

FDC

Foundation for Democratic Change

Developing Local Support
for Third - Neutral Intervention
in Ethnic Conflicts

- FINAL REPORT -
April 2004

Project financed by the Embassy of the United States of America,
Public Affairs Section - Bucharest, Romania

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*Fundația pentru Schimbări
Democratice*



*Centrul de Resurse pentru
Comunitățile de Romi*

ICPC

*Institutul pentru Cercetarea și
Prevenirea Criminalității*

Developing Local Support for Third - Neutral Intervention in Ethnic Conflicts

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“Developing Local Support for Third – Neutral Intervention in Ethnic Conflicts”

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Developing local support for third-neutral intervention in ethnic conflicts

Project developed by FDC in partnership with RCRC and ICRP, with the financial support of the US Embassy in Bucharest

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Foundation for Democratic Changes (FDC) initiated the project “**Developing local support for third – neutral intervention in ethnic conflicts**” in 2003. It represents the continuation of the Training Program “*Prevention and Resolution of Inter-ethnic Conflicts*” developed in 2002, together with The Resource Center for Roma Communities (RCRC). Thus the project is a direct follow-up to the conclusions drawn and recommendations resulted from the end of the 2002 program.

To achieve the proposed objectives, the project benefited from the partnerships with RCRC and the Institute for Crime Research and Prevention (ICRP), which declared their support in order to continue the effort to train representatives of Roma NGOs to intervene as neutral parties in ethnic conflicts.

The target group of the present project was represented by the 22 graduates, representatives of Roma NGOs, trained in 2002 by the RCRC and the FDC in prevention and resolution of conflicts through alternative dispute resolution methods: mediation, facilitation and other forms of assisting the parts in conflict.

The project benefited from the financial support of the **Embassy of the United States of America** to Bucharest, **Public Affairs Section**.

The project focused on the following activities:

Technical assistance and consultancy: This component, offered by the FDC team, was a concrete and immediate answer to resolve the obstacles identified at the local level at the end of the training program in 2002.

The assistance given to the graduates was even more important, if we take into account, that neutral intervention in conflicts, performed by a specialized person in the area, mediator or facilitator, is still a novelty in Romania. Accepting neutral intervention as a viable method of constructive intervention needs a deeper understanding and must be supported by sufficient practice in the area.

Local workshops: Organizing and running local workshops represented a necessary follow-up to promote the people trained in 2002.

The workshops were organized in those localities where the trained mediators carry out a significant activity regarding the prevention and resolution of disputes, respectively: Bucharest, Galați, Cluj, Tecuci, Timișoara, Botoșani, Iași, Giurgiu and Craiova.

The local workshops brought together at the same table representatives of the public authorities, Police and Roma NGOs, in order to build a dialogue or to strengthen existing ones.

The meetings represented a favorable framework for the presentation of the way the Roma mediators cooperated with or could cooperate with local authorities, with the Police and the people from the Roma communities, thus promoting a model of working in conflict prevention at the local level.

The mediators had the opportunity to promote their own activity and their NGOs activities in the presence of the public authorities and Police representatives. The mediator’s professional approach in presenting the activities and some situations they intervened in helped the public authorities’ representatives to better understand the possible roles of a mediator in a conflict.

Networking: The active and periodical communication called into being a network for mediators - specialized in ethnic conflicts that, through the dedicated e-group created on the Internet, allowed for a permanent transfer of information and maintained an interest for applying the theoretical knowledge gathered. Moreover on-line consultancy was offered to individuals for organizing the local workshops.

To improve the network cohesion, an event like the seminar organized in the framework of the project was essential. On the one side, it created the ideal frame for the exchange of experience and, on the other side, it offered the possibility to verify, improve and renew the information and concepts used through the contribution of the FDC specialist team.

Partners in the project

THE FOUNDATION FOR DEMOCRATIC CHANGE

- Mission** Promotion of human rights through dialogue improvement and consensus building, through the use of assistance techniques by third-neutral and impartial party (mediation, facilitation, participatory planning)
- Objectives**
- To promote alternative methods of conflict resolution through the assistance of a third-neutral party;
 - To improve communication between the representatives of the Government and of non – governmental organizations, in order to identify and solve problems connected to economic and social development;
 - To facilitate access to information about human rights and minority rights in direct connection with conflict resolution to those who are interested.
- Activities**
- Training programs, consultancy and assistance in conflict resolution;
 - Promoting Alternative Dispute Resolution methods in Romania
 - In the juridical system
 - In civil society
 - In public administration
 - Standardization of the profession of “Mediator”

THE RESOURCE CENTER FOR ROMA COMMUNITIES

- Mission** Becoming the most important partner of the Roma NGOs from Romania, in order to contribute to the improvement of living conditions in Roma communities.
- Objectives**
- To support the efforts made by Roma communities to solve the specific problems they face;
 - To contribute to the identification and countering of prejudice and different forms of discrimination against the Roma, and also, to contribute to the improvement of inter-ethnic communication.
- Activities**
- Community development programs;
 - Civic education campaigns;
 - Training programs for young Roma people (Roma NGOs activities, journalism etc.) and for the Roma experts from the County Offices for the Roma Population;
 - Monitoring the implementation of the Strategy for the Improvement of the Roma People Situation in Romania;
 - Developing the Roma National Network;
 - Administering PHARE grant schemes for Roma NGOs.

THE INSTITUTE FOR CRIME RESEARCH AND PREVENTION

- Mission** Coordinating and controlling the activities of the structures responsible for crime analysis and prevention from the County Inspectorates of Police
- Objectives**
- To contribute to the achievement of specific objectives established by the General Inspectorate of the Romanian Police, including the ones directly linked with the National Strategy for the Improvement of the Roma People Situation in Romania;
 - To study crime and to identify ways to prevent it;
- Activities**
- Criminology studies;
 - Studies on issues of interest to the Police;
 - Prevention of crimes perpetrated against persons;
 - Prevention of crimes perpetrated against property;
 - Preparation of policemen in the domain of community activities and human rights.

The project team



Dorlin Mureșan

- **project coordinator**, graduate of the Department of Economic Studies in Foreign Languages - Academy of Economic Studies (ASE), Bucharest - one year post-graduate specialist course in “Geopolitics and Geo-strategy” (ASE Bucharest); Project Coordinator at the *Foundation for Democratic Change*



Anca Ciucă

- **coordinator of the trainers' team**, MSc. in Electrical Devices Engineering at the Polytechnic University, Bucharest, starting in 1992 multiple international specialist in the field of conflict resolution, multiple participations in projects regarding inter-ethnic conflict analysis and resolution, President of the *Foundation for Democratic Change*



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Adrian Bădilă

- **trainer**, MSc in Electrical Devices Engineering at the Polytechnic University, Bucharest, postgraduate courses in Public Administration at the “Martin School of Public Policy and Administration”, University of Kentucky, Lexington, USA; specialist courses in communication and conflict resolution; consultant



Maria Ursu

- **network responsible**, graduate of the Department of Law, Babeș – Bolyai University, Cluj – Napoca, Project Coordinator at the *Resource Center for Roma Communities, Cluj Napoca*



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- **project assistant**, M.A. in Public Policy, University of Bucharest; BA, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, University of Bucharest; Project Assistant at the *Foundation for Democratic Change*

1. INTRODUCTION

GENERAL CONTEXT

The political and economic transformation processes that have taken place in some countries during the last ten to fifteen years and the events that happened in all these years throughout the whole world created a new situation.

“The hope for progress, peace and harmony is matched all too often by the resurfacing of old enmities or the appearance of fresh disputes over newly - emergent issues. We have to make a distinction between violent conflicts and peaceful ones. Modern pluralistic societies are full of myriad peaceful disputes and conflicts of one kind and another, and it is the capacity to live with, adjust to, transform and resolve these juxtapositions which is the hallmark of modern, advanced, democratic and successful countries.”¹

In this sense the techniques of prevention and resolution of peaceful or violent conflicts could be used more extensively around the world. But for this reason it is very important to focus on developing the local capacities for mediation and conflict resolution.

“The move to use these skills and processes would have to avoid the trap of exporting ready-made systems. Earlier research indicates that the approach used in each particular case would have to be grounded very firmly in local cultures and socio-political conditions. The central challenge here is to find the most appropriate balance between knowledge provided from outside and processes, techniques developed by local actors.”²

Starting in December 1989, after the general euphoria produced by the collapse of the totalitarian regime, in order to change, the Romanian society divided into different groups that started to act for the reformulation and establishment of interests, positions, attitudes and to redefine themselves culturally and socially, thus, influencing the subsequent evolution of the society. This period of social change emphasized old conflicts - kept in a latent state through coercion and new conflicts - generated by systemic change. In many cases this process took violent forms and aggressive manifestations.

From the numerous group violence registered at the beginning of the 1990s the inter-ethnic ones had the greatest impact in the media and produced the largest material damages and human victims. The violence emphasized *“the conflict generated by cultural differences, a conflict that takes place, although no one wants it, and because of which everybody suffers.”³*

The ethnic minorities always represented a significant percentage in Romania's population. In 1930, Romania's population (including Basarabia and North Bucovina) was a little over 18 million inhabitants, and the Romanians represented 73% considering the mother tongue and 71,9% considering the ethnic group. According to the census made in January 1992, the population structure is the following: Romanians (89.4%), Hungarians (7.13%), Roma people (1.80%), Germans(0.52%), Ukrainians (0.29%), Russians (0.17%), Serbians (0.14%), Turkish (0.13%), Tartars(0.11%), Slovaks (0.09%), other nationalities Bulgarians, Jews, Croats, Czechs, Poles, Greeks, Armenians etc. (0.3%). The census from 2002 shows that in Romania the structure of the population, considering the ethnic group, is the following: Romanians (89,5%), Hungarians (6,6%), Roma people/ gypsies (2,5%), Germans (0.3%), Ukrainians (0.3%), and other minorities represent (0.8%).

The data regarding the number of Roma people/ gypsies that live in Romania are however disputed. If the census is based on the personal declaration concerning the affiliation to an ethnic group, there are studies that indicate a different number of Roma people that live in Romania. Thus, *Minority Rights Group* estimated the number of Roma people between 8,3% and 11,5% in 1995, and the Council of Europe appreciated the number of Roma between 5,5% and 10,1% in 2003 from the total of Romania's population. (See Table 1 in Annexes)⁴.

Alongside the violence recorded in Tg. Mures between the Romanians and the Hungarians in March 1990, from the materials published, resulted that between 1990-1995, 33 violent actions took place against Roma people that, usually, lived on the out-skirts of rural localities. The main objective of the 14 000 persons belonging to the majority, and to other minorities – Hungarian, German, Macedonian etc.- that took part in these actions, was to banish the Roma people from the communities they lived in and to burn their houses (400 houses). Only in two counties, Harghita and Hunedoara, the crowd killed 6 Roma people that were considered guilty of perpetrating grave crimes.

¹ Roger Hill , *Structured Mediation and Dispute Resolution – a proactive approach to the world conflict challenge* – The Canadian International Institute for Applied Negotiation, June 2001, pg. 1

² Idem, pg. 2

³ Geert Hofstede, *Managementul structurilor multiculturale* - Editura Economică, 1996

⁴ Romani Criss, documents prepared for the seminar „Roma in the context of European politics: Action plan for Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti people in the OSCE member states”, February 12-13, 2004
http://www.romanicriss.org/pdf/newsletter/Tabel_1_Recensamantul_1992_2002.pdf

The script for the start of this violence was, relatively, the same. On a background of misunderstandings generated by living conditions of Roma people, their traditions, the rejection of moral values accepted by the rest of the community, the violation of juridical norms institutionalized in the society, a very serious deed (murder, rape, bodily damage), committed by a Roma person against a member of the ethnic majority, unleashed a punishment reaction of the whole community. In some cases, the majority "correction" action was selective. It is very important to notice that some persons belonging to the majority that were suspected of being in connection with the Roma people perceived as offenders, were subdue to the same treatment. Similar is the case of Roma people integrated in the local community, participated together with the majority at the banishment of the ones non-integrated. Through social contamination, the violence from some localities spread to localities where these tensions between the majority population and the Roma reached a critical point. Parallel with this group violence, thousands of interpersonal violent conflicts took place between people belonging to the majority, on one side, and to the Roma, on the other side. Their impact on the respective communities was not as big as the one like in the situations mentioned above, but they contributed to the maintenance of relative insecurity.

The peaks of violence registered at the middle of the 1990s with the situations of conflict that involved Roma people as exponents of some compact communities, seemed to belong to a phase in the social relations evolution that, once surpassed, was no longer going to return. Nevertheless, in September 2003, Craiova was the scene of a conflict that turned to violence involving 300 Roma people. Although the cause was apparently of another nature than the one of the conflicts between 1990-1996, and Roma people were involved on both sides, the conflict brought in the fore-ground the importance of a sustained and continued activity of conflict prevention with ethnic component. In the Final Report of the project "*Prevention and Resolution of Inter-ethnic Conflicts*", published in January 2003 and distributed to the authorities, the situation in Craiova was presented in a case study, which establishes the older roots of the conflict.⁵

National Strategy for the Improvement of the Roma People Situation in Romania

In order for democracy to be effective, the state and its citizens must give expression to their conflicts and act for their resolution, in the reciprocal interest of the involved parties. This includes the replacement of an adversarial system, which divides the parties into winners and losers, with a consensual system, when this is possible.

Conflict resolution implies a multidisciplinary approach, including psychology, sociology, social psychology, juridical studies, international relations and others. All these constitute the ground of alternative methods of conflict resolution. More than that, institutions like the family, the school and the church, have an important role in the formation of a positive attitude towards the approach of conflict through the elimination of violence, as a way of resolving it, but also towards reconstruction after the traumas were produced. By adopting in 2001 the ***National Strategy for the Improvement of the Roma People Situation in Romania, HG 430/2001***, the Romanian Government established multidisciplinary efforts for reducing the socio-economic discrepancies of the majority of Roma communities in comparison with the rest of the population of Romania. The Governmental Decision ***HG 430/2001*** recognized the need to integrating the efforts made by the state and by the Roma NGOs, non-Roma NGOs and international organizations. The Strategy is the result of a common effort of the Government and the representative organizations of the Roma communities, and was signed and adopted by the Ministry for Health and Family, Ministry for Work and Social Solidarity, Ministry for Education and Research, Ministry for Culture and Cults, Ministry for Youth and Sports, Ministry for Interior, Ministry for National Defense, Ministry for Public Administration, Ministry for Public Information, Ministry for Agriculture, Food and Woods, Ministry of Finance, National Agency for Child Protection and Adoption, as well as the nongovernmental organizations – members of GLAR – the Working Group of Roma Associations: Romani Criss, Aven Amentza, Development Agency "Împreună", Roma Party, Roma Democratic Union – Alba Julia, Foundation Wassdas - Cluj, Roma Union– Constanța, O Del Amentza – Deva, Democratic Alliance of Free Roma, Sașa - Petroșani, Roma Christian Center-Sibiu, etc.

The Strategy represents a political statement, which refers to social policies, directions for actions for a period of 10 years, and a plan of measures for a period of 4 years (2001 - 2004).

The general objectives of the Strategy include: the prevention and the countering of institutional and social discrimination, the preservation of the identity of Roma people, ensuring equal chances for reaching a decent standard of living and the stimulation of the participation of Roma people in the economic, social, cultural, educational and political life of society.⁶

⁵ *Prevention and Resolution of Inter-ethnic Conflicts – Final Report – December 2002*, edited by the Foundation for Democratic Change, 2003

⁶ *Report regarding the progress made in the implementation of the Strategy for the Improvement of the Situation of Roma Ethnicity*, Ministry for Public Information, Bucharest, April 2003

From the perspective of the prevention of ethnic conflicts the Strategy aims:

- To counter, first of all the **causes** of the majority of these conflicts: poverty, lack of housing, lack of jobs, insufficient or inadequate educational and professional preparation, as well as discriminatory **tendencies**;
- **To support the constructive** resolution of conflicts that arise, through encouraging the cooperation at local level among the Local Public Administration and the Roma nongovernmental organizations and the decentralized Services, as well as through distributing tasks regarding conflict resolution to those institutions and employees responsible for the implementation of the Strategy.

Strategic Priorities for the period 2001 - 2004

The General Plan of Measures for the period 2001-2004 includes, among others, activities that have as an objective the development of a peaceful and tolerant social climate, through communication, intercultural education and the prevention of conflicts with an ethnic component, through:

- Presentation by the Ministry of the Interior of a package of measures regarding the prevention and the countering of discrimination in the with citizens;
- Identification and operative resolution of tense and conflicting situations, that could generate family, community or inter-ethnic violence;
- Presentation of a national program for the prevention of crime and juridical education of Roma population and the distribution in Roma communities of educational publications;
- Presentation in cooperation with NGOs and the Ministry for Work and Social Solidarity of a training program for social mediators and young Roma people, for Roma communities;
- Presentation in cooperation with NGOs and Roma communities of training programs of school mediators and for training and self-improvement of teachers in the field of intercultural education;
- Supporting projects in the field of intercultural research and education.

Some examples of what has been done

The activities included in the *General Plan of Measures* have been fulfilled to different degrees, and some of them have, or should have a permanent character in order to be sustainable. More than that, from the reports regarding the implementation of the Strategy arise the need for supporting the cooperation between the state authorities and the Roma NGOs both at central and local level, as this cooperation is in numerous cases still in its early stages. The implementation of the Strategy is completed through a series of activities, projects and programs developed and run by non-Roma nongovernmental organizations, in partnership with local authorities, and decentralized institutions and services.

Below are some **projects developed by Roma organizations** that aimed at training Roma specialists, able to prevent and intervene in conflicts that have an inter-ethnic component.

The Resource Center for Roma Communities (RCRC)⁷ ran a training program held by Roma trainers that aimed to increase the institutional and operational capacity of the Roma NGOs. Through the *Community Facilitation and Development Program*, RCRC intended to offer effective models for community facilitation and development in 24 inter-ethnic communities of Transylvania and the Banat region. *The National Roma Network (RNR)* aims to develop at the national level a Network of non-governmental organizations with a Roma specificity, able to work in partnership with the authorities and local communities for finding concrete solutions to emerging problems.

"Aven Amentza" Roma Center for Public Policies applied in 41 counties the Action Plan, "*Roma 2002 – Together for Europe*", which aimed to establish a *data base* regarding the Roma and Roma dedicated programs, at the local level, the establishment and development of an *identity formation* and representation of Roma minority. An example of a project in the field of the promotion of tolerance was the *National Intercultural Caravan, for Prevention and Countering Discrimination against Roma*, developed in partnership with the local administration in all the counties.

Roma Center for Social Intervention and Studies "Romani CRISS" participated in the formation of a *school mediators' network*, teachers and representatives of civil society, who meet regularly, for defining and developing continuous training program for educators that work with Roma children. "Romani Criss" trained 84 *sanitary mediators* (Roma women with a medium-level educational background) to be employed by the Ministry for Health and Family through the County Public Health Departments. The Health Department of "Romani Criss" developed the "*Sanitary Mediator's Guide*". In addition, the organization develops and sustains young Roma to be human rights local monitors to identify and report cases of discrimination.

⁷ see: www.romacenter.ro

II. Short Overview of the Project

The Foundation for Democratic Changes (FDC) initiated the project “***Developing local support for third – neutral intervention in ethnic conflicts***” as a direct result of the final conclusions drawn at the end of the project developed in 2002.

Developed as a *pilot-project*, the training program ***Prevention and Resolution of Inter-ethnic Conflicts*** addressed 22 representatives of Roma NGOs interested in the prevention and resolution of conflicts through alternative dispute resolution methods like mediation, facilitation and other forms of assisting the parties to a conflict. The goal of the program was to train Roma NGO representatives to intervene as a neutral party in conflicts that have an ethnic component.

The training sessions (3 day sessions) and the elaboration of the study case as their graduation paper made up for a total amount of 304 hours of professional training, and the Training Program contained 6 modules having the following themes:

1. *Conflict Analysis*: forms of conflict manifestation
2. *Ethnic Minorities*: historical and legal context
3. *Inter-ethnic Conflicts*: specificity and forms of intervention, prevention
4. *Communication*: barriers and overcoming communication barriers
5. *Negotiation* and assisted negotiation (mediation)
6. *Strategies* of prevention and intervention

The project ***Developing local support for third – neutral intervention in ethnic conflicts*** organized between June 2003 and April 2004, aims to support the application of the theoretical knowledge previously gained and tries to answer assistance needs, identified by the graduates when applying in practice their abilities of neutral intervention in conflicts that have an ethnic component or in their relation with the authorities. The need to develop this project appeared by analyzing the situations which the participants confront when applying alternative methods of conflict resolution in the towns where they work.

This project ***supports at the local level*** the application of neutral methods of intervention in conflict, having the following **objectives**:

- ***Improving the abilities of intervention in disputes of the graduates***, by placing them in regular contact with the FDC team. Thus, in the case of conflict situations in which the mediators intervened and asked for help, the team advised and assisted them, either by phone, email or directly through assistance offered in that location
- ***Promoting mediation, in communities and at the level of authorities***, by editing a bilingual brochure Romanian-Romanesh and including the experience from the different locations in the study-report released at the end of the project.
- ***The authorities and the potential beneficiaries recognized as experts*** the graduates of the training program. In order to achieve this, local meetings were organized (in Bucharest, Botosani, Iasi, Tecuci, Galati, Cluj, Dej, Timisoara, Craiova and Giurgiu) with the representatives of public authorities and institutions that aimed to form work groups in order to identify conflicting situations in which they could intervene in cooperation with Roma specialists.
- ***Encouraging a permanent exchange of experience between the graduates of the training program*** by creating an e-group and organizing a seminar in order to improve knowledge and evaluate the activities developed at the local level.

Risk Factors

INTERNAL RISKS

Communication

The resources of the organizations in which the graduates of the training program work, are very different, because generally, these organizations are based on volunteering and have benefited from scarce financial resources, coming from donations, membership fees and sponsorships for small local projects.

In order to include all the participants in the information process, all available means of communication were used (e-mail, regular mail, telephone and fax).

Nevertheless, the process of communication was thought to be difficult. Access to more efficient means of communication, like e-mail and mobile phone was considered to be difficult for half of the graduates.

During the project, communication implied a permanent effort, and long delays in receiving answers from the graduates led to long delays for the collection of data and for preparing the action plan for organizing the local meetings.

The *Seminar* organized in Gilau, Cluj, in November, 2003 made a major contribution in re-establishing the connection with some of the participants and, in clarifying some legal aspects regarding the development of future project activities.

Personal Dynamic

When the training program started in March 2002, some of the graduates were students in different university centers. For those who were going to graduate university courses in the summer of 2003, we expected that changes would appear regarding the organizations in which they work as well as address changes from one town to another.

Moreover, *all* the participants in the training program *Prevention and Resolution of Inter-Ethnic Conflicts* previously or during the period of the program participated in other training courses in other fields. This led in some cases (2 graduates) that following university graduation, they would get totally involved in other projects developed in other connected fields (community facilitation), that had sufficient financial resources in order to ensure a monthly income as permanent employers for these graduates.

On the other hand, the process of analyzing and reporting the cases in which the graduates would intervene requires time, keeping in mind that they are already involved in the activities of their own organizations, doing field work, and their involvement in this project is voluntary.

The desire of the graduates to go through a phase of apprenticeship and to get involved in the project was expected to decrease due to the lack of any immediate perspective of organizing mediation as a distinct economic activity (paying for the services of mediation), the lack of a specific legal framework and the poor understanding by the Romanian society of the role and of the social functions played by the mediator.

EXTERNAL RISKS

Framework for implementing the project at the national level

Due to a lack of framework legislation through which to regulate the activity of the expert in the field of third-neutral party conflict interventions and of the mediator, the courses held until now by the *Foundation for Democratic Change*, as well as by other organizations and institutions, aimed only at the development of abilities as a form of vocational training. In other words, at these courses were invited individuals, who wanted to have a different approach (a constructive one) towards the conflicts they were experiencing in their own activity, at the work place.

Improving the theoretical knowledge and developing new abilities of neutral and constructive conflict intervention has to face in practice the barriers of the mentality of society, the preconceived ideas regarding conflict resolution at the level of management and even the poor understanding and knowledge of the field from the point of view of the financiers.

On the other hand, since the early stages of the Training Program, the graduates signaled the possibility to confuse the terms *school mediator*, *sanitary mediator* and a *mediator* trained in the ***Prevention and Resolution of Inter-ethnic Conflicts*** Program. Each of these three training programs was structured according to its own Occupational Standards, that were officially recognized and, based on which the occupations of school mediator, sanitary mediator and mediator are now included in the *Romanian Occupations Code (COR)*.

These training programs **did not** benefit from constant financing and this led to discontinuities in the application of the gained knowledge and of the developed abilities.

The existence as a normative document of the *National Strategy for the Improvement of the Roma People Situation in Romania* created a solid basis from which to start formulating the objectives of the project and to stimulate the interest of the authorities of participating in workshop-based local meetings.

Framework for implementing the project at the local level

The relations at the local level between the authorities and the Roma organizations are very different in form and in terms of cooperation experience, as it resulted from the analysis made by the graduates of the courses at the end of the Training Program *Prevention and Resolution of Inter-Ethnic Conflicts*. Even the Roma civil society is extremely heterogeneous at the level of the whole country, finding itself in its early stages. The process is hardened even more by the national and local tendencies to polarize the associative life and to involve the political sector in defining priorities.

Putting into practice the provisions of the *Strategy for the Improvement of the Roma People Situation in Romania* is performed extremely differently from one town to another, either because of a *reduced knowledge and experience in formulating programs* that could solve some problems of the community, either because of the *different percentages* of Roma in the population structure of those towns.

The previous work experiences, registered by the decentralized local authorities and the public services of the state with credible partners from the Roma communities constitute an important factor in sustaining the interest of working with Roma experts in preventing and solving ethnic conflicts.

The early stages in which the Roma civil society finds itself at the national level, with the usual search for identity, are reflected also at the local level through the *divergences* existing between the Roma non-governmental organizations.

Partnership

In order to counter the risks outlined above, the *Foundation for Democratic Change* identified partnership as an active form for increasing the level of support, at the national level, but also at the local level, for the objectives of the project, both from the part of the local and central public authorities, as well as from the part of the Roma civil society.

ROLE AND INVOLVEMENT IN THIS PROJECT OF NATIONAL LEVEL PARTNERS

- **Foundation for Democratic Change**, as project coordinator, was responsible for the development of consultancy and assistance activities, the participation of Roma specialists and inviting representatives from local administration and from central institutions represented at the local level, elaborating the materials that were distributed in the meetings, as well as elaborating and typing a leaflet, a final Report and a multi-media CD-ROM;
- **The Institute for Crime Research and Prevention**, as a partner, participated with its specialists in the field of conflict resolution, offered a conference room and the technical facilities (flip-chart, overhead projector) for the development of the meetings, ensured the participation of the Police and invited other central and local public institutions at the organized workshops;
- **Resource Center for Roma Communities**, as a partner, participated with its specialists in the development of the project and in moderating the e-group, and cooperated in identifying local representatives of Roma organizations for the meetings;

ROLE AND INVOLVEMENT IN THIS PROJECT OF LOCAL LEVEL PARTNERS

- **The organization of Young Roma from Galati County, "ILO TERNO"**: has previous experience in working with local authorities and other non-governmental organizations for solving problems specific to the Roma community. **ILO TERNO** identified a few fields of priority in which it wants to develop activities, respectively: juridical assistance, protection of minors that come from families with special problems, developing a network for sanitary education, increased literacy among those left outside the school-based educational process, mediating inter and intra-ethnic conflicts. **ILO TERNO** largely contributed to identifying the local factors interested in using mediation and the expertise of the graduates of the training program, in order to prevent local ethnic-based conflicts, and invited these people to the local meetings.

- **Rroma Students Organization ROMANO SUNO- Cluj Napoca:** develops activities in the social, cultural, educational, humanitarian, professional, economy and Human Rights fields. The developed projects aimed to promote the Rromani culture, improve image of Rroma communities, to promote school-based education inside Rroma communities, to improve access of Rroma citizens to the services offered by Cluj Town Hall, as well as to promote and stimulate volunteering among young Rroma. **ROMANO SUNO** contributed to the organization of the Cluj local meeting, by inviting local partners (other Rroma NGOs) and some members of the association.
- **Foundation for Rroma Social Development RAMSES- Dej:** has as its goals to facilitate access to the means of education and development for Rroma children and youth; to offer support to adult citizens of Rroma ethnicity in obtaining a job and official documents; to offer help to old Rroma. **Foundation RAMSES** develops projects that promote understanding and inter-cultural education, and in partnership with the local public administration from Dej, implements projects for the local development of Rroma non-governmental organizations in the region. **Foundation RAMSES** contributed to the organization of the meeting in Cluj Napoca by inviting some representatives from the Dej Town Hall and from the Police, as well as by participating in the debates of the meeting.
- **Alliance for Rroma Unity- Tecuci Branch:** established following the need to organize the Rroma from Tecuci, the association largely contributed to the increase of trust between Rroma and local authorities, as well as to a better understanding between the different Rroma clans from this town. **AURr Tecuci** develops projects and activities in cooperation with representatives from the following fields: education, Church, local authorities and Police. **AURr Tecuci** largely contributed to organizing the local meeting by inviting the representatives of the public institutions, identifying the conference room where to hold the meeting and identifying and inviting mediators trained through other training programs.
- **PARUDIMOS Association-Timisoara:** aims to improve the image of Rroma communities through different activities and projects, among which, TV and radio shows in the Rromani language at TVR Timisoara and, respectively Radio Timisoara. **PARUDIMOS** took part in organizing the local meeting in cooperation with the *County Inspectorate of Police-Department of Prevention*, and its members participated in the debates of the meeting.
- **“DIVANO ROMANO” Association- Botosani:** is active towards the consolidation of the relations between the Rroma local community, the Rroma organizations and authorities, managing to attract members of the Rroma community in its activities, to change the attitude of the public authorities towards the Rroma community as well as the attitude of the later towards the authorities. **“DIVANO ROMANO”** contributed to the organization of the local meeting by cooperating with the *County Inspectorate of Police- Department of Prevention*, together with whom it identified and invited local interested parties, as well as having its members participate in the debates of the meeting.
- **The Association of Rroma Students and Young People ROMANITIN- Iasi:** the association works for the improvement of the situation of young Rroma from the region of Moldova, and aims to create the organizational framework necessary to ensure meetings, targeting the development of their personality and a pro-active civic consciousness.
- **The Social-Democrat Roma Party (PRSD)- Giurgiu County Organization:** through the projects developed, the organization aims to realize and to maintain permanent communication between the Rroma community, NGOs and public institutions, to promote young Rroma inside the community and to prevent social relations that could generate conflict. **PRSD County Organization Giurgiu** actively contributed in organizing the local meeting, in inviting the representatives of public institutions and local administration and in identifying the conference room. The local representatives contributed significantly to the debates of the meeting and came up with suggestions regarding the continuation of the cooperation.
- **“ROMANO EURO-DROM” Association- Craiova:** established by young Rroma students from Craiova, who noticed the need to be involve actively in solving the social problems of the Rroma community, the organization, over the last 4 years, got involved in a lot of activities and projects. By implementing them, the organization aims to identify and support the development of intellectual Rroma elite that will constitute role models for Rroma, to stimulate the active involvement of Rroma young people, to prevent all forms of racism and to contribute to the improvement of communication between Rroma and non-Rroma. **“ROMANO EURO-DROM”** actively contributed to the organization of the local meeting in Craiova by inviting other locally known Rroma organizations, as well as by participating with representatives of the association in the debates of the meeting.

The Project Activities Structure and Objectives

No.	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
I.	CONSULTANCY AND MENTORING		Create an apprenticeship system for further graduates of the <i>Prevention and Resolution of Inter-ethnic Conflicts</i> Training Program
	1. Assistance offered to graduates to evaluate their relationships with the public authorities, at the local level, other NGOs and media and to develop a strategy to improve these relationships.	9 local relationship maps (one for each local partner organization)	Increase the capacity of 9 Roma NGOs to relate to other institutions at the local level, with the aim to cooperate in the prevention and resolution of conflicts involving Roma local groups.
	2. Tailored guidance and advice based on regular needs assessments	An on-line consultancy system (2 days per month)	Consultancy and guidance to use their strengths successfully and overcome the weaknesses and obstacles encountered in putting into practice third– neutral intervention tools
	3. Continuous evaluation of the graduates based on their contributions within the network, intervention reports, and contribution in developing local projects to address local conflicting problems related to ethnicity	A needs assessment scheme for the trainees in their apprenticeship period, comprising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 evaluation dossier; • 1 monthly evaluation report; • 1 intervention form/ conflict form completed by each of the graduates 	Design an intervener's evaluation scheme, to periodically evaluate the trainees' personal achievements and further development priorities
	4. Technical assistance in interventions as neutral parties, when trainees feel a need for support or for an ethnically mixed intervention team.	17 personal portfolios of interventions as neutral parties, through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • technical assistance in interventions (2 days/month) • 2 third-neutral interventions identified and prepared 	Develop for each graduate a personal portfolio of interventions as neutral party
II.	PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION OF AN INFO-PACK	10 local communities aware of the possibility of third-neutral intervention and of existing resources	Increase public awareness on third – neutral intervention
	1. Editing bilingual leaflets	1 leaflet prepared in Romanian and Romanesh with information regarding mediation	Create a presentation on the legislation regarding mediation and of the advantages related to using it in dispute resolution
	2. Printing of the leaflet	2000 leaflets printed	
	3. Distribution	2000 leaflets distributed	Improve mutual communication channels at the local level
III.	LOCAL WORKSHOPS	10 local communities ready to use third party– neutral intervention tools in ethnic conflicts	Integrate the newly created expertise in conflict prevention and resolution into local network of institutions and civil society looking for constructive approaches to existing ethnic conflicts
	1. Preparation of the workshops	Identify and invite representatives from the Town Hall, Local Council, Police, Gendarmerie, Health Agency, Labor Chamber, Prefecture, Local School Inspectorate, Roma communities, media, and other local NGO	Check and improve the local relationship map developed by each local Roma NGO involved in the project
	2. Workshops	10 local communities identify existing ethnic conflicts fit for third– neutral intervention	Increase the capacity for local cooperation to address ethnic conflicts through third– neutral assistance

IV.	FACT FINDINGS REPORT	One comprehensive report on identified situations for third-neutral intervention in ethnic conflicts at the local communities level, and also referring to the support received from local authorities	Improve and increase knowledge on existing opportunities for third-neutral intervention in ethnic conflicts at the local communities level
	1. Researching for the Report	10 local workshops, 17 evaluation dossiers and interventions reports analyzed	Identify key moments in the activity when to promote third-neutral intervention tools and also to relate to authorities and to civil society at the local level
	2. Editing the Report	One structured bilingual (Romanian – English) report on the expertise gathered under the project	
	3. Printing	500 Reports, format A4	
	4. Distribution	500 Reports distributed directly and through mail	
	5. Include parts of the Report on the web site	The Fact – finding Report included into the FDC web site	Increase visibility of the project's results
V.	NETWORKING	1 network of graduates in ethnic conflict prevention and resolution	Increase sustainability of the ethnic conflict prevention and resolution activity
	1. Develop dedicated communication channels for the graduated mediators	1 dedicated e-group established and administrated by the CRCC	Create a permanent channel for communication for the graduates and the assistance team
	2. Organize and hold in Cluj a 3 days seminar with ethnic conflict prevention and resolution specialists	A 3 days seminar for 20 people organized and held in Gilău, Cluj (15 trainees, 3 experts from FDC and 2 from RCRC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exchange of experience between graduates and the assistance team • continue the team building process started during the training program • Identify new ways for future development of the network
	3. Evaluating the way of functioning of the network	4 periodical evaluation of the functioning of the network and what it needs to improve it	Increase sustainability of the network

The Target Group

Although the project had as its target group all the 22 graduates of the Training Program *Prevention and Resolution of Inter-ethnic Conflicts* run in 2002, only 17 of them were actively involved in its development. (see **Annex 1: The participants list, the organization they work with, contact data**).

Their involvement proved their seriousness in carrying on the activity of neutral intervention and their sincere wish to promote at the local level the gathered knowledge. In addition, through the numerous presence of their colleagues from the organization at the local workshops, the NGOs they represent manifested their special interest in supporting the third neutral intervention in inter-ethnic conflict resolution.

All these organizations proposed to contribute, in cooperation with local public authorities and/or other NGOs, to the socio-economic and political promotion of the Roma ethnicity, to increase access to public services, to ensure the equality of life chances for Roma citizens and to increase the number of Roma people that attend the general and compulsory educational program guaranteed through the national system of education.

3.1. Consultancy and mentoring

What is the need for consultancy and mentoring?

The whole project was built upon the idea of helping and supporting the graduates of “*Prevention and Resolution of Inter-ethnic Conflicts*” courses to put in practice, in the environment they develop their activity, the knowledge they gathered attending the training program. The activity of consultancy and mentoring was designed in direct relation with the recommendations formulated at the end of the training program⁸ and which had as a base the obstacles identified by the participants in their attempts to intervene in local disputes.

The expected result of the entire activity of consultancy and mentoring was to develop and verify in practice a valid and general system of **APPRENTICESHIP** for the graduates of the conflict resolution and mediation conflict courses.

The activity was coordinated by the FDC, but the national level partners, RCRC and ICRP, were involved, each in its area of expertise.

MENTORING

The mediators were assisted **to evaluate and analyze the institutional environment** in which they work, based on a questionnaire created by the project team, concerning the way the graduates and the NGOs they represent relate at local level. The purpose of the questionnaire was to help them formulate objectives on the medium term regarding the improvement of communication with authorities and other organizations at the local level, and, also, to increase the cooperation area, in order to be known and recognized at the local level as experts in inter-ethnic conflict resolution.

The FDC and the ICRP **facilitated the communication** between the graduates and the chiefs of the department from the County Police Inspectorates, mayors, vice-mayors and representatives of Prefecture, thus smoothing the way to further cooperation between the Rroma NGOs, the graduates and the local public authorities.

Printing a *bilingual leaflet Romanian – Romanesh* (see **Annex 2**) constituted a tool for **promoting mediation in an inter-ethnic context**. The leaflet helped the mediators to disseminate a unitary and clear message about mediation, comprising elements about the characteristics and advantages of mediation, and references to legislative acts that recommend mediation. As it was drawn up bilingual, the leaflet had an influence upon the balance of power between the Rroma mediator and his interlocutor – Romanian, Rroma or other ethnic - contributed to increased respect towards the Romani culture.

The objective of the consultancy was **to increase the visibility** of graduates and of the NGOs they work in. The partners in this project periodically released press statements to the local and central media, as well as through the e-groups dedicated to NGOs. ICRP involvement within the organization of local workshops ensured a significant and numerous presence of journalists and contributed to the increase of the media impact of the training program and the present project.

One of the most important aspects of the mentoring activity was the facilitation offered by the FDC team, of the discussions, held during the local workshops, which represented in many cases **neutral interventions** in tense local situations.

CONSULTANCY

The consultancy offered by the FDC team focused mainly on three themes.

The first theme concerned the interventions in conflicts. The mediators consulted with the FDC team regarding the approach to some conflicts and the intervention strategies. Thus, the consultancy mostly related to the *approach of the parties* involved in order to accept a mediator, to *neutrality* and the difficulties that appeared in maintaining it during the intervention, as well as to *the possibility to negotiate* when the mediator himself or his organization is part of a conflict.

The second theme referred to the *improvement in the way the mediators relate at the local level* for further efficient cooperation with representatives of the Police and of the local authorities in order to prevent and resolve some conflicts. In this sense, discussions were held regarding the role of local workshops organized in the project and the way the mediators could better use the association to a professional group, under the endorsement of the FDC, RCRC and ICRP.

⁸ Final Report “Prevention and Resolution of Inter-ethnic Conflicts” edited by FDC and RCRC, January 2003
<http://fdc.org.ro/ro/publications/index.html>

The third consultancy theme had as its base the necessity to continue the professional improvement of mediators and the development by their NGOs of some activities related to mediation and conflict prevention.

To answer to the individual consultancy needs, to monitor and evaluate the professional evolution of each graduate, the FDC team developed an intervention questionnaire (see **Annex 3**).

The local workshops and the seminar organized in Gilău – Cluj, offered the opportunity to discuss the mediators' needs for professional development and to identify ways used by the partners in the project to further promote mediation and mediators activities.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The consultancy and mentoring component of the project was very well received by the participants, being a concrete and immediate answer to resolve the obstacles identified at the local level at the end of the training program.

It was clear that the implication of a hierarchical superior institution or/and of a NGO recognized at the national level for their expertise in the area is needed to influence the local balance of power and to contribute to the initiation of a dialogue meant to lead to a partnership relation between Roma NGOs and public institutions.

The assistance given to the graduates is much more important as the neutral intervention in conflicts, performed by a specialized person in the area- mediator, conciliator or facilitator- is still a novelty in Romania, and accepting them as viable methods requires a deeper understanding from both authorities and population.

3.2. Local workshops

WHY WERE LOCAL WORKSHOPS NECESSARY?

The integration of the neutral intervention expertise in the local network of public institutions and of civil society which aims to approach in a constructive way the existing local conflicts, was considered to be possible by organizing meetings that brought together representatives of all interested parties.

Besides being an opportunity for the participants to get to know each other better, the local meetings were designed to create the background for a better understanding of the concepts of mediation, neutral intervention and the existing local resources – the graduates of the training program. During the local meetings and workshops, clarifications were brought on aspects related to the existence of three types of mediators included in the Romanian Code of Occupations - Codul Ocupațiilor din România (COR): school mediator, sanitary mediator and mediator.

The meetings were organized in those towns where the graduates develop a significant activity in the field of conflict prevention and resolution: București, Galați, Cluj-Napoca, Tecuci, Timișoara, Botoșani, Iași, Giurgiu and Craiova. At the meeting in Cluj-Napoca there were invited also the graduates that work in the nearby town of Dej, together with representatives of the Town Hall, City Council and of the Police. These meetings brought together, around the same table, representatives of the local authorities, of the Police, of other decentralized public services (School Inspectorates, Health Departments, Agencies for Employment of Labour Force, a.o.) and representatives of Rroma NGOs, in order to build a dialogue among the participants or to contribute to the development of the existing one. Sitting at the same table, the participants at the meetings could notice the needs and problems of each party, and identify the areas where they could act together to find solutions.

For the preparation at central level of the meetings, the **Institute for Crime Research and Prevention (ICRP)** involved its territorial structures, respectively the Prevention Departments of the Romanian County Police Inspectorates. The Prevention Departments, together with the Rroma mediators from that town cooperated in organizing the meeting. Delegating the responsibility of organizing the meeting towards the prevention officers and the representatives of the Rroma NGOs was a first step in stimulating cooperation at the local level.

There are common elements of the meetings, as well as specific elements determined by factors like the cultural background of the town (historical regions of Romania), the attitude of the authorities towards the Rroma organizations, prior cooperation experience, etc.

The interest towards neutral intervention in conflicts was not the same during all the meetings, but in each of the towns, at least one of the represented authorities expressed their direct interest to cooperating with the mediators for the resolution of a problem identified during the meeting. The police and local authorities expressed, in most of the meetings, their openness and availability for dialogue and partnership with the Rroma organizations and the graduates of the training program. Older agreements were renewed, the grounds were set for new partnerships between mediators and authorities, cooperation protocols were signed, and concrete proposals were made for future cooperation.

Overwhelmed by the multitude of tasks they are responsible for in relationship with the requirements of the European integration process, but also by the complexity of the social and economic problems they dealt with, the local authorities rarely took the initiative in formulating projects in partnership. In most of the cases, moving from the declarative level of cooperation to the concrete one of developing common activities for conflict prevention depends solely on the Rroma mediators and the organizations of the later.

DESCRIBING THE FRAMEWORK OF THE WORKSHOPS

Each workshop was *prepared in advance*, taking into account the existing relations between local authorities and graduates, as well as the calendar of events of the local authorities for the desired period. Preparing the workshops required efforts from our partners, in certain cases requiring a preliminary visit of the project team in order to build a dialogue between future local partners.

All the workshops developed according to a rather similar *agenda*.

The first part was dedicated to the presentation of the project, of the activities already developed by the authorities, for the implementation of the National Strategy for the Improvement of the Roma People Situation in Romania at the local level, as well as for presenting the activities of prevention and resolution of conflicting situations, done by the graduates at the local level.

The second part of the workshops contained a presentation of the concepts of conflict mediation and neutral intervention in conflicts, the legal support for the activity of mediation as well as clarifying the differences between the objectives of the training programs of the school mediators, sanitary mediators and mediators trained by the FDC and the RCRC.

All of the workshops included a part of *open debates*, facilitated by the FDC experts, through which it was intended to identify possibilities for cooperation between mediators and the representatives of the public authorities.

Each workshop was attended on average by approximately 30 guests, having an important representation of the local interested factors: prefects, deputy prefects, mayors, deputy mayors, local counselors, representatives of the appropriate County Inspectorates, chiefs of the Romanian County Police Inspectorates, of the Prevention Departments and of other departments from Police, presidents of organizations, as well as Roma local leaders.

The Prevention Departments from the Romanian County Police Inspectorates had a determining role in organizing the local workshops. In all the cases cooperation with the graduates of the Training Program *Prevention and Resolution of Inter-ethnic Conflicts* and with their organizations was encouraged. Cooperation mainly referred to identifying conference rooms for holding the meetings in and inviting representatives of the local authorities and of other Roma organizations.

The folders with the presentation materials of the project and with the partner organizations were prepared by the FDC.

NEEDS AND PROBLEMS

The local meetings were organized as *workshops* and offered the participants the opportunity to express their needs, discontents, problems, to make suggestions, to ask questions, to ask for clarifications. Some of them were found in most of the meetings held, others were specific.

In the local meetings we discussed also problems related to the poor economic situation of the Roma, the lack of jobs-especially for Roma people- caused either by the low level of education and professional training mainly because of the difficult access to quality education, or of the lack of juridical education. The opinion of the Roma participants, but also of the representatives of the authorities is that these factors generate most of the incidents and conflicts. Discrimination was brought into discussion only in the meetings from Craiova and Botosani, towns where the Roma organizations filled complaints to courts in specific cases of ethnic discrimination.

One factor underlined in all the meetings by the participants was the need for communication, for dialogue between the parties (institutions and Roma communities), for knowing each other.

It was mentioned however that this dialogue should be a *normal* one, initiated by the desire of the parties to organize something together, and not because the institutions are constrained from higher authorities to do so, because it is requested by the European Union.

During the meetings the representatives of the authorities underlined how important for dialogue was the fact that the Roma will be *assisted in identifying their interests and in formulating their needs and priorities*.

There exists a need for informing and for formal and informal *education*, civic education both for Romanians and for Roma people. The need for education was brought into discussion in all the workshops because many misunderstandings and conflicts with the authorities are generated by lack of knowledge. For example, it is necessary to know the Police organizational scheme, its competency limits and the legal procedures that the citizens could use in addressing the authorities in order to diminish the *fear of authorities*.

The Training Program *Prevention and Resolution of Inter-ethnic Conflicts* also included aspects regarding the organizational scheme of the local public institutions and of the Police, as decentralized institutions. However, the discussions from the workshops proved that the graduates still have problems in understanding the Romanian public administration system and still need specialized assistance in order to get used to the related legal procedures in the case of a conflict in which the law was broken. The Roma participants stated that there are no representatives of the authorities to inform the Roma and that they suffer from this lack of information about and from the authorities.

The discussions showed that this *concept of mediation* is very little known at the level of authorities, including Police, this being the reason why misunderstandings appear regarding the activity of the mediator but also regarding on what parties, when and how one could intervene as a neutral party in order to solve a conflict. The representatives of the authorities asked that they should be also included in the training programs regarding neutral intervention and the process of mediation.

Moreover there are *confusions* regarding the activity of a "mediator" because the qualifications of "sanitary mediator" and "school mediator" are mentioned in the *Strategy for the Improvement of the Roma People Situation in Romania*, as well as because of the training programs developed in partnership with the decentralized services of the respective ministries that signed the Strategy.

Local rivalries between the Roma organizations, traditional leaders and the new generations that have another level of training and other expectations, have been put forward in all the meetings. The

openness towards dialogue with all Roma organizations expressed by the authorities in the meetings is in some towns reason for fear that the “traditional” organizations will lose their privileges of “quasi-monopole” as the representatives of the Roma.

Even though during the meetings or previous to them, the young Roma mediators asked the traditional leaders to support their work, it was obvious the concern of the later that they may lose their position in the community. Some of the leaders expressed concern that traditions will be lost, like the *justice of the peace*, through the application of the conflict resolution techniques by the new NGOs, and skepticism regarding the abilities of the mediators to solve conflicts, especially in communities with a low level of education. Actually, one of the problems refers to how viable would successful mediation be, in a community where the leader does not want the involvement of the mediator, even though the parties in the conflict would ask for mediation.

Certain problems and needs were addressed in the recommendations and the identification of opportunities that took place in the meetings, however others require a longer dialogue in order to build trust between the parties.

SUGGESSTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

A suggestion made both by the authorities and by the Roma was to organize *regular meetings* between Roma and the representatives of the authorities in order to identify and find solutions. In villages, the meetings with the police unit chiefs are very important for informing Roma citizens and their representatives.

Mediators could connect Roma communities and authorities in order to allow the latter to do their work properly (interventions, searches, inspections etc.) Actually, the police unit chiefs suggested using mediators when they are asked to intervene in situations that overpass their attributions. Thus, we could talk about the possibility of cooperation between Police/ police unit chiefs/ police officers and mediators/ Roma organizations in different situations and conflicts presented during the discussions (at the end of most of the meetings, the police representatives seemed very interested in working with Roma mediators and in knowing more about mediation). This cooperation could determine the strengthening of the status of the Roma mediator in the region.

The mediators need to keep in contact with the local leaders and with the leaders of the Roma communities. This is needed in order to avoid the activities of the Roma mediators cooperating with the Police and with the other local authorities being perceived by the community as “collaborationism.”

In the communities where the traditional methods of conflict resolution (*JUSTICE OF PEACE*) are seldom used, the mediator could have a very important role in preventing violence, an argument supported both by mediators and by the representatives of the local authorities. The problem raised in this case, that appeared in several of the meetings is about who covers the costs of the mediator’s activity. *Who pays for the work of the mediator?*

In developing and maintaining the relationship of the mediator with the authorities it is important that this will keep a “REGISTRY” with the interventions and with the assistance offered to the parties that are in conflict, in order to prove their activity in the discussions with the public authorities.

It came out of the discussions that the decentralized services, the mediators and the Roma organizations could cooperate in developing activities conceived for the Roma communities, a possible endeavor especially when there are *previous positive experiences* in developing projects together.

During the meetings the participants underlined how important is *training new mediators and increasing the number of those at which one could appeal to at the local level*. The local authorities and the non-governmental organizations expressed their desire to support this type of projects (training and assistance for starting the activities) in other fields, too.

The interest for mediation coming from some mass-media representatives could support the development of a public information campaign in order to promote knowledge about mediation, the existing specialists, the advantages of using mediation, as well as cases successfully mediated by these mediators. The openness of the local level journalists could have a beneficial effect at the central level. For example, the local meeting from Timisoara was extensively presented in the “Jurnalul Banatean” newspaper from November 27, 2003, the article containing declarations of the police commissary Silviu Erusencu regarding the importance of the event and of the topics discussed.

The workshops represented first of all an opportunity to identify problems, needs, common opportunities regardless of the region or of the participating authorities or Roma NGOs. At the same time during the meetings certain specific issues determined by various local factors were brought into discussion (the relation between authorities and Roma ethnic group, the relations between Prefecture, Town Hall, Police, the willingness to have a dialogue and to cooperate etc.)

SPECIFIC ELEMENTS OF DIFFERENT LOCAL WORKSHOPS

Bucharest, September 18th, 2003

The workshop was organized in order to emphasize the beginning of an important component of the project - promoting the concept of mediation at local level - and to ensure a future wider participation at local workshops of the central authorities from territory (the health departments, locale agencies for employment, child protection, etc.).

At the same time, it was a good opportunity to present the project and its objectives, as well as the strategic partners and their motivation for supporting this partnership. The workshop was hosted by The Institute for Crime Research and Prevention from the General Inspectorate of the Romanian Police. In the opening speech *The Police Commissioner Mr. Gabriel Vasile Niță*, the director of the institute underlined that the project conformed with the Romanian Police efforts to contribute to the practical implementation of the provisions of *The Strategy for Improvement of the Roma People Situation in Romania* adopted by the *Romanian Government* in 2001. The director of *Resource Center for Roma Communities*, Mr. **Florin Moisa**, made some extremely favorable estimates regarding the quality and the content of the Training Program and the efforts made by the training team, coordinated by *The Foundation for Democratic Change*, to adjust the practical component of the program to the needs expressed by the representatives of Roma NGOs.

Representatives of all of the agencies and departments involved in the implementation process of the Strategy were present, and from the discussions came out a low level of knowledge regarding the neutral intervention in conflict resolution domain, as well as the mediation process. Mediation is associated by the majority of those present with programs developed for training school mediators and sanitary mediators.

Although mediation - as a process structured for assisting parts in dispute - is already stipulated in legislation as an alternative regarding the resolution of working conflicts, in the law regarding prevention of domestic violence and in the legislation regarding discrimination, applying these provisions had to face the lack of a minimal theoretical knowledge of those who must formulate application norms.

Galați, October 16th, 2003

Between 1999 – 2000, *Galați County Inspectorate of the Romanian Police (CIRP)* developed a project in partnership that had its purpose the training of 50 “*Roma mediators*”. The courses’ curriculum was actually focused on Human Rights and Minority Rights and comprised legislative themes of interest to Roma communities. The participants at these courses were mainly young Roma people from Galați County, as the basic request was to have minimum high school studies. The later role of the graduates was to educate and inform Rroma communities about legislative problems, and to cooperate with the Police to assist Rroma people when law violations take place.

From the 50 “*Roma mediators*” trained by Galați CIRP, only 2 – 3 have kept in touch with the institution, the rest are not active in the community. The main accusation was that the funds allocated for the project concentrated on the training component, and their later activity, although very challenging, was based only on volunteering.

The discussions held focused, mainly on explaining the differences between the “mediator” trained by Galați CIRP and the graduates of *Prevention and Resolution Inter-ethnic Conflicts* training program. The workshop pointed out that, because of the low level of knowledge of the mediation concept - as assisted negotiation – and of the mediator’s role – as the third neutral and impartial party -the words *MEDIATION* and *MEDIATOR* were used excessively and improperly, leading to confusions with some bizarre consequences.

As an immediate result of the workshop, the mayor of *Galați Municipality* invited **Victor Făcăleț** (graduate of the training program organized by FDC and RCRC), to work together with the City Hall in problems related to the implementation of the Strategy for the Improvement of the Roma Situation People in Romania at the local level. A priority identified during the workshop was the one regarding houses for the Roma people.

Cluj, November 11th, 2003

Both in the opening speech of the workshop held by the Deputy Chief Inspector of Cluj CIRP, and in the speech of the Alliance for Roma Unity – Cluj branch – president (Mr. Rudi Varga), it was stressed that in the Cluj area there are not situations of conflict with the Roma people. Regarding the ones that appeared sporadically through quick interventions they were settled. Mr. Rudi Varga wanted to specify that the only existent problems are due to some Roma groups who come from other areas and that settled down in the Cluj area.

Although from the affirmations of the local Rroma leader could result that the situation is very good, the discussions pointed out that a possible situation of conflict exists at the local level between the vernacular Rroma communities and the newcomer. Rroma groups that settled down in the area. Mr. Varga underlined that he does not want the involvement of the mediator in mediating conflicts, the traditional form – *JUSTICE OF PEACE*- being enough and tested over time.

However from the interventions of other Rroma representatives presented at the workshop (some of them leaders in smaller localities from the county), it resulted the wish to apply mediation, to resort to the services of the trained mediators and even to be included in future training programs. It was mentioned that in Câmpia Turzii they want a mediator at the local level, firstly, to facilitate the application of *Law 416 regarding The Minimum Guaranteed Income*.

At the workshop graduates of the training program were, also, invited, respectively, Mrs. **Alina Covaci** who is active in Cluj-Napoca, and Mr. **Gelu Moldovan** who is active in Dej.

From Dej, Gherla and Câmpia Turzii local councilors and representatives of the Police participated at the workshop. They presented the activity already developed by the graduates of the *Prevention and Resolution of Inter-ethnic Conflicts* training program in cooperation with local authorities and the special impact of these activities at local level. The participants from Dej, Gherla and Câmpia Turzii declared their support in forming new mediators who must have both the necessary theoretical knowledge and practical skills to intervene in conflicts involving Rroma people.

Tecuci, November 21st, 2003

Due to the discussions from the Galați workshop, when other training programs of different types of mediators (school, sanitary or formed by the Galați Police) were mentioned, and because Tecuci is in Galati County, at this workshop it was suggested to invite all the people from the town that were included previously in training programs as “mediators”.

Identifying them required a special effort from our local partner, Mrs. **Georgeta Pleșcan**, the president of the *Alliance for Rroma Unity – Tecuci branch* -, to draw up lists of former graduates and to find out their present residence. Mrs. **Pleșcan** benefited by the remarkable support of Tecuci Municipality Police and the Prevention Department from Galati CIRP, Chief Commissar Mr. *Ion Victor*. In the end, *only one person* trained during the program developed by Galați CIRP, Mr. Ionel Dobrin, participated in the workshop, who continued to cooperate with the local Police after his graduation, as volunteer, and thus was identified.

All the representatives of authorities who participated at the workshop appreciated in a special way the efforts made by Mrs. **Georgeta Pleșcan** to prevent violence at the local level (example: distribution of the rightful amounts according to *Law 416 of The Minimum Guaranteed Income*), or even in the resolution of some local conflicts (between pupils, at school and outside the school, between members of Rroma communities from Tecuci etc.). Though she works with Tecuci Town Hall in a constant way (daily), the cooperation relation with Mrs. **Pleșcan** is not official. The situation is due to the conflict personal relation with the representative of Rroma people from Galați County Council who is the representative of Roma Party (the organization represents Rroma people in the *Romanian Parliament* and in the *Department for Roma Problems* - part of the *Romanian Government*). Through the representative from the Roma Office in Galați County Council it was attempted to impose another person representing Rroma interests from Tecuci. Despite this situation the local authorities see themselves forced to work with Mrs. **Pleșcan** because she is active and has the necessary knowledge and skills to intervene in the resolution of conflict situations. The permanent preoccupation for improving Rroma situation in the locality and the continuous activity developed in relation with the authorities (representation, assistance, education) have made possible for **Mrs. Georgeta Pleșcan** to be recognized as leader by all the Rroma people in the locality, singular case for the traditional Rroma communities.

A suggestion launched at the Tecuci workshop was to analyze the possibility to extend the mediation model applied by the training program graduate, Mrs. **Pleșcan**, in communities that lie in the immediate proximity of the town, and even in the communes from the area, especially the communes Brăhășești and Munteni. A large number of Rroma Ursari live in these communities, most of them without identity papers, impossible to make as they do not have birth certificates, and they have never been included in the education system. Also in Tecuci, thanks to good cooperation with the headmasters of some schools from the town and with some police stations chiefs, the participants proposed to familiarize pupils with the notions of peaceful conflict resolution, respective third-neutral intervention. At the end of the workshop, the LADO representative manifested the intention to sign a cooperation protocol with The Alliance for Rroma Unity Tecuci in order to formulate some common projects.

Timișoara, November 26th, 2003

The workshop in Timișoara Municipality was marked by the conflicts between different Roma organizations, and by the conflict between generations. The training program graduate and our local partner in the project, Mr. **Valentin Pepenel** activates in a youth organization, *The Association of Roma Students PARUMIDOS*. The members of the association are in the majority students at *The Department of Sociology - Social Assistance - The West University* and are oriented towards social projects addressed to Roma communities from Timiș County.

Roma youth present at the workshop expressed their disappointment regarding the authorities' tendency not to take them into account, to work only with one organization and, more often, with one person perceived as representative. Thus, their cooperation with Roma people is reduced to the old cooperation with the traditional leader of the community ("bulibașă"), state the Roma students.

On the other hand, the traditional leaders ("bulibașă") who constituted nongovernmental organizations, with political or religious character, have an old relation with the authorities. These relations have an important role in legitimizing their own positions in front of Roma groups on the county range.

The informal leaders attempted to question the affiliation to the Roma ethnic group of the some young students, but they changed these statements after they were presented the counter-argument that they themselves gave recommendations to the students when the later registered at University. According to the legislation regarding *positive discrimination*, special places are allocated annually for young Roma that want to study in universities, and in the universities regulations it is stipulated that they must prove they are Roma based on a recommendation from a Roma NGO recognized by the local level authorities.

From the context of the discussions resulted a special interest of all local leaders to participate directly or to designate representatives at the future training courses in *Prevention and Resolution of Conflicts*.

The workshop was presented in "Jurnalul Bănățean" no. 189, on November 27th 2003 and included some interviews with persons present at this event.

Botoșani, December 16th, 2003

The local workshop coincided with the visit to the county of the Ambassador of France, the reason why the mayor of Botoșani Municipality participated only in the first part of the meeting. The second part of the workshop was held in the presence of representatives of the Police, which limited the discussions to the cooperation with the Roma mediators when they can cooperate with the Police. Though only this aspect of cooperation was tackled, concrete possibilities of mediators' intervention were analyzed

A Local Mixed Commission for Roma problems works in Botoșani, commission that has monthly meetings and analyzes the impact of projects developed, identifying at the same time what should be done in the next period. As a result, a range of projects have multiple partners, respectively the Police, the Local Council, the County Council, the Town Hall and Roma NGOs, among them DIVANO ROMANO, the NGO where Mr. *Bilian Ferariu* works. He is a graduate of the training program "*Prevention and Resolution of Inter-ethnic Conflicts*".

According to the statement of the representative of the Body of Public Guardians', as a result of this cooperation, an important decline of incidents involving Roma people registered in 2003. The Judiciary Department of from the Botoșani CIRP specified that in 2003 in the Botoșani Municipality only one violent robbery in comparison with 11 registered in 2002, that constantly involved Roma people.

From the discussions it was decided that the traditional methods to resolve conflicts, respectively the *Peace Judgment* is rarely used in Botoșani County, and the representation through group leaders like BULIBASA is disputed in many situations. From the appraisals made resulted that it is difficult to work with them, when they exist, because they often try to promote their own financial interests and even to benefit from the existence of some projects financed from outside for their own interest.

Iași, December 18th, 2003

The organization and the development of the workshop in Iași was thoroughly affected by the existence of tense relations between the Prefecture and Roma youth organizations. There is a great restraint from the FDC partners at the local level, respectively **Margareta Hochin** and **Iulian Dinu**, to cooperate with local authorities. This restraint can be explained through the reduced or very reduced willingness of the local authorities from Iași, including the Police to open a dialogue. Roma youth say this attitude is due to the influence of the Deputy Prefect to boycott youth activities in the County.

Trying to get over this crisis, the project team decided to use the same model of local cooperation to organize the workshop. Thus, the workshop was prepared under the coordination of the Prevention

Department from the Iasi CIRP, but the **Association of Roma Students and Youth ROMANITIN** participated only to a certain extent in the organization. Breaking the cooperation was marked by the moment when the Prevention Department contacted the Prefecture to ask for support in preparing and running the workshop.

Benefiting from the fact that the workshop coincided with the National Day of the Minorities from Romania, the Deputy Prefect of Iasi decided to invite the representatives of all minorities existent on the range of Iasi County, and from the Roma ethnic group only the organizations with whom the Prefecture cooperated “well”, were invited.

In the official opening speech, the Deputy Prefect wanted to specify that the Roma youth has nothing to look for in the Iași Prefecture headquarters, we quote: “I personally threw them out of the Prefecture”, and invoked behavioral reasons. The workshop in Iași proved that before promoting the cooperation with local mediators to prevent and solve ethnic conflicts, actions are needed to resolve the crisis provoked by the conflict between the Prefecture and an important part of Roma organizations, the ones that include the students or young people with Universities degrees. These are considered by the Deputy Prefect of Iasi to be “noisy and with no respect for the authorities and the older persons, they ask questions and incite to disobedience towards authorities”.

Giurgiu, February 11th, 2004

The workshop in Giurgiu was organized in local partnership by the local officer from the prevention department and the graduate of the training program “Prevention and Resolution of Inter-ethnic Conflict”, Mr. **Marius Neagu**, member of the Social Democrat Roma Party – The organization of Giurgiu County. Held in the County Council headquarters, the workshop benefited from numerous presence from the authorities and media.

At the opening, Mr. **Ștefan Cîrligea** – Deputy Chief of the Giurgiu CIRP – mentioned that in 2003, the number of Roma participants at criminal offences decreased by half, and this is the result of the very good cooperation between the Police structures and the representatives of Roma in the county.

Trying to put into practice his skills as a mediator, Mr. **Marius Neagu** stated that he dealt with the reticence of persons from the public institutions, and with the financial barriers. He put forward an official request to be hired as a mediator by the Prefecture, his request having no answer.

Mrs. **Fieraru Ștefania**, inspector at Giurgiu School Inspectorate, mentioned that, although since 2001 the Ministry of Education allocated reserved places for Roma youth in high schools and universities, no request was registered until 2002 in Giurgiu. In 2002 she received the first application from Mr. **Marius Neagu** to register at the Faculty of Political and Administrative Sciences Bucharest. The main reason for the lack of requests is that the parents do not declare their children, gymnasium graduates, as belonging to the Roma ethnic group.

The representative of the County Office for Roma, organized within Giurgiu Prefecture, suggested that through future courses Romanian mediators should be trained, too.

România Actualități Radio Station, during *Pulsul Zilei*, broadcasted at 18:00 in the same day, included a special reportage dedicated to the workshop in Giurgiu.

Craiova, February 19th 2004

Initially scheduled for the first half of October 2003, the workshop from Craiova was postponed due to street violence provoked by the fights between some groups of Roma and the forces responsible for the maintenance of public order, on September 18th.

Because of this special situation the workshop in Craiova had a particular importance. Thus, the Director of the Institute for Crime Research and Prevention, Police Commissioner Vasile **Gabriel NIȚĂ** was present at this event.

Organizing the workshop in February 2004 was also possible because of the activity developed inside the Roma community of Craiova, by the mediators, respectively, Mr. **Marcel Costache**, Mr. **Eduard Padeanu** and Ms. **Ramona Dita** between September-December 2003.

The Police Commissioner, **Constantin Codita**, the Chief Inspector of CIRP Dolj underlined in his opening speech, that from the point of view of criminality, Dolj County is one of the most problematic counties in the country, even though starting with 2000 the level of crime decreased by 29%.

According to Mr. Marcel Costache point of view, the causes for the violence from Craiova are multiple, but they all reduced to *discrimination*. The organization, in which he works, **ROMANO EURO DROM**, signaled several times the existence of incidents that anticipated the violence in September 2003 in Craiova. The study case included in the Final report of the training program from 2002 referred to one of the situations that justified these events.

It is important to notice that a representative of Rroma ethnic group, Peace Judge in Rroma tradition, solicited a greater involvement of the Police in sanction the discriminations actions.

The representatives of other Rroma organizations took advantage of the participation of the representative of the Local School Inspectorate and presented the existence of problems related to the educational system, like the obligation for Rroma children to go to schools attended 100% by Rroma children and in which the quality of education is at an extremely low level, or because of the difficulty of some Rroma youth to attend primary school after they passed the appropriate school age.

Because of the multitude of identified problems, during the discussions it was suggested to create a working group at the local level and to organize regular meetings between the representatives of the Rroma organizations and the authorities.

The workshop enjoyed a very good illustration in the media and articles about the workshop were printed in the local newspapers "Cuvantul Libertatii" and "Editie Speciala de Oltenia", from February 20th 2004. The local TV channel "Observatorul de Oltenia" presented this event extensively.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The meetings represented a very good opportunity to initiate and, in some cases, to strengthen the dialogue between Rroma mediators, respectively between the organizations in which these are active, and the public authorities represented at the local level.

By involving the Institute for Crime Research and Prevention as a partner, respectively the *Prevention Departments of the CIRP* of each county where workshops were held, *Police* could consider itself to be the most important beneficiary of these activities because future partners were identified and because answers were formulated regarding the problems they faced when working with Rroma people.

By having as participants representatives of Town Halls, Local Councils, County Councils, Prefectures, National Employment Agency, Health Departments, Local School Inspectorate and Police represented in most cases the beginning of a dialogue and cooperation, even between the authorities themselves, an extremely useful cooperation, especially regarding problems related to Rroma. The complexity of the problems they are faced with, makes it almost impossible for one authority, in most cases the Town Hall to assume the responsibility for solving these problems.

Moreover the meetings were extremely important for mediators because they had the chance to promote their own activities in the presence of the authorities. The professional approach of explaining and presenting the situations in which mediators intervened, helped the representatives of the authorities to better understand the role of the "conflict mediator". Therefore, the representatives of the authorities declared their interest and willingness to work with the mediators trained by FDC and also with their organizations, too.

A very important aspect of all the local meetings was that the participants-regardless of the institution or organization they were representing- started by negating the existence of intra or inter-ethnic conflicts in those towns. The discussions from the meetings determined them to change the way they were seeing things and to accept the fact that these conflicts exist and it is necessary to cooperate with specialists trained for solving them.

3.3. Specialized network and Networking

WHY WAS NETWORKING NECESSARY?

The main reasons for developing a specialized network were:

The first reason is **pedagogical**: from the evaluations made at the end of each of the six modules of the Training Program in 2002, it emerged that the participants best understood and assimilated information, if it came directly from one of their colleagues. The exchange of experience proved to have a major impact in the formation process.

The second reason is given by the **reduced experience of using mediation** in Romania in general, and especially in conflicts that involve Roma people. The field of mediation is still in its early stages in Romania, and each practical experience is of great value for the group of mediators.

The third reason is given by the need to **exchange information** of interest for all, consolidating this way the feeling of belonging to the group. The development of a Mediators' Network was one of the recommendations at the end of the Training program in 2002, especially for sustaining the practical activity of the mediators.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITIES

The idea of Networking became concrete through two activities:

- (1) Development and administration of an *electronic discussion group on the internet*, dedicated to the mediators that graduated from the Training program, and
- (2) Organization of a *seminar* as a framework to facilitate the exchange of experience and to complete the knowledge in the field of conflict intervention.

(1) The Discussion group on the Internet

The discussion group was created on the Internet, and it included the graduates of the Training program, the trainers and the RCRC representative, Maria Ursu, who also administrated the electronic group.

The goal of the discussion group is to make the communication among the participants in the project easier and more efficient, at least for those that use internet communication. The information exchanged within the discussion group refers to:

- Personal or organizational development opportunities in the field of alternative dispute resolution methods and the countering of discrimination,
- The cases where the participants intervened as neutrals,
- Exchange of information relevant for the activity of the Roma organizations,
- Counseling from the side of the trainers or the side of colleagues – members of the Network,
- Evolution of the current project,
- Exchange of information between organizers and participants regarding the organization of the local meetings and the implementation of the project.

The electronic discussion group is being used especially by the younger participants in the project, who have at least occasionally access to a computer with an internet connection. But in order to benefit from the exchange of information, even older participants decided to join the discussion group and began to learn how to use the computer and the Internet.

(2) The Seminar

The Seminar took place in Gilau, near Cluj, between November 12-14th 2003. It was programmed to come to follow directly after the local meeting in Cluj (11.11.2003), in order to offer as many participants as possible the opportunity to assist at a local meeting and to have an example of how such a meeting runs. The experience was important especially for those that were involved in the organization of the local meetings in the towns where they develop their activity.

The seminar was attended by the participants in the project that were the most motivated and most involved in intervention activities, as it brought together the core of the mediators' Network.

It was a surprise even to the FDC team to see that all participants were involved in the mediation of conflicts in the year that had passed from the end of the Training Program on „*Prevention and Resolution of Inter-ethnic Conflicts*” in December 2002.

Among the cases presented, were some extremely complex, and drawing from the participants' experiences, a specific typology of conflicts where Roma mediators can intervene, was developed. This experience accumulated by trying to mediate conflicts, led for each of the participants to a confidence increase in their capacity to use their knowledge and skills as a neutral party. By trying to intervene in different type of conflicts, the participants' ability to analyze a conflict and to intervene in tension ate situations increased very much. The discussions and the analyses made in the framework of the seminar, improved for all those present the overview of the possibilities to develop the mediation activity, a field which is still in its early stages in Romania.

One of the analyzed conflicts was the one of Craiova of September 2003. On the basis of the information's presented by the mediators from Craiova, several neutral intervention possibilities for that moment in time were taken into consideration and discussed. The analysis of a possible intervention of a mixed team, of mediators from the FDC and Craiova, in a very violent conflict, which had not been settled completely, helped all participants gain a clearer view on the risks implied by such an intervention, but also of the role of the neutral intervention in the prevention and resolution of such a complex conflict. It became very clear for everybody, that in order to solve such a case, all authorities must cooperate.

Meeting with former colleagues a year after the finishing of the Training program, tightened relationships among the participants, and as a general tendency, it improved considerably the exchange of information within the group. Discussing on conflict prevention activities developed in the year that passed, participants began to explore possible projects they could develop together, starting from the common objectives they have.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The networking proved to be extremely important for reaching the goal of the project. Active and continuous communication among the participants, information exchange, is a particularly efficient way to accumulate and transfer knowledge. Offering assistance and consultation to the graduates, as well as the organization of the local meetings was facilitated permanently by the existence of the networking component within the structure of project. Receiving continuously information from the discussion group, an important part of the mediators could participate in local meetings that were organized in other towns than the ones they work in.

The seminar had an essential role in increasing the cohesion within the mediators' group. It created the ideal framework for exchange of experience and offered participants the opportunity to verify and improve their information and concepts they work with, also through the discussions with the FDC team of specialists.

For a permanent and efficient communication within the network, it is very important that the electronic discussion group continuous to function, and to benefit from a joint FDC and RCRC coordination.

3.4. Types of intervention

During the discussions between the mediators and the FDC team, both during the seminar and individual consultations or within the discussion group, it became evident that the graduates of the Training program *Prevention and Resolution of Inter-ethnic Conflicts* have intervened or tend to intervene in *some specific types of conflict*. These are determined by the specific needs of Roma communities, also by the need to relate with public authorities.

Types of disputes and their characteristics from the perspective of neutral intervention

Neighborhood conflicts: *are disputes among neighbors, when at least one of the families is from the Roma ethnic group.* In most of the cases they are older conflicts, which became violent as a result of the destruction of goods or of physical aggression. The conflicts can also be new ones, generated by accidents that imply loss or damage to the goods of one of the families. In order to intervene in such a conflict, the mediator must be known by both parties, and enjoy *respect in the community*.

The intervention of the mediator could be solicited by one of the families or by the authorities, in many of the cases, by the Police. In the case that the conflict involves a non-Roma family, the risk exists, that the members of this family do not accept a Roma mediator whom they consider to take sides, because the latter would be a member of the Roma ethnic group.

Cases of separation: *they take place especially* between unmarried couples that lived together, because traditionally Roma people get married legally after a number of years of living together or never get married. If the relationship lasts for less than 5 years, *The Family Code* does not ensure the necessary protection of the woman, especially regarding the goods (the right to separation). The situation is more serious if the family has minor children.

When the couple wants to divorce after a legal marriage, most of the time the spouses do not have the necessary money and legal knowledge to go to the law court for division of goods.

For an unmarried couple, if the man removes the woman from the house, with or without children, she goes to the Police to solve the situation. The intervention of the Police is extremely limited in such cases, especially if there is no violence.

The Police can recommend a mediator to the party that pressed charges and must be accepted by both sides as neutral and impartial. In addition, he must have the minimum legislative knowledge in the domain, and knowledge in conjugal and child psychology.

Intervention in cases of theft: *in the case goods were stolen and the thief and the victim know each other, are part of the same community, and the parties prefer to settle the dispute and reconcile their differences, if the goods are recuperated or the damage has been replaced.*

The cases presented involved theft of small value, where the victim accepted a mediator assisted negotiation, instead of going to the Police and making a complaint. It is important that the thief admits his action and is interested in the resolution of the dispute.

Interested to ask for the intervention of a mediator in such cases are the victims, in order to solve quicker the case, but also the thief, in order to repair the damage caused, and not to be subject to a Police investigation.

Conflicts that arise from the allocation of social homes for Roma ethnics in buildings that are not adequate for housing, or from the evacuation of Roma families, *require the intervention of specialized persons that should facilitate the communication between the Roma families and the local administration.*

These conflicts involve on the one hand the Roma family/ families, with many children, and on the other hand the Town Hall, sometimes joined also by the Association of Owners or of the families that live in the building. The intervention of the mediator is most often solicited by Roma organizations that are concerned, because of the possibility of abuses against Roma families and outbreak of violence.

Intervention in this type of case involves knowledge of the public administration system and of the internal procedures of the city halls.

Petition wording in the name of some Roma citizens that can't fill the request in a clear way (problem, needs, options) *facilitates* access to public institutions and to the defense of their own citizenship rights.

Many members of the mediators network carried out such an activity in the Roma communities where they worked, thus contributing to the prevention of possible violence and to the creation of equal opportunities for Roma people, to distinguish themselves in front of public institutions.

To give this type of assistance, it is preferable for the mediator to know the procedures and the usual wording for this kind of document.

Frequently the mediator's help is solicited by illiterate Roma citizens, and in this way they can express accordingly their requests to public institutions.

Applying the Law no. 416/2001 regarding the Minimum Guaranteed Income: *the situations of conflict appear when they cash their pecuniary rights (they come in large number), and due to the delaying of the payments (sometimes months).* In almost every locality in the country, the majority of those registered as "the poorest citizens" and has the right to social benefit calculated according to the law, is Roma people.

It is mainly, a conciliation activity (mediation without having the parties present) necessary for the tense crowd - because of long waiting – not to resort to violent acts. The third neutral party has the role of "calming down the spirits" and to negotiating with the civil servants the solution to resolve the situation. The activity proved to be extremely favorable for the Town Hall and its civil servants that could carry out their activity without interruptions, without verbal admonition etc., for the public order forces (they didn't have to intervene in force), and for the citizens of different ethnic groups that waited to cash their pecuniary rights.

The mediator must be known and recognized in the community, and by the civil servants of the Town Halls.

Allocating supplementary places for Roma students within some high schools and University departments, *according to the provisions of the National Strategy for the Improvement of the Roma Situation in Romania,* represents an opportunity that is not always capitalized upon, either because of the reticence of some leaders to allocate these places in some localities or because Roma students do not know and cannot use the provision.

The activity of a mediator to convince the leaders to allocate these supplementary places for Roma students is useful, especially in the case of eligible Roma students who do not know how to apply in order to be admitted in the respective institutions.

This facilitation activity is sometimes made by the Romanesh teachers who have knowledge about the provisions of the Strategy and about the institutions responsible to implement them. The fact that the person who intervenes to settle disputes appeared between the learning institution and Roma families has mediation and negotiation skills, contributes to taking advantage, in civilized conditions, of opportunities stipulated in the Strategy for Roma students.

Roma students and their families ask for the help of the mediator to settle these situations.

Conflicts that can appear between teachers and the school's headmaster, on one side, and Roma students with problems, on the other side, can be settled easier with the help of a person that understands the rigors of the learning institution and the mentality and the problems specific for some difficult children who come from a different cultural environment.

The intervention cases from the Roma mediator - for example for a Roma student that causes problems not to be expelled, for his family not to come to school and to protest etc.-, revealed the fact that the mediator, besides good communication skills that he must possess, must be a person that both school and the Roma student's family can trust. In many cases knowing Romanesh is essential for the mediator.

The intervention of a mediator to resolve in a constructive and peaceful way this kind of conflicts can be solicited by the Roma student family, and by the school's headmaster.

Discrimination: The rejection cases of a candidate for a job or at the existent place of work, on ethnic grounds (that he belongs to the Roma ethnic group).

Besides the petitions that can be addressed to the Law Courts, it can also be appealed to the specialist services of a mediator, especially for continuing the working relations.

The employer or the Roma candidate (frequently unemployed) is very interested in the services of a mediator.

Altercations between Roma NGOs: they appear often due to a badly understood competition, according to which winning means to *eliminate* the other party so the winner can keep and/or gain new privileges (reputation, power in community, privileged relationship with authorities, funds for sustaining their own activity).

In some localities, the representatives of some Roma nongovernmental organizations even requested arbitration from the Police, but settling such altercations is not a Police duty. The only ones capable of taking a decision regarding the relations between organizations are the leaders and the members of these NGOs.

The mediator's intervention must be supported by a public institution, the only one that can exercise a sufficient ascendancy of power to bring to the negotiations all interested parties.

Investigating violent conflicts and formulating action proposals to prevent conflict escalation are extremely important to the NGOs dedicated to the Roma ethnic group.

Preparing some members of the organizations in conflict analysis and intervention creates the premise for future contributions to public policy development to improve the situation of the Roma ethnic group and to prevent and resolve inter- ethnic and intra - ethnic conflicts.

Also, it creates the premises of close cooperation with the authorities in order to ensure a security climate at the local level and in the Roma communities.

The intervention of some experienced specialist mediators can be solicited by the Roma organizations and/or by the authorities to train other local specialists and coordinate complex research activities.

4. Conclusions

Developing this project was a unique experience for all the partners, on one hand because of the very large number of organizations and institutions involved in it, and on the other hand because of the need to permanently adapt to the realities of the Romanian society.

Conceived as a project with extremely ambitious goals, the establishment of strategic partnerships at the national level was a determining factor in creating the favorable premises for successfully achieving all the activities envisioned.

A determining role was played by the *Institute for Research and Crime Prevention*, which managed to mobilize at the local level the Police Inspectorates and to get them involved in organizing and running the meetings. In some cases (see chapter III 2), the presence of the Police representatives encouraged the dialogue between the parties represented at the meetings. In many situations of conflict it is still necessary to have a public authority in order to determine the parties to engage in dialogue and even to impose to the parties to participate to the meetings.

The involvement as local partners of the non-governmental organizations, in which the graduates work, offered *the opportunity to experience local partnership* especially where this type of experiences are missing from the history of the public administration institutions.

The project with all its components (consultancy, assistance, local meetings) showed that the training on conflict resolution is just the *beginning of a long term professional relationship*. The situations encountered in practice are so different, that a long experience is required in order to develop third-neutral intervention models. The existence of a *core group* – trainers, former colleagues in the training program, other experts in this field, etc.- could significantly shorten the adaptation period to the daily problems of an expert in third-neutral intervention in conflicts, offering thus trust in his/her own theoretical knowledge and in the abilities developed during the courses.

All the graduates involved in the project (17 out of the 22 that graduated the 2002 courses), positively appreciated the impact of the *“apprenticeship”* period, offered through the project and the possibility to benefit from the trainer’s *assistance* after the end of the courses.

Assisting the graduates allowed for the *identification of certain types of conflicts* in which they could successfully intervene, offering both to the authorities and to the Roma non-governmental organizations sufficient arguments in order to sustain the development of similar training programs.

The dialogue with the potential beneficiaries of the services offered by the experts in neutral intervention in conflicts emphasized the *level of knowledge of the concept*, as well as the *level of acceptance* of this type of social service at the local level. The level of acceptance and, afterwards, of using mediation depends in a large measure of the level of understanding what is mediation, as well as how and when it could be used.

The abusive use of the words “mediation” and “mediator” already created many confusions and including these words in the legal norms from different fields led to the false perception that mediation is appreciated and used in Romania. What we found out from the local meetings indicates a different reality: a lot of confusion, but also the sincere desire to clarify and improve the level of knowledge in this field. All those present at the meetings asked for the *re-opening of the training program*, but also for organizing *Initiation Programs* and even short sessions for the *promotion of the concept*.

Even though the training program was conceived in such a way so that the graduates could intervene in any type of conflict, with an emphasis for inter-ethnic conflicts, reality proved that they are accepted either in intra-ethnic conflicts, or in Roma-authorities relations. By being members of an ethnic minority group it was impossible for them to intervene in situations in which one of the parties is a member of the majority or of another ethnic group. Both the Roma graduates and the authorities asked that the training program should include ethnically mixed groups, so that in inter-ethnic conflicts joint mediation could be realized, the mediators being members of both ethnic groups of the parties involved.

In all the meetings the participants appreciated in a particular way the quality of the training program, visible in the first place through the later activity of the graduates, the level of involvement in the community life and the openness towards a constructive dialogue in the relation with other NGOs and authorities. The graduates said that the training program allowed them to use better knowledge gathered during other training programs, as school mediators, sanitary mediators, human rights, community facilitators.

Annexes

OSCE/ODIHR/CPRSI

Romani CRISS

The Roma Population in Romania
Registered at the Official Censuses from 1992 and 2002
- Official and unofficial data-

Document realized within the seminar “The Roma in the European policies context: The Action Plan regarding The Improvement of Roma and Sinti People Situation in the OSCE space”
February, 12-13 2004

	The official census from 1992 ⁹	The official census from 2002 ¹⁰	The evolution between the two censuses	European Roma Rights Center (official) ¹¹	Minority Rights Group (unofficial estimations) ¹²	The European Council GT Roms 2003 (unofficial estimations) ¹³
The total population of Romania	22.810.035	21.680.974	-1.129.061			
The total population of Roma people	409.700	535.250	+125.550	409.700	1.800.000-2.500.000	1.200.000-2.200.000
The percentage of Roma population in the total of Romanian population	1,8%	2,5%	+0.7%	1,8%	8,3%-11,5%	5,5%-10,1%

⁹ The population census available at <http://www.recensamant.ro/fisiere/CUVvol1.pdf> accessed in February, 13th 2004

¹⁰ The population census available at <http://www.recensamant.ro/fisiere/CUVvol1.pdf> accessed in February, 13th 2004

¹¹ Document no. 9397 – The report “ The Legal Situation of Rroma in Europe” of the Committee for Juridical Problems and Human Rights (rapporteur Csaba Tabajdi) – based on which it was adopted the Recommendation 1557 of the Parliamentarian Assembly of the European Council, quotations from” Official numbers presented to the national governments” (<http://errc.org/publications/factsheets/numbers>).

¹² Document no. 9397– The report “ The Legal Situation of Rroma in Europe” of the Committee for Juridical Problems and Human Rights (rapporteur Csaba Tabajdi) – based on which it was adopted the Recommendation 1557 of the Parliamentarian Assembly of the European Council, quotations from ” Gheorghe, Nicolae and Ligeois, Jean-Pierre: Rroma/gypsies – an European Minority, London, Minority Rights Group, 1995

¹³ The European Council, GT-ROMS 2003 The Preliminary analysis of responses to the questionnaires regarding Roma/Travellers and similar groups participation to the decision making process (unfinished document).

Mediation

provides alternatives to

Violence,

which

- Destroys human relations.
- Makes victims.
- Leaves traumas.

E medieră

Des aver șajuntipe k-e

Maripen

Savi

- Musazdel e relacia mașkar e manasa
 - Kerel victimă
- Mekhel navlipenă

Developing Local Support for Third-Neutral Intervention in Ethnic Conflicts

E barripen e thanuntso vasdipo vaș E neutre intervencia and-e etnikane Konfliktură

Program developed by
 O programo kendo de

Foundation for Democratic Changes,
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In partnership with
 And-e parteneriam si:

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Public Affairs Section, The Embassy of the
 United States of America, Romania

Have you ever seen a conflict as a new start?

Dăn tumen godă jekh data ko konflikto sar jekh ko jekh nevo putaripo?

**Neutral
 intervention
 in solving
 ethnic conflicts**

**I neutro intervencia
 vaș jekh lacho agor k-
 e etnikane konfliktură**

What is the legal ground FOR MEDIATION?

Recommendation no. 98/ 1998 of the European Council

Law on settlement of labor disputes no.168/ 1999

Law on preventing and sanctioning all forms of discrimination, no. 48/ 2002 completed by GO no. 77/ 2003

Law to prevent and combat domestic violence, no. 217/ 2003

Mediator's occupational standard, Adopted in July 2000

Occupations Code in Romania, occupation included in March 2001 under code 244.702

What is mediation? So si e medieră?

Mediation is a *negotiation assisted* by a neutral and impartial party.

E medieră si jekh kriss vasdipo pal-jekh čacutni koter

Mediation is an *alternative* to the court of law and it is *complementary* to the legal act.

E medieră/kriss si jekh aver šajuntipen k-e gžikano staboro/zakono thaj ašhel paš-e čašpenjo buci.

The advantages of mediation Sosžar e medieră si lači

- It is *less expensive* and *faster*
- *Na trebul but love* thaj *si maj sižo*
- It is *confidential*, which is discussed in the mediation sessions is not public.
- *Na si avoidine*, so del pes čuma and-e medieră kidipen na si vaș sa e lumă
- *Restores* the relationship between parties.
- *Lačharel!* I relacia mașkar e kotoeč
- The *solution is sustainable* because it is brought directly by the parties.
- *E xarripo si maj soroko*, ke si kendo direkto koterčelur
- It is *voluntary*, the parties may commence or abandon the mediation without legal consequences.
- Si kendi *sosžar e kotoeč kamlin*, e kotoeč šaj de putaren thaj se phandovden e medieră, bi nasulman

Who is the mediator?

Kon si o mediatoro?

- a *person specially trained* to intervene in conflicts.
- Jekh mamă spečialo siřilo te butkered and-e konfliktură
- provides services in compliance with the Code of Ethics for Mediators
- *kerel buci*, e mediatoronjo pakivoča
- *does not* provide legal advice
- č/đel juridikane konsultacia
- it is *impartial*, does not defend and does not favor any of the parties
- na lel kotoe lagines
- it is *neutral*, it does not impose solutions to the parties
- solutiuvov siřved e kotoerenoq sar arela maj miřtoq, na kerd len zuralipeča

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Form for conflict intervention

1. Dates about the mediator:

Name:

Organization:

The locality where he works as a mediator:

The period of involvement in case solving:

Who solicited the intervention? (locality, area)

2. The local context:

Urban/ rural locality? Number of inhabitants?

For cases in which citizens of Roma ethnic are involved:

The Roma population in the locality/ area, level of living, professions.

The way the Roma community is organized (compact? traditional? people/nations? Does it recognize traditional leaders (“bulibașă”)? Do they practice “the peace judgment”?)

3. Conflict Analysis:

The conflict history/ nature :

Description of parts:

Relation – what kind of relation is and its importance for the future:

Communication:

Interests expressed by the parts:

Elements that influence the power balance.

4. The intervention

What did the mediator do?

Which were the results of the mediator’s intervention?

What is the present situation?