



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe  
Secretariat**

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**Conference Services**

Please find attached the presentation by Mr. Valeriu Nicolae , European Roma Information Office, Brussels, delivered to the Side Event on implementing the Roma and Sinti Action Plan, 13<sup>th</sup> OSCE Economic Forum, Prague, 23 -27 May 2005.

**Around 1900 Directives for the internal market.**

When it comes to things considered relevant to Roma the EU refers to the 43/2000 EC considered ambiguous and with hardly any visible results yet.

“the Lisbon Strategy puts a **strong emphasis on combating poverty and social exclusion**”

“Focus should be **on employment and employability** as the best means to alleviate poverty and achieve social cohesion. Again, this **requires education, basic skills, and active labour market policies** to draw **disadvantaged groups** into work.”

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The seven **key policies** as resulted after the analyses of NAPs regarding social inclusion are practically the same major area Roma are facing **strong discrimination and exclusion.**( according to the European Monitoring Bodies (EUMC and ECRI) and acknowledged by the European Commission, European Parliament, Council of Europe and Committee of Ministers. Background paper for the seminar on Promoting Social Development for all – European Commission 2005

Unfortunately the focus on employment and employability has been hardly found in the actions taken in the past and the evaluation of the Phare projects of the European Commission discovers the same flaw:” **Given the scale of unemployment in Roma communities, it is surprising that only 9% of Phare assistance for Roma minorities was spent on tackling unemployment.** Not enough emphasis or investment has gone to tackling unemployment and labour market reintegration for unemployed Roma.”

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In a letter to Odile Quintin from 03 February 2005 the Coordinator of EQUAL I in Germany, Antje Hofert writes :”whereas the German guidelines for EQUAL place a special emphasis on projects that assist the integration of Roma people in particular Roma refugees, no projects dedicated to the labour market integration of Roma and Sinti has so far been selected”. The letter concludes “It is not acceptable that Germany as a leading economic power withdraws from its duties towards Roma and Sinti”.

Germany spent over 628.000 Euros (partially funded from European Social Funds) in one single project on Training for Former Drug Addicts- Café de Ville and over 2.000.000 Euros (over 1.5 million from ESF) in a project focused on employment in the tourism industry.

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**GENERAL ECONOMIC BACKGROUND**

**1.GDP per capita in PPS**

There is no data on the Eurostat website based on ethnic groups. However on 2nd of February 2005 the UNDP released a report estimating that **between 3 to 5 times more Roma live under the poverty line than the majority population of the countries they live in. Considering the fact that in their majority Roma live in the EU Countries with the lowest GDP it is safe to assume that Roma is the ethnic group with the lowest GDP in Europe.**

**2. Labour productivity per person employed**

There is also no data looking at productivity based on ethnicity. Considering the very low levels of education and the employment focused in general in the lowest paid manual jobs **it is most probably that the employed Roma to have one of the lowest productivities in Europe.**

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**EMPLOYMENT STRUCTURAL INDICATORS**

**3.Total employment rate**

According to Eurostat the overall employment rate has increased between 1999 and 2003 from 62.5% to 64.4% for the EU15 and from 61.9% to 63% for the EU25. The unemployment in January 2005 was 8.9% in the EU.

According to the Evaluation of Phare programs :**“Direct support to long term employment is a critical missing link in Roma integration policies. Overall, the activities[Projects focused on Employment] have been piecemeal and have relied on long-established practices such as vocational education and training, supported short-term employment, and public work projects with little attempt to ensure that the methodologies meet the needs of the target group.”**

**“The unemployment rate among the Roma population is very high, and well above average. In certain disadvantaged Roma districts, it may be up to 90 % or more. The Bulgarian authorities have informed ECRI that Roma have difficulty in finding work because they are poorly educated and do not have sufficient vocational skills. ECRI would, however, draw attention to allegations that certain Roma are refused jobs, even though they have the education required, solely because of their ethnic origin.” (ECRI)**

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Unemployment in Roma communities is according to most reports at a minimum 70%. **The 61 % difference means an estimated population of more than 3.6 million people. With an estimated active population under 320 million (including Romania and Bulgaria) just bringing Roma communities to the level of the other population employment would be an over 1% increase overall in the EU. That alone would be better than what Europe managed between 1999 and 2004.**

**4a. Employment rate of older workers.**

One of the worst situations within the Roma communities is that of aged people. With a life span sometimes 12 to 15 years less than the majority population (UNDP report) there is a very small percentage of Roma over 60.As no clear data on the unemployment of Roma based on age groups is available, one can just assume that the proportion of unemployment based on age groups in Europe is the same as in the case of Roma. **Even in this very optimistic scenario the percentage will be close to 90%. Most probably the numbers are over 95% in the case of Roma between 55 and 64.**

**4b. Employment rate for males and females**

Multiple discrimination make the situation of Roma women when it comes to employment to be without doubt the most contrasting of all compared to the European statistics. Much slower to adapt to the new economies due to strong exclusion, Roma communities have in general a abysmal rate of unemployment for women. Even the few employed are usually in the lowest paid jobs and do not work full time. According to the Commission Staff Working Paper from 27 of January 2005 (an annex to the Draft Joint Employment Report) **the unemployment in the countries with a significant Roma population for Roma is estimated between 70 to 90%. It is realistic to consider the unemployment of women at over 80%. Despite many programs targeting specifically women there is no programme on the ESF website specifically targeting employment for the Roma women.**

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**INOVATION AND RESEARCH**  
– Gross domestic expenditure on R&D (GERD)

The percentage of European Union households with Internet access rose from 18% in 2000 to 45.1% in 2003 according to the Eurostat. There are lots of reason for optimism looking at the numbers regarding expenditures in R&D. More computers are bought, more fast internet access and 93% of the schools in EU are connected to the Internet.

The Digital Divide is dramatic if one looks at Roma.

“Roma inhabit approximately 95 percent of the chabolos (makeshift housing and slums) around larger cities in Spain (Congress of Deputies 1999b). Around 80 percent of these houses are smaller than 50 square meters and house more than 4 people.”(World Bank Report 2003)

ECRI reports often underline as it did in 2003 in Slovakia the lack of electricity from Roma ghettos “ECRI is very concerned that the situation as regards housing for many Roma communities remains grave, with large numbers of Roma living in settlements lacking even the basic amenities such as water, sanitation and electricity.”

Most of the schools from Roma ghettos lack also those basic amenities and segregated classes with substandard often make impossible even in schools with access to the IT the access of Roma to those technologies.

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**Youth education attainment level**

The UNDP fact sheet from 2nd of February 2005 shows levels between 4 times to 11 times less for the primary education of Roma in comparison with the majority population.

According to the World Bank Report from 2003 in Bulgaria the ratio is 20 times less when it comes to upper secondary education. Whereas 76.7 % of the EU youngster (under 22) completed upper secondary education the number when it comes to Roma is well under 1%.

Considering the Lisbon target and the existing gap only by halving this gap Europe would well reach its target of 85% of youth completing their upper secondary studies.

Situation of Roma girls is also a reason of worry in many of the European Reports but that is not reflected in the funding or actions taken or planned yet.

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**Business investment**

Europe spent over 4 times more in one project for a business start-up course for a period of 4 months for 15 men and 13 women than it spent according to the Evaluation of Phare Programs in a year in Slovakia or Romania.

**SOCIAL COHESION**  
At-risk-of-poverty rate after social transfers

In Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary a World bank report writes : “Poverty rates for Roma in all three countries are strikingly high—in all cases several times higher than among non-Roma.”

In the same year 2003, a UNDP report found out that “...one out of every two Roma in the countries surveyed, goes hungry at least a few days every year. One out of six is constantly starving. Health in Roma communities sharply deteriorated in the last decade...the infant mortality is frighteningly high”

The social transfers despite reducing the poverty from 44% to 15 % according to the Eurostat are simply not doing much in the case of Roma. Lack of proper documents is most of the times the main cause in preventing Roma access to social benefits.

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**10. Dispersion of regional employment rates**

One of the targets in the Social Cohesion strategy is: **halving by 2010 the number of early school leavers who do not continue with further education.**

According to ECRI report in Spain "...school drop-out rates and absenteeism are still very high among Roma/Gypsy children and concern approximately **70% of children over 14 and 90% of girls over 14.**"

**There is practically no hope that the 10% target by 2010 is going to be reflected in Roma communities but halving the gap should well be one.** The actual 18% overall rate in Europe could be reduced with close to 2%, in case Roma would have a "just" 40% of early school leavers.

The objectives **include clear targets for the disabled, aged people and women** but yet there are no clear priorities focused on Roma.

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**Total long-term unemployment rate**

The fall of communism in Eastern and Central Europe has **dramatically increased the long-term unemployment rate within Roma communities.** One of the worst groups affected by the transition to a market economy, Roma, are still struggling in finding employment. As the World Bank discovered a very worrisome phenomenon is **the continuous increase of the level of poverty within Roma communities.**

There are 3 more indicators related to the environment, which have no relevance to the situation of Roma.

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**Out of 14 major indicators 10 are of much importance to Roma in Europe.** The lack of data and focused reporting is endemic and repeatedly documented (EUMC, ECRI and European Commission Report "Roma in an Enlarged Europe").

The main priority of the European Commission according to President Barroso's Communication Paper is focus: **"First, Europe's actions need more focus. We must concentrate all our efforts on delivering on the ground policies that will have greatest impact."**

Up to this point that is exactly what was missing from the actions of the European Commission in regard to Roma. A clear focus and clear policies able to impact Roma are hard to be found and the results on the ground unfortunately show it.

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The acknowledgement of the discrimination and harsh living condition of European Roma is one of the achievements of the programs of the European Commission, Council of Europe, International Organisation and of the work of the European Parliament.

The switch from acknowledgement to concrete actions is still missing. Often Roma are hold responsible for their situation and the Draft Joint Employment Report 2004/2005 also recognize it: "The burden is often placed on individuals to adapt rather than addressing wider issues of discrimination in society at large. The Roma or migrants often seem to be portrayed largely as responsible for their labour market exclusion."

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"The European Commission's role is to coordinate this process ...the Commission's monitoring would stimulate and create the necessary peer pressure to achieve these goals" (Kok report)

**PARTNERSHIPS**

Lisbon Strategy could very well be the best opportunity Roma had for being included in the European Society. Is the best chance for tackling the social exclusion and having targeted actions meant to reduce the gap between the majorities and the Roma minority.

Could provide the opportunity for Roma to better and more actively contribute to the European economy and become equal citizens.

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