



Republic of Serbia
MINISTRY OF HUMAN AND
MINORITY RIGHTS

**HUMAN DIMENSION
IMPLEMENTATION MEETING**
Warsaw, 28 September to 9 October 2009

Presentation by: Petar Antić, Deputy Minister

Working session 14 Roma/Sinti and, in particular, early education for Roma and Sinti children, October 7, 2009

Republic of Serbia was holding the **Decade of Roma Inclusion Presidency** in the period of July 2008-July 2009. Priorities of Serbian Presidency were housing, combating discrimination in education, development of monitoring and evaluation system and development of the European Roma Policy.

In the area of education, in the framework of the Decade Presidency, **International Conference The Right to Education for Every Child: Removing Barriers and Fostering Inclusion for Roma Children** was held. The Conference has brought together 220 senior officials and experts from the Ministries of Education of Roma Decade Countries, Roma civil society representatives, international and local education experts, representatives of international organizations, UN organizations, Delegation of EC in Serbia, CoE, and bilateral partners to scrutinize policies, identify successful practices, lessons learnt and to agree upon the key strategic steps. The drafted Outcome Conference Document was discussed, revised and amended at the working groups' sessions. The Conference did not aim to describe once again the problems faced by Roma children. Broad consensus exists on the nature of the barriers to be overcome; in particular that segregation of education is detrimental not only for Roma children but for all children. The discussions concentrated on how to make progress in critical areas, what we know and what we don't know about strategies that work in promoting inclusive education, how to accelerate these, and how to make actions happen at a scale that will make a difference. After finalization of the Outcome Document, it was sent to all Roma Decade member states and submitted for adoption at the at the 16 Roma Decade International Steering Committee meeting that was held in Belgrade on June 25-26, 2009.

It was agreed that commitment to remove barriers and foster inclusion needs to be based on a common set of principles:

- The rights of each and every child should be recognized and respected - all children are entitled to develop to their full potential.
- States are accountable to create equal access to quality, inclusive education, which meets the needs of all children in an integrated setting.
- Roma communities, parents and children themselves need to be actively involved and consulted.

- Discrimination should be monitored, with mechanisms in place to ensure discrimination is challenged and addressed.
- Early years of child's life are critical for later development; particularly 0- 3 years, with rapid expansion of pre-school and support services for parents of young children to disadvantaged groups of population needed.¹

Beside activities at the international level in 2009 some important improvements in the **area of education have been made at national level:**

- New Law on the Basis of System of Education and Upbringing was adopted in September 2009. It prescribes solutions that would create systematic preconditions for Roma to approach to quality education. Among other things, the new Law envisages involvement of pedagogical assistants, changing of enrolment policies toward inclusion as well as new way of financing;
- Since September 2009 in the Serbian primary schools 50 Roma teaching assistants (26 new ones and 24 earlier assigned assistants) have been assigned. They have passed 2 of total number of 7 planned modules of training. Engagement of assistants is supported by OSCE, through the Program of the Roma support financed by EC. Above mentioned Provisions of the new Law for the first time creates systemic conditions for employment of Roma assistants;
- In the school year 2009/2010 Ministry of Education provided free text books for all primary school pupils of the first grade;
- Ministry for Human and Minority Rights approved means for providing 400 sets of text books for Roma primary school children;
- Implementation of the affirmative action measures in the school year 2009/2010 resulted in enrolment of 230 Roma secondary school pupils;
- In the academic year 2009/2010, 110 students were enrolled at Universities with the implementation of the measures of affirmative action;
- Ministry for Human and Minority Rights in cooperation with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the OSCE Mission to Serbia is working on the increasing of the number of Roma students in the schools for internal affairs;
- Ministry of Human and Minority Rights in cooperation with the Ministry of Education of Serbia is initiating: development of Rule Book for Implementation of Affirmative Action Measures; development of Rule Book for Monitoring and Combating Discrimination in Education; involvement of elements of Roma culture and history in the curricula. All these measures are based on the new Law on Bases of Education System, Strategy for Improvement of Roma Position and Action plan for its implementation, as well as in new Law on Textbooks.

Beside activities related to education this year was also marked with **completed general framework for improvement of Roma position.**

On April 9, 2009 Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted Strategy for Improvement of Position of Roma which consists of 13 areas- education, housing, health, employment, social care, culture, media and information, antidiscrimination, aces to personal documentation, political participation, as well as areas related to specific position of Roma women, internally displaced persons and returnees based on readmission agreements.

¹ Attached please find Conference Outcome Document

On July 3, Government adoption Action Plan for the Implementation of the Strategy for the Improvement of the Position of Roma, which includes budgetary means for implementation of priority measures within the budget of ministries in charge for 2009 in total amount of around 525 millions of CSD (5.5 millions of EUR).

Ministry of Human and Minority Rights started to create **review of existing and planned activities at central and local level** aiming to improvement of Roma position.

Regarding the **structures for implementation of the Strategy**- there is a Council for Improvement of the Position of Roma of the Government of the Republic of Serbia which president is Deputy Prime Minister for EU Integration; Working Groups for the implementation of the Strategy in 10 ministries and in the Commissariat for Refugees are being established and the Ministry of Human and Minority Right is holding coordination meetings; working group of the Government of the Republic of Serbia for the creation of the Plan for Social Inclusion of Roma Temporarily Inhabited in Informal Settlements is established.

In 2009 ministries in charge for **implementation of the Strategy** (beside Ministry of Education) are implemented following measures:

Ministry of Health: employed 60 Roma health mediators, all of them women; realized public call for proposals for the projects from the field of public health and regulation of sanitary-epidemiological conditions in Roma settlements, based on which were approved 29 projects with the total value of around 7 million CSD (around 74 000 EUR). Projects are realized by local health institutions and Roma NGO.

Ministry of Economy and Regional Development are in charge of implementation of part of the Action Plan in the area of **employment**. They realized public call for proposals for public works based on which were approved means for the projects for which applied National Council of Roma National Minority and 12 Roma NGOs, with the total sum of around 50 million CSD (526 EUR).

Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning approved by the end of December 2008 means for creations of urban planing documentation for 11 Roma settlements in 9 local self government units in Serbia.

Ministry of Culture is implementing public call for proposals in the field of culture as well as media of national minorities and they are also financing magazine of the National Council of the Roma National Minority "Romano Nevipe".

Ministry of Youth and Sport implemented public call for proposals with the aim to support youth NGOs what resulted in approval of certain number of projects of Roma youth organizations, mostly in the field of education.

One of the activities Ministry for Human and Minority Rights is working on is development of the **System of Monitoring of Implementation of the Strategy at central and local level**.