

## Case study

### “Equality of Opportunity”

#### Overview

<b>Driver</b>	U. S. Steel Košice, s.r.o. (USSK)
<b>Country</b>	Košice, Slovak Republic
<b>Societal issue addressed</b>	High unemployment rates of socially marginalized groups of Roma minority
<b>Partners</b>	Local community workers, Municipalities and mayors, Schools
<b>Status</b>	Ongoing
<b>Impact</b>	Almost 200 Roma people employed in USSK
<b>Challenges</b>	Attitude of Roma people – working patterns
<b>Endorsements</b>	Via Bona Slovakia 2008



#### Executive Summary

Since 2002, U. S. Steel Košice (USSK) has been working in cooperation with the village council of Veľká Ida, the city ward of Šaca, and the Romintegra 7777 Civic Association active within the Lunik IX residential area in Košice, running a special project for employing Roma people. The Municipal Authority of the city of Košice took over the responsibilities of Romintegra in 2008. Roma people are employed by the above mentioned municipalities, and USSK offers an agreed amount of work and the respective financial resources.

Within the programme “Equality of Opportunity” the company provides training for a special social group, mostly excluded from a real labour market. The participants of the programme are identified by local community workers and mayors. The most successful participants of the training are offered a full time position. By having a stable job and a regular income, the participants of the programme were able to improve their lives. Some of them moved out from impoverished Roma settlements and became tenants in the community housing. The project has been running since 2002.

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## 1. Situation and societal issue

Many employers are unwilling to employ Roma workers because of unfavourable (subjective) assessments of Roma workers' productivity and their work ethic. Research on long-term and chronic unemployment shows that Roma unemployment rates are between 40 and 50% due to poor qualifications. USSK has the most experience with employment of Roma workers in Slovakia. In the area of Košice there are socially marginalized groups of Roma minority who have problems with inclusion in public and work life. Roma people have problems finding work because of a lack of education, qualifications and work experience. The most problematic areas identified were village Veľká Ida and two city parts of Košice – Šaca and Luník IX.

## 2. Partners

- Local community workers
- Municipalities and mayors
- Schools

### a. Driver

- U. S. Steel Košice, s.r.o. (USSK)

### b. Businesses

USSK act as innovator and investor. They finance the project, set up the model and are improving it (which means they do not finance a project which was developed by other body e.g. some non-governmental organization).

### c. Community organizations

- Several schools joined the project.

## 3. Programme Description

### a. Initiation

When the USSK came to Slovakia, the mayor of Veľká Ida came to ask for financial help. President John Goddish offered work positions as a solution for the economic problems of Roma community. That is how the "Equality of Opportunity" project started to grow. The objective of the programme was to offer training and a full time job for long-term unemployed people who were identified by the leaders of the community as able and eager to change their lifestyles.

### b. Process

"Equality of Opportunity" started in 2002. Initially work positions were offered for a group of 8 Roma people from village Veľká Ida in the form of personal leasing from the municipality. The number of participants increased year on year and in 2008 172 Roma workers were employed by USSK. Two other areas of Košice joined the project – Košice Šaca and Luník IX.

### **c. Activities**

The process is based on personal requests from Roma people and also on personal knowledge of the applicants. Local community workers and mayors then choose people who want to work and change their way of life, support the education of their children, are interested in improving their qualifications and fulfill the requirements of USSK. Each year USSK facilitates the transfer from personal leasing into labour relation/employment for the best employees. They then take further courses to enhance their qualifications.

## **4. Impact**

### **a. Benefits to the local/ regional community**

Roma workers are improving their skills as well as their lives. Having a regular income allows them to take care of their family. As a result of solvency many of them have moved from cabins without electricity into city apartments. Their families are integrated into society. The project is open only for workers whose children are attending schools. Therefore not only individual workers are benefiting but also their families.

### **b. Benefits to the community organisations**

Several schools joined the project. The first was the Vocational School – Šaca which provides vocational training for participants of the project. Elementary school Šaca and Elementary school Ľ. Podjavorinskej also cooperate with USSK. USSK runs several projects with them to motivate children to get basic education and continue with their study at the Vocational School – Šaca which specializes in providing education in metallurgy. Schools, children and youths are strongly supported in order to improve situation in Roma community. E.g. a special class was opened also for small children who are not at the age of school boarding. As a result of the project's success many local personalities and leaders are regularly attending the schools. Children are also offered a motivational excursion to the Vocational School - Šaca to see their potential further study area. The best students are also offered places at a summer campus or other support.

### **c. Benefits to the companies**

USSK is the biggest employer in the region. The project "Equality of Opportunity" helps to solve problems in the region, support its development and the lives of local people. The Company not only gets strong visibility but also positions itself as leader in this area. The project also inspires others and stands as the best example for government and other organizations. Corporate culture is also enriched and strengthened, thefts are minimized and health and safety standards are enhanced.

## **5. Challenges**

Coming from a different cultural background, Roma people can experience difficulty in adapting to what is expected from them in Slovak companies and other working environments. Therefore USSK and the municipality regularly check and evaluate their work and assist them. The best workers are awarded once a year by representatives of municipality and USSK senior management.

## 6. Endorsements

The project has been promoted at various international conferences and received several awards.

- Awards – Via Bona Slovakia 2008, Responsible Employer  
[www.viabona.sk/english](http://www.viabona.sk/english)  
[www.viabona.sk/tmp/asset\\_cache/link/0000014985/amcham%20001.pdf](http://www.viabona.sk/tmp/asset_cache/link/0000014985/amcham%20001.pdf) (in English)
- 2008 Ostrihome, Hungary: International conference “Ways into the future: Participation through Education”, organized by Caritas Wien, sponsored by Erste Bank a Komenský Fond
- 2008, Prešov, Slovakia: Conference on Labour Shortages in Eastern Slovakia organized by Amcham Slovakia  
[www.amcham.sk/upload/gallery/Docs/conn\\_06\\_2008\\_24.pdf](http://www.amcham.sk/upload/gallery/Docs/conn_06_2008_24.pdf) (in English)

## 7. Contact & Further Information

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Articles about the project were featured in the company's newsletter and Slovak media.

CSR report U. S. Steel Košice 2006-2008  
[www.usske.sk/citizenship/USSK\\_sprava\\_CSR08.pdf](http://www.usske.sk/citizenship/USSK_sprava_CSR08.pdf) (in English)

Press releases [www.usske.sk](http://www.usske.sk) (in English)

Company Weekly “Oceľ východu” [www.usske.sk/ov/arch-s.htm](http://www.usske.sk/ov/arch-s.htm) (in English)

Examples of articles in Slovak media (in Slovak):

[www.sme.sk/c/3354444/v-us-steel-kosice-zamestnavaju-romov.html](http://www.sme.sk/c/3354444/v-us-steel-kosice-zamestnavaju-romov.html)

<http://ekonomika.sme.sk/c/3635222/us-steel-zaskolil-23-romov-troch-zamestnal.html>

[www.24hod.sk/clanok-55793-U--S--Steel-Kosice-pomaha-Romom-ziskat-pracu-i-vzdelanie.html](http://www.24hod.sk/clanok-55793-U--S--Steel-Kosice-pomaha-Romom-ziskat-pracu-i-vzdelanie.html)

## INCLUDE – Pathways to Community Investment

The European project INCLUDE provides local intermediaries like civil society organisations, economic development agencies, chambers of commerce and public authorities with support that will help them to engage businesses in innovative cross-sectoral partnerships. INCLUDE identifies on a worldwide scale good examples of collaborative business initiatives as well as business engagement in cross-sectoral partnerships, which contribute towards skills development and employability of disadvantaged groups, towards social inclusion and innovation in addressing societal challenges and communicates them.

INCLUDE builds upon the results of the CSR-Laboratory “Skills for Employability enhanced through Employee Engagement” which was carried out as part of the European Alliance for CSR and is run jointly by UPJ and the ENGAGE initiative coordinated by Business in the Community (BITC). Partners of the project are the German Federal Department of Labour and Social Affairs, Citi-Group, Asociata pentru Relatii Comunitare (Romania), Önkéntes Központ Alapítvány (Hungary), SMartKolektiv (Serbia), Pontis Foundation (Slovakia) and Özel Sektör Gönüllüler Derneği (Turkey).

The project is supported by the European Commission (Directorate-General for Employment, social affairs and equal opportunities).

Further information about the project is available at [www.bitc.org.uk/global/include.html](http://www.bitc.org.uk/global/include.html) (in English) [www.upj.de/include](http://www.upj.de/include) (in German)

### UPJ

UPJ is the German national network of engaged businesses and local non-profit intermediary organizations. Its projects and programmes create new connections between businesses, civil society organizations and public authorities thus contributing to solve societal challenges and to shape sustainable communities. UPJ, a registered charity under German law, provides organizations from the business, community and public sectors with information and consultancy to improve their Corporate Citizenship and Corporate Social Responsibility activities. [www.upj.de](http://www.upj.de)



### ENGAGE

ENGAGE is an international programme that brings together businesses and community organisations around the globe to increase the quality and amount of employee community engagement in their local communities. Its mission is twofold: To inspire, mobilise and support companies to develop sustainable community investment programmes, and to provide community organisations with a network, tools and support that will help them work more effectively with business partners. [www.engageyouremployees.org](http://www.engageyouremployees.org)



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