

The Key to the Future - From Marginalisation to Participation: An Integrated Community-Based Model for Roma Youth in Budila Commune

Name of the organisation

Asociația Sprijin și Dezvoltare

Website of the organisation

organisation website: <https://sprijinsidezvoltare.wordpress.com/> project website: <https://www.cheia-viitorului-budila.ro/index.php>

Location of the organisation

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Good practice aspect(s)/themes of youth work

- Participation of young people in decision making
- Inclusion
- Community work
- Youth work in rural areas

Good practice category

A practice of processes and methods

Good practice aim & purpose

The “Key of the Future – Social Inclusion in Budila Commune” project aimed to increase social inclusion and participation of Roma youth and their families in a marginalised rural community in Romania, moving from marginalisation to participation through an integrated community-based model.

The project responded to major challenges faced by Roma communities and other vulnerable people living in similar conditions: limited access to early education, high risk of early school leaving, reduced access to health services and low civic participation among young people.

Its main objective was to create an integrated community-based model supporting participation of Roma youth and their families, improving access to education and essential services, and contributing to social inclusion.

A central objective was to empower Roma young people by placing them at the core of the intervention, supporting them to develop self-confidence, social and communication skills and engage in their community, while recognising the role of families.

Through non-formal education, counselling, sports and empowerment activities, participants reflected on discrimination, human rights and their role in society.

In the long term, the project enables Roma youth to become advocates for their communities, promoting social change and inclusion, while strengthening cooperation between NGO, municipality and school to ensure sustainable impact.

Good practice description

“The Key to the Future – Social Inclusion in Budila Commune” is an integrated community development project implemented within the Roma community and other vulnerable groups in Budila Commune, Romania.

The intervention was based on an integrated approach, combining education, health, personal development and community participation, tailored to the specific needs of a rural marginalised context.

Roma youth were placed at the centre of the intervention. Activities were designed to create a safe and inclusive environment in which young people could develop self-confidence, social competences and the ability to actively participate in community life, while being encouraged to express their views and represent their needs and perspectives.

The youth work activities included educational support to prevent early school leaving, school and vocational counselling, sports and personal development activities for young people, empowerment programmes for Roma women and young women, parental education, as well as employment support services for parents, including counselling and meetings with local employers.

To support access to essential services and early childhood education, the project included the construction and operation of a kindergarten for Roma children and other vulnerable families in the community. In addition, a medical office and a dental office were established, providing preventive services for children and young people

The project also promoted intercultural dialogue and cooperation between the Roma community and the majority population through awareness-raising and community engagement activities.

Currently, activities continue in the sustainability phase through educational and participation programmes for Roma children and youth, organised in collaboration between the NGO Sprijin și Dezvoltare (project partner), the Municipality of Budila (project promoter) and Budila Secondary School.

These include workshops on bullying prevention, human rights and children's rights, healthy communication, mutual support and democratic participation. Young people are encouraged to reflect on these topics, identify situations of discrimination or bullying and contribute to creating a safe and inclusive environment. Simple digital youth work tools are also used to support expression and documentation of their experiences.

Sports and cultural activities continue through sports club and intercultural dance activities, promoting cooperation and dialogue between Roma and non-Roma youth.

An important element of the practice is the empowerment of Roma youth through initiative groups and regular meetings, where they are encouraged to express their ideas and actively engage in local youth participation and community development, strengthening their role as active, representative actors and voices within the community. Roma women and young women are supported to strengthen their role within the family and community.

In this process, Roma youth have also been involved in developing European initiatives, including the preparation of an Erasmus+ youth exchange project.

As part of the sustainability process, the process of establishing a Roma youth organisation is being supported as a youth-led initiative.

The practice was implemented between January 2022 and April 2024 and continues in a sustainability phase, reaching over 1,300 beneficiaries, including approximately 800 children and young people (at least 770 Roma children and youth) and around 470 Roma parents, as well as other vulnerable community members.

Good practice result & concrete effects

As a result of the practice, Roma youth and children increased participation in educational and community-based activities and developed personal, social and communication competences.

Key effects include:

- increased access to early education through the kindergarten established within the project
- improved access to health services through the primary healthcare and dental offices
- development of life skills, communication and leadership among Roma youth
- increased self-confidence and active participation in community life
- strengthened role of Roma women within the family and community
- increased empowerment of Roma women and young women through support groups and participation activities
- strengthened cooperation between local authorities, schools and NGOs

Roma youth and community members became more involved in community life and local decision-making. Through initiative groups, they identified needs, formulated proposals and submitted 10 community initiatives, reflecting increased civic participation and ownership.

Services and activities continue through collaboration between the NGO Sprijin și Dezvoltare, the Municipality of Budila and Budila Secondary School.

Young people moved from passive beneficiaries to active participants, contributing to the co-design of activities and local initiatives.

The practice strengthened local youth work in a rural marginalised context by involving Roma youth in participation, dialogue and community initiatives, in line with Europe Goes Local principles.

Good practice chapter of the European Charter on Local Youth Work

Organisation and practice