



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

Social Market Economy in Member States II : ESF
Romania, Bulgaria Malta

Brussels,
EMPL/F/5/13/11/2012

NOTE FOR THE FILE

Subject: ESF funding for the SERA Foundation Romania

On 12 October 2012, the Head of Unit F 5 received an email message from Mr. Jiri Plecity on a possible inappropriate ESF funding in Romania for the Foundation SERA, one of the objectives being to assess the international adoptions policies in force in the country since 2000. The respective policies consisted in putting in place stricter conditions for international adoptions and curbing the previous abuses, in which SERA had been, allegedly, involved.

Unit F5 made an internet search about the Foundation activities, which showed that the Foundation had been suspected of illegal child trafficking before 2000. However, the suspicions/allegations of illegal activities have never been confirmed and there has been no judicial procedure resulting into any condemnation of the Foundation (press clippings file attached – enclosure 1)

Further to the above-mentioned alert, Unit F5 checked with the Romanian Managing Authority and received the confirmation that the Foundation is a partner in a project where the beneficiary is the Ministry of Labour. The funding comes from the Administrative Capacity Programme and the Managing Authority is the Ministry of Public Administration and Interior. The project is about "Improving the organisational efficacy of the child protection system in Romania". The contract was signed in 2010 for a budget of around EURO 4 million, out of which EURO 3.4 million ESF contribution. The project activities started in 2011 and are scheduled to finish in April 2013. The list of experts provided by SERA to the project includes former Presidents or Directors of the ex-National Authority for Child Protection.

According to the financing request (a copy of which we received on 13 November from the Managing Authority), the SERA Foundation contribution to the project consists in **assessing the organisation and the functioning of the child protection system in Romania**. Adoptions (national or international) do not seem to be an objective or an activity under the project.

Up to the present date, the Romanian Managing Authority has reimbursed to the project an amount of EURO 916,432.44, out of which EURO 367,028 have already been

declared to the Commission and paid. The Managing Authority also paid an advance to the project amounting to EURO 331,963.

On 16 October 2012, Unit F 5 wrote to the Romanian Managing Authority (Ministry of Public Administration and Interior) asking them to reconsider the appropriateness of the involvement of the SERA Foundation into the design of child protection policies given the suspicion of illegal practices by the Foundation in the past and to report back to the Commission on action taken (copy of the letter attached – enclosure 2).

To date, Unit F/5 has not received any concrete reply from the Managing Authority (Ministry of Administration and Interior). On the grounds that this Managing Authority has no competence in child protection policies, they have reported the case to the Ministry of Labour. Additionally, they have scheduled a control mission on the project activities to take place between 21 and 23 November 2012 to find any potential irregularities.

On 23 October 2012, the Head of Unit F/5 received an email message from the Executive Director of the SERA Foundation who was in possession of DG EMPL's letter to the Managing Authority, complaining about the reportedly reputational damage caused to the Foundation by the letter (see enclosure 3)

EMPL F/5
Septimia DOBRESCU
Constantin Viorel MIHAI

Enclosures:

- Annex 1) Press clippings on the case (e-mail 12/10/2012);
- Annex 2) EMPL F/5 letter (16.10.2012) to the Director of the Managing Authority of the Administrative Capacity Operational Programme (RO and EN) ;
- Annex 3) E-mail sent by Mr. Bogdan Simion, executive director of SERA Foundation to EMPL F/5 HoU (following EMPL F/5 letter to the Managing Authority).