

## **RROMANI BAXT ALBANIA RBA**

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**For many years, governments, donors, foundations etc. give money “for Roma”. However, the results are almost inexistent.**

During the last years, there were some donors who really wanted to help Rroms, chiefly aiming at their better integration in all levels of education, from Kindergarten to complementary curriculum and from state school to its leaving certificate and university. Unfortunately 90% of the international foundations involved for the last 20 years in Albania, haven't done anything else than studies, analysis, reports, one can say kind of cliché tales, one after the other, all in the cut and paste style, changing only the date or the year. All this is ZERO: they loose the money given by other people, their waste the riches which came from their country and from Europe, their create hatred between Rroms and ga3es in Albania, they destroy friendship and faith in democracy. It is also for them a good opportunity to steal in corruption. The Rromani children grow, they don't have any true aid, they don't attend school or drop out very early. In this field we involved our forces, in order to send our children to school, avoid dropping out until they graduate and have a diploma. One can say we succeeded.

Unfortunately, there where we were working, with MONEY from CCFD or RomaEducation Fund REF , and had such positive output for the children, not far from us, maybe 50 or 60 yards away, some parallel activities were set up, instead of being set up in areas where they were really needed. In these activities there are more ga3e employed with the only purpose of earning a salary than there are Rromani children coming to learn. In many cases the strategy is aimed at avoiding any change in the situation, so that they can get again and again money. In addition, they tell to the company at large that "Rromani organizations have no idea on management" but in reality they get 20 times more money than we do and we do 20 times more work than they do.

When we read reports stating that everything is great, in Albania we know that this is not true. We listen to what our friends from other countries say, and the situation is quite the same there too. One can say that in 80-90 % of Europe is in the same situation as far as the Rroms are concerned.

These last 3-4 years this sad reality is better identified and the recent reports are more critical. This is certainly progress, but still the reports fail short to suggest solutions. We are looking for solutions, and we are searching them on the mistakes that have been done in the past. Which mistakes?

a) The word « Roma » is systematically used but still, everyone put under it whatever one wants, or better said, whatever is in one's interest.

b) When the word “Roma” is pronounced, many governments and NGOs consider us all as poor, excluded, with no resources, no education, cultureless, backward people

c) Within the word "Roma" many governments and NGOs cover people who are not Roma, but simply poor and backward, and who for this reason are called and considered Roma

d) When strategies are designed, the authorities who make them in their offices do not know the reality on the grassroots and therefore draft them based on stereotypes, not on the real needs.

e) Misuse of funds dedicated to Roms was commonplace some years ago. However, more elaborated methods are used now for reporting correctly so as to justify the funds' use, with all requested documentation, while there is no result.

f) Sometimes, donors insisted for irrelevant projects in the quarter, putting pressure on us by saying that if we did not accepted these projects, they would go and work with other organizations. Then, they wrote on the contract that the idea came “from the community”.

g) Considerable funds are misused and some Roms also are responsible for this. I do not know whether this is normal, but it is a pity to see them getting money without any result for the children or for the excluded, all this happening while people see how much is spent for the Roms without for their situation to change. Seeing public money spent for nothing, they think: “why in the world should we pay so much for the gypsies who do not want to change their life, who want to remain in the muddle, to sell their children – as stereotypes exist, while we are also poor and we need this money to live better, as this money is the taxes that we pay...”. And the racism grows in this way.

h) Many authorities, including academics, in Europe say that the Roms are a political fiction, a kind of political lie, and there exist but groups which roam around, which are parasites, live out of social welfare, there is no Rromani language, no Rromani identity, culture etc.... This is becoming fashion now and Europe tolerates it, under the justification of the freedom of speech. On this negation of identity, coupled with the vision of the Roms as a social group, one can find the basis of the idea that the Roms are guilty for the crisis in Europe and hate on them with grow as it was the case 70 years ago against the Jewish people, accused of being guilty for the “recession”.

i) Even when among the mistakes there is one good project, the priorities of the donors change so quickly that in a few years it looks old fashioned and it is left behind.

j) There is no coordination between the projects and we do not communicate enough for exchanging ideas and helping each other.

The façade of democracy hardly hides some dictatorial aspects. Seven years ago, the OSCE adopted the Action Plan on the improvement of Roma and Sinti situation in the

OSCE area and consulted the Rroms while drafting it. However, their proposals were not taken into account and the document fully integrated the conception of “Roma as a social problem”, including into it also the “gadje of misery”. Therefore, the first thing to do is to have a clear definition of WHO ARE THE RROMS: we are a nation, as the president of International Rromani Union Emil Šćuka declared in 2000. We have our history, our culture, our language and many other positive values that are disappearing or have disappeared already in Europe, like the honour, the respect, the empathy etc. True enough we can learn a lot from Europe but Europe too can learn a lot from us. In this respect, here are a few recommendations I would like to make:

FIRST: for us to be recognized as a POSITIVE ELEMENT in Europe. Europe should not forget that 50-60% of the Rroms are not poor and live in good conditions and good relationship with non-Rroms; they are integrated. Do not consider us anymore as a NEGATIVE ELEMENT, an asocial group, who do not want to work, who live out of social welfare etc.

Just have a look around you and see how non-Rroms work: A Rrom works much harder than that, but when he has no job, what can he do? He will live with the social aid. And if this aid is also refused to him? What will he do? He will say: too bad, they don't give me a job, and neither social assistance, come here my wife and my children, let us sit down and die slowly...

SECOND: Once we are recognized as a POSITIVE ELEMENT, the strategies are to be drawn with the participation of skilled Rroms who know the situation, and not only by bureaucrats who will perform this task exclusively on the basis of statistics, among which a half are erroneous, because their basis is erroneous. Be this in the realm of employment, of health, of education, or any other, very concrete proposals exist in the Frame Statute of Rromani People in EU, a document that is at your disposal here and also available on internet. I do not want to take more time going into the details, but you will find all these in the document I mentioned, which was written by a group of Rromani lawyers and activists 10 years ago. You might think this is too old, but it actually isn't. Ten years in the history of a nation aren't but one day.

THIRD: there is a need for adequate monitoring:

- 1) Not to exclude the Rroms from the projects and activities saying “We had sad experiences in the past with the Rroms, we better work for them without them”. This is not possible.
- 2) Real and efficient monitoring is needed both on Rroms and on non-Rroms. Nowadays, many Rroms are mascots in non-Rromani organisations, kind of alibis for non-Rroms to be able to say “you see, there are Rroms with us”.
- 3) We are not demanding for our organisations to be 100% Rromani conducted, but they

cannot be neither 100% non-Rromani conducted... they should be for example 50%-50%...

4) The evaluation cannot be done only on the basis of reports, one should also see the results in real life, among the beneficiaries. The evaluator should stay one month on the spot, in the Rromani quarter and see the reality, not to come there like a tourist.

5) Not pressing with short terms: too short terms for achieving such or such objective push the players to lie on their realisation so as they do not lose the financing

6) We wish to set up a *clearing house* in Tirana, a place in which the realities will be discussed and debated among Rroms and our non-Rromani friends, colleagues and partners. For many years we asked for financial support on this idea, but we have not any up to date...

7) I invite you all to read the Frame statute I mentioned before and to make sure that it is officially adopted at the European level. Our identity and our language should be recognised for what they really are and not anymore as they were treated by 200 years old tales, in a period when people did not know much about the Rroms. It is also very important that young Rroms get scholarships and high education, not only in their countries, but also abroad.

8) I call upon the creation of a wide group which will identify, on the basis of the grassroots experience, good practices, strategies and projects, for them to be spread and evaluated by people familiar with the reality and the mentality of the country. This group should dispose of the necessary means and tools to perform a continuous work through regular contacts and communication, and not to limit its activity to papers that remain in archives.

9) On April 2011 as an Albanian delegate I was invited by ERTF in Strasbourg. During my staying in France I made some work meetings including UNESCO. I learned that UNESCO will organise soon an important conference on the education of the Rroms. We should use this opportunity and write a letter to the organisers, stressing on the importance of the modern communication in education. Television is an important tool quite neglected so far in educational strategies. There exist already some TV studios (KEJA in Budapest, Clavis Films in Paris) which can contribute and distribute available educational material, for a real education of both Rroms and non-Rroms.

Thank you

Pellumb Furtuna (Gimi)