

u r b a n o City Report



December 2009



Nyíregyháza | Hungary

Official Opening of the Huszarvar Socio-Cultural Centre

Huszar Estate | 9 December 2009



Connecting cities
Building successes



The City of Nyíregyháza is active member of the RegGov-network that is operating in the framework of the current URBACT II Programme. It is the main objective of the partners joint together in this network to develop new and efficient forms of co-operation to support sustainable and integrated neighbourhood development.

The target area in Nyíregyháza, the Huszár estate, hosts a very deprived Roma community and needs a long-term integrated development process to overcome this situation of multiple deprivation.

On 9 December 2009, the City of Nyíregyháza could celebrate an event that is of major importance for this neighbourhood and the local community: The official opening of a new socio-cultural centre in the Huszár estate.



I. Nyíregyháza | An innovative European City

Nyíregyháza is located in the Eastern part of Hungary and it is the capital city of the Szabolcs-Szartmár-Bereg County. In the city centre, over the last years, a lot of investment has been able to create a beautiful city with high quality public space and facilities. There are museums, libraries and all kinds of attractive sites available in this town. Nyíregyháza is not only a city with large housing estates, but also surrounded by residential areas with gardens and small houses and some very traditional estates of small houses in groups like little old village estates.

But, despite all the progress that has been made in recent years, the City of Nyíregyháza is still facing many challenges and tasks, especially with regard to the social sector, that require an active policy and, very often, much more resources than available - especially in the current times of economic crisis that has also hit Nyíregyháza in various respects.

The total number of inhabitants in Nyíregyháza is nearly 120,000 – with a relatively high proportion of elderly people. As a result, one of the tasks for the local authorities is to provide a range of services to this growing group, not only in the area of Nyíregyháza city, but also in the wider area with housing areas and estates that belong to the micro region. Together with these settlements the municipality provides services and runs institutions.

The next major problem with regard to the social situation in Nyíregyháza as well as region, is the relatively high rate of unemployment. According to the unemployment statistics of November 2009, the unemployment rate in the city is 7%. And there is a steady increase in this figure, which is mostly the result of the current economic crisis. The increase in this figure is also the result of the closure of some factories in the city, like Flextronics.



The Huszár Estate

But, the current unemployment rate is only one part of the problem and threat for Nyíregyháza. The other part is that the number of job opportunities is decreasing, which means that the local authorities observe a growing tendency of **longer-term unemployment**. And as one of the consequences, in addition to the problems resulting from the lack of income, this growing group of long-term unemployed citizens will also face a lot of mental and health-related problems.

The next challenge with respect to the local social policy and the core task to create and maintain social cohesion in Nyíregyháza, is related to the **Roma communities** in the city. The proportion of the Roma people is 8% of the entire city's residents. Most of the members of these communities live in two segregated areas in Nyíregyháza, the "Huszár Estate" and the "Keleti Estate".

The main objective of all programmes and projects related to the Roma communities is the social integration of these people, because what can be seen in both areas is that the level of integration is by far not appropriate.

2. The Huszár Estate | Target Area of the RegGov Partnership

The main objective with regard to the Huszár Estate, which will be achieved with the support from the RegGov-partners, is the **integrated development** of this area. There is a need to stop further segregation, to improve the housing conditions of the local community and, maybe with the highest priority, to improve the educational and the employment situation of the Roma people living in this area.

In the past, many activities have been undertaken to achieve these objectives and many improvements and new services could be established in or for the area and its residents. But, one of the crucial problems has always been that most of these activities have been depending on **time-limited funding schemes**. The problem with such an approach is that after the termination of the programme or the project there is no more funding available for that purpose. So, the projects last only for a short period and the local authorities were always forced to run a stop-and-go policy and have not yet been able to stabilise some essential elements of their strategy and make them structural and regular elements of local policy and service provision.

There are a lot of long-term plans and strategies prepared, but at the same time the projects are mostly short-term activities. Therefore, the main objective for the City of Nyíregyháza for its participation in an UR-BACT-network is to create **long-term and sustainable solutions** to

Remaining challenges -
especially in the social field



The End of the Local School

these problems with the support from the network-partners and with the instrument of an **Integrated Local Action Plan** as it is required for all URBACT network cities.

3. The Local School for Roma | A Part of History

The **Huszár estate** developed in a **spontaneous** way, it was not made planned or organised. Roma people at a certain stage, started to move into this area. And as a reaction to this tendency, the local authorities step by step tried to provide all the necessary services that could support integration.

The **local school** that was run in this area was part of these activities. It was not only used by children from the Roma community, but over time the proportion of other pupils decreased drastically and only Roma children remained. The advantage of the school was that the teachers were highly qualified and trained in tackling the Roma problems. Their work was well supported by the different services that were available in the area.

The problem was that at a certain point segregated schools were not allowed anymore in Hungary. If the City of Nyíregyháza had continued to run this school, it would have lost all national support for all schools in the city. Therefore, at this stage, the local school at the Huszár estate needed to be closed.

When this school was given up, the City of Nyíregyháza tried to organise and accompany **transfer and inclusion of the pupils into other schools** as smooth as possible. The approach was to provide additional support and services to those schools that accepted the children from this closed school. The City of Nyíregyháza also tried to provide help to the families who sent their children to school so that a smooth transfer without major problems could be organised.

4. New Chances | A new Socio-Cultural Centre for the Huszár Estate

Once the local school was closed, the City of Nyíregyháza used this empty building as a **resource for the their integrated development of the Huszár estate**. With support from various levels and organisations, and in close co-operation with the Human-Net Foundation, this building was prepared as a new Community Centre for the Huszár estate - from now on acting as a focal point for integrated neighbourhood development.



National legislation forced the city to close the local school



Efforts to organise a smooth transfer to new schools

Using the redundant school building as a resource

Opening Speech

The opening of this new centre was celebrated with an interesting event, that did not only present the new building with all its equipment for future benefit to the local community, but also a number of very interesting and also critical **presentations from local politicians, professionals and experts.**



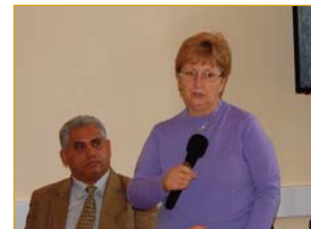
The opening event, an important day for the project team from Nyíregyháza, did not only generate **high interest from local and regional press and television.**

Also various **RegGov-partners** came to join their colleagues from Nyíregyháza on this important day.

4.1 Official Welcome and Opening

Judit Csabai | Mayor of the City of Nyíregyháza

In her opening speech, Mrs. Csabai, Mayor of the City of Nyíregyháza, stresses that the families in the Huszár estate cannot continue to live in the conditions which are existing in the estate today. At the same time she draws the attention of this opening's visitors to the fact that there will be **no short-term solution** to this problem and that for the City of Nyíregyháza it is not an option to try to solve the problem with efforts to spread the members of this local community all over the city.



Mrs. Csabai expresses the intention of the City of Nyíregyháza to gradually improve the living and housing conditions of this community in their estate, where they are living now as the only promising and sustainable way ahead.

Improve people's living conditions in their own areas

This is also in line with the **Integrated City Development Strategy**, which has been decided by the town council in 2007, defining general objectives for the development of the city and its various areas for the period from 2007 until 2013. In this plan, an improvement of the housing conditions as well as the social infrastructure facilities has been foreseen for the Huszár estate.

Being realistic, Mrs. Csabai stresses that all of these objectives will not be realised in that funding period, as there is a general **lack of resources and funding** for all the tasks that need to be accomplished for a sustainable development of Nyíregyháza.

Long-term commitment and investment is needed

In the light of these conditions, it is even more important that today the new Community Centre can be opened here, realised with the support from the Hungarian government and also from the city's European partners who have provided support and advice.

Social and Child Welfare Services

Establishing this **new focal point for the development of the Huszár estate** was not a planned activity originally, but was rather the successful use of a sudden opportunity when the segregated school, hosted in this building beforehand, needed to be closed.

Mrs. Csabai expresses her pride, that the Huszár estate now hosts such a beautiful building, but at the same time stresses that the building can only make a successful contribution to the estate's integrated development if it is actively used from now on for **a variety of activities and services**.

And, in the view of Mrs. Csabai, these activities must also include targeted efforts to **improve the training and employment situation of the local community** as a crucial pre-condition for lasting success of the initiative and an improved integration of this community into the surrounding society. So, helping the local community to get better education, better professional training and then supporting them on their way towards a long-term employment remains the main challenge and task to be accomplished.

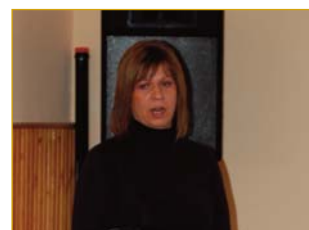
This includes, in the view of Mrs. Csabai, a special focus on the situation and the **development opportunities of the children** living in this area, and at the same time targeted efforts to build bridges between this segregated estate and the rest of the city. Good education, a variety of sports activities and the support for the creation of community spirit, pride and team spirit can be essential starting point for an improvement of the current situation.

4.2 The role of the social and child welfare services on Huszár estate

Erika Kemenes | Head of Social Department of the City of Nyíregyháza

Mrs. Kemenes, Head of the Social Department of the City of Nyíregyháza, is especially proud to be able to contribute to this opening, as she started her professional career in this area and therefore has a very special relation to this local community. And 'local community' in this case means, as Mrs. Kemenes emphasises, talking about **800 families with 2,000 persons** living in these poor and excluded conditions, with more than 25% of them being children under the age of 14.

Even though at the start of her work in this estate, the living conditions have been even worse and improvements have been achieved since then, it is important for Mrs. Kemenes that all possible efforts are undertaken to make sure that there will be **no further degradation of social conditions**, even in the current times of worldwide economic



Social and Child Welfare Services

crisis, and that more improvements will be achieved over the next years.

This must refer to an improvement of the **housing conditions**, as the existing 600 housing units, of which 250 are owned by the local authorities of Nyíregyháza, are in most cases overcrowded and far too small for the families living there, at the same time showing a very low standard of comfort and equipment.

But, future activities and efforts in this area will also need to relate to an improvement of the **educational situation and achievements** – to provide the local community with better employment chances, contributing to an improvement of the currently very low income levels, which are here at 94,000 HUF yearly income that compares to 177,000 at the average city level. Expressed in a different way – and again showing why the Huszár estate needs to be an area of special attention over the next years: 70% of Nyíregyháza's poor people and 24% of its recipients of social welfare payments for children live in this estate.

Some of the **improvements which have been achieved** here during the last years include

- a **local doctor** that provides the area with medical services since 1990;
- a **higher rate of local children visiting kindergardens**, 30% of them going to the local kindergarden, which created in 1994 the „Step by Step“-programme, but which is far too small for the area, so that the other children visit kindergardens in other parts of the city;
- a **Family Health and Welfare Centre** that has been established in 2003 and also offers many support activities for children and homeless people;
- the start of a good **co-operation with the Human-Net Foundation** in 2004, offering a variety of new services and activities, including a Child Protection and Welfare Service, a Day Time Service and the employment of a special family worker who supports parents in educational matters, especially convincing them to send their children to kindergardens and schools.

The local authorities of Nyíregyháza have, also on an organisational and-general level, permanently undertaken efforts to improve their services. This has also meant to break larger services up into smaller units with the aim to create more targeted and flexible organisations that are able to cope with the growing complex problems in a better way and to create a higher efficiency in service delivery.



Many achievements - but
many remaining challenges



URBACT II as a Partner

At the same time, it cannot be ignored that essential services are still missing in the area: For Mrs. Kemenes, this refers especially to an **urgently needed medical service provision** to improve the nutrition and health situation in the local community.

With regard to the development of adapted and efficient future activities and services, the most important problem for the City of Nyíregyháza is the **lack of data** that would be necessary to understand and monitor the situation in various parts, neighbourhoods and estates of the city.



4.3 The URBACT II RegGov Project: History and the Future

David R. Froessler | URBACT Expert

David R. Froessler, who has accompanied and supported the team from Nyíregyháza in their activities to develop an Integrated Action Plan for the Huszár estate as URBACT expert for more than one year now, expresses in the opening of his speech his pride to be able to join the friends and colleagues from Nyíregyháza on this important day - being part of an event that clearly shows that **the project makes progress** and that even in difficult times little steps towards the larger objectives can be achieved - if local politicians as well as professionals are committed to a project and give it their full support like in Nyíregyháza.



He explains that the RegGov-network is the framework for the joint work between the City of Nyíregyháza and its partners, an international network which is financed by the URBACT-programme for a working period of three years. The main concern of the URBACT Programme is to **support cities in developing long-term integrated plans** to develop and regenerate their most deprived neighbourhoods.

Experience has shown that in the past most countries and cities have done sectoral and short-term projects only and that these approaches did not lead to comprehensive and sustainable improvements for those neighbourhoods and estates. What the URBACT Programme wants to promote and support instead is to establish in all member cities **a new culture of long term integrated development planning**.

There are **two main innovative elements** to make these objectives reality in the member cities of URBACT networks – both of them opportunities, but at the same time contractual obligations for the member cities of this network.

The first innovative element is that each partner in an URBACT network needs to establish a comprehensive local partnership to get all

Long-term integrated
strategies instead of
stop-and-go projects

URBACT II as a Partner

local and regional stakeholders involved in the development of the integrated planning process and to make everybody work together and contribute. These partnerships are called 'Local Support Group' and it is the firm intention of all partners involved that they will operate a lot longer than the RegGov-network itself and that such partnerships, once developed as pilots in the member cities, will also be set up and used for other areas and tasks in these cities.



The second innovative element that is supported with this URBACT network's activities and exchange is a clear improvement of what is called 'vertical cooperation' in neighbourhood development. This means that all relevant authorities and organisations have to learn and develop a new co-operation culture between neighbourhoods, their city, the surrounding region and the national level – an improved co-operation between all policy levels. This is of special importance as the European regions in their new function as Managing Authorities are now responsible for the management of the European Structural Funds, a more and more important source of finance for integrated urban development.

The entire RegGov-network has ten member cities, half of them being from the so called Competitiveness Regions in the European Union, five cities from Germany, Sweden, Hungary, Greece and the Netherlands. These cities and regions work together with additional 5 partners from the so-called Cohesion Regions, adding partners from Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and Italy. An important characteristic of this RegGov-network is the fact that it is not only assembling ten cities for an interregional co-operation, exchange and learning process, but also the ten regions, represented by their Managing Authorities as active partners and supporters of this network.

European cities with different skills and experiences supporting each other

The co-operation of the RegGov-partners is organised in Thematic Clusters: The partners of the ten cities and regions defined the four most important topics they wanted to deal with in the framework of this RegGov-network. These topics were then grouped in so called Thematic Clusters:

- The first Thematic Cluster is dealing with the question how cities in a region can learn from each other and co-operate on a regional level in the development and implementation of integrated urban development and regeneration.
- The second Thematic Cluster deals with the question how the private sector can be actively involved in integrated urban and neighbourhood development and what forms of support and co-operation can be organised in this context – knowing that this is a very difficult task, especially in the current times of worldwide economic crisis.

URBACT II as a Partner

- The third Thematic Cluster deals with **the integration of the most excluded groups** which are difficult to integrate in our urban society. The work of this Thematic Cluster will refer to two groups: initially to the Roma-communities in the participating cities and, at a later stage, to the young people who very often grow up in stigmatised and deprived areas where they do not get a good education and preparation for an independent life.
- The fourth Thematic Cluster deals with **city-wide monitoring systems** – to monitor in a regular and structured way the developments in the various parts of our cities, allowing intervention at an early stage of negative development trends.



What the network partners promised to the European Commission and to the URBACT Secretariat who finance and support all of these activities, is that at the end of the network there will be **10 active Local Support Groups** established and stabilised – **10 comprehensive local partnerships** which will continue to work in the member cities after the end of the programme. And, there is also an agreement that there will, at the end of this network-funding, be **more than 10 Integrated Local Action Plans** ready in the member cities, because some of the cities will develop with the help of their partners more than one Local Action Plan.

The main aim of all network activities is to qualify and improve the quality of those Local Action Plans, also to strengthen their position in the **competition for funding in their regions**. It is clear that there is a high competition in each region for the resources provided by the European Structural Funds. But, the RegGov-network wants its member cities to have the best plans in that competition. Thanks to the partners in this process and thanks to the support from the URBACT-Secretariat in Paris.

Support the member cities
in designing innovative
projects and getting funding

In concluding his speech, David R. Froessler emphasises that the City of Nyíregyháza has always been one of the most dedicated, committed and innovative partner in the RegGov-Network, and therefore it feels good to see them having success with their work today.

For him, this opening shows again **the high innovation potential of the City of Nyíregyháza for European urban policy making** in various respects, as this newly created centre is

- an excellent example for the adaptation and re-use of a redundant building and a given up local infrastructure facility;
- a model case for decentralised and integrated service provision;
- focusing on the most important target group: the children and young people as the future of our urban societies;

The Local Roma Government

- with local non-profit associations and volunteers as driving forces and good partners of the local authorities;
- a new and visible focal point for the future of the Huszár estate and its people.

David R. Froessler wishes all partners in this projects further success in the continuation of their work, in order to bring a **change and a positive future** to the Huszár estate, to bring change, hope and a real perspective in life to the Huszár estate's citizens, to create **an example for innovative and future-oriented policy making and service delivery** in Nyíregyháza and to help to strengthen and to further improve the excellent reputation of the City of Nyíregyháza as a committed, human and successful European city.

And, he finally assures all friends and partners in Nyíregyháza that he will continue to accompany them on that way and provide all possible support that might help to improve the situation of deprived people and commiunities in their city.

A start for a process of
improvements and change -
with continued support

4.4 Activities of the Local Government for Roma

Arthur Balogh | Chairman of the Local Government for Roma

First of all, Mister Balogh expresses his gratitude that the European Union is investing in the future of this community. For him, this fact and the opening that is celebrated today, is a **'historic event'**.

Mister Balogh explains that it was only in 1993, that a Hungarian law has established a **self-government for minorities** in this country. In the county that is surrounding Nyíregyháza, there are 122 local councils for various minorities.

While this is certainly seen as progress, Mister Balogh still wants to attract the attention of today's guests to the fact that this does not automatically lead to the necessary political participation of Roma in Hungary. Their presence in the Parliament is not guaranteed, as Roma people can only enter the Parliament by becoming regular members of certain political parties. This usually leads to a situation where the few Roma members of Parliament are more dedicated to the interests of their political parties than the interests and needs of the Roma communities in the country.

The same problem exists on the local level – where Roma communities again are not represented in the local councils and therefore, in most cases, their problems are discussed and decisions with regard to their future are taken in their absence.



The Local Roma Government

So, in the best case the Local Government for the Roma minority is asked for advice when relevant decisions need to be taken, but they are never really involved in the decision making process. This situation is regarded by Mister Balogh as a „half-democracy”.

With regard to processes of better education, employment and integration of Roma people into the Hungarian society, Mister Balogh reports that there are young members of the Roma community who finish high school and then successfully obtain a university degree. But then, in most cases, they are employed by Roma organisations and the self-government, while **the mainstream society and large companies and employers still discriminate and exclude them**. The Roma self-government tries to set a positive example in this respect by employing also non-Roma people and trying to build bridges between those two separated parts of the Hungarian society. But, this of course has a very limited effect on the overall situation.

Therefore, his main request and advice towards local politicians is that **the Hungarian society urgently needs a profound change in attitude** towards this topic – and that more bridges between the different parts of the Hungarian society need to be built – possibly starting with enforced cultural events and activities, but then also having a clear focus on an integrated labour market.

Before the change of the political system, 90% of the Roma people were employed, most of them either in the construction sector or in government services. That created opportunities for an independent life for them. Today, Hungary is characterised by a very high rate of unemployment, which affects also members of the mainstream society, but to a much higher degree members of minorities, especially the Roma communities. Therefore, it needs an **active support of local, regional and central government to create social inclusion** in the Hungarian society, otherwise the aim to integrate the Roma communities will remain a dream and the development of a competitive and sustainable Hungarian country and society might equally remain a dream.

With regard to the history of the building that is opened today as a Community Centre for the Huszár estate, Mister Balogh explains that this special school for the Roma children was a very important institution. At the same time he admits, that the relationship between pupils, parents and teachers at that school was sometimes wrong: In many cases, parents came to the school and told the teachers what to do and what not to do – with the teachers often being afraid of them and not able to act against such advice.

Therefore, the decision to give up segregated schools certainly was the right one, especially as Mister Balogh is convinced that the children



Advantages, but also
disadvantages of the former
segregated school

The Local Roma Government

from the Roma communities need to get to know other cultures, habits and mentalities in time, so that at a later stage in their education and professional training they are able to **cope with the mainstream society** and find their way in it.

At the same time, the closure of this local segregated school created many challenges and difficulties for the local community, especially the children and the young people. During and after the change of their school, the children had tutors and mentors to help them with the integration into their new schools and classes. For them, a good school is not only important as a place where they have a chance to get a good education and the option of later training and employment, for them, **school usually is also the place where they get the only warm meal** in their life.

The support to these young people and children is provided by a variety of organisations which all co-operate. But, no matter how many specialised organisations are providing support, Mister Balogh concludes that **progress made so far has been very very limited**: He observes some improvements with regard to the participation of children in kindergartens and schools and referring to their educational achievements.

But, at the same time, he observes that progress with regard to inclusion in the labour market and access to good employment opportunities for members of the Roma community, even those with a good education and training, still is a shame: The mainstream society as well as the large companies still discriminate and exclude them. This needs to be regarded as the most important **obstacles towards social cohesion** that would be so important for the Hungarian society – also, and maybe: especially, in times like the current ones where the country has been severely hit by the consequences and effects of the worldwide economic crisis.

4.5 Experiences with school integration of Roma children

Mr. Attila Vitál | Expert

Mister Vitál is working in the Huszár estate since 1999, dealing with housing issues and problems related to the housing situation in this community. Over the last 10 years, he has become **acquainted with each individual family in the area**. He has done various studies with regard to the links between the social status and situation of a family and the health and educational situation and perspectives.

Mister Vitál reports that the **dropout rate from school** amongst Roma children is 10 times as high as the one in the overall local society and that Roma children have 50% less chances to finish a higher education.



Progress made in the recent
past is far too limited



Experiences with School Integration

With regard to the overall situation, Mister Vitál reports that there is still a **very distinct and clear exclusion with regard to the housing situation, the employment opportunities and the provision of public services** related to health, education and social assistance.

For him, segregation in the education system always needs to be regarded in a very differentiated way, as his studies have shown that there is **spontaneous, directed and institutional segregation**. An example of a 'directed segregation' is, following his observations, what happened to the children from this estate when the segregated school that is now opened as a Community Centre was closed: At that time, Mister Vitál reports, the Roma children from the Huszár estate were not distributed to any schools, but mainly to special schools in the city, in most cases those schools which were run for mentally handicapped children.

Therefore, the question if segregated or integrated schools are the better solution, is a very difficult one to answer for Mister Vitál. He sees clear advantages also in segregated schools, as they can provide a homogenous education for Roma-children, one coherent approach that takes into account their specific background and culture with tailor-made education concepts, and it can ensure that, at this period of a child's life, there is **no discrimination and prejudice**, but a welcoming system that gives the best possible support to each child.

On the other hand, Mister Vitál agrees that mixed schools have the clear advantage that they give a stimulus for integration at an early stage, teaching the children in a "controlled" environment to **learn to understand and accept other cultures**. This can, of course, help the Roma children to get prepared for discrimination that will hit them sooner or later in their life in the Hungarian society and perhaps provide them with skills and routines to deal with such discrimination.

But, experiences have shown that integrated or 'de-segregated' schools do not only face resistance from the mainstream society, but also from the Roma communities – not their leaders, but the ordinary people and parents. This is partially a consequence of the fact that such 'de-segregation' has been started and implemented as a bureaucratic and administrative process, **without involving the Roma communities in the decision making and the [mental] preparation for this process**. If such schemes are meant to be successful and also accepted by Roma parents, Mister Vitál is convinced that it needs much more dialogue before they are implemented.

The lack of acceptance from the mainstream society has led to a situation where this 'de-segregation concept' has created some sort of **'two-class'-school system**. When Roma children were distributed to schools around town, many parents from the mainstream society did



Segregated schools gave
more tailor-made support

De-segregated schools give
more chances for early
integration

De-segregation in schools
provoked resistance
from all sides

Experiences with School Integration

not accept that and took their children off those public schools. Instead, they sent their children to private and church schools which cannot be forced by the local authorities to accept Roma children. So, the de-segregated schools are now mainly the public schools, while private schools still are dominated by the mainstream society and in most cases would not accept Roma children. This tendency creates a new risk that there will be more and more a separation into middle-class [= private and church] schools and underclass schools that host children from minorities or otherwise disadvantaged families.

In a wider view, recent developments in Hungary show very negative tendencies with regard to the concept of de-segregated schools. There are more and more Internet forums with chat facilities that deal with this topic and they are becoming more and more racist.

With regard to the Roma children who are now in de-segregated schools, Mister Vitál reports that in many cases they had a lack of knowledge and skills when they entered the school, together with the general feeling of being not welcome that resulted in failures in the new schools. This combination again enlarged their frustration and their lack of motivation to actively participate and succeed in the new school. This downward spiral, in its next step, led with some young people to a growing degree of violence, developed as some sort of compensation for all the failure and frustration – and, of course, such tendencies as understandable as they might be, contributed to a further increase of prejudices against Roma children in 'regular' schools. This is what Mister Vitál calls the "Vicious Cycle of Educational Exclusion".

These tendencies, together with the observation that there is also a very high degree of 'hidden segregation' in schools [with separate classes for Roma children], leads Mister Vitál to a very clear analysis and demand to the politicians: The concept of de-segregation in schools might be the right way, but in the present case it has not been sufficiently prepared: As it was mentioned already, there was a lack of involvement and dialogue with the Roma communities, but there was also a very obvious lack in the preparation of teachers to this new situation. They do not know how to deal with these children and they are not prepared in any way to deal with these new tensions and conflicts in their schools.

As long as such deficits are not overcome, Mister Vitál sees severe risks in the concept of de-segregated schools: Especially with regard to the fact that Roma children will show more and more absenteeism from school, lower school performance and higher rates of class repetition and school drop-outs.



A public mood and climate
against Roma citizens

The Vicious Cycle of
Educational Exclusion...

The Human-Net Foundation

And, first experiences show very clearly that there is a very tight link between the age of a child at the time of transfer and such risks: The older children have been at the time of their transfer to a de-segregated school, the higher their lacks of knowledge and skills have been compared to the other children in their classes and the more difficult their integration has turned out to be.



The older children, in many cases, do neither speak a proper Hungarian nor a proper Roma language. Especially for them, the new schools and teachers were not prepared and no educational models, methods of instruments were known or tested.

Their former teachers from the local, segregated school at the Huszár estate have not been able to be of great help to those young people and children. These teachers of the former segregated school were made “tutors” in the new, de-segregated schools, which was already a very negative development in their personal careers, but they were also not accepted by their new colleagues in the de-segregated schools and tended to be as excluded there as the new children.

To summarise all of these experiences and findings in one sentence, Mister Vitál concludes his presentation with the very clear statement that ‘de-segregation in the school system means a lot more than just re-distributing children across the local schools’.

De-segregation in the school
system is much more than
re-distributing children

This seems to be a very obvious message, but Mister Vitál is convinced that **absolutely necessary support activities to children, parents and also teachers have been neglected and missed during this recent process.**

4.6 The Human-Net Foundation's Equal Opportunity Programmes

János Nyírcsák | Director of the Human-Net Foundation

Mr. Nyírcsák explains in the opening of his presentation that the Human-Net Foundation was created in 1996. After having developed many different projects and services, the foundation took over the family assistance services from the City of Nyíregyháza a few years ago.



The high number of projects and the variety of services provided by the Human-Net Foundation need a lot of **financial resources**. 50% of these costs are covered by the City of Nyíregyháza, the remaining 50% are covered by projects which and resources which are acquired by the foundation through competition – making proposals when relevant Calls for Tender are published by other funding organisations and authorities.

The Human-Net Foundation

All together, the Human-Net Foundation has raised 1.5 million Euro from such successful bidding since its creation.

Current activities and services of the foundation include

- Assistance to people with social, mental or life-style problems;
- Mediation services;
- Individual and group support activities;
- Psycho-social assistance to individuals;
- Information about existing services and support facilities;
- Help to long-term unemployed people;
- Christmas activities or other events related to special days like Mother's Day, Children's Day etc.

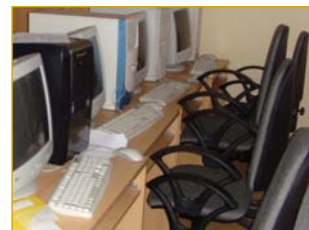
Assistance to families in most cases is given in small groups of families or family members. Support activities to improve employment chances of excluded groups or people are provided through the 'Carriage Project' in the entire region around Nyíregyháza. This also includes a 3-week lab to improve skills needed for employment search and also accompanying people for a limited time in their search for a job.

So far, the Human-Net foundation has made 450 people participate in employment programmes, many of them entering employment or training afterwards. In a recent programme, 19 participants were registered, of which at the end of the course 17 gained a diploma and 11 of those successful participants then found employment.

A programme that is targeted at young people at the age group from 12 – 20 years is called 'Look to the Future in a Different Way'. This programme intends to improve the social skills of participants, help them to develop way to spend their leisure time in a good way and, in general, support them in their efforts to improve the quality of their lifes.

200 children have until now participated in an Artistic Programme that develops individual skills of the children and young people and has a clear benefit for their school performance as one of the positive outcomes. This is also the case for other activities with groups of children, like classes that teach folkloristic dances.

The Safe Start Programme support families and children in their physical, social and intellectual development in order to prepare a successful start of the children in school.



The Child Welfare Centre

Even though many activities of the Human-Net Foundation are aimed at Roma people, the methods learnt and applied there are also used to help and support other disadvantaged groups: This refers, for example, to projects with refugees that support refugee families and have special elements to support the women of refugees.



Mr. Nyírcsak is very proud that the foundation will now have a home in the Huszár estate with the new Community Centre that is opened today. Even though this building will, from now on, not host a school anymore, Mr. Nyírcsak is convinced and determined that it will remain **a place for learning and personal development.**

There will be a strong focus on work with children and teenagers from the estate, but the Human-Net Foundation will equally offer courses, projects and support activities for other age groups from the local community.

Support to all groups of the
local community

4.7 The Child Welfare Centre's Activities to Support Roma Children

Dr. Lajos Hüse | Director of the Child Welfare Centre

Dr. Hüse opens his presentation by confirming the findings of the previous speakers: In the current Hungarian society, he sees still overwhelming tendencies of ghetto-forming, extreme poverty and unemployment amongst the Roma and a lack of education – often leading to criminal activities on the black market and in prostitution in order to gain an income.



For him, this needs to be mentioned as a basis for all further discussion about de-segregated school systems, because due to his own research and observations one thing has always been neglected: Even if the younger children look 'from the outside' like normal children, they are coming out of an entirely different world and are **not at all prepared to integrate themselves in a new, de-segregated school** that is part of the mainstream society.

And, Dr. Hüse is equally convinced that as long as the system and the policy does not really understand this situation and take its implications into account in all planning and strategic considerations, the requirements which are made towards these children are not realistic and cannot be fulfilled by them.

A better and deeper understanding is needed for a
successful support

Therefore, his **proposals for a process of de-segregation that has chances to be successful** include first of all the request to establish a more intense and regular case management for the children that includes their entire family.

The Child Welfare Centre

Secondly, the challenges and requirements of this de-segregation efforts should be analysed much more intensely as a basis for the development of training packages for teachers, social workers and case managers. These members of staff who have a crucial role for the success of this concept, need to be trained and re-trained again repeatedly until successful models and local practice have been developed and shown to be successful.

Thirdly, Dr. Lüse suggests to accept that these huge challenges cannot be handled during the school lessons alone. Therefore, his third request is to also offer social and educational activities for the Roma children after school to provide them with additional support and coaching.

On the basis of many years of practical experiences in this field as well as research activities, Dr. Lüse is convinced that any model of de-segregation that has a chance for a lasting success needs to start with

- the development and application of **training for specialists**,
- the development of and training for **signaling systems** to be applied in schools,
- **anti-discrimination training** for teachers, social works and young people in schools,
- the training and employment of **facilitators** in schools, specialised on stress handling and life skills,
- a more coherent **connection between the child's school world and family life**,
- attention for and development of **tailor-made solutions to individual problems** like the lack of money for the school bus as it occurs in many Roma families and
- the development of a reliable system of **individual case management** in schools that deal with the children, their parents and their teachers in a comprehensive and integrating way.

The overall aim, as simple as it might sound, must be to make also the Roma children **enjoy their school** and to **strengthen communities of children within schools**. The intensity and kind of support a child will need from such a system will need to be assessed in each individual case, as it depends very much on the distance of the individual child from the mainstream children's culture and the mainstream society.

As one example that proves the potential for success that such socialisation programmes can have, Dr. Lüse mentions the '**Nutcracker Club**': In this model, children with adaptation problems find a safe therapy group that provides them with a friendly and welcoming environment



[A much more comprehensive support system is needed](#)

The Child Welfare Centre

were they can learn to overcome their deficits and problems. Experiences with this approach have shown that children who are regarded as trouble makers and problems in their schools here, in a friendly and sensitive environment, are really nice, friendly and co-operative children, so that the therapists have real difficulties to understand why and how any teacher or other person in their school can have a problem with them.

As one practical conclusion from these experiences, Dr. Lüse concludes that teachers in de-segregated schools need to **learn to give also positive feedback** to children who have difficulties with their integration into school and class life. If such positive feedback is never provided, as in most cases, experiences show that also any negative feedback and request for change will never be accepted by these children.

Dr. Lüse adds a very important additional aspect that is very often neglected: The therapy in groups like the 'Nutcracker Club' very often discovers also medical problems of children and needs for medical treatment which in normal school life are never discovered, but can be decisive for the future and success of a child in its school.

And, no matter how demanding and difficult this might seem, Dr. Lüse, on the basis of his experiences with many children and families adds one more important demand: If the system is not able to help Roma women who live as prostitutes to develop a different perspective and source of income in their life, the system will not be able to prevent many children to be forced into prostitution as well sooner or later, no matter how much efforts have been undertaken to integrate them into de-segregated schools.

Other examples of positive approaches that lead to clear improvements of Roma children's self-esteem and integration chances are a **Child Orchestra** that uses the music skills of Roma children and gives them a chance to apply them and to develop a sense of pride, that they can do something really well – or simply leisure time activities with these children – like the **Summer Camps** that have been offered in 2008 and 2009 – offering the children for a limited time a safe environment, good nutrition and the chance to play, to learn and to do sports – with the sports activities to be a very important element to teach them rules of competition and to learn that a competitor is not automatically an enemy who needs to be treated with violence.

All the activities that Dr. Lüse has mentioned and demanded for a successful integration of Roma children require a high amount of resources, especially money. In the past, these **resources** have been contributed by the local authorities of Nyíregyháza, by donations from companies and private people, by a lot of volunteers who have given



Support for children needs
to include their parents

Leisure time activities to
develop social skills and give
reasons to be proud

The Child Welfare Centre

their time for free to make activities possible and also by students who have contributed to projects and activities with unpaid work during placements in these projects.

And, also something that should be mentioned on a day like this: Such activities have not remained unnoticed or without reward: Dr. Lüse reports that the Summer Camp 2008 has won a price for Child Protection and that the Nutcraker Club has won such a price in 2009.

But, no matter how important such prizes might be for the motivation of volunteers and co-workers and for future funding opportunities, Dr. Lüse makes it very clear that for him and all other professionals and volunteers involved, the most important reward of all these activities, in the end, are **happy children** who have a chance to lead a decent life one day in the Hungarian society.

He therefore concludes his presentation with a quotation from Mark Twain that recommends not to spend too much time to search for a logic in life, but to invest this time instead to give a meaning and a sense to your life.....

david r froessler

duesseldorf | december 2009



The final aim are happy
children with chances in life



Programme

Wednesday, 9 December 2009



- 9:00h Arrival of participants
- 10:00h Official Welcome and Opening
Mrs Csabai Judit | Mayor of the City of Nyíregyháza
- 10:20h The role of the social and child welfare services on Huszár estate
Ms. Erika Kemenes | Head of the Social Department of the City of Nyíregyháza
- 10:40h The URBACT II RegGov Project: History and the Future
Dipl.-Ing. David R. Froessler | Urbact Expert
- 11:00h Presentation of the activities of the local government for the Roma Minority
Mr. Arthur Balogh | Chairmen of the Roma Minority
- 11:20h Experiences with the integration of Roma children in regular schools
Mr. Attila Vitál | Expert
- 11:40 h Presentation of the Human-Net Foundation's Equal Opportunity Programmes
Mr. János Nyírcsák | Director of the Human-Net Foundation
- 12:00h Overcoming the deprived situation of Roma children: The activities of the Child Welfare Center
Dr. Lajos Hüse | Director of the Child Welfare Centre
- 12:20h Guided Tour: Services and Functions of the new Socio-Cultural Centre
- 13:45h Lunch

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City Report

Nyíregyháza | Hungary

Official Opening of the
Huszárvár Socio-Cultural Centre

Huszár Estate | 9 December 2009



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The logo for 'URBANO' consists of the word 'URBANO' in a bold, uppercase, sans-serif font. Below it, the text 'Urban Research & Consultancy' is written in a smaller, uppercase font. The logo is set against a light purple background that has a white diagonal shape on the left side.

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