

Seminar: Social Inclusion of the Roma in the Republic of Serbia, 18 June 2013

Belgrade

Operational Conclusions

Inter-sectoral issues

- The Strategy for Improvement of the Status of Roma in the Republic of Serbia was adopted in 2009, while the Action Plan for the period until 2015 was adopted in June 2013. The Government will submit annual public reports on the implementation process of the Strategy and its Action Plan in order to ensure a transparent process implementation.
- Office for Human and Minority Rights in cooperation with the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit is responsible for overall coordination efforts for the implementation of these Operational Conclusions, as well for preparation of annual public reports on implementation process of the Strategy and its Action Plan.
- Solid foundations for sustainable improvement of the position of Roma have been established, especially in the education and health sectors. It is necessary now to focus on enhancing the effectiveness of the adopted measures and better link them with the available and future resources, including donor funds. It is of importance that strategic documents for programming of financial assistance of the Government and of the European Commission set measures for improvement of the status of Roma
- The establishment of the "Council for the Improvement of the Position of Roma and the Implementation of the Roma Decade" on 20 May 2013 is a welcome development. The Council will periodically oversee the implementation of the Action Plan, allow for an exchange of good practices on Roma inclusion and evaluate the Action Plan effectiveness, with a view to build upon the lessons learned from its implementation.
- Analytical data and figures will be collected and processed in a coordinated manner, through a "one-stop-shop" body, in order to consolidate figures, facilitate targeted surveys on the situation of Roma and provide all stakeholders, starting with ministries and governmental agencies, with consistent figures, in line with the Law on Protection of Personal Data.
- The network of Roma coordinators will be further developed and strengthened, including by increasing their number in the municipalities where the context so requires. Roma coordinators will closely cooperate with other relevant state-funded mechanisms to improve the status of the Roma. In order to promote active inclusion of Roma, competent institutions will establish mechanisms for the integrated social services delivery model, which obliges the centers for social work and the National Employment Service to search

more actively for solutions for their users who are fit for work, yet continually receive pecuniary social assistance.

- The media will be encouraged to play a more active role in promoting a more positive image of the Roma community. Media campaigns targeting national institutions, municipal authorities and the general public will be launched in order to raise the awareness of the rights of the Roma population, as well as to inform the Roma on relevant administrative procedures for improving their situation.
- The European Commission, as well as other donors, as partners in this process, will continue to provide support, including policy advice and expertise as well as financial assistance, in a transparent manner, to the initiatives, measures and programmes aimed at further improving the status of the Roma in the Republic of Serbia and other Western Balkan countries.
- The recently launched project under IPA 2012, as well other relevant projects such as the forthcoming project on housing solutions and support to municipalities under IPA 2013 following the June 2011 Roma seminar conclusions, will be implemented according to the project's agreed timetables.
- The European Commission will continue to closely monitor Serbia's efforts to improve the situation of the Roma throughout Serbia's EU accession process, including within chapter 23 on judiciary and fundamental rights.
- Active Roma inclusion programmes, financed by the Republic of Serbia, will be more effectively linked to the funds earmarked for major infrastructure projects.

Civil registration: access to personal documents

- The state of play in the field of subsequent registration of births and the registration of temporary and/or permanent place of residence will continue to be monitored through annual reports issued by the Government, including the numbers of persons registered in birth registries through the procedures prescribed under the Law on Registries, the Law on Amendments to the Law on Non-contentious Proceedings and the Law on Permanent and Temporary Place of Residence of Citizens. The completion of the process of registering the so-called 'legally invisible' persons is expected by end 2015.
- The state of play in the field of the citizenship registration will be monitored according to the Law on Citizenship of the Republic of Serbia. Registration of citizenship will be carried out in line with the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Strategy for Improvement of the Status of Roma in Serbia until 01.01.2015, by introducing the measures to provide legal assistance to applicants and giving priority to solving

procedures for determining the citizenship of the Republic of Serbia. The issue of registration of permanent and temporary residence and issuance of identity documents will be monitored, in line with the Action Plan above mentioned provisions, including registration of citizenship at birth.

- The Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration, the Ombudsman and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees - Office in Serbia regarding the issue of birth registration in the birth registers of Roma will be fully implemented.
- The associations of citizens active in the promotion of human and minority rights implementing activities aimed at informing the Roma about their rights in the area of personal status of citizens and providing free legal aid to members of the Roma community in these proceedings will continue to be supported by the Government relevant bodies and ministries.

Education

- Key measures have been adopted; 170 teaching assistants have been trained and hired. The Government will support the expansion of the teaching assistants' network and job descriptions of tasks will be further harmonised to ensure consistency and improve effectiveness. On the basis of an analytical survey to be carried out by the relevant governmental bodies, additional teaching assistants will be hired, based on the expressed needs. These positions will remain "systematised and included into the national qualification framework".
- Authorities at both national and local level will investigate the causes for dropout and introduce systematic support measures at the level of local governments as part of the social protection system, as well as in-school support systems.
- The municipalities will ensure the cooperation among all existing mechanisms for the inclusion of Roma at the local level, including the local Inter-Sectoral Commissions, in order that all those mechanisms would work together towards improving the educational status of Roma, above all by providing support for their enrolment in schools and preventing dropout. The universal enrolment of Roma children in regular schools and the Preparatory Preschool Programme will be ensured by the Ministry of Education. The number of children who enrol and complete primary and secondary schools will be increased, which should also help to decrease the number of early school leavers. The civil society will monitor the implementation of these actions and warn of potential shortcomings in the system.
- Early education of children of age 3 to 5 will be further strengthened under a support system targeting the child, rather than the institution, and developed through: support to

early childhood development programmes and the introduction of integrative specialised and additional programmes in preschool education, enabling active inclusion of more Roma children and parents in early development programmes which will include at least 40% of Roma children (of which at least 40% girls); support to the work of inter-sectoral committees, in order to uphold inclusive education of children and increase the number of Roma children in the education system.

- Segregated classes/schools will be prevented. An implementing legislation (by-law) on anti-discrimination measures in education institutions will be adopted before the end of 2013 and enforced.
- Learning outcomes for Roma students will be improved through a coherent support system for primary and secondary school students such as remedial teaching, mentoring and pedagogical assistants, catch-up classes, improvement of school ethos and active involvement of Roma parents. At least 60% of pupils from vulnerable groups, amongst which many are Roma (of which at least 40% girls) will have reached the average academic achievement of students of the educational institution they attend until 1 January 2015.
- Drop-out prevention programmes will be further developed in particular by providing additional scholarship and mentorships throughout Serbia to pupils and students. Monitoring and evaluation aimed at enhancing efficiency and quality of the education system, including in the higher education, will be ensured. In the interest of more accurate school attendance statistics, the Ministry of Education Science and Technological Development, schools and teaching assistants will prepare and disseminate reports.

Employment

- The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Policy, as well as the public authorities at the central and local levels will actively promote and implement the policies and measures aimed at increasing employment of the Roma, with special emphasis on Roma women. Specific actions will include public calls for applications of self-employment and public works activities targeting the Roma population.
- Existing legislation concerning social entrepreneurship, in particular regarding cooperatives and social business initiatives that include Roma population, shall be revised and amended if necessary. The provision of adequate incentives, of a fiscal or administrative nature, shall be considered to actively support socially responsible business choices.
- Employment of Roma in local and national institutions will be stimulated, including by development of traineeship programmes, and the National Employment Service (NES)

will further cooperate with civil society organisations, including at the local level, to address the issue of Roma employment. Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Policy and NES will ensure that examples of good cooperation practice are replicated in other municipalities and that awareness about employment opportunities for Roma is increased.

- Affirmative actions as well as financial and non-financial incentives such as small grants and public private partnerships will be developed and institutionalised in order to support employment of Roma and facilitate the launching of sustainable Roma business activities.
- The civil society, especially the Roma associations, will contribute to raising the awareness of employment opportunities and with their help, the information network will be strengthened so as to provide information about employment opportunities to as many Roma as possible.

Social protection and health care

- The implementation of the legal provisions enabling registration of one's place of residence at the address of a centre for social work, as a way of fulfilling the residence requirement when applying for personal documents will be monitored by the Ministry for Labour, Employment and Social Policy and Ministry of Interior, with a view to fully ensuring applicants' registration. In the provision of social and healthcare services, particular efforts shall be spent by Ministries for Labor, Employment and Social Policy as well as Health to raise the awareness of local authorities on the matter, in order to grant full access to social and healthcare services, prevent discrimination, as well as to ensure consistent implementation of the relevant legislation.
- To date, 75 Roma health mediators have been hired in 59 municipalities. Over the next three years, additional funds will be committed to increase the number of health mediators, based on an analytical survey of the needs to be carried out by relevant governmental bodies, as well as to improve the access to these services by the beneficiary population. These positions will be "systematised" and included in the national qualification framework. Modules for formal education will be developed, as well as nomenclature of occupations, and employment of health mediators as health care assistants will be implemented.
- Information from the Ministry of Health database on Roma, by improving the software and respecting the Law on the Protection of Personal Data, will be shared with the relevant sectors in order to facilitate a more comprehensive response to Roma inclusion by social services. Data from the database will be used by Ministry of labour, employment and social welfare and Ministry of education, science and technical development.

- Members of the Roma community will be hired by centres for social work, in accordance with the needs and the required educational attainment levels. Over the next three years, additional funds will be committed for the recruitment of more social workers. Ministry in charge of social welfare will continue with the activities on raising awareness of Roma on their entitlements regarding registering in birth registers.
- Local protocols for protection of Roma children living and/or working on the street will be developed and institutionalised and sustainable financial support provided for urban community services such as drop-in centres, which facilitate protection and social inclusion.
- In the next two years, Ministry in charge of social welfare, in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders will continue with the implementation of activities to address domestic violence, implementing the measures against trafficking and begging (use of children), as well as actions for continuation of de-institutionalisation from residential institutions.

Housing

- A large number of Roma persons live in very poor conditions, often with no running water or electricity. Legislation on forced evictions, in line with relevant international standards, will be adopted by end 2013 and frame the conditions to be respected in such cases. Manual and guidelines, with particular emphasis on the roles and obligations of local Self-Governments, will be developed and distributed to all relevant administrative actors and the Government will monitor legislation implementation by all municipalities across the Republic of Serbia.
- The Government will ensure an efficient and effective implementation of the National Social Housing Strategy, in compliance with the provisions of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
- The Government and municipal authorities will invest efforts in legally regulating the existing informal Roma settlements, or in providing sites for their relocation, as per the above mentioned legislation provisions. Where relocation is necessary, it will be conducted only after their residents have been given sufficient advance notice, with full respect of their human rights and in line with international standards. Binding manual/conclusion that defines competent authorities' procedures for the relocation of informal settlements will be issued by the Government and communicated to the local authorities.
- The local Strategies and Action Plans will be updated by municipal authorities to also include more accurate data on Roma residents in informal settlements, as well as to

propose measures to regularize and consolidate living conditions within existing informal settlements.

- For the implementation of housing programmes, the Government will allocate funds for the construction of additional housing units, with support from municipal budgets and donor funds.
- The 20 municipalities which will benefit from the IPA 2012 and 2013 support would have achieved the objectives set under the project by the agreed date, including in particular the development of local action plans.

Freedom of movement

- The Government of the Republic of Serbia will continue to actively seek and implement solutions to the issue of abuse of the visa-free regime faced by a certain number of EU Member States. The Roma population's awareness of the risks of abusing the visa-free regime needs will further be raised.
- Roma civil society organisations will be urged to continue their campaigns aimed at informing the Roma population about the readmission procedure.
- Continual cooperation will be ensured with the European Union in exchanging information and notifications about the number of persons entering and exiting the EU. Cooperation will also be intensified through the Committee for Monitoring the Visa-Free Regime with the European Union.
- Trends regarding the number of asylum seekers, as well as the number of returnees under the Readmission Agreement with the EU Member States, will be continually monitored by the national authorities including by developing migration profiles and updating statistical data.
- The available resources of competent state bodies and local self-government units will be directed towards ensuring sustainable integration of all returnees and their families, through facilitated access to all services such as education, health and social welfare. At the same time, available pre-accession EU funds other donor funds, as well as the available budget funds, will be used to stimulate economic empowerment and housing of the most vulnerable returnees.
- Returnees will be informed in detail about their options upon return. A coordinated approach will be ensured by providing them with psychosocial and healthcare support, as well as access to accommodation.