



DECADE OF  
ROMA  
INCLUSION  
2005 - 2015

**PROGRESS REPORT 2010**

**GOVERNMENT OF SLOVAKIA**

June 2011



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### **GOVERNMENT OF SLOVAKIA**

#### **1. BASIC INFORMATION ON THE SITUATION OF THE ROMA MINORITY**

- At 31 December 2010 the Slovak Republic had 5,435,273 inhabitants;
- The Slovak census of 2001 indicates the size of Slovakia's Romani population to be 89 920, or 1.7 per cent of the total population. Based on personal declaration, this figure is considerably lower than the 1989 official estimate of 253 943, which was based on ascription; field studies and statistical projections yield a range of 320 000 to 435 300;
- Slovakia doesn't have firmly set poverty line, it is however estimated that around 300 000 Roma live in basic material need;
- is increasing for various reasons and the number can only be estimated to 620 and rising;
- In Slovak republic the situation of Roma varies. There are few urban ghettos which are growing as well as multiplying. The majority of Roma however reside in rural settlements where demographics are steadily increasing. Thus problems of urban and rural settlements vary. In rural settings the problem is access to basic infrastructure and civic services. The access to drinking water, electricity and sewage is limited not to mention access to basic education, health and employment facilities. Whereas in urban centers infrastructure is more available, but inaccessible due to social exclusion and related problems;
- According to Statistical Office data, the average for the year 2010, gross domestic product in volume of 65.9 billion Euros.

#### **2. INSTITUTIONAL PROVISION AND EVALUATION OF ROMA INTEGRATION POLICY**

Office of The Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma communities is charged with the challenge to promote social and cultural needs and solve extremely adverse situation of the Roma community. Last year, total of 96 projects was supported with the sum of 901 750 €. The funds allocated to support projects included

the support of the Open Society Foundations scholarship programs, last year the amount of 67 300€ was earmarked for this purpose.

In the Slovak republic the bodies responsible for the implementation of the Decade National Action Plan are, Ministry of Labor, Social affairs and Family, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Health and Slovak Government Office.

### 3. SITUATION OF ROMA IN THE AREA OF EDUCATION

With regard to the implementation of the Decade National Action Plan in 2010, Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Republic Government for Roma Communities (OPGRC) provided a significant legal support for the elementary schools with the extension of the number of teacher assistants as well as provided counseling for the municipalities with regard to the implementation of alternative programs in the pre-school education. The OPGRC carried out several interventions (in a number of municipalities with a significant share of marginalized Roma population) to promote and stress the need of setting up (or broaden the capacities of) a pre-school facility. The OPGRC devoted much effort with regard to the reduction and reassessment of the number of pupils in the special elementary schools. In school year 2010/2011 there is cca. 24 000 pupils in the special elementary schools. The research of REF (School as a Ghetto, 2009) and Mr. Marcin (The Cost of Non-inclusion, OSF, 2009) brings estimates that roughly 60% of them are children from marginalized Roma communities. The effort was directed at schools and pedagogical-psychological advisory institutions as well as at the parents themselves. In relation to the secondary education, OPGRC exerted much effort to maintain and broaden the number of so called allocated vocational schools which proved to be a very efficient means for the Romani students to gain a secondary education. One of the reasons, why many Roma kids do not continue to study at secondary schools is the problem of costs connected with transportation and studying, fear against physical attacks from other pupils. That is why vocational schools create allocated classes in the neighborhoods of Roma communities. One of the reasons, why many Roma kids do not continue to study at secondary schools is the problem of costs connected with transportation and studying, fear against physical attacks from other pupils. That is why vocational schools create allocated classes in the neighborhoods of Roma communities.

The main problem with the process of desegregation is the ban on collection of the ethnic data. Therefore, first and foremost we must be able to collect accurate ethnic data on the representation of Roma pupils in the special pre-school facilities, elementary and secondary schools as well as in the special classes within the standard schools. Secondly, a big problem poses the process of psychological assessment prior to the school attendance. Socially disadvantaged environment (SDE) might be sometimes misinterpreted as a form of light mental disorder. The dual system of pedagogical-psychological advisory bodies has proved to be problematic, since the special pedagogical-psychological counseling is directly (financially and personally) interconnected with the particular special school. Thirdly, desegregation collides with the freedom of choice of the parents to place their kid according to their wishes. In practice, this means that some elementary schools in smaller municipalities are becoming (or have already become) “Roma schools” because the non-Roma kids are being massively enrolled in the “white” schools in the nearby towns. Fourthly and

finally, we can not turn a blind eye on the problem of Roma parents themselves. The combination of poverty, low education (special school graduates and often secondary illiterate), prospect of better grades for their kids caused by the reduced curriculum and more comfortable atmosphere in the purely Roma class, smaller distance and the prospect of financial allowances makes it very likely that the parents will decide to enroll their kid into a special school.

Ban on segregation and discrimination in the school system is explicitly anchored in the school act (no. 245/2008 - §3, section d). On the other hand we cannot dismiss the possibility that in particular cases some kind of segregation occurs. The OPGRC proposes in its revised Decade action plans legislative changes in all of the problematic areas mentioned above. They should have a major impact on the process of the mitigation of the “de facto” segregation.

The model of inclusive education is being discussed at the level of the “Council of Government for the Human Rights, Equal Treatment and Gender Equality” and has been also elaborated in the newly prepared conception of the Ministry of Education. The relevant stakeholders are about to launch the consultation process which should lead to a unified vision of the inclusive education in Slovakia.

With regard to the number of teacher assistants for children from socially disadvantaged environment, the estimated data in year 2010 show that there is approximately 65 in pre-school education (standard and special kindergartens), and about 450 total in elementary education (standard and special schools). The number of teacher assistants in secondary education is negligible, close to zero. We do not possess the numbers of Roma kids in special kindergartens but we suppose that they are being attended mostly by kids with a severe mental and physical disability.

Since the classification of pupils on an ethnic basis is strictly forbidden, there is no such a provision that would cover explicitly and exclusively Romani students. The school legislation operates with the term “pupil from a socially disadvantaged environment”. In fact almost all of the Romani pupils coming from the marginalized Roma communities (MRC) are hidden behind this formulation. The pupils from the socially disadvantaged environment are entitled to receive material and financial support due to the provision in the ministry of social affairs subsidy act (no. 544/2010) and are also positively discriminated by the contribution from the ministry of education (in the school year 2010/2011 every school received 90 Euros extra per pupil from SDE). The ministry of social affairs subsidizes every pupil whose family is in material need or at the borderline of life-minimum. He/she gets lunch and necessary teaching tools for free. The ministry of education has also developed a program of secondary social scholarships which depend on the school performance and attendance.

The OPGRC provides every year also an endowment (60.000 Euros in year 2010) for secondary and tertiary Romani students. This endowment is coordinated and managed by the OSF Bratislava.

Regarding the absorption of ESF structural funds for Roma education, the ministry of education has launched two projects:

- “Improvement of the reading literacy” (allocated 5mil. Euros; authorized applicants – elementary schools with minimum 50% pupils from socially disadvantaged environment);
- “Education of pedagogical employees – inclusion of the marginalized Roma communities” (starting in September 2011; allocation cca. 26 mil. Euros; authorized applicants – elementary schools with minimum 20% pupils from socially disadvantaged environment);

Besides these two projects, ministry of education opened the call for applicants (municipalities) who are included in the “local strategy of complex approach”. The allocated amount of money (17mil. Euros) is intended to improve the level of education within the MRC.

#### Area of early care and pre-school education

The act on pre-school education does not exist. The main tenets of pre-school education are included in the school act (no. 245/2008). The establishment of pre-school facilities is an original competence of the municipalities.

There are no accurate data on Roma children attending pre-school facilities. According to some estimates of the Slovak Governance Institute (SGI, 2010) approximately 30% Roma children attend at least one year kindergarten. The main barriers consist in the lack of kindergarten capacities and financial means of Roma parents. There are some cases where the founder of the kindergarten (usually the municipality) becomes afraid of the “white flight” if there is a growth in the representation of Roma children.

The newly, in July 2010, formed government adopted a program manifesto where it is explicitly stated that “the government will introduce a compulsory one year pre-school (kindergarten) education”. It is evident from this manifesto that the Slovak government understands the importance of pre-school education, especially in the case of children from SDE/MRC. The ministry of education has published in the last few days its conception on the complex reform of regional educational system. This conception will be consulted among relevant stakeholders and the final version will be the fundament for the legislative changes.

Ministry of education decides basically between two models – either a compulsory one year pre-school education or a compulsory zero class (with a different curriculum from the current one) for all children who will not pass the test of school preparedness.

#### Primary education

In the field of primary education, we encounter the same problem as elsewhere with the data collection. However, the main problem concerning the pupils from marginalized Roma communities remains the high frequency of enrollment into special schools. Total number of children enrolled into special schools: 2009: 23 973 and in 2010: 24 007. The data on Roma children drop-out rate are not available.

We have already mentioned in the introductory passage on education the biggest challenges that Slovakia currently faces with regard to the primary education of the MRC pupils.

### Secondary education

Notwithstanding the notorious problem with the collection of data on the number of Roma pupils in the secondary education, we could quite firmly state that the figure of MRC pupils continuing to study in the secondary education is very low. According to another SGI study (SGI, 2010) on the effectiveness of the secondary education scholarships, there is a huge gap between the number of social benefits beneficiaries at the level of primary education (13%) and the number of secondary social scholarships beneficiaries (3%).

The main obstacle for them to continue in the secondary education is the material and financial situation of their families. The social scholarship, which is dependent on the school attendance and performance, does not cover the whole amount of costs connected with the secondary education.

To put it bluntly, secondary social scholarships have to compete with other possibilities of securing income right after the termination of the mandatory school attendance period. Option 1 could represent a pupil who abandons secondary education and joins grey economy which simply means: income for the family instead of expenses connected with the studies. Option 2 could illustrate a situation where the pupil prematurely abandons secondary education, signs up as unemployed and then applies for the “activation subsidy” (63,07 Euros) which surpasses even the highest possible amount of social secondary scholarship. Option 3 happens when the pupil who has dropped out, founds a family and becomes the beneficiary of social allowances for a family with the appropriate number of children.

In year 2010, the OPGRC supported from its grant scheme 146 Romani pupils attending secondary education in the amount of 35 938 Euros.

The Slovak Decade action plan on education proposes several measures with regard to these financial “temptations”. We would like to raise the amount of social secondary scholarships at least to the height of the “activation subsidy” or use the “activation subsidy” also as a tool for retaining the pupils from poor backgrounds in the secondary education. We propose broadening of the subsidy for pupil from socially disadvantaged environment also on the level of secondary education. Last but not least, we support creation of so called allocated vocational schools in the vicinity of Roma settlements.

### Tertiary education

Obviously, the number of university students coming from the MRC is even lower than those attending secondary education.

The OPGRC provides from its grant scheme every year scholarship for tertiary Romani students. In year 2010, the OPGRC supported 67 Romani university students in the amount of 24 855 Euros.

The greatest challenge in the field of tertiary education (besides the tiny rate of Romani students) poses the one-sided orientation on pedagogical education and mainly social work. There is an immense need to have the Romani students more spread around the whole spectrum of university education.

#### 4. SITUATION OF ROMA IN THE AREA OF EMPLOYMENT

The development of Roma unemployment is according to our estimates vastly different from the development in the same field and time horizon in the majority population. It appears that approximately two thirds of Roma are discouraged from engaging actively in the labour market. The major role for the public policy therefore is the preparation of such programmes that would increase the chances of Roma to get employment and bring them back on to the labour market. The data regarding Roma employment is scarce. Most monitoring efforts merely state almost 100% unemployment rate, but there are no findings regarding Roma participation in the labor market and their employment. Our knowledge of data is limited. Research into this area often uses varying definitions of unemployment rate, but the findings of 100% unemployment are universal. It would be necessary to organize a sample research of the workforce, possibly utilizing current sampling techniques with the addition of ethnicity question. Research teams could consider including economists specializing on employment markets at least for consultations.

Low work activity is a regional specific. One quarter of Slovak districts with the highest concentration of Roma population has significantly higher registered rate of unemployed and significantly lower chances of finding jobs. A half of the unemployed is without finished formal qualifications or even finished primary education. The chances for further decrease in employment are dwindling fast. With the growth of demand for workforce, the ratio of people with only primary education grew as well in combination with long term unemployment further increasing the overall unemployment rate. That is especially apparent in unemployed Roma 60% of who has only primary education, 64% is at least one year out of work and one half is at least two years out of work.

In the area of employment the employees of the office of the plenipotentiary for Roma communities have primarily been consulting of project proposals in regards to the employment of Roma in cooperation with partners capable of creating jobs for the long term unemployed. Office of the plenipotentiary has no data on the change in the unemployment rate of the Roma population. A number of Roma have left Slovakia in search of better job opportunities abroad particularly (Czech republic, Great Britain) or to the western part of Slovakia (Bratislava and surrounding areas).

In the course of consultations while creating, functioning and monitoring of the municipal enterprises (municipal firms) have the employees in regional offices of the plenipotentiary for the Roma communities monitored municipal enterprises supported by the Grant scheme of the plenipotentiary for Roma communities in particular Šarišské Čierne, Červenica, Torysa, Kurov, Sveržov, Veľké Kapušany, Budkovce, Jablonov, Žehra, Spišský Hrhov.

Current issues in the area of employment:

- Absence of job opportunities in entire regions,
- The number of long term unemployed as well as those who have never worked is increasing,
- Discrimination during job application selection procedures,
- Various training courses-organised by labour offices are irrelevant, do not address the target group and do not reflect the needs of the labour market
- Insufficient education level of Roma, especially in smaller municipalities, and with it significantly lowered chances of employment
- Absence of the work habits in the group of term unemployed as well as those who have never worked
- Absence of municipal enterprises that would attempt to employ their inhabitants
- Absence of flexible guidance for the gaining of employment opportunities-this function is partially and locally taken over by NGOs.

## 5. SITUATION OF ROMA IN THE AREA OF HOUSING

The situation of Roma housing remains an open issue, not only because qualitatively it is on a level inferior to the majority population, but also because of lacking infrastructure. The majority of dwellings in Roma settlements can be characterized as simple structures build mainly from wood, mud, clay, corrugated iron, they do not comply with building regulations. These structures are built by the inhabitants with little skill and without settling the land titles. Access to community and public services is severely restricted. The most significant issue is the lack of utilities such as water, electricity and sewage, not to mention gas and rubbish collection. The necessity to realize a housing intervention is accentuated by the rising demography of Roma families as well as deterioration of current housing units in both urban and rural settings. Partly also caused by overcrowding.

Inability of municipalities as well as inhabitants themselves to settle land titles, mainly for financial reasons, is one of the greatest hindrances in attempts to improve the housing situation. It prevents investment in utilities infrastructure, as well as the inability to use EU structural funds.

There have been no cases of unlawful evictions in Slovakia in 2010. However due to other reasons such as flooding and poor housing construction, fire and wind-storms several families lost accommodation. These were either given shelter by the local municipality or sought refuge with families elsewhere. Municipalities subsequently sought government assistance in repairing or rebuilding of these dwellings. It has to be noted that government assistance though promised has been slow for administrative reasons.

There is a single program of lower rental houses of lower standard that is currently supported from the national budget. A participation in the construction is strongly encouraged. This program also aims to support the construction of technical and public infrastructure, access road, electricity, water pipes and sewage. Last year 181 accommodation units were constructed this way. Further sixteen localities were assisted from the grant scheme of to the Office of Plenipotentiary of Slovak republic for Roma communities.



## 6. SITUATION OF ROMA IN THE AREA OF HEALTH

Insufficient health care provision to the Roma population is not caused by worse physical i.e. geographical accessibility. The network of primary health care providers of general practitioners for adults and children as well as gynecologists for women is generally equally accessible in terms of distance and time it takes to reach these. The Roma however postpone visits to the doctors to the last possible moment when symptoms are already severe, attendance of regular annual checks is low quite often instead of the visits to the general practitioner the emergency rooms are used often on weekends. They do not pick up their prescribed medication and do not follow the doctor's advice. Many Roma do not belong to any health care insurer, despite the fact that in cases of unemployment or material need the insurance fees for these patients is paid by the state from the national budget.

On the other hand medical staff often shows little interest in health care awareness of the Roma, prevention and the motivation to prevention is often driven more by their personal prejudice about the Roma. These experiences often lead to the Roma being discouraged from future visits of healthcare facilities. This is why the most important aspect for the improvement of Roma state of health is the support of the equality and fairness in health care, improvement in lifestyle and living conditions of disadvantaged groups as well as the support of individual responsibility for ones own health. These targets can not be met exclusively within the health care sector. These changes require changes in almost every field of public policy and especially in the values of the wider civil society.

“The program for the support of disadvantaged communities in Slovakia” is realized by the Public health authority of the Slovak republic through community workers of health education. The aim of this program is the improvement of health and the increase in the responsibility for ones own health in the disadvantaged Roma communities. The target group consists of the inhabitants of segregated and separated Roma settlements and localities. Comparatively worse state of health in the target group is the cause of increased expenses for the treatment of ailments born by the general public, work incapacitations, hospitalizations and invalidity. Activities realized in stage 1 and 2 of this program in 2007-2008 and 2009-2010 contributed the increase of regular visits to the specialist medical practitioners such as pediatricians, general practitioners, gynecologists, dentists, increased numbers of children being vaccinated, improvements in personal hygiene, increased maternal care for the health of their offspring. So far the realization of the programs aimed at the continuous and persistent work of community workers of health education proved its positive impact. Particularly in the rise of health awareness, building of the sense of reachable and available help as well as improved breath of information about hygienic and health habits. Marked change in health and lifestyle of the target group is only possible via long-term continuous and systematic health-educational activities.

## 7. SITUATION OF ROMA IN THE AREA OF SECURITY

Slovak Republic law does not define the concept of extremism. For the purposes of detecting, investigating and documenting these crimes, not least for the purposes of

the preventive action of the Slovak Force are currently pursuing three basic strands of extremism:

1. right-wing - presented ideas promoting racism, fascism, Nazism, neo-Nazism - operating on the principles and ideology of National Socialism
2. left-oriented - presented mostly anarchist, anti-globalization and anti-corporate ideas and radical eco ideas,
3. religiously oriented - presented by religious groups, by their ideology, their views and subsequent activities may endanger life, health or property of individuals and violate generally binding legal regulations.

In 2010, 114 crimes defined as extremist and crimes with racial motives. 81 crimes were solved, which is 92.34% of the cases for this type of crime. The total was 70 offenders; of which 1 person was minor and 10 persons were juveniles.

2010 saw a decline in crimes of extremism and crimes with racial motives by 18, which makes a total decline of 23.76% compared with 2009. Racially motivated murder wasn't recorded.

Under the Slovak Presidency of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005 – 2015 an International conference on combating extremism was organized on 23rd and 24th March 2010. 2010 saw an attempt entering of radical groups to enter the political arena, which was another incentive for creation conference.

## 8. DEVELOPMENT OF ROMA CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

In 2010 through the grant scheme of the Ministry of Culture - Culture of National Minorities project plans based on thematic classification of living culture, periodicals, non-periodical press and cultural policy were supported. Overall 118 projects applied for the subsidy, 82 were supported to the total amount of 530 345 Euro.

An important tool is the subsidy program of the Ministry of Culture - Culture of disadvantaged groups, in which activities were supported and directed to the marginalized Roma communities. The subsidy scheme has supported 11 projects to the total amount of 38 500 Euro.

In 2010 through a dedicated contribution of the Ministry of Culture SNM - Museum of Roma Culture in Slovakia completed an extension and completion of exhibition Romano Drom / Roma on the road section on the important personalities of the Roma.