

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



2018 End of Year Report for the Settlement of Drosero, Xanthi

1) INTRODUCTION

Drosero is a settlement of Greek Roma, which is approximately 1.5 km from the city center of Xanthi. It is the largest settlement of Roma in Greece and many residents are permanent. The Women's Cultural Association of Drosero – ELPIDA (www.drosero.eu) is a non-governmental organization founded in June 2006 on the initiative of 21 Roma women. Since then, ELPIDA has been systematically and continuously involved in integrating Roma into the local community, addressing the social issues of the people and defending their rights. It recognizes that the education of the inhabitants is the most effective avenue for them to be able to achieve better and equal living conditions.

Thus, the Association, apart from other activities, prioritizes the integrated education of the children of the settlement. Since its founding, ELPIDA – with the financial and moral support of the Stavros Niarchos, Bodossakis and G. Leventis Foundations, as well as support from the Royal Dutch Embassy, the Citizens' Movement, the Council of Europe, the Embassy and Consulate of the United States, Theodoros Papalexopoulos and Sklavenitis, has offered tutoring, creative employment centers, as well as free food programs for pupils. Furthermore, the association has submitted a list of reports and requests to the relevant bodies for the creation of school units in the settlement, for the attendance of children and for the problems presented in schools. Some requests have been answered, others not, but the Office of the Ombudsman has shown continuous support.

As a continuation of our efforts, especially regarding the issue of schooling for all Roma children, the Association carried out a systematic census of the population of the settlement in the summer of 2018.

2) AIM AND GOALS OF THE CENSUS

The general purpose of the census was to study the current state of schooling, the causes of school drop-out and school failure of the Roma children of the settlement, in order to recommend relevant solutions. We note that the children of Drosero are attending schools located only within the settlement – which de facto

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isolates young people from the rest of Xanthi's society – and there is no municipal nursery school in the settlement.

In the city of Xanthi there are 16 primary schools for 3,555 students. In Drosero, primary school pupils attend the 15th and 20th Primary Schools, while the 15th Kindergarten is next to it. In practical terms, it is one school with 28 classrooms, where every year about 2,000 students of the settlement are trying to register. Barring children from Drosero from registering in the schools of Xanthi has the obvious aim of maintaining a complete separation between the city of Xanthi and the settlement. The same applies to the kindergarten. In Xanthi there are 15 public kindergartens for a total of 791 students. While in Drosero there is 1 kindergarten for a total of 94 students. We applaud the efforts of educators to create classrooms, even if they do not exist, for example using the gym of the school.

Until recently the 8th Gymnasium, the junior high school of Drosero, was housed on the same premises as the kindergarten and primary school(s). With the start of the school year 2012-2013, it was moved to OAED's premises, next to the settlement, where again only young Roma are attending, with the result that social exclusion is maintained. There is no public high school within the settlement. The nearest High School is the 2nd High School, 2.6 kilometers from Drosero, while the nearest vocational high school is 1.6 kilometers away. Students who wish to attend these high schools must go by foot, due to the lack of public transportation.

The **detailed objectives of the census** were: 1) the systematic inventory of the population, with an emphasis on families with minor children, with their identification (names and dates of birth) by official documents (ID cards, family status certificates, birth certificates, health books); 2) the count of children who: a. are in school, in a grade appropriate to their age, b. attending school but in a lower grade than normal for their age, c. not attending school this year, d. have never attended school; 3) recorded oral testimonies of parents who decide not to send their children to school, and the reasons for that decision; 4) the collection of signed powers of attorney from parents agreeing to let our Association to enroll their children in primary schools in the city of Xanthi proper, outside the settlement with both Roma and non-Roma classmates; 5) the ultimate goal of the census is to provide a comparative study of the school attendance and school infrastructure in the settlement and in Xanthi proper.

3) CENSUS RESULTS

Based on the census results, up to September, the total population of Drosero recorded is **8,293**. We were able to record at least 300 more families – **with more than 900 children** – who had temporarily left the settlement in search of work or better living conditions, but who had the intention of returning.

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ANALYTICAL CENSUS RESULTS	
Adults	
Listed in files with records	1.443
Third-Aged residents living at the same home with their children's families (average)	1.000
Husbands and wives with no children (80, 2 adults per family)	160
Adults reported only the number of their children and no other element (151, with 1 husband or wife and 2 grandfathers in average)	604
Simple oral report of the number of the residents in the house	271
Families now missing in other cities or countries (300, with 2 parents and 2 grandfathers in average)	1.200
Families who did not want to report any element for their parents and children (10, with 2 parents and 2 grandfathers in average)	40
TOTAL	4.718
Children	
Listed in files (0-2 years old with records 261, with no records 63)	324
Listed in files (3-17 years old with records 1.630, with no records 421)	2.051
Now missing in other cities or countries with their families	900
Families who did not want to report any element for their parents and children (10, with 3 children in average)	300
TOTAL	3.575
TOTAL POPULATION	8.293

As far as we know, few of these children go to school. Families with school-age children (3-17 years old), with as many data as possible, number 526. Each family has an average of 3 children (from infants up to 18 years). The school-age children we have recorded and listed by year of birth are 1,630 in total. Finally, we recorded 519 children who did not go (this year or never) to school (with higher rates in secondary education and mainly in high school) and 204 children, according to information provided us by their parents, that they are attending school, but in grades lower than normal for their ages.

During the census, either discussing with the residents in their homes or discussing with those who came to the Association, we recorded some very serious reasons why parents decide to stop their children from attending or not even enroll in schools of the settlement. We briefly report that: a) The children do not acquire basic knowledge, even if they complete the elementary school, they have little knowledge of the Greek language, both written and oral, and are therefore unable to continue at the junior high school; b) According to multiple testimonies there are daily intense quarrels among pupils with minor injuries, the phenomenon is attributed to too many pupils per class as well as to the high density of classrooms in the single space in which the two schools are housed; c) For the same reasons, pupil-teacher relationships are particularly strained, and there is no lack of physical punishment, gestures and

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expressions that are inconsistent with the spirit of education; d) The toilets are inadequate and in a very poor condition, with the result that they are not used by the pupils, except for fights. At the same time, serious health problems arise due to these conditions; e) When parents try to enroll their children in other schools (the schools of Xanthi proper), the answer is that they belong to the schools of the settlement and have to register there. It is obvious that the aim is to preserve the separation of the students of Drosero from the students of Xanthi, which is akin to periods of authoritarian regimes. A modern comparison refers to the Gaza Strip. At the same time, parents are fined when their children are not attending school or are absent from school, and from this year they lose the chance to qualify for KEA benefit if they can't verify that their child attends school. So we have reached our other goal of gathering about 200 signed powers of attorney from parents of children aged 3-11 who wish to have their children attend Xanthi schools outside of the settlement in order to obtain better education conditions.

4) COMPARATIVE STUDY

A) SCHOOL CAPACITY – AVAILABILITY OF SPACES

We know that under Ministerial Decree No. F.3/898/97657/C1 of the Government Gazette 1507 TB/13-10-2006 the maximum number of pupils in primary schools and kindergartens per classroom is 25 children, with the possibility of an increase of 10% as stipulated in the Ministerial Decree No. F.12/622/129803/C1 of Government Gazette 2451 B/13. Based on this, we are moving on to our comparative study.

We know from residents of the settlement that in the 15th Kindergarten, where additional rooms have been set up to prevent children from enrolling at other schools in Xanthi, there are 6-year-olds attending this school year, which indicates that their school entry was delayed due to lack of space. So, any 5-year-olds who have been unable to start their compulsory education, their parents, if they do not have older children attending school, stand to lose their KEA bonus. We are wondering what is going to happen from next school year, when 2 years of kindergarten education (pre-K and K) becomes compulsory in all the prefectures and municipalities of Greece.

Also, according to the numbers of children we recorded per age in the census, we give a table showing the projected number of nursery, pre-K and K students in the academic years 2018-2025:

Number of children per School year	Nursery (3 yearsold)	Pre-K & Kindergarten (4-5 years old)
2018-2019	102	200
2019-2020	92	208

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2020-2021	87	194
2021-2022	82	179
2022-2023	Anyborn in 2019.	169
2023-2024	Anyborn in 2020.	82 (K students, while any born 2019 will be Pre-K age).
2024-2025	Anyborn 2021.	Anyborn in 2019 and 2020.

We see, then, how many children need nursery school, and that their number will remain steady in the years to come. It is clear that the 15th Kindergarten is not large enough to accommodate the Pre-K and K needs of the settlement.

In the primary schools of the settlement, declared as twelve classrooms, there are 7 rooms in the permanent building and 19 prefabricated classrooms, for a total of 28 classrooms, of which 2 were created by using the gym, again to avoid having children enroll in schools in Xanthi. In the very limited space of the so-called 2 schools, there are probably about 750 students, given that clear statistics from the Education Directorate does not exist. In our catalogs we have found 741 primary school pupils (with records), so there are no spaces 1) for at least 39 students, 2) any junior high school age student who was unable to complete the elementary school for lack of space, 3) and all the other students for primary school that we do not have records of them. From parents' oral testimonies, we recorded 146 primary school pupils this year in a lower grade than their age (the actual number of students is known by the School Directorates and the Primary Education Directorate). We also have parents' testimonies that when the teachers judges a child able to cover the curriculum more quickly, they arbitrarily advance the child to the next grade. We know from residents of the settlement that in the 15th and 20th Primary there are currently adolescents (we have recorded at least 31 secondary school aged children in the census as attending the primary school), so there are many more children who are entitled to primary education and are not attending. It is worth mentioning that, apart from other problems of survival and finding work of the residents of the settlement, the abysmal educational situation discourages parents from sending their children to school, creates a feeling of self-doubt when they – themselves uneducated and in a vulnerable social group – necessarily interrupt their children's education, move to other cities and abroad for work, send their children to schools there, and upon their return to Xanthi run into barriers to problems getting transcripts from the other schools accepted, or worse, the children do not know Greek at all and are forced to start over in the early primary grades.

In conclusion, we wonder why the children of the settlement literally have to be stacked in what is, in practical terms, one school, with one small yard – that is, whatever courtyard remains for 850 pupils in the 1,5 acres of a total plot after adding the prefabricated classrooms – and even without a gym to provide exercise. The age heterogeneity of the classes, combined with the lack of space for exercise, also contributes to the increased levels of conflict between students that we have recorded from many parents.

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According to the document sent by the Department of Primary Education to the Association under the protocol number 3904 - 9/7/2018 and subject "Supply of Information", there are 16 primary schools and 15 public kindergartens in the city of Xanthi and in the village of Drosero there are 2 primary schools and 1 public kindergarten. The number of students attending primary school in the city of Xanthi is 3,555, with the largest school the 6th Primary School with 332 students. **Inside the settlement of Drosero, at least 741 students (1/5 of the students in Xanthi) must make do with 2 primary schools while at least 4 schools are required to be in proportion to the pupils of Xanthi.** Also, the same document states that the Pre-K and K students attending Kindergarten in the city of Xanthi are 791, with the largest number (102) in the 9th Kindergarten (five classrooms). **In Drosero there is just one kindergarten. At least 94 children should attend (only those that we have listed with records), while in proportion to the students of Xanthi they need at least 2 kindergartens and 4 kindergartens once Pre-K becomes compulsory.** According to document number 515/14-05-2018, from the Center for Social Protection and Solidarity of the Municipality of Xanthi to our Association, in Xanthi there are 6 municipal nursery schools, attended by 456 children. **Inside the settlement we have recorded that there are at least 102 3-year-olds (listed with records) who, in proportion to the students of Xanthi, need two municipal nursery schools to accommodate them.**

In addition, on December 28, 2017, the Department of Social Welfare and Social Policy sent a document, #54781, entitled "Providing Information" to the Office of the Ombudsman, a document our Association was formally notified of in September 2018. According to the above-mentioned document, the Provost provided the Ombudsman with data from the Directorate of Primary Education of Xanthi, to the effect that for the school year 2016-17, at the 15th Kindergarten (in Drosero) there were 120 (over-enrolment) children enrolled, but by December 2017 the students were reduced to 60. In the primary schools of the settlement there were 737 students enrolled (over-enrolment) which in three months were down to 490. At the request of the Association (with protocol numbers 507/9-9-2018 and 510/10-9-2018), we asked, among other things, to be informed about the causes of school drop-out, and of the school failure of children and were never answered (violation of article 4 of Law 2690/1999, Government Gazette 45 A/1999). For an educational program respecting the students' trilingual status it is, of course, up to the goodwill and initiative of each teacher to find appropriate material, similar to that of intercultural schools, to make the lessons effective and build the knowledge of students.

B) FITNESS OF SCHOOL FACILITIES – THE ROLE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

To round out the picture of the educational situation in the settlement, we must mention the important support of the Office of the Ombudsman in the effort of our Association to activate the competent bodies to solve the building issues and the registration of the children of the settlement in these schools. . We should mention here that, in the first year of the Association's establishment, we conducted the first

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systematic inventory of the population and based on the inventory, the extent of the settlement became clear for the first. The conditions under which the inhabitants of the settlement survived were then officially and completely presented for the first time. At the time, we found that 90 children attended school, out of 160 registered. The Association, through private donations, hired social workers who visited all the houses of the settlement one by one, helped the families, and suddenly the school enrollments became 1,000 next year and 800 children attended. Then, in 2007, we appealed to the Ombudsman, and representatives came for the first time to the settlement – including the Ombudsman of the Child – to meet residents, to visit the schools, and to speak with the authorities. As a result, the first prefabricated classrooms, which were then considered a "temporary" measure until a new school was built, were installed.

Time passed, the population continued to grow, the problems remain, and the schools continue to be inadequate to the needs of the community. In fact, the President of the Association made a visit to the Ombudsman's headquarters when the students lacked access to clean drinking water (the taps of the yard were removed). In fact, the President of the Association made a visit to the Ombudsman's headquarters when the students lacked access to clean drinking water (the taps of the yard were removed). This visit, together with requests sent by us on these issues to: 1) the Municipality of Xanthi, 2) the Primary Education Directorate of Xanthi and 3) the Directorates of these schools, with notification to the Ombudsman, resulted in Ombudsman representatives coming for the second time, to the settlement on 29/11/2017, where they inspected the schools and spoke with the directors. The result of the inspection was an inventory all the problems and shortcomings in child safety measures, as well as proposed solutions. By means of the protocol numbers 233478/11468/2018–12/3/2018 and 233478/14690/2018– 30/3/2018 of the Ombudsman to the same competent bodies, they confirm in detail what the Association claims and the seriousness of the situation. The documents of protocol numbers 233478/46098/2018–18/10/2018 and 233478/46099/2018– 18/10/2018 of the Ombudsman to the same bodies prove that the competent authorities not only do not take the necessary measures to solve the issues, but deliberately do not respond to any request either by our Association or by the Ombudsman.

C) CONCLUSIONS

It shows that the local authorities are well aware of the educational problems in the settlement, they have the data from the Directorates of the Schools each year and they do not take care to ensure enrolment of all the children systematically. However, what does happen systematically is the unequal treatment of students, their clear separation from non-Roma students, the violation of their rights, the specification of their future as uneducated citizens. In conclusion, those responsible also put our children's health and physical welfare in danger on a daily basis. We dare not imagine what will happen in the event of an earthquake or fire, because then it will be too late for accountability or correction of errors.

5) INTERVENTION OF THE PUBLIC PROSECUTOR OF XANTHI

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For the school year 2018-19, the Association decided to move legally as the last choice in the direction of resolving the issue of education in Drosero. When 2 Roma children were denied enrolment in two public kindergartens outside the settlement (at the initiative of their parents) and with the results of the summer census, we requested the intervention of the Prosecutor of the First Instance of Xanthi. Having first acknowledged the Association's requests, he then invited the kindergarten directors, who refused to enroll children, and the President of the Association to an arbitration to settle the dispute on 6/9/2018. The directors have invoked the spatial allocation process for pupils and that additional or overdue registration must be submitted by the parents first to the Primary Education Directorate. They stated that it is not their own responsibility to enroll students in their schools beyond the enrollment period, but that of the Directorate.

Then the prosecutor requested a meeting of Deputy Director of Primary Education, Dimitra Dobriki, with the President of the Association, in the same dispute resolution process, on 7/9/2018. Mrs. Dobriki initially outlined the bureaucratic process of enrolling all the children initially and then as needed. In view of the results of the census, she then proposed state funding for the development of Drosero's school units and two social workers to be placed in the settlement. The Association asked the public prosecutor to answer our demands for the numbers of children who enrolled this year, school drop-outs, training program, etc. The debate ended with the prosecutor's conclusion that many official instances are involved and what is required is a concerted effort to ensure that all children attend school by the end of October at the latest, and that no child be left out of school, because otherwise we are in breach of European laws and there will be consequences for our country. After the statements made by Mrs. Dobriki, we visited the primary school and kindergarten of the settlement. We found that the walls of the primary school needed painting, while at the Kindergarten we faced a negative attitude of the directors towards any co-operation and concerted effort.

6) VISIT OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, RESEARCH AND RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS

However, the demands of the Association, other than to the Public Prosecutor, were also communicated to the Ministry of Education and Research. As a result, the Secretary General of the Ministry, Mr. Giorgos Angelopoulos, visited the Association on 13/9/2018 to discuss with the President. We note that it was the first time, after 13 years of action by the Association, that a government representative visited this area. In addition, on this visit, Mr. Angelopoulos, before joining the Association, visited the schools of the settlement, spoke with the school directors and the Deputy Head of Primary Education. In order to resolve the issue, the Ministry put forward a plan with three types of interventions: 1) immediate intervention within the next two
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months with logistic infrastructure, building corrections, new books etc.; 2) over 4-6 months to move for this year 50-70 children (informed us that there are already 30 children), to the primary schools of Xanthi with free transportation, and two-story prefabricated heavy-duty rooms to accommodate more children; 3) within the next three years, without a specific timetable, to build another primary school in Xanthi to accommodate more Roma students in all schools. He also took personal responsibility for the delay in the mandate from the ministry, saying he needed the mandate to implement the plan as of May, but did not receive it until August. After resigning from the post of Secretary General of the Ministry and taking office at the Prime Minister's office in Thessaloniki, he pledged as a position but also personally, to follow the developments and to help according to his capabilities. We conclude that the proposals for finding a solution are repeated over the years, with "temporary" prefabricated classrooms used until the schools are built. We regret to conclude that in the end, in a developed country of the European Union, in a city with Greek citizens, Roma and non-Roma students will remain segregated.

7) PARALLEL INITIATIVES BY THE ASSOCIATION

At the same time, we clarify that the Association maintains an organized record of daily reports on the recording, study and results of visits, actions and oral testimonies. An example is when a parent wants to enroll his child at school and is refused for formal, bureaucratic reasons, or when after due registration, the school principal says "bring the child next week" and then "next week" (specific incident at the 15th Kindergarten in the settlement). In these situations, the Association provides the parent with an application. This application, which is signed by the parent, is submitted to the school officials and requests a written justification for refusal to register or allow attendance of the child in accordance with the law of the Basic Administrative Law [N. 2690/1999, article 17, (FEK 45A)]. We state that already such a signed application by a parent whose child was refused enrolment at the 15th Kindergarten and further refused a reply in writing, we wrote a supplement to the application, the parent again signed it and submitted it to the prosecutor.

8) OUTCOME OF THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE ASSOCIATION AND THE PRIMARY EDUCATION DIRECTORATE

This submission took place on 19/9/2018, the day we went to the prosecutor's office for another meeting with Mrs. Dobriki, as we still had not received an answer to our requests from her. There, she told us that she has other current issues, that she is nevertheless trying to expedite the process of placing 30 (!) students in public schools in Xanthi, waiting for lists of students from us to place 70 others – until then, of course, we did not know the numbers and enrolments from the previous school year as we mentioned above – and ended up challenging the legality of our Association. A classic, unfortunately, reaction of the education officials in Xanthi over time. Since we have clarified from the Association that no other NGO in Xanthi represents vulnerable social groups nor address the serious problems concerning the

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education of the children of an entire settlement, the meeting concluded that they should at least respond to our demands.

The answer of the Primary Division eventually came to the Association, with protocol number 6341/24-9-2018, and it concerns both of the last two requests. It states briefly that for the two primary schools of the settlement there were 622 students enrolled in 28 sections, not by school unit and not by class. It also reports that in the kindergarten of the settlement there have been 94 children enrolled for three sections, without specifying whether the classrooms are sufficient or not. So, in the kindergarten, already in September, there were surplus students, and in Mrs. Dobriki's answer there is no reference to their placement in other public kindergartens. Whether there are additional places in schools or unfilled teaching positions is also not mentioned. In addition, there is no mention of the findings of a social worker survey, although we are positive that in a settlement inhabited by a vulnerable social group with more than 2,000 children, the Ministry of Education should be interested in appointing a social worker. At the same time, we are informed by residents of the settlement that the officials of the primary schools are calling parents of the pupils who have registered, informing them that their children are going to start studying in Xanthi schools and that their transfer is secured free of charge by bus. If the parents agree, they sign the corresponding document at the school and wait for information on when the process will begin. We are informed that November 2018 arrived and the process has not begun.

We understand, therefore, that some effort is being made by the Education Directorate, possibly under pressure from a Ministry and a prosecutor. This is a good start for the settlement and the city of Xanthi. We doubt whether anything would happen without the Ombudsman, contiguous documents and the continuous efforts of our Association that have been treated in the same way by those responsible over the years. Also, the effort to collect responsible statements signed by parents for the attendance of their children in non-residential schools has been started by our Association since the summer, long before they became alarmed and started collecting statements in schools. This move from the Primary Education Directorate only serves to divide the parents and diverts us from the ultimate goal, which is to take care of all the children together, as suggested by the prosecutor.

9) SECONDARY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IN THE SETTLEMENT

In secondary education for the children of the settlement, things are not very different. In summary, we report from parents' testimonies that: 1) many students who are forced to repeat classes in primary school finally drop out and either do not continue at the junior high school or do not even complete the elementary school. For this year the enrolment at the junior high school is 210 (while in the census we recorded at least 329 children of junior high school age), of whom 100 students regularly attend, 40 are often absent and 70 have never shown up; 2) from OAED's office 6 rooms have been officially allocated for teaching but 10 are used this year with "with permission of the service"; 3) if some students do not wish to attend this junior

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high school because they are not satisfied with the building facilities or because they have difficulty in understanding the lessons, the lack of urban transport discourages them from enrolling in other junior high schools, so they leave or ask for transfer to another school, which for reasons unknown to us they do not get it; 4) parents, who are called to trial and fined because their children are not in junior high school, see their younger children, who do not fit or are afraid to attend the primary schools of the settlement, and realize that the situation will be perpetuated; 5) in a vulnerable social group with such a high percentage of illiteracy, since there is no high school in the settlement at which to study, even if the children had gained the necessary knowledge and study skills in primary school and junior high school, which too often is not the case, the creation of a family from an early age is considered a good choice. The majority of children, who should complete high school or have entered secondary education, instead marry and have children themselves.

For these reasons, there are fewer than 50 students enrolled in high school this year (while there are at least 258 high-school-age children). Currently, the Association, by telephone and sending requests, initiates procedures for the daily free transfer of high school students from the settlement to school and back. The aim is to encourage them not to interrupt their studies due to distance and to be able to complete their secondary education. We talked to Ms. Kosmidou, executive secretary of the Regional Governor of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, Christos Metios. We also asked the directors of the high schools of Xanthi to give us the data of the registered Roma students, so that we know how many and which students we will recommend for moving. We have the support of Mr. Angelopoulos, who is informed in Thessaloniki, as well as his general secretary, Mr. Sdoukou. We also report that a program of 240 hours of tutorial teaching for high school students has been finalized, for the first time in the history of the Association, with funding from the Institute of Balkan Studies, and we are already looking for free meals for these children.

10) PROPOSALS – BEST PRACTICES

After all that we have found, recorded and studied, we have come to suggest some good practices and to recommend them to the responsible bodies. We do not want to compare ourselves to refugees, however, we are reading a number of articles on integrating refugees into the education system and we welcome them. On behalf of the Association we have exhausted every possibility to find a solution to the issue of schooling for all the children of our settlement.

We therefore propose the following:

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- 1) Recruit social workers to meet the needs of the families of the settlement and encourage them to integrate their children into the education system and stay at least until the completion of compulsory schooling.
- 2) Create booster classes for students of all levels to successfully complete the classes they are attending, not to miss more years than so many students already have missed.
- 3) Direct sharing of students from the schools of the settlement with the schools of Xanthi with free school bus transport.
- 4) Creation of integration sections for Roma students in the host schools in the city of Xanthi for their smooth integration into the departments and Roma translators in the classes.
- 5) Public announcements for free enrollment and student transcripts in any school they wish.
- 6) Immediate care for the children 3-4 years old at the municipal nursery schools and public kindergartens in Xanthi.
- 7) Immediate suspension of the imposition of fines on parents who fail to have their children attend school, on the grounds that they are members of a vulnerable social group and are entitled to other terms.
- 8) Immediate adaptation of educational programs and school material to intercultural standards.
- 9) Immediate construction of new school units of all levels outside the settlement, so that all children can attend equally and with more suitable building facilities.
- 10) Creating jobs for parents (e.g. public service translators, school guides and escorts in school buses serving Roma students, etc.) in order to have the opportunity to raise their children in a dignified way.
- 11) Immediate adoption of new laws in favor of Roma, proposed by the Ombudsman (e.g. the legalization card for street vendors which will allow a large proportion of Roma to practice the profession they can, given their lack of education, to provide them with a living).
- 12) Immediate commencement of daily urban transport to serve the inhabitants so that the settlement of the entire settlement from the city ceases and finally respect their right to easy access to the public health facilities (e.g. Xanthi General Hospital 4 KM from the settlement).
- 13) Finally, to begin the process of integration of the settlement into the city plan, with public announcements to the inhabitants about the actions to be followed. We do not understand why their houses must still be considered illegal (which means that the schools of the settlement are also considered illegal.) and risk losing them permanently, although they taxes and the houses have electricity.

11) CONCLUSION

Our children want to attend public Greek schools that will respect the cultural identity we are trying to maintain, not ghettoized minority schools. Young people are the ones who will change established problems that have been perpetuated for years. We are asking our children to complete compulsory education, which is the only hope for defeating delinquency, marriages of minors, and at last to be able to acquire the

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right to a better life and the right to work. Keeping the described problematic situation, the children eventually end up dropping out of school for good, they are often driven to illegality to survive and then fail to have their rights protected in the face of Justice. In turn, parents are beggars, unemployed or street vendors, ultimately victims of the state, which burdens them with huge fines.

Footnote: We note that for many years we have provided preschool education for children aged 3-4, taught by tertiary education graduates. Children in this program have been ready to attend the next level of education, as they were already adapted to and familiar with a school environment and a school educational program. This was achieved with the help of Roma women mediators for interpreting and successful communication between students and teachers.

Sincerely,

The President of the Women Association of
Drosero Xanthi «ELPIDA»



Souleiman Sampicha