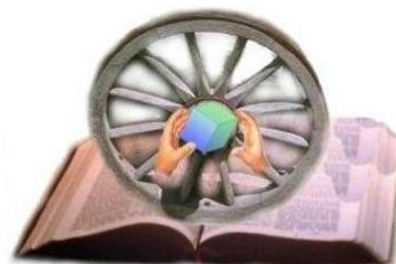




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# ROMA YOUTH COUNCIL- FROM AN IDEA TO REALITY

FINAL REPORT ON THE PROJECT- ROMA YOUTH INCLUSION IN THE PUBLIC  
PROCESSES OF DECISION MAKING AND PUBLIC OPINION



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## 1. SUMMARY

Youth councils are relevant bodies in a local level which are necessary for the functioning of a municipality. If the municipality wants the youth to invest in that municipality, to have trust in the local government and their promises, we believe that there should be a direct collaboration with the youth itself, and that their opinions about measures that personally affect the improvement of their life standard and social life. From sports and cultural events, education and job positions, up to their participation in the creation of local strategies for young people and their inclusion in the decision making.

Although there is a foreseen program for the inclusion of young people, it gives out the impression like its only on paper, and in fact the position of the young people in the municipalities is at an unsatisfactory level, which is an indicator for the need to create a separate body of young people who will participate in the work of the municipality sessions, and they will present their own requirements, which will encourage the cooperation between these two parties.

Overall, in the past years the education of Roma has risen to a higher level, so young people are more aware of the problems that exist in their municipalities. They are aware enough to recognize what is not working properly, and when someone makes decisions that are not in their interest. But they do not always feel secure and courageous enough to stand up for their opinions and to seek a solution from their municipalities for their needs. In such cases, we believe that through joint engagement of the young people and their cooperation, an open and reliable space will be created where they can discuss what measures should be undertaken, finding solutions and the changes that they would like to see in their municipality. The need for this project arose as there was a significant lack of interest from young Roma, to be involved in the decision making process in their municipality and their lack of interest to be actively involved in the process of decision-making, that personally affects them.

It seems that the municipality of Shuto Orizari is constantly stagnating when it comes to include young people as members of the community. Therefore, young people have no cultural corners or centers where they can express themselves, cinema, coffee bars, etc., which makes them feel as if they are deprived from socializing and get together with their peers. This severely damages the development of the municipality,

and contributes to the insufficient education of young people because they do not have the opportunity to exchange information's and experiences that would further help them progress.

Association for protection and education of children and young Roma – Progress, with the support of Civica Mobilitas, from the 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2017 until the 30<sup>th</sup> of April 2018 implemented the project under the title Roma youth inclusion in the public processes of decision making and creation of public opinion.

During the course of this project a few main activities were implemented such as a roundtable with representatives from the NGO sector and the local self-government of Shuto Orizari, a seminar with young Roma as product of which was created the Roma Youth Council, also a promotion of the actions through media coverage of the activities as well as online promotion.

The goal of this project was to increase and strengthen the inclusion of young Roma in decision-making processes and in the creation of public opinion. Part of the specific goals that the association was able to accomplish are increasing the cooperation between young people and the local authorities, creating a Roma Youth Council that will function on the territory of Shuto Orizari, and will participate in creating policies for the youth through its presentations at the council sessions of the municipality.

## 2.PROJECT INTRODUCTION

Before the project came to the stage of creating a Roma Youth Council, a number of activities were implemented which preceded the final goal. These activities include the memorandum for cooperation, the organization of a seminar and a roundtable on finding the most optimal solutions for the functioning of this informal body. Within a period of ten months, the Association Progress, through the support of CIVICA Mobilitas, managed to establish the Roma Youth Council, inform the youth and the public about its existence, and enable young people from this municipality to get involved in the measures that the municipality brings, to improve their cooperation with local authorities and to jointly build youth policies.

### ✓ **Signing a memorandum for collaboration with the municipality of Shuto Orizari**

The priority of this project was initiate cooperation between Shuto Orizari and the young people living on its territory, but also with the organization itself. Therefore, on 07.08.2017, a memorandum was signed between Association Progress and the mayor of the municipality of Suto Orizari.

The general goal of the Memorandum is through mutual cooperation, understanding and assistance between the signing parties, to enable an effective implementation of the adequate measures for young people, and for them to be allowed to actively and directly take part in the decision-making process, to express their needs and problems, and to make a compromise between the municipality and the needs of young people, which will influence young people's policies and the public opinion.

The collaboration between the contracting parties will especially refer part for cooperation and implementation of the envisaged project, which will be realized through the following forms:

- a cooperation which will provide the necessary conditions for the seminar and premises for the gathering of young people and their future meetings and solutions;
- assigning a person responsible for the communication with the young people and holding the collective meetings;

- carrying out trainings for the youth in politics or activities oriented towards their inclusion;
- processing the materials and brochures whose purpose will be to inform the young people about the ongoing activities, projects and measures;
- preparing and implementing joint initiatives between the Roma Youth Council and the Municipality of Shuto Orizari for the organization of collective activities for the training which will be of common interest for both contractual parties in the direction of universal preparation for a successful implementation of the measures for young people and the creation of public opinion and decision making;
- ✓ **Roundtable- “The benefit of youth participation in the public processes of decision making and the creation of public opinion”**

Association Progress on the 12<sup>th</sup> of August 2017 in Hotel Karpos in Skopje organized a roundtable, in which took part 20 participants from different backgrounds and exchanged good practices in how to increase the interest of young people and their inclusion in the politics and its creation.

In this roundtable were present distinguished activists in the department of civil sector, representatives from the municipality of Shuto Orizari, as well as the young people themselves who want to be part of the Youth Council. There was a discussion about similar previous projects of this type, exchange of experiences about mistakes and recommendation for more effective functioning, and the reducing the outflow of young people because of their insufficient involvement and funds separated for their development and education.





✓ **Seminar – “Roma youth participation in the public processes of decision making and the creation of public opinion”**

This seminar was held on the dates 16-17 of August 2017 in Hotel Karposh, which is located in Skopje. During the two-day seminar, 30 participants had the opportunity to gain knowledge about the duties of the local self-government, how to communicate with the municipality and how to put together a request (solicitation) direct to the local government. During the seminar itself, a local youth council was created as a part of the municipality of Shuto Orizari. The president of the LYC was elected, a board of members and other members, whose duty



will be to take part in the sessions held within the council of the municipality, and they will be integrated in the decision-making processes of the municipality.



During the first part of the seminar the moderator introduced to the participants the duties-competencies of the local self-government, and he gave them a basic introduction about the responsibilities and duties of each local community towards us. After that followed lectures about the communication with the local self-government, writing requests and practical exercises and workshops that helped them adopt the knowledge gained so far.

During the second stage of the seminar the Roma Youth Council was formed, as well as writing initiatives, proposals and innovative solution for the young people in the Shuto Orizari.

- ✓ **Partaking in a debate program in TV Shutel for the promotion of the project and informing the public for the support of the council and the inclusion of young people in the same.**



### **3.1 Roma Youth Council**

The Roma Youth Council is the product of our project – Roma youth inclusion in the public decision making processes and the creation of the public opinion, supported by Civica Mobilitas. RYC is an informal body with a freewill participation and by their own will, where a large number of civil organization members are included, youth association, students and other young people from the territory of Shuto Orizari who want to give their contribution. With this in mind, RYC is some sort of a representative of young people from the municipality and acts in the direction of fulfilling their interests and necessities, on a local level of the community.

The members of RYC, together with the president of the council were unanimously elected by a five member committee, also ensuring that the structure has an equal representation of the two sexes and covers all the areas of action in the municipalities according to the specifications and skills of each of the members: education, culture and sport, youth work, employment and quality of life. These members will bear the responsibility of representing other young people on the level of Shuto Orizari, to encourage a larger social interest from the youth, and to strive to improve the position of young people in Shuto Orizari. Also, it is very important that the municipality of Shuto Orizari provides information and transparency concerning the amount of funds the municipality invests in young people's development, which areas are targeted with these funds and how is this budget spent.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of September 2017, a contract for RYC work was signed, where are clearly stated the duties, goals and obligation of the council members. By signing this contract, RYC got its outline and a code by which it will lead its future work. The members itself prepared a strategy and rulebook for their work and the same will be inspected on the meetings. The fundamental duties of RYC are: preparing, supervising and regularly coordinating the impenetating the local youth strategy of Shuto Orizari, as well as its evaluation and correction. Afterwards, presenting concrete proposals to the municipality in the areas defined with the Local youth strategy. The RYC also has the responsibility to prepare reports, recommendations and conclusions which are the focus of the council. The

members are obliged to gather opinions from other young people in the municipality, and to inform them about their next activities. The responsibilities of each of the members are to actively participate in all of the meetings and actively contribute in the development of the RYC and to actively advocate for achieving the objectives of the RYC.



We believe that this roma youth council on the aspect of collaboration with young people will uplift the municipality to a higher level, as well as hearing out their point of views, proposals, problems and needs they consider that should be solved in according to the competences of the municipality and also strengthening the collaboration between the institutions

and young people. An assigned representative of the youth will significantly simplified the representation of young people before the municipality of Shuto Orizari and in this way the municipality will be informed and have an insight about what is that young people are lacking of.

The Roma Youth Council has the right to organize working groups, campaigns, ongoing activities, capacity building activities and similar things. The President and the members will have meetings once a month, where they will debate about the progress of the municipality, implemented measures and activities in which young people are represented, benefits they enjoy in the municipality as young people and what they can change in their municipality. Afterwards they present their conclusions from the meetings before the council of their municipality and where their request will be reviewed.

Association Progress goal is to achieve massive membership of the youth from Shuto Orizari in the RYC, raising awareness among young people about the need for such council and engagement, and for them to take over the initiative to solve their problems themselves, because nobody will do it for them.

## 4. Youth and the local self-government

Since the creation of the council, until the completion of the project, the council has been cooperating with the municipality of Shuto Orizari. On 20<sup>th</sup> of September, 2017, after the President, Vice President and members of the Council were elected, together with the board of Association Progress, a coordinative meeting was held where the President signed the agreement for RYC, and a decision upon the following activities was reached, within the frames of the project - "Roma youth participation in public decision-making processes and public opinion creation ". The President together with the members participated in their sessions and worked in the interest of all young people of this municipality. First, council members surveyed their peers from Shuto Orizari and the results were rather predictive. More than 60% did not know how to get involved in the decision making processes of the municipality or that this type of council could be established, a place where they could actively participate, almost 90% had a negative attitude towards the cooperation with the municipality because they do not believe in the transparency of the municipality and the access to information on how the budget for young people is spent, whereas 80% of young people declared their positive attitude for the creation of the council and that they would like to actively part take in it themselves in order for them to take initiatives and be productive members of the municipality they live.

Throughout the project, the president and its members held meetings more than 14 times, and attended 5 sessions of the municipality council, during which were presented solutions and part of the proposals mentioned on the seminars.



### ***4.1 A RYC workshop for the creation of a National youth strategy, Hotel Karposh***

After the attendance of sessions and observing the councils works, they came to the following conclusions and recommendations directed to the municipality of Shuto Orizari . And that about certain questions concerning young people, their opinions were not taken into consideration at all, until now, and that the municipality made decisions on their behalf.

Thus, they proposed changing certain items of the youth local strategy and proposed new measure, which would be on their interest and would make Shuto Orizari and urbanized municipality which will provide the opportunity young people to socialize, educate and grow culturally.

That would be a modernized appearance of the bazaar in Shuto Orizari with window displays, cultural centers, discotheques, libraries with reading space and available literature for youth, and they requested a place i.e. premises where they could hold their future meetings and agree on the following proposals. Further on they think that there is a



small advancement in terms of cooperation between the municipalities and that their attitudes are of significance as people with the right to vote, and that their direct cooperation with the youth is the only way for the local government do strengthen the trust of young people and that the things necessary to them will be implemented.

#### ***4.2 Session in the municipality of Shuto Orizari***

With this young people proved that their inactivity was due to the previous indifference of the local government concerning the collaboration with the youth, and that caused the decline of their interest to take initiatives for change and as a result the municipality faced a significant loss of new ideas which would have aided the municipality and would contribute to its development.

## 5. Young people about the council...



I think that his council was lacking for a long time in our municipality and that it will bring positive changes in Shuto Orizari. I am very happy that by participating in the seminar I had the opportunity to become part of the council and to actively participate in its activities.

**Rahman Sulejman, member of RYC**



As a president of this council, I will bear my responsibility in representing the youth before our municipality and I will also present their requests. I hope that this will strengthen the collaboration between us the young people and the municipality and that we will be a step ahead from the rest of the municipalities, who have implemented this type of collaboration

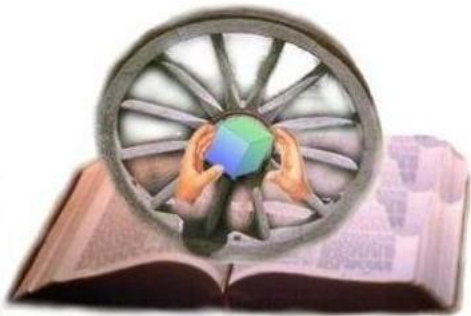
**Makfire Memedi , President of the council**



First and foremost, I am very pleased that I will be part of the council because in this way I think I will overcome the fear that my voice won't be heard and that I will fight for my needs and interests. Also, the council is a good way to meet other young people and socialize with people that have the same goal of realization some sort of an initiative.

**Suada Imer, Member of the Council**

## **6 . ABOUT ASSOCIATION PROGRESS**



**Association for protection and education of children and young Roma- Progress, is formed with the sole goal of implementing the basic human rights which are realized in several social spheres: economic, social, political, health and cultural. Progress was registered on December 1, 2000, and has since been working on the realization of its goals and mission.**

**Our organization strives to create a wider social interest while at the same time satisfying the needs for professional or any other assistance in the field of rights and freedoms established in the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, and with the laws and international agreements ratified by our state.**

**Association Progress is successful and has been operating for 18 years, and has accomplished numerous collaborations with: The City of Skopje, Ministry of Culture, OSF, FARE Network, USAID, Swiss Embassy, etc. Our projects are mainly realized through seminars, lectures, workshops, conferences, manuals and brochures. The organization counts over 60 volunteers who are in charge of organizing events and activities, and also help throughout their implementation all in the light of fulfilling our set out vision - and that is a free democratic society for young Roma, with no discrimination and stereotypes a country where they will be accepted.**







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