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Participation of the Roma Community Action Group in the Budgeting Process of Velingrad Municipality

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The municipality of Velingrad:

Velingrad Municipality is located in Southwestern Bulgaria and is part of the administrative district of Pazardzhik. It includes 21 settlements. The town of Velingrad is the administrative center of the municipality.

The total population of Velingrad is 40,707 and 4,600 of them are Roma. They live in separate neighborhoods and are concentrated in the town of Velingrad and the village of Draginovo. The municipality has an annual budget of BGN 39,000,000.



Participation of the municipality of Velingrad in the ROMACT program:

- Velingrad municipality became part of the ROMACT program in March, 2020.
- The program's main goal is to achieve sustainable partnership between local authorities and local Roma communities in addressing the issues of marginalized/disempowered communities.
- A Community Action Group (CAG) was established with active members of the Roma community;
- CAG were trained and prepared to implement a community-needs assessment survey and develop a list of priority needs. This priority list became the base to step on;
- Joint meetings with CAG and local authorities were organized, to discuss how to address the priority needs of the Roma community and how to take concrete actions.

Concrete steps: establish and train CAG



The process started in the Roma neighborhoods: the ROMACT team met with people in the neighborhoods and after a number of unofficial meetings, we finally formed the community action group - CAG.



The group received many opportunities for capacity building (coaching sessions, trainings, seminars): how to work as a team; how to prioritize community needs; how to build and sustain partnership with local authorities; how to participate in developing the main strategic plans and programs of the Municipality related to Roma integration.

Concrete steps: needs assessment



When CAG was well prepared, they conducted a survey to identify the needs of the local Roma community: they went from door to door to speak with people. The collected information was analyzed and summarized.



The needs were too many. After discussions within the group, the members decided to choose the most important ones for the majority of the Roma residents. They prioritized needs. A Final List of priorities of the Roma community was developed.

Concrete steps: meetings with the mayor



The next step after developing the Final List of priorities of the Roma community, was to meet with the mayor and his administration. CAG members presented the list and asked the mayor to include them in the Municipal Budget.

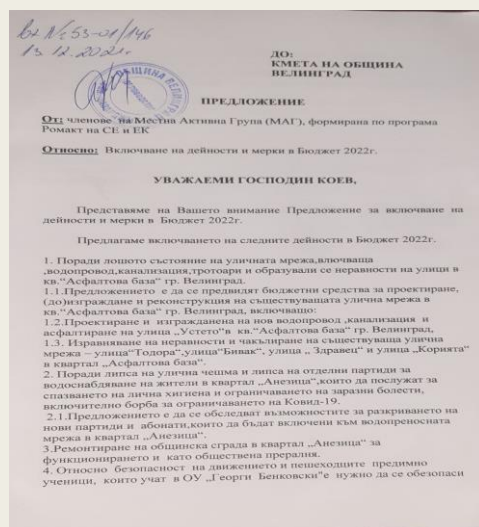


As a result of these meetings, the participants selected a number of priorities to be included in the local Budgeting Plan in accordance with their feasibility and period of implementation (the budget of the municipalities is for one calendar year).

Concrete steps: official request



CAG members prepared an official request with priorities to be included in the Municipal budget



They filed their official request at the Municipal Registry to the attention of the Budget Commission of the Municipal Council.

Results from the participation of Roma in the budgeting process:



300 meters of new sewerage and 500 meters new water supply built and on “Todora” Street in the “Asphalt Base” neighborhood - 40 000 EUR



Reconstruction and asphaltting of two streets – “Usteto” and “Zdravets” in the Roma neighborhood “Asphalt Base” - 87 200 EUR

Results from the participation of Roma in the budgeting process:



Construction of a drainage canal in the "Anezitsa" quarter.



Construction of a new water supply system and the installation of water meters for the 55 newly connected families in the "Anezitsa" quarter - 30,000 EUR

- The participation of vulnerable communities in the Budgeting Process is one of the opportunities for their full presence in the economic, cultural, social and political life at the municipal level.
- One of the main tasks of the community action group /CAG/ is to prioritize the needs of the local community by choosing those that affect the whole or a large part of the community. In addition, these priorities must be within the capacity of the municipal authorities.
- The real-needs assessment and the good preliminary preparation of CAG is a step towards their effective participation in the Budgeting Process and finding solutions to their problems.

Thank you For Your Attention!