

Winners of the Second Most Roma-Friendly Mayor in the Western Balkans and Turkey

Albania – Municipality of Roskovec



Ms Majlinda BUFI, Mayor of Roskovec

The mayor of Roskovec has put in the spotlight the agenda the integration of Roma.

The most of impact of the work of the municipality has been reached in the following fields:

- Improvement of the living conditions of Roma families
- Awareness and support for better education
- Promoting and preserving Roma cultural heritage
- Awareness of health issues
- Participation in decision taking structures

- The municipality has adopted a Strategic Social Plan, in which are laid out clear and specific objectives on Roma integration. Implementation of infrastructure projects, from road reconstruction, improvement of electric and water supply, to house reconstruction (55 houses reconstructed); went along with social projects, providing recognition of Roma contribution to the cultural heritage of the town.

- Related to the improvement of education as of preschool level, a kindergarten was opened hosting 100 children from the majority and Roma families, two Roma teachers have been enrolled in one of the schools and free English language courses are provided for Roma and Egyptian children.

- In addition, there are Roma directly employed in the municipality, from services to administration level, and also a calendar of meetings was established to ensure participation of Roma communities in the decision taking and consultation processes of the municipality.

Bosnia and Herzegovina - Municipality of Kakanj



Mr Aldin ŠLJIVO, Mayor of Kakanj

- For keeping a strong communication with the Roma community and CSOs, by increasing their involvement in working bodies and commissions, resulting in effective cooperation and response to the needs of the Roma community.

- This has led to the establishment of scholarships for Roma students, provisions of books and didactic materials for Roma students, direct financial support to local Roma CSOs including support to cultural heritage activities and celebration. In addition, helping the grassroots Roma to fight illiteracy by supporting projects addressing this issue, providing assistance in civil registration and obtaining ID documents.

- Results also scored high in housing and construction of social housing for members of the Roma population in the Kakanj municipality. So far, 6 buildings have been constructed with the support of Kakanj Municipality, the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH, Hilfswerk Austria and Caritas of Switzerland and for 40 families were allotted 40 apartments. The construction of the 7th building for the accommodation of 10 more families is underway, and the documentation for the 8th building with another 10 apartments is under preparation;

Other achievements that the municipality reached, are:

- Establishment and operation of a Local Action Group for the Prevention of Violence, Begging, Child Labour and Minor Marriages. The Local Action Group, through mediators, works in the field with parents and influences that an increasing number of Roma children attend the educational system;

- Employment of 22 Roma people in the public sector;

- Payment of one-off financial benefits, infant benefits, child allowance, etc.

Kosovo* - Municipality of Lipjan



Mr Imri AHMETI, Mayor of Lipjan

Municipality of Lipjan has 57,474 inhabitants, 3.67% of whom are Roma.

- The Municipality of Lipjan and Mr Ahmeti, respectively, continuously support Roma through different programmes and projects including housing, education, employment, etc.
- The Municipality of Lipjan is one of the rare municipalities having a Roma vice mayor in Kosovo.
- Moreover, lately they offered internship positions to Roma youth in their municipality, supported Roma families to improve their living conditions and also supported financially learning centres in order to support children with homework in different villages around the Lipjan area.
- Considering the number of Roma community living in this municipality, the Mayor continuously supports programmes for the integration of Roma into the Kosovo society.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Montenegro - Municipality of Bijelo Polje

Mr Petar Smolovic, Mayor of Bijelo Polje, represented by Ms Saida ČIKIĆ, Municipality of Bijelo Polje



The Municipality of Bijelo Polje has had a wide range of commendable activities in the previous period which recommended Mr Smolovic and the Municipality of Bijelo Polje for the award ‘Most Roma friendly Mayor’.

- For the first time in Montenegro, a specialized Office for Roma issues in the municipal Secretariat for Local Self-Government was established with 2 persons employed, one of whom is a Roma woman who is employed by the Municipality for the first time in history of Montenegro.

- Securing funds in the amount of EUR 200 000 for the construction of housing units for 10 Roma families, in cooperation with international NGO ‘Help’ Montenegro;
- Strategic planning with involvement of Roma community in creation and adoption of the second Local Action Plan for Roma Integration in Municipality Bijelo Polje for the period 2018-2022;
- Providing support for 2 Roma NGOs through allocation of funds for implementation of 2 projects which directly target Roma and their inclusion at local level.

North Macedonia - Municipality of Shuto Orizari



Mr Dudush KURTO, Mayor of Sutorizeri

- For having a clear understanding of what the Roma challenges are, and swaying local policies makers on how to create empowering measures to increase the impact on conditions of the Roma.
- Building infrastructure, including improvement of schools and kindergartens.
- Reconstructions of medical centres and support to education.
- Lowering the number of child dropouts from school and implementing measures that increased the transition of pupils from each level of education until university.
- Implementation of more than 20 infrastructure projects, going beyond immediate needs and providing also for recreation, such as building of children parks.
- Last, but not least, increasing the level of employment of the Roma community in the public structures and also supporting their involvement in leadership positions.

Serbia - Municipality of Mladenovac



Mr Vladan GLIŠIĆ, Mayor of Belgrade

- The municipality of Mladenovac has adopted a sustainable Local Action Plan for the improvement of the status of Roma in period of 2019-2022.
- The specific communal problems of the Roma community are recognized and steps for solving these issues are taken, funds are allocated from the municipal budget for improving the situation of Roma.
- The municipality has taken over mobile housing units for the most vulnerable Roma families from the city of Belgrade, projects to train homemakers and housekeepers are implemented and already 16 Roma people are employed.
- Beside that, they implemented projects for day care for Roma children.
- With all these efforts, the Municipality of Mladenovac and Mr Vladan Glisic sets an example to other municipalities in working towards improvement of life conditions of Roma and making them equal citizens of our societies.

Turkey - Municipality of Konak



Mr Abdül BATUR – Mayor of Konak Izmir

- Things such as giving seats to Roma in the local parliament
- The establishment of a Roma workgroup in the city council
- The establishment of an equality unit in order to prevent disadvantaged people from facing discrimination
- Opening town centres which are oriented towards disadvantaged people and especially his ensuring of the continuity of these town centres had an effect for him in order to win the award.
- Also the mayor's efforts to increase the employability of Roma come into prominence.
- The participation of women in vocational courses in the neighbourhood centres opened in the Roma neighbourhood has contributed to the organisation of various personal development and awareness trainings.
- He has also conducted work in the field of education such as opening science centres for children in the district centre, providing breakfast support at schools, granting scholarship to Roma youth who continue to secondary and higher education.
- Health screenings and awareness-raising trainings are organized in the district centres.
- The municipality also conducted a project called "Our Orchestra", which brought together young Roma people with musical talent to create employment, and it also supported the entrance of some of these children to the conservatory.