



PROGRESS REPORT 2014

1. INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT AND FUNDING OF ROMA INCLUSION

The Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees leads and coordinates all activities relating to the promotion and protection of human rights of minorities, of the Roma in particular, as the largest ethnic minority in BiH. On the initiative of the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees BiH, the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted the Revised Action Plan of Roma in Employment, Housing and Health Care of Bosnia and Herzegovina in December 2013, which was implemented in 2014. Representatives of Roma and Roma NGOs took an active part in this process.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has established several institutional mechanisms, i.e. bodies responsible for matters of national minorities, of which the Roma are the largest and the poorest ethnic minority.

There are Councils of National Minorities at the state level and in two Entities, which act as advisory bodies, give opinions and suggestions for solving problems of minorities.

The Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees leads and coordinates activities of the Decade, CAHROM and other bodies. The Human Rights Department of the Ministry is responsible for providing professional, administrative and operational support and monitoring, promoting and protecting of the rights of Roma.

The Roma Board, an advisory body of the Council of Ministers, is responsible for systematic monitoring of the Action Plan implementation, the adoption of action plans and proposing measures for improving the situation of Roma, initiating the provision of budgetary resources for Roma and the like.

The Ministry has involved a lot of Roma people in the fieldwork at the local level, particularly in the selection of beneficiaries of housing. In this way it has ensured massive participation of Roma representatives in the decision-making process.

Monitoring is done on the ground in different directions by several actors. Independent monitoring is performed by Roma representatives and independent experts, experts in particular areas coming from local and national institutions and others.

The Roma Board as an advisory body of the Council of Ministers monitors activities for addressing Roma issues. International organizations monitor them within the scope of their activities.

Every year the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH and the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina plan funds at the state level amounting to EUR 1.5 million in order to fund the Roma Action Plan implementation. These funds are increased through a system of co-funding by other ministries and implementing partners, particularly in Roma housing.



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The funds are also increased with donations from international organizations that co-fund our activities, too. Most municipalities allocate funds at the local level to improve the living conditions of Roma and invest their funds in infrastructure projects.

The Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina regularly applies for IPA funds from the European Commission. The European Commission has approved the EUR 5 million IPA project and the implementation of the EUR 2.5 million first stage began in the second half of 2013. Most of these funds, i.e. 80%, will be put in Roma housing and living conditions improvement.

In 2014 there were several referral meetings with Roma representatives and local authorities, in order to better coordinate activities.

Funds planning will continue regularly on a yearly basis. All funds are used solely to improve the inclusion of Roma in society, by providing better living conditions, awarding small grants for employment and improving health care and education.

Bosnia and Herzegovina took over the Presidency of the Decade of Roma Inclusion on 1 July 2014.

In October 2014, Bosnia and Herzegovina hosted and organized a CAHROM meeting, i.e. a meeting of the Committee of Experts of the Council of Europe countries dealing with issues related to Roma population.

2. EDUCATION

Education in BiH is regulated by framework BiH laws, laws at the entity level in the Republika Srpska, cantonal laws in the Federation of BiH and the Law of Brcko District governing pre-school, primary, secondary and higher education.

When it comes to the state level, this area is monitored and coordinated by the Ministry of Civil Affairs, i.e. a separate Department of Education.

Responsibility for the implementation of educational policies is determined by the BiH Constitution, the constitutions of the entities and cantons and the Statute of the Brcko District of BiH, while development of educational policy is a responsibility of the lower levels of government, such as entities:

- a) the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where education is a decentralized system in ten cantons. The Federation Ministry of Education and Science has a coordinating role in planning and implementation of activities related to education policy in the Federation. Cantonal ministries of education are responsible for designing educational policies, including the enactment of legislation on education and the provision of education in each canton individually,
- b) Republika Srpska, where the educational system is centralized and
- c) Brcko District, which also has its own educational system.



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In July 2010 the Council of Ministers adopted the Revised Action Plan of Roma Educational Needs of BiH (RAP) which includes goals and measures to be implemented throughout the country. BiH has 12 ministries of education and one Department of Education in the Brcko District, which have not made specific plans and programmes to support the education of Roma, but are focused on the implementation of this RAP.

A decision of the Minister of Human Rights (2011) issued for the level of Bosnia and Herzegovina appointed a team of experts, which prepares for each school year a report on the implementation of the RAP and BiH Roma educational needs and submit it to the BiH Council of Ministers. Up to now, three reports have been produced.

According to the report on the implementation of the RAP for school year 2013/2014, the situation is the following:

Pre-school education has been recognized as extremely important for the subsequent development and progress of each individual. However, the conditions under which children of that age are educated are not equally stimulating and motivating for all children, particularly those who belong to marginalized groups such as Roma children. Therefore, it is the inclusion of children, Roma children in particular, in formal pre-school education that is increasingly insisted on and along these lines, attending preschool program in the year before going to school has become obligatory.¹

Since we do not have general information on the number of Roma children of preschool age due to administrative barriers, information on participation of Roma children in preschool programs cannot be expressed in percentages, but it is presented numerically in the report.

A significant contribution in this area was given by the Increasing Early Learning Opportunities for Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina Project, implemented by UNICEF in cooperation with Dubai Cares Foundation, given the target group is the marginalized groups of children including Roma children. Examples of good practice of the mentioned project were noted in the municipalities of Bijeljina and Živinice where the largest number of Roma resides.

We can say that there is a significant progress, but it is still far from the goal to be achieved.

Given **primary education** is compulsory, goals set in the Revised Action Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina on Roma education needs in this area are achieved best, the data indicating an upward trend in enrolment of Roma children in primary school, where it is especially important to emphasize that there are no differences in the enrolment of boys and girls.

In school year 2013/14, a total of 2078 Roma children was enrolled in primary school. According to the report, the number of Roma children who dropped out of school was 64 or 3.07%, which is considered a significant improvement compared to previous years.

¹ The Law on Preschool Education, BiH Official Gazette 88/07.



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Again in school year 2013/2014, an emphasis was placed on education of Roma parents on the compulsory primary education, the importance of programs related to early childhood growth and development, training of teachers, parents and students in human rights and rights of the child, as well as stereotypes and discrimination in education against Roma and overcoming them.

Developing awareness of the role and importance of education among the Roma population is of great importance given education traditionally does not define one's social status within the Roma community. Therefore, these information meetings take place continuously.

For example, in school year 2013/14, 194 meeting with parents of Roma children were held in order to inform them that primary education was compulsory, 37 meetings with Roma communities and activists were held in order to train them in the importance of programs related to early child development and 24 thematic lectures were held for parents in Roma communities. On the other hand, education and upbringing of Roma children carry certain specificities and there is a need to train teachers, but also parents and students in this respect. Formal preconditions for inclusion of Roma children in the education system are respect and appreciation of basic human rights, especially children's rights.

There was a total of 85 courses of training of teachers, parents and children in primary schools in order to raise awareness of human rights and rights of the child, involving 400 teachers, 4328 children and 1123 parents. There was a total of 39 courses of training in stereotypes and discrimination in education against Roma and how to overcome them, involving 269 teachers, 1817 students and 948 parents.

We emphasize that in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there is no segregation of Roma in pre-school, primary and other education and that inclusive education is taking root.

Further, we note that 23 Roma students attended special educational institutions in school year 2013/2014 and it is important to emphasize that they really were children with special educational needs.²

The progress made in school year 2012/2013 when it comes to primary education did continue in school year 2013/2014 and involves incentive measures taken by educational authorities and local communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The incentive measures to advance the regular attendance of Roma children took different forms such as individual counselling work with Roma children and their parents, parent-teacher meetings, the inclusion of an expert team consisting of educators and psychologists in addition to social and health workers, assistance in providing school supplies and textbooks, clothing and footwear, provision of free school meals etc.

² Before adoption of the Revised Action Plan of BiH on the Educational Needs of Roma there was an upward trend of enrollment of Roma children in special educational institutions, at the request of Roma parents, even when they were not children with disabilities in order to be provided with a full day care and food and "to be removed" from the street.



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Free textbooks for Roma children in primary school were provided to 1,295 students which makes 62.32% of the total number of Roma pupils enrolled in school year 2013/14. Textbooks were provided mainly through financial support by respective ministry (entity, cantonal), municipality and / or city.

Free transport was provided to 147 Roma students in primary school. (Anyway, free transport is generally provided throughout BiH to primary school children if their place of residence is more than 2km/4km far from the school they attend).

Free snacks at school were provided to 749 or 36.04% Roma students.

Secondary Education

According to the data, 51 Roma children enrolled in secondary school in school year 2013/14, and 29 Roma pupils completed this level of education in the same year. That same year, a total of 92 Roma pupils attended secondary education with no significant differences between Roma girls and boys. One student dropped out of secondary school.

A total of 99 Roma students, with equal gender distribution, receive scholarships from the institutions' budgets.

In school year 2013/14, eight Roma students were enrolled and all of them receive scholarships from the institutions' budget.

The total budgetary funds allocated to Roma students in school year 2013/14 were BAM 117,959.15.

Generally, it can be said that BiH has developed a practice that the relevant ministries and local communities allocate budgetary funds to support enrolment, attendance and graduation of all Roma children and that the budgetary funds have been increasing in each school year, although they are still not enough to meet all needs of Roma children to achieve full equality in access to education due to hidden costs in education.

3. EMPLOYMENT

The Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of BiH designed the 2013 – 2016 Action Plan for Roma in Employment, Housing and Health Care that was adopted by the Council of Ministers of BiH on 11 December 2013.

The earlier Action Plan and the new Revised Action Plan make the basis for the implementation of planned activities in accordance with the funds provided from the budget of Bosnia and Herzegovina and budgets of the entities, cantons and municipalities as well as from donor funds and EC funds (IPA).



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Every year the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of BiH earmarks in its budget BAM 3,000,000.00 to be spent as grants for the implementation of the Action Plan for Roma in Employment, Housing and Health Care.

The Revised Action Plan takes the registered needs of Roma in employment as a basis and we have set a realistic goal to give jobs to 4,700 Roma people. i.e. at least to one member of the Roma families that registered their needs. Analysing the results achieved so far, we can conclude that until now 10.5% of persons have been employed in one way or another. In accordance with the implementation of the Action Plan, BAM 2,822,000.00 have been allocated for employment of Roma in employment and self-employment projects, 475 persons being beneficiaries of these funds.

On the basis of the signed Memoranda of Understanding, funds for Roma employment are transferred to the Federation Employment Institute, the Employment Institute of the RS and the Employment Bureau of the Brcko District, which are obliged to spend them on employment / self-employment of Roma.

Based on the Memoranda, every year the Institutes issue a public call for the selection of beneficiaries of Roma employment and self-employment projects. The beneficiaries are selected by commissions appointed by the Institutes which also includes representatives of the Roma.

In 2014, BAM 500.000, which were transferred from the grant funds to employment institutes at the end of the year, have been allocated for Roma employment. In early 2015 the Institutes started the competition procedure by announcing public calls and the competitions are expected to be completed in near future.

In 2014, delays occurred due to natural disasters and in general it was difficult to spend these funds as envisaged and new models, i.e. employment programs linked with the housing programs in municipalities where these programs were implemented, were proposed in the spending methodology for these funds. Accordingly, the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina issued a conclusion that, in order to sustain projects of Roma employment, an integrated approach to social employment of Roma needs to be taken in the coming period and new models should be created so that available grants can be channelled



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directly through municipalities or municipal Employment Offices at programs supported by local communities.

4. HOUSING

The Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted the Revised Action Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina for Addressing Roma Issues in the Field of Employment, Housing and Healthcare in December 2013, which was implemented in 2014. The aim of Revised Action Plan was realistic planning of activities and the budget and establishing better indicators in order to be able to evaluate results.

As we reported in previous reports, the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina decided to plan in the state budget EUR 1,500,000 for Roma issues, each year. Out of the amount, EUR 1,000,000 was allocated for Roma housing each year. The same amount was planned and allocated to implementing partners for Roma housing projects in 2014.

Based on the planned budget, the Ministry announced Public Call for submitting Roma housing projects each year and it was also done in 2014. The Public Call lasted for a month, after that Commission on selection of the projects checked all locations from the submitted projects and based on confirmed priorities in the field, the Commission recommended 24 projects to be funded by the budget funds of 2014. Implementation of the projects has been continued in 2015.

Municipalities, cities, entities, local and international organizations, institutions and donors and Roma NGOs could submit their applications. All projects were based on co-funding by implementing partners and in this way available budget funds could be doubled.

Priority was given to construction of Roma houses, reconstruction and improvement of living conditions and infrastructure.

The following criteria were applied:

- the funds were used for the most vulnerable Roma families that could confirm ownership or for Roma homeless if municipalities allocated plots (like in Zenica, Bihac, Mostar etc.),
- co-funding was crucial in decision making process,
- attention was paid to number of housing units and costs per Roma housing units in the project selection,
- infrastructure connections were obligatory (in some locations, reconstruction of electricity network or other infrastructure was required and the process was delayed),
- Roma representatives at the local level were included in the Commissions for selection of beneficiaries.



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When a project was approved, the Commission for selection of beneficiaries, consisting of a representative of the Municipality, the Social Welfare Centre and the implementing partner (if it is not the municipality) each and Roma representatives, selects the most vulnerable Roma families as beneficiaries of the projects. The Ministry representatives were observers of the process of selection.

The implementation of 24 housing projects has been continued in 2015 and they will be finished until December 2015.

OVERALL RESULTS UNTIL JANUARY 2015:

- A total amount of invested budget funds, donations and co-financed funds by implementing partners from 2009-2014 was about **EUR 12.000.000**
- Housing projects were implemented in 60 municipalities or locations,
- A **TOTAL OF 740 housing units were constructed or reconstructed**, including 150 housing units from IPA funds. Construction and reconstruction of some housing units is still in progress.
- **A TOTAL of more than 1000 Roma families were beneficiaries of infrastructure projects.**

The Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina applies for IPA funds on regular basis. In 2012, 5 million EUR were approved. The first phase in the amount of 2.5 million EUR was implemented mainly in 2014 and in 2015 the second phase will begin. About 80% will be invested in Roma housing.

More and more municipalities have decided to allocate a plot for the construction of social housing units for Roma families, bearing in mind that Roma are homeless and their housing situation is the worst. Examples of good practice in providing housing for homeless Roma families, i.e. social housing are found in Zenica, Bihać, Mostar, Teslić, Bugojno, Zavidovići etc.

The Ministry is constantly monitoring the situation in the field and improving the methodology based on lessons learned and previous experience.

5. HEALTH CARE

The implementation of the Revised Action Plan for Roma Health Care (the end of 2013) was continued in 2014. The Revised Action Plan contains priorities in line with the needs expressed by the representatives of Roma and all other relevant participants in the review process. Access to and coverage with health care as a top priority and training and prevention in this area are the backbone of the new Revised Action Plan in the part respecting health care. Its implementation will enable equality, improve the overall health situation of the Roma



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through access to health care, enable obtaining important baseline data on specific diseases and achieve a higher level of awareness of health care and the right to health care.

In 2014, the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina continued allocating certain financial resources as an incentive to competent medical institutions to carry out certain actions to improve access to and provide better health care for Roma minority in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The earmarked funds for Roma health care in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2014 were spent by relevant institutions on the basis of signed Memoranda of Understanding for the implementation of the Action Plan for Roma Health Care of BiH signed between the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Public Health Institute of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Public Health Institute of the Republika Srpska and Brcko District Government, the Department of Health and Other Services of the Brcko District of BiH.

In 2014 the Memoranda of Understanding stipulate spending of the amount of BAM 187.000 KM (Federation of BiH: BAM 117,174.20, Republika Srpska: BAM 58,605.80 and Brčko District of BiH: BAM 11,220.00) that should be used for the implementation: in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, for strategic objective Improving Health Care for the Roma Minority within Program 1. Ensuring Access to Health Care and Program 2. Prevention and Education; in the Republika Srpska, for strategic goal Improving Health Care of the Roma Minority within Program 2. Prevention and Education; in the Brcko District of BiH, for strategic objective Improving Health Care for the Roma Minority within Program 2. Prevention and Education.

These 2014 Memoranda are being implemented. The 2014 Memoranda were signed in late 2014 (due to a delay in adoption of the budget by the Council of Ministers in 2014). The deadline for submission of financial and narrative reports under the Memoranda is 30 June 2015.

The Memoranda are being implemented in the Republika Srpska, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Brcko District.

Most of the specific activities envisaged for 2014 are implemented in the field, in local Roma communities for the promotion and improvement of health care for Roma in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In 2014 significant results were achieved in the implementation of the Action Plan for Roma Health Care of Bosnia and Herzegovina with funds allocated for 2013.

A particularly significant progress was made in the inclusion of many Roma families into the mainstream health care system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, raising awareness about the importance of health care of the Roma minority, prevention of addictions, immunization of



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Roma children, oral health, reproductive health and maternity care, in training of Roma civil society in local communities in health care.

6. ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AND GENDER EQUALITY

All the measures listed above have been taken in order to reduce poverty and social exclusion of the Roma population. Regular budget planning and implementation of the Action Plan for Solving Problems of Roma in four areas lead to the elimination of discrimination and inequality in society. Obviously, it is necessary to proceed with faster implementation of the above-mentioned measures.

A separate department for the elimination of all forms of discrimination operates within the Institution of the Ombudsman.

The Law on Gender Equality, which was passed in 2003, is the most important tool for raising awareness on gender issues.

A lot of implementing partners and international organizations in BiH are implementing projects related to the prevention and elimination of violence, equal inclusion of Roma women, economic empowerment etc. The network of Roma women is very active in Bosnia and Herzegovina and actively participate in programs to improve the situation of Roma women. 17 Roma women have undergone training of the Council of Europe within ROMED program.

7. A VIEW OF THE DECADE

Bosnia and Herzegovina joined the Decade in 2008 and the first activities began in 2009. The 2005-2015 Decade of Roma Inclusion has achieved good results in BiH in the following segments:

- regular planning of funds for Roma issues has been introduced in the state budget,
- progress has been made in almost all areas, especially in Roma housing,
- the exchange of experiences and best practices among the member countries of the Decade have been positively assessed,
- cooperation with local authorities with a view to solving Roma issues has been intensified,
- cooperation with Roma NGOs has been enhanced and their participation in the regular activities of all levels of government for faster inclusion of Roma in society has been increased.



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The Decade has initiated the process of solving Roma issues, but the results could have been even better in the following:

- allocation of greater financial resources at all levels,
- faster resolution of economic independence of the Roma through an integrated approach to housing and employment etc.