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#EU4Youth

From barriers to opportunities: How Roma youth can be supported to enter the labour market

For many young Roma people in the Republic of Moldova, the path to employment begins with obstacles that may seem small, but are difficult to overcome: lack of identity documents, limited access to information, insufficient qualifications, or the distance to vocational training centres. At Impact Days Moldova 2026, representatives of public institutions, non-governmental organisations, and the Roma community discussed these barriers, as well as solutions that are already producing tangible results.

Discrimination in the labour market remains a reality

According to data presented during the panel by Victorina Luca, Member of the Council for Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality, more than half of the cases examined by the Council in 2025 concerned discrimination in employment. Among the most common cases were unequal treatment of employees, denial of promotion opportunities, workplace harassment, and dismissals motivated by discriminatory criteria.

Referring to illiteracy and functional illiteracy, Victorina Luca noted that the lack of basic skills such as reading, writing, or preparing a CV can become a major barrier to securing employment.

“Many people do not know how to read and write or prepare a CV. It is very difficult to obtain a job without these basic skills,” Victorina Luca pointed out.

At the same time, she emphasised that significant progress has been made in recent years regarding inclusion policies and support measures for vulnerable groups.

“The situation today is different from what it was 10-15 years ago. The subsidies and programmes available today are positive measures that are much more open to vulnerable populations and job seekers,” Victorina Luca stated.

Barriers preventing access to employment

From the perspective of the National Employment Agency (ANOFM), the challenges are numerous. Dina Turchin, senior expert with ANOFM, highlighted the lack of identity documents, limited knowledge of the Romanian language, lack of professional experience, and restricted access to information as the main obstacles encountered by beneficiaries.

Panel participants stressed that education and vocational training remain essential tools for integrating Roma people into the labour market. In this regard, the programme “EU4Youth:

Employment and Entrepreneurship among Youth," implemented in collaboration with the National Employment Agency, provided concrete examples of success.

Throughout the programme, information campaigns and outreach activities were carried out in Roma communities to facilitate access to information on employment and vocational training opportunities. Community mediators and ANOFM mobile teams played a key role in this process by travelling to localities and informing community members directly about available services.

"We meet local labour market actors with the support of local authorities. We ask local administrations to help bring young people to these meetings, and we present the services and opportunities available to them," explained Raisa Dogaru, Director of the National Employment Agency.

According to her, community mediators make a significant contribution to facilitating communication between public institutions and Roma communities, helping beneficiaries understand administrative procedures and access social, educational, and employment services.

The experience presented by Elena Rădița, a community mediator from Rîșcani, proves the importance of this role in building trust and encouraging participation in vocational training programmes.

Sixteen young women trained for a profession

Elena Rădița showcased the results of a project implemented with the support of the EU4Youth programme, through which 16 Roma young women participated in vocational training courses organised directly within their community.

"Sixteen Roma participants aged between 16 and 35 were trained to become seamstresses," Elena Rădița reported.

The success of the initiative was made possible through cooperation between the community, local authorities, and employment institutions. A decisive factor was the organisation of the training courses within the locality itself, eliminating one of the main barriers faced by Roma girls and young women.

"We all know that Roma girls are often not allowed by their parents to travel to another city to study. That is why we found a solution to organise the training locally. This was a success for all of us because all 16 girls attended the courses regularly," explained the community mediator.

The project has already generated success stories. Participants will benefit from practical internships and vocational training scholarships, and organisers hope they will become role models for other young people in their communities.

"I hope they will become ambassadors who will encourage other young people to contact the Employment Office and understand that they can obtain a valuable professional qualification," Elena Rădița said.

Change is possible

In conclusion, participants emphasised that the positive results already achieved demonstrate that change is possible when cooperation and mutual trust exist.

“We cannot say that the state does nothing for Roma people because we do have positive results. The state supports us, but there must also be willingness and commitment on our part,” concluded Elena Rădița.

The example of the 16 young women trained in Rîșcani shows that inclusion becomes possible when solutions are adapted to community realities: when training opportunities are brought closer to people, when information is clearly explained, and when institutions work together with community mediators and local authorities.

The EU4Youth Phase III Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship programme, co-funded by the European Union and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, is being executed by the Central Project Management Agency (CPVA) in Eastern Partnership countries. The programme will run until the middle of 2026 and aims to provide technical assistance to governmental and non-governmental organizations to tackle youth unemployment and improve employability.