

# Local engagement for Roma inclusion

## Locality study Mátraverebély (Hungary), 2016

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# 1. Executive summary

Mátraverebély is a small and economically disadvantaged village in Hungary with 2,000 inhabitants. Roma and non-Roma communities live in the settlement, with most of the Roma segregated from the non-Roma. Inhabitants of the village used to work in the mining and construction sectors but after 1990 most of them lost their jobs. The biggest employer in the village is the local municipality via public work programmes. Local Roma families also face poor housing and educational situations. A negative, depressing self-perception is typical of the whole village.

The main research questions focused on mapping of local needs for small-scale local actions that could stimulate future development projects, on the reasons of lack of positive interaction between local Roma and non-Roma communities, and on the potential ways of mobilising local Roma youths.

The LERI research aimed at managing community development efforts, which have the potential to change the generally perceived negative local outlook and through this, to decrease the social distance between Roma and non-Roma communities. The approach was to serve as a basis for a Roma inclusion-related local development process. Community development took several approaches that included establishing a community radio station, holding a study tour (for joint planning), creating an oral history database, and publishing a quarterly local calendar<sup>1</sup>. All the planned activities involved the PAR model, where local inhabitants participated in all steps of the local LERI activities, from planning to management and evaluation.

Community development processes could achieve results in the long-term, however, the activities made through the LERI research have already had some positive impacts, such as cooperation between Roma and non-Roma organisations of the village, activity of locals and networking at a national and international level.

**Keywords/Tags:** Community development, community radio, study tour, local calendar, local research.

## 2. Description of the local context

According to the 2011 census figures, Roma people constitute about 3 % of the Hungarian population,<sup>2</sup> but unofficial estimates put this rate as high as 7–9 %.

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<sup>1</sup> Calendar – 'kalendárium' in Hungarian – is a special type of printed publication in Hungary, that besides keeping track of time, it has also been serving educational as well as entertaining purposes since the 19th century, especially before modern ways of communication became widely available. It often contains – among others – advices on gardening; bedtime stories for children; articles on history, family life; interviews with public figures.

<sup>2</sup> Központi Statisztikai Hivatal. (2011), *Census data, Data on ethnicity, 2011 (2011. évi Népszámlálás, 9. Nemzetiségi adatok)*, Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, Budapest. Available at: [www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/idoszaki/nepsz2011/nepsz\\_09\\_2011.pdf](http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/idoszaki/nepsz2011/nepsz_09_2011.pdf). All hyperlinks were accessed on 8 December 2016. The exact number of persons who identified themselves as Roma was 315,583 in 2011.

Members of this community are dispersed across the country, but tend to be overwhelmingly concentrated in the rural, poorer north-eastern part of Hungary.

The Roma are not a homogeneous group. About 90 % of the Roma population belongs to the so-called Romungro sub-group that first arrived in Hungary in the 15th century and today has been completely linguistically assimilated. Another sub-group, which constitutes about 5 % of the Roma population, belongs to the so-called Oláh or Vlach group.<sup>3</sup> They migrated from Wallachia in Romania, and the first wave arrived here in Hungary in the early 19th century. This ethnic group has been internally differentiated along occupations, and it still has its own language, of which the most typical dialect is known as Lovári.

The third sub-group is the Beás, who were late migrants from the geographical region of Banat (on the border between Serbia and Romania) at the turn of 19th and 20th century. They speak the archaic Romanian language, which contains no Roma words, they reject the label 'Roma' – with which primarily Oláhs identify – and prefer to be referred to as Beás or Tsigan. This sub-group lives mostly in the Southern Transdanubia (south-western) part of Hungary.<sup>4</sup>

All Roma communities are settled and often live in suburban areas or on the outskirts of settlements. Since the 20th century, caravans have ceased to exist and traveller groups no longer move around the country.

Recently, the Roma people in Hungary have faced much worse conditions than the majority society in all areas of life including education, employment and health. The rate of those who have not completed primary education is four times higher among Roma (23 %) than non-Roma (5 %). The rate of those who obtain a tertiary degree is 17 times lower among Roma (1.2 %) than the majority community (17 %).<sup>5</sup> The rate of unemployment in 2011 was around five times higher among Roma people (72 %) than non-Roma (12.7 %)<sup>6</sup>; recently the unemployment rate has decreased (Roma: 30.2%, non-Roma: 6.7%) but the difference remains the same.<sup>7</sup> Also life expectancy for Roma is nearly 10 years shorter than the national average.

There are two main public institutions that potentially represent the interests of the Roma community in Hungary. First, the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights, who is appointed by the President and confirmed by Parliament, monitors and investigates cases of human (minority) rights violations. Second, the National Roma Self-Governments (NRSRG) can be created on local, regional and national levels if a certain number of people from the minority community register to participate in the elections. The NRSRGs have the right to make

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<sup>3</sup> Kemény, I. and Janky, B. (2003), *On the Roma ethnicity data (A cigány nemzetiségi adatokról)*. Kisebbségkutatás, 2003. Vol. 2. Available at: [epa.oszk.hu/00400/00462/00018/pdf/05.pdf](http://epa.oszk.hu/00400/00462/00018/pdf/05.pdf) In Census 2011 there was no specific question on sub-groups.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 13 July 2012, available at: <http://irb-cisr.gc.ca/Eng/ResRec/RirRdi/Pages/index.aspx?doc=454081>

<sup>6</sup> Központi Statisztikai Hivatal. (2011), *Census data, Data on ethnicity, 2011 (2011. évi Népszámlálás, 9. Nemzetiségi adatok)*, Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, Budapest. Available at [http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/idoszaki/nepsz2011/nepsz\\_09\\_2011.pdf](http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/idoszaki/nepsz2011/nepsz_09_2011.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, Labour Force Survey 2014.

decisions on issues related to language, media and culture, but lack effective executive rights.

The Roma population is not represented by a Roma political party in the national Parliament. Political parties used to nominate Roma candidates to Parliament, but they had little effect on the government's integration policy.

In November 2011, the Hungarian government adopted the National Roma Inclusion Strategy for 2011–2020, supplemented by the Action Plan for 2011–2014. The strategy is based on the approach of 'explicit but not exclusive targeting', which means that it targets Roma people without excluding others who live in similar socioeconomic conditions. The Minister of State for Social Inclusion is responsible for the Strategy's implementation.

Mátraverebély is a small village in Nógrád County (north-east Hungary) with 2,000 inhabitants; about 50 % of the population is Roma and belongs to the Hungarian-speaking Romungro group. Seventy per cent of children in Mátraverebély are Roma.<sup>8</sup> The village is well-known for its religious shrine, which used to attract many tourists to the area.

The greater region is one of the most disadvantaged regions in Hungary, facing high unemployment rates, poor public transport and an underdeveloped infrastructure – recently the county had the worst GDP index in Hungary.<sup>9</sup> Until the early 1990s, the region had a mine-based industry. Agricultural prospects are currently, low. This region has Hungary's lowest entrepreneurial activity.

The Roma community lives in both segregated and integrated areas of the county, but Mátraverebély itself is isolated; it is located in the poorest area of the micro-region.

The village is divided by Road 21, which crosses the settlement. About 700 Roma live on one side of the road. Houses here are of low quality (materially and in many cases in a structurally poor condition) and many of them do not have public utilities such as running water or electricity. In many houses, these services are not available because providers terminated the services in response to unpaid bills. However, Roma households are not the only ones affected by this problem.

Data on the history of the local Roma population are not available. The Roma community originally lived in the segregated part of the village (on a hill called Rózsadomb<sup>10</sup> just next to the village) and most of the Roma people used to work in the mining and construction industries during the communist regime. These days, the non-Roma community is diminishing as young people have been

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<sup>8</sup> Kun, Zs. (2012), *Micro-regional Strategy to Combat Child Poverty, Bátorlytereny Micro-region (Kistérségi Gyerekesély stratégia, Bátorlyterenyi Kistérség)*. Czár-Consulting Bt. Available at: [www.tagulovilag.hu/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=132:kistersegi-gyerekesely-strategia-batorlyterenyi-kisterseg&catid=11:hirek&Itemid=2](http://www.tagulovilag.hu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=132:kistersegi-gyerekesely-strategia-batorlyterenyi-kisterseg&catid=11:hirek&Itemid=2), and: MTA Gyerekszegénység Elleni Program (2009), *Micro-region Review, Bátorlytereny Micro-region (Kistérségi Tükör, Bátorlyterenyi kistérség)*, Budapest, November 2009. Available at: [www.gyerekesely.hu/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=562&Itemid=68](http://www.gyerekesely.hu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=562&Itemid=68)

<sup>9</sup> [www.hirado.hu/2016/11/28/nograd-megyee-a-legrosszabb-gdp-mutato-az-oroszagban/](http://www.hirado.hu/2016/11/28/nograd-megyee-a-legrosszabb-gdp-mutato-az-oroszagban/)

<sup>10</sup> Ironically, Rózsadomb is also the name of the most upmarket and expensive part of Budapest.

moving away. As a result, many old houses had been left unoccupied and Roma families have recently moved in.

In the last four years in Mátraverebély, local programmes have been implemented that focus on Roma integration in the spheres of housing, education, early childhood development and community development. During the needs assessment and planning period, the LERI field expert wanted to link the LERI research to as many of these projects and initiatives as possible, using those experiences as a foundation.

The planning period started in 2013 with different stakeholders. The most important counterpart of the local LERI research was the regional Roma NGO, NMCKKSZSZ,<sup>11</sup> which manages the Tanoda programme (an extracurricular educational programme for disadvantaged children) and is also involved in housing-related initiatives. The NGO has a wide network that has the potential to make a significant impact on the village. The leaders of NMCKKSZSZ are well-known and accepted by local Roma and non-Roma alike, including the local authorities. The mayor of the village also supports local initiatives and is open to innovations and projects. He, and the majority of the local self-government, is focused on public work initiatives and willing to work with experts in other fields.

The previous mayor (between 2010 and 2014) was very engaged in Roma integration initiatives. She was famous in the media for her involvement in such projects. There was a risk that a new mayor (local elections took place in October 2014) would not continue these policies and that a candidate promoting anti-gypsy rhetoric could win. Fortunately, that did not happen – the newly elected mayor supports inclusion-related approaches and has the local knowledge and regional political network needed to achieve these goals. There have been changes in the local Roma Minority Self-Government (RMSG) too, but the new entity is engaged in integration projects.

In the planning phase, two actors were unable to participate subsequently in the implementation phase: the Ambedkar Secondary School and Habitat for Humanity Hungary (the reasons for this will be described later). The ELTE (Eötvös Loránt University of Budapest) joined the local LERI research as a new actor because the Community and Civic Study faculty wanted to participate in local research (this will also be described later).

In Mátraverebély, two needs assessments were undertaken over the three years of the research implementation. First, the local municipality (2010–2014) together with the Roma NGO managed round-table discussions on local involvement and future possibilities. The round-table discussions were initiated by Habitat for Humanity Hungary, which managed a small-scale housing programme in the village that combined community activities with home-renovation processes. As part of the programme, stakeholder meetings, where local plans and future social innovations (the needs of the local community) were negotiated, also took place.

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<sup>11</sup> NMCKKSZSZ: Nógrád Megyei Cigány Kisebbségi Képviselők és Szószólók Szövetsége – in English: Association of Roma Representatives and Spokesmen in Nógrád County

Second, the settlement also participated in a European Social Fund (ESF) co-financed programme, the State Reform Operative Programme (ÁROP in Hungarian), which also produced a local needs assessment. In both projects, local activists, NGOs, members of local government and the local RMSG assumed important roles. These projects used local community planning techniques and, as a result, the LERI field experts had ready-made local problem trees at their disposal. These results showed the need for local development in the areas of employment, education and community development.

The municipality also participated in an ESF co-financed national housing programme (the Complex Housing Programme for Slums) and the NMCKKSZSZ was involved in its implementation. Community development was an integral and essential part of the programme. It had both a 'soft' element, including training, community action and programmes for children and their parents, and an infrastructural development element. The municipality applied and managed the soft part only; it did not want to start the infrastructural one.<sup>12</sup> Eight local Roma activists participated in the community development training. One of their tasks was to map local community needs and ideas. Although these various activities (round-table discussions, ESF co-financed Operational Programme, community development training) did not result in a comprehensive plan, their insights were useful during the needs assessment phase of the LERI research as a coherent 'cloud' for local ideas. The municipality and the Roma NGO have been able to make use of the official documents (notes on round-table discussions, Operational Programme final report, and community development plan).

As a result of the PAR needs assessment, the local LERI core team (consisting of local stakeholders and the LERI field expert) conceived three major areas for the local LERI research: a) employment; b) education; and c) community development.

**Employment** – the village, and the region as a whole, has a very high unemployment rate, and few job opportunities. The local municipality could provide public work for inhabitants that would be financed by the national government. Recent public work programmes have been more flexible than previous ones, but their effectiveness is highly questionable and their sustainability is critical. Reasons for the high unemployment rate, especially among Roma, include low levels of education, long-term unemployment and a lack of mobility. A lack of skills, including a lack of foreign language skills, also plays a role. Local Roma people also face ethnic discrimination from employers, not just because of their Roma ethnicity, but also because they live in Mátraverebély (the settlement has garnered a very negative reputation).

The previous local municipality acknowledged these problems and was going to organise vocational training, foreign language courses and other services focused on increasing their employability, however, these activities ceased after a few months. The only option for those with low skills and experience is entering public work, which is managed by the municipality. Recently, the municipality has focused more on public work programmes than training.

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<sup>12</sup> About 40 settlements participated in the programme at national level, only 7 were also applying for infrastructural development funding.

The municipality needed some fresh ideas for local involvement, therefore we planned a study tour, where innovative local public work projects could be visited and new ideas could be adopted.

**Education** – the local public school is segregated as only Roma children study there. Non-Roma inhabitants take their children to the neighbouring settlements' schools. The local institute lacks professional and experienced teachers (the situation was so serious that and the regional Roma NGO officially complained about this at the regional educational council). Recently, the number of teachers has increased and the situation has improved, but these improvements are only temporary as the teachers are on short-term contracts. It is very hard to find teachers for the local school because of its poor reputation. This is one of the reasons for the low-level educational performance of Roma children; their secondary school dropout rate is very high. In 2014, an alternative school,<sup>13</sup> the Ambedkar School, provided secondary education in the settlement offering the possibility of matriculating at the end. Unfortunately, the secondary school had to close down after its first year of operation. The students had started to learn and were keen continuing doing so, but there was a lack of interest in new classes – local parents did not trust this school. With a limited number of students, the school was unable to produce the finances to continue.

Both the municipality and the local NGO are very committed to promoting education. Their plans include services from early childhood development (Sure Start House) to helping local youth enter higher education. One of the lessons from local education projects is that children living in acute poverty face additional obstacles within the regular, formal education system. However, they can perform very well in informal educational settings, which focus more on skills development and shaping their (social) attitudes. As a result of these pedagogical methods, the children can look forward to better educational careers. The planned activities in the LERI local project plan (LPP) aimed to include activities for youth that used new, more informal methods. The planned local LERI activities (establishment of a community radio and creation of a local calendar) required skills that are hard to develop in traditional education settings.

**Community development** – at community meetings local activists articulated the need for an active community. This was one of the main results from the community development training's analyses, something that all eight participants agreed on. Although the settlement is inhabited by Roma and non-Roma communities, there is a large social gap between the two groups despite of their geographical proximity. Moreover, the settlement lacks an active community (both the Roma and non-Roma), which could stimulate local innovations to emerge from grass-roots level. One of the reasons for this is a lack of a community space. There was a recent initiative to build a public oven that, once built, could become a centre for open community actions.

The community development activities done under LERI research in Mátraverebély (community radio, local calendar), which provided an opportunity to explore, collect and publish local oral histories, could give the necessary

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<sup>13</sup> Dr. Ambedkar School, [www.ambedkar.eu](http://www.ambedkar.eu)

impetus for further actions. It could also help overcome the psychological gap (including the prejudices, misconceptions and cultural blind spots) between the two groups.

Driving a community development approach and related actions was the idea of NMCKKSZSZ, its leaders have very positive experiences of it. They promoted this idea in planning meetings and convinced all the other stakeholders. Community development became a meta-level of the local LERI research, all the planned and maintained activities were to answer a local need but with a very strong focus on community development.

Originally, **housing** was to be included in the local LERI research activities, however, the plan had to be changed. Habitat for Humanity Hungary had been running a programme in the Roma-settled part of the village: participants saved up to renovate their houses, which Habitat provided matched funding for, and the locals managed the renovation together (they could use the matched funding based on their participation in the renovation processes). The programme was very promising; however, Habitat had to close it down because of financial issues. Members of the local Roma community reportedly felt betrayed. Because of the two partly unsuccessful actions (this and the Complex Housing Programme for Slums without infrastructural development action), core members of the local LERI team decided to remove housing from the needs to tackle and focused on the three other areas instead.

### 3. PAR methodology employed

The research questions for the LERI research in Mátraverebély were the following:

- a) Is there a need for small-scale local actions that could be the basis for future development programmes? (without these, all planned programmes will be top-down programmes for the locals);
- b) There is a lack of positive interaction between local Roma and non-Roma communities due to the very rare joint activities; if these kinds of project were maintained would the number of positive interactions be significantly higher?
- c) Local Roma youths cannot organise programmes for themselves because of the lack of community places and programmes targeting them; if programmes were provided for them would they actively participate?

During the local LERI research in Mátraverebély, the following PAR techniques were applied:

- **Interviews:** conducted with stakeholders during the needs assessment and evaluation phases to facilitate the flow of feedback on the LERI activities and ensure all relevant actors could influence the research at key points and operate as an informal advisory committee.
- **Group meetings:** stakeholders and partners of the local LERI research had regular group meetings to share the results of the activities and their views on it. These meetings were the primary form of communication to keep in touch with locals.

- **The study tour:** this was a perfect mode for learning about good practices. According to the LERI field expert's experiences, for many locals it is a much more effective way to internalise lessons than participating at conferences or listening to and reading research papers. During field visits, participants are able to meet locals, gain personal experience of the given activities, and jointly draw conclusions on the other projects visited.
- **Micro-narratives:** research activity focused on local oral history. The interview guideline was developed with local activists. Data collection was managed jointly by locals and university students; the students' analysis was presented in the village and evaluated by locals. The aim of the micro-narratives was for the inhabitants of Mátraverebély to identify aspects in their family histories they could be proud of and work on that basis towards a common future. Therefore, local participants' points of view were essential to achieve the goals of the research. The results of the research were published in quarterly local calendars.
- **Community radio:** the purpose of community radio was to establish local media that was managed and used by locals (an interactive channel for community development, able to react to local events very quickly, proactively). The community radio was also intended to be a resource where local youth could learn basic communication strategies and techniques.
- **Social events:** connected to the publishing of quarterly calendars, these events provided a place for performances. One major social event, Children's Day, was held.

The proposed PAR techniques were the most feasible to achieve the goals of the Mátraverebély's LERI local project plan. The aim of the LERI research activities in the village was to start community development processes that would lead to local empowerment.

The local LERI team included the following members:

- mayor of the village
- vice-mayor of the village
- the leaders of NMCKKSZSZ
- one member of the local Roma Minority Self-Government
- one representative of the inhabitants of the Roma part of the village
- leader of public workers.

All members of the local LERI team worked on a voluntary basis, and all the decisions were made in a democratic way, with consensus. This was also the approach regarding the PAR methodology employed.

#### 4. The local intervention description

The overall goal of the local LERI research was to manage small-scale actions in Mátraverebély, which could meet local needs in education and community building, and provide successful experiences within community development, especially in strengthening interpersonal relationships between Roma and non-Roma inhabitants of the village.

## Milestones:

### Community radio

- Training (June 2015)
- Preparatory works for the regular radio (staff, techniques, work methods) (July-November 2015).
- Early stop of activity before the launch of a regular radio (November 2015)

### Study tour

- Decision on detailed agenda, its goals and aims (July 2015)
- Organising the tour (September 2015)
- Managing the tour (November 2015)
- Follow-up meeting (December 2015).

### Calendar

- Local research (fieldwork)
  - first draft of interview framework by local activists and university students (September 2015)
  - approved research plan (October 2015)
  - data collection (November 2015)
  - primary analyses of data (December 2015)
  - follow-up meeting with students and local co-researchers, activists (January 2016)
- Local oral history database (February 2016)
- Printing and publishing the calendar
  - editing the first edition of the calendar
  - publishing the first edition of the calendar, social event (February 2016)
  - editing the second edition of the calendar
  - publishing the second edition of the calendar, social event (May 2016)
  - editing the third edition of the calendar
  - publishing the third edition of the calendar, social event (August 2016)
  - editing the fourth edition of the calendar
  - publishing the fourth edition of the calendar, social event (November 2016)
- Evaluation of the LERI research in Mátraverebély (August 2016)
  - individual interviews
  - stakeholder meeting.

The implementation phase of the LERI research in Mátraverebély officially started in June 2015, although both the LERI local project plan and local action budget were approved months later (in autumn 2015).

## Community radio

The idea of community radio arose from community development training, when training participants indicated the need for local media. This activity had two main goals: 1) providing a form of community media for the settlement, where Roma and non-Roma youth could share their opinions and thoughts; and 2) providing the youth with a form of indirect education, where they could get experiences on how to conduct interviews, use technical equipment and software

and edit audio. They could obtain skills that are not taught in the formal education system.

At the end of the planning session, the NGO started to organise the community radio-related actions. The community radio had a strict timeline because the trainers and potential participants wanted to start it as soon as possible and the trainers had a very busy schedule.

The implementation of this activity included the following elements: first, a three-day training on 'How to set up a community radio' managed by leaders of the Civic Radio Foundation, Budapest.<sup>14</sup> Although there are several, national and local radio stations in Hungary, only very few community-based ones exist. The Civic Radio Foundation is the only NGO that provides not only technical and methodological training on radio-making processes, but also shares experiences on how to build up and maintain a community radio. NMCKKSZSZ had positive experiences with this NGO therefore; they were approached to undertake this training. Participants of the training were ten local Roma and non-Roma youths who were open to this new media activity in the village. They also showed interest in local actions and conducting interviews with local people as well as learning the technical background of radio streaming (most of the participants were also students at the Ambedkar Secondary School).

After the successful training, both NGO leaders and trainers wanted a follow-up to continue mentoring the students. The trainees were very keen. It was felt that three days was not sufficient time to garner all the knowledge and skills needed to start a radio station; the mentoring phase therefore took place over three months. During this time, the trainees were provided with professional support in interview techniques, editing and software. Local youth undertook several interviews and developed other audio material and, together with the trainees, edited and prepared them to stream. The original plan was to develop an online radio, where all the fresh and archive materials could be available via the Internet. The NGO had budgeted for extra Internet space, where all the media files would have been uploaded, but the planned amount was not sufficient. The decision was to use temporarily Facebook (FB) as the media platform; all the related materials are available to a closed Facebook group.<sup>15</sup> Later on, local youth wanted to create a YouTube channel too (to link this one to FB), but this did not become popular. The Internet-based radio idea became a tricky one. The Civic Radio Foundation's experts suggested starting in small, for instance with a Facebook channel. Following a pilot and evaluating its results, NMCKKSZSZ could potentially pay for a more expensive Internet service. However, following a short period of FB-based radio sessions, the participants have just lost their motivation due of the lack of publicity,

*"We wanted to be on air, but it didn't seem available."<sup>16</sup>*

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<sup>14</sup> The website of the Civic Radio is available at: <http://kronika.civilradio.hu/>

<sup>15</sup> Rádío MVerébély: [www.facebook.com/groups/585373121566262/?fref=ts](http://www.facebook.com/groups/585373121566262/?fref=ts)

<sup>16</sup> Interview with a member of community radio, 30 June 2016. (Roma male).

It is hard to say what would have been the proper way to manage a radio programme, but it is possible that this would have closed down even if it had been Internet based.

After November 2015 the community radio ceased to exist. The participants lost their motivation and stopped coming to meetings or related activities. The main reason could have been the closure of Ambedkar Secondary School where all the radio activists came from. Following the closure of the school, all students had to study in different settlements or to start jobs as public workers, so their capacities became very limited, too. After some unsuccessful attempts to re-engage the local youngsters, the main driver of this activity lost his motivation as well, and also had to work in different settlements (he used to be the director of the local Ambedkar School). As one of the volunteers of the Roma NGO who also participated and helped to manage this action, suggested:

*"One of the reasons for the radio closing was that locals and youth couldn't hear it anywhere. We recorded interviews with local youth, we edited them, cut them, with music, etc. and finally we couldn't listen to it – only in a very strange way through a closed Facebook page. After a while we just couldn't believe it really was a radio."<sup>17</sup>*

Despite this development, the NGO is not giving up on achieving its original goal and wants to restart this activity,

*"We just missed something, but in the future, we can correct it, we can do it much better. This attempt was a necessary wrong, it had to happen. Now we know how to do it in a much more effective and useful way."<sup>18</sup>*

The community radio activity was evaluated by four of its participants (other participants were not available). Their evaluation was not clear whether it was successful or not: in the beginning it seemed to be very promising, participants were active and motivated. There were some participants who had already worked for a school radio, while others were complete beginners. All of them enjoyed the training and carried out several interviews, cut and edited them, but there was no opportunity to share them. The NGO originally wanted to establish a web-radio on a daily basis. Finally, it became clear that the NGO's Internet domain was not capable of handling the task without significant upgrading – the cost of an appropriate domain would have been much higher than the planned budget share. Without real publicity, participants lost their motivation after a while, leading to closure,

*"Community radio would be popular if it were about the local youths, it would show their life. Music should be the call."<sup>19</sup>*

The training, learning about the basic elements and techniques of radio-making was first a very positive experience. Its evaluation has changed however after the closure. All the participants agreed it should be followed-up in the future,

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<sup>17</sup> Interview with a member of the community radio, 30 June 2016. (Roma male).

<sup>18</sup> Interview with the leader of the community radio, 30 June 2016.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with one of the former participants, 30 June 2016.

developing different channels to share the products. (The most feasible channel might be a specific YouTube channel with a connecting mobile phone app.)

*"The youths have to get involved in the planning work too, in depth, like in this intervention, a radio should be done by them and not by people in their 30s"*<sup>20</sup>

## Study tour

When presenting the LERI research to the newly elected municipality, a study tour was suggested as a useful action for them. One of the most serious problems for the municipality is the public work. In 2015, 150 people were employed as public workers by the municipality – the local government is the biggest employer in the village. They are now facing the following situation: without public work, a large number of local families will not have a decent salary (through either work or social benefits), therefore social tensions cannot be managed without public work, commissioned by the public authority. On the other hand, this number of employees is too high for the municipality to provide permanent, valuable work to. Therefore, the mayor and vice-mayor of the municipality wanted to see 'best practice-like' innovations. The aim of the proposed activity was to get detailed information on local community development activities in other similar villages that could serve as a source of inspiration to future projects in Mátraverebély. The most effective way to get this knowledge was in the form of a study tour where the participants could get direct information from other organisations' activists who had already implemented this work.

In selecting settlements to be visited, the main goal was to find ones being similar to Mátraverebély (relatively small villages in less developed micro-regions), with successful public work or educational or housing programmes. NMCKKSZSZ has a relatively wide network of NGOs and progressive mayors. The local LERI team also asked the LERI field expert to suggest settlements and programmes. In one of the LERI research team meetings, members chose among the proposals. The chosen settlements' programmes were commonly accepted best practice examples.

The study tour was realised between 5- 7 November 2015. The agenda was approved in September along with the list of study tour participants. Ultimately, 10 locals visited the projects (four people from the Roma NGO, the mayor and vice-mayor of the settlement, another member of the self-government, a member of the RMSG, and two women from the local public work programme – overall, five Roma and five non-Roma) and these participants were the core team of the local LERI research, as well. The visited mayors and project managers were prepared for the visit and provided not only formalised guidance but also in-depth and honest discussions about their successes and failures. The study tour took place in the south-west part of Hungary. Visited settlements and projects included the following:

Gyulaj – Participants visited a complex programme in an isolated small village (housing, education, agricultural development, public work). Visiting partners

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<sup>20</sup> Interview with the former leader of the community radio, 30 June 2016.

were the mayor (Ms Maria Dobos), the local RMSG, and the Maltese Order (managers of the local housing programme). There were also educational projects (such as Sure Start and Tanoda), but the most interesting activity for the team was the public work. In Gyulaj, the public work programme is focused on agriculture. It tries to cover an entire production line, from producing crops and feeding animals, to selling the processed goods in a local butcher's shop (at very low prices). The most important lesson from this visit was the long-term planning and complexity of the local actions that could be realised with the participation of an NGO (the Maltese Order).

Besence – Participants saw the local economic development programmes, which are the result of a synergy of different financial sources including the regional economic development fund, ESF funds, public works, etc. The visiting partner was the mayor (Mr. József Ignácz, a local partner in the LERI research). During this particular visit, members of the Mátraverebély LERI team also presented their activities; participants had the opportunity to compare the two local approaches. The two mayors found common points on local public work programmes and started to plan a joint workshop on this topic.

Gilvánfa – The village is inhabited by Roma only. Our local partner, the Szent Márton Caritas Association, which maintains the Tanoda programme, manages a highly unique project: local children collect the histories of the local Roma families using oral history methods and have organised an exhibition on a village-level family tree. Besides the educational programme, there was also a very special housing programme: one of the village slums was demolished and new houses were built in their place. The houses were built from adobe made by locals as a part of public work. Not only was this process interesting, but also the structure of how a local municipality managed the selection process of the new tenants, the follow-up work and the connected social work, which was essential to the whole process, was informative.

Cserdi – Participants visited a public work programme. The most popular visit was to Cserdi because of its mayor. Cserdi is known in Hungary as a model project, and the mayor frequently appears on different media as he is simultaneously highly impulsive and causes disagreement. He has successes in public work programmes and in mobilising the local Roma community (being Roma himself) while his methods are disputable and divisive. Almost all the participants of the study tour reflected on his performance. In later discussions among themselves, they acknowledged that the methods used by the Cserdi mayor are effective. At the same time, these methods (especially, the use of punitive/negative incentives) stimulated further discussions, not only among study tour participants but also among public workers back in Mátraverebély.

During the evenings of the study tours, we organised 'ventilation' sessions, where participants could discuss their new experiences, impressions and the relevance of these experiences to their local contexts. Most of the projects had some connection and similarities to previous or recent efforts in Mátraverebély, which were also evaluated. Interesting debates occurred in the evenings, when all the common experiences and the possible adaptations in Mátraverebély were discussed.

This study tour was the most popular activity of LERI in Mátraverebély: the Roma NGO and the local mayor had initiated it, both of them participated in its organisation, and the RMSG representative participated on the tour as well. All the participants were highly active during the tour and afterwards.

The study tour's follow-up meeting - organised by the local Roma NGO - took place on 16 December 2015, in which all attendants of the study tour actively participated. The main goal of the meeting was to collect the impressions, lessons learned and possible local adaptations gathered throughout the tour. The general impression was that all the visited villages might be small and poor, but were nonetheless in better socioeconomic conditions than Mátraverebély. The reasons for this are complex, including the development programmes with longer time horizon there, the existence of local cooperation and solidarity, the motivation of the local vulnerable community, the availability of land, etc.

*"These villages are further ahead compared to Mátraverebély, and the reasons are not really clear. Maybe they started these development programmes earlier; maybe the attitude of locals is different. Maybe also we should start with this, changing the attitudes."<sup>21</sup>*

The studied public work programmes were innovative and some ideas seem adaptable: for example, the municipality could provide jobs for some public workers in the agricultural off-season; local shops could sell locally produced goods (vegetables, mushroom, chicken and rabbit); a housing renovation programme could be restarted based on community work. The most important factor is the motivation of the locals. According to the study tour participants, a strong local mentality is greatly needed. This feature was also the strongest in Cserdi and was the basis of the local strategy.<sup>22</sup> A plan was developed to present some short video clips about Cserdi to the public workers in Mátraverebély and discuss the clips together; finally, many local Roma people watched these clips at home and discussed them. Moreover, Mátraverebély's mayor is planning to organise a workshop including mayors of the visited villages' and it is planned to be open to the whole community. Based on the response to the workshop, a public work conference is also possible in Mátraverebély. Altogether, it seems that this study tour will have longer-term effect, too early to assess by the time of writing this study.

## Local calendar

The local calendar was the core element of the community development approach. The idea had its roots within the lack of local heritage of Roma and non-Roma communities. The inhabitants of the village think of themselves as people in poverty without real hopes or alternatives. Through this part of the

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<sup>21</sup> Interview with one of the members of the local self-government who participated in the study tour. Group-level evaluation meeting, 16 December 2015 (non-Roma male)

<sup>22</sup> The village is inhabited mainly by Roma, the mayor himself is Roma. He has started to change the mentality of the local Roma community, confronting them with their unreasonable financial behaviours, improper attitudes to work, etc. These attitudes and behaviours are characteristics of severe poverty and not connected directly in any way to ethnic origin. In many cases the ways he has acted could be called highly paternalistic, even possibly disrespectful. However, his methods have achieved significant results (decreasing crime in the village, more children in secondary school, high numbers of renovated houses, a profitable public work programme) for the wider public. This method has been a topic of public debate since its start.

project, basic community development processes have begun, which could strengthen the community as well as active citizenship. Skill development elements were also provided – organising the calendar preparation and editing work, undertaking interviews and editing the quarterly printed editions require cooperative interactions – these are soft and indirect methods, which could result in positive thinking for the village, a community that can have dreams.

The activity started with a village-level research – managed by the Roma NGO and involving volunteers and external researchers in a classic PAR method (beneficiaries were also participants in all the phases of the research).

In the data collection phase, the ELTE University was involved and the Community Development and Civic Study faculty<sup>23</sup> devoted a whole semester to this work. Students had to inform themselves about Mátraverebély's history, and about interview techniques, etc. Local LERI co-researchers prepared a draft questionnaire for interviews and contacted possible interviewees (50 locals). Local co-researchers were recruited from previous community development training participants. Co-researchers also visited the university, introducing themselves and the village to the students, which started the joint work. Planned interview topics included family history, educational background, labour market careers, recent attitudes towards the village, and expectations for the future. The preparatory work was quite intensive, as both university students and local co-researchers were very active. Students finalised the interviews and started to prepare a dataset; local co-researchers visited all the listed potential interviewees to fix dates for the interviews.

Finally, 10 students participated in the research for three days. The participation of co-researchers was difficult – some of them just walked to the given addresses with the students but did not participate in the interview, while some of them were more active than was useful. In three days, 35 interviews were recorded as some potential interviewees did not want to tell their story and some were not at home (visiting ill relatives in the neighbouring villages, etc.). The gathered oral history was (and still is) great material for the local calendar. Later, students conducted three, while local co-researchers seven more interviews.

The ELTE students did not only conduct the interviews, they also analysed them and developed case studies in five thematic areas (labour first and then community life, education, religious connections and Roma and non-Roma communities in the village). They presented this in Mátraverebély in March 2016 and at the ELTE conference in May 2016.<sup>24</sup> The aim of the local presentation was both to share the main results with the participants and to receive feedback on whether local situations had been understood. It was a classic PAR-like feedback: researchers, local co-researchers and the local community all discussed the statements and results of the research. Despite some criticisms from locals (statements were too general, lack of local specifics, missing interviews with key persons), the presentation was warmly received. In particular, the view of an 'outsider' was very interesting for the locals. The discussion after the

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<sup>23</sup> <http://tatk.elte.hu/mesterszakok/civil>

<sup>24</sup> The programme of the conference and the abstracts of the presentations are available in Hungarian: <http://tatk.elte.hu/kutatas/kulcskerdesek/>

presentation had this main message: there is a gap between youth and elderly people in the village as the youth is not interested in the knowledge and heritage of local elderly people. The gap is generation-based, not ethnicity-based – further projects have to focus on this and build a bridge between generations.

*"The '70s and '80s was a golden age for this village. Twenty to twenty-five people used to work together just for the settlement; a special public spirit worked very well at that time. Somehow, we should hand on this to the youths of today. But it is a hard task."<sup>25</sup>*

The results of the research and the most important elements of the local oral history, are published quarterly in a local calendar. A local editorial board edits the calendar. Participation in the board's work was open, however, some key persons of the village were invited directly. The board is an informal one therefore the number of participants changes quite hectically. In the first two to three meetings the mayor also participated, but later exited, saying he did not want to influence the calendar, it should be as the local people want it. In a most active way local elderly non-Roma people participated in editorial meetings, as did two to three representatives from the Roma community. (One of the Roma youth's drawings is included in all editions.) Most technical work had to be carried out by one of the NGO leaders. It was typical for elderly non-Roma inhabitants to come to the board meetings and bring their old photos and stories to be part of the next edition. This method can ensure that most of the topics in the calendars are from and for local community members. Three printed calendars have been already published; a further one scheduled for December 2016.

The local research was evaluated by students who maintained the data collection: they presented their analyses and received feedback from the local community. Discussions on the history of the village launched the very active debates of the local calendar's editorial meetings. After publishing each edition of the calendar, a public hearing was organised each time. The calendar itself did not receive any real criticism; participants to the public hearings were always interested in the next edition. The local calendar has become the topic of the village with people waiting for new editions and enjoying discussing it. Interviews and old photos especially are very popular, but reviews on recent actions are also highly appreciated.

The Roma NGO initiated the local calendar, but the local municipality wanted to participate as well and finally provided official information and public summons. It also covers part of the costs. In this way, a very promising cooperation have developed between a civil institution and

The calendar was mentioned by all the stakeholders and locals as the most important element of the whole local LERI research.

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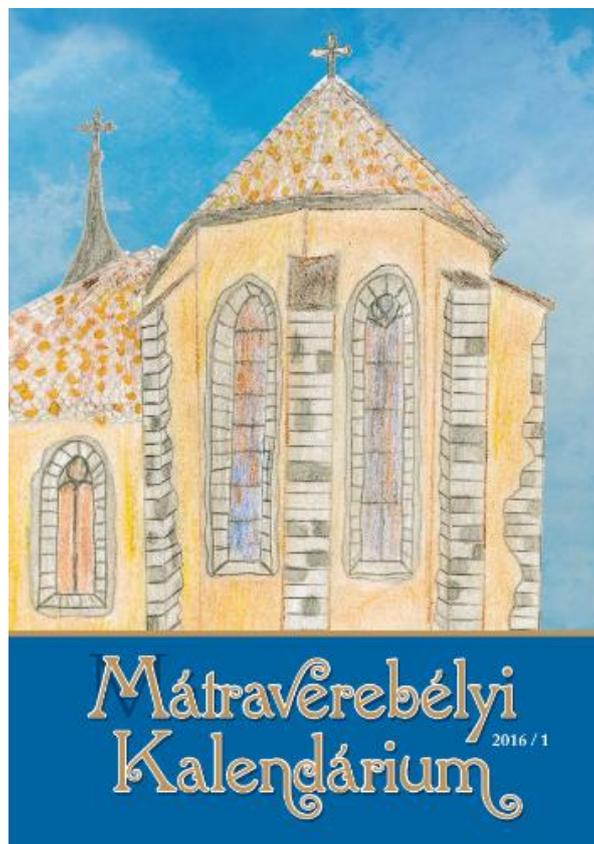
<sup>25</sup> Interview with one of the members of the local calendar' editorial board, public hearing 12 March 2016.

*"The calendar is very important and valuable, it is very much accepted in the village. People from both sides of the road [members of Roma and non-Roma communities] are joining the group that prepares it."*<sup>26</sup>

Roma made it together with non-Roma. Local activists put its content together, and it presented Roma and non-Roma stories equally. It has a very high local popularity. Both the Roma NGO and local municipality are keen to continue its publication after the LERI research is finished. The municipality has some financial resources to achieve this, and the NGO is looking for additional funds for the future.

*"The calendar has become a local value, which must be kept and maintained in the future."*<sup>27</sup>

### **Picture 1. Mátraverebéli calendar**



Source: <http://www.matraverebely.hu/files/Kalendarium/Kalendarium201601.pdf>

## **5. Analysis, discussion, lessons learned**

The research started in June 2015 and ended in August 2016. (The last edition of the local calendar will be published in December 2016, but most of its editorial work has already been done.) Participatory level evaluations were accomplished through the interventions too. In August 2016 the stakeholders organised a

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<sup>26</sup> Interview with one of the core team members, 30 June 2016.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with the mayor, 23 August 2016.

local-level evaluation and final meeting (individual interviews and moderation of the stakeholder meeting was done by the LERI field expert).

The description of individual activities as well as their evaluations have been covered earlier. This section summarizes overall findings of the LERI research in Mátraverebély.

Community development is a long process that can only have partial results during a year-long intervention (this is true even if similar activities had been carried out in the previous year).

One of the main goals of the research in Mátraverebély was to improve local community involvement in and motivation for local project planning and implementation. The involved Roma NGO has a specific role: it is not based in the village but is a grass-roots organisation seated in the neighbouring town. For Mátraverebély it is an 'outsider' organisation. The NGO has already managed ESF programmes in the village; therefore, there were periods when it was an employee and resource distributor. From that position, community involvement was difficult because the distinction between paid and volunteer periods and actions was not always clear.

It was also hard work to maintain the motivation of the community for an ongoing action, both among youths and adults, especially when the expected result was more idealistic (non-material) than of daily material benefit.

This situation makes the evaluation of the actions and projects difficult. Textbook-like independency is not a relevant issue in this context. A PAR-like evaluation could not, and should not, be objective, per definition, but could benefit from both external and internal points of view. In the case of Mátraverebély, there is no real external opinion (the LERI field expert was actively involved in the local activities in many ways, and therefore was not independent either).

A further point to consider is that an evaluation could indicate hidden tensions. Therefore, community-based evaluations could frequently be too polite instead of frank and straightforward. This was not a problem in Mátraverebély, but it shows the limits of community-based evaluations. Criticisms of given actions or actors are more part of private conversations than open discussion; therefore these are not part of the evaluation.

In general, it is unfortunate that it was quite challenging to involve the local Roma community in the LERI actions, at least they were not as engaged as anticipated; there are two to three Roma people who intended to participate in meetings and related works, but middle-aged people especially were less interested in the research. They participate in interventions related to the labour market but less in community development. There are several reasons for this: they prefer interventions with material goals in a feasible timeline than more idealistic approaches (like research). This attitude is general, both local Roma and non-Roma communities could be characterised as such.

The situation is the same regarding the youth. The community radio itself was not sufficiently interesting and their initial motivation disappeared after few

months. It would have been different if the intervention could have worked as a secondary school activity. Without such a foundation, it does not seem to work.

The results of the LERI research activities are due to the cooperation of the core team, namely the local self-government (including the mayor and two members of the local municipality) and the Roma NGO. The LERI research provided space for joint working and thinking, and they found common interests in a very pragmatic way.

It was also a crucial factor that the Roma NGO was able to tap into its former local network. Local LERI co-researchers and the Roma core team members had worked with the association in the last few years so they already knew each other and had the necessary trust in one another.

A further important factor is transparency – how the NGO managed the research. All professional and financial details and timelines were known by all the involved people and by anyone who was interested in the LERI research's details. At needs assessment and project planning sessions, local LERI core team members were aware of the details of the research, and during implementation, information was shared with everybody. This transparency is necessary to gain and keep the trust of locals. Regarding this point, we should emphasise that the PAR method is a perfect way to achieve and maintain this mutual trust.

One can observe two main obstacles: unstable circumstances and the underestimated human resource requirements.

The closure of Ambedkar Secondary School affected the community radio's activity very negatively (and through this, the educational part of the LERI research in Mátraverebély).

There have been further changes in the micro-region regarding the NGO's situation. The Roma NGO has been working in the region for 20 years, in several settlements. Working in a region like this always needs a strong network and proper relationship with local authorities. The NGO is known as a socially engaged entity that had (and has) closer connections to the socialist-liberal party, which recently became the opposition party both in national and regional government. Because of these political circumstances, the situation of the NGO has become very unstable in the region.<sup>28</sup>

In this situation, it is extremely important that the municipality of Mátraverebély is willing to work with the NGO and, despite political tensions, still considers the NGO a partner that can manage Roma inclusion-related programmes in the settlement. In the future, both in educational and housing programmes, the municipality intends to work with the NGO, as professionalism and commitment are the basis for cooperation.

In the LERI research in Mátraverebély, all core members of the team worked on a voluntary basis (expenses were paid only for typing interviews). The research itself was quite complex and needed much more work than estimated. During the

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<sup>28</sup> Meanwhile, Ms Judit Berki, one of the leaders of the NGO received a Pro Familis prize from the Ministry of Social Affairs in June 2016.

planning of the local LERI research, the basic idea was to connect new activities to ones already started, as much as possible. At the very least, the hope was to use networks, human resources and financial capacities that already existed. Meanwhile, it became clear that the tasks undertaken were just too much to manage and implement on a voluntary basis. Previous local attempts showed the need for complex interventions, which is also a basic idea of the local LERI research, but perhaps the planned activities were too ambitious for the research's structure. In future interventions, the employment of a regular community developer(s) and social worker(s) could be a core element.

In the near future, most of the ongoing activities could be maintained as part of further social interventions. The municipality and the Roma NGO are willing to apply together for ESF programmes aimed at Roma inclusion, and those programmes could build on these attempts. The community is keen to continue the local calendar, and both the NGO and the municipality want to do this. At the evaluation of the study tour, a regional workshop/conference idea on public work programmes came up. Although it seems dormant now, this would also be a promising continuation of the activities.

Let us see how the aforementioned research questions can be answered.

- a) There is a need for small-scale local actions which could be the bases for future development programmes, without these all planned programmes will be top-down programmes for the locals.

What we can see is that **small-scale actions are very important**. They are feasible for the participants, their goals and methods are clear – just like the tasks that participants have to accomplish. These actions are available for everybody based on their individual motivation. Participants are generally motivated to follow these actions and these are part of future development intervention plans. If the NGO and/or local municipality was successful in applying for further funds, these programmes could work as community-planned bottom-up projects. In the local LERI research in Mátraverebély, all activities belonged to this category, all of them were bases for further projects. Participants felt that these were their projects, and are enthusiastic about maintaining them as bottom-up interventions. Top-down projects are acknowledged to be much more official, institutionalised interventions, as a state provided service or benefit. Therefore, bottom-up initiatives are extremely important if a project wants to use a community approach to planning, maintaining and evaluating a social innovation together with the given community. This process starts with these kinds of very small-scale local actions.

- b) There is a lack of positive interaction between local Roma and non-Roma communities due to the very rare joint activities; if these kinds of project were maintained, the number of positive interactions would be significantly higher.

We can **partly confirm this hypothesis**: joint actions for Roma and non-Roma inhabitants of the village did provide positive interactions and led to positive common experiences; unfortunately, we cannot say that the number of these interactions is significantly higher than before. We saw very different examples in the course of the LERI research. Roma and non-Roma locals participated in

public hearings, although the representation of the people from the segregated part (populated by Roma) was always lower. The Children's Day activity (May 2016) was organised by the Roma NGO (it was also the opening ceremony for the community oven) – only Roma children and their parents participated in this event, non-Roma locals just missed it – it was not a village-level activity. At the very end of the research, a Village Day was organised (20<sup>th</sup> August). Although, the local municipality usually manages this, this year the local RMSG indicated, they wanted to participate in its planning and management and offered financial support – the mayor welcomed this idea. It was the first time that the local municipality and the RMSG have worked together on a village-level activity – which was jointly organised and financed. The event was open to the whole village, and Roma and non-Roma locals participated together. It may seem to be quite a small result, but in the local context, it had an icebreaking effect. In this evaluation, we cannot say there was a strong and proven causality between the above-mentioned actions, we can only observe and suggest that there may be a correlation.

- c) Local Roma youth cannot organise activities for themselves because of the lack of community places and activities targeting them; if activities were provided for them they would actively participate.

Again, this research question **can only be partly confirmed**: we can say that the local youth needed more than an initial push to organise the actions for themselves. A stable, mid-term framework seems to be necessary to achieve such a goal. Elementary school-aged children participate in the Tanoda programme, they are active and eager, but youth between 14 and 30 could not really be motivated through this programme. This was true for both Roma and non-Roma youth. During the LERI research-planning session, the core team thought this age group would participate in the calendar-related work too – this did not happen (only one young Roma male participated in the editorial board meetings, he drew pictures for the calendar). The reason for the lack of participation from this age group cannot be separated from the above-mentioned secondary school issue – this shows that a formal educational framework, supplemented by informal actions could achieve the original goal. In the interviews with local people, some of them mentioned initiatives for youth, which should be supported by future projects,

*"I always used to say, we should offer a community place, a room for them, where they can go. In this case, they will not stay on the street. There is a community house in the village; we should employ somebody who could take care of it for these kids, that is all. (...) For example, my daughter and her friends made a movie this summer, just with their mobile phones. Another time, they started to write a book-like thing, similar to what they were reading. Local youths here do not read at all, but if you give them one of their books, I mean, their generation's book, they will read it. Later on, they will start to lend it to each other, just as happened with my child and her friends, so it started to work as a reading club. And there are other things like this, only we, the adults, should support them."<sup>29</sup>*

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<sup>29</sup> Interview with the leader of the Roma Minority Self-government, November 2015, (Roma female).

We have to mention one unplanned and unexpected result of the LERI research: the international networking. BIPA organised two international workshops for the involved settlements of the four countries; members of the local core team participated in these meetings, and a further workshop took place in Mátraverebély. During the meetings personal connections developed, as a result of this, two international projects were formed with Slovakian partners. In May 2016, an Erasmus+ programme was fulfilled: Roma youth from Slovakia and Hungary participated in a study tour in Helsinki; further applications and actions are in progress. From the Hungarian side, four young Roma participated in the study tour; they made a short video clip about it, and one of them wrote about their experiences in the local calendar.

With one of the Slovakian partners in the LERI research (Rakytník) an Interreg project has been developed. The mayors and NGOs of the two villages are very motivated and ambitious to work together under this framework. In addition, these actions can provide a positive follow-up to the LERI research: these projects are being planned through community planning methods, just like LERI. This demonstrates how the already tested methods could become part of the future development processes.

## 6. Conclusions and recommendations

The PAR method was a new approach in Mátraverebély. The local municipality and the Roma NGO found common interests and, based on these, they built up a common, grass-roots programme. In managing the local LERI research, the main method was **cooperation and the avoidance of possible confrontations**. Both of them made concessions to the other because community involvement and development was the main goal.

Regarding community involvement, it is **imperative to find key local persons and the best ways to motivate them**. Local members of the LERI core team and co-researcher group also hold official positions (the mayor, leaders of the RMSG, the regional NGO, leader of public workers, etc.). In a small village like Mátraverebély it is inevitable that the same people hold different positions, their public and private roles are inseparable. Therefore, the mentioned key-person issue also has to be evaluated in the given local circumstances.

The ESF programmes in the 2014–2020 period promote the so-called CLLD method (community-led local development) more and more – certain funds will only be available if this method is used. Many elements, techniques and actions of the PAR method are very similar to CLLD. In this sense, **PAR has been very useful training for CLLD, and in many senses, PAR provides more than CLLD**. The PAR method can be used for vulnerable, informal groups too, and it is more open for communities without real lobbying power. If local actors are committed to inclusion-related achievements, they could use PAR methods as part of CLLD. Transparency, community-based evaluation and permanent community-led monitoring especially could provide advantages for this kind of interventions. It is also important to maintain mid-term programmes (three to five years) that could provide the necessary stability for these interventions. A further consideration is the **flexibility of requirements**. Despite ESF programmes' development goals, the direct local intervention's purpose – in most cases – is the fulfilment of initial indicators. Local development progress,

such as the interventions carried out in the frame of the LERI research, could work effectively if able to react to current local needs, based on local circumstances, with daily feedback from participants. The **process itself is much more important than the fulfilment of strict indicators**. This process presumes an ongoing planning method where details of a programme can be modified by actual needs and circumstances, and the framework of the programme allows this kind of change.

## 7. Additional Information

### Acknowledgements

The author would like to emphasise that all local co-researchers and partners worked on a voluntary basis. Their work aimed to improve the situation of local people – both Roma and non-Roma communities. It was an honour to work with them to achieve their goal.

The author would like to thank, for their altruistic work, the leaders and volunteers of regional Roma NGO (NMCKKSZSZ), the mayor of Mátraverebély, the participating members of the local municipality, the members of the local RMSG, and the volunteers of the calendar's editorial board.

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