

ROMA-VISION

Most EQUAL Development Partnerships (DPs) have high hopes and ambitions but the Esélyegyenlőség a médiában DP, in Hungary, has really set itself some difficult challenges. Firstly, it is training a group of disadvantaged people with the intention of getting jobs for them in the media. Secondly, and with very limited resources, it is trying to construct a television station of its own in Budapest. Then last, but not least, it is working with its transnational partners to establish an all-European Roma Television Network.

In Hungary, as in many other European countries, disadvantaged groups are not well represented in the media. On the occasions when issues related to minority groups are featured on radio or television, the reporting often strikes a negative tone or resorts to a stereotypical stance. In addition, there are few examples of the media using newsreaders or reporters from disadvantaged backgrounds or inviting "experts", who are from an ethnic minority community or who have a disability, to contribute to their programmes.

The Esélyegyenlőség a médiában (Equal Opportunities in the Media) DP is trying to bring about constructive change by training 40 people for jobs in the media in an attempt to open up the "closed shop" attitude of television and radio stations. What it is doing mirrors the Council's Recommendations on the implementation of Member States' employment policies^[1].

"The media here is almost shut to outsiders and the best way of describing it is that it is just like a professional club," explains Lajos Puporka who is in charge of Kisebbségi és Emberi Jogi Alapítvány (the Minority and Human Rights Foundation). He continues, *"while some of our trainees might eventually get jobs in the mainstream media, we decided to create our own television station to give the most talented of them the chance to get a job and some real work experience. We are going to..."*



This doorway will soon be the entrance to the TV8 reception area and its television studio

The [Minority and Human Rights Foundation](#) has been joined in these tasks by [Ház a réten Közhasznú Kulturális Egyesület](#) (House on the Meadow Cultural Association), [Mozgáskorlátozottak Egyesületeinek Országos Szövetsége](#) (National Federation of Disabled Persons' Associations) and [Partners Hungary Alapítvány](#) (Partners Hungary Foundation). Together they decided to call the television station TV8, as the project is based

in the VIIIth District of Budapest. Whilst accurate figures are hard to come by, it is estimated that up to 20,000 Gypsies might be living in this district.

The Minority and Human Rights Foundation is a reasonably young organisation, as it was founded in 2002 when its assets were one computer and 10,000 dollars. However, the Foundation gradually developed with external help, especially through the EU Phare programme that enabled it to run two projects one on Gypsy History and the other on Civil Society in Hungary. It is now in a much more stable situation and is trying to work with the market by selling productions to TV and radio stations. House on the Meadow Cultural Association is a non-profit making educational organisation that was established in 1997. It has a video and media school, staffed by individuals who are highly-skilled, open-minded and flexible which makes them ideal tutors for Roma people and people with disabilities. The goal of the National Federation of Disabled Persons' Associations (MEOSZ) was established by people with physical disability in 1981 and it is still controlled by them. With its 85 member associations, 540 local groups and 190, 000 individual members, MEOSZ was invaluable when it came to recruiting project participants with disabilities. Partners Hungary Foundation was established in 1994 to prevent and manage conflicts stemming from the democratization of the country. Right from the beginning the Foundation has been involved in promoting the co-existence of Roma and non Roma this experience was very important both in the design and in the on-going implementation of the project.

TRAINING FOR JOBS IN THE MEDIA

Equal Opportunities in the Media is providing media-related training to some 40 individuals, the majority of whom are young Roma but the beneficiaries also include people with disabilities and other disadvantages. Each of the DP's members has brought different skills, experiences and contacts to this project.



Gergely Lrincz reconsiders the story board for his film assignment...

At the start of the project, the possibility of being trained in media skills was advertised on local TV and radio and through the partner organisations in the DP. Over 150 people applied to join the training course and in the end, 40 were selected on the basis of their social situation, education, capacity to communicate and any related professional or musical skills. The twelve months of training that finished in December 2006 was provided by the House on the Meadow Cultural Association. Four years ago this organisation was accredited as an official provider of training for professional qualifications in the field of film and broadcasting and so the training offered by the DP was to a professional standard that is recognised by the Ministry of Education. It involved six months during which 420 hours were spent on basic theory and then a second six month period involving 530 hours of practical work experience in local radio and television stations.



...while, Róbert Bordas focuses on everyday life in his local Roma community

"When we conceived the project we thought that it might be necessary to have someone like a social worker or counsellor as part of the training team to help the students with their problems and boost their self-confidence," explains Lajos Puporka who adds *"but that has never really been necessary."* A number of factors might explain this situation. Firstly, the students receive a small, but significant, salary of 350 euro per month and for some this is the first time they have earned any income so it really boosts their self image. Secondly, the DP hired a training suite in a very smart, down-town office building and supplied state of the art equipment so the students quickly realised that they, and their needs, were being taken seriously. Finally, while the students are very mixed in terms of backgrounds and disadvantages, there has never been segregation, and they have learned from each other by working together. During the course people began to specialise in camera work, lighting, editing, or reporting, as they refined their interests and understood their aptitudes better. While each student had his or her personal assignment in terms of producing a short film or radio report, small working groups were formed so that all the necessary skills were available to produce the final product.

Participants on the course also had the chance to go to film festivals mainly in Hungary but some held in other countries. This gave them the opportunity to meet up with professionals working in

this field, to present what they had produced and to gain important hints and tips from these full-time media specialists. The students also all spent time together in two workshops in the countryside to get to know each other and to brush up their skills. The last workshop was held in December 2006 just before their final assessments by the external, independent examination committee and it gave them a chance to finalise their work and to prepare themselves mentally for the ordeal. Andras Matkocsik, the teacher of the course believes that *"while it has been an important formative experience for everyone and while they have a chance to develop their communication and visual skills only about a half of the students will end up working in the media."* Indeed that process has already started.



The modern training suite some of the latest most up-to-date recording equipment

WORKING IN THE MEDIA

While the examination results were very positive with 35 of the 40 participants passing the assessment, this group is being reduced down to 15 on the basis of their talent and professional capacity that they have demonstrated during the course. *"For many this is the first taste of the realities of working in the media – it's a very competitive and cut-throat sector,"* adds Andras. His views are echoed by one of the students, Melinda Szajko who feels that *"while the course was an absolutely marvelous opportunity for me, I sometime wonder whether any mainstream media organisation would hire a Roma presenter and that's why I am looking to TV8."*



A very dusty lens captures Lajos Puporka (left) consulting the foreman of the Roma builders

The lucky 15 will go on to work for another year in TV8 at the same salary they had received during their training and while they were completing the course the television studio was being prepared. The DP had found an old building that used to be a store and was able to rent it and to gain permission to convert it. Naturally, it was decided to use the skills of the local Roma community to carry out all of the construction, plastering, cementing and painting that was needed. The final touches are now being made to the studio and the wiring and equipment has just to be installed. Then, as a result of the training course and all of the renovation work, TV8 will go on air, for the very first time, during summer 2007.

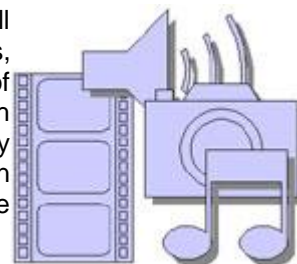
Media spanning the Frontiers

While, the Minority and Human Rights Foundation had experience in implementing and managing projects, funded by national and community sources, it had never worked in a transnational project, in spite of the large number of its international relationships. *"If it hadn't been for EQUAL we would never have found all these very stimulating new contacts,"* says Lajos Puporka *"and while we are all very different this diversity of skills and knowledge is one of the strong points of our partnership."* It is the theme of Roma that unites all the members of this partnership but at the beginning, they were all approaching this theme from different angles.

The [ROMA DP](#) in the Czech Republic is the managing organisation of this [R.O.A.D.\[2\]](#) Transnational Partnership. ROMA is operated by the Romany Association of Northern Moravia

which has experience of organising a great number of free time and educational activities for the Roma minority, as well as for the majority population, with the aim of combating racism and xenophobia in society. The second partner is an Italian DP called "[In carovana. Sulla via delle stele](#)" or "In Caravan – On the Wings of the Wind." Kervan, the organisation that operates the project, has worked with Romany people in projects financed by the ESF focusing on how it is possible to re-launch the more traditional forms of Gypsy work in a legal way. The third member is "[Romowie na rynku pracy](#)" which means Roma in the Labour Market. This DP is run by [the Romany Association in Poland](#), which houses the Romany Historical Institute that is a centre for documentation, research and publishing activities. The Association has also created a large international, permanent exhibition on the extermination of European Roma which is on display in the National Museum Auschwitz – Birkenau, at Oświęcim. Finally, the [European Roma Employment Agency](#) in Slovakia focuses on increasing the employment of the Roma. In [its EQUAL project](#), it is helping the Romany minority, long-term unemployed and low-skilled people to integrate into the labour market via counselling and training that increases their knowledge about employment legislation and taxes, computer literacy and entrepreneurship.

The ROAD Transnational Cooperation Agreement was confirmed by all the five partners, in May 2005. In a very busy schedule of meetings, often as frequent as one every month, the partners identified a series of ten activities or operating packets, as they called them, in which transnational cooperation would bring added value. However, not every member was expected to participate in every packet. For example, on behalf of the other members, the Slovak and Czech partners have developed a range of educational modules on:



- Essential social skills and work habits;
- Establishing a company or becoming self-employed
- Development of presentation skills;
- Introduction to computers;
- Job-search and interview skills.

These modules are now being piloted by the other partners.

Similarly, the Italian partner is leading a packet along with the Polish and Czech DPs to establish a documentary centre that is now gathering and updating information about work with Roma - about policies, measures, activities, and methods of the work in all the partner countries. This centre will shortly be accessible through an internet portal.



Practising to record progress in ROAD's transnational work

During ROAD, there have been many chances taken to discuss interesting developments in the different countries such as the creation of the Roma Art Agency in Poland that tries to help the talented Roma Artists or new approaches to working with Romany children and young people in Slovakia. Of course, partners also used the transnational meeting that they were hosting as excellent public relations opportunities to promote their own views and activities. For example, the lead partner ROMA invited representatives of Romany organisations, the Deputies of the Counsel for Minority Matters and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in the Czech Republic to a workshop held during the transnational coordinators meeting proposed to inform them about the outputs and experience of its ROMCENTRUM (Romany Cultural and Community Centre).

The Hungarian Equal Opportunities in the Media DP has played a very full role in the meetings and the activities of ROAD and, in addition, it has filmed the whole development of the work of this transnational partnership. This record will be very important if the most ambitious objective of

ROAD comes to fruition. At its meeting in Zakopane, Poland, in June 2006, the Polish, Slovak and Hungarian partners agreed to work towards establishing a European Roma Television and Media Foundation that would help to contrast cultural specificities, preserve the Roma history and protect the Roma language. There is currently a feasibility study taking place on how best to create a network of small studios that could together make programmes to be broadcast over satellite. At the same time, an application for the funding of this network is being prepared for submission to the new [EU Culture Programme](#) that will operate from this year to 2013. However, in an act of great faith and conviction, the Foundation has been established and is now legally registered in Auschwitz, Poland.

The Three Most Important Lessons from "Equal Opportunities in the Media"

According to Lajos Puporka, the significant things that have been learned through the DP's EQUAL experience are:

1. "Firstly, international collaboration is rewarding and enriching. So many things have been learned from partners and, at the beginning, it was never anticipated that this cooperation would be so interesting and useful.
2. Secondly, for a small, but developing organisation, participation in EQUAL has been very valuable. The discipline that is imposed in terms of monitoring and maintaining financial records meant that we have had to upgrade our own administrative structures. Now, we are in a position to be able to work with any authority and to manage income and grants effectively.
3. Finally, for Roma and for other disadvantaged groups, it is important that they are treated with respect if they are to be properly integrated in both the social and vocational spheres."

Lajos Puporka
Kisebbségi es Emberi Jogi Alapitvány
Ulloi ut 23
1091 Budapest
Hungary
Tel/Fax: + 36 1 216 3907
Mob: + 36 30 911 7405
Email: puporka@hotmail.com

[Link to EQUAL database description](#)