



Regional Cooperation Council

NEWSLETTER

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European Union



Highlights

*“Roma integration is an important element of the enlargement process. Before accession, countries will need to prove tangible progress in the fields of education, employment, health, housing and civil documentation,” said **Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn at the Brussels launch of the Roma Integration 2020 project.***

*Roma Integration 2020 Task Force adopts **regional standards for monitoring and reporting** on Roma integration.*

*Two **regional workshops** held within a year of the Roma Integration 2020 implementation: **Monitoring and Reporting on Roma Integration Policies and Public Budgeting for Roma Integration.***

Welcome

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the first issue of the Roma Integration 2020 project newsletter. From the beginning of the project we have focused on achieving the expected project results in effective, efficient and quality manner. It is time to start regularly updating you on these achievements.

Roma Integration 2020 project, implemented by the Regional Cooperation Council and funded by the European Union and the Open Society Foundations, provides valuable technical and expert support to the governments of the Western Balkan and Turkey to achieve tangible results in their efforts of integration of Roma in their societies. We focus on proper Roma integration policy formulation, implementation, budgeting and monitoring. At the same time we strive to ensure Roma integration policy is duly embedded in the general socio-economic policies in the region, and within the EU integration process in general.

Within a year, closely working with our government partners, we succeeded in establishing responsible national structures on Roma issues consisted of National Roma Contact Points and Inter-Ministerial Bodies, increasing their capacities of monitoring and budgeting their Roma integration policies, providing a platform for wider societal dialogue on Roma integration and valuable policy input, setting up regional standards for monitoring and reporting by which the region is now a step ahead in this area.

We will continue the good work and share the news with you. We appreciate your interest and support to the aims we strive to achieve.

Orhan Usein

Roma Integration 2020 Action Team Leader

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Project Launch



Launching the Roma Integration 2020 on 09 Jun 2016 in Brussels, EU Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn said, "Roma integration is an important element of the enlargement process. Before accession, countries will need to prove tangible progress in the fields of education, employment, health, housing and civil documentation. The Decade of Roma Inclusion has put integration of Roma on the political agenda: the 'Roma Integration 2020' programme is a confirmation of the Decade in the enlargement countries, where it aims to achieve sustainable results on the ground."

In his opening comments, Founder and Chairman of the Open Society Foundations, George Soros said, "My foundations have played a critical role in placing the situation of Roma on the agenda of national governments and the European Union, and I hope the new 'Roma Integration 2020' initiative will lead to commitment from high level political leaders and civil servants to deliver tangible results for Roma."

RCC Secretary General, Goran Svilanovic said, "These difficult times affect everyone, but even more the disadvantaged – the Roma. The region needs to walk the path to EU with its entire people, and Roma cannot be left behind again. Roma Integration 2020 is an initiative aiming to lead towards inclusiveness."

Ministers and high level officials also addressed the meeting attended by EC, international organizations, missions, civil society representatives and media.

The project's main objective is to help governments to reduce the socio-economic gap between the Roma and non-Roma population in the Western Balkans and Turkey.

Read more at [>>>](#)

National Platforms 2016

The project assists participating economies to organize annual discussions on Roma integration policies involving relevant public officials, local level officials, Roma civil society and other relevant stakeholders.



These forums are designated to review progress by presenting governments' and civil society's monitoring reports. Conflicting findings are particularly discussed with a view to identify appropriate solutions.



The forums are also used to prioritize measures, provide input to the policy planning, assist with the appropriate

budgeting and mainstream Roma issues in relevant policies. Certain specific issues of concern related to Roma integration may also be discussed.

During 2016, with the support of the Roma Integration 2020 and in close cooperation with the National Roma Contact Points, the following National Platforms took place:

- Belgrade: Parliamentary hearing, 13 Oct 16
- Sarajevo: Inter-ministerial meeting, 07 Nov 16
- Pristina: Public discussion, 21 Nov 16
- Skopje: Workshop, 24-25 Nov 16
- Podgorica: Public discussion, 10 Dec 16

The National Platforms mirror such meetings held at the European Union Member States. 2017 National Platforms will, as relevant, precede and feed into the Roma Seminars organized by the governments and the European Commission.



Read more at [>>>](#)



Task Force

RCC's Roma Integration 2020 Task Force had its first meeting on 9 Nov 2016 in Belgrade. The Task Force is composed of the National Roma Contact Points from the participating economies, two civil society representatives, the European Commission DG NEAR, Open Society Foundations and the RCC Secretariat. It is co-chaired by the European Commission and the Roma Integration 2020 representatives.

The Task Force adopted the Rules of Procedure, a template for annual progress reporting, and a project calendar for 2017.

Orhan Usein, Team Leader of the project, opened the meeting by saying, "Roma Integration 2020 provides direct assistance and technical support for Roma integration to the participating economies." Ms Marta Garcia Fidalgo, Advisor on Coordination of Roma Policy at the EC's DG NEAR reiterated that the Task Force mirrors a similar body at EU level steering the implementation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020.

The most important achievement of the first Task Force is certainly the adoption of the Monitoring and Reporting template. By this, the region effectively agreed on common monitoring standard, including qualitative and quantitative overview of the progress and outputs of their Roma integration policies, as well as overview on the budgetary aspects of those policies. Read more at [>>>](#)



Monitoring Roma Integration



The regional workshop on monitoring and reporting on Roma integration, organised within the Roma Integration 2020 project, was held on 12-13 Dec 2016 in Vienna.

"The European institutions, the EU Member States as well as all the countries with aspirations to join the EU have a joint responsibility to improve the lives of its Roma citizens. In order to track the changes and the progress towards the Roma Integration 2020 targets and overall Roma inclusion process we need accurate and up-to-date information, where monitoring and reporting have a crucial role", said RCC Secretary General, Goran Svilanovic, at the opening of the workshop. "Roma represent about 5.5 percent in the average of the population in the region. Being aware of the challenges and issues they face, each participating economy has adopted a Strategy and Action Plan to ensure full integration of Roma. The implementation of these action plans needs to be monitored appropriately and collected information fed back to the decision makers who are to decide whether the actions gave satisfactory results or additional corrective measures are required."

The Roma Integration 2020 Action Team presented a template for reporting that is closely following the reporting template of the European Commission DG JUST, used by the EU Member States. The template has been adopted by the project Task Force and is envisaged to provide track on progress in the areas of education, employment, health, housing and other areas covered by the Roma policies in the economies.

The workshop participants – national Roma focal points, representatives of education, employment, housing, health and civil registration ministries; representatives of ministries of finance, Roma civil society organisations as well as envoys of statistical offices and international organisations, such as Eurostat, OSCE/ODIHR, UNDP, etc. – around 80 participants in total - gained the necessary skills for data collection, use of monitoring indicators and reporting on the Roma-relevant policies, shared best practices and exchanged views on monitoring, reporting and data collecting.

It is expected that public officials present at the workshop and responsible for implementation and reporting on Roma policies in the economies will use the monitoring and reporting template to report on progress in Roma integration towards relevant public authorities and international organizations. As agreed, reports using this template are expected for submission by all economies towards the Roma Integration 2020 Action Team by the end of March. The team stands ready to support partner governments in systematically establishing the monitoring and reporting process in the economies.

Find related documents at [>>>](#)

Public Budgeting for Roma Integration

A two-day regional workshop on public budgeting for Roma integration policies, organized by the Regional Cooperation Council's (RCC) Roma Integration 2020 project (RI2020), took place in Skopje on 20-21 March 2017. The Workshop participants discussed public financing and budgeting allocations for Roma policies in the Western Balkan economies.

"Policies and budgets are where the governments begin to translate their commitments to Roma into practical steps towards integration and equality. Too often, however, they fail to ensure that public services respond to Roma needs and priorities," underlined Orhan Usein, RI2020 Action Team Leader, in his opening remarks. "All the EU-aspiring economies have a joint responsibility to improve the lives of their Roma citizens. It is valuable that Roma integration continues to be a key priority in the enlargement process as reiterated in the most recent European Commission's assessment. A good monitoring system is essential to point out to what works and what doesn't so that scarce financial resources are not wasted. RI2020 served for the establishment of a regionally standardized monitoring and reporting model."

The workshop acquainted the participants with principles of synergies between strategic planning and budgeting for Roma integration policies. It facilitated awareness rising of developing Roma-sensitive budgets, provided tools on budgeting for Roma integration policies and exchanged practices on these issues both on the regional and the EU level.

The event gathered more than 60 governmental officials from the Western Balkans working in the respective line ministries in charge of the five policy priorities (employment, education, housing, health, etc.) and budget, including the ministry of finance and the National Roma Contact Points, European Union Delegations, and civil society representatives.

Find related documents at [>>>](#)



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Upcoming Events

National Platforms

- Ankara: Jul 2017
- Belgrade: Jun 17
- Pristina: Sep 17
- Podgorica: Jun 17
- Sarajevo: Oct 17
- Skopje: Oct 17
- Tirana: May 17

Regional Workshops

- Filling the Budgeting Gap: Oct 17
- Combating Discrimination and Anti-Gypsyism: Dec 17

Task Force: Sep 17