

Roma Political Leadership Academy

**Bratislava, Slovakia
February 23-26, 2007**

Conference Report

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NDI Regional Roma Initiative

While 17 years of democratic transition in Central and Eastern Europe has led to significant improvements in general living standards, Roma continue to suffer disproportionately from widespread poverty, discrimination and segregation. Roma have been unable to address the social and economic problems plaguing their communities due to their underrepresentation in elected bodies, political parties and government institutions. Increased participation in electoral politics and governance offers Roma the opportunity to develop and promote policies needed to address their communities' long-term needs in such areas as housing, education, employment and healthcare.

Since 2004, the National Democratic Institute has focused on leadership training to enhance the skills of more than 175 Romani political and civic activists in Bulgaria, Slovakia, and Romania. Participants include electoral candidates from both mainstream and Romani parties, local government officials, and civic leaders committed to improving the situation of Roma and defending Roma rights through participation in the political process. The Institute's political leadership training series, which consists of monthly seminars to build skills in advocacy, fundraising, strategic planning, communication, media relations, and election strategy, operates in Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia.

- NDI has built relationships between program participants and government officials. In Bulgaria and Slovakia, NDI Roma participants have met with Presidents Georgi Parvanov and Ivan Gasparovic, respectively, to discuss policies of pressing concern to the Romani community. NDI has also facilitated internships for Roma in the parliament of Bulgaria and with political parties in Romania.

- NDI conducted public opinion research in Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia to identify issues of importance to Roma and offer insights into their political attitudes and preferences. The data is being used to develop campaign strategies and policy priorities and to aid mainstream parties and politicians in reaching out to Romani constituents. NDI has authored reports of Romani participation in elections in Bulgaria and Slovakia, as well as an analysis of the minority self-government system in Hungary.

- In 2006, NDI's Roma initiative expanded into other countries in Southeast Europe, with continued support from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), and funding from the Open Society Institute (OSI) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). NDI has assisted a coalition of Serbian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working toward Roma social and economic inclusion, organized campaign simulations for Romani partners in Macedonia in preparation for the July 2006 parliamentary elections, and provided strategic assistance to a Romani political party partner, the Serbia Roma Union, prior to Serbian parliamentary elections in January 2007.

- In February 2007, NDI held its third annual Roma Political Leadership Academy near Bratislava. The event brought together nearly 30 participants from nine countries throughout Eastern Europe for advanced skills training and cross-border networking. Political party organizers, government and civil society representatives, and trainers from the United States and Europe led sessions on campaign strategy, voter mobilization, promoting ethical campaign behavior, and election-cycle advocacy campaigns.



NDI is fostering regional cooperation among Roma to exchange experiences. Above, NDI Slovakia partner Peter Pollak consults with the Serbian Roma Union during its campaign for the January 2007 parliamentary elections.

Political Leadership Academy: Opening Remarks



US Ambassador Rodolphe Vallee invoked the political journey of Abraham Lincoln in his address.

local elections, and the role of that success in inspiring similar progress across Eastern Europe.

In contrast, U.S. Ambassador to Slovakia **Rodolphe Vallee** reminded attendees that success can be found in learning from disappointments, invoking the story of Abraham Lincoln's numerous personal and professional failures before becoming U.S. President and

Romani leaders and activists and international and government representatives gathered for the opening session of NDI's third annual Roma Political Leadership Academy on February 23, 2007. Following opening remarks by NDI's Central and Eastern Europe Director, **Robert Benjamin**, participants were greeted by Deputy President of the Slovak Parliament **Mirsolav Ciz**. The Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities, **Klara Orgovanova**, addressed the group, highlighting the successes gained by Roma in the past years, particularly in the recent Slovak

abolishing slavery. Following these speeches, the opening dinner provided an opportunity for individual discussions among participants, governmental officials, ambassadors, and staff. The Academy provided a rare opportunity for participants to exchange ideas and experiences with their peers throughout the region.

A member of the European Parliament (MEP) from Hungary, the **Hon. Viktoria Mohacsi**, welcomed participants to the Academy. She emphasized the unique opportunity to engage with and learn from peers across the region to improve their ability to represent and advocate for Roma throughout Europe.

Speech by Ambassador Vallee: Excerpts

"What I want to talk about tonight may surprise you. I want to talk about failure. Failure and your reaction to it. You can fail and choose to walk away, never again attempting to accomplish your goals. Or you can take the lessons learned from your failures, celebrate the small achievements, and, with perseverance and determination, create future successes...."

"What our great President Lincoln also knew is that, sometimes, just attempting to achieve something new can be a victory. As he told an aspiring youth who dreamed of becoming a lawyer, "if you are resolutely determined to make a lawyer of yourself, the thing is more than half done already."...

"Whether you work for an NGO, help another candidate get elected, or campaign for office yourself, I urge you to celebrate your successes, learn from your losses, make the most of your current position, and keep working towards your goal of improving your life, your community, and your country. With your commitment alone, you are more than half done already."



Slovak Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities Klara Orgovanova highlighted recent successes of Slovak Romani activists.



At dinner, Slovak participant Laco Duda (right) speaks with Lenka Sarmirova from the Slovak parliament.

Roma as Candidates & Campaigners:

Kicking off the first day of training, NDI Romania Director **Scott Andersen** led a session on election campaign strategy. Andersen outlined the critical elements of a campaign, emphasizing an overarching message: *know your audience*.

Half of a successful campaign is being aware of the local and national political environment, the strengths and weaknesses of the candidate and his/her opponents, and knowing the voters in the constituency. Comprehensive research allows the candidate and campaign team to set realistic goals and deadlines, structure their campaign to maximize limited resources, and design a clear and concise message that will resonate among voters. **Osman Balic**, deputy chair of the Serbian Roma Union (URS), provided an example of campaign strategy. Balic discussed his party's recent campaign in the Serbian parliamentary elections, speaking frankly with participants of the successes and failures his party had seen over the course of the election cycle.

NDI Bulgaria Director **Sevdalina Voynova** elaborated one of Andersen's last points: the importance of turning-out supporters on election day. Voynova detailed a number of get-out-the-vote (GOTV) activities and discussed Bulgaria's most recent nationwide non-partisan GOTV campaign. She

stressed creativity, as much of the battle is convincing people of the importance of voting. Volunteers must convey a message that will convince voters why their engagement in the democratic process matters. For Roma it is particularly critical that they mobilize non-Roma as well as Roma supporters in order to secure victory at the polls.

The concluding session on Roma candidacy discussed efforts to ensure that, once at the polls, voters can exercise their right to free and fair elections. NDI Slovakia Director and a founder of the Slovak election monitoring group *Obcianske Oko* **Zuzana Dzurikova** led an ener-

getic discussion on vote-buying and methods of preventing manipulation. Participants debated on defining vote-buying and determining the best methods to combat it.

The strength of having such regional diversity was showcased as participants varied greatly on whether it was effective or counter-productive to address vote-buying as an issue specific to Roma communities.

Former regional council candidate **Peter Pollak** highlighted the efforts of his organization, New Roma Generation, to combat vote-buying, including a code of conduct during the 2006 Slovak parliamentary elections.



Left, NDI Romania Director Scott Andersen solicits comments from participants during his presentation on running an election campaign. Below, Osman Balic describes techniques used by his party, the Serbian Roma Union, in the January 2007 parliamentary elections.



Above, NDI Slovakia Director Zuzana Dzurikova invites Peter Pollak of NRG to join a debate on vote-buying. Right, Romanian participants Silvia Constantin and Titina Ion follow the discussion.



Roma as Policy Advocates

The Academy's focus on elections extended to NGO advocacy efforts during the campaign period.

Antoaneta Tsoneva, chair of the Institute for Public Environment Development (IPED) in Bulgaria, commenced this section of the academy by delving into the oft-overlooked area of municipal budgets. Budgets remain one of the most tangible ways of observing and monitoring government priorities and politicians' commitment to campaign promises. Understanding municipal budgets is about understanding where the money comes from, who receives it, and how it is spent.

She stressed the necessity of NGOs involvement in the budget process by waging advocacy campaigns throughout the preparation, adoption, implementation, and reporting stages. Through active participation in public discussions and committee

hearings, public opinion research, and publication

A key element of a successful advocacy campaign is realizing long term goals through the careful and consistent achievement of smaller objectives.

of analyses and reports, activists have the ability to influence the budget, hold politicians accountable, and increase government transparency as well as the effectiveness of their own advocacy campaigns.

Chair of the Romanian NGO Romani Criss, **Margareta Matache**, presented the key elements of a successful advocacy

campaign, stressing the need to understand the process of achieving long-term goals through a careful and consistent achievement of smaller goals.

Matache emphasized the need to know your audience. Government officials, particularly parliamentarians, are burdened with hundreds of deadlines and requests. Policy advocates need to present their information in a short and direct manner with tangible and realistic demands that politicians can meet.

Patience is key. The path to a successful policy is long and time-consuming and involves a variety of

actors. Advocates must develop relationships with politicians in all parties, network, and place their organizations in the public eye through regular reports, analyses, and attendance at public meetings.

NDI was pleased to feature Member of the European Parliament **Viktoria Mohacsi** at the Academy. She recounted her own path into politics, beginning with her experiences as a child in Hungary, her encounters with racism and prejudice, and the barriers that led her first into the non-governmental arena. She reminded participants to keep an

Margareta Matache of Romania discusses her NGO's advocacy efforts with Senad Mustafov of Macedonia.



Romani-Hungarian MEP Viktoria Mohacsi (right) details her journey from advocacy to politics.



Antoaneta Tsoneva of Bulgaria discusses utilizing budgets to increase the effectiveness of advocacy campaigns.



open mind and to follow their instincts, noting that she had never thought she would become a politician. She cited her early work advocating to the government to desegregate the Hungarian school system. Though never intended, her perseverance on the issue led the Minister of Education to suggest she solve the problem, and appointed her to become Commissioner Responsible for Integration in the Hungarian Ministry for Education. She stressed that her actions were guided by her belief in working to solve the problems she saw around her in the way she felt would be most effective.

Election Campaign Simulation

As the final session, NDI conducted an election simulation that launched participants into the fast-paced environment of the final week of a mayoral campaign in the fictional town of “Stakata.” For some, the activity was an opportunity to showcase the skills gained throughout their year-long participation in NDI’s political leadership training series. For others, it was an opportunity to gain first-hand experience with the challenges and rewards of an election campaign. Above all, participants gained confidence in their public speaking abilities, practiced their campaign skills, experienced work in a high pressure environment, and gained an understanding of the importance of teamwork and the clear delineation of roles on a team.

Participants were divided into five fictitious political parties. Their first task was to determine who would fill the roles of candidate, campaign manager, campaign press secretary, president of the party’s women’s forum, president of the youth forum, and leader of a local party branch office. Over the course of the simulation, each party was given 13 tasks to complete. Activities included a live radio interview, a candidate debate, drafting talking points for the



Participants engage in a series of tasks to elect their candidate as mayor in the local election simulation.

candidate’s speech to an interest group, and designing campaign materials. Incorporated into the activities were breaking news events that forced the parties to react quickly to unanticipated situations, requiring crisis management and damage-control skills. As their final task, the five candidates faced tough questions from their fellow participants in a mock debate which featured swift thinking, poise, and gamesmanship.

Throughout the afternoon exercise a panel of judges evaluated the parties on the clarity of their message, creativity, teamwork, and timeliness. Following the announcement of the official “election results,” the judges reviewed the score with each team, helping them identify strengths as well as areas for improvement.

Although the competition was very close, the Romanian-language team earned the highest score, electing Romanian participant Eugen Stefan Florian “Mayor of Stakata.” The team’s ability to react quickly and effectively to last-minute crises, along with the candidate’s ability to stay on message, were decisive factors in their victory.



Sakibe Jashari from Kosovo and Gabriela Hrabanova from the Czech Republic help their team design creative campaign materials.

Appendix 1

Roma Political Leadership Academy February 23-26, 2007 Bratislava, Slovakia

Friday, February 23

18:30-19:00 Cocktail and Hors d' oeuvres Reception

19:00 Opening Remarks and Dinner
Deputy President of Slovak Parliament Miroslav Číž (Welcoming Remarks)
US Ambassador to Slovakia Rodolphe Vallee
Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities Klara Orgvanova
Member of the European Parliament Viktoria Mohacsi

Saturday, February 24

9:00-9:30 Introduction to NDI's Roma Political Participation Program and
Participant Introductions
Speaker: Robert Benjamin, NDI Director for Central & Eastern Europe

Roma as Candidates and Campaigners

9:30-10:45 Developing a Campaign Plan/Strategic Planning
*Trainer: Scott Andersen, NDI Romania Director with a presentation from Osman
Balic, Vice-President of the Serbian Roma Union*

10:45-11:00 Coffee Break

11:00-12:30 Voter Targeting (Roma and Non-Roma) and Get-Out-the-Vote
Activities
Trainer: Sevdalina Voynova, NDI Bulgaria Director

12:30-14:00 Lunch

14:00-15:30 Tools to Promote Ethical Campaign Behavior:
Election monitoring, codes of conduct, and party poll watchers
Trainer: Zuzana Dzurikova, NDI Slovakia Director

Roma as Policy Advocates

15:45-17:30 Understanding the Budget Process to Advocate More Effectively
Trainer: Antoaneta Tsoneva, former Ombudsman for Sofia Municipality

Appendix cont'd...

18:00 Leave for Guided Tour and Dinner in Bratislava

Sunday, February 25

9:00-10:30 Using Elections to Advocate for a Policy Agenda
Trainer: Margareta Matache, Executive Director of Romani CRISS, with a presentation from Peter Pollak of the New Roma Generation

10:30-11:00 Coffee Break

11:00-12:00 Using International Initiatives and Frameworks to Advocate for Policies
Presenter: Viktoria Mohacsi, Member of the European Parliament

Simulation

12:00-12:30 Wrap-up and Introduction of Simulation
Presenter: Catherine Messina Pajic, NDI Deputy Director-Central & Eastern Europe

12:30-13:30 Lunch

13:30-14:00 Explanation of Rules and Procedures of the Political Communication Simulation
Presenter: Megan Volk Unangst, NDI Roma Program Officer

14:00-17:30 Simulation Exercise

17:30-18:00 Judges Finalize Scoring

Video Screening

The Council of Europe's *Dosta* Video Competition Winners
*(TV Spot of the Dosta! Campaign for Fighting Prejudices Against Roma, We are Europe too, The Black Pearl and Who's Starring Who's not: That's the Question!)
Films introduced by Salome Hirvaskoski, Administrator, Council of Europe*

18:00-18:30 Full Group Simulation Evaluations

18:30-19:30 Team by Team Simulation Evaluations

19:30 Group Dinner

22:00 Performance of the Kokavakere Lavutara (Sendreiovci) band

Monday, February 26

Participants Depart

Appendix 2

2007 Roma Political Leadership Academy

Participants

Albania

Marsela Taho received her degree in social work from the University of Tirana in 2001, and also completed the Roma Participation Program at Central European University in Budapest in December 2005. Since graduating, Marsela has worked with children and families as a social worker for various organizations, such as Terres Des Homes, UNDP-Local Governance Programme, AiBi (Amici dei Bambini), Romano Kham, Help Life Organization and Women's Advocacy Centre. She also does volunteer work for the Fier branch of Union of the Albanian Roma "Amaro Drom".

Miranda Fejzo is from Korça, Albani. She is the current chair of the Korça Branch of the "Romani Bart Albania" Association, and has managed a series of projects on Roma issues as well as provided numerous training in various subject areas. She is a member of several European Roma forums including the European Roma Travellers Forum (ERTF) and the European Forum of Roma Young People (EFRYP). Additionally, Miranda is currently serving as Manager for a project to recycle urban waste in Korça and is coordinating a project called "Additional Learning" in Korça and Bilisht.

Bulgaria

Iliya Genchev is from Pazardzhik, and has completed a higher education degree in public administration. In 2004, he worked for six months as a deputy chairman and head of the Business Center in Pazardzhik, established under the program JOBS. Also in 2004, he served as a social consultant to the municipal administration in Rakitovo. During the 2003 local elections the Coalition for Justice and Unity supported his candidature for mayor and municipal council member of Rakitovo municipality.

Kadrin Hasanov is from Rakovski village in Razgrad's municipality. He has completed a Bachelor's degree in history and is currently completing his Master's degree at Shumen University. Since March 2006, Mr. Hasanov has served as a member of the Integro Association and is the project coordinator for "Getting out from the Trap," a project funded by Partners for Bulgaria Foundation supporting secondary education for Roma in small towns and villages.

Maryana Borisova is from Simitly town, Blagoevgrad municipality and is in her second year studying International Relations. Ms. Borisova attended a project of the Open Society Institute in Blagoevgrad as the head of Education and Work Qualification for Young Roma. She has also attended many pre-election campaign meetings at the local and municipal level.

Miglana Yordanova is from Sapareva Banya town. Since 2000, she has worked as a specialist on Roma issues in the municipal administration of Sapareva Banya, and serves as a chairperson for the youth initiative group Unity, established in 2004.

Petar Petrov is from Zhatitsa town, with a higher education degree in economics. Since 2001 he has been a member of the Roma political party Evroroma, and was nominated as an MP candidate for Stara Zagora in the previous parliamentary elections.

Czech Republic

Amalie Berkyyova is a Romani teacher in the Czech Republic. She has participated in a six-month training program for Romani women political leaders organized by Athniganoi association and the Romani women's group Manushe in cooperation with the German Heinrich Boell Foundation and the government Council for Roma Issues. Ms. Berkyyova also ran second on the party list for the SNK-European Democrats (SNK-SD) coalition in the October local elections and was elected as municipal councilor for the town.

Appendix 2 cont'd...

Gabriela Hrabanova is the executive director of Athinganoi, an association of Romani high-school and university students. Gabriela has a Bachelor's in political and social studies and she is currently earning her masters in International Relations and Diplomacy at the New Anglo-American University in Prague. She has also worked for the Roma Information Project which provides consultancy and training seminars for Romani non-governmental organizations on strategic planning and organizational development. She is also involved in the Decade of Roma Inclusion as a member of the governmental committee for the Decade and in the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination.

Hungary

Katalin Barsony currently serves as Editor in Chief at Duna Television in Budapest, responsible for developing a public television series devoted to Roma culture entitled, *Romani Mundi*. Katalin earned her Master's degree in Sociology from Eötvös Loránd University and has completed additional training and coursework in English, public diplomacy, and advocacy. Previously, she has volunteered with the Romaversitas Foundation, interned with the European Parliament, and served as a Roma expert in the Open Society Institute's Roma Participation Program and European Roma Information Office.

Kosovo

Sakibe Jashari is from Ferizaj/Urosevac, Kosovo and is a student in Political and International Relations at London University. She is also an Administrative Assistant at the local community office of UNMIK, and has previously worked as a research assistant for the Education coordinator with the Adventist Development and Relief Agency of Denmark's Kosovo operations and as a language assistant with the OSCE. She has been a frequent participant at workshops on conflict management, local elections training, and human rights implementation and is fluent in English, Albanian, and Serbian with a working knowledge of Macedonian, Turkish, and Romani.

Macedonia

Ferki Demirovski is a state advisor in the Ministry for Foreign Investments. He also acts as the coordinator for a citizens' advising centre founded by the Romani NGO Mesečina which serves Skopje and Veles. Additionally, he is an assistant within Romaversitas in Skopje. Mr. Demirovski is also studying public administration at the South East European University in Tetovo in western Macedonia.

Senad Mustafov is a member of the expert group for citizens' rights with the European Center for Minority Issues (ECMI). He has previously worked with the Romani NGO Phurt and has a background in law. More recently, he was chosen as Director of the Foundation Open Society Institute-Macedonia's (FOSIM) Romani higher education program.

Romania

Cristinela Ionescu is from Petrosani and is a graduate of the Faculty of Social Assistance and Journalism. She collaborates with the Roma organization Thumende Valea Jiului, and is a TV producer in a local TV station promoting Roma culture.

Daniel Grebeldinger is from Cenad village, Timisoara County. He graduated from the Faculty of Physics at Western University of Timisoara and is currently working as a high school physics teacher in Sannicolau Mare and as a Romani language teacher in Cenad village. He is President of the Parudimos Association in Timisoara, an NGO where he began work in 2002 as a volunteer. He participated in many trainings and projects organized by well known Roma NGOs on issues including training of trainers, network communication, community integration, human rights, and project management.

Eugen Stefan Florian from Arad County is currently a student and Executive Director of S.C. Graffix Media Ltd. He has a background in fundraising, advocacy, and organization management and has participated in various projects, including the Millennium Center youth project. He participated in election campaigns for both the local and national

Appendix 2 cont'd...

elections in 2000 and 2004 for the Roma Unity Alliance and the Social Democratic Party (PSD) as well as for the referendum on the constitution.

Silvia Anisoara Constantin is from Bucharest and is currently a student at the Political Science faculty in Bucharest (SNSPA). She was a volunteer for two years at the Roma center Amare Romentza, and was involved in projects promoting the rights of Roma communities.

Titina Ion is from Bucharest and a student in political science. She is currently working as a health mediator and volunteers with Romani Criss, with aspirations to become a politician.

Serbia

Dejan Markovic is an undergraduate student of law at Belgrade University. He has been actively engaged in politics since 1996 when he was elected President of the Civic Alliance of Serbia (GSS) party local branch in Rakovica. The next year he was elected as a member of the party's main board. In local elections in September 2000, he became a member of the Belgrade City Parliament. From 2000 to 2004 Dejan was GSS Caucus Whip at the Belgrade City Parliament. In 2002, NDI Serbia engaged Dejan as a local election consultant for the Albanian minority parties in South Serbia. Dejan is now Manager of the Serbian Roma Union (URS) Election headquarters.

Sladjana Kostic lives in Belgrade and is a married mother of three. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Economics and Customs Management. Sladjana has served as Project Coordinator for a Roma NGO in Belgrade, D'omu, and was an active member of the International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) from 1998 to 2001. Currently, she is employed at the Vehicle Insurance Company and lives in Belgrade and is the Coordinator of the new established Serbian Roma Union (URS) Women's Forum.

Slovakia

Andrea Taragoš comes from Borka in the multicultural district of Roznava, where she works for the Employment and Social Affairs Office as a project assistant. She has a background in civic organizations and is most interested in local politics and interethnic relations in her district. In the future, she plans to study International Relations and Diplomacy. Prior to the local elections in December, she managed a successful election campaign for the mayor of Borka and two Roma councilors in the municipality. She speaks Hungarian, Romani and Slovak fluently.

Jan Buzo lives in Snina and presently studies social work at the University of Prešov. He is a state administration employee and has cooperated with several Romani NGOs, including Inforoma and Intrinsing. Mr. Buzo is a founding member of the NGO My Rómovia (We, the Roma) aimed at increasing civic activism of Romani communities in the region of Prešov and Košice. He cooperates with a community center in Sol and coordinates activities of the center with the local municipality. He ran in the December local elections as a candidate for the municipal council of Sol.

Ladislav Duda serves as an assistant community and social worker in his hometown municipality of Sabinov. He is an active member of a local NGO, and has participated in a number of trainings aimed at improving skill in interpersonal communication, conflict mediation, and counseling for the long-term unemployed. Most recently, he assisted on the successful election campaign of the mayoral candidate in Sabinov.

Milan Pešta is a recent graduate of the Technical University in Košice. He currently works for the municipality of his hometown Šarišské Michaľany as an assistant of community and social work. In 2002 he attended a number of training seminars aimed at developing political skills and mobilizing voters.

Stanislav Daniel is a graduate of the University of Nitra's Department of Romani culture and has previously served as an intern at the office of the Plenipotentiary for Romani communities. In 2005, he participated in an internship with the Council of Europe's Roma and Migration Division. He regularly works with the Milan Simecka Foundation on various projects, and plans to work on community organizing projects in Petrova, in the Bardejov district.

Viera Kroščenová is the chairman of the housing committee for Roma in Ruzomberok municipality where she plays an active role in the civic sphere. In 2005, after being inspired by seminars held by the New Roma Generation (NRG), she established the NGO Zrnko nádeje. She also cooperates with the regional branch of the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) and ran in December local elections as a municipal council candidate.

Appendix 2 cont'd...

Speakers & Trainers

Antoaneta Tsoneva is the Executive Board Chair at the Institute for Public Environment Development in Bulgaria. Mrs. Tsoneva has frequently served as a trainer for workshops on citizen participation, strategic planning, strategic advocacy, and legislative drafting. She has previously worked as Municipality Secretary, Chief Expert for the Sofia Regional Administration, and as Ombudsman for Sofia municipality. Mrs. Tsoneva has authored a number of publications on anti-corruption administration and citizen participation in the budget drafting process and holds a Master's degree in Bulgarian Studies from the University of Sofia.

Klara Orgovanova is currently the Plenipotentiary of Roma Communities for the Slovak Government. A trained psychologist, Orgovanova has previously been involved with the Project for Ethnic Relations (PER) in Princeton, New Jersey.

Margareta Matache is the Executive Director of Romani CRISS, an NGO which defends and promotes the rights of Roma and works to combat and prevent racial discrimination against Roma in all areas of public life. Prior to her time at Romani CRISS, Ms. Matache was a trainer for the Council of Europe's programs, a short term observer for the OSCE/ODIHR and a coordinator of international Roma advocacy programs such as the "Roma and Stability Pact in South Eastern Europe."

Miroslav Čiž is a member of the party Smer-Social Democracy and currently serves as the Deputy President of the Slovak National Council.

Osman Balic is the Vice President of the political party Serbia Roma Union (URS) and the coordinator of the League for the Roma Decade.

Peter Pollak is a prominent Roma rights activist and current leader of the Slovak NGO New Roma Generation (NRG). A former NDI program participant, Mr. Pollak served as a candidate in Slovakia's 2005 regional elections in which he garnered the most votes ever by a Roma candidate.

Rodolphe Vallee has served as US Ambassador to Slovakia since 2005. Previously, he served as Chairman, CEO, and owner of a Vermont-based energy company and has held additional executive positions for a number of renewable energy companies. In the political sphere, H.E. Vallee has served on the US Senate Subcommittee on Education, and the Advisory Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiation. He holds a Bachelor's degree in biology from Williams College and Masters in Business Administration from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania.

Sevdalina Voynova is NDI's country director in Bulgaria. Voynova studied intercultural studies at Oxford University in the United Kingdom, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in Israel, and Sofia University in Bulgaria. Voynova has authored many publications including NDI's manual for civil society organizations *Voter Education and GOTV*, C.S. Mott Foundation's manual *Political Party Outreach to Citizens and NGOs*, the Bulgarian Women's Coalition's analytical report *Women's Participation in the Elections*, and a number of NDI reports on Romani political participation in Bulgaria.

Viktoria Mohacsi is a Hungarian Member of the European Parliament with the ALDE group. Prior to this, Ms. Mohacsi worked with the Hungarian Ministry of Education as Commissioner Responsible for Integration, where she initiated a desegregation program to begin placing Romani children out of schools for the disabled and into the mainstream school system. Ms. Mohacsi has also acted as a researcher and consultant on Roma desegregation programs for the World Bank, Soros Foundation, Syracuse University and the Education Research Institute. As a journalist, Ms. Mohacsi worked with Hungarian Television as a reporter on its Cultural News and Patrín Magazine programs. She also works on behalf of Roma education rights with the European Roma Rights Center (ERRC).

Zuzana Dzurikova is NDI's Roma program director in Slovakia and has worked for the Institute in Slovakia and Montenegro since 2000. Dzurikova has worked extensively with Roma candidates prior to local, regional and parliamentary elections in Slovakia. Prior to NDI, Dzurikova was the co-founder *Občianske Oka*, a domestic Slovak election monitoring NGO, and is a lawyer by trade.

**NDI's Roma Political Leadership Academy
February 23-26, 2007**





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NDI would like to extend a special thanks to the **National Endowment for Democracy** for its generous support of the third Annual Roma Political Leadership Academy.

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