



REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

**OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting  
Working Session 6  
Tolerance and non-discrimination I**

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN FOR IMPROVEMENT OF THE  
SITUATION OF THE ROMA AND SINTI WITHIN THE OSCE AREA BY THE  
REPUBLIC OF SERBIA IN 2008 AND ITS PLANS FOR THE YEAR 2009**

**Warsaw, 29 September - 10 October 2008**

In 2008, the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights has reviewed and revised the draft Strategy and the Action Plans (APs) for Improvement of the Situation of the Roma, based on the relevant domestic and international instruments including the OSCE Action Plan for the Roma, Sinti and Travellers.

Adoption of these documents by the Government of the Republic of Serbia, which will also include a draft 2009 budget and projections of the 2010 and 2011 budgets, is expected to take place in October 2008.

The draft Strategy and the Actions Plans cover such areas as education, employment, housing, health, social welfare, media and information, culture, but also topics relating to all other areas: non-discrimination, access to personal public documents, gender equality and the situations of returnees under readmission agreements and internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Kosovo and Metohija.

The preceding period saw the implementation of measures from the APs adopted within the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015, i.e. measures taken not only in education, employment, housing and health fields but also in the culture, media and information ones.

**Ministry of Health (MOH)**, as in the past two years, has announced a public call for partner projects between health institutions and Roma non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in order to implement healthcare projects for the Roma, including those aimed at improving sanitation and hygiene conditions in Roma settlements. In 2006, a total of 60,000.000.00 dinars was allocated for these purposes, of which amount 33,603,419.31 dinars was spent. In contrast, in 2007 half that amount – 30,000.000.00 dinars – was set aside and 26,462,959.00 was expended. For this year, 2008, the projected amount of 20,000,000.00 dinars was used to contract 15 Roma health mediators for a period of eight months costing 3,500,760.00 dinars, while the rest of these funds will be spent to bring the ongoing public calls to a close. As far as the year 2009 is concerned, plans have been made to allocate 25 million dinars of which 10,800,000.00 will be used to employ 30 Roma mediators on a fixed, 12-month contract. For the remainder of two years, 2010 and 2011, allocations to be made are 30 million and 35 million, respectively.

**Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Policy (MLESP)** is earmarking its budgetary resources to implement the AP on Roma Employment Opportunities through the application of affirmative action in prioritizing among the general employment policy measures. Funds are set aside to employ the less employable categories of people including the Roma minority. Up to now, the National Employment Office advertised competition for subsidized self-employment of jobseekers and participation of unskilled workers in the training on active job hunting. The priorities accorded in the tender for public works included, among other things, also proper housing conditions in Roma settlements, thus providing a good opportunity for linking the implementation of the APs for the improvement of Roma housing and their employment. In the implementation of this tender, 600 Roma found employment in 2007 thanks to the projects selected by 25 Roma NGOs which spent 70 million dinars for these purposes.

In the academic year 2008/2009, the **Ministry of Education and Sport (MES)** - in cooperation with the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and the National Council for

the Roma Ethnic Minority (NCREM) - implemented affirmative action through enrolment in secondary schools and admissions at universities and post-secondary colleges. Such action has allowed the enrolment of students in secondary schools in school 2008-2009, whereas the admission of students to post-secondary schools and universities has not yet been completed. With the assistance and cooperation of the OSCE Mission to Serbia and the support of the European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR), the MES is implementing a project of teaching assistants in the education of Roma attending pre-schools and primary schools.

**Ministry of the Environment and Physical Planning (MEPP)**, on the basis of the National Action Plan and the Guidelines for Improvement and Legalization of Informal Roma Settlements, has provided, within the 2009 budget, 100,000.00 dinars for the elaboration of master plans in 14 Serbian municipalities which have adopted decisions to develop spatial plans required for Roma settlements.

**Ministry for Human and Minority Rights** further coordinates the activities related to the Serbian Chairmanship of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015. It has allocated 5,338,000.00 dinars through the budget for these purposes. The earmarked amount will be used to hold meetings of the International Steering Committee (ISC) of the Decade and theme workshops on the priority areas identified by the Chairmanship: housing and elimination of discrimination as to access to education.

In 2009, the MHMR intends to allocate 8,841,600.00 dinars out of the budget to improve the situation of the Roma. These funds will help finance the Chairmanship's priority activities; as a contribution to the Trust Fund of the Decade and publication of a series of textbooks and teaching material suiting the educational needs of Roma children; information and sensitization of the broader public to the needs of the Roma population in education; media campaigns, television programmes, brochures.

In cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and with the support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the MHMR is implementing the Project of Roma Integration in Local Self-Governing Bodies. This Project includes 20 local governments throughout Serbia. The Project consists of engaging Roma coordinators within the local communities; training of coordinators; elaboration of local APs and of provision of initial funds for their implementation.

**Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP)** has provided funds in its 2008 budget to recruit local Roma coordinators in 40 Serbian municipalities. This measure will be carried out during the month of September 2008. The MHMR, UNDP and the MLSP will organize the training programme for all recruited local coordinators in Serbia, including on the work and functioning of the institutions and bodies of local government, strategic planning, raising of funds for the purpose of project management.

The budget of the MLSP in 2009 envisages the following activities: implementation of programmes of support to Roma families worth 3,280,000.00 dinars, which will be entrusted to the Republic and Provincial Welfare Institutes; implementation of selected programmes of protection against Roma domestic violence, which will be given 2,300,000.00 dinars; readmission of Roma families will be allocated 19,000,000.00 dinars; the number of municipalities with Roma coordinators will be increased, with 17,000,000.00 dinars being allocated for the recruitment of coordinators and 120,000.00 as support for the development of local community programmes for Roma integration in partnerships of local self-governing bodies, Roma organizations and other NGOs active in the local communities.

**Ministry of Culture (MOC)** has spent 3,300,000.00 dinars for the support and promotion of culture and creativity among the Roma minority in 2008. For the next year, 2009, it will set aside 23,700,000.00 dinars to fund a competition of creative works of all ethnic minorities. In addition to these, the MOC has envisaged a further 2,000,000.00 dinars intended for the implementation of the Action Plan for Improvement of the Situation of the Roma in the Field of Culture, in order to reach the targets of Roma cultural policy such as language standardization, advanced professional skills, institution building and communication skills, with an additional 1,000,000.00 dinars to meet the needs of the Serbian Chairmanship of the Decade. Besides these allocations, the MOC will co-finance a Roma theatre in Novi Karlovci; inclusion of the Council of the Roma Minority in the education of members of the Council to plan long-term as well as presentation of Roma publishing at the Book Fair, which has been done again this year.

Apart from cultural measures, the MOC is also responsible for the exercise of the right of minorities to information in their own language in order to protect and promote their linguistic and cultural identity, as required both by the domestic legislation and the relevant international instruments. In this respect, the MOC, as the competent body, provides the funds in support of the enjoyment and promotion of this right.

The Roma minority has not reached the standards required for other indigenous minority groups. Therefore, affirmative action takes proportionally more funds for this group than for others. For instance, in 2008, budgetary funds amounting to 13,500,000.00 dinars have been designated to print a Roma-language newspaper, for two Roma media outlets and Roma-language programmes in the electronic media.

The analysis of this year's tender, tendering documents and the opinion given by the Roma Minority Council have all revealed problems related to the selection of the media, location of media outlets, topics discussed in projects and the fact that the majority of projects were in Serbian. In view of this, a survey will have to be conducted to identify the problems and needs of the Roma population in the communities where they live in larger numbers and have access to the media.

In 2009, the MOC is planning to increase the funds intended for information of the Roma minority to 20,000,000.00 dinars with a view to meeting the following targets: regularly publishing, providing professional staff and a variety of contents in the Roma-language print media; providing support for the Roma electronic media; raising public awareness including continuous information of the public about the rights, status, needs and opportunities of the Roma population; training of Roma and majority media reporters in the coverage of, and reporting on, the activities and results of the four areas of the Decade in order to inform the Roma population on the availability and the kinds of rights they enjoy; implementing and analyzing the survey through a questionnaire; participating in the Chairmanship of the Decade of Roma Inclusion.

**Ministry of the Interior (MI)** participated in revising the draft Strategy for Improvement of the Situation of the Roma. In line with its responsibilities, it has envisaged for the period 2009-2011 measures to facilitate access to personal public documents through expedited procedures; accessing information contained in all available records and registers; running checks on the place of residence to ensure that the Roma living in non-legalized tenure register their residence; joining information and awareness-raising campaigns; initiating amendments to the Law on Residence and Abode of Citizens and the Law on Personal Numbers (unique identification numbers) that will allow for the simplification of procedures.

**Office of the Commissioner for Refugees of the Government of the Republic of Serbia** estimates that of the 6,370 people living in collective centres, some 1,200 are Roma, to whom the Commissioner's Office provides food and accommodation.