

S U M M A R Y

PoMOCna KAWA #45



HELPING THE ROMA REFUGEE COMMUNITY IN POLAND

7 ORGANIZATIONS PARTICIPATED IN OUR MEETING Unitatem Foundation (Poland Welcomes), Specialized Support Center for Persons Experiencing Domestic Violence in Korytniki, International League, Avalon Foundation, CONSILIUM Association for Civil Initiatives, Mediation and Legal Protection

The guest of the meeting was Joanna Talewicz - president of the "Towards Dialogue" Foundation. The Foundation has been involved in supporting the Roma community and building intercultural dialogue for 11 years. The speaker gave a multi-level overview of the current situation of the Roma refugee community, additionally pointing out its causes and consequences. If you want to learn more, below is a summary of the most important conclusions of the lecture.

First - education

The key to providing effective support to refugees from the Roma community is to understand this group and, above all, to reject stereotypes about it. The president of the "Toward Dialogue" Foundation pointed out that the Roma are a very diverse community - not always hermetic or conservative. Even within this community there are subgroups that differ culturally. The expert acknowledged that it is not uncommon for Roma living in Ukraine to face the problem of poverty. Another problem is that about 20% of the Roma minority in Ukraine have stateless status, and as a result may lose their title to assistance in Poland. These and other forms of marginalization can affect, for example, the Roma's lack of trust in institutions and sense of insecurity. This is thus one of the factors that make working with this community difficult.

Second-priority refugees

Roma who fled the war in Ukraine - the country where they were born, raised - when they reached Poland often did not receive assistance on par with other Ukrainian citizens, as they often appeared to be second-priority refugees at the Polish-Ukrainian border to whom assistance is due in the second instance. There were situations in which support was openly denied to this group simply because of their origin--

who, through their own prejudices, made it difficult to help those in need. Treating Roma as second-priority refugees means that in the long run their situation may not be taken into account when creating systemic solutions, including migration policy. Common situations include: refusal to rent housing to Roma (despite confirmation of liquidity), refusal to accommodate them in collective points, explaining reluctance by suspicion of potential thefts that Roma "may" commit.

Alleged Roma nomadism and legal problems

The expert brought up a very important issue - the attribution of nomadicity to the Roma community. She pointed out that the nomadic lifestyle is among the minority in this group. This issue causes legal problems when it comes to recognizing Roma as refugees. There is a narrative according to which nomads, by virtue of the fact that they are not tied to one country, cannot theoretically escape the threats they face in that country. Joanna Talevich stressed that this is not a new problem, and tactics based on similar claims were used after World War II. The situation is further complicated by the fact that there is no case law or other international documents that precisely regulate this issue.

Two dangerous tendencies

The Foundation's president cited two phenomena dangerous to the Roma community. The first is "pushing" out of town, which makes it more difficult to receive assistance, which is usually available in large towns and cities. The second - the creation of segregated centers, which may be a reaction to the reluctance to place Roma in collective housing facilities.

Trainings with the Foundation "Towards Dialogue"

From the information presented above, it is clear that we need to educate humanitarian workers so that they know how to reach out to the Roma community and build communication between cultures. The "Toward Dialogue" Foundation has been conducting such training even before the war. Any organization can apply and express a need for the course. You can inquire about details by writing to biuro@fundacjawstronedialogu.pl.



If you need a contact for a specific organisation, please email us at mapujpomoc@culturelab.pl.