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Roma Entrepreneurship, a promising answer to Roma employment in the Western Balkans.

Event hosted by

MEP Romeo Franz and MEP Sergey Lagodinsky
(Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance, Germany)

29 SEPTEMBER 2021
11:30H – 13:00H CET

Objectives:

The central theme of the 2021 European Parliament Romani week Western Balkans session focuses on the importance of employment, as a key element for breaking the circle of exclusion.

Roma community's access to employment remains one of the major challenges and a clear barrier for sustainable inclusion. Data show that the rate of unemployment of Roma is well beyond the national average and that an important share of the existing employment is in the informal market. Initiatives targeting employment in the public sector, improvement of employment offices approach to reach Roma population or address employment discrimination, delivered limited results. More needs to be done and new approaches pursued. In the context, the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance has started supporting a project to address entrepreneurship in the Western Balkans.

During the session, panellists will discuss the importance of supporting and developing the right skills and build capacity of Roma entrepreneurs with the view to have them actively contribute to the recovery of the Western Balkans economies, and to the implementation of the European Investment Plan for Western Balkans (COM 2020/641 final of 6 October 2020).

The objective of this session is to present the innovative “Roma entrepreneurship approach” already tested in some Member States and Western Balkans economies, to share experience of beneficiaries and to show-case reference examples.



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Programme

11.30 – 11.40: **Launch of the event and opening statements**

- MEPs – Mr Romeo Franz and Mr Sergey Lagodinsky

11.40 – 11.50: **What COVID meant for Roma entrepreneurs and Roma communities and the importance of Roma entrepreneurship.**

- M. Petrica Dulgheru, Executive Director REDI

11.50 – 12.10: **Economic Recovery and entrepreneurship support programs in North Macedonia - Match Fund:**

- Ms. Nadire Redjepi, Director of field operations
- M. Elvis Memeti, Advisor for prime Minister North Macedonia
- M. Vase Davaliev, CEO Horizonti Microfinance
- M. Ferki Demirovski, Roma Entrepreneur
- M. Asan Ferat, Roma Entrepreneur

12.10 – 12.30: **Economic Recovery and support programs in Serbia:**

- Ms. Nadire Redjepi, Director of field operations.
- M. Ivica Kojic, Head of Cabinet President of Serbia (tbc)
- M. Bogdan Merfea, Former Director REDI Fund
- Ms. Sladjana Vasic, Roma Entrepreneur
- M. Osman Balic, REDI Business Clubs

12.30 – 12.50: **Green and digital revolution: “Are Roma suitable to play a role in this arena?”**

- M. Petrica Dulgheru, Executive Director REDI
- M. Asib Zekir, Executive Director REDI Recycling Skopje
- Ms. Lea Shkallu, Helvetas Sarajevo
- M. Zoran Simic, Roma Entrepreneur

12.50 – 13.00: **Conclusions and Closing of the session**

- Ms. Marta Garcia Fidalgo, Adviser on Roma integration and Equality Coordinator
European Commission DG Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations