

# Tools for Improving Employability of ROMA

**No 3**

**The Netherlands**

## *Project Report*

### Meeting in the Netherlands

19th - 20th May 2008 the third partnership meeting was organised in the Netherlands.

Partners had visited Dutch Sinti and Roma organisation, Veldhoven municipality, where they were introduced with the policies education and integration of Roma. During the visit FlexPay introduced project "Transvak" for the unemployed Roma to be educated as truck drivers and get employed.



### ROMA in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, they make a distinction between the following categories:

- the Sinti: most of the Sinti families have been in the Netherlands for centuries, and are affiliated with the Sinti people of Germany, Belgium and France.
- Roma-1900: the family groups who have been living in the Netherlands for over a century, part of whom have been living in caravan communities together with Sinti and Travellers.
- The majority of the Roma who were part of the group of foreign workers who came to work in the Netherlands in the 1960s came from former Yugoslavia.

- Roma-1978: these are the Roma families who, travelling throughout Europe, were allowed entry into the Netherlands in the late 1970s, and were housed in various refugee communities.
- The most recent Roma arrivals: people who live among refugees and asylum seekers, in addition to the economic travellers and new guest workers, primarily a result of the expansion of the EU.

In the Netherlands, there are approximately 970 Sinti families, 139 Roma-1900 families, and 554 Roma-1978 families, with an average number of 3.6 people per household.

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## Visit to Dutch Sinti and Roma organisation

Differences of values and styles of life between Roma community and mainstream society were pointed out by Henk van Beurden. Some key points on the way of development of the new method of work with Roma:

- Differences of values and styles of Start education for 15-18 years old Roma
- Start with strongest of the group – who can achieve and show success
- Great importance of the role of the parents (explanation to parents – to invest, to support children to achieve their goals; support helping children to develop social

skills, such as wake up, bring to work etc)

- Support for employer – subsidies to compensate
- The most success was in small companies, short line-relationship easier
- Employers as part of education - construction companies (painting , building, etc.), practice
- Relationship with companies – network of employers
- Long term support , even in case of problems
- Trust in mediator among Roma people



- Wishes and competences, intake assessment

### Assistance for Roma to get basic education

Roma school assistant at primary school (pupils of 4-12 years), helping learn Dutch – Roma girls of age 18-21, even without diploma, payed by municipality, 8-15 children for one assistant

They have arranged official 3 years teaching level to be Roma school assistant

## Gipsy Talents



***“Investment  
not only of  
GETTING job  
but also  
KEEP”***

## Project of TWIN coordinators

(presented by Mr. Wim Brouns)

Task of TWIN coordinators (Roma and non Roma) is to establish relationship between organisations, local administration and Roma community, to build trust and mediate.

## Visit to the Municipality of Veldhoven



Veldhoven is a typical Dutch municipality on the outskirts of a city - bordered by Eindhoven on one side, and the open, rural area of De Kempen on the other. This is one of the reasons Veldhoven is often called the Gateway to the Kempen, or the 'Campine' in English. The current municipality of Veldhoven was established in 1921 when the former municipalities of Oerle, Zeelst and Veldhoven-

Meerveldhoven were merged into one. Veldhoven has experienced rapid growth over the past few decades. The population has grown from 10,000 in 1947 to approximately 43,300 residents as of 1 January 2007.

In 50 years, Veldhoven has grown to become a medium-sized city with over 42,000 inhabitants. Employment opportunities within the municipal borders have grown significantly to exceed 20,000 jobs. A considerable number of residents from the surrounding municipalities are also employed in Veldhoven. With a wide diversity of sectors, Veldhoven makes a powerful contribution to an economically strong region.

***"57 Roma families live in Veldhoven, distributed over 4 caravan community locations, and amounting to approximately 225 people."***

### The Roma community in Veldhoven

The Roma community living in Veldhoven are part of the Roma-1900 group. There are apparently around 139 families belonging to this category living in the Netherlands, 57 of which live in Veldhoven, distributed over 4 caravan community locations, and amounting to approximately 225 people. This is over 40% of the total Roma-1900 population in the Netherlands.

In 1977, the first caravan location was built in Veldhoven, accommodating over 30 residential caravan sites, and several families moved from Assen to Veldhoven. In 1987, this location was dismantled and the residents were housed at newer and smaller locations. As a result, three locations were created, each consisting of 15 residential sites. In 2005, the 4<sup>th</sup> location was completed, consisting of 12 brick homes.

Schutwal

Hoppenven



De Wegerd

Beerze

## Policy of Roma Inclusion in Veldhoven

Policy of inclusion doesn't necessarily mean full time employment, but at least change from „work is nothing“ to „work is something“. Goal of the inclusion measures is participation, not necessarily regular employment.

**Team** working with Roma at the municipality:

- Roma policy advisor
- Roma intermediary (schools, locations)
- Education officer – only for Roma
- Family coach – working at one family and has to try handle multi problems of the family
- Customer manager – search for work

In Veldhoven specialists use "make

*problems individual"* approach.

Flexible plans for 0,5 – 1 years, changing when it's needed.

### What's a must:

- Interested people in
- Takes long time
- Know what's going on – see by yourself, visit them, make contact, make trust
- Make individual / work together
- Good people from different organisations
- Political support

*“make  
problems  
individual”*



## PARASOL - adult education organisation

Third year of work with Roma

Teaching reading and writing in Dutch skills for illiterate adults, also computers, social skills, English. Also creative tasks – cooking, painting, make-up, hairdressing

14 students (15-27 years old), separate groups for male and female

2 teachers for each group

Attendance 8 hours a week, monitoring of everybody

Every 10 weeks meeting with someone from municipality

Aim is to reach higher level, without aiming which level it should be

Goal is to have less people depended on social benefit



## The fifth Partnership Meeting

From 5th to 8th April, 2009 the fifth partnership meeting took place in the Netherlands. During two days the partners had the possibility to visit several municipalities in Woensdrecht, Weert, Stein, Beek and see examples of working self-employed Roma and Sinti, visit Roma camp. Partners met self-employed Roma, who run small businesses such as make caravans, provide garage services, run sport club, sell second hand cars etc.



Meeting with the Roma owner of the chalet building



Visiting a boxing school owned by Roma in Woensdrecht



Meeting with a young Roma car dealer in the municipality of Beek



Slovakian team talking with the Roma owner of the garage

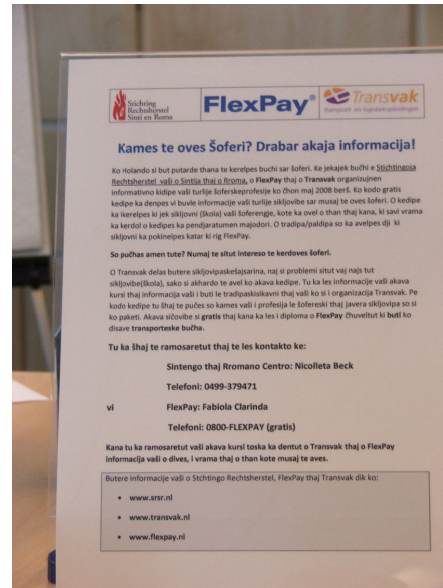
## Project results

### Agreement between Stichting Rechtsherstel Sinti en Roma (SRSR), Aijer Arbeidsmarkt- en Re-integratie and FlexPay BV

The objective of the agreement is to train Roma as truck drivers and to provide them a placement at the transport company.



Aijer (labour market and reintegration services) is an agency that has wide experience in the provision of employment counselling for those entitled to benefits, who have little or no contact with the (normal) labour market. Aijer is currently in talks with the Capelle aan den IJssel municipality for the setting up of programmes as part of the covenant



drawn up between the *Stichting Rechtsherstel Sinti en Roma* (SRSR) and FlexPay. The aim of this is to train four Roma as truck drivers, so that they are no longer reliant on social security benefits. An contract of employment with FlexPay made on the basis of a wage subsidy is one of the tools that can be used to this end.

### Stichting Rechtsherstel, Transvak and FlexPay

In May 2009, FlexPay received a request from *Stichting Rechtsherstel* to contact a Roma in the province of Noord-Holland. The Roma has already received training as a truck driver and until the end of 2008 worked as a driver. He has therefore only been without work for a relatively short time. The Roma is participating in a reintegration programme.

Contact has been made between the Roma and FlexPay on several occasions to discuss e.g. his CV and the extent of his mobility (or, is he able to work from home, this is the case).

Contact was then sought with Transvak, a training institute in Transport & Logistics with a network in Noord-Holland. Contact was also made with the Roma's reintegration coach, so that no training programmes run parallel with each other.

The arrangement was that Transvak would first contact the Roma and that talks would already be started up with potential employers. If an employer is interested, FlexPay will draw up an offer for placement and submit this to the employer. To this end, use will also be made of any possible wage subsidies.

## Cooperation between Veldhoven municipality and FlexPay

A programme for the purposes of a Roma residents in Veldhoven has been discussed. In view of the condition (i.e. weight problems) of the Roma and the fact that he is long-term unemployed, the following programme has been worked out:

- The Roma will take part in a fitness programme;
- At the same time, the Roma will receive a placement agreement for 1 year with FlexPay. The Veldhoven municipality will pay the costs of this placement. The Roma henceforth receives a salary instead of a social security allowance.
- Together with the Veldhoven municipality, FlexPay will work towards social activation of the

Roma, in other words, observe the agreements made on time, both with respect to the municipality and the fitness programme and the conditions set with regard to the placement of FlexPay.

- As soon as the physical condition allows, Veldhoven will arrange acquisition of a workplace. If necessary or desirable, the Roma can follow a (short) training programme.
- Because Veldhoven bears all the costs of the placement, the potential employer can hire in the Roma at a highly attractive price without legal employership (this is already with FlexPay).

If suitable, the employer can take on the Roma directly.

## Proposal for Employment Consultation



For the benefit of Roma, an intermediary legal entity could be set up to tackle problems, such as the leasing of business premises.

This legal entity (a trust would seem to be the best option) can act as leaseholder and sub-let to Roma under the same terms and conditions. This could also be the case for the leasing of vehicles and other equipment.

This legal entity can be established by a local authority, a group representing the interests of Roma or other third parties. The risks borne by the trust will be fairly small. Only in the case where nothing can be gained, will you be left with the remainder. Often this problem can be eliminated.

For example, Werkadvies negotiates on a regular basis for the leasing of property on behalf of our clients. Because they are an intermediary player, they can often impose more conditions with re-

spect to the leasing agreement. In the case of property leases, Werkadvies always demands an initial leasing contract of a maximum of one year (3 months notice), followed by a 3 year lease, then a 5 year lease with a period of notice of 6 months or 1 year (normal conditions). In some cases, we might also demand a change in rent. This depends on the saleability of the premises.



Gerpiet Wicherts, director of Werkadvies

## Employment

### ***Definition of the problem***

In general, the economic situation of Roma and Sinti can be said to be weak. However, hard and fast unemployment figures are difficult to come by, since registration based on race is prohibited. Prima-facie evidence seems to suggest that relatively large numbers of Roma and Sinti rely on social security benefits. Local sources intimate that unemployment level could be as high as 90%. It would seem difficult to survive solely on these benefits. These groups of Sinti/Roma are far removed from the employment market.

A survey amongst local authorities indicated that conventional jobs for our target group were few and far between and that support from the SRSR was desirable. Local authorities need feedback, additional know-how/resources and methodology development.

### ***Objective***

To improve rates of participation in employment for Roma and Sinti, who otherwise rely on social benefits.

### ***Method/process***

Use will be made a three components:

1. *Support to local authorities* Local authorities consult a twin mediator in setting up individual reintegration programmes. Twins, both citizens and Sinti/Roma, will stimulate the awareness-raising process amongst the target group, to emphasise the importance of work and financial self-reliance. Account holders will offer an analysis of the current situation and expertise. The SRSR offers the possibility of co-financing any 'hurdles along the way', which cannot be otherwise financed through the normal channels.



2. *Development of projects, specifically set up for the target group.* Together with the regulatory agencies, the SRSR will develop individualised employment projects, aimed at training and sustainable employability, taking into account the special characteristics of the target group.

Special attention will focus on individualised counselling. Clients of local authorities can make use of these resources. If necessary, the SRSR will offer co-financing.

3. *Development of methodologies* The experience and expertise since gained by twins and other organisations and individuals can be further improved in a more methodological fashion than previously, following which an analysis can be carried out to ascertain factors for success and failure. To verify the accuracy of the findings and to underpin these empirically, data needs to be systematically collected.

In this way, local authorities and reintegration agencies can be optimally supported by the SRSR in establishing programmes.

***“unemployment level could be as high as 90%”***

## Results attained

### *Support to local authorities*

In Maasgouw municipality, the citizen twin will be hired in for 80 hours a year to advise the Social Affairs consultant in the setting up of a suitable programmatic plan for a number of their clients. Likewise, the twin in Stein will be involved in the intakes and the setting up of programmatic plans by the reintegration agency in Stein.

In the last few years, occasional use has been made of the SRSR's co-financing possibility for the final 'hurdle', for example, for a project aimed at certifying a number of young Sinti in Gemert, the result of which was the awarding by the local authority of contracts to a paving company run by a Sinto. It also proved possible to offer continuity of work to a young Sinto through the financial support of the local authority of Gemert.

In 2007, a 'Management for musicians' project was initiated to teach professional Sinti and Roma musicians how to run the administrative and promotional aspects of their work more satisfactorily. Around 18 individuals took part. It proved only a partial success, because the facilities offered often proved too complicated.

### *Development of projects*

In cooperation with the Aijer reintegration agency and Flexpay placement agency, a 'Truck Drivers Programme' was set up. This was brought to the notice of the local authorities, twins and Roma/Sinti. The project is specifically tailored to the Roma/Sinti community, taking into account the necessary confidence and extra input of support. If WWB funding in the local authority is insufficient, a request for co-financing by the SRSR can be made.

A number of years ago, a Teaching Assistants project was started.

The aim of this, on the one hand, was to improve the educational participation of children, on the other hand, as an employment project for participants. Participants follow a training programme (including, if necessary, a preliminary programme), while they are employed in a school attended by Roma/Sinti children. Additional support is part of this programme. Funding is made available jointly by the school in question, the local authority and SRSR. Since 2007, around six teaching assistants have been appointed. In addition to positive results achieved with respect to absenteeism rates and parent participation, attitudes on the part of the target group to employment participation have changed. The status of 'salaried employment' has thus risen amongst candidates.

### *Development of methodologies*

Know-how has been gained with respect to methods of work which succeed or fail with our target group. The twin mediators have acquired the necessary experience in the process of attitudinal change with respect to work, the way forward to normal employment or reintegration projects, and mediation in conflicts at work. To some greater or lesser degree, they have also been dealing with potential employers and possible resistance on their part to taking on Roma or Sinti workers.

In the meantime, a network of individuals and agencies has been set up, which has met with mixed success in helping Roma and Sinti find employment. Up until now, all this know-how and expertise has not been adequately set down or explored in any systematic way.

## Self employment

### ***Definition of the problem***

There is a need amongst a growing number of Sinti and Roma to set up their own business. The professional know-how is often present. However, there are a number of obstacles in place which prevent them from actually establishing their own business. Often, the basic know-how is lacking to set up a business plan, familiarity with statutory regulations is wanting, and expectations about future earnings are unrealistic. Information and support from the chambers of commerce and related organisations seems to be too general in practical terms. Acquisition of capital and leasing of business premises appear difficult because of ongoing prejudices.

### ***Objective***

To enable motivated and suitable Roma and Sinti to successfully set up in business

### ***Method***

The SRSR has been seeking partnerships with organisations who specifically target new entrepreneurs, such as the specialised Werkadvies BV reintegration agency. This reintegration agency deploys coaches who have experience with the setting up businesses. In the first instance, the SRSR is responsible for the transfer of available know-how and expertise with respect to the target group to these coaches. To do this, the experience of twin mediators, the individual business coach and organisations in the network (such as the WSD group and Start Foundation) is used. The request for support is received from a new entrepreneur via a twin, a local authority or spontaneously, whereupon the SRSR contacts the reintegration agency. This agency works with a Personal Growth Programme. In following the five steps of this programme, the client receives the coaching that is most geared up to their objectives. Each phase provides greater clarity about the personal goals of the client and the tools (tests, assessment, specialist coaching, training etc) which might be applied.

Coaches help (new) businesses set up a business plan, apply for credit facilities, etc., and assist with the organisation of proper administration and promotional activities. For a large part, a business coach can be financed from IRO funding (UWV) and WWB funding (local authority). To start with, these coaches will be intensively involved with an entrepreneur; over time, the intensity of this contact will be reduced, but progress will be monitored. The involvement will be on a long term basis.

The SRSR will act as advisor to the coaches. They will help supervise adequate use of the processes of motivation and awareness-raising, as a result of which the client's own environment will be activated. They will have a coordinating and regulating role with respect to effectiveness, and ensure that reports are properly submitted on time.

Cooperation will be sought with organisations or funding agencies, which may be able to provide financial support to new entrepreneurs, so that applications can be dealt effectively and efficiently.

In view of needs identified, a proposal may be made to set up a business unit, which offers financial support, if there is a clearly ring-fenced 'gap', for which no available provisions exist and where efforts on the part of the local authority are clearly present. By providing guarantees, leasing and sub-leasing for business premises or equipment, confidence can be enhanced. In so doing, conditions can be imposed on the entrepreneur, with respect to training or sharing of experiences and the like. Likewise, minor acquisitions can be arranged with conditions attached. Firm agreements with local authorities are essential for this.

## Results attained

- ◆ Appointment of a business coach for 18 hours with Van Brabant Chaletbouw in Woensdrecht.
- ◆ The involvement of the business coach includes the following: the description of business processes, the motivation of the entrepreneur, joint consultation with the local authority and funding organisations, setting up promotional plans, support in the development of a relevant network, creation of confidence amongst suppliers, solving (potential) conflicts, recruitment of MBO students.
- ◆ Making available a bridging loan to Van Brabant Chaletbouw at the request of the local authority.
- ◆ Support on the part of the aforementioned business coach in writing and verifying the business plan of a guitar constructor in Woensdrecht.
- ◆ Support on the part of the aforementioned business coach in writing and verifying the business plan of a car dealer in Raamsdonkveer.
- ◆ Funding for the certification of employees of a paving company in Gemert, so that the local authority in Gemert can commission work to this company.
- ◆ Supplementary loan by the local authority, on top of the starting credit, for Mario's DIY garage. As a result of this, the intended leaser of the business premises was willing to lease this.
- ◆ Provision of credit facilities to a newly started businessman dealing in pallets, a fork-lift for which was defective, so that a new purchase could be made to enable continuity of the business.



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## Grundtvig Learning Partnership

The Grundtvig Learning Partnership is a framework for small-scale co-operation activities between organisations working in the field of adult education in the broadest sense. The partnerships focus more on process, and aim to broaden the participation of smaller organisations that want to include European cooperation in their educa-

tion activities.

In a Grundtvig Learning Partnership trainers and learners from at least three participating countries work together on one or more topics of common interest to the co-operating organisations. This exchange of experiences, practices and methods contributes to an increased

awareness of the varied European cultural, social and economic scene, and to a better understanding of areas of common interest.



**Lifelong Learning Programme**

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.

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