

Social Inclusion Seminar: Roma Issues in Serbia, 21-22 June, Belgrade

Operational conclusions

Cross-Cutting Issues

- The National strategy for improving the status of the Roma and the action plan for its implementation were adopted in 2009.
- The measures initiated in education and health sectors in particular, often through donors funding, have laid solid foundations for systemic and sustainable enhancement of the position of the Roma. These measures should be developed through increased budget support to ensure their sustainability. Donors should however continue to contribute.
- Transparency of the Government and local authorities' activities to be increased. Evaluation of the Action Plan implementation to be launched with a view to adapting as necessary future activities, particularly as regards education, health and employment measures.
- The network of Roma coordinators is to be further developed and their number increased.
- Media will be encouraged to play an active role in promoting a more positive image of Roma community. Media campaigns targeting central institutions, municipalities and the public at large will be launched to raise awareness on the rights of the Roma, and encourage the Roma's engagement with the authorities.

Civil registration: Access to Personal Documents

- A number of representatives of the Roma minority in the Republic of Serbia have not yet been entered into the birth registry or do not have a registered permanent and/or temporary residence. Legislative gaps in the area of subsequent registration of birth and administrative obstacles in the area of subsequent registration of birth and registration of residence need to be remedied. The government will aim at completing the registration process of "invisible persons" as a matter of priority.
- Aiming to harmonise the practice in the work of the institutions tasked to deliver birth registry activities, the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, Public Administration and Local Self-Government shall prepare and forward to these institutions instructions on the application of the provisions of birth registry regulations regarding the procedure of

subsequent registration in the birth registry. Furthermore, the Ministry shall issue adequate instructions on the methodology of work of bodies deciding in the first instance administrative procedure in the field of registries against the requests for subsequent entry in the birth registry, with an emphasis on the obligation to provide legal assistance to undereducated clients, administer the procedure without stalling, as cost-effectively for the client and other participants in the procedure.

- In order to overcome problems regarding the costs of the procedure for subsequent registration in the birth registry, it is necessary to prescribe that the administrative taxes be free-of-charge for documents and actions relating to the procedure or linked to the procedure of subsequent registration in the birth registry.
- The Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia shall provide the needed assistance to persons without registered citizenship. This concerns the obligation to provide legal assistance to undereducated citizens and conduct the urgent citizenship establishment procedure in order to resolve the issue preceding the registration of permanent residence and/or issuing personal documents, together with the entry into the birth registry.
- The amendments to the Identity Card Law facilitate the issuing of the identity card to a person without registered permanent residence, who is a citizen of the Republic of Serbia based on the registered temporary residence. The address of the social work centre can be used as the address of temporary residence for the purpose of obtaining personal documents. The registry of permanent and/or temporary residence will be facilitated through the provisions of the Law on Permanent and Temporary Residence of Citizens, which needs to be adopted shortly.
- The Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, Public Administration and Local Self-Government, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Justice shall discuss in the forthcoming period with other relevant public administration bodies and the Ombudsman, as well as relevant international organisations (UNHCR) and NGOs concrete measures to facilitate access to personal documents.

Education

- Key policies are in place; 175 pedagogical assistants have been trained and employed. The government will support the expansion of the network of pedagogical assistants and employ additional Roma assistants. About 200 additional Roma pedagogical assistants would need to be employed in the coming years.

- Government will ensure that Roma children are fully enrolled, and early child education will be developed.
- The school attendance by Roma students remains to be improved and school dropouts reduced. Additional scholarships to pupils and students should be disbursed and timely paid. The monitoring and evaluation with a view to improving the efficiency and the quality of education system will be ensured. Reports will be prepared by the Ministry of Education, schools and pedagogical assistants, in order to better monitor attendance.

Employment

- Strategic and programme documents in the field of employment envisage the involvement of the Roma in active employment policies as a priority. 24,000 Roma were involved in active employment policies in 2010; the database on unemployed Roma has become operational; specific public calls for self-employment subsidies and new jobs have been published two years in a row, and specific public works targeting the Roma are financed from the State budget.
- The Roma employment rate remains very low. Policies and measures should therefore be continued by both Labor Ministry and Economy and Regional Development Ministry, including in public administration. Further employment of the Roma in local and state institutions should be stimulated.
- The cooperation established between the National Employment Service and the civil society organisations tackling Roma issues in some local governments should be continued, while good practices of cooperation and awareness-raising should be transferred to other municipalities. The Chamber of Commerce and Roma associations should contribute to the awareness raising on employment opportunities and reach out to Roma communities by better advertising job openings and opportunities.
- The information dissemination network should be further developed with the help of Roma associations to inform as many Roma as possible of employment opportunities.
- Roma active inclusion programs financed by the Republic of Serbia and donors should be linked more effectively with the funds earmarked for large infrastructural projects.
- The European Commission is expected to identify ways to provide additional support for programs advancing the status of the Roma to the Republic of Serbia and Western

Balkans countries. These issues relating to advancing the position of the Roma are common for the overall Western Balkans region.

Social and health care

- Appropriate policies in this field have been enacted. The access to health care services to persons without health cards based on the residence registered at the address of the social work centre was welcome. Access to rights and services in the field of social welfare, depends on possessing personal documents, thus excluding legally invisible persons. Amendments to current legislation will enable that the address of the social work centre may be registered as the address needed to obtain personal documents. Municipal authorities should be sensitised in order to prevent discrimination in health and social services.
- To date, 75 Roma health mediators have been employed in 59 municipalities. Additional resources should be dedicated to recruit 75 Roma health mediators for three years.
- Members of the Roma community should be employed in social work centres. Additional resources are needed to engage additional case managers in the next three years.

Housing

- A large number of Roma live in some 593 settlements under very poor conditions, often without water and electricity. An adequate approach to the relocation of illegal Roma settlements should be found. The Government will therefore ensure efficient and effective implementation of the National Social Housing Strategy, in line with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights provisions.
- Municipalities to make efforts to legally regularise the existing informal Roma settlements or to provide a location for their relocation. When needed, relocation to be conducted with sufficient advance notification, in full respect of human rights. In doing so, municipalities will build on lessons from successful projects already realised in Serbia.
- The Government will ensure funds for the construction of additional housing units and additional support through municipal budgets and donors for the realisation of housing programmes.

Free-movement

- Full implementation of the already identified policies to be ensured.
- There is a risk that undue migration pressure would increase pressure on the enlargement process. Continued and enhanced cooperation with the Serbian authorities is necessary to monitor and overcome the difficult situation of the abuse of visa free-travel regime faced by some EU Member States. Roma community's awareness of the risks posed by abuse of the visa free regime to be increased.
- Roma NGOs should continue campaigns to inform Roma communities on re-admission procedures.
- Sustainable integration of all returnees shall be ensured and returning families shall be integrated and provided with assistance.