



2014

Annual Report



Introduction

Policy Center for Roma and Minorities is a non-profit, non-governmental organization, established in 2008 in Romania, which takes action to solve issues concerning the social inclusion of Roma and other ethnic minorities.

Vision

We believe that every human being has the right to know and make most of their potential, regardless of identity, ethnicity or the minority group they are part of or associated to.

Mission

Our actions support the Roma minority and other ethnic groups to become active citizens of the society and stimulate the majority to actively participate in the social inclusion process.

Values

Responsibility – for our actions

Professionalism – in our work

Innovation and creativity – in our way of thinking

Transparency – regarding the decisions we take

Equal opportunities – for Roma and other minorities

The main instruments we use in order to achieve our objectives:

- Research
- Public information, education and awareness campaigns
- Social and public policy suggestions
- Public debates
- Public statements
- Media monitoring

Achieving our objectives

Policy Center for Roma and Minorities (PCRM) has achieved the objectives set for 2014 for the three main areas of intervention:

- Social inclusion of Roma and other ethnic minorities, through the Alternative Education Club which has been extended to 3 schools in the ghetto type community of Ferentari
- Changing the negative attitude towards ethnic groups, especially the Roma minority, through implementing projects focused on awareness and non-discrimination cultural or sportive events
- Promoting a proactive attitude towards society issues and active citizenship on a local, national and international level, confronting the political class with the harsh reality of living in a ghetto type area

These objectives could not have been achieved without the constant support of partners, donors, volunteers and the commitment of the PCRM team members.

The long-term change in the community is brought mainly through the permanent project implemented by PCRM in Ferentari, The Alternative Education Club (AEC) where we have been working with over 300 children between the ages of 6 and 15 in the past four years.

On a local level, PCRM is working with the members of the ghetto type community of Ferentari, through the AEC where over 150 children have improved their knowledge, skills and talents by participating in the remedial and non-formal education activities (dance, music, photography, reading and writing, math etc.). Over 60 adults were involved in community organizing and development projects like the “Mothers’ Club” which continues to be a strong civic initiative group recognized by the Sector 5 Municipality and other authorities.

On a national level PCRM has created new partnerships and improved old ones in order to develop a better sustainable perspective of the foundation’s mission. Partnerships with different ministries, like the Ministry of Labor, Family, Social protection and Elderly, aim to assure that the financing opportunities are in direct contact with the real needs of the communities, especially the marginalized and vulnerable ones. On this matter, we collaborated with the Ministry of Regional Development and the European Funds Ministry in promoting the Community Led Local Development program (CLLD) at a national level. Another action with national impact is the bill proposal for changing the legal frame in order to make structural funds more accessible to poor communities in Romania. Also, our collaboration with the Romanian Football Federation in organizing several events for children is another example of the impact PCRM has on a national level.

On a European level PCRM has developed and improved partnerships with organizations from different EU member states in order to bring sustainable changes in the lives of the people from the community of Ferentari through being part of the European Roma Grassroots Organizations Network (ERGO). We also had the help of diplomatic missions in Bucharest and high-level connections with representatives of European institutions, which facilitated a better capacity of working on a European level on the issue of social inclusion.

The board

● **Ana Opreșan**

● **Nicoleta Bițu**

● **Marian Daragiu**

● **Aida Catană**

● **Magda Balica**

The team

This year, we attracted more enthusiastic and dedicated colleagues as ourselves and our team grew and became stronger:

● **Florin Botonogu**

President

● **Oana Bacil**

Alternative Education Club Coordinator

● **Raluca Negulescu**

Executive Director

● **Rodica Păun**

Educational Assistant

● **Olimpia Sabina Antoci**

Program Director

● **Maria Militaru**

Educational Assistant

● **Roxana Dumbravă**

PR and Communication Coordinator

● **Cateluța Vătală**

Educational Assistant

● **Irina Mihuțescu**

Advocacy Assistant

● **Elena Feraru**

Educational Assistant

● **Nicoleta Scripcariu**

Financial Manager

● **Laurențiu Gheorghe**

Football Instructor

● **Nicoleta Grigoraș**

Administrative Assistant

● **Solène Peyron**

Intern

Education Projects

The Alternative Education Club was launched in October 2010 as a pilot project and was extended during the past 4 years in 3 schools from the Ferentari community. The main goal is improving the quality of the education for Roma and non-Roma children who live in the ghetto type area of Ferentari, through an innovative approach, combining sports and creative activities, remedial education and proactive citizenship. In this creative space, the children interact with educational assistants and volunteers who offer them support and guidance, promoting the general idea that education is important in the process of breaking the borders of marginalization and poverty. At the same time PCRM stimulates participation of parents in the activities of the club, facilitating their involvement in promoting education and a better quality of life.



After more than four years of activity and having in mind the main beneficiaries (more than 300 Roma and non-Roma children who are vulnerable from a social point of view), the Alternative Education Club has the following objectives:

- Offering counseling and mentoring for a group of socially vulnerable children
- Creating an innovative approach, focused on developing and improving skills and competences useful throughout life
- Creating sports teams in order for the children to develop and get used to discipline, self-esteem, team spirit, fair play and respect
- Promoting a proactive participation in the community
- Becoming a bridge between children and parents, where education is seen as an efficient way of breaking the vicious circle or marginalization.

The Alternative Education Club is also used as a space for debate with the participation of Roma NGOs representatives and Roma leaders, embassies, intergovernmental agencies, local authorities and other NGOs. These debates focus on themes such as the ghetto issue, poverty, discrimination or public policy.

In order to expose the children who participate in the AEC to as many positive role models as possible, PCRM has developed many partnerships meant to attract volunteers. Our monitoring shows that the children who are constantly present in the AEC have improved academic performances and are more motivated to go to school. Also, due to the work of the educational assistants and of the volunteers, the children are now more disciplined, responsible, respectful, creative and independent.

In 2014, the Alternative Education Club was open weekly from Monday to Saturday from 9:00 to 17:00, thanks to a wonderful team of workers, volunteers, partners and donors who put their minds, hearts and strengths together in order to offer a more efficient option for development for the members of a disadvantaged community.

Education through Art and Culture

The Alternative Education Club is a program based on the idea that non-formal education plays an extremely important role in improving the education level of the children from Ferentari. Cultural and artistic activities, drama and music workshops and visits outside the community are some of the projects we organized in 2014.

This past year, for three months, 12 children had weekly workshops on improvisation with a group of talented actors from Alternopedia Association. They learned and played several educational and creative improvisation games, useful for the children.



The children from the AEC have also exhibited their works from the photography workshops. In January, Imbold Art Gallery hosted the “FerenTARE” exhibition. Later in 2014, there was the exhibition “My photo. My voice” and at Shehalle Zurich, the artist Dan Perjovschi included some of the photographs taken by the children in his exhibition.

Music is a constant in the most liked activities of the AEC. This year, the children had the chance to experience and learn about several instruments in a meeting with young musicians from the National Music University of Bucharest. They also enjoyed taking guitar lessons from Ryan Allmendinger, a US student who volunteered at the AEC.

Alternative Education Park

As a tradition, every year we organize a “back-to-school” event in the community. The AEC team along with volunteers, professionals and most importantly, the children who have participated constantly in the activities of the club, gathered in the park from Aleea Livezilor where they organized workshops for each of the non-formal activities they practice in the program. It was chance to show the entire community what they learn and become trainers and instructors for a day as well as interact with professionals from each of the fields (actors, journalists, football players etc.).

Summer outside

The Village Museum from Bucharest organizes each summer a series of workshops for children focused on Romanian traditional arts and crafts. The children from the Alternative Education Club have participated for the past 4 years in workshops lead by authentic craftsmen and learned pottery, weaving, music, poetry and traditional games.



“7 years in 7 days” Camp

In September 2014 a group of 25 children from the AEC have participated in the “7 years in 7 days” Camp organized by Rotaract Bucharest after a fundraising campaign which also involved the children performing and creating hand-made art. The socio-educational camp was meant to offer the children a week of fun and useful activities with two specialized trainers.

Education through sport and dance

At the Alternative Education Club, children have the opportunity to develop social and personal skills through practicing sports. We use sports as a tool for intercultural dialog and for changing negative attitudes towards the Roma minority, especially on stadiums. Due to that, our partnerships with FARE (Football Against Racism in Europe), the Romanian Football Federation and the Romanian Basketball Federation are fundamental.

“Respect Diversity” Cup

As part of the FARE Action Weeks, PCRM in partnership with The Romanian Football Federation have organized a football championship held at the National Arena stadium. The event brought together children from poor, marginalized communities from Bucharest with famous football players in a celebration of diversity and fair-play conveying a very strong anti-racism message.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8tdr1qpb9Bo>)



Born for Trouble (B4T)

For over four years the children from the AEC participate in dance classes with the best street-dance crew in the country, Trouble Crew, and the results speak for themselves when it comes to the success of their performance. B4T (the children's dance crew) has had several mentionable achievements in 2014: places 3 and 8 at the International Hip-Hop Competition in Bucharest; places 1,2,3 and 4 at the National Dance Competition IDO Romania in Oradea; participating in the European Street-Dance Championship in Rimini, Italy. Moreover, B4T started to gain some fame and was invited to perform in several events organized by the US Embassy and "Regina Maria" Foundation.



Battery Dance Company

The children from the AEC have participated for the second time in the program "Dancing to connect", implemented by Battery Dance Company NY in over 25 countries since 2006. The program aims to develop improvisation abilities and test youth creativity through contemporary dance. Battery Dance Company organized intensive dance workshops for a week, which led to a performance in an innovative show held at WASP – Working Art Space and Production in Bucharest. Accompanied by two exceptional dancers – Mira Cook and Clement Mensah – the children were motivated and delivered an outstanding performance.

Mentorship

The children who participate in the activities of the AEC have countless opportunities to meet people who can shape their views on all aspects of life, in a positive way. Knowing the need for this kind of encounters, we encouraged them to participate in the "Take over Day" project – a day when the children met with professionals, learned about their jobs and took over for a few hours.

Another memorable moment for the children, was meeting the sprint canoeing Olympic Champion, Ivan Patzaichin, who shared stories of his career and inspired them to be ambitious, brave and work hard for their dreams.

Speaking about memorable moments, the meeting with the judge Cristi Danileț was also one that the children enjoyed. They discussed about the laws and how justice is applied and explored several realistic scenarios to have a better understanding in their own terms.

Social and Financial education

This year we organized a workshop about the AFLATOUN program in the AEC. This social and financial education program is created for children and their teachers as an alternative way to learn useful skills in life.

Fundraising events

In July 2014, 5 swimmers participated in the Bucharest Swimathon campaign joining the AEC's cause – United for Education, to raise funds in order to offer a daily lunch for 60 children from the Alternative Education Club. Also, the street-dance crew performed in an event organized at “Artidava” Independent Cultural Center in order to raise funds for their participation in the European Street-Dance Championship in Rimini, Italy.

National and international recognition

The Alternative Education Club was promoted as a good practice example through several materials, articles, videos or conferences. To mention a few: a video created and disseminated by Mott Foundation (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UsPfuZb0c_Q&feature=youtu.be); Conference against discrimination and racism – UEFA, respect diversity – organized by FARE Network in Rome; European Economic and Social Committee.

Community

Another basic principle, for which PCRM was founded, was to create a way to identify and find solutions for the needs of the people from the community we work with. In order to expand the community organization and development work that we undergo, in 2013 we created the Mothers' Club – a civic initiative group meant to empower the Roma minority from the ghetto of Ferentari in order for them to be able to bring change in the community.

The Mothers' Club

Founded in 2013, The Mothers' Club gathers over 20 Roma and non-Roma mothers who share experience and work towards a positive transformation of their community. The Mothers' Club aims to stimulate active citizenship by facilitating a process in which the citizens identify the issues in their community and come up with their own solutions to these problems by themselves. Community organizing and active citizenship are



the key words in this process. The project engages women in a meaningful way that empowers them to become the architects of change of the society they live in. We meet every week to map not only the challenges, but also to work together on implementing the most appropriate solutions. It is a long term project of grassroots democracy that proposes a change a paradigm. In the end, the communities know best which solutions are fit for their situation.

In 2014, the women from the Mothers' Club have been appreciated for their work and results. The "Guerilla Mothers" Prize was awarded at the Public Participation Awards Gala. Also, since April 2014, together with PCRM and CeRe (The Resource Center for Public Participation), the women participate in an ongoing advocacy campaign regarding a housing issue on Iacob Andrei Street (in Ferentari). In October, the women from The Mothers' Club have been invited at the Citizens' Initiatives Fair to share their experience and talk about their successful community organization initiatives.

Due to the fact that these women understand the importance of lifelong learning, they participated actively in several trainings and counseling programs, in order to better themselves and become role models for their children and community. Some of the trainings they participated in were focused on community organizing, psycho-educational counseling, parental education and English language.

Advocacy & Lobby

This year we organized a debate with the Romanian Parliament focused on the legislative proposal initiated by PCRM regarding the need for action in development of poor communities. The debate happened as collaboration with the Chamber of Deputies, currently the legislative proposal being analyzed by the Senate. The aim of this project is to create an inter-institutional mechanism which coordinates the unitary regulation process of the measures and instruments for social inclusion, destined for the disadvantaged social class. Another objective of the project is to create the legal framework for cofounding finances necessary for European projects initiated in poor communities (http://www.cdep.ro/pls/proiecte/upl_pck.project?idp=13538).

"Toto and his sisters"

The project created by Alexander Nanau in collaboration with Policy Center for Roma and Minorities Foundation a few years ago, had its premiere in 2014 and already managed to win several awards at international film festivals. The aim of this project was to show the public an unaltered image of a world forgotten by the authorities and avoided by others, and to demonstrate that there is a way for (individual) salvation. Distributed by HBO Romania, the documentary was a success and its impact is already visible – after watching it, a large number of volunteers offered their service for the community. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zcxO-bBKJ90>)



The debate challenge

In May, students from the Political Science Faculty of the University of Bucharest have participated in a round table meeting with members of the PCRM team and Nicoleta Bițu, to debate on issues like stereotypes, activism, and the role of women in the Romanian society.

In September, Policy Center for Roma and Minorities has taken a public stand regarding the critical housing situation of the people living on Vulturilor Street in Bucharest and also regarding the lack of efficient public policy about housing in the Romanian society. This public statement acted as a signal to the authorities, about the social risks involved in this kind of situations, which usually imply abuse and brutality of the police forces towards the evicted.

On a very specific level, this year we developed several projects: Community Led Local Development – Roma community involvement: mobilization, participation, empowerment; Network for the social inclusion of Roma – capacity building and advocacy; No disgrace in this electoral race! – Recording and combating hate speech and racism during the 2014 electoral cycle in Romania; Roma entrepreneurship in Romania – Research and advocacy for setting up a financial instrument facilitating access of small Roma entrepreneurs and social businesses in Romania to micro-credits; The national alternative education program for minors and youth in the penitentiaries. Information on the details of these projects can be found on our website.

Financial Report

The operational budget for 2014 – income 212.922 EURO

Main financers

- The Embassy of the French Republic in Romania
- District 5 Municipality - Bucharest
- European Commission (European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network)
- Mega Image
- FARE (Football Against Racism in Europe)
- Open Society Foundations
- EEA Grants and Norway Grants (European Economic Area Agreement – The Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Iceland, Lichtenstein and Norway) – Programe Operators: Civil Society Development Foundation and the Romanian Ministry of Cluture