



(New) ERGO Network

Roma grassroots empowerment for equal citizenship

November 2010

Strong and independent grassroots and community-based organisations are the key for Roma to become equal stakeholders in society. They contribute to the success of Roma inclusion policies by organising pressure from below and active involvement in design and implementation of programmes and projects at local, national and international level.

ERGO Network supports and promotes grassroots empowerment to overcome the discrimination, anti-Gypsyism and stigmatisation that are root obstacles for their equal participation in society. Through grassroots mobilisation, activism and leadership at all levels of society, ERGO Network encourages Roma to attain respect for their rights as equal citizens. To enhance its impact and operational strength, ERGO Network joined forces with Spolu International Foundation and formally merged in November 2010. A presentation of the (new) ERGO Network.

Mission

ERGO Network wants to achieve equal opportunities for Roma in their societies and encourages them to take an active role in accomplishing respect for their rights as equal citizens.

ERGO Network connects organisations that share the conviction that Roma can and should participate as active citizens in their own societies. To overcome the discrimination and stigmatisation that are root obstacles to their equal participation in society, ERGO Network supports civic empowerment, mobilisation of Roma at grassroots level, and leadership at all levels of society.

Our approach creates opportunities for Roma to shape the policies that affect them, which can make a crucial contribution to more successful outcomes of inclusion policies.

For ERGO Network and its members to combat the exclusion of Roma is a responsibility that needs to be shared by Roma and non-Roma. ERGO Network therefore, promotes active citizenship, which implies participation, self-organisation, common responsibility and dignity.

At European level, ERGO Network expresses its members' common concerns and aims to bridge the gap between day-to-day reality and policymaking. ERGO Network provides expertise to policy makers and politicians to design and implement more effective Roma inclusion approaches as part of mainstream policies.

Approach

ERGO Network provides its members know-how and facilities that support, enable and strengthen their activities and enables them to express the voice of grassroots Roma individuals and communities. This mutually raises the value of the network as a whole.

ERGO Network in particular aims to facilitate capac-

Objectives

ERGO Network's key objectives are:

- to offer members an effective channel for information provision and exchange on relevant political and policy developments and a platform to communicate, network and share expertise among them and with other organisations, policy makers, scientists and other stakeholders;
- to facilitate capacity building of independent 'watch dog' organisations, networks and groups and to strengthen the impact of their actions within common programmes and initiatives targeted at achieving better policy outcomes;
- to advocate at European level for accessible and effective inclusion policies and the recognition of equal citizenship for Roma towards governments, EU institutions, international organisations and the private sector.

ity building of 'watchdog' organisations and networks that monitor policies, put crucial issues on the political agenda, formulate solutions and stir public debate at local, regional and national level.

ERGO Network's two-way chain of information brings experiences on the (lack of) impact of Roma inclusion policies from the local level to the national and European level – and ensures knowledge of relevant European and national policies at grassroots level. Benefiting from their connections in ERGO Network, member organisations can use this knowledge in their advocacy towards municipalities and governments.

Activities

In addition to European advocacy, support, and information exchange, ERGO Network has three main strands of activities.

- **Monitoring Local Policies** and Local Partnership for Roma Inclusion: this programme aims to establish the impact of Roma inclusion policies and initiatives at grassroots level, identify obstacles to successful implementation and propose practical solutions. It seeks to make policy makers aware of local conditions for Roma inclusion and simultaneously stimulate local activism to achieve better policy outcomes.
- **Youth Programme:** to support the emergence of a new generation of critically independent Roma activists, leaders and professionals by uniting them in networks and platforms and by way of internships, campaigns and capacity building trajectories.
- **Campaigning:** stigmatisation and discrimination of Roma is intimately connected to the exclusion of Roma. Campaigns to raise awareness of a wider audience and targeted actions to encourage authorities to address Roma issues are an important element of ERGO Network's activities.

Organisation & Membership

Through its members, ERGO Network is connected to community based organisations, leaders and Roma youth branches in over hundred Roma communities in seven countries. They understand local dynamics and contexts and can create bottom-up pressure on administrations to take positive action to address Roma exclusion

ERGO Network operates as an independent foundation. As a grassroots platform, its activities reflect common concerns and ownership of priorities, objectives and approaches between ERGO Network and its members.

Contact

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Programmes, initiatives and actions are developed and implemented in consultation and cooperation with its members.

Full and associate members are assembled in ERGO Network's Members Platform, which meets annually to discuss work plan and initiatives and to share information and knowledge. Full members are additionally represented in the Advisory Council, which has the prerogative to propose board members and is involved in strategic decisions. Associate members have the possibility to apply for full membership.

ERGO Network staff is based in Brussels (office) and Utrecht (secretariat). The ERGO office serves the interests of its members at European level and facilitates the daily activities of the network. The office is also responsible for research and policy and programme development.

The secretariat is the administrative centre of ERGO Network, which ensures the conditions for its activities and manages financial matters. Strategy, work plans and audits of ERGO Network are overseen by an independent Board, comprising both Roma and non-Roma members.

History

ERGO Network was founded in 2004 as an informal gathering of organisations engaged in Roma empowerment. Founding members Roma Active Albania, Integro Association (Bulgaria) and Spolu International (the Netherlands) formally registered ERGO Network as an association under Bulgarian law in 2008.

To strengthen the organisation, cope with a changing policy environment and be able to more effectively operate towards stakeholders and donors, ERGO Network and Spolu – which had a fifteen year track record in supporting Roma grassroots organisations – merged in 2010.

The merger allows ERGO Network to benefit from the strong points of both organisations, expand membership and strengthen its position at European level. ERGO Network is registered as a foundation under Dutch Law.

Members

EDROM (Turkey)
Porojan (Moldova)
Tarna Rom (Moldova)
R.R.O.M.A (Macedonia)
Roma Active Albania (RAA)
Roma Progress (Macedonia)
Integro Association (Bulgaria)
Democratic Association of Roma (DUR) (Serbia)
Policy Center for Roma and Minorities (Romania)

ERGO Network is a member of the European Roma Policy Coalition (ERPC) and is allied with European youth network "TernYpe".

