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**Community centres and their roles in the context of marginalised Roma communities**

**ABSTRACT**

The active presence of the community centre and other "low-threshold social services" is generally considered to be one of the basic prerequisites for improving the situation of people from marginalised Roma communities.

The systematic support and functioning of a network of community centres is part of almost every strategy and action plan for improving the situation of people from marginalised Roma communities in Slovakia. This was no different in the case of the Slovak Strategy for Roma Integration until 2020 (hereinafter as Strategy). The initial emphasis on increasing the number has been complemented over time by a focus on sustainability and quality in service delivery.

It can be argued that there is strong political support for the promotion of community centres in marginalised Roma communities. This has been confirmed by the inclusion of community centres among the Roma integration programmes financed with the help of the European Social Fund through the Human Resources Operational Programme.

The purpose of the presented evaluation focused on the quality and availability of the community centres is to assess to what extent the set indicators are met, to what extent the criteria and parameters enable the performance of quality community centres respecting the basic characteristics of low-threshold and to what extent the smooth functioning of the selected social services at the local level is ensured.

Due to the specific period during which the evaluation was carried out, much attention is also paid to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the functioning and tasks of the community centres for crisis intervention.

The main objective of the evaluation carried out is to define recommendations that can be used for the benefit of the further implementation of the community centres in marginalized Roma communities. Therefore, the focus of the evaluation is mainly on aspects that have the capacity to positively influence the further functioning of community centres, such as support to staff capacities, administrative and methodological support or cooperation with other actors active at the local level.

For the purpose of the evaluation, emphasis was placed on the use of qualitative evaluation methods, information on project implementation was collected through three main methods: i) secondary data analysis, ii) online questionnaire survey and iii) semi-structured interviews.

In order to better conceptualize the community centres role on the topic of integration of marginalized Roma communities, several datasets of administrative data were also taken into account.