

# **EU Second Roma Integration Award for the Western Balkans and Turkey**



Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina,  
the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,  
Kosovo\*, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey

## **APPLICATION FORM**

(ANNEX 1 OF THE CONTEST RULES)

### **Did you know?**

It is estimated that about 1 million Roma<sup>1</sup> live in the Western Balkans, 2.8 million in Turkey and 6.2 million in the EU. Roma are Europe's largest ethnic minority. They face continued exclusion, segregation and discrimination.

The EU's policy on Roma inclusion, integration and empowerment is placed within an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 adopted by the European Commission in 2011. Within that framework, all 28 EU Member States and all 7 candidate countries and potential candidates for EU membership adopted their National Roma Integration Strategies which they now put in practice.

In June 2016, the Commission adopted its annual report on Roma integration that stresses the following as regards the candidate countries and potential candidates:

- Roma integration continues to be a priority in the enlargement process.
- Enough funding must be ensured to carry out integration measures.
- Attention should focus on implementation by local authorities.
- Roma community should be involved in planning, implementation and monitoring.

<sup>1</sup>As it is most commonly used in EU policy documents and discussions, the term "Roma" refers to a variety of different groups of people who describe themselves as Roma, Sinti, Kale, Gypsies, Romanichels, Boyash, Ashkali, Egyptians, Yenish, Dom, Lom, Manouches and other, and also includes Travellers, without denying the specificities and varieties of lifestyles and situations of these groups.

- Focus on results on the ground to reduce the gap between Roma and non-Roma.

Find out more: [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma/index_en.htm)

Watch a film about Roma: <http://romahomeland.org/>

Watch a short video "A Better Future for Roma" in candidate countries and potential candidates: <https://vimeo.com/143848472>

\*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICI Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence

**Before filling out this Application Form, please read carefully the Contest Rules. You also have to fill out, date and sign the Declaration of Honour.**

*Please fill out this Application Form and send it, together with the Declaration of Honour (Annex 2 of the Contest Rules), by e-mail to*

**NEAR-ROMA-INTEGRATION-AWARD@ec.europa.eu**

*by 31 October 2016 23:59:59 of Brussels time (the time of registration in the European Commission's IT system is decisive).*

*("NEAR" is the abbreviation for the European Commission department responsible for the Second Roma Integration Award: the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations.)*

*Please make sure that where the Contest Rules require quantified data, e.g. a specific duration or number of staff or beneficiaries, this Application Form contains this data.*

*Where this Application Form requires a limit on the number of words, any words in excess of that limit will be disregarded in the evaluation. Adjust the size of the table cells where necessary to fit the text.*

## 1. THE PARTICIPANT

Full official name of the participant	Institute of Romani Culture in Albania (IRCA)
Official legal form of the participant. This legal form must be suitable for an NGO.	Non-Profit Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO)
Participant's history, aim and main activities (no more than 300 words). Demonstrate in particular the eligibility criteria under Section 3 points 2. and 3. of the Contest Rules	<p>Institute of Romani Culture in Albania (IRCA) is established on July 1, 2011 and since then is working towards the recognition of Roma identity and culture as a country's and world's cultural heritage, with Roma youth and future Roma generations empowered to access equal citizens rights and have mutual friendly intercultural exchange with non-Roma.</p> <p>IRCA advocates for Roma equal access in citizens' rights as well as public and social services; provides educational and career advice to Romani students, increases capacities of Romani youth for participation in public life; conducts research studies for documenting and institutionalizing Romani cultural heritage; promotes intercultural exchange and friendly relations between Roma and non-Roma youth within Albania and abroad.</p> <p>Roma identity is often looked down and even abandoned by many educated Roma. This has led to increasing prejudice and discrimination against Roma and their isolation and segregation while most Roma developed a primitive living style of early marriages, depreciation of school, work in informal sectors, big families abusing children and women often named wrongly as Roma culture or Roma living style. It was this background that inspired IRCA to work on documentation, institutionalization and development of Roma culture and identity through Roma youth empowerment and gradually transforming into a leading Roma advocacy and think tank organization.</p> <p>The impact of IRCA's work fall in four main categories: (i)intercultural dialogue; (ii)youth empowerment; (iii)advocacy and participation; (iv)institutional development and partnership building. Composed of committed Roma university students and graduates IRCA's work relies on the principles of voluntarism and self-help. Combination of volunteer advocacy with education services and recreation activities, has led to the establishment of three youth networks including Romani Students' Network, Romani Corps of Volunteers as well as Romani Youth Parliament - Forum. Most of IRCA's activity is also featured in an online radio program entitled "Kanxura"-Radio.</p>

Staff count: approximate number of people, voluntary or paid, full-time or part-time, directly carrying out <u>all</u> the activities of the participant, i.e. not just the project	<p>IRCA counts four full time staff members, all of them Roma professionals managing the work and direction of activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Bledar Taho; Executive Director (Five years): Leader of organization; direct all operations and manage all projects, grant proposals; seek partnerships, collaborations and cooperation with other organizations; represent IRCA as an institution; [Roma]</li> <li>-Xhesika Korra; Program Manager (Five years): Trainer, Education mentoring and career counseling; [Roma]</li> <li>-Aurora Koci; Admin Assistant and Communication (Three years): Assisting executive director with administrative issues and communication; [Roma]</li> <li>-Klaudia Hamiti; Projects Assistant and Finance (Three years): Assisting in projects implementation; [Roma]</li> </ul> <p>IRCA employs 3 part-time staff members and 204 Roma and non-Roma volunteers working on the activities of the Romani Students' Network, Romani Corps of Volunteers as well as Romani Youth Parliament – Forum.</p>
Full official address, notably street/post box, postal code, city, country	Str. Myslym Shyri - S. Pitarka 24/b P.O. Box 154, Tirana 1001, Albania
E-mail address	<a href="mailto:institute.irca@gmail.com">institute.irca@gmail.com</a>
Website	<a href="http://www.irca.al">www.irca.al</a>
Statutory registration number, VAT registration number (whichever available)	IRCA has been established with a court decision No. 3116 dated on 01.07.2011. The VAT registration number is L21721452J
<b>CONTACT PERSON:</b>	
Name (Ms, Mr)	Mr. Bledar Taho
Telephone number	+355 69 61 81 840
E-mail address	<a href="mailto:institute.irca@gmail.com">institute.irca@gmail.com</a>

## 2. THE PROJECT

Title of the project	Roma Mediators advocating for efective implementation of Roma Local Action Plan in Fier Region
Period covered by the project (Section 4 point 3. of the Contest Rules)	March 2013 – 30 September 2016 (6 months every year)
Geographical location of the project (Section 4 point 2. of the Contest Rules)	Fier Region, Albania
Source of financing of the project	Open Society Foundation in Albania
<p>Objectives, design, planning and activities of the project (Section 4 point 1., Section 5, criterion 1 of the Contest Rules):</p> <p><i>Please explain in no more than 500 words how the objectives, design, planning and activities (completed by the date of submission of this application) of the project can directly positively affect the Roma children and youth (below 18 years) and/or young adults (18-30 years) in terms of inclusion, integration and/or empowerment, with expected long-term effects on their lives. If the beneficiaries of the project belong to various age groups, please explain and confirm that Roma children and youth and/or young adults are a majority of the beneficiaries.</i></p>	

Roma constitute a linguistic minority in Albania and continue to face very difficult living conditions and frequent social exclusion and discrimination, particularly regarding access to health care, social protection, education, employment and housing. The Government of Albania endorsed the Strategy for the economic and social integration of Roma in 2003 and entered as a member of the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005 – 2015) in 2008. The protection of Roma rights and the monitoring of the objectives of the National Strategy and National Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2010-2015, and recently of the newly launched Action Plan (2016-2020) remain the two main action pillars of Albania into the fulfilment of the Recommendation No. 5 of EU “Reinforce the Protection of Human Rights”.

Thus, IRCA has been very active into the monitoring of the National and Local Action for Roma at local level, namely in Fier region, with the highest concentration of Roma population in Albania. IRCA activated Roma youth mediating structures in Fier, as the relevant community structure working as a “Janus-faced institution” working in parallel with youth Roma communities and “shapers” of effective local government.

This project aimed at reinforcing the advocacy position and Roma youth leadership on monitoring the effective implementation of the Local action Plan for Roma in Fier region. Specifically, it aimed at (i)increasing the participation, advocacy, leadership and monitoring capacities in local government; (ii)realisation of internships in local institutions.

Several activities were implemented to fulfil the project objectives. Firstly, a Roma mediator capacity building training was carried out to increase leadership skills and mobilization of Roma youth to advocate at local institutions. Trained young Roma mediators aged between 18-25 years old organised monthly meetings according to the thematic areas of the Roma decade on civil registration, integration into the education system, facilitation of employment seeking and job opportunities for Roma, access into the social care services, housing and health services. At these meetings, representatives of the local council, educational departments, labor departments, health departments, and state social service answered questions addressed by Roma youth mediators.

In addition to these activities, continuing support was provided by IRCA for 3 Roma youth to monitor and advocate for the effective implementation of the Local Action Plan for the Integration of Roma in Fier. This activity was implemented through the development of an advocacy and monitoring plan by 10 young Roma mediators with good advocacy and leadership skills, who also benefitted from a direct work experience through internships in local institutions. Many radio podcasts were prepared on social inclusion, civic activism and advocacy and aired in the community radio “Kanxura” in both Albanian and Romani languages.

These activities contributed into an increased rate of activism of Roma youth, that helped Roma children in Fier to access schooling, register with civil and health documents, access social services and seek employment and mobilize their peers into the monitoring and advocacy campaign for the implementation of the Local Action Plan for Roma.

Results achieved of the project (Section 5, criterion 2 of the Contest Rules):

*Please explain in no more than 500 words the results (achieved by the date of submission of this application): how the project was able to directly positively affect the Roma children and youth (below 18 years) and/or young adults (18-30 years) in terms of inclusion, integration and/or empowerment, with expected long-term effects on their lives. Explain how you have measured these results and how these findings have been or will be used to adjust the objectives, design, planning or activities of the project.*

This project brought about many results achieved, which affected positively both categories of Roma children and youth and Roma young adults. This project led to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Institute of Romani Culture in Albania (IRCA) and Municipality of Fier, prescribing the obligations and commitments during the entire project duration. 10 Roma young adults were trained and benefitted from an increased rate of knowledge, leadership and mobilization and advocacy skills, evidenced by their active participation and contribution into the monitoring activities.

In addition, 3 young Roma were selected as the mediators at local level and their terms of reference were designed in collaboration with the Municipality of Fier. They supported the work of the local government, as with the latest reform in 2014, Municipality of Fier expanded its geographical size and new functions emerged. At the same time, the Roma youth mediators worked directly with Roma youth and children in addressing their issues of concern. Roma young mediators participated in every monthly meeting of the local council. Also, they organised meetings with educational institutions, public health and employment representatives, social care services, non-governmental organisations addressing the identified issues. An important result was the design and the implementation of the monitoring and advocacy plan by Roma youth on the Local Action Plan for Integration of Roma in the Municipality of Fier.

Quantitatively, the project managed to support 2419 Roma to have access in local institutions. Specifically, as the result of project actions, 1089 Roma children were registered in primary, secondary and high school. IRCA provided facilitation with free books delivered by Ministry of Education and Sports. In addition, 76 Roma (34 women and 42 male) were employed in collaboration with labour offices following the job seeking application procedure. 734 Roma youth were equipped with health cards and participated in awareness raising and capacity building activities on reproductive education, caring health, hygiene etc. 246 Roma families were supported to complete legalisation documents and reconstruct their houses. 274 Roma children and adults benefitted from the support on accessing and obtaining civil registration.

10 Roma youth, who were trained on leadership, community mobilizing, advocacy and lobbying served as the catalysts for the achievement of all the above-mentioned results for Roma youth in Fier. The 3 mediators executed their role as the liaison among the Romacommunities in general with a focus on Roma youth and local government. 12 podcasts were prepared and shared as information on Roma mediator work and social inclusion by Roma young people themselves. They were aired into the online community radio “Kanxura”, the latest initiative of IRCA, in Albanian and Romani languages

All these data derive from the attendance lists of all project activities. All these achievements are also measured based on follow up activities with local institutions. Lastly, the monthly reports and databases provided by the Roma Community Mediators and submitted to IRCA serve as a measurement mean of the project results. IRCA can provide evidence on the results presented as per each activity undertaken.

Share of Roma staff carrying out (implementing) the project (Section 5, criterion 3 of the Contest Rules):

*Please describe, in no more than 300 words, how many people – paid or volunteer, full-time or part-time – are directly carrying out (implementing) the project. What is the share in % of Roma among these people?*

*Do not confuse the people who carry out (implement) the project and the people who benefit from the project! For example, teachers and social assistants carry out a project while children benefit from it. However, sometimes it may be difficult to distinguish: for example, unemployed people may receive training as beneficiaries of the project and at the same time they can be employed by the project or do volunteer work to carry out the project. Therefore, describe clearly the people who carry out (implement) the project.*

A comparative advantage is that the whole team in charge of the project implementation is of Roma origin. The project has been managed by 1 one full time Programme Coordinator with Roma origin, one full time Communication officer with Roma origin, one full time Financial Officer with Roma origin, three Part time Mediators with Roma Origin. 1 advocacy expert assisted the monitoring and advocacy plan of the Local Action Plan of Integration of Roma in Fier.

Mr. Bledar Taho, the Executive Director of IRCA contributed as the Expert for the Advocacy Plan. He is a Roma graduate in economics from Universita degli Studi di Milano-Bicocca and Marin Barleti University in Tirana, holding an M.Sc in European Studies and Public Administration. Mr. Taho directs all operations, grant proposals; seeks partnerships, collaborations and cooperation with other organizations; represents IRCA as an institution.

Ms. Xhesika Korra – Project Coordinator is a Roma graduate at the University of Tirana, Faculty of Foreign Languages and is experienced into education, employment, health and social issues. She possesses expertise into career counselling and self-help employment.

Ms. Aurora Koci – Communication Assistant, is a Roma graduated at University of Tirana, Faculty of Social Science for Public Relation. Aurora is experienced on communication, public relations and volunteer management. She has been highly engaged in activities with Roma children and parents.

Ms. Klaudia Hamiti – Finance Assistant, is a Roma graduate at University of Tirana, Faculty of Law. She is experienced in accounting, financial delivery and compliance of financial regulations with project contracts.

Three part-time Roma youth mediators were responsible for different areas in Fier region. Mr. Panajot Alushi, part-time Roma youth mediator in Driza and Levan. Mr. Marjus Veizi, part-time Roma youth mediator in Mbrostar, Baltëz, Sektor Seman and Mr. Makeljan Haxhiaj, part-time Roma youth mediator in Roskovec and Mbrostar.

Share of women and men (girls and boys) among beneficiaries of the project (Section 5, criterion 4 of the Contest Rules):

*Please state, in no more than 300 words, what the share of women and men (girls and boys) is among the beneficiaries of the project. If there are gender imbalances, please explain them and explain how these findings have been or will be used to adjust the objectives, design, planning or activities of the project. If the project is intended to benefit one gender only, please justify why that is appropriate to achieve the objectives of the project.*

A gender balance is respected among the project beneficiaries. An almost equal balance has been preserved among Roma girls and boys benefitting from this intervention implemented by IRCA according to the main priorities of the Local Action Plan for the Integration of Roma in Fier Municipality in Albania. Specifically, the data relate to civil registration, education and schooling, qualification and employment, health sector and housing.

In the education sector, among 1089 Roma children that have been registered in the primary, secondary as well as in the high schools and supported with the provision of the free books delivered by Ministry of Education and Sports, 553 were girls and 536 were boys.

In the employment sector among the 76 young adults Roma employed in collaboration with labour offices, 34 were adult young Roma women and 42 adult young men.

In the health sector, IRCA through this project supported 734 Roma youth and adults, who were equipped with health card and participated in training on reproductive education, caring health, hygiene etc. Dissegregated into gender criteria, this result amounts to 356 Roma adult young women and 378 Roma adult young men.

Concerning housing, 246 Roma families were supported to complete legalisation documents and reconstruct their houses

Related to civil registration, 274 Roma children and adults (174 girls and 100 boys) were provided with facilitation on civil registration documents.

10 Roma youth with an equal balance in terms of gender (5 girls and 5 boys) were trained on leadership, community mobilizing, advocacy and lobbying.

### 3. COOPERATING ENTITIES (fill out only if applicable –

#### Section 3, point 4. of the Contest Rules)

<p>Describe in no more than 300 words the share of implementation of the project by the participant, i.e. without the cooperating entities. This share must be meaningful and substantial.</p>	<p>Institute of Romani Culture in Albania (IRCA) is the sole implementer of the project “Roma Mediators advocating for effective implementation of Roma Local Action Plan in Fier Region”. However, IRCA targeted local public institutions and established long lasting and collaborative relationships. These collaborative institutional relations helped into the effective implementation of project activities. IRCA collaborated with Municipality of Fier and Municipality of Roskovec in the Republic of Albania, Labour Office in Fier, Health Directorate and Regional Education Directorate. Due to these positive institutional relations with these local institutions, the results presented in the civil registration, education, employment, housing and health sectors were</p>
<p>List the cooperating entities. For each entity, provide its full official name, its legal form, its official address and its statutory and/or VAT registration number.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fier Municipality of Republic of Albania Address: Lagja “Kastriot”, Rruga “Brigada e XI Sulmuese”; Tel/Fax: 034 410 636</li> <li>Roskovec Municipality of Republic of Albania Address: Lagja Nr.1 Qender Tel/ Fax : (+355) 038780241</li> <li>- Labour Office Fier Address: L. Kastrioti Rr. V. Pecuke Tel: 034 – 224 13</li> <li>- Health directory Fier Address : Lagja 1 Maj, Fier</li> <li>- Regional Education Directory Fier Address: L. "Kastrioti", Rr. "Leon Rei", Fier</li> </ul> <p>All these public institutions are founded on legal public law.</p>

## 4. SUPPORTING VISUAL MATERIAL

In compliance with the Contest Rules (Section 6), visual material supporting this application (e.g. photos, videos, brochures) is only accepted if it is openly available on the internet in electronic format (a website, YouTube, Vimeo, Facebook etc.). Provide links below and explain the material, in particular how it shows various aspects of the project. The supporting visual material itself may be in any language.

*Provide the link and a short (maximum 30 words) explanation for each item of visual material. Do not provide more than 10 items; any items beyond this limit will be disregarded during the evaluation.*

<https://soundcloud.com/radiokanxura/tracks> - our 12 podcasts and radio programs on Roma Inclusion

[https://www.facebook.com/IRCA.AL/photos/?tab=album&album\\_id=754148198012372](https://www.facebook.com/IRCA.AL/photos/?tab=album&album_id=754148198012372) – Final Conference

<https://www.facebook.com/IRCA.AL/photos/pcb.1066882303405625/1066877653406090/?type=3&theater> – Training Roma Mediator

[https://www.facebook.com/IRCA.AL/photos/?tab=album&album\\_id=637991736294686](https://www.facebook.com/IRCA.AL/photos/?tab=album&album_id=637991736294686) – Roma Mediator Meeting with Local Institutions

[https://www.facebook.com/IRCA.AL/photos/?tab=album&album\\_id=613146508779209](https://www.facebook.com/IRCA.AL/photos/?tab=album&album_id=613146508779209) – Open letter directed on Roma integration and access to social service in Fier Council

[https://soundcloud.com/radiokanxura/plani-lokal-i-veprimit?utm\\_source=soundcloud&utm\\_campaign=share&utm\\_medium=facebook](https://soundcloud.com/radiokanxura/plani-lokal-i-veprimit?utm_source=soundcloud&utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=facebook) – podcast

<https://soundcloud.com/radiokanxura/mediatori-permes-medias-online> - Advocacy through online media podcast

<https://soundcloud.com/radiokanxura/plani-lokal-i-veprimit-> local action plan on Roma inclusion podcast

<https://soundcloud.com/radiokanxura/interviste-me-zpanajot-alushi-mediator-ne-bashkine-fier>, <https://soundcloud.com/radiokanxura/interviste-me-keli-hamzaj-nqa-keli-haxhiaj-meditor-ne-rroskovec-fier-mixdown> - interview with our Roma Mediators

<https://soundcloud.com/radiokanxura/zeri-rom-permes-te-rinjve> - Roma voice through youth

**We wish you good luck!**