Helsinki. Unfortunately, as the continuity of funding is uncertain, it is difficult to plan activities in the long term.



#### 4. Empowerment and participation: Grassroots democracy by Roma and non-Roma women

Organisation: Helsinki Deaconess Institute

Location: Finland, Helsinki metropolitan area

Contact Person: Anca Enache, [anca.enache@hdl.fi](mailto:anca.enache@hdl.fi)

Comments: Interested in partnerships with European platforms working on Roma rights & Roma women rights



**Project Description:** The aim of this project is to develop a process of local participation through which Roma women and girls can acquire the information and skills needed to access all services/opportunities available to citizens and minorities, and develop the capacity to take full ownership over their choices and participate in the community on an equal basis. The project also promotes public awareness of gender equality and domestic violence, and uses media and arts to combat stereotypes.

Approximately 500 Roma and non-Roma girls and women are currently supported by the project. It is run by 2 staff members and approximately 20 volunteers; Roma act as local facilitators and coordinate initiative groups. They are planning, monitoring and evaluating activities and receive training. The main project partners are the E-Romnja organisation, the National Roma Forum of Finland, the City of Helsinki, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Parish Union of Helsinki.

**Challenges and Developments:** A key challenge is the lack of sustainable political commitment towards the issues faced by Roma women and girls. The project has started only recently; plans for further development have not yet been formulated at this stage.

**Funding:** The project is co-funded from 2014 until 2016 by the Parish Union of Helsinki and by the Helsinki Deaconess Institute. It is not yet possible to assess funding possibilities beyond the year 2016.

#### 5. Health promotion camps for Roma men

Organisation: Helsinki Deaconess Institute

Location: Finland, Helsinki metropolitan area

Contact Person: Jukka Hampunen, [jukka.hampunen@hdl.fi](mailto:jukka.hampunen@hdl.fi)



**Project Description:** The project promotes a healthier lifestyle among Roma men through physical exercise and non-formal educational initiatives. Approximately 100 Roma men are participating on an annual basis, and are involved in the planning of activities. As the health promotion camps are coordinated by one staff member, volunteering and peer support are very important. The project is conducted in close cooperation with the Day Centre Kaalo (Helsinki).

**Challenges and Developments:** The main challenge is to raise awareness of the importance of a healthy lifestyle, as this doesn't receive much emphasis within Roma culture. Due to a lack of financial resources, it is currently difficult to organise new health camps.

**Funding:** The project has been funded by the City of Helsinki Health Centre and co-funded by Helsinki Deaconess Institute since 2009.



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# HUNGARY

## 6. Empowering Roma children and youth



Organisation: Reformed Church of Hungary

Location: Hungary

Contact Person: Laura Velkey, [velkey.laura@reformatus.hu](mailto:velkey.laura@reformatus.hu)

**Project Description:** A joint initiative of HEKS (Swiss Church Aid) and the Reformed Church of Hungary, this project aims to promote engagement with Roma children and youth within congregations of the Hungarian Reformed Church.

Currently, 11 different congregations are actively involved and supported in their work with Roma children and youth. They coordinate after-school programs, support groups for mothers and their children, playhouses, life-skill programs and community development initiatives. This way, the congregations contribute to the enhancement of educational and societal opportunities of Roma children whilst also supporting their families. The project entails local cooperation with municipalities, social institutions, schools and Roma communities, as well as national cooperation with church institutions and services.

The project is currently targeting 250 persons, which includes both congregation members and vulnerable families. It encourages church members in different local contexts to build relationships with the Roma living in their areas by visiting them and organising after-school activities. Three staff members (2 in Hungary, 1 in Switzerland) are involved in the coordination of the project, as well as 50 volunteers.

**Challenges and Developments:** Key challenges are overcoming anti-Roma stereotypes within the church community and the wider society, fruitfully engaging the church leadership, integrating Roma into the congregational community, engaging parents, and empowering Roma to overcome their overreliance on benefits and social help.

The project started out with one Hungarian coordinator and now has two. The project is set up to involve 15 congregations in total - a goal which will hopefully be realised in 2016. Beyond 2016, the plan is to continue the project and to reach out to even more congregations and to develop new strategic aims in accordance with identified needs.

**Funding:** The project is currently set up to run from 2013-2016. It is funded from HEKS resources, budgets of local churches, and the national budget of the Hungarian Reformed Church. The project is sustainable as long as HEKS funding can continue; local churches are currently contributing 30% of their annual budget on average.



## 7. National Reformed Roma Mission

Organisation: Reformed Church of Hungary

Location: Hungary

Contact Person: Nyeső Ágnes, [ciganymisszio@reformatus.hu](mailto:ciganymisszio@reformatus.hu)

Comments: Looking for partners with experience in community development, awareness-raising (especially in schools), trainings for Roma



**Project Description:** The aim of this initiative is to strengthen the mission identity of the congregations of the Reformed Church of Hungary and to support them in serving as open and integrating communities. The aim is to increase social solidarity and to lessen tensions between the majority society and minority groups. The Roma Mission aims to improve the quality of life of those living in areas with severe social, ecological and infrastructural disadvantages.

The mission's strategy consists of providing professional trainings to pastors and co-workers, providing professional support to congregations, disseminating information about Roma culture and tackling stereotypes, providing educational support for Roma children and promoting integration and community life. The mission also encourages congregation members to reach out to Roma from their villages/towns.

The national office of the Roma mission has 6 staff members. Furthermore, each of the four church districts has one coordinator, who supports pastors, co-workers and teachers in the different villages. Additionally, the work of the Roma Mission is supported by approximately 100 volunteers.

Individual congregations cooperate with municipalities, social institutions, schools and the Roma communities. National cooperation takes place with church institutions and services, other NGOs and state bodies; furthermore, the Roma Mission cooperates with Swiss Church Aid.

**Challenges and Developments:** Key challenges are overcoming anti-Roma stereotypes within the church community and the wider society, fruitfully engaging the church leadership, integrating Roma into the congregational community, engaging parents, and empowering Roma to overcome their overreliance on benefits and social help.

In 2013, the Reformed Church of Hungary's Synod adopted its National Roma Strategy (distinct from the National Roma Integration Strategy which is a governmental responsibility). Since then, the Roma Mission network has expanded and involved an increasing number of congregations and pastors. In the future, the Roma Mission's main focus will be to promote awareness-raising in schools, to create a national 'delegation' which visits towns, congregations and church bodies, and to increase international visibility by making the webpage available in English.

**Funding:** The funding for the Roma Mission comes from the RCH budget, national grants, and financial support of Swiss Church Aid and churches outside of Hungary. The funding is currently quite stable.

## NORWAY

### 8. Emergency shelter



Organisation: Church City Mission Oslo

Location: Oslo, Norway

Contact Person: Børre Arnøy, [borre.arnoy@bymisjon.no](mailto:borre.arnoy@bymisjon.no)

**Project Description:** A joint initiative of Church City Mission Oslo and the Red Cross, this emergency shelter offers a place to sleep to a maximum of 100 persons per night. On a yearly basis, approximately 2000 individuals rely on the service; a significant percentage has a Roma background.

The shelter is run by 4 staff members and approximately 50 volunteers.

**Challenges and Developments:** Due to the increasing number of migrants, the emergency shelter needs to grow in size, though finding an appropriate space and the necessary financial resources proves difficult. Staff members are also involved in a public debate around a proposed law which would make begging illegal; so far, their attempts to prevent this law from being adopted have proved successful.

**Funding:** Since 2013, the shelter has received 50% of its funding from the Ministry of Justice of the Norwegian government. The other 50% are provided by the Church City Mission and the Red Cross.

### 9. Rom for fattige tilreisende (poor migrants)

Organisation: Church City Mission Oslo

Location: Oslo, Norway

Contact Person: Johanna Fraenkel, [johanna.fraenkel@bymisjon.no](mailto:johanna.fraenkel@bymisjon.no)

Comments: Looking for Romanian partners to set up a small sewing factory in Gorj



**Project Description:** 'Rom for fattige tilreisende' is aimed at providing support to EU migrants who live at the fringes of Norwegian society – many of them are Romanian Roma who try to sustain themselves by begging, collecting bottles and playing music on the streets of Oslo. The project encompasses outreach work, case work, Norwegian language courses and various crafting courses (sewing, knitting). It also offers weekly health check-ups. Advocacy activities are centred around national and international conferences and meetings with journalists, politicians and municipality workers. The project's impact is related to its ability to create a cultural bridge between Norwegian society and begging migrants.

The project is run by 3 part-time employees and supported by 16 volunteers. There is a user council with 5 representatives; 3 of them are Romanian Roma, the other two are non-Roma Romanians. Additionally, Roma are involved in the project as outreach workers, as translators, and as teachers for various courses.

**Challenges and Developments:** The limited availability of funding and low staff capacity often prove insufficient to meet the manifold needs of the target group. There are also few opportunities for engaging the wider Norwegian society through awareness-raising activities.

The project was initiated on the basis of focus group meetings with users and originally covered three main areas (outreach, case work and advocacy). Through the involvement of volunteers, the project's scope could be expanded to include additional activities such as courses and health work.



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**Funding:** From 2013 onwards, the project has been funded mainly by the Church City Mission, and to a small percentage by the Norwegian government. Due to a lack of sustainable funding, the future of the project is uncertain, which makes long-term planning difficult. Also, some staff members are required to work on the basis of temporary contracts.

## ROMANIA

### 10. Day centre for Roma and socially disadvantaged children



Organisation: Fundația Creștină Diakonia (Christian Foundation Diakonia)

Location: Cluj, Romania

Contact Person: Kinga Lörinczi, Erzsébet Corde-Szobloszlai, [office@cj.diakonia.ro](mailto:office@cj.diakonia.ro)

**Project Description:** The Christian Foundation Diakonia is currently running day care centres for disadvantaged children (many of them being Roma) in 15 locations across Romania. The centres offer support with homework for improved school results, promote good behaviour, raise awareness about the importance of hygiene, teach religious education and aim to build better relations between the children's families and the local community. The centres ensure comprehensive support through active partnerships with local and national authorities, churches, schools, GP Offices, and the General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection Cluj. The centres support over 500 children in total.

The centres are run by a total number of 45 staff members (social workers, pedagogues, Roma mediators) and supported by 10-15 local and foreign volunteers. Partnering with the Faculty for Social Work, they also offer internship opportunities to students. The children's parents are involved in organising events for the children and have the possibility to participate in thematic seminars.

**Challenges and Developments:** The main challenges are realising financial sustainability and long-term impact within both the target group and the community at large. There are plans to expand the scope of activities in order to include (amongst others) social counselling, health education, summer programmes and mentoring for those who continue their education.

**Funding:** The centres, which started in 2001, are funded by foreign church-related partners, local donors, EU programmes and grants, and the national authorities.



## SERBIA

### 11. Roma Resource Centre

Organisation: Ecumenical Humanitarian Organisation

Location: Various municipalities, Serbia

Contact Person: Robert Bu, [robert@ehons.org](mailto:robert@ehons.org)



**Project Description:** The Roma Resource Centre is involved in various projects promoting Roma Inclusion across Serbia.

- a) The Roma Resource Centre is supporting vulnerable families across Serbia by guaranteeing minimum sanitary standards and improving living conditions in their homes. The families do this by constructing septic tanks, building and furnishing bathrooms, and carrying out minor repairs in their houses. Major reconstructions are carried out as well, and for eight families new small houses were built. In 2014, EHO promoted the Dweller Driven Upgrading of Roma Settlements and the Construction Manual for Dwellers. These are the first guides and manuals of this kind in the country and the region.
- b) In 2014, the EHO RRC worked with 22 teaching assistants in 23 primary schools in 16 municipalities in Serbia. 22 grants were provided for teaching assistants in order to assist them in completing four-year vocational secondary school. These assistants organised supplementary lessons in the form of individual mentorship, out-of-school activities and work with parents, involving a total of more than 1,800 pupils in the education programme.
- c) Over the course of 2014, 15 seminars were held on the topic "Introduction to Intercultural Education" for 308 primary and secondary school teachers and teaching assistants from 60 primary schools in Vojvodina. The EHO RRC supported 10 primary school projects promoting intercultural values in the local community. Roma men and women took part in a programme of work, employment and self-employment training, and 35 of them found work this way. The services of the Info Centre, the Legal Centre and the Centre for Advice to Migrants of the EHO RRC were used by 1800 people.

**Challenges and Developments:** Not specified

**Funding:** Not specified

### 12. Assistance for forcibly displaced Roma people

Organisation: Ecumenical Humanitarian Organisation

Location: Serbia

Contact Person: Tanja Stojković, [tanjas@ehons.org](mailto:tanjas@ehons.org)



**Project Description:** This project is in its fourth three-year cycle (2013-2016) and aims to provide legal, economic and educational assistance to, and improve the living conditions of, repatriated Roma. In doing so, it aims to support the process of (re)integration of Roma people repatriated to Serbia from Western European countries where they have lost residence rights, as well as Roma people displaced from Kosovo and living in the Vojvodina municipalities. Over the course of 2014, 2136 different personal documents were



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procured and 18 families received grants to start their own small business through the provision of tools and equipment. Additionally, 286 children received mentorship, as well as school supplies and shoes.

**Challenges and Developments:** Not specified

**Funding:** Not specified

### 13. Educational assistance for Roma and other socially vulnerable girls

Organisation: Ecumenical Humanitarian Organisation

Location: Serbia

Contact Person: Stanka Janković, [stanka@ehons.org](mailto:stanka@ehons.org)



**Project Description:** This one-year project aims to improve the educational opportunities of girls aged 10 to 15 which are at risk of leaving school (mostly Roma girls, girls living in poverty, girls with disabilities) in the municipalities of Ruma, Titel, Opovo and Plandište in the province of Vojvodina, Serbia. The objective of the project is to develop the capacities of girls from marginalised groups in rural areas in Serbia by providing them with access to better education, mentorship and skills training opportunities. The pupils attend supplementary lessons, get help from a mentor and are given other forms of support in order to finish primary school successfully. Besides overcoming learning difficulties, their special talents and abilities are developed through creative activities, and through the continuing education and motivation of their parents, who will support them in their efforts to continue and complete their education.

**Challenges and Developments:** Not specified

**Funding:** Not specified

## UNITED KINGDOM

### 14. Armada Spasy

Organisation: Salvation Army

Location: Margate, Chatham, Gravesend

Contact Person: David Blowers, [david.blowers@salvationarmy.org.uk](mailto:david.blowers@salvationarmy.org.uk)

**Project Description:** As part of an approach focused on 'change of hearts and minds first', the Armada Spasy project connects Roma Inclusion to evangelisation – its aim is to plant new congregations among Roma migrants in the UK and to involve them actively in evangelising activities. Although this approach is by no means the only one which the Salvation Army employs in its engagement with Roma, it has been described by Roma migrants themselves as more effective than one which focuses on promoting social cohesion alone. By instilling a new sense of purpose and promoting an identity which transcends anti-Roma stereotypes, the project reflects a spiritual approach which can meaningfully contribute to social inclusion. It is also being followed through with several Slovakian Roma communities in their country of origin.

Approximately 400 persons benefit from the project annually; 150 adult members are now part of the congregation and engaging with their own community within the UK and abroad. The project is run by five paid staff members, two of whom work on a full-time basis.

**Challenges and Developments:** The main challenge of the project is, as project coordinator David Blowers puts it, to “demonstrate cultural sensitivity without making spiritual compromise”. The project seeks to establish a balance between fostering a new sense of positive identity whilst also respecting existing cultural traditions.

Evolving from a house group with 8 members, the project has resulted in the establishment of a large congregation in Margate and of two other predominantly Roma congregations in other towns.

**Funding:** The project has started in 2008. Initially, it was mainly funded from the Salvation Army central fund, but now it is increasingly being funded from the personal contributions of Roma members. The project is financially sustainable for the foreseeable future.

