

# BUILDING A NATIONAL ROMA PLATFORM

*News 1/2017*

## What's going on in the project Building a National Roma Platform

Dear reader,

This is an information package summing up the topical matters of the project Building a National Roma Platform. In this letter we tell about

- the national meeting between the Advisory Boards on Romani Affairs, held in autumn 2016
- the regional platform events in Helsinki, Kuopio and Kajaani in spring 2017

At the end of this letter you can find contact information to persons working on the project. The next newsletter will be issued in June.

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## Wellbeing and health discussed at the national Roma Platform meeting

A national meeting between the Advisory Boards on Romani Affairs was organised on 12–13 October 2016 in Jyväskylä. The themes of the event were wellbeing, health and physical activity as part of the project Building a National Roma Platform. The event gathered approximately 80 experts, representatives from municipalities and organisations and members of Advisory Boards and local Romani workgroups to listen to presentations and to discuss.

### Building a National Roma Platform: from Policy to Practice

“Building a Roma Platform: from Policy to Practice” is a project financed by the European Union. The aim of the project is to promote and monitor how well the National Policy on Roma (ROMPO) is known at local and regional levels, to create local and regional networks between Romani people, authorities and other stakeholders for the implementation of ROMPO, and to disseminate information of good practices for local and regional implementation. The project is carried out together with regional Advisory Boards on Romani Affairs.

The presentations focused on Romani work at the national and grass-root level, ongoing projects and topical events in Romani work in general, and on the theme of wellbeing, health and physical activity.

The event offered diverse and topical information to stakeholders within the field of Romani work and a forum for discussions and for sharing good practices. The discussion during the two days was lively, and comments particularly emphasised the importance of open discussion and of informing people operating in the field.

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## *News 1/2017*

### **Collaborative doing and insight – greetings from regional events**

During spring 2017, the Building a Roma Platform project organised three regional events together with regional Advisory Boards on Romani Affairs.

Before the events, the project organised a training day for people arranging the regional events. During the training day, the participants familiarised themselves with participatory leadership method presented by Monkey Business coaching company. The method was used in all regional events. The training day offered an opportunity to learn the method before the regional events. The themes of the approaching events and questions raised were also worked on at the training.

The objective of the regional events was to present the ideas of the Policy on Roma, promote the implementation of the policy and strengthen regional and local networks between the Roma, authorities and other stakeholders. Each event was planned in close collaboration with regional stakeholders in order to make the events correspond to the needs of the regions. That helped to tailor the events to correspond wishes coming from the region.

#### **In Helsinki: lively discussion on local government policy and on changing attitudes**

The regional events were launched on 9 March 2017 in Helsinki. The discussions there focused on the approaching municipal elections and local government policy. The participants included about 30 candidates for the municipal elections, municipal employees and other local people who are active in Romani affairs.

The importance of attitudes was brought up at the meeting, both regarding the majority population's attitudes towards Roma population and the attitudes of the Roma towards the majority. It was agreed on that genuine contacts, for example in connection with children's hobbies and school, are a good way to change attitudes. Such encounters give opportunities to get acquainted with new people and reduce prejudices. Due to the approaching municipal elections, participants encouraged the Roma to get engaged in politics and to use their own expertise to further develop society.



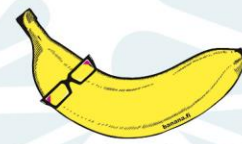
Smily faces after a succesful event in Helsinki.

Picture: Hanne Seppälä.

#### **In Kuopio: focus on wellbeing and working life**

The event in Kuopio on 29 March 2017 gathered about 20 participants from organisations, town administration and parish to discuss wellbeing and promoting wellbeing in a comprehensive sense. Wellbeing was dealt with as a broad concept which means that the different spheres of life are in balance. Engaging in activities together in events, camps and concerts etc. was seen as important means for building social networks.

Work was considered as one way to promote wellbeing, and difficulties in finding opportunities for practical training or finding employment were discussed. The conclusions regarding education were that support is needed at



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different stages of transition and for choosing one's own vocational path. Mentoring was suggested as one concrete measure for increasing interaction between employers and the Roma. The idea of mentoring means that mentors from working life would already during training keep contact with the Roma and support them in applying for jobs, for example.

## **In Kajaani: gender equality and strengths of Roma culture at the core of the event**

The regional events were concluded in Kajaani on 7 April 2017. More than 40 participants from Roma organisations, town administration and from among employers in the region presented their experiences and development proposals in order to increase equality and wellbeing among the Roma in the region.

The discussions dealt with wellbeing at different stages of life and potential barriers to wellbeing. There is still need to increase gender equality in everyday life of Roma families but the situation is improving. Participants also brought up the strengths of Roma culture, for example social skills and good manners. Both are important in working life too. Visions for the future were also drafted at the event. It was anticipated that since many Roma in the region have recently started their education successfully, in five years' time educational paths could lead to employment more often than earlier.

More information about the events and the project can be found on our website [www.romani.fi/sanoista-tekoihin](http://www.romani.fi/sanoista-tekoihin).

## **Contact details**

Henna Huttu, Ministerial adviser  
[henna.huttu\(a\)stm.fi](mailto:henna.huttu(a)stm.fi)  
Ask me about: Building Roma platform -project,  
National Policy on Roma (ROMPO), drafting of a  
new Policy on Roma and National Advisory Board  
on Roma Affairs

Sarita Friman-Korpela, Consulting officer  
[sarita.friman-korpela\(a\)stm.fi](mailto:sarita.friman-korpela(a)stm.fi)  
Ask me about: Building Roma platform -project and  
Roma policy in the EU

Leea Rautanen-Muhli, Project coordinator  
[leea.rautanen-muhli\(a\)stm.fi](mailto:leea.rautanen-muhli(a)stm.fi)  
Ask me about: Building Roma platform -project, website  
([romani.fi/sanoista-tekoihin](http://romani.fi/sanoista-tekoihin)) and events of the project

Taina Mutanen, Departmental Secretary  
[taina.mutanen\(a\)stm.fi](mailto:taina.mutanen(a)stm.fi) / [ronk\(a\)stm.fi](mailto:ronk(a)stm.fi)  
Ask me about: National Advisory Board on Roma Affairs, travel  
and finance management