



Center for Civic Education CIVITAS INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

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Civitas in Romania: Selected Highlights from the External On-site Evaluation Conducted by Gary Marx, Center for Public Outreach, May 28-June 7, 2011



In 2011 the Intercultural Institute of Timisoara (IIT), with years of experience in civic and intercultural education, piloted the use of the Project Citizen curricular program to address challenges in Roma communities throughout Romania. Project Citizen on Roma Issues promoted student awareness of Roma issues and challenged local authorities to take action to address these issues. Young people, guided by their classroom teachers, identified problems in the Roma community, used the Project Citizen process to research and develop policy-based solutions

to these problems, and presented these solutions to local authorities and community members.

Twenty-two teachers from eleven schools throughout Romania implemented the program with students of Roma and non-Roma backgrounds during the 2011 pilot program. This approach to civic education is now engaging students, families, and communities in identifying and addressing issues with significant implications for their futures. The evaluator's observations include the following:



- **Roma-Focused Issues Identified and Addressed by Romanian Students.** Among those issues being addressed by Project Citizen teams were abandonment of school; early marriages that cause young women to drop out; the lack of information among Roma community members about their rights; a lack of official papers or identification; health and well-being; lack of intercultural understanding; and a need for literacy.
- **Dealing with Issues of Diversity and Inclusion versus Exclusion.** IIT's creative and inclusive approach to Project Citizen could provide an example of a critical step in addressing internationally issues of diversity and inclusion versus exclusion of populations.
- **Benefits for Students.** When asked to identify how Project Citizen benefited them, students pointed out experiences such as identifying community problems and working as a team to develop solutions, gaining understanding and appreciation for differences among people, and meeting with public officials and members of the Roma community. Students said they had developed teamwork and communication skills; greater confidence, persistence, patience, politeness, perspective, and tolerance; an ability to empathize; and a greater understanding of rights and responsibilities.
- **Project Quality.** Student projects addressed important community issues, were well presented, and were reinforced by well-conceived support materials.
- **Likelihood to be Involved in Identifying and Solving Community Problems.** One-hundred percent of students who were asked said they were more likely to be involved in identifying and dealing with community issues and problems in the future.
- **Benefits for Teachers and Other Educators.** Local educators noted that Project Citizen's impact on their schools included greater interaction; more active learning and project-based education; students who are investigating and doing; improved communication with the Roma community; and better understanding of conditions students are facing.