

The second instance in which I witness Hristo's abilities to bring a group of disparate people into a common dialogue with a constructive outcome was at a meeting last summer sponsored by UNESCO. The meeting drew a remarkable assortment of individuals interested in one way or another in Roma education from across Europe. Aside from the linguistic difficulties – though the language of the conference was English I believe I was the only native speaker in the building -- this group included a tremendous array of interests, views, and ways of communicating. The goal of the meeting was to produce a coherent document that represented something like a consensus about what steps ought to be taken to improve the situation for Roma students, a difficult goal to envision let alone reach given the level of divergence among the participants – NGO workers, government officials, academics, politicians, teachers, one man with a book of photographs and a life story impossible to follow, representatives of transnational organizations. But Hristo managed to keep everyone focused on the task at hand, to give space to those who agreed with his positions and to those whose views were quite different, not imposing any one interpretation or allowing anyone else to impose their views on the whole. This was all done with remarkably good cheer, despite the lack of air-conditioning and the staff's zeal about keeping the windows closed. There were disagreements, some quite significant, but in the end the group reached something like a consensus, thanks largely to Hristo's willingness and ability to shepherd each of us into the proper field. And in the middle of night he found time to go to the bus station to fetch two Bulgarian teachers back to the conference center.

So this is what I put forward as an answer to the question of "who is Hristo Kyuchukov?" He is a man who cares enough to help each of us who comes into contact with him to be better, to help us learn from each other, and to help us speak our minds. In other words, Hristo is a teacher.

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My experience with Hristo Kyuchukov starts in the early 2006 from the moment when my good friend and social worker Yona Weiss, PhD. sent me a letter on meeting some very interesting guy. This guy was a Roma by origin and both of them participated in a conference in USA. She was very impressed by his presentation on Roma children education and gave him a book from the conference on Quality Education that I edited. (Kopčanová, D. (ed.) Quality Education for Children from Socially disadvantaged Settings. VUDPaP & SK UNESCO, 2005).

Soon Hristo sent me an e-mail, showing his interest to work in the field that was the focus of our research work, too. We started to discuss our experience by e-mail and within a year we have become close collaborators, although, still just in a digital form.