

**Theoretically informed case study accompanying the film
REAL PEARL ART-EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION, HUNGARY**



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QR-Code to the Homepage and video:

Link to the video: <http://inno-serv.eu/realpearl>

This report is part of the research project „Social Platform on innovative Social Services“ (INNO SERV). INNO SERV investigates innovative approaches in three fields of social services: health, education and welfare. The INNO SERV Consortium covers nine European countries and aims to establish a social platform that fosters a europeanwide discussion about innovation in social services between practitioners, policy-makers, researchers and service users. This project is funded by the European Union under the 7th Framework Programme (grant agreement nr. 290542).



1. Short profile: Real Pearl - Basic Art Education Foundation

The Real Pearl Basic Art Education Foundation has consciously focused its educational activities on socially disadvantaged children in order to foster their psycho-social development. The scope of their involvement has been gradually extended to the parents and to the wider community.

Specific innovative elements

Child-centred art education for disadvantaged children, enhancing cognitive skills- and personality-development.

The artistic activities for children expanded to social work and complex community building incorporating income generating activities for parents, in particular embroidery work sold through social webshop.

Providing wide-reaching, integrated programmes in the most deprived and segregated rural settlements.

Tackling fuel-poverty by the production of bio-bricket.

Key characteristics of the service

Organisation:

The Real Pearl Foundation was funded in 2000. The core staff consists of fourteen people, most of whom are art-pedagogues. Their work is supported by a number of volunteers and other promoters. The Foundation wisely uses the available tools of social media in order to raise awareness.

User groups:

The service targets primarily children attending elementary schools and their parents. The students who regularly attend art-classes count approximately 600 disadvantaged, underprivileged Roma and non-Roma children from 12 settlements surrounding Berettyóújfalu. Mostly due to their social background, poor life-conditions and limited family support they face difficulties in the schools. Due to the rigidity of the school system schools are unable to compensate for these disadvantages. Therefore these children often experience failure in schools. Their motivation as well as their self-esteem tends to deteriorate.

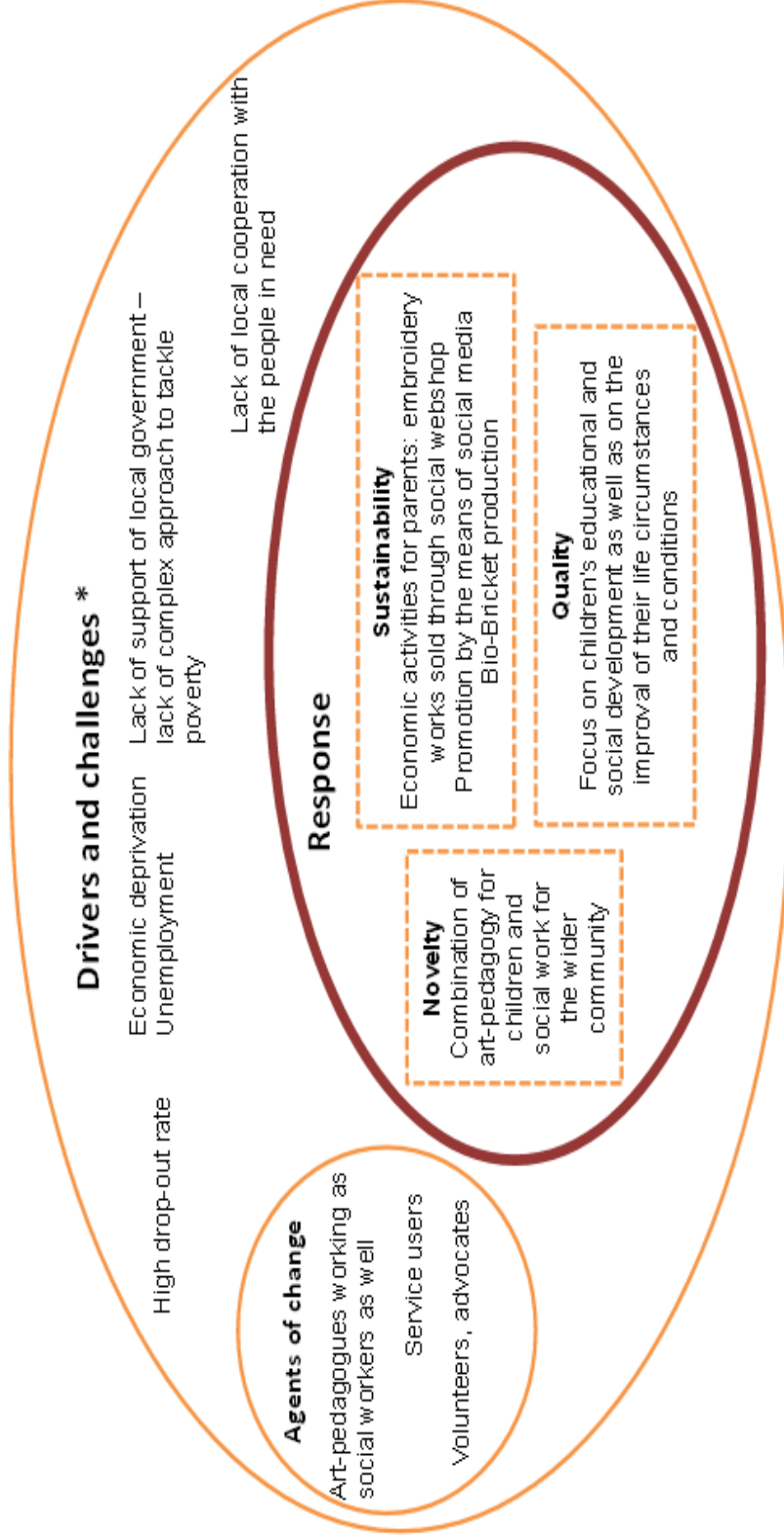
Principle:

In order to break the vicious circle of poverty, there is a great need to help the locals in their basic needs but also to rebuild their positive attitude and motivation and to empower them. Real Pearl applies an integrated and child-centred educative methodology to develop children's self-esteem. Teachers devote personal attention, regular positive feedback to the children and this way they can experience success in their work, and a chance to express their thoughts, their creativity. The Foundation's activity has been extended to the parents of children and gradually to the whole community of the most disadvantaged villages. In these remote areas they carry out complex social work and community development activities, which they plan and run together with the local Roma people.

Driver(s):

The whole micro-region, but especially the small, dead-end villages suffer from economic deprivation, where traditional ways to solve social problems fail. Public institutions are not fulfilling their role in reducing poverty, tackling ethnic conflicts, facilitating social cohesion and preventing high rates of drop-out of disadvantaged children from schools. The cooperation between the local government and the local poor people, especially the Roma, seems to be very weak thus civil and informal initiatives like Real Pearl Foundation play a crucial role.

Factors influencing Social Services Innovation



*These lists are used for illustration only and are discussed more fully in WP 2.

2. Policy Framework related to extracurricular education in Hungary

Principle/ Guidelines	Key organisations and actors	Services provided by government	Expenditure, Resources
<p>School time: daily 4-5 hours depending on the age of children</p> <p>Education in primary schools is often complemented by extracurricular afternoon programmes offered by the school or offered by other organizations. The previous ones are available only until the age of 12. They tend to be more like supervisory character and less-structured leisure-time activities instead of focus on child development. (Szikra, 2011)</p> <p>The distribution of after-school programmes is regionally diverse and less available in poor, rural areas (Szikra, 2011)</p> <p>Lack of special education strategy for socially disadvantaged children, for Roma children.</p> <p>Ethnic segregation in schools is extensive with Roma children receiving lower quality education (Kertesi – Kézdi 2010). Segregation is observable in extracurricular afternoon programmes as well.</p>	<p>1. Vast majority of primary schools are public ones maintained by municipalities. Most of their extracurricular afternoon programmes end at 4PM.</p> <p>2. Private – for profit and non-profit – providers also entered the field. They offer their services inside or outside primary schools, usually for fees.</p>	<p>The most relevant legal acts concerning extracurricular activities in Hungary.</p> <p>1. For regulating the extra-curricular services at the national level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Law No. 190/2011 on Public Education <p>2. For coordinating and organizing extra-curricular services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ministerial Decree No. 20/2012. (VIII. 31.) – Ministry of Human Resources <p>Service characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extracurricular activities are held by qualified pedagogues - In the academic year of 2011/2012 35% of primary school pupils attended extracurricular afternoon programmes (Statistical yearbook 2011-2012) 	<p>1. Schools are eligible for headcount-based subsidies of the central budget which is complemented by municipal funding if necessary</p> <p>2. There used to be so called extra integration subsidy for children coming from socially disadvantaged families</p> <p>3. Public funding is not sufficient for financing special programmes intended to enhance child development, therefore especially private providers need to do extra fundraising activities in order to ensure their functioning.</p>

3. The social, political and institutional context

3.1 Population / Government

	Hungary (2010)	EU27 (2010)
Total Population:	10,014,324	501,120,157
Proportion of population aged 0-5 years:	5.84%	6.3%
Percentage of population at risk of poverty or social exclusion	29.9%	23.4 %
Percentage of population under 6 years at risk of poverty or social exclusion	37.1%	25.2%
Expenditure on social protection (% of GDP)	23.1%	29.36%

Source: EUROSTAT 2012

3.2 Information about the specific welfare state: Hungary

After the fall of the state socialist regime serious economic decline hit Hungary. The risk of permanent poverty increased especially for unskilled people, those living in disadvantaged areas, people living in small-size municipalities. The political elites expected that economic development and increase in national income would diminish the high rate of poverty. Therefore in the early 1990s they tried to hide the phenomenon with specific cash-transfers in forms of early-retirement, long parental leaves, etc. However the rate of population facing economic deprivation kept being relatively high and no real progress has been achieved. According the data of Central Statistical Office approximately one-fifth of the population at the age of 20-59 was long-term unemployed in 2010 and 3% of the population lived in poverty (Medgyesi and Scharle, 2012). The proportion of poor among Roma in Hungary is approximately four times higher than the national average (BI, 2011). Spatial segregation of Roma is quite extensive. Two thirds of the Roma population live in the least developed regions of Hungary. More than 70% lives in spatially segregated housing mostly with Roma neighbours. Approximately 20-26% lives in segregated Roma settlements.

One of the main sources of reproduction of poverty is education. In absence of special tools for integration of disadvantaged children the schools fail to provide the necessary support for the disadvantaged children to catch up, to acquire equal opportunities when entering the labour market. Selection of children as well as segregation starts already on the level of kindergarten, and continues on the primary school level. 80% of Roma adults have completed only primary education in contrast to the 33% in the total population. At the age group of 24-25 years old only 5% of Roma have accomplished secondary education (level A). This rate is 55% in the total population.(BI, 2011)

Although there are various active labour market policies adopted in order to enhance integration of disadvantaged people into the labour market, emphasis has been put on public works programmes recently. Training and consultation as well as social work have been gradually limited in activation policies. Public works programs, however, have not proved to be effective in raising employability of participants in the free labour market (Köllő and Scharle 2011). These programs do not correspond to the realities of the labour market, what decreases their efficacy (Medgyesi and Scharle, 2012).

Hungary maintains a relatively generous family policy system. Expenditure on family policy support has almost reached 3% of GDP¹ in 2010 (Eurostat, 2012). However at current conditions it tends to benefit more the better-off families (especially through tax allowances), while it does not offer appropriate support for families at lower social status. Prior the financial crisis cash transfers had impact on reducing poverty (Gábos, 2008). Since 2008 cash benefits has been kept at the same amount, while its value has decreased (Ferge and Darvas, 2012). For a family in one of the most disadvantaged regions of Hungary it meant a considerable 10% decrease in monthly family income in nominal terms, and 17% decrease in its real value (Ferge and Darvas, 2012). The table below presents the social protection expenditure of selected countries

Social protection expenditure: Aggregated benefits and grouped schemes in millions of Euros

Time	Expenditure for social protection benefits in millions of Euros		Increasing benefits in kind	Part of benefits in kind of social protection benefits	
	1996	2010		1996-2010	1996
EU 27	/	3,605,678.95	/	/	34.07%
Hungary	/	22287.98	/	/	32.19%
France	379,396.42	654,238.65	84.47%	31.94%	34.17%
Germany	565,683.07	765,717.82	52.53%	30.79%	34.69%

Source: Own calculations based on EUROSTAT 2012

Access to nurseries and family child-care centres for children under 3 years is highly limited, the share of children attending such services has been around 10% in 2010s (Central Statistical Office, Stadat). Coverage of daycare services exceeds 20% in Budapest and in county seats, while on the other side of the spectrum, in small villages the rate of children accessing the services tends to be under 0.5% (Central Statistical Office – Stadat). Regional differences are quite extensive in Hungary, reifying the existent territorial and social inequalities. In the least developed regions (Northern Hungary², Northern Great Plain³) the rates are the lowest ones. In terms of household income, children of better-off families are over-represented: Families of the two highest income groups use services of nurseries the most, while the families in lower income groups are under-represented (Tokaji, 2011). The demand for services by far exceeds the capacities of existing facilities and the development of the network is very slow, what is especially unfavourable for disadvantaged children who could benefit the most of early childhood education and care.

In contrast to nurseries, the network of kindergarten is relatively well-developed covering 85% of children of the age cohort (Transmonee). In Hungary the attendance of children is compulsory from the age of 5 (from 2014 age limit is decreased to 3 years). In 2009 the so called kindergarten allowance was introduced to encourage parents of disadvantaged children to attend kindergarten at an early age. Kézdi and Kertesi (2012) found that 2 in 3 children attend kindergarten at the age of 3, while in case of children of mothers with primary education it is only 1 in 3 children. They argue this is partially reasoned by lack of capacities in kindergarten, by limited parental intentions or other reasons on the demand side. Lack of capacity is especially

¹ 2.34% was spent on cash benefits and 0.59% on services.

² In 2009 it was the 9th NUTS2 region with lowest regional GDP per capita in the EU (http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/1-13032012-AP/EN/1-13032012-AP-EN.PDF)

³ In 2009 13th NUTS2 region with the lowest regional GDP per capita in the EU

characteristic for municipalities with high rate of unemployment and poverty, and where the Roma minority is represented in higher percentages (Kertesi and Kézdi, 2012). Approximately on 42% of Roma children attend kindergarten (BI, integration) 20.3% of children and youth under the age of 17 lived under the poverty threshold in 2010 (Central Statistical Office, 2012). This rate duplicates in the least developed regions (Ferge and Darvas, 2012). According to the PISA data the impact of social background of families on the educational performance of the child is the strongest in Hungary among all countries examined, which highly underlines the need for early childhood education for disadvantaged children (Danis, 2011).

The Programme against Child Poverty was launched in 2005 and a detailed long-term strategy has been issued in order to deal with these challenges. The main purposes were to ensure healthy life conditions, to make children acquire the necessary skills enhancing their social integration, to reduce the considerable regional differences and ethnic inequalities. One of the main principles advocated was the role of early childhood education and care in reducing the social disadvantages. In 2009 the financing was shifted under EU financing. Recently the Programme against Child Poverty has been considerably disempowered.

4. Challenges and Drivers of Innovation

Structural weaknesses of the system:

Territorial discrepancy in access to social services: The municipal system is highly fragmented in Hungary. Public services tend to be under-financed, thus small-size localities find it hard to maintain and provide these services. Due to the difficulties to reach the nearest town, but also the lack of information and distrust in public institutions, people living in small villages, and especially Roma, have limited access to services dealing with mental health problems, labour market activation and family issues.

Highly selective and rigid education system: Failure to deal with the disadvantages of the underprivileged children and promote their catch-up. Schools and teachers are not prepared to cope with the children entering schools without the skills considered necessary.

Lack of multidisciplinary approach to poverty: Most of the programmes and projects devoted to tackle poverty are not complex enough to deal with the different aspects of the persisting problem such as education, health, nutrition, housing and lack of economic activity simultaneously.

Low level of coordination of relevant public policies (both at central and local level): The weakness of the current system is the lack of cooperation between policies like employment, child care, housing, tax and social policies. Furthermore certain fields lack long-term action plans, or even if they do exist they are changed according to the alternation in governments.

Limited cooperation between the local public authorities and civil organizations

Innovation: Ideas, criteria, levels and added values

Art-education for children focusing on their abilities and strengths. Activities are aimed to develop their social skills and their self-esteem.

Development and dissemination of specific methodology highly sensitive to the social and cultural environment in which the child is raised

Art-education reaching beyond the schools, active involving parents and the community as well.

Use of children's drawings as the sources and basis of the income-generating activities for

mothers in forms of embroidery works.

Social webshop – the foundation introduced its own brand of embroidery products, which are sold through their social webshop.

The use of social media – the foundation highly utilizes the social media in raising awareness of the problems they face and also about their work. They are actively represented in social network sites. In addition to this, the leader or the foundation writes a blog, which proved to be very powerful in prompting public discussion and support for their activities.

Besides art-education the foundation got engaged in tackling fuel-poverty through the production of bio-brickets.

Agents of change

The director of the foundation Nóra L. Ritók faced the problems of poor and Roma families at as a school-teacher. Her efforts, pro-activism and patience to build up mutually trustful relationship with the parents are the basic pillars of the foundation's work. With the support of the art teachers as well as volunteers they attempt to help families in various forms taking into account the interests and needs of service users, who got to shape the direction of the programmes as well.

Key innovative elements of this example

Field of service	Welfare and education
Establishment of organization	2000
Type of organization	Non-governmental, civil organization
Financing	State contribution, private donations, 1% of personal income tax
Size of the organization	App. 14 core staff; app. 10 volunteers; app. 4 local members of the community
Members and participation	Core staff includes art-teachers, social worker. Environmental activists provide assistant to the bio-bricket project. Users of the service include about 600 children and their parents.
Contact Name of the innovative example Homepage	Homepage: http://igazgyongy-alapitvany.hu/en/ Organization: 'Real Pearl' Basic Art-Educational Foundation Address: 4100 Berettyóújfalu, József Attila utca 11., Hungary Contact person: L.Ritók, Nóra (director) Phone: Nóra: (+36) 30 299 6143, School: (+36) 54 400 131 +36) 30 299 6137 Email: l.ritoknora@gmail.com Field of service: Education Partner: BI Country: Hungary

The centre of the Real Pearl Foundation is in Berettyóújfalu, one of the 33 most disadvantaged micro-regions of the country near the Romanian border. The Foundation works in several settlements of the region, but it concentrates its efforts to Told, one of the most disadvantaged villages of the area.



355 people live there and vast majority (81.76%) of those aged 15-65 have no permanent earnings/income. More than 50% of the population is Roma. All the houses lack piped water in the village. People use the public wells in the streets. Electricity can be found only in a few houses, mainly as the result of the Real Pearl Foundation's social work and community development program. There is no main road crossing the village, there is one way in and out, which makes it hard for the village to improve.⁴

During the socialist era, the region had a flourishing agriculture, which provided enough workplaces for the locals. After the collectivist agricultural cooperatives ceased to work, unemployment rose massively, and the life standard of the village deteriorated rapidly. Nowadays less than 10 people have a fixed job place in the local kindergarten, all others live from seasonal work mostly in agriculture (during the summertime only). There used to be only one shop in Told enjoying complete monopoly. Therefore the prices were twice as high as in the neighbouring villages. In October 2012 this shop shut down as well. There are three buses a day to and back to the nearby Berettyóújfalu.

Because of the deep, hopeless and unalterable poverty ethnic and social conflicts, thefts, and frequently violent arguments became usual in the ethnically diverse community. There live Olah, Hungarian and Romanian gypsies, and (non-Roma) Hungarian. As it is almost impossible to get a permanent job, the vast majority of the adult population completely lost its motivation and incentive to work. They are dependent on social assistance for their livelihood. Most of them are unskilled, and the illiteracy is high.

Children from this extremely poor, starving and depressed environment face difficulties at school. The probability of becoming a drop-out has been extremely high. They are lagging behind the others already in the first school year, what multiplies during the years. Schools lack the methods and principles of inclusive education and are unable to support children in catch-up. Families in Told are not well prepared in terms relevant school equipment nor in form of parental support in learning and practicing. Many of the children do not finish elementary school contributing to transmission of poverty to the next generation.

The Real Pearl Foundation founded in 2000, provides art-education (including fine and applied art, dance, graphics, painting, ceramics) to foster the psycho-social development of children. Art school classes are organized after the normal primary school hours. The art school maintains good relationship with the primary school of the nearby town, Berettyóújfalu, where many of the children from the surrounding villages study. The "link" between the primary school and the art school is the founder and head of the foundation, Nóra L. Ritók who has been a drawing teacher there. During her work as a teacher she acknowledged that children coming from such disadvantaged environment, need complex help to compensate their disadvantages before and during their education. This includes continuous pedagogical and social support and attention and also subsidies which have not been provided by the public primary school.

The extra-curricular activities of Real Pearl apply an integrated and child-centred educative

⁴ Such settlements are called '*zsákfalú*' in Hungarian which means 'dead-end village'

methodology developed by the teachers involved in it. It is based on the creativity of children while also improves their concentration. Central to this methodology is to build up children's self-esteem which improves their performance also in the normal classes of the primary school. Personal attention, regular external confirmation of their abilities and experience of success proved effective for children's development.

The Real Pearl's activity does not stop at the doorsteps of the school. They extended their work to the parents of children and gradually to the whole community in the most disadvantaged villages. Told is the place, where complex social work and community development activities were undertaken in cooperation with the local Roma people. Besides the collection and distribution of donations the foundation helps to pay the meals of the children at school or the medicines children and adults need. They assist them in emergency needs, organize protection, against the usurers or provide daily help with, e.g. giving a lift to the hospital, help to get access to health care services and cover the costs of burials. Cultural programs aim at the preservation of the local (Oláh) Roma culture, and the possibility for both children and adults to express themselves through art. A gardening program was initiated in which families received seeds and plants to produce food in the otherwise unused gardens.

One of the central programmes has been the building up of the brand 'SZUNO' (which means 'Dream' in Romani language). Pillow- and cell-phone-cases, wall pictures, purses and bags are sold under this brand the speciality of which is that mothers of the Real Pearl's students embroider the drawings of their children. The Foundation sells them via its social webshop and pays women for each piece they make (for more details see : <http://igazgyongy-alapitvany.hu/shop/>). It is an important source of revenue for the families and plays a community building role as women work together in a workshop. The Foundation plans to create a workshop where the local men can produce furniture for children also with motives created by local children. Through the gardening program and the SZUNO, the Foundation tries to help the community to be self-sustaining where work can breed enough money for the living.

One of the most recent activity of the Foundation, which raised attention among NGOs and experts alike, has been the production of "bio bricks" through which fuel poverty is being tackled. Unemployed people of the village Told recycle paper, reed etc. and press it with a special methodology into "bricks" during the summer-time which are then distributed among the poor to be used in the winter (see details <http://igazgyongy-alapitvany.hu/alapitvany/biobrikett-program/>). Working in the "bio-brick" farm of the Foundation is accepted as voluntary work by the local municipality which provides the unemployed with eligibility to (a very low level – 80EUR/month) social assistance from them.

The Real Pearl Foundation consists of a core staff with about 14 people, most of whom are art-pedagogues. They are supported by a number of volunteers and other promoters. The bio-brick program, for example, has been run together with environmental experts, and promoters include the British Council and the Legacy Foundation (see details here: <http://igazgyongy-alapitvany.hu/alapitvany/biobrikett-program/>). The staff is led by Nóra Ritók who encourages and trains art-teachers to join the foundation and starts up art-classes in the nearby villages. Local people, especially in Told, work hand-in-hand with the foundation, and by today, many of them have leading role in managing the handicraft workshop and the biobrick production. Also, the users of the services of Real Pearl are involved in the planning and decision-making process about new and running projects.

An important segment of the Foundation's work is the effective usage of media. Besides running an informative, well-structured and regularly up-dated homepage documentaries have been filmed and interviews made about their activities. Exhibitions and auctions from the works of the children and the mothers are regularly organized not only locally but also in Budapest, raising funds among the intellectual elites of the capital. The blog written by Nóra L. Ritók is available on one of the most read on-line newspapers (Heti Világgazdaság, HVG on-line, see here: <http://nyomorszeleblog.hvg.hu/2013/03/07/354-hol-vesztettuk-el-oket/>). The fact that the Foundation is well-known also in the capital city increases its local acceptance, and smooths the

co-operation between the foundation and public institutions.

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