



Annual Report 2008 **Spolu** Strengthening
the Roma Voice
Make the Roma voice heard!

Spolu International Foundation

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Photo: Contrasto / Hollandsche Hoogte

Demonstration in Italy of Roma to protest against racism, June 2008

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Jan Marinus Wiersma (left) chairing the Round Table in the Hague with Knut Vollebaek, High Commissioner National Minorities OSCE (right)

Photo: Spolu IF

Preface

By **Jan Marinus Wiersma**, Vice-President of the Socialist Group in the European Parliament and President of the Board of Spolu International Foundation

The breakthrough for an EU Roma strategy that we would have liked to see in 2008 didn't happen. But to conclude that our efforts to promote a comprehensive and coordinated European response to the ongoing and even deepening, exclusion and discrimination of Roma communities in Europe have been in vain would be wrong. On the contrary, the policy agenda for Roma inclusion has been greatly consolidated in the past year. We now need to build on the concrete achievements of 2008.

One of the great successes of Spolu is that it has firmly established itself as one of the players at the European level. As a result, the foundation will be able to play a key role in shaping the concrete initiatives to promote Roma inclusion that the European Union has now committed itself to. Most importantly, this will benefit its activities in the countries where it is active.

The first ever Roma summit the European Commission was organised in September 2008, under pressure from civil society and the European Parliament, was a landmark event. It was the first time ever that the European executive so sincerely signalled it was taking the issue of Roma inclusion seriously. Roma inclusion has become a fixed item on the European policy agenda. That is an enormous gain. At the same time, the event showed that the EU is unsure how to deal with the challenges before it and is reluctant to take bold steps. Likewise, at their summit meeting in December 2008, the European government leaders reaffirmed their commitment, remained rather vague as to concrete initiatives.

Nevertheless, we should count our blessings because I believe this state of affairs presents clear opportunities. The EU seems genuine in its wish to closely involve Roma civil society in the exercise of formulating its policy response. The initiative we took in the European Parliament to secure an additional 5 million euros from the European budget specifically for Roma inclusion projects has fallen on fertile ground. In close dialogue with NGOs, the European Commission is seeking to use these funds to design and implement innovative approaches that will help future development of more effective policies to break the vicious circle of poverty, exclusion and discrimination of Roma communities. The active involvement of Spolu demonstrates the central role it now plays in the policy-making process. Its experience of bottom-up grassroots approaches is invaluable to European policy makers.

In the Netherlands, too, Spolu was able to deepen awareness of Roma issues among Dutch policy makers. A meeting we organised in The Hague on 6 October 2008 successfully made the connection

between Spolu's international network and the movers and players in The Hague. I hope this will help translate the vocal commitment of the Dutch government to the fate of Europe's Roma into concrete and active involvement at European level.

Although the political context is on the one hand conducive to achieving positive results, there are also great challenges. The economic crisis will surely affect Roma communities, and might even hit them hard. We must be alert on political rhetoric – anywhere in Europe – that takes aim at minorities or the disadvantaged to mislead dissatisfied constituencies. Roma inclusion policies can only be effective if we stand squarely before equal citizenship. In this regard, too, we need clear political commitment from political leaders. Spolu is on course and needs in the coming years to steadily continue its efforts. Combining pragmatism and a focus on concrete results with a clear view on the bigger questions still out, I believe the organisation will continue to make a difference.

Introduction

By Ruus Dijksterhuis
Director Spolu
International Foundation

With pride, I present you the annual report about the work and achievements of Spolu International in 2008. Through 'Strengthening the Roma Voice Programme 2006-2010' Spolu creates favourable conditions for Roma to improve their position in society. Last year, Spolu supported national programmes of 13 partner organisations in eight countries, which empower 16 grassroots networks that organised more than 90 Roma communities to achieve their citizenship rights. In this annual report concrete examples of our work can be found.



Roma woman discussing the lack of water supply in the Albanian Roma community.

The year 2008 was a challenging year for Spolu. It started with the launch of the European Roma Policy Coalition (ERPC) strategy, of which Spolu is one of the founding members together with Amnesty International, the European Network Against Racism (ENAR), the Open Society Institute (OSI) and other key players in the Roma rights field. It was encouraging to commonly strategise the plea for a European Roma Policy and for a coordinative body in the European Commission that can catalyze the developments.

An important achievement of the ERPC's lobby was the first Roma Summit that took place in Brussels. One of the most significant results of the summit was the announcement of the Integrated Roma Platform by Commissioner Spidla. Many Roma activists were present; among them members of the European Roma Grass-

roots Organisations (ERGO) network. ERGO is one of the main stakeholders that lobbies for Roma grassroots interests and recognition of Roma issues on European level. Spolu was the driving force behind its establishment.

Together with ERGO, Spolu started to streamline the advocacy mechanisms regarding the implementation of Roma policies between the European and grassroots level by way of a chain of communication. This chain ensures a two-way information flux between the grassroots level and EU institutions, translating European and national policies towards grassroots level and analyzing and assessing the impact of these policies. It provides unique information towards the European stakeholders, like the European Commission and that enables them to sharpen policies targeting Roma communities.

Spolu became more recognised as a key actor among the institutions and networks addressing the interests of Roma. Together with Amnesty International, Spolu stimulated the debate in the Netherlands on the Roma situation. Through our large net-

Spolu's approach

With almost 15 years of experience, Spolu is internationally recognised for its expertise and appreciated for its efforts to create favourable conditions for Roma to strengthen the Roma voice.

Spolu supports grassroots Roma leaders and organisations to develop into key stakeholders that professionally support the empowerment of Roma as well as effectively advocate for the interest of Roma. We assist them, the partner organisations, the ERGO network, the national networks and coalitions and the community groups, gaining skills and knowledge to fulfil this role and to position themselves in the Roma field. Spolu's approach

is unique: in our capacity building efforts, we continually assess how to create ownership and design trajectories for our partners to develop their own strategies and to become independent entities. We believe that this is the only sustainable way to structurally improve the future of Roma.

To further enhance Roma ownership, Spolu is in the process of outsourcing

The Strengthening the Roma Voice Programme

For a humane and stable European society, it is important that Roma are empowered to organise themselves from the local level upwards, develop representative leadership, create alliances with those who want to support them and become equal partners of authorities and institutions.

The Strengthening the Roma Voice programme is designed to counter the mainstream development in which Roma NGOs are mainly supported and trained as efficient service providers, technically skilled to manage programmes. We offer an alternative and support Roma civil society to speak up and take its role as watchdog. We support Roma NGOs that empower Roma leaders and organisations, so that they are able to stand up for their civil rights and sustain their participation in local and regional decision making, even after the programme ends.

The goal of the Strengthening the Roma Voice Programme 2006-2010 is to contribute to the achievement of equal opportunities for Roma in Central and Eastern Europe, by making a specific contribution to the creation of a grassroots Roma movement.

Specific goals and expected results are:

1. Consolidating the international ERGO Network to:
 - be a formalised but flexible network organisation,
 - have 10 members, with a general Board and a number of thematic working groups, and
 - be respected as a negotiating partner by national and international authorities and institutions.
2. Consolidating the organisational structure of ERGO members, so that they:
 - become professional Roma organisations working independently on the national level in their respective countries, and
 - are recognised as experts and respected as negotiating partners by local and national governments and institutions.
3. Establishing strong, active, well-organised and visible collaborative regional networks and national coalitions that:
 - consist of Roma communities, leaders and NGOs,
 - have clear links with grassroots groups,
 - have built alliances with (Roma) organisations, and
 - are respected by authorities and institutions.
4. Mobilising 5 to 15 local Roma communities in each member country and increasing social and organisational representative structures within these communities.
5. Developing a support base in The Netherlands en Europe for the Roma movement.



Photo: Valbona Dervishi

Roma community of Nishtulle

work of Roma organisations and contacts with representatives of relevant governments, institutions and civil society, we are well informed about actual developments concerning Roma in Europe and enabled us to hold a clearinghouse role.

its coaching and capacity building role to its partner organisations. For instance, Integro Bulgaria, took over some responsibilities and tasks in coaching the partners in Turkey and Macedonia. Roma Active Albania had a leading role in the development of a youth programme and co-facilitated an experience exchange meeting between different Roma organisations that work with Roma youth.



Badushe Shima, Roma woman from the community of Mbrostar Ura, Albania

Photo: Valbona Dervishi

ERGO's advocacy on the EU level

ERGO became an important player on EU level and its advice was often requested by EU institutions. ERGO's Executive Director Valeriu Nicolae facilitated a series of meetings between Roma and high-ranking government representatives, including the Ombudsperson of Finland and numerous ambassadors and officials of the EU. One of the most important in this respect was the meeting with the US ex-Secretary of State **Madeleine Albright**.



Photo: Valeriu Nicolae

ERGO emphasizes long-term support to watchdog organisations and think tanks that are capable of monitoring rampant anti-Gypsyism and mistakes of both social contractors and governments. This has been introduced as a priority for the policies various stakeholders. As a concrete result of ERGO's advocacy, Mrs. Doris Leuthard from the Swiss government, decided to dedicate five percent of its aid to Bulgaria and Romania for improving the situation of Roma and designed a long term strategy for Roma across Europe.

ERGO also specifically lobbied towards the Dutch government, for the adoption of a European Roma Policy and a Roma Unit within the EC that coordinates and monitors policy implementation. A series of meetings took place with Dutch diplomats, including the Human Rights Ambassador, Mr. Hamburger, Minister of European Integration Affairs Mr. Timmermans and a Delegation of the Dutch Parliament.

State of the art: the ERGO network

The European Roma Grassroots Organizations (ERGO) network unites most of Spolu's partners. In 2008, ERGO became an independent organisation. Integro Bulgaria, Roma Active Albania and Spolu IF are the founding members. The Board of ERGO consists of Mr. Valeriu Nicolae (executive Director), Mrs. Lilia Makaveeva (chair) and Mrs. Ruus Dijksterhuis (treasurer). Spolu still holds the function of secretariat, but has given a clear mandate to the Board and its members to perform their tasks as laid down in the 'Regulations on work of ERGO Management Board and GA'. Besides, a chair of the General Assembly was elected: Mr. Adriatik Hasantari, who succeeded to strengthen the decision-making role of GA. ERGO, accepted three new members, namely Roma Progress from Macedonia, Edrom from Turkey and Spolu IF from The Netherlands. The GA of ERGO now consists of eight members (see box).

ERGO became one of the main stakeholders for Roma grassroots groups on European level. Executive Director Valeriu Nicolae was invited frequently by European stakeholders, such as the cabinet of European Commissioner Spidla, the DG Employment and Social Affairs and European Commissioner Frattini. Also, he was the leading person behind the European Roma Policy Coalition (ERPC), a conglomeration of European NGOs, consisting of OSI, Amnesty International and ERRC, which aim to promote a European Roma Policy and a Roma Unit that coordinates and monitors policy implementation.

ERGO established a Working Group on Mobilisation and Empowerment that was co-headed by Lilia Makaveeva from Integro Bulgaria and Adriatik Hasantari from Roma Active Albania. The working Group explored approaches and prepared a summary paper with ERGO's vision that was presented to representatives of the European Commission at the end of 2008. Spolu facilitated the drafting process of the paper and offered expertise. Further, Alina Silian, a scientist from the Central European University in Budapest,

Members of ERGO

Albania:	Roma Active Albania
Bulgaria:	Integro Bulgaria
Macedonia:	Roma Progress
Moldova:	Tarne Rom
Netherlands:	Spolu IF
Romania:	Agency Impreuna
Slovakia:	Zdruzenie Spolu
Turkey:	EDROM

volunteered to make the reports. Also, representatives of other movements were invited, such as Alina Dragolea from the Romanian Feminist Movement and representatives of the European Youth for Forest Action (EYFA).

In the beginning of 2009, Valeriu Nicolae stepped back as executive Director. The GA decided to create a staff with an Advocacy Officer and an Information & Policy Officer to support the members of ERGO to lobby in their countries and on European level. Valeriu Nicolae will remain available as an advisor of Spolu and is available to coach the staff members to explore the EU field. In this way, his contacts, knowledge and advice will not be lost.

ERGO and the Roma Summit

The first Roma Summit organised in September 2008 by the European Commission (EC) was a historic moment for Roma in Europe. ERGO was overall present: Executive Director Valeriu Nicolae was one of the keynote speakers of the event. In a short movie about Roma, the work of ERGO member Integro was presented. During the summit, most of the ERGO members took part in a protest by wearing T-shirts printed with the slogan "Against Ethnic Profiling" during the opening speech of EU president Barosso, aiming to show disapproval with the fact that the EU did not take a stance in the Roma Finger Printing policy in Italy.



DECADE OF
ROMA
INCLUSION
2005-2015



Photo: Iniego Association

ERGO's mechanism of change: the chain of information

Roma issues fit into regular policies and programming on poverty, social exclusion and discrimination, by way of *mainstreaming*. This means that no special attention is given to the complexity of the situation that Roma encounter. Although the opportunities are there, very few local authorities use EU Structural Funds to improve the position of Roma in their territory.

This is caused by a lack of information and a lack of special mechanisms and incentives to apply for funding to address Roma issues. Further, there is a lack of political will to invest in the improvement of the position of Roma. European policy makers have difficulties in grasping the reality in the field concerning Roma, as communication channels between grassroots groups and European level are almost absent. Bridging this gap is a major challenge for all stakeholders.

Therefore, Spolu and ERGO started to streamline the advocacy mechanisms between European and grassroots level regarding the implementation of Roma policies by way of a *chain of communication*. This chain ensures a two-way information flux between grassroots level and EU institutions, translating European and national policies towards grassroots level and analysing the impact of these policies. The chain enables an upward flow, bringing experiences from grassroots level

concerning the impact of Roma policies on the municipal level to the European level by assessing and evaluating Roma policies. A downward flow disseminates information translating European and national policies towards the grassroots level.

In putting this into practice, member organisations and the local leaders and CBOs assess the dynamics among all

actors: Roma as well as national, regional and local authorities and NGOs. They identify their priorities and formulate their demands. The chain of information fits within the concept of active citizenship of ERGO, which promotes active citizenship through the mechanisms of empowerment and grassroots mobilisation, giving Roma the possibility to better negotiate their interests in society and overcome the stigma of being Roma.

The role of Spolu within ERGO

The formalisation of the ERGO network marks the gradual withdrawal of Spolu as a standalone organisation. The ERGO network is already recognised as an independent entity that lobbies on European level. In fact, due to ERGO's lobby activities, Spolu became more visible on European level and was approached as an expert organisation on grassroots issues, complementary to ERGO. Spolu will remain member of ERGO and keep the function of treasurer, as it is perceived as a neutral organisation that is trusted to manage the finances. In 2009, ERGO plans to obtain its own funding to start the process to become financially independent. Spolu coaches the staff of ERGO to take upon them the tasks, such as elaborating case studies, coordinating common activities of the network and organising meetings. Under the umbrella of ERGO and in close collaboration with a number of ERGO members, Spolu takes a leading role in the development of a European Youth Programme, a European Women Programme and clearinghouse function.



Photo: Spolu IF

The formalisation of ERGO
(l) Adriatik Hasantari and (r) Lilia Makaveeva

Achievements of 2008

Overview of the results

Partner organisation: Roma Active Albania (RAA) *Rruga Myslym Shyri 117/2, Tirana, Albania, tel: (355) 4264822, e-mail: raa@albaniaonline.net, contact: Adriatik Hasantari - director*

Names community	Activities due to the Programme (partly) with Spolu funding	Social structures in communities	Impact (indicators for empowerment)
1. Durres 2. Elbassan 3. Pogradec 4. Akerni 5. Llakatund 6. Lezha 7. Pojan 8. Mbrostar Ura 9. Korça 10. Tirana 11. Fier 12. Baltez	- Site visits between communities - Summer camps for Roma children - Small infrastructure projects - Project 'overcoming barriers through common entertainment' - Making of a calendar - Public awareness concert - Cultural activities with youngsters and children - Professional courses - Campaign on education - Campaign 'for a cleaner environment' - Campaign against discrimination	- 7 local boards of Roma leaders - 2 active groups of Roma leaders - 8 youth groups - 3 children groups - 5 women groups - 1 Mother centre initiative - 1 Mother Centre	Activation of women and youth in the community. Better negotiating position of the communities on local and regional level, through involvement in the Roma leader's network. Co-operation with other NGOs and Roma communities. Better negotiating position towards authorities. Promotion of a positive image of Roma to non Roma. Mentality change of the Roma communities. Enrolment of Roma children in school. Pavement of road in Roma neighbourhood. Capacities of women to negotiate, to manage activities and to express opinions.
Networks	Members	Activities	Impact
Youth networks in Fier and Korça national level	- Roma students - Youth from communities in and around Fier and Korca	- Publication of the newsletter youth voices, distributed at the university in Tirana - Training courses and workshops on lobby and advocacy and media	- Discussions between Roma and non Roma about Awareness raising among Roma youth about the role of their Roma identity in their lives - Local and regional authorities more aware of the needs of Roma youth
Regional network in Fier and Korça	Roma leaders from communities in and around Fier and Korca	- Lobby and advocacy - Six monthly meetings - Organising site visits to exchange experiences	- Issues of the Roma minority on the agenda of local and regional politicians and authorities
Informal women network	Roma women from different communities in Albania	- Negotiating a permanent exhibition on Roma culture in the national museum - Organising a seminar to present their priorities	- Official recognition of the contribution of Roma culture on Albanian society through a permanent exhibition on Roma culture in the National Museum
National coalitions of RAA	National Federation of Roma NGOs	Lobby and advocacy for the implementation of the Decade action plans and the Strategy for the Improvement of Living Conditions of Roma	- Recognition of RAA as expert Roma NGO in the field of community development, advocacy, lobby, equate policies for Roma. - Close monitoring of the governments' actions in the frame of the Decade and the Strategy for the Improvement of Living Conditions of Roma

Partner organisation: Bairska Svetlina, Ljubojno 38v, "Jorgo Kostovski" *b.b. 7000 Bitola, Macedonia, tel: (389) 47241694, e-mail: bairskasvetlina@yahoo.com, contact: Remzi Medik - director*

Names community	Activities due to the Programme (partly) with Spolu funding	Social structures in communities	Impact (indicators for empowerment)
1. Bitola 2. Prilep 3. Krivolak	- Preparation of local action plans and negotiations with authorities - Exchange of experience between Roma communities - Celebration 8 th of April - Awareness campaign on drug use. - Performance of Roma Amateur Theatre	- 2 initiative groups on infrastructure - 2 initiative groups on youth - 2 initiative groups on women - Initiative group on education - Initiative group on culture - Coordinative body of local NGOs	Concreting and asphaltting part of Roma neighbourhoods. Acceptance of women in meetings with authorities, 25 children are registered in secondary school. Involvement of parents in school affairs. Increased lobby skills of Roma community. Cooperation with the ombudsman other Roma NGOs and political parties to ban discrimination. Inclusion of Roma in several national programs and researches.

Partner organisation: Roma Progress, Macedonia Opština Rankove, 1316 Rankovce, Macedonia, tel: (389) 31380615,

e-mail: romaprogress@yahoo.com, contact: Vidance Monevski - director

Names community	Activities due to the Programme (partly) with Spolu funding	Social structures in communities	Impact (indicators for empowerment)
1. Rankovce	- Celebration of 8 th of April;	- 1 Youth group	- Cooperation with and support from authorities
2. Kratovo	- Establishing Roma women handball team.	- 6 Roma Advisory groups	- Cooperation with non-Roma youth
3. Konjuh	- Computer Center	- Communicative body	- Sports clubs now include Roma girls
4. Vinica	- Round table on self-inclusion	- 1 NGO 'Terno'	- Local media attention for 8 th of April celebration
5. Probistip	- Training on lobby and advocacy		- Cooperation with other NGOs, schools and neighbouring Roma communities
6. Berovo			

Networks	Members	Activities	Impact
Active Councils Network	Representatives from Roma communities Rankovce, Kocani, Kratovo, Vinica, Probistip and Berovo	- Presenting annual plans of Roma communities to municipal councils - Exchange of experience between communities	- Improved communication with local government, institutions and Referent for Minority Issues in local government
Youth Network	25 high school and university students	- Meetings on critical thinking, lobby, advocacy and group leadership - Exchange meeting with Bulgarian youth Event on Regional Roma Stars	- Public discussions via forum on website and media attention - Research on activism among Roma youth

Partner organisation: Porojan, Moldova str. Alexandru cel Bun nr. 51, Chrisnau, Moldova,

e-mail: igor.pivovar@gmail.com, contact: Igor Pivovar - director

Names community	Activities due to the Programme (partly) with Spolu funding	Social structures in communities	Impact (indicators for empowerment)
1. Parcani	Debate games; theatre circle; essay writing	Local RCYN-group	- Increase of personal skills and confidence children
2. Ursari	Lessons in Romani language, culture and identity	afterschool classes	- Raised awareness of Roma identity among children
3. Ciocilteni			- Partnership with the local school
4. Hincesti			
5. Drochia			
6. Chetrosu			

Networks	Members	Activities	Impact
Roma Children and Youth Network (RCYN)	23 Roma children and youth from 6 communities of Central and Northern part of Moldova	- 4 national meetings - A summer camp and summer school - Participation in intercultural events - Bimonthly RCYN information bulletin	- Raised awareness on Roma identity; - Improved skills of children and youth on various topics - Increased visibility of the Network in the communities

Partner organisation: Democratic Association of Roma (DUR), Serbia Supljikceva 28, Belgrade, Serbia, tel: (381) 637017544,

e-mail: yromainf@eunet.rs, contact: Jordan Vasic - director

Name community	Activities due to the Programme (partly) with Spolu funding	Social structures in communities	Impact (indicators for empowerment)
Roma settlements in Belgrade	<i>Youth</i> - Open discussions and workshops - Workshops on journalisms and camera recording - Film of the Roma settlements - Newsletter <i>Women</i> - Setting up a catering unit - 5 peer learning workshops to develop the catering service	- Women group - Youth group - Waste Collectors Cooperative - Ekoservis - Local committees in all settlements	- Increasing of Roma women's capacities and strengthening of their self-confidence - Active youth in the different settlements that mobilise others, and use media to promote a positive image of Roma young

Partner organisation: Association of Roma Students (ARS), Serbia Narodnog fronta 26/5, 21000 Novi Sad, tel: (381) 6366971,

e-mail: nenad.vladisavljev@urs.edu.rs contact: Nenad Vladisavljev - director

Networks	Members	Activities	Impact
Youth network in the Vojvodina	3 youth groups from communities in the Vojvodina	Organising youth from new communities	Change of mentality of young Roma in Vojvodina
Students network in Serbia	46 Roma Students from Novi Sad and 5 from Belgrade	Roma students organization ARS from Vojvodina coaches Roma students from Belgrade to form their own organization and form a network	Activism of Roma students, expansion of students network to Belgrade

Names community	Activities due to the Programme (partly) with Spolu funding	Social structures in communities	Impact (indicators for empowerment)
1. Micrevo 2. Bansko 3. Petrich 4. Ognianovo& Marche 5. Simitli 6. Sandanski 7. Razgad 8. Zavet 9. Vazovo 10. Kubrat 11. Vetovo 12. Provardia 13. Vurbitsa 14. Sekulov 15. Todor Ikonomovo 16. Senovo 17. Stara Zagora	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training and coaching in lobby, advocacy and project management - Advocating for local plans at the local authorities - Educational support - Support to Community Centres and Mother Centres - Establishment of youth dance group - Elaboration of a long term plan for Roma integration - Exchange visits - Cleaning day organised by youth - Regional round table - Organised protest to protect the Roma quarter from intensive traffic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 11 NGO's - 9 Youth group - 8 Women groups, including 4 Mother Centres - 2 IGA group - 1 Initiative Group 	<p>Appointment of 33 Roma in public bodies, institutions and local authorities. Roma in Mosque Board of Trustees. Roma in School Board of Trustees. Roma coalition. 2 Roma mayors of 2 villages from Dulovo municipality. 2 Roma labour mediators in local labour bureau. Roma members of local cultural house. Partnership agreements between mayors and Roma communities. Agreement for accepting local Roma strategy from the municipality. Sport ground and football field with lighting. 1 municipal council voted the Roma day to be included in the city cultural calendar. Participation of Roma in Blagoevgrad regional council for ethnic and demographic issue. Free Mother Centre building from municipality. Free office for the NGO from the municipality. Municipal decision to support the claiming of the protesting Roma people. Agreement about financial support of MC from the next budget year (2010). Mass media attention.</p>
Networks	Members	Activities	Impact
Youth	16 students and 25 youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training in communication with media - Campaign with youth - 1 summer camp with trainings in planning - 1 exchange with Macedonian youths - 3 youths participated in IDEA debate courses in Turkey - 420 Roma student supported with school books for secondary education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved relations with schools and institutions; Involvement of high numbers of ethnic Bulgarians as well as Turkish and Roma people in the campaign activities - Mass media attention - Increased organisational capacity - Raised awareness on Roma identity - Developed informal leadership in the network - Larger visibility of the network
GORD	Representatives from ca. 30 Roma communities and NGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preparation of activity plan - 4 Regional trainings - Coaching of 17 members - Participation in two campaigns and the national lobby of an NGO coalition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National visibility of GORD network - Coalition with Roma and non-Roma organisations - Increased mass media attention - Increased capacity GORD members - Increased knowledge on leadership and networking, - Increased influence on policy on local and national level
MC	Women of 5 mother centres (ca 20 women)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exchanges and international meetings with other Mother Centres - 2 Trainings in advocacy and strategic planning - 2 Regional meetings - 1 case study - Lobbying with Ministry of labour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identified active Roma women from all over Bulgaria interested in MC approach - First steps towards a national platform on Roma grassroots issues - Increased leadership of local women - Participation of Roma women in local social activities
National coalitions of Integro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National coalition of 24 Roma NGOs to keep the vice Minister of labour and social policy - National coalition with influential public figures and organisations against hate speech - National coalition of 6 Roma NGOs for elaboration new Roma policy document 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collecting support for 2 open letters to the national government and other relevant institutions - Organising 2 press releases - Recommendations and proposals to the - National action plan for social inclusion - Significant contribution to the draft of a new policy document for Roma integration - Co-organize the national round table for presenting the draft of new policy document for Roma integration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognition of Integro as expert Roma NGO in the field of community development, social policy, advocacy; strategy planning and empowering approaches - Active participation in national consultative process concerning social inclusion of Roma community

Partner organisation: Zdruzenie Spolu, Slovakia Krizkova 391, 696701 Kremnica, Slovakia, tel: (421) 45 6744549

Email: spolu@stonline.sk, website: www.spolu-slovakia.sk, contact: Darina Tököliová – president

Names community	Activities due to the Programme (partly) with Spolu funding	Social structures in communities	Impact (indicators for empowerment)
12 communities in Slovakia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Negotiating with local authorities - Cultural-social meetings and debates - Library program - Sport activities - Seminar Business interest - Club activity with children and parents at school - Roma identity campaign - 'Women to women' activity to activate Roma women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Roma Advisory Board - Organised women leaders in 11 communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved negotiating position of the Roma community
Networks	Members	Activities	Impact
Regional networks (2) of Roma leaders in Eastern Slovakia and Central Slovakia	Roma leaders from the Roma communities of Eastern Slovakia and Central Slovakia	Preparing common projects discussion forums Boards	Mass media attention; partnership with regional authorities; increased capacities of network members; influence on policies
Pale Romnja (Roma women network)	20 Roma women representing various Roma communities in Slovakia	Coordination of a variety of activities in the communities (library program, sports, support of Roma identity, debates and meetings, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mass media attention; - Formalization of the network - Increased skills of the network members

Partner organisation: Centrul de Resurse pentru Comunitatile de Romi (CRCR), Romania Cluj, str. Tebei nr. 21, Cluj Napoca 400305, Romania, tel (40) 264 420474, email: cmacaria@romacenter.ro, website: www.romacenter.ro, contact: Claudia Macaria - coordinator

Names community	Activities due to the Programme (partly) with Spolu funding	Social structures in communities	Impact (indicators for empowerment)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Targu Mures, Mures County 2. Sebes, Alba County 3. Baia Mare, Maramures County 4. Cluj-Napoca, Cluj County 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training on Leadership, writing of project proposals and making a CV - Development of own projects - Activities with Rudolf Moca (famous Roma actor); - Small scale activities, (such as English lessons and a Christmas concert for the elderly); - Preparations for registration as local NGO - Volunteering as kindergarten assistants for Roma children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth Club – 42 members, age 18-23 - Youth Club – 30 members, age 11-15 - Youth Club/NGO – 47 members, age 15-17 - Club as NGO 'Young Roma Maramures' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wide participation of Roma Youth in the local activities of the clubs; - Large sense of ownership in own projects; - Increased self-esteem by working closely with a Roma as role model; - Improved contact with schools - Registration of Youth Club as NGO
Networks	Members	Activities	Impact
Youth	120 Roma High School and University students from 4 different local branches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working meetings with the mentors of the youth clubs exchange of experience summer camp for the 4 youth clubs - Training on leadership and writing of project proposals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Raised awareness on Roma identity - Active participation of youth in the activities of the network

Partner organisation: Centar za majke "Plamen", Bosnia-Herzegovina Naselje Gaj niz B, 72220 Zavidovici, tel: (421) 45 6744549

Email: plamenmz@yahoo.ca, contact: Senada Dzankic - president

Names community	Activities due to the Programme (partly) with Spolu funding	Social structures in communities	Impact (indicators for empowerment)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Zenica 2. Vitez 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training courses - Establishing a playroom for children - Literacy courses - Round tables on equality - Roma and non Roma - Promoting Roma language and culture - Courses for children how to play and write 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Mother Centres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self organisation of Roma women

Partner organisation: European Roma Grassroots Organisations (ERGO) network

Email: info@ergonetwork.org, website: www.ergonetwork.org, contact: Lilia Makaveeva - chair

Members	Activities	Impact
Albania: Roma Active Albania Bulgaria: Integro Bulgaria Macedonia: Roma Progress Moldova: Tarne Rom Romania Agency Impreuna Slovakia Zdruzenie Spolu Turkey: EDROM Netherlands: Spolu IF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meetings of the M&E Working Group - GA meetings - Training on European lobby - Bilateral exchanges - Participation in ERPC - Participation in EU events and meetings - National and International - Campaigns on Anti-gypymis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase of visibility ERGO & ERGO members on European level - Impact on European policies concerning Roma - Formalisation of the ERGO network - Drafting of the ERGO strategy paper - Involvement of key persons in ERGO & ERGO lobby - Increase of network with 3 members - Increase of advocacy capacity of ERGO members

Overcoming stigmatisation

According to Spolu, stigmatisation of Roma and anti-gypsyism of Roma is one of main the root causes of their social exclusion. Roma are regarded as a threat to the stability and well-being of society and are often portrayed as undeserving, ungrateful and untrustworthy sub-citizens. They are perceived as inactive citizens, incapable of contributing to the creation of a healthy social environment in which they can partake in their social, economical and political rights. Roma themselves internalise the negative images projected onto their ethnic group and often accept them as normal, reflecting and strengthening the prejudiced attitude of the majority. Due to the harsh stigma attached to Roma, many are afraid to identify themselves as such, regardless of their social status.

Spolu strives to eliminate this stigma, allowing Roma to hold a respected place in society, without renouncing their ethnicity. We believe that Roma and non-Roma should both assume their responsibilities and duties as active citizens and act forcefully and effectively against anti-gypsyism. Spolu and its partners promote a positive image of Roma, by supporting actions that demonstrate the contribution of Roma people and Roma culture to society.

Providing the majority population with an alternative picture of 'what is a Roma' is done through a variety of activities, such as the organization of a photo-exhibition showing daily life in a Roma quarter of the city of Pogradec, Albania by a Roma youth group, the making of a movie about successful Roma in Belgrade

by a group of Serbian young Roma and the media coverage of successful activities organised by Roma.

The internalized negative image of Roma is addressed in all actions: identity issues are a very important element of the programme. By presenting positive role models, people are made aware of the fact that being Roma and being successful are not contradictory. Especially within youth groups, the identity question is often addressed through discussions and role plays. By recognizing their own qualities, capacities and contributions to mainstream society, Roma develop a more positive perception of their self-identity and start recognizing the process of stigmatization and the long term impact it caused.

Roma culture contributes to Albanian society

A group of Albanian Roma women successfully negotiated the inclusion of a Roma culture section in the Albanian national museum. It all began with a rather conventional activity: women sewing clothes to show the traditional outings of their culture. This functioned as a magnet: more than ninety women spontaneously joined when they heard about the sewing activity. Through regular discussions, they wondered why their culture is not considered to be part of Albanian culture, even though Roma have been living in Albania for centuries. They feared the disappearance of their tradition, without recognition of its contribution. This concern mobilized even more women. Roma Active Albania supported the women in spreading the information.

The group of Roma women visited the National Museum and organized meetings and a workshop with museum representatives. During these contacts, the women explained the importance of promoting their values by presenting Roma culture and the clothes they made. In the end, the Roma minority was provided with its own area in the museum to show the different aspects of Roma culture to the public. The president of Albania promised to open the exhibition and the Director of the Museum made the important statement that Roma culture contributed substantially to the development of contemporary Albanian society. This success and the subsequent debate amongst the Albanian public regarding the position of Roma culture, helped to make grassroots Roma women become aware of their capacities to impact upon the position of Roma in society.

Roma women activists Flora Lloshi and Klara Xhaibra at the opening of the exhibition in the Albanian National Museum



Photo: Valbona Dervishi

Campaigning for Roma!



Minister European Affairs mr. Frans Timmermans (L) participates in Racism Breaks the Game Campaign

Photo: Valeriu Nicolita

ERGO is very active in organising and participating in campaigns against discrimination and anti-gypsyism, like the 'Racism Breaks the Game' campaign. The campaign combats stereotypes and prejudices in football and involved many known people, such as the popular (Roma) football player Banel Nicolita. The Dutch Deputy Minister on European Affairs, Mr. Frans Timmermans, also participated. Some ERGO members initiated similar campaigns in their country, like a football campaign in Slovakia and Macedonia.

During the 'Run Against Racism and Discrimination' Campaign, 900 people participated by running in the streets of Bucharest against xenophobia, racism and discrimination. The event was organized by ERGO, the Italian Union Sports for All and the Open Society Institute's Roma Initiative Office. Many well known Romanian and Italian sports men and women participated, such as multiple medallist Gheorghe Simion, Daniel Prodan (former football player) and Daniele and Daniele Masala (Italian gold medal winner at the 1984 Olympics).

Against Fingerprinting Campaign

The advocacy for Roma in Europe was influenced by the incidents involving Roma in Italy and the increasing anti-gypsyism tendencies. Beginning of 2008, Berlusconi gave instruction to register Roma by taking their fingerprints. Members of the European Parliament, representatives of leading NGOs as Amnesty International and Open Society Institute as well as Roma activists responded indignant and called the European leaders to take steps against Italy. This event gave a huge boost to the debate on the position of Roma in Europe and kept the European Union alert on paying attention to the position of Roma.

Roma activists spontaneously started a 'Fingerprinting' campaign, wearing T-shirts during important events, like the first EU Roma Summit in Brussels. During Barroso's openings speech, Roma activists, among them many ERGO members wore T-shirts with 'Against Ethnic Profiling'. The 'Fingerprinting' campaign succeeded to unite many Roma activists from different European countries.



ERGO members protest at the EU Roma Summit

Photo: Reuters

Tackling anti-gypsyism in the media

Integro Bulgaria together with members of the Bulgarian Roma coalition started a campaign against the Bulgarian journalist Roumen Kalinov, who wrote humiliating articles about Roma but at the same time was awarded an important prize as a young promising journalist in December. He wrote in the Novinar

national daily newspaper on 20 December 2007 "The Gypsies are cumming. If you sow Gypsy seed, you reap social benefits. The Gypsies are multiplying while you Bulgarian dudes and broads pay your taxes. [...] The Gypsies are cumming like wolves, they're multiplying like sheeps".

Thanks to the Integro's campaign and the support of ERGO, different European

organisations and representatives expressed their concern, which resulted in the award being revoked. In the media, a debate on freedom of speech and human dignity started at one of the most popular TV stations in Bulgaria - BTV. Through this debate, Integro could express its vision about the real participation and involvement of Roma in all spheres of decision-making.

Roma as active European citizens

Spolu promotes a dynamic concept of active citizenship: Roma should participate as active fellow citizens in their own societies, without ignoring their responsibilities in changing their own situation and their duties to contribute to the shaping of society. This concept is promoted through empowerment and grassroots mobilisation. We provide Roma with the tools to become active citizens and enable them to strive for their rights to create an equal position in society.

In order to create opportunities for active citizenship, the growing anti-gypsyism tendencies in society need to be addressed firmly by enabling Roma to speak up and

to express their identity. Roma are confronted with comparable complex problems all over Europe. They live in poor housing conditions, deprived of proper education, poor health care facilities and high level of unemployment. Their marginalised position is the result of structural discrimination and exclusion. De jure, Roma are European citizens that have the same rights and duties as their fellow citizens. But de facto, their rights are largely ignored: anti-gypsyism in schools, in the mass media, the workplace and in the public eye, confirms prejudices and stereotypes. European states have laws which forbid discrimination against Roma and ensure legal equal citizenship status

for Roma but these laws are not seriously enforced. This situation is corroborated by a complete lack of awareness regarding the historical and ongoing dehumanisation of Roma, which results in a strong assimilation pressure, perceiving Roma as strangers in their own societies.

Spolu addresses the root causes of social exclusion of Roma and the denial of citizenship, by enlarging their capacity to assert their rights and claim a respected place in society. Together with our partner organisations, we are deeply involved in developing innovative and effective approaches that address the root causes of the social exclusion and discrimination of Roma.

The GORD network influences local politics

Through partner organisation Integro Bulgaria, Spolu supported the establishment and strengthening of the GORD network that unites over 30 grassroots Roma leaders and CBOs. Due to the GORD network, leaders from communities in various regions succeeded to influence politics. A noteworthy example is in Vetovo, Northeast Bulgaria, where a group of Roma leaders consisting of Muslim and Burgudzhii (Christian) Roma, along with the local deputy mayor managed to improve the livelihood of their communities with the support of GORD. They were given the appropriate information on how to use on local level existing national and international policies for Roma. This enabled the deputy mayor to find finances for improving the infrastructure in Roma settlements. Also, he managed to find several job opportunities for Roma specialists in different institutions, such as the police, municipal administration and the local branch of the national employment agency. Their GORD membership

makes them an interesting partner for the local authority.

Other examples are the three villages of the Dulovo municipality, in which Roma were mobilised during the local elections and managed to elect three Roma mayors. Although these mayors would like to put Roma interests on the political and municipal agenda, they lacked the organisational capacity and

know how to do so. In 2008, they joined GORD and gained knowledge and skills to negotiate. GORD members advised them to stimulate Roma to become members of boards at cultural houses, schools, kindergartens and other structures in the villages. Thanks to this advice, the mayors succeeded to create ownership of these institutions by having Roma in their Boards.



Influencing policies in Macedonia

Spolu's Macedonian partner organisation, Roma Progress, supports Roma leaders from different communities in Eastern Macedonia. Leaders from six communities created the Network of Active Councils. They formulated annual plans for their Roma communities, with concrete requests for support from the municipality in the field of employment, housing, infrastructure and education. Three municipalities already approved part of the annual plans. In Vinica for instance, the municipality allocated extra budget of € 3.000 for Roma welfare beneficiaries, approved a project of € 1.000 for equal opportunities for Roma women, provided premises for the Roma centre, paved a road, supported the Roma cultural Art Association in organizing events and employed Roma in a public enterprise. In the coming period, the network will persuade the remaining three municipalities to approve the annual plans.



Photo: Mahler Centre Haman, Bosnia-Herzegovina

Supporting active citizenship in Turkey and Hungary

Spolu worked with partner organisations in Turkey and Hungary. We did not have financial resources to support them, but supported them in an indirect way to promote active citizenship and a positive image of Roma.

Roma organisation EDROM from Edirne is the oldest Roma organisation in Turkey. They joined the ERGO network in 2008. The exchange with other ERGO members helped EDROM in developing its own approach and ideas in organising and mobilising grassroots leaders. Integro Bulgaria played a crucial role by hosting internships for EDROM staff members and by providing training and coaching. April 2009, Spolu will start a three year programme in Turkey with support of the MATRA programme from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In Hungary, Spolu supported Lili Urszinyi from the organisation AEC, to formulate a project proposal regarding Roma Youth and Identity, funded by the Dutch Embassy in Hungary. It enabled Roma youth to exchange experiences, discuss their place in society and the meaning of their Roma identity.

Portrait of Latif Kazanxhiu:

Regional Coordinator in Fier, Albania

Spolu's partner Roma Active Albania supports Regional Offices in the Fier and Korça. Both offices support local Roma leaders to benefit from policies concerning Roma and function as secretariats for the regional networks of grassroots Roma leaders. The following is an interview with Mr. Latif Kazanxhiu, Roma leader and coordinator of the Regional Office in Fier.

What is your personal motivation to be a regional coordinator?

"I want to offer my capacities to the Roma cause because Roma are nowadays powerless and not considered as a priority for state institutions. I want to bring change within the Roma communities and I want to involve Roma in actions to improve their life."

What makes the regional office unique?

"The regional office promotes issues of rural Roma communities to the regional institutions in the urban area of Fier, where the office is located. The most unique thing is the establishment and effectiveness of the regional network of Roma leaders. We have identified and lobbied for the main priorities of the Roma minority in our region."

How is the regional office connecting national and international policies with Roma grassroots communities?

"I participate in national and international meetings and I use the information on plans and policies for lobby and advocacy in Fier. As an example, I have pointed out to institutions and authorities in Fier that they should assume their responsibilities in implementing the National Strategy for the Improvement of Living Conditions for Roma. I have also organised seminars and meetings about the Albanian commitment for the International Decade for Roma Inclusion. It is important to inform Roma leaders and authorities about this and I often involve the local media."



Latif Kazanxhiu with Roma leaders

Photo: Valbona Dervishi

Grassroots voices: youth and women

Roma groups and networks are often dominated by elderly male: women and youth are underrepresented. One can question if a movement is really well represented if a large part of the people it claims to represent, hardly has the possibility to express their needs and make their voices heard. By including women and youth, the movement gains in power and strengthens its claim on representing the needs and issues of the Roma population.

Roma youth

Most Spolu partners support Roma youth to raise their capacity and to get united in youth groups and networks. In Serbia, Romania, Albania, Bulgaria, Moldova and Macedonia, partner organisations strengthened a total of six regional and national networks of Roma grassroots youth. Youths from

Bulgaria and Macedonia met during an exchange meeting and developed a set of common activities. They intend to include Turkish youths in their cross-border exchanges. Through partner organisation RAA, youth from several countries meet during international meetings and are about to establish a European Youth network. Spolu and its key partners, Integro from Bulgaria and RAA from Albania, developed a strategy to further ensure the inclusion of youth in the Roma movement. Ownership and self-management are crucial parts of the strategy. In the strategy, access to information, an open-minded attitude and interaction between Roma youth sub-groups and other youth from the mainstream society are stimulated. Through campaigning, organising events, peer learning, networking and forming partnerships with other youth initiatives, the youth can become visible

and occupy their place in the Roma movement.

Roma women

Through a variety of approaches, partner organisations stimulated the inclusion of Roma women. Especially the 'Mother Centre approach' worked remarkably well. The concept of Mother Centres was introduced in Roma communities through a pilot project coordinated by the International Mother Centres network and Spolu. Mother Centres are low threshold community centres for women that function as public living rooms in which women develop lobby and advocacy activities. In 2008, Roma Mother Centres were supported in Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia, Serbia and Slovakia. In 2008 Spolu took the first steps to develop a programme focussed on women's activism in the Roma movement, which will be further elaborated in 2009.

Women in Bosnia and Slovakia: cross-over between grassroots movements

Roma Mother Centre Plamen from the city of Zavidovici in Bosnia and Herzegovina is developing into an international training centre for women groups that desire to start a Mother Centre. Plamen received Roma women groups from Bulgaria, Serbia, Macedonia, Albania and Slovakia in their centre in 2006 and 2007.

In 2008, Plamen trained and coached two new Roma Mother Centres in the Bosnian cities of Vitez and Zenica. Plamen offers the Roma centres access to their experiences, knowledge and activism in the European Mother Centres network and the broader women's movement. The Roma centres bring diversity in the Mother Centres network, increasing its claim to represent common interest women.

In Slovakia a similar development occurred when the Slovak Union of Mother Centres coached Roma initiatives. The Roma centres participated in both the Roma women network Pale Romnja and the Slovak Union of Mother Centres. The cross-over of these two organisations thus greatly enlarged the impact

of both movements: the new Roma centres put the issue of discrimination and social stigmatisation on the agenda of the Union of Mother Centres and issues of women empowerment were taken into account by Roma women.



Photo: Centar za majke "Plamen" Bosnia

Debates with Moldovan Roma children

Spolu invested in the Moldovan Roma Children and Youth Network (RCYN) through its partner organisation Porojan. The network brings together 23 Roma children and youngsters from Ciocilteni, Parcani, Ursari, Hincesti and Drochia. It functions as an informal platform for activities and discussions that handle the topics that are important in the day-to-day lives of young Roma.

Porojan organised various activities based on ethnic diversity theme, like summer camps, training courses, essay competitions and debate games. In the debate games, children from the different localities were introduced to debate techniques and competed with each other in teams. It taught the kids to gather information, formulate their opinions and express it clearly, while building their selfconfidence and team spirit.

Photo: Vaibona Demshii



Youth in Romania



Photo: Vintegro Association

The Romanian partner organisation Centrul de Resurse pentru Comunitatile de Romi (CRCR) supported youth clubs in the cities Baia Mare, Targu Mures, Sebes and Cluj. Young Roma in these clubs gathered at least 2-3 times per week for training activities and informal meetings. Besides training in personal skills, the young Roma took ownership of the small-scale activities in the clubs, such as educational information campaigns for Roma youngsters, volunteering in a Roma-kindergarten and collecting and disseminating oral Roma history.

The youth clubs in Targu Mures and Baia Mare did a campaign on informing Roma scholars positive discrimination measures, such as scholarships and quota on faculties for Roma and visited secondary schools, to encourage Roma youth to continue their education. The campaign led to an increased amount of registrations of Roma students and close collaboration with the school inspectors and local schools. In Targu Mures, the famous Roma actor Rudolf Moca participated in their activities. As a successful and popular Roma, he functioned as a role model.

Mobilizing Roma students in Serbia

October 2008, Spolu started a partnership with Association of Roma Students (ARS) in Novi Sad, Serbia. This decision was based on the outcome of a context analysis that was elaborated by consultant Tanja Peric. She concluded that its representation of Roma students and its focus on mobilization of Roma youth

of the Vojvodina based organization fits well with the Spolu approach.

ARS is composed of active Roma students and is influencing policies regarding Roma youth and students in the Vojvodina. The lobby and advocacy network large of ARSA is well established: Former members are now employed in the Executive Council of Vojvodina and hold key positions. ARS

started to identify student organisations from other Serbian towns, like Belgrade and Nis, to form a national network in Serbia. This focus on university students as well as high school pupils. ARS organised debates and discussions with and for Roma students. Identity and how to deal with stigmatisation are important issues in all activities.

Support base in Europe and The Netherlands

Spolu has become a player on European level, involved in lobby and advocacy for Roma interests and promoting the grassroots empowerment and mobilisation in the Roma debate.

Together with the European Roma Policy Coalition (ERPC), consisting of international organisations like OSI, Amnesty International and ERRC, Spolu lobbied for a European Roma Policy and a Roma Unit within the European Commission (EC) that coordinates and monitors policy implementation. An ERPC strategy paper was launched in February 2008. In the run towards the first Roma Summit in autumn 2008, the coalition used strategic moments to influence the EC agenda. Membership and activities of the Coalition created a large visibility and recognition for Spolu in both the Netherlands and Europe: Spolu took part in meetings with European Commissioner Spidla, different MEPs (like Livia Jaroka and Victoria Mohaci) and different representatives of the DG Social Affairs (like Joachim Ott and Virag Sandor) and DG Region (Susan Andresson). Spolu became member of the steering committee of the ERRC research on improving the impact of policies, programmes and projects on social inclusion and non-discrimination of Roma. All this will enable Spolu to create favourable conditions for Roma grassroots to speak up and claim their citizens' rights as other European citizens do too.



Round Table in the Hague organised by Spolu and Amnesty International.
From left Mr. Wiersma, Mr. Vollebaek, Mr. Hamburger, Mr. Nicolae and Mr. Nazarski.

On October 6th, Spolu and Amnesty International co-organised a round table in The Netherlands. A panel chaired by MEP Mr. Jan Marinus Wiersma (also President of Spolu's Board) debated on the contribution of the Dutch Government to enable a European strategy that addresses the issue of citizens' rights of Roma in Europe. Speakers in the panel were High Commissioner National Minorities OSCE Mr. Knut Vollebaek, Dutch Human Rights Ambassador Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mr. Arjan Hamburger, Executive Director of ERGO Mr. Valeriu Nicolae and Director Amnesty International Netherlands Mr. Eduard Nazarski. Members of parliament, policy makers, officials and Roma representatives were present. The round table contributed to put Roma issues higher on the

Dutch political agenda and strengthened the image of Spolu as a stakeholder in Netherlands and Europe concerning Roma. This is reflected in the speech of Dutch Foreign Affairs Minister Verhagen at the Council of Europe Meeting in The Hague on November 6th 2008: "It is absolutely clear that Roma are entitled to the same basic rights as everyone else, without exception. [...] Because we believe that it is crucial for Roma to take ownership of their own future, we fund NGOs that are run by Roma [...]. Through our Human Rights Fund, we co-finance Spolu's work in South-Eastern Europe to bring together and strengthen local Roma organisations."

Spolu has long-term relationships with a number of organisations and institutions, like Anne Frank Foundation, Cordaid, IKV-Pax Christi and the city of Deventer through the city twinning programme Deventer-Edirne. Spolu collaborated with Kerkinactie to strengthen the support base for Roma in The Netherlands, for instance through the church congregation from Ommen that adopted the youth programme in Romania. Further, a Roma event on April 8th, the international Roma day, was organised in close collaboration with Amnesty International and Cordaid and Dutch Roma activists Ahmet Jasar, Ohran Galjus and Beki Galjust. Both Roma and non-Roma discussed about the Dutch Roma policy and the role of Roma themselves in improving their position in society.

Donors and Supporters in 2008



Financial Paragraph

This paragraph provides a summary from Spolu's Annual Report 2008, namely the Balance Sheet and the Profit and Loss Account, an Auditor's Report as well as donations received in 2008. The figures are derived from the annual report 2008, which has been issued by BDO CampsObers Accountants & Adviseurs Maastricht.

Summary balance sheet as at 31 December 2008 (in euros)

ASSETS	31 December 2008	31 December 2007
<i>Fixed assets</i>		
Intangible fixed assets		
Other	9.161	5.759
<i>Current assets</i>		
Inventories and work in progress		
• Non-concluded projects	2.556.467	1.810.118
Receivables		
• Other receivables and prepaid income	19.958	7.561
Cash at Banks	349.463	456.731
Total assets	2.935.049	2.280.169

EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	31 December 2008	31 December 2007
<i>Equity</i>		
Reserve	68.774	55.614
<i>Short-term liabilities</i>		
Creditors	41.898	1.145
Taxes and social security premiums	8.874	9.255
Advance subsidies	2.804.179	2.204.179
Other liabilities and accrued expenses	11.324	9.976
	<u>2.866.275</u>	<u>2.224.555</u>
Total liabilities	2.935.049	2.280.169

Summary profit and loss account 2008 (in euros)

ASSETS	31 December 2008	31 December 2007
Net sales	746.149	869.161
Project costs	747.430	871.554
<i>Project result</i>	-1.281	-2.393
Subsidy not project related	3.786	7.283
<i>Operating result</i>	2.505	4.890
Financial income and expense	10.655	5.193
Result	13.160	10.083

Donation awarded in 2008

The Foundation has received a contribution of over 0,8 million euro from The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (TMF), ICCO for implementation the programme 'Strengthening the Roma Voice' in Albania, Moldavia, and for the ERGO Network. For the implementation of this Programme Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia the institutions Cooperating Netherlands Foundations and Kerkinactie have contributed a total amount of 0,2 million euro.

Auditors' Report

We have audited the accompanying financial statements 2008 of Stichting Spolu International Foundation, Utrecht, which comprise the balance sheet as at 31 December 2008, the profit and loss account for the year then ended and the notes.

Management's responsibility

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with the Guideline for annual reporting 640 'Not-for-profit organisations' of the Dutch Accounting Standards Board. This responsibility includes: designing, implementing and maintaining internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements 2007 that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; selecting and applying appropriate accounting policies; and making accounting estimates that are reasonable in the circumstances.

Auditor's responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial statements based on our audit. We conducted our audit in accordance with Dutch law. This law requires that we comply with ethical requirements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial statements are free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial statements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Opinion

In our opinion, the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of Stichting Spolu International Foundation as at 31 December 2008, and of its result for the year then ended in accordance with the Guideline for annual reporting 640 'Not-for-profit organisations' of the Dutch Accounting Standards Board.

Maastricht-Airport, 14 July 2009
BDO CampsObers Audit & Assurance B.V.
represented by Jos Verspaget RA

Looking forward

By **Ruus Dijksterhuis**, Director Spolu International Foundation

The attention generated for Roma issues in Europe and the milder political climate over the last year gives hope for fundamental improvements for the coming years. At the same time we should be alert to the increasing anti-gypsyism tendencies that marked the first months of 2009, like the Roma man and his five-year-old son from the village of Tatárszentgyörgy in Hungary that were gunned down after trying to escape from their house that was set in fire by their attackers with petrol bombs.

Spolu will fight the practice of treating Roma as secondary citizens and point out that this does not fit with basic European values of solidarity, equal opportunities and fundamental rights. We believe that European citizens can only identify with and commit themselves to the European Union if these basic values are respected. Therefore we urge the European Union and its member states, including The Netherlands, to design a European Human Rights policy that addresses the practice of secondary citizenship, like they also carry out a profound human rights policy towards other countries. Till such a policy is in place, there is a need for a European Roma Policy, addressing the specific needs of Roma in Europe.

As member of the European Policy Coalition (ERPC), Spolu will be involved in the lobby for a European Roma Policy and debate with representatives of relevant governments, institutions and civil society to critically analyze the approaches and strategies to improve the situation of Roma in Europe. Special attention will be given to push the European Commission to ensure that the Integrated Roma Platform, that has been established beginning of 2009, will be addressed Roma issues in an effective and meaningful way. Also we will keep a close eye on the progress made by the Roma Decade for Social Inclusion, that will be half way its term in 2010 and use its interim conclusions to give a boost to the debate on the role and commitment of the national governments in solving Roma issues.

And of course, Spolu together with its partner organizations will continue to create favourable conditions for Roma grassroots to speak up and claim their citizens' rights as other European citizens do.

