



New Social Support Center for Roma Communities opens in Targu Mures

15 March 2007. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Romania launched a new *Social Support Centre for Roma* in Targu Mures, the biggest city in the centre of Transylvania. Following Dorohoi and Galati, this is the third out of five centres that are going to be established in Romania based on the model created through the pilot-phase successfully implemented in Marasesti, Vrancea County.



From left: Ms. Mariea Ionescu, President – National Agency for Roma, Ms. Soknan Han Jung, UNDP Resident Representative/UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Edita Emoke Lokodi, President - County Council of Mures.

The project is developed with financial support from the Swedish Government - Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and implemented in partnership with the Government of Romania through the National Agency for Roma and the Mures County Council.

The opening ceremony was attended by Ms. Soknan Han Jung, UNDP Resident Representative/UN Resident Coordinator, national and regional partners of the project, local public institutions, Roma NGOs, mass-media and project beneficiaries. "It is important that UNDP establishes a centre that promotes intercultural dialog in a multicultural city like Targu Mures," remarked Ms. Jung.

Roma communities are facing common problems that underpin widespread poverty such as access to education, healthcare, social assistance and housing. Romania made it a priority to offer them better opportunities, and in April 2001 the Government adopted the *National Strategy for Improving the Roma Situation*. Romania also participated in the launch of the *Decade of Roma Inclusion*, an initiative adopted by 8 countries in Europe to improve the lives of Roma.

To support the Government's Strategy, UNDP established community centres designed to enhance the economic, social and personal prospects of the Roma minority with special focus on the welfare of women and children. "UNDP pays great attention to gender equality as we always advocate for women's involvement in the public and political life", stated Ms. Soknan Han Jung.

Each centre provides a complex range of services to more than 200 Roma beneficiaries aiming to both help this minority get involved in their own social integration process and consolidate local partnerships.

The project in Tg. Mures completes the existing local initiatives with a comprehensive approach to all Roma issues. Given the complex range of services offered, the interest shown by the beneficiaries and the support provided by local authorities, the creation and development of these community centres is a successful example of sustainable community



Ms. Jung at the press conference.



The event brought together representatives of partners, local public institutions, Roma community and mass media.

development for the most marginalized groups in the country.

The new social centre is staffed by a team of six dedicated professionals comprising two social workers, one medical counselor, one IT trainer, one entrepreneurial counselor and one local coordinator. They will provide the local Roma community with the following social services: information and counseling regarding social rights, support for employment and professional reorientation, support for school recovery; medical services (health education, medical counseling including family planning, support for registration on the family physicians lists); training services (computer literacy, training of sanitary mediators); and entrepreneurial counseling.

Building on the positive results obtained during the pilot-phase model, which was considered a best practice, the SIDA donor plans to replicate this project across South Eastern Europe.

