

DEPART CONFERENCE 5 DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION OF ROMA CITIZENS ON MUNICIPALITY LEVEL IN EUROPE

Graz, 7th December 2017

Conference report

Participation:

The event involved 180 citizens, including 1 participant from Albania, 54 participants from Austria, 1 participant from the Czech Republic, 3 participants from Croatia, 1 participant from Italy and 120 participants from Slovakia.

Location / Dates:

The event took place in Graz, Austria on December 7th 2017.

Short description:

The fifth thematic event was focused on "Democratic participation of Roma citizens on Municipality level in Europe". In order to create a solid background for discussion, a keynote at the Square of Human Rights next to the Forum Stadpark, was held in the morning, where democratic participation challenges were discussed. To follow, a panel with representatives of the target group held a discussion with the participants on the topic. The results and experiences from the other events were presented to create a wider political impact and concrete knowledge, best practises transfer of approaches to other countries and regions were presented.

The first part was concluded by Roma cultural program followed by the lunch break with typical Austrian food.

After the lunch break we took the opportunity to bring participants with different cultural backgrounds and nations together. Going through 3 interactive workshops helped loosing fears of contacts and reduce prejudices within the participants.

Conference report:

The conference, organized by the **City of Graz** and **EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURS** was dedicated to the topic of "Democratic participation of Roma citizens on Municipality level in Europe".

The Conference was opened by **Sissi Potzinger**, local councillor City of Graz, Austria and **Siegfried Nagl**, mayor City of Graz, Austria

After the opening the first keynote was held by **Mag^a Barbara Schmiedl**, representative of the European Training and Research Centre for Human Rights and Democracy - ETC Graz (Austria) at the square of human rights in the central park of Graz: "*Democratic participation and human rights - A report from the „City of Human Rights – Graz“*".

After the interesting keynote of Barbara Schmiedl a detailed panel discussion on the topic ““Do Roma want to get integrated? / Why we want them integrated?” with stakeholders and members of the target group took place.

Followed by a short cultural program performed by the pupils of the Private Grammar school of Z.J. Malla with singing and dancing, participants had a lunch break with highlights from the Austrian cuisine, which created a solid ground for networking of the participants.

The afternoon session opened with a presentation of the project and a wrap up of it- Short presentation of all events - Content, results, transfer and next steps - by **Philipp Lienhart**, EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURS, Austria.

Loosing fears of contacts and reduce prejudices was the main goal of the 3 workshops of the afternoon session:

Workshop 1 – “Rich in culture - Roma culture and history”

Orchestral performance and interactive presentation of the Private Music and Dramatic Conservatory in Košice under the direction of **PaedDr. Gejza Adam, PhD.**

Workshop 2 – “Common dancing > Cross cultural dance workshop with participants”

Irena Adamova explained the basics of Roma music and dancing in a short keynote followed by a dancing workshop for all participants.

Workshop 3 – “Cooking connects > Open kitchen > feel, taste and have a try”

DI Jana Tomova prepared some delicious dishes together with the participants and her team from the Private Grammar school of Z.J. Malla. The common tasting in the end was an absolute highlight.

Outputs

Transfer of knowledge for the presented examples of good practice were made between the participating municipalities, countries and experts. Therefore, for example, the Private Music and Dramatic Conservatory Košice is interested to cooperate with the City of Graz in an international EU-Music-Project.

EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURS, 2017