



REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

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

Contribution by the Delegation of the Republic of Serbia

Warsaw, 29 September - 10 October 2008

Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015

The Serbian Presidency

July 1, 2008- June 30, 2009

Introduction

The Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005- 2015 was initiated by agreement of high officials of Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia reached at the conference “Roma in Expanded Europe: Challenges for the Future”, held in Budapest in June 2003, with the support of the World Bank and Open Society Institute. In 2008 Albania joined the Decade, Slovenia asked for observer status and the Spain is in the process of joining. During the Serbian Presidency Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as UN-Habitat and the UNHCR joined the Decade.

The Decade goals are to close the gaps between Roma and the rest of society and to work toward elimination of discrimination through development and implementation of National Action Plans in the areas of education, housing, health and employment.

While focusing on priority areas of education, housing, health and employment, each participating Government shall in addition take into account the other core issues of poverty, discrimination and gender mainstreaming.

The main principle is to support full participation and involvement of national Roma Communities in achieving the Decade’s objectives.

The Serbian Presidency

Serbia is the first non-EU country to preside over the Decade of Roma Inclusion. Our EU orientation and steps taken towards EU membership create solid conditions for greater engagement in Roma integration.¹

There is a long tradition of the Roma movement in Serbia: first Roma organization founded in 1927 (“Slavari Tetkice Bibije”); first Roma magazine published in 1936 (“Romano Lil”); first Roma language TV show broadcast in the world in 1986, etc.

In 2002, Roma granted national minority status with the Law on the protection of the rights and liberties of national minorities. The National Council of the Roma national minority has been established in 2003, the Council for the advancement of the Roma minority position and the Implementation of the Decade of Roma Inclusion of the Government of the Republic of Serbia in 2008, new Ministry for Human and Minority Rights with its Department for the Implementation of the Roma National Strategy. Roma political parties were represented in the Parliament during 2007.

At the moment, in Serbia are operational more than 1,000 Roma NGOs, there is a network of the NGOs *League for the Decade of Roma Inclusion* and very active *Women’s Roma Network*.

At the regional and municipal level there are important institutions, such as Office for Roma inclusion of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, City of Belgrade Coordination center for Roma inclusion and Roma coordinators in 30 municipalities (another 40 expected in the second half of 2008).

A number of documents, harmonized with the Millennium Development Goals and the Poverty Reduction Strategy, have been adopted on the national and local level. The National Action Plans for the Decade of Roma inclusion have been adopted in 2005. for education, employment, housing and healthcare. Adoption of the Draft Strategy for Roma integration is expected till the end of the year, and it will include policy update in the mentioned four priority areas (priorities, M&E system, budgeting, operational mechanisms).

¹ Serbia has joined the “Decade for Roma Inclusion 2005–2015” in 2005.

Priorities of the Serbian Presidency

Priorities of the Serbian Presidency are:

- Housing
- Combating discrimination in education
- Cross-cutting issues:
 - Data, indicators and monitoring
 - European Roma Policy and access to EU funds
 - Invitation to new countries to join the Decade

The Ministry of Human and Minority Rights is coordinating activities.

Activities in the Roma Decade Presidency Year

- **13 International Steering Committee Meeting of the Decade of Roma Inclusion (ISC)**, Budapest 24-25
 - Press Conference- Formal Handover of the Presidency of Decade of Roma Inclusion
 - Introduction of the Serbian Decade Presidency Program
- **Press Conference of the Minister of Human and Minority Rights**, Government of the Republic of Serbia, Belgrade, July 30, 2008
- **Decade of Roma Inclusion Presidency Plan Presentation**, Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, Roma National Strategy Secretariat, UNDP, Open Society Fund, World Bank, OSCE Mission to Serbia, UNICEF, Belgrade, August, 2008
- **Roma Education Round Table**, Presentation of the finding and recommendations of the Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma, Monitoring Reports, OSI, Belgrade, October 23, 2008
- **Adoption of the Strategy and Action Plans for Improvement of Roma Status**, October 2008
- **14 International Steering Committee Meeting of the Decade of Roma Inclusion**, Belgrade, September 4-5, 2008
 - Official Opening
 - European Roma Policy and EU Funds
 - New Decade members (countries and international organizations)
 - Operation of the Decade Trust Fund
 - Housing, including data, indicators and monitoring issues
 - Cultural event
- **Meeting with the countries from ex Yugoslavia**, Belgrade, October 2008
 - Development of the project proposal for the DTF-potential topics- access to EU funds for non member countries, position of the IDPs, returnees based on the readmission agreements, access to personal documentations, common approach to the European Roma Strategy
- **Meeting of the Roma NGOs from Decade Countries**, Open Society Fund with the Support of the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, Belgrade, October 2008
 - Role of the Roma NGOs at National and International Level
- **Housing workshop**, Belgrade, November 2008
 - Improvement and legalization of Roma settlements

- Relocation
 - Low cost housing
 - Combating discrimination
 - Monitoring and evaluation
 - Best practice
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- **15 International Steering Committee, Belgrade, February 2009**
 - Combating discrimination in Education
 - Development of the Monitoring and Evaluation System
 - European Roma Policy and EU Funds
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- **Workshop-Development of Monitoring and Evaluation System, Belgrade, March 2009, UNDP with the support of the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights**
 - Development of the National Working Groups for Evaluation and Monitoring
 - International Working Group for Evaluation and Monitoring
 - Statistical and analytical data and data gathered by the Roma communities
 - Comparable data and data used at national level
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- **Workshop- Antidiscrimination in education, Belgrade, April 2009**
 - Schools for children with special needs
 - Primary school enrollment test and procedures
 - Preparatory pre school program
 - Socio-economic support for participation in the mainstream education
 - Pedagogical support to children in mainstream education
 - Role of the teachers, pedagogues and psychologists, school inspection
 - Monitoring and evaluation system
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- **World Roma Day Celebration**
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- **16 International Steering Committee Meeting of the Decade of Roma, Belgrade, June 2009**
 - Serbian Presidency Report
 - Handing over Presidency to Slovak Republic
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- **Invitation to new countries and international organizations to join the Decade**
 - Bearing in mind rich experience and knowledge of the UN- Habitat and especially long lasting cooperation with our Government and respective institutions, particularly in the field of alternative housing solutions for Roma settlements and the fact that housing is, as a complex topic, priority of our Presidency, we have invited UN- Habitat to join the Decade.
 - Serbia will invite Turkey, Greece and Italy, as well as all other interested countries to join the “Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015” during its Presidency.