

Cultural and Educational Women Association of Drosero Xanthi “ELPIDA” (“THE HOPE”)



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PRESS RELEASE **ELPIDA Represents the Roma of Xanthi at ERIO Meeting in Brussels**

Drosero, 21 November 2018 | ERIO – the European Roma Information Office – held its board meeting and conducted a workshop on "Ending Roma Discrimination in Housing and Health: Role of Equality Bodies," 13-14 November 2018 in Brussels. Sabiha Suleiman, Director of ELPIDA, was invited to participate, to exchange views with experts on the important housing and health issues that the Greek Roma face at the local and national level.

During the board meeting on 13 November, **priorities set for the 2019 agenda were the participation of Roma in public institutions and services as well as their participation in the public sphere, a paramount concern for the Roma in Greece.** During the discussion, Ms. Suleiman contributed information on the housing and health issues that concern the settlement of Drosero. Furthermore she described the problems that the young face in accessing both employment and education, with a key issue being their exclusion from the public schools of Xanthi.

The workshop, held on 14 November, included presidents of human rights organizations, representatives of the respective Ombudsmen from various European countries, representatives of non-governmental organizations, etc. Among them were Szabolcs Schmidt, head of the Roma issues unit in the European Commission, Florian Hartleb, Commission Analyst on Equality and Equality Issues, and Sheena Keller spokesperson from the European Agency for Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA).

In this workshop, each country representative described the discrimination that Roma face in terms of housing and health. Ms. Suleiman described the impact of the fact that the Drosero settlement is excluded from the urban plan of Xanthi. The consequences of this include a delapidated drainage network and difficulty accessing health care, due to a lack of public transportation.

Finally, the funding issue was discussed between the institutions, and it was decided that from 2021 onwards there will be changes in the allocations approved by the European Parliament for Roma issues. It was proposed to set up a special committee to assess whether the money provided by the EU for the Roma is being used in full to improve their living conditions and their equal treatment on the basis of their rights as citizens.

The event was held under the auspices of the European Parliament and the European Commission, and the workshop was organized in cooperation with the European

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Equality Network (EQUINET), funded by the Equality and Citizenship Program of the European Union and hosted by the Belgian Equality Body UNIA.

Photo captions

1. Sabiha Suleiman, Director of Elpida, arriving for the meeting in Brussels.
2. The participants in the workshop: "Ending ROMA Discrimination in Housing and Health: Role of Equality Bodies."

About ELPIDA:

ELPIDA (which means 'hope' in Greek), is a non-governmental organization, founded in August of 2006 on the initiative of 20 women in the Roma settlement of Drosero, near Xanthi, Greece. Elpida aims to improve the living conditions of the Roma in the settlement through education, dissemination of information, and advocacy.

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Sincerely,

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