



E-Romnja - 2022

E-ROMNJA - THE ASSOCIATION FOR PROMOTING ROMA WOMEN'S RIGHTS

ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT

-2022-



We are a Roma feminist, a-political, and non-profit organisation that fights for the rights of Roma women and girls.
Our approach is intersectional, and we believe that no society and/or community can exist without women's participation in society and community.
We believe in the Roma girls and women's involvement in the development of the communities to which they belong.

MISSION

We fight for the respect, integrity, and dignity of Roma women. We promote narratives, experiences, and histories reflecting the diversity of Roma women's experiences and their lives.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community development and organisation are long-term processes through which our initiative groups are brought together to act in their collective interest. We find this component transversely in all the projects we implement. What we have learned in the first ten years of activity is that to gain the trust and commitment of community women, we must be consistent, and permanently in touch.

For us, community development comes as an answer to the lack of involvement of the authorities. In the absence of services and support from institutions and authorities, Roma women organise themselves, show solidarity, and create alternative support systems.



PROJECTS

Ketaniphen - Empowerment and participation: grassroots citizenship led by Roma women

Ketaniphen is a project that started its implementation in 2015 and is still ongoing. Financed by Helsinki Deaconess Institute, the project is implemented in Valea Seacă community, Bacău County.

In this community, we have three groups: one group of Roma women, a group of youths (girls and boys), and a group of Roma teenager girls.

Activities completed by the Valea Seacă groups:

- community services organised by women for women: community lunch twice a week for 150 people, hygiene products, and birth control distribution;
- monthly/thematic meetings for planning street action, the monitoring meetings of the City Council, or other community activities;
- workshops with Roma men from the community on topics such as: gender violence, education, and reproductive health;
- facilitating access to health, social, and even legal services, this year managing to solve and bring 7 cases to justice;
- workshops of non-formal education with children.

On Roma Resistance Day (May 16), Roma young people in the Valea Seacă group created a theatrical piece on toxic relationships. On this occasion, the Roma girls from the community also made a short video with messages about the Roma resistance to discrimination.

In certain contexts, our community center in Valea Seacă only serves as a safe space for personal discussions about everyday life.



The 'Sisterhood' mentorship program

"Sisterhood" is a mentorship program developed by E-Romnja through the "Educated Girls" project, financed in the first years of implementation by the Helsinki Deaconess Institute and their partners from Finland.

The mentorship program was created following the identification of Roma girls' needs in our communities and the systemic issues they face.

Our goal was to give support to Roma girls to finish their studies because the reality in the communities has shown us that they have an increasing risk of dropping out of school. The support consisted of mentorship, educational scholarships offered monthly during the school year, and the creation of a safe space for discussion for the girls and mentors involved in this whole process.

The girls taking part in the program are between 12 and 18 years old and are selected based on some criteria that take into consideration their financial and family situation, the lack of access to school in adequate conditions, and other vulnerabilities (skin color, sexual abuse antecedents or other type of violence, Romani language speakers, traditional family, single parent family).

The mentors' role is assigned to activist Roma women with professional and life experience who can be role models and can support the Roma girls to develop personally and professionally, increase their self-esteem, and feel encouraged and understood.





In 2022, the mentorship program was financially sustained for the most part by the German Embassy, but also by the Helsinki Deaconess Institute.

The novelties consisted of the introduction of a psychological support component for mentees, but also for mentors, training for the three youth workers, training for teachers and school mediators, awareness campaigns on the topic of access to education organized by the mentees in communities, the creation of 'A story about Roma sisterhood' video material which can be accessed here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nASrUPN0N94&t=4s> (Romanian version)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vu7e45wKimk&t=1s> (English subtitles version)

INTERSECTIONALITY

As Roma women, we have identities and experiences based on intersections between gender, class, ethnicity, skin colour, religion, language, background, disability, etc. Intersectionality is a traversal concept in our feminist work, therefore, we wish to bring a feminist intersectional perspective in all our interactions, in the work at the local level with the groups of women, young women and men, in the relationship with the civil society and the relationship with the authorities.

We believe that intersectionality is an instrument that deconstructs the homogeneous images created by society for women and men, Roma and non-Roma, hetero and LGBT+. At the same time, we believe that concepts such as intersectionality, are meant to highlight how oppressive systems like racism, classism, sexism, etc., act against the most vulnerable people. Through our actions, we advocate for the intersectionality theory to be included in the anti-discrimination legislation or integrated into strategies, measures, programs, etc.



ACTIONS

SOLIDARITY, LET US ALL UNITE!

The March 8 protest was about solidarity with our refugee sisters in Ukraine in the context of the war, about the fight against inequality, gender violence, and oppressive systems.

We stood together with several groups and organised a protest in the University Square in Bucharest to show our concern regarding the lack of measures for the most vulnerable people in the context of war and to denounce the different treatment received by the Roma women refugees from Ukraine.



THE MARCH FOR HOUSING

On November 12, together with the Common Front for the Right to Housing, we organised the March for Housing to ask the authorities:

- to cap the energy costs and the reduction of utility bills,
- to stop all evacuations,
- more public and social housing,
- easier access to social housing,
- the control of rent pricing,
- to finalise the social housing block in Prelungirea Ghencea and to build the other 7 blocks announced.



We have chanted along the people in Ghencea:

'We are not ashamed to cause scandal!'

'The right to housing is a fundamental right!'



EVENTS

MUJER GITANA - ROMA WOMAN” - event organised by the Spain Embassy in Bucharest and hosted by the Cervantes Institute.

During the seminary, E-Romnja highlighted the need and importance of developing programs for Roma girls and women in the marginalised communities. When the Roma women are involved, the communities are more progressive. We've also talked about the struggle to convince the local authorities to get involved in resolving the issues in the communities, such as paving the streets, which is a feminist problem since it affects the Roma women in particular.

Moreover, we explained what the institutionalised racism the Roma girls and women encounter looks like, the lack of intervention, and also the discouragement the Roma women face when they try to access the public services. We have also talked about:

- the authorities' responsibility to find ways to make legislative amendments to protect the victims, but also to take over models of good practice from other countries, such as Spain;
- the lack of integrated services;
- the discrimination faced by Roma women based on ethnicity, sexual orientation, and class criteria.



ROMNJA POWER MONTH

Since 2019, between March 8 and April 8, we have organised Romnja Power Month – an umbrella concept adopted by our colleagues from Romaniphen in Berlin.

The Roma Women's Month consists of organising events, debates, cultural activities, concerts, and parties to increase the visibility of Roma women in different spheres, such as art, culture, politics, community work, activism, academic environment, etc.

This year, together with our groups of youth and women, we have organised actions at the local level in Mizil, Giurgiu, and Valea Seacă.



**The 'Towards a Roma Feminism Movement across Europe' Conference,
December 12-14, 2022, Bucharest**

Along with Romano Svato and Romaniphen, we brought together Roma activists and feminists from Romania, Moldova Republic, Austria, Germany, Hungary, Finland, Serbia, and Spain to share our experiences in all our diversity, to discuss intersectionality, feminism, racism, and discrimination.



PARTNERSHIPS

Intersect Voices in Europe - Combating Discrimination Against Roma Women

- project financed through the “Rights, Equality, and Citizenship” program of the European Union and implemented between 2020 and 2022 by the Helsinki Deaconess Institute in Finland (partnership leader) along with the partners the Center for Legislation Nonprofit (Romania), the Romni Onlus Association (Italy), the and E-Romnja Association (Romania).

The project aimed to contribute to a better understanding of the discrimination experiences faced by Roma women in Romania, Finland, and Italy and to combat intersectional discrimination by improving anti-discrimination legislation on multiple criteria through advocacy actions at the national and European level.

Within the project, in 2022, we created and launched two animation movies:

- ‘Challenging intersectionality – The Experience of a Roma trans woman’ – inspired by the experience of discrimination of a Roma trans woman: https://youtu.be/tlNhpGRS_7g?si=Qh7885SrBovfXLyw
- ‘Challenging intersectionality – The Experience of a Roma woman in the community’ – inspired by the experience of discrimination of a Roma woman in the community: <https://youtu.be/cx3xYc3fQas?si=40j-MyNoiOA7HSwv>

Both animations show experiences of discrimination in the relationship with the public health system, are narrated in the Romani language, and have English subtitles.





Roma girls and women with intersectional experiences and identities from different communities and Roma lineages, Romani language speakers and non-speakers, have shared their experiences and life stories in a safe space, without prejudices, during a workshop on intersectionality topic delivered by our colleagues Roxana Oprea and Anca Nica in April 2022.

EGALIS: gender equality through social change and education

The project run between April 2021 and April 2023 and was implemented by the Coalition for Gender Equality with the financial support of Active Citizens Fund – Romania, a programme financed by Island, Liechtenstein, and Norway through the SEE Grants 2014-2021. Our colleague, Georgiana Lincan, signed the “Intersectionality” chapter in the “Teaching and integrating gender equality in pre-university education” textbook for teachers.

At the same time, E-Romnja contributed to formulating proposals for the revision of the occupational standard for equal opportunities expert and equal opportunities technician professions and to organizing the “10 years of feminist street actions,” which also include the street actions organized by E-Romnja both in Bucharest and at the local level.



INTERSECT. Intersectional Community Centre

- project implemented by E-Romnja in partnership with easyEco Association, which aimed to increase social inclusion and enable vulnerable groups in Bucharest that face multiple and intersectional discrimination.

Through the intersectional community centre founded within the project, social services, legal counselling, career support, and interventions for mental and reproductive health were offered to people at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

The 'Intersect festival, organised in two editions, was a good opportunity to bring together people from communities and different groups, artists, and activists from various domains aiming to combat social injustices.

The project was supported through the Active Citizen Fund Romania programme, financed by Island, Liechtenstein, and Norway through SEE Grants 2014-2021.



‘INTERESECT – Roma Community is also diverse: Training Young People for Inclusion’

- Erasmus project implemented by Gitanas Feministas por la Diversidad Association (Spain) in partnership with E-Romnja Association (Romania), Diversity Youth Network (Hungary), and GLAS (Bulgaria) between 2019-2023.

The project aim was to promote social inclusion for Roma LGBTQ+ people who lost their family, social, and institutional protection, following the assumption of their identities.

Within the project, the materials were debated from an intersectional perspective to help the social workers and the mainstream organisation working with youth in approaching work and guiding the Roma LGBTQ+ young people.



Choose to be involved! Participation through education for democracy

- project implemented by the Transcena Association in partnership with the E-Romnja, Association, carried out between 2021 and 2023 through the Active Citizens Fund Romania programme, financed by Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway through the EEA Grants 2014 - 2021.

The project's goal: to increase access to civic education and participative democracy among middle school and high school students and young teachers in Bacău, Călărași, Giurgiu, Prahova, and Bucharest Counties.

Within the project,

- educational resource packages that integrate education through theatre as a tool for developing students' social and civic skills have been developed and tested;
- actions of civil involvement with pupils from 12 schools have been organised;
- training sessions with teachers from 12 schools have been organised to develop interactive teaching abilities within the process of forming students' civic and social skills.



Co-Steering Group of the YOUTH PARTICIPATION STRATEGY - SALTO

The Co-Steering Group is part of the Youth Participation Strategy, and the goal of the coordination group is to monitor, review, and support the Strategy throughout the mandate (February 2022 – June 2023).

As an essential member of this group and supporter of Roma youth (girls and boys) participation, E-Romnja had the role of reviewing, monitoring the Strategy implementation, and developing a set of performance indicators that would evaluate the progress of each activity along the other 11 group members.

Also, we participated in the **Youth Participation Forum**, an event that had the role to consolidate the youth participation in Europe and to explore the entire potential of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps. During this event, we organized a workshop about intersectionality, highlighting the importance of integrating this concept into projects and programs for youth.

Our participation within the Co-Steering Group depicts the importance of diversity, intersectionality, and representation for young people's empowerment and participation in a democratic life through the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programs.



Together for the women's safety! – a multidimensional intervention project against gender-based violence

The project is implemented between 2021 and 2023 by FILIA Center, the ANAIS Association, the Front Association, the Transcena Association, and E-Romnja Association – five organisations, members of the Network for Prevention and Combating Violence against Women (V.I.F. Network), and is funded through the Active Citizen Fund Romania programme, financed by Island, Liechtenstein, and Norway through the SEE Grants 2014-2021.

The project aims to consolidate the awareness, watchdog, monitoring, and advocacy activities of the Network for Prevention and Combating Violence against Women at the central and local levels through a multidimensional approach able to produce systemic changes in how the problem of gender-based violence is handled by the authorities and in how the society relates to violence against women.

E-Romnja coordinates the activity of Enablement and Local Actions. Thus, we will organize:

- counselling meetings with the local public authorities in Mizil, Giurgiu, and Valea Seacă;
- community workshops and meeting with the Roma women to see the needs and issues they face at local level when it comes to gender-based violence;





- awareness workshops with Roma men in the communities on topics such as violence, equal opportunities, etc.;

- advocacy training with 12 Roma women in our communities, its purpose being of strengthening the local initiative groups and of empowering them in the fight against gender violence.



Not least, within the partnership and the Network for Prevention and Combating Violence against Women, we submitted a petition to the National Council for Combating Discrimination through which we requested to establish the derogatory and discriminatory nature of the virginity tests carried out in the legal medicine units in the country, but also seven administrative complaints against several local authorities regarding the lack of services meant for victims of domestic violence.

On November 23, 2022, together with partner organizations, we organized the “Together for Women’s Safety” March and requested the financing of prevention programs and specialized services for gender violence survivors in the street. The action was replicated also locally in our Mizil, Giurgiu, and Valea Seacă communities.





The topic of gender-based violence remains a priority theme for E-Romnja and we hope that all our work will consolidate the V.I.F. network, contribute to a better understanding of the systemic issues the Roma girls and women face, create more solidarity within the feminist movement in Romania, and give a clearer insight into intersectionality.

Access facilitation to integrated services of education, health, employment, and empowerment for the vulnerable people in Bucharest District 1

The project will be carried out from May 2022 to April 2024 and will be implemented by District 1 City Hall (Project Promoter), the E-Romnja Association, and the Life and Light Foundation as partners, with the financial support provided by Island, Liechtenstein, and Norway through the SEE Grants 2014-2021 within the 'Local Development, Poverty Reduction, and Enhanced Roma Inclusion' programme.

The specific project objectives:

- increasing access to health, education, employment, and social assistance services for at least 400 Roma people from three neighbourhoods of District 1;
- the empowerment of 30 Roma people;
- skills improvement of 11 specialists and volunteers working with Roma people for increasing the quality of the offered services and the level of inclusiveness of the authorities and public institutions in District 1.



Integrated services for Roma people from vulnerable communities

A project carried out between December 2021 and December 2023 by the Save the Children Organization (Project Promoter), the E-Romnja Association, and Bahna City Hall, which benefits from a grant provided by Island, Liechtenstein, and Norway through the SEE Grants 2014 – 2021 within the Local Development Program.

For two years, E-Romnja has carried out empowerment activities and thematic workshops with Roma people from Bahna (Neamț County) and Breasta (Dolj County), workshops with the local public authorities from the two communities, established and strengthened two local initiative groups, exchanges with Roma women from Bahna and Breasta, awareness campaigns addressed to Roma, but also to the majority population through creative, non-formal tools (theatre-forum, photo-voice exhibition).



Safe roads: intersectional solidarity in times of conflict

A project implemented between May - August 2022 by the MozaiQ, the FILIA Center, and the E-Romnja Association, funded by Oxfarm GB.

Specific objectives:

- Mapping the roads undertaken by Roma, LGBTQIA+, women, and GBV survivors from Ukrainian/Moldovan borders to enter Romania, within Romania, and onwards to other European countries, as well as the services available in Romania and other European neighbouring countries.
- Safe relocation for refugees from vulnerable groups from Ukraine on the way to Romania, within Romania, and onwards to other European countries by linking beneficiaries with organisations supporting LGBTQIA+, women, GBV survivors, and Roma women in other countries.
- Monitoring the risks vulnerable groups are exposed to in terms of discrimination and safe and equal access to basic and protection services (food and non-food items, information, dignity, safe shelter, healthcare, legal aid, mental health, and psychosocial support).
- On a case-by-case basis, providing social, psychological, medical, legal services and emergency support (such as cash, food supplies, and other necessities) or redirection to specialised protection services.

What we have accomplished:

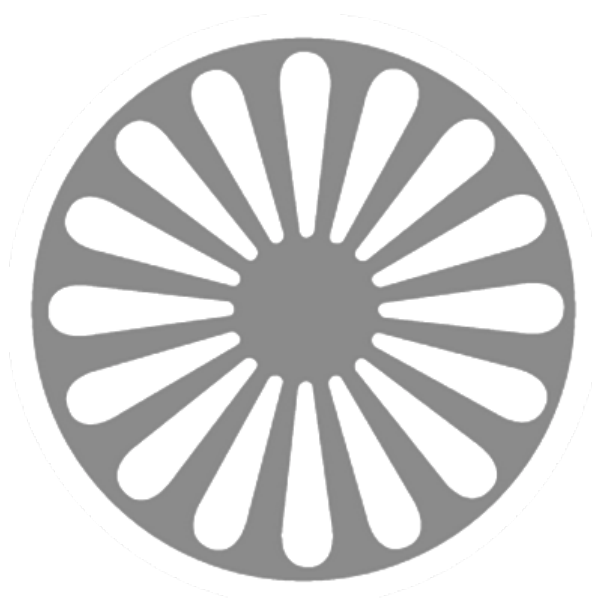
- mapping the refugee centers and the offered services, focusing on Roma refugees from Ukraine;
- identifying the Roma refugees' needs;
- redirecting cases we were not able to cover (cases of people with disabilities, people suffering from mental health issues, substance abuse, aggressors or victims of domestic violence, aggressors or victims of gender-based violence) to other non-governmental organizations;
- offering emergency kits for the following categories: Roma women refugees, Roma men refugees, and Roma children refugees;
- offering vouchers and cash for certain categories, according to some established criteria;
- supporting anti-discrimination workshops addressed to Roma refugees from the refugee centers;
- organizing anti-discrimination and intersectionality workshops addressed to different categories of workers and volunteers from the refugee centers working with Roma refugees;
- legal counselling and representation for different situations or identified needs in the refugee centers;
- providing interpretation in Romani, Ukrainian, and Romanian languages for refugees to access different services.

HEALTH

Annually, our advocacy actions at the local level are addressed to the local authorities, community members, and other people outside the communities. Our topics are related to Roma teenagers and women's access to sexual and reproductive health services, services and support to gender violence victims, infrastructure, and utilities, but also access to public information, participation, and involvement in the decisional process.

Roma women in the initiative groups with whom we work participate monthly/annually in the Local Councils meetings to monitor their activity so that the communities where we work do not get excluded from the local plans. Also, the Local Initiative Groups of Roma women, but also other Roma women in the community participate in local street actions organised on different occasions (Intersectional March 8, April 8 – The International Roma Day, November 25 – The International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women).

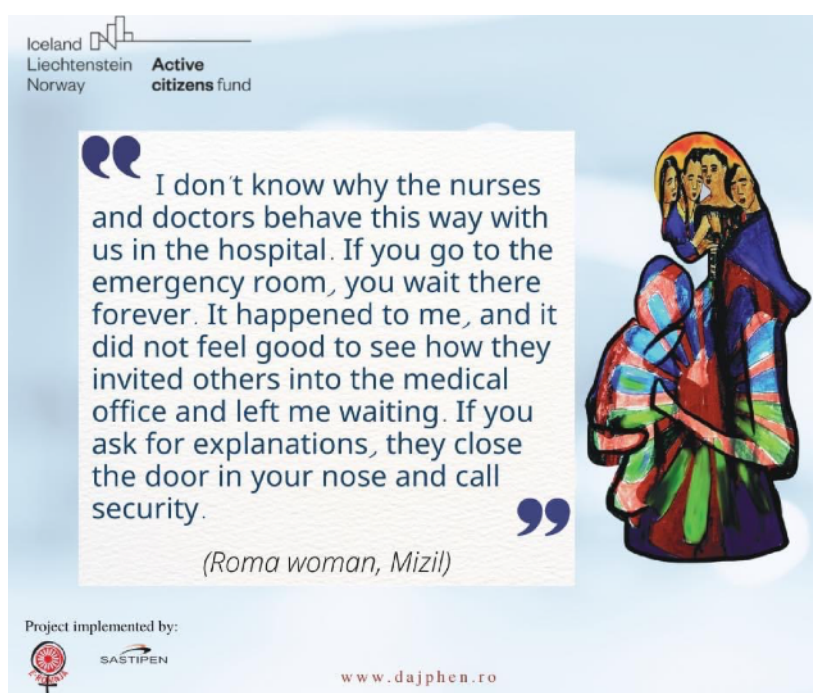
Since 2016, E-Romnja has carried out local initiatives meant, on the one hand, to bring more information to the communities the association works in regarding the sexual and reproductive health of the Roma women and, on the other hand, to bring attention to the low access of Roma teenagers and women to the existing public services.



DajPhen - Solidarity Networks for Roma women

The project was carried out by the E-Romnja Association in partnership with the Roma Center for Health Policies – SASTIPEN between 2021 and 2023 and benefited from a grant from the Active Citizens Fund Romania programme funded by Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway through the SEE Grants 2014 - 2021.

The hypothesis from which this project started was that when the authorities do not develop support services for Roma teenagers and women who go through the experience of motherhood, women create informal networks of community support.



What we aim to accomplish in the two years of implementation:

- informational workshops for Roma women on rights in the field of health, maternity, access to medical services, family planning;
- training and support pre- and post-natal for Roma girls and women;
- workshops for Roma men regarding the increase in their involvement during their partners/wives' pregnancies and the process of raising children;
- consultations with local, county, and national authorities on improving medical services and infrastructure, as well as increasing Roma women's access to existing services;
- advocacy actions for improving the health policies and reducing the negative institutional practices towards the Roma girls and women;

- training for the health personnel and health mediators;
- workshops with Roma and non-Roma doctors to increase their involvement in providing medical services;
- a guide for journalists who cover topics about the Roma community;
- 16 video podcasts with and about Roma girls and women, beyond stereotypes and prejudices.

All the information and lessons learned at the local level will be transposed into different tools available on the dedicated website: www.dajphen.ro.



ADVOCACY

UNITED NATION - The Meeting of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD): August 23, 2022

The intervention of the E-Romnja on sexual and reproductive rights of Roma girls and women in Romania:

For the Roma girls and women, especially for those living in segregated communities, access to sexual and reproductive rights continues to be an evident issue that is related to the malfunction of the entire health system. At the same time, access to public health services for people with multiple and intersectional identities is almost impossible. For categories such as poor people, people with darker skin, transgender people who face racism, lesbophobia, and transphobia, the level of trust in the public health system is very low.

**Our recommendations:**

- to create services addressed to Roma women in vulnerable communities through midwives to reduce infantile death and maternal mortality;
- to take responsibility and pass laws to combat forced sterilisation, child abuse, forced marriage, and human trafficking;
- to introduce the concept of intersectionality into the anti-discrimination legislation;
- to adopt a code of ethics in the health system that includes topics such as human rights, women's rights, anti-discrimination, anti-racism, and gender equality.

10 YEARS OF E-Romnja

In July 2022, E-Romnja celebrated 10 years since its foundation. 10 years of work to make our voices heard, to make our experiences and stories visible, and to create and develop our spaces. 10 years of struggle to gain access to services and rights in our society, communities, and families. 10 years in which we have worked on different plans and levels, different domains, both in the movements and coalitions we have been and are still involved in, but also the Roma communities in which we work.

In all these years, we have addressed topics such as: access to infrastructure, access to sexual and reproductive health services, gender-based violence and institutional racism, decent housing, forced eviction, potable water, and infrastructure.

In all these 10 years of work with the Roma women, we have learned an essential lesson - that any issue seen through the eyes of a Roma woman is a feminist issue, which needs a type of Roma-specific approach. We have also learned to listen to Roma women, to work with them, and to intersect with other groups and civic movements that support our causes. We have learned to talk collectively about our experiences and traumas, and to address them as we understand them and as we feel most comfortable. And all the projects we have implemented during all these years reflect this.

We still have a long and challenging journey with many obstacles ahead. We do not forget about the institutional racism, the projects about us without us, the classism that still exists and the biases related to the Roma women who do not dress appropriately or talk as people expect, the sexism and our exoticization as Roma women, but also about the homophobia and hatred towards people who have a different orientation or gender identity.

We hope that in another ten years from now, our causes will be more visible to decision-makers and that E-Romnja will grow in society and in communities that are also about us, the Roma women.

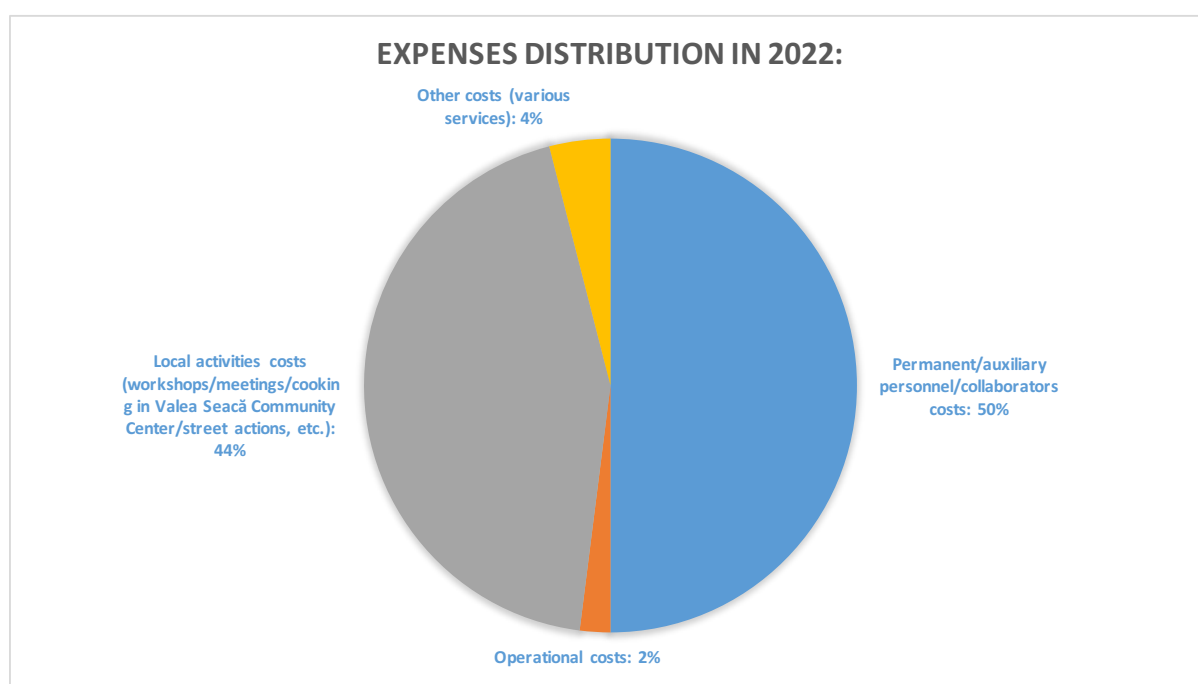
To mark this anniversary moment, we created a retrospective brochure that can be downloaded on our website, www.e-romnja.ro, and can be read both in Romanian and English.

Our story goes on!

FINANCIAL REPORT

In 2022, the total income of E-Romnja was of **2.346.915 lei**, thus:

- Funded projects: 90,2%
- Donation and other income: 9,8 %



SPONSORS IN 2022:

EEA Grants 2014 - 2021 (Active Citizens Fund - Romania), Google, Oxfam, The Giving Back Fund, Helsinki Deaconess Institute, Mama Cash, The German Embassy, The "Rights, Equality, and Citizenship" programme of European Union, ERASMUS, individual donors 3,5%, in-kind donors

E-ROMNJA TEAM

Carmen Gheorghe /// Anca-Georgiana Nica /// Georgiana Aldessa Lincan /// Roxana-Magdalena Oprea /// Carmen Alexe /// Anca Constantin /// Estera Gușă /// Mirela Gheorghe /// Luiza Nicolae /// Francisca Vasile /// Laura Voinea /// Natalia Căldăraru /// Luminița Feraru /// Cristina Dumitrache /// Lucia Dinu /// Elisa Dinu /// Lizuca Dinu /// Lăcrămioara Călin /// Mădălina Bădăraș

WE GIVE SPECIAL THANKS TO:

- the Roma women, men, girls and boys from the initiative groups in our Mizil, Giurgiu și Valea Seacă communities;
- the Roma mentees and mentors from the 'Sisterhood' program, as well as other volunteers who contributed to our activities;
- All the people who have made individual donations (cash, redirecting 2% or 3,5% of their income, products, equipment etc.);
- our allies in our common fight and to all those who follow and encourage us to continue our mission;
- Last but not least, we thank our funders at home and abroad who are constantly supporting our work.

**JOIN OUR MISSION OF EMPOWERING ROMA GIRLS AND WOMEN,
BY DONATING HERE:**

- RON ACCOUNT: RO 67 RZBR 0000 0600 1518 6865
- EURO ACCOUNT: RO 64 RZBR 0000 0600 1757 0694
- DOLLAR ACCOUNT: RO 46 RZBR 0000 0600 1819 7250
- PAYPAL.ME/EROMNJA



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