

Working meeting on inclusion of Roma and Roma refugees

26th July, Skopje

Operational Conclusions

Cross-cutting issues and follow-up

- Significant steps have been taken in the creation of institutions, legislation and strategies aiming to improve the socio-economic situation of Roma and to better include them in mainstream society.
- However, stronger political commitment should be demonstrated in order to ensure that strategies are turned into action, especially by allocating appropriate financial resources.
- To that end, additional state funds will be allocated for the implementation of existing strategies and action plans.
- Implementation of existing strategies and action plans will also improve with the development of effective reporting, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.
- Currently, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms suffer from the absence of official data on Roma. A system to gather official data needs to be established with the cooperation of all relevant state institutions led by the State Statistical Office. The 2011 census will be an opportunity to acquire reliable and objective data.
- Administrative capacities, coordination and communication between institutions in charge of Roma policies should be improved. The work of the National Coordination Body and Advisory Body should be activated.
- More effective information and outreach campaigns about existing activities and policies are needed to raise awareness among the Roma community
- The Roma Information Centres should play a vital role in informing the target group about existing policies. Therefore, their project status (including the status of the staff) should be replaced by a permanent position within the public administration and their human and financial capacities should be increased.
- The issue of Roma refugees from 1999 should be included in the general discussions and policies geared towards Roma inclusion.
- In order to ensure proper follow-up to the meeting, coordination meetings bringing together all relevant stakeholders (authorities, international community, NGOs) should be organised every 6 months. Thus, progress can be reviewed and challenges assessed providing for a continuous evaluation of activities for inclusion of Roma. The state institutions responsible for coordinating and implementing existing policies should lead these coordination meetings.
- The coordination meetings can also be used to coordinate donor activities with regard to Roma.

Employment

- A direct link between employment with and appropriate education and qualification needs to be recognized, resulting in more emphasis on human capital development. Only this way can disadvantaged groups reach real and decent jobs.
- An integrated approach including dialogue with municipalities and the private sector should be established. The Employment Agency is strongly encouraged to create programs with the private sector in order to motivate companies to employ Roma.
- Strengthened efforts are needed to increase representation of Roma in the public administration based on merits and qualification. In addition, affirmative employment measures in government funded projects should be promoted.
- The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy should elaborate more active labour measures for employment specifically targeting the Roma, as currently only one such measure exists.
- Access to existing and future active labour measures for employment should be provided also for the Roma refugees.
- Existing activities for increasing employability of Roma need to be more and better promoted. The Employment Agency should organise a seminar for the Roma Information Centres and NGOs to enable them to correctly inform the Roma community about existing policies.
- The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy should search for mechanisms to legalize income-generating informal activities in which many Roma are involved.

Personal documents and Roma refugees

- There is a persistent problem with civil registration. Changes in the legislation and measures to address this issue need to be urgently adopted and implemented. The recommendations produced in 2010 by the inter-ministerial working group on persons without documents should be adopted by the government without delay and implemented by end of year 2012.
- In order to ease access to personal documents and civil registration, the costs and fines for late birth registration should be waived during the first six months of 2012. The fees for DNA testing required for establishing identity should be waived for the same period of time.
- All existing and future measures should be duly promoted by appropriate state institutions in cooperation with Roma Information Centres and NGO's.
- Official data on persons without personal documents need to be established and the 2011 census should be used to acquire data. The State Statistical Office together with the Roma Information Centres should raise awareness among the Roma about the necessity to participate in the census.
- The Law on Public Health Insurance should be amended, as it was originally planned in spring 2011, to include refugees in the public health system.
- Efforts to provide adequate funding for permanent housing solutions for refugees need to be pursued urgently. In accordance with an earlier governmental decision, the Ministry of Transport and Communication should allocate public land for the construction of housing units within a project funded by UNHCR.
- A commitment to sign and ratify the UN Convention on reduction of statelessness persons (1961) will be taken without delay.

Housing

- The Law on Legalisation of Illegal Buildings provides an essential tool to pave the way for improving housing conditions of many Roma families. The deadline for application (3 September 2011) should be extended for another six months.
- The Roma community needs to be better informed about the necessary procedures under the Law on Legalisation of Illegal Building. The Cadastre Office and Roma Information Centres should organize workshops to raise awareness among the Roma community.
- Administrative burdens and fees for obtaining documents required for legalisation of illegal building should be waived for socially vulnerable persons.
- The current legislation should be amended in order to establish a mechanism for legalisation of illegal settlements providing for their inclusion in municipal spatial plans.
- In case of dislocation of Roma settlements, the concerned population should be relocated only to urban areas.
- The central and local authorities will engage in more regular dialogue regarding housing and infrastructure problems faced by the Roma community. They should notably cooperate in developing a mechanism to stop and prevent further geographical segregation of the Roma community.
- Housing and infrastructure projects targeting the Roma community should receive a higher priority in terms of budgeting.

Education

- Comprehensive measures to decrease the number of Roma children in special needs classes or schools need to be adopted.
- Access to pre-school education is a key element for integration through education. Therefore, fees for pre-school education will be waived for socially vulnerable families.
- Children of Roma refugees will be included in the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy's project "Inclusion of Roma children in pre-school education".
- The Ministry of Education and Science in cooperation with municipalities should improve monitoring and evaluation of attendance of pre-school and primary education.
- In line with the national Strategy for Roma and the relevant Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion, the project on mentors and pedagogical assistants should be implemented. A solution to enable their presence inside school facilities although they are not official members of the pedagogical staff needs to be found rapidly and before the end of the 2011-2012 academic year.
- The issue of increasing number of street children must be addressed as a key priority by relevant ministries. New transit centres, providing day and night care, will be created.
- The manual on antidiscrimination in education published by the Ministry of Education and Science should be more extensively used along with strengthened measures for desegregation in schools.
- The multi-ethnic character and curricula of the new high-school in Shuto Orizari under construction shall be ensured.
- The budget distribution from the central to the municipal level should be made according to the number of students (principle "Money follows the child") instead of fixed amounts related to number of education facilities.
- Projects on adult education will be developed and the Centre for Adult Education will start its activities before the end of the 2011-2012 academic year.