



Republic of Serbia
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
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B e l g r a d e
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VA

Implementation of the OSCE Action Plan on Roma and Sinti

The Republic of Serbia is together with Montenegro, Croatia, Macedonia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, participating in the international program “Decade of Roma Inclusion”, from 2005 to 2015, to improve the status of the Roma population. Therefore, since 2003, the Republic of Serbia has implemented many activities aiming at improving the situation of Roma in Serbia, in cooperation with governmental and non governmental organizations. These are as follows:

- The National Council of Roma Ethnic Minority has been formed.
- The Secretariat for Roma National Strategy within the Agency for Human and Minority Rights has been established.
- The Office for Roma Inclusion of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina has been set up.
- Local action plans on implementation of Roma Inclusion Strategy have been adopted in eighteen municipalities.
- The Council for the Advancement of Roma and Implementation of Decade of Roma Inclusion, under the auspices of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, has been formed.
- Over a thousand of Roma NGOs have been established.
- Over a hundred projects, supported by the Republic of Serbia, have been prepared and implemented

On June 24, 2008, at the 13th session of the International Steering Committee on the *Decade of Roma*, Government Vice President, Mr. Bozidar Djelic, on behalf of our country, has taken over the Decade Presidency from Hungary. This fact will have further positive effect on the improvement of the status of Roma in Serbia.

The Education Reform, launched by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia starting 2003, pinpoints, aside of other issues, also the improvement of the education of ethnic minorities, particularly the Roma, as the most deprived ethnic community. The Roma population in Serbia represents the most numerous group of people who have extremely low percentage of school enrollment, regular school attendance, school grade completion and continuation of education, and extremely high percentage of school failure and drop out rate.

In cooperation with other institutions in the Republic of Serbia, the Ministry of Education has also been involved in the implementation of the *Decade*, as an agent and a coordinator of numerous measures envisaged by the *Unique Action Plan for the education of Roma*, the document of the Republic of Serbia, adopted on January 27. 2005, as a support to the Strategy for Improvement of Roma Education in the Republic of Serbia. Some of the measures have already been implemented, some are in progress and some will be implemented in the period to come. The Ministry of Education has implemented so far, in cooperation with governmental and non governmental organizations, the following activities:

- Roma students enrollment to secondary schools and faculties, through implementation of affirmative action measures
- Functional basic education of Roma
- Forming of Roma intellectual elite at University of Novi Sad
- Protection of Roma children against discrimination in education
- Expansion of Roma children's access to preschool education
- Finding systemic solutions in respect of Roma history, their tradition and culture in the framework of educational institutions
- Roma children as internally displaced persons/repatriates: from language barriers to social capital
- Inclusion of Roma children into secondary schools at the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina
- Creating conditions for extension of access and better school performance of Roma children
- Roma Education - solutions for the future: involvement of Roma parents in school boards.

The Ministry of Education has also implemented, in cooperation with the OSCE, the following activities:

- Capacity building of Ministry's Regional School Departments staff on implementation of regional action plans for the improvement of the education of Roma
- Promotion of the Decade of Roma Inclusion at the Ministry's Regional School Departments.
- Engagement of Roma Assistants as support to Roma pupils, coupled by a conference: "Media Promotion of Roma Assistants Activities in Instruction"

- The "Ethno - Historical Guide" has been drawn up, in cooperation with the OSCE, the "George Eckhart" Institute and representatives of the Ethnic Minorities Council.

During the implementation of the above mentioned projects and organizing the Conference, the following results have been achieved:

- Sixteen educational advisors have been appointed as responsible for Roma education improvement in the Republic of Serbia
- Local action plans on Roma education improvement were drawn up and implemented, A large number of promotional workshops and activities have been organized, where projects at national and regional level were presented, aimed to inform the broad public on the Decade of Roma Inclusion project objectives and activities
- A Model on introducing Roma Assistants into instructional activities has been developed, and adapted in accordance to the needs of Roma who live in the conditions and the social context typical for the Republic of Serbia
- Twenty eight Roma Assistants have been engaged in twenty six schools in the Republic of Serbia
- A Conference for local and regional representatives of the press, regional radio and TV houses, governmental and non governmental organizations was organized

As a result of the cooperation with the OSCE and the other organizations, the Ministry of Education elaborated different models of cooperation and initiatives with the governmental and nongovernmental sector and partly improved the actual educational activities with Roma pupils. However, some of the questions still remain open, such as:

- Education improvement of internally displaced Roma persons from Kosovo and Metohia and Roma repatriates from Western Europe countries
- Development of the school subject: "Roma Language with Elements of National Culture" and education of teacher staff in charge of above mentioned school subject
- Amendments of the legal framework in respect of introducing Roma Assistants into the instruction
- Establishing a Roma Chair at university level