

Strengthening the Reformed Church to help the disadvantaged

Context

With a 16-per cent share of the population and some 1,200 congregations, the Reformed Church in Hungary (RCH) is the country's second largest religious community and an important social institution. It works to strengthen the Roma community and foster the inclusion of refugees, in this way fulfilling its social responsibility. As part of church cooperation, HEKS/EPER has maintained decades-long contact with the RCH, supporting it in its work for the benefit of Roma and refugees.

By nation-wide comparison, not only do the Roma have a markedly lower level of education, their community is affected by high poverty rates, poor job prospects and life expectancy that is 15 years lower. Living together with the majority population is also fraught with tension in some places. Unlike almost any other organization, the RCH parishes have the potential to build bridges and defuse tensions between population groups. HEKS/EPER supports Reformed parishes in developing projects to educate and help Roma children and adolescents shape their lives.

Building bridges is also crucial in dealing with refugees and migrants. For most Hungarians have only limited contact with people from a migration background and their perception of them is shaped by the often inflamed public discourse. HEKS/EPER therefore wishes to help the RCH build awareness in church congregations regarding the situation of refugees, facilitate encounters and foster inclusion for refugees.

Objectives, priorities, activities

- Remedial lessons intended to improve the educational opportunities of Roma



HUNGARY

HEKS/EPER Main Focus:
Interchurch Cooperation



9'843'030

Population (2015)

93'030

Area km²



children and young people as well as facilitate the integration of refugee children into the school system.

- Courses on lifestyle choices designed to equip Roma children and young people to cope with various challenges of everyday life and develop perspectives for their own lives.
- Reformed schools, which are often regarded as elite schools in Hungary, will be assisted in integrating young Roma.
- RCH congregations are being sensitized to the situation of refugees.
- Reformed congregations are building bridges between communities through specific programmes for Roma and for refugees, face-to-face meetings and joint events. Volunteers are being trained for participation in local projects to foster inclusion for Roma and refugees.

Target groups

- Roma children and young people
- Refugees and migrants who settle permanent in Hungary.
- Reformed Church parishes and their members as well as volunteers

Partnerships, networks, alliances, memberships

HEKS/EPER works exclusively with the RCH in Hungary. The transfer of knowledge and the fostering of relations between Switzerland and Hungary are crucial programme components. This is done through partnerships between church parishes, group trips or the sharing of know-how.

HEKS/EPER on the ground

The HEKS/EPER Desk Officer for Eastern Europe visits Hungary regularly.

Topics and working approach

HEKS has been working with the RCH for decades now. This work also invariably entails the sharing of knowledge and experiences between Hungary and Switzerland, also regarding work with refugees and migrants being done by HEKS/EPER and churches in Switzerland.

Country:

Hungary

Programme costs 2018:

CHF 300 000.–

HEKS/EPER No.: 394.900

Responsibility:

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