

DecadeWatch

Roma Activists
Assess the Progress
of the Decade of
Roma Inclusion

2005–2006



DECADE
WATCH

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Publication coordinated by Andy Hauptert
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Design and layout Judit Kovacs, Createch Ltd.
Printed in Hungary by Createch Ltd.
2007

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DecadeWatch is supported by the Open Society Institute and the World Bank.

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Overview

DecadeWatch—Background

The Decade of Roma Inclusion

In February 2005, heads of governments from Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia launched the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015 by signing the following declaration:

“Building on the momentum of the 2003 conference, ‘Roma in an Expanding Europe: Challenges for the Future,’ we pledge that our governments will work toward eliminating discrimination and closing the unacceptable gaps between Roma and the rest of society, as identified in our Decade Action Plans. We declare the years 2005–2015 to be the Decade of Roma Inclusion, and we commit to support the full participation and involvement of national Roma communities in achieving the Decade’s objectives and to demonstrate progress by measuring outcomes and reviewing experiences in the implementation of the Decade’s Action Plans. We invite other states to join our effort.”

In addition, all countries drafted Decade Action Plans in the priority areas of education, employment, health and housing and created institutional arrangements for implementing the Decade commitments. The Decade promoted the participation of Roma civil society in drafting action plans and their implementation, including in monitoring implementation.

DecadeWatch

Building on the principle of Roma participation in the Decade, DecadeWatch is an initiative of a group of Roma activists and researchers to assess progress under the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015 since its launch in February 2005. DecadeWatch is supported by the Open Society Institute and the World Bank. This support included training and mentoring the research teams, as well as developing the methodology for, providing editorial support to and printing this series of reports.

Methodology and Process

These reports were prepared by Roma activists from Roma civic alliances—Roma NGO networks—in most of the countries, while in the case of Croatia and Montenegro the reporting was conducted jointly by mainstream NGOs and Roma activists. The reporting period for this first round of DecadeWatch is 2005–2006, and the information presented is based on research conducted between autumn 2006 and early 2007. While the focus is on developments in 2005 and 2006, the analysis also often comprises measures and policies that had been introduced before the launch of the Decade and remain in place. The members of the DecadeWatch team also reflected their own experience, often spanning many years, in reviewing policies for Roma in their countries.

The research involved the review of documents—policies, legislation, and independent reports and surveys—as well as interviews with officials and civil society. The research followed a detailed questionnaire that collects information about critical inputs necessary to make the Decade a success:

- availability and quality of *action plans* with indicators and targets and associated tracking and reporting mechanisms;
- *institutional arrangements* for Decade implementation, including Roma participation; and
- *government measures* in the four priority areas of education, employment, health and housing, including on data availability and collection as well as the availability of EU-compatible anti-discrimination legislation.

DecadeWatch is the result of a team effort and a process of intensive and frequent interaction. As a first step, the entire team came together for a briefing and methodology development workshop in September 2006. In the following months, each country team conducted its research and prepared a detailed background report to present its findings. All reports were then edited into shorter, approximately 10-page country chapters following a standardized comparative structure. The shorter country chapters were shared with the governments' Decade coordination offices for comments and they reflect the feedback received from each government. The final report, including country chapters, the overall messages and the scoring of country performance, was discussed at an editorial team meeting in Budapest in April 2007. The overview chapter of this report summarizes that discussion and was prepared by a sub-group of the DecadeWatch team. The scoring included a review of every indicator and a joint comparison by the entire team of country performance across each indicator, based on the information from the country reports. Country teams were asked to propose a scoring, which was then subject to discussion by the entire team.

DecadeWatch aims to compare countries' performance across a host of indicators—to track progress and to identify the areas where each country can benefit from the experience of another. For this purpose, DecadeWatch has developed a scoring mechanism with scores between 0 and 4. The top score is 4, awarded to best practice performance, while 0 measures no government input. The intermediate scores differentiate between the various degrees of government involvement in putting Roma inclusion policies in place. It is worth noting that the score of 4 is not necessarily four times better than 1—but that 4 reflects the standard of what is achievable. The difference between 0 and 1—reflecting the difference between no action and some initial steps—is more relevant, in particular at the start of the Decade, than the difference between 3 and 4, which captures the difference between an advanced government program and an integrated, comprehensive policy.

Table 1: Defining DecadeWatch Scores

SCORE	SUMMARY DEFINITIONS
0	No action by the government
1	Sporadic measures, initial steps taken, but not regular and systematic action
2	Regular measures, but not systematic or amounting to a programmatic approach
3	Government program, advanced action, but not integrated policy
4	Integrated policy, setting the standard for government action and ownership

The DecadeWatch scores present a simple average across the indicators—without a weighting of individual indicators. Where countries had the same scores, they were ranked the same. Attaching different weights could result in minor changes to the overall ranking of countries, but would not change the country groupings as listed in the report. The detailed DecadeWatch scorecard methodology is presented at the end of the overview chapter.

DecadeWatch is a first contribution to measuring progress under the Decade, and the DecadeWatch team recognizes the limitations of its methodology. First, DecadeWatch deliberately only captures whether there are government measures in place. Owing to outcome data limitations—there is little, if any, disaggregated, nationally representative and regularly collected data on Roma in any country reviewed—it does not analyze whether these measures are having an effect yet. That said, DecadeWatch argues that measuring outcomes, e.g., in terms of increased enrolment and attendance rates for Roma children, after the first two years of Decade implementation may be premature, as many of the policies are expected to have a long- to medium-term, rather than a short-term, impact. Getting an assessment of whether measures are in place or not may be sufficient as a first stocktaking after two years, but for the longer term DecadeWatch argues strongly for the collection of disaggregated data on Roma to allow for outcome monitoring in the future.

A second limitation lies in the fact that the choice of indicators could be subject to debate. However, DecadeWatch has chosen a set of indicators that are deemed critical to the Decade's success in achieving its aims: DecadeWatch argues that success

in Decade implementation relies on the availability and quality of action plans, on the right institutional framework, on the policies put in place by governments in the four priority areas, and on how systematically these policies are designed and implemented.

Third, DecadeWatch recognizes that countries are different in their size, in the size of their Roma populations, and in their economic and policy-making capacities. By defining the score 4, DecadeWatch attempts to define the best achievable performance against which each country can measure its own action on any given indicator against best practices. Moreover, there are gaps in every country. By identifying such gaps in one country compared to another, DecadeWatch highlights the areas for further progress in any given country.

This is just the first step. The DecadeWatch team will work—together with governments and partner agencies and institutions of the Decade—to further develop this methodology and make a contribution to establishing mechanisms to measure the Decade's success. The Decade of Roma Inclusion, an unprecedented initiative to promote inclusion of Roma, deserves an effective monitoring mechanism.

DecadeWatch—A Progress Assessment for the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015 by Roma Activists

What Is DecadeWatch?

DecadeWatch is the first assessment of government action on implementing the commitments expressed under the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015. It is a contribution by Roma activists to making the Decade a success. Since the Decade aims at giving Roma a voice in the process of inclusion, this assessment has been **conducted by coalitions of Roma NGOs and activists from all countries participating in the Decade**. This first round of DecadeWatch reviews the period from the launch of the Decade in early 2005 until the end of 2006.

The first DecadeWatch report assesses government action, not the changed situation for Roma on the ground. Given the absence of consistent and systematic outcome indicators and data, this first exercise focuses only on inputs: What have governments done since the launch of the Decade? DecadeWatch summarizes a range of indicators measuring (i) the existence and quality of Decade Action Plans including the availability of data to report on progress, (ii) the institutional arrangements for Decade implementation, and whether measures have been put in place across the four Decade priority areas. **This first round of DecadeWatch does not measure impacts and change in outcomes for the Roma**. Systematic outcome monitoring, in particular monitoring comparable across countries, is currently impossible because of significant data gaps. Moreover, the Decade has just had two years of implementation, and it may be premature to assess outcomes.

DecadeWatch is a progress review of the Decade and a contribution by Roma activists to making the Decade a success...

...which assesses government inputs, not effectiveness of policies for Roma...

...identifies and maps good experience...

In identifying government action across all countries, DecadeWatch country reports aim to **identify good experience** and highlight achievements that countries can learn from. DecadeWatch also includes in its analysis government measures, programs and policies that were introduced before the Decade and continue to exist.

...and makes cross-country comparisons

DecadeWatch is an **attempt to compare government action** across countries and to provide a snapshot of whether and to what extent governments have acted on their Decade promise. It recognizes that countries differ in size—and also in the size of their Roma populations—and level of economic development, and therefore may require differences in scale of effort. However, it is important to get some measure of political will and proactivity as well as to identify good practice and gaps across countries and priority areas.

The last two years have seen notable progress...

This assessment finds **significant progress across all countries, though more in some than in others, and, within countries, more in some areas of action than in others:**

- Overall, *Decade Action Plans and relevant institutions are in place* and activities have been initiated, to various degrees, in all countries. In particular, there are Decade coordination offices in all countries; these offices have built up important experience over the last two years.
- The Decade has become the *framework for discussing Roma inclusion both for the governments and for Roma civil society* in all participating countries, although Decade Action Plans have largely not been understood by governments as policy implementation tools.
- Since the launch of the Decade in February 2005, Romania and then Bulgaria have taken over the *Decade Presidency* from Hungary. Most countries have been consistently represented at the Decade's International Steering Committee meetings. With the exception of Montenegro and Serbia, all countries have contributed to the Decade Trust Fund, which finances joint technical assistance and capacity building in support of Decade implementation.
- The Decade process aims at *giving Roma a voice* in the countries' efforts at promoting inclusion, and Roma report that they are being heard more than before the launch of the Decade.

...often in the form of sporadic measures that have not yet developed into systemic Roma inclusion policies...

However, despite some progress, the Decade has not reached the critical point that would guarantee success. **Most governments think about Roma inclusion in terms of projects and sporadic measures but not in terms of programs or integrated policies.** While Decade Action Plans have been adopted in most countries, they do not appear to inform government decision-making and policy planning as much as they could. The institutional home of Decade coordination in many countries is often insufficiently integrated with policy directorates in line ministries and lacks

real agenda-setting and implementation power and capacity. Lastly, governments increasingly mention the Decade in the context of their action on Roma inclusion, but could do more to use the Decade and the action plans as a vehicle to systematically report on progress.

So far, the perhaps biggest gap in Decade implementation has been **the lack of data on Roma—covering education, employment, health and housing**. Data collection is sparse, irregular and not nationally representative. Many countries collect data on the ethnicity of individuals enrolled in programs or recipients of services, e.g., employment services. That allows tracking absolute numbers of individuals covered, but does not allow relating it to the entire population. It is, therefore, only of limited use. As a result of past survey work supported by international partners such as the World Bank, the Open Society Institute, UNDP and UNICEF, much more is known now about the exclusion of Roma across countries than a few years ago. However, what is lacking two years into the Decade is systematic and regular data collection to allow tracking of progress on Roma inclusion over time. Nationally representative surveys should deliver such information. Only the systematic and regular collection of disaggregated and nationally representative data will allow governments to report on the outcomes of their efforts under the Decade in 2015. The Czech government stands out among its peers for admitting current limitations and for committing to developing a monitoring and reporting framework by the end of 2007.

Looking Ahead: The Decade Agenda for Governments for 2008–2009

The lack of systematic data collection and the failure to identify a credible reporting system on outcomes under the Decade suggest the urgent need to **set binding outcome targets for 2015**. The DecadeWatch team will work with governments and partners to identify and propose a set of indicators and targets covering the priority areas under the Decade.

This progress assessment shows that, while certain government inputs are in place, the Decade agenda has not yet been consistently and systematically translated into actions on the ground. The connection between the Prime Ministers' commitment and the delivery responsibility of line central ministries and the local level needs to be strengthened. It is **essential that the Decade be embedded in what local governments as well as local branches of line ministries do**. While national governments carry the prime accountability for progress under the Decade, they need to **involve municipalities in the Decade and decentralize to the local level their political commitment** expressed in the Decade pledge. In most countries municipalities are the key education, health and employment service providers, and need to lead the outreach and communication with the Roma communities. Unless there is recognition of the special role and responsibility of municipalities in delivering the outcomes under the Decade, the process will fail.

...and reporting on their impact
Roma inclusion will only become possible if governments generate nationally representative disaggregated data on the situation of Roma

Set targets for 2015...

...decentralize the Decade...

...adopt two-year operational plans...

This assessment finds that the Decade Action Plans in most countries remain under-utilized as documents that inform policymaking and government action. Some countries, however, have developed short-term operational plans. In the interest of supporting concrete action, it is important that this practice be used across all Decade countries. **Governments are thus advised to approve, as a next step, two-year operational plans backed up with concrete financing and credible implementation commitment and capacity.**

...strengthen the Decade coordination offices and build on their experience...

The Decade coordination offices in all countries have developed substantial experience in the last two years and have been the main beneficiaries of the international dimension of the Decade. Through International Steering Committee meetings and other Decade workshops and activities, they have built contacts across countries that have promoted the exchange of good practices. It is important that **the experience of Decade coordination offices be utilized at the domestic level and in coordination with the line ministries.**

...move from projects to policy change...

Government action too often is limited to sporadic measures, often financed or co-financed by international partners. Only the front-runners in the Decade have begun tackling the Decade challenge by developing programs or even integrated policies. It is important that **all countries move away from a fragmented project approach to developing systematic policies.** At the same time, **governments need to do more to make their programs and policies effective tools for Roma inclusion.** The success of such policies largely relates to the degree Roma themselves are involved in advising on their design and implementation, in particular where programs cater to the population at large and do not have specific Roma targeting. Governments also need to ensure that results under the Decade become visible for Roma and non-Roma populations to show that the process is real.

...make use of EU accession and integration...

The Decade is a pan-European initiative to foster the integration of the Roma—the largest minority in Europe—and *the* vehicle for a European solution to the challenge of Roma exclusion. **Countries should place their Decade commitments into the process of European accession and integration and use available mechanisms.** This relates first of all to the use of EU Structural and Pre-Accession Funds for Roma integration, but also implies the effective partnering with (other) EU Member States, the European Commission and other EU institutions in developing policies for Roma inclusion.

...and show political leadership

Being seen as promoting Roma inclusion often appears to be perceived by governments as a potential electoral liability. It is important that this attitude make way for bolder political leadership on inclusion and equal opportunities, and for innovative ways to change public opinion. **Governments should present the Decade agenda as what it is—an investment in the national interest** and into the future prosperity of society as a whole within a wider European and world economy. It is worth recognizing that in most Decade countries governments have changed since the launch, and some countries have been more successful than others in keeping the momentum. Yet the strength of the Decade is its long-term nature that lasts beyond individual government terms.

Comparative Country Performance

The comparative progress assessment reveals that, while there is progress across all countries, it is uneven, and no country performs consistently well across all indicators. This suggests that, despite the fact that some countries are ahead of others in their efforts to implement the Decade, there is room for all Decade countries to learn from one another.

The differences in performance as measured in this report relate mainly to the varying degrees of government ownership and government effort to move from sporadic measures, often co-financed by donors, to systematic policies backed up by budgetary resources. The DecadeWatch progress assessment finds that countries fall into five groups:

1. **Hungary** is the most advanced country participating in the Decade. Its overall score is lowered only by the fact that by the end of 2006 it had not yet approved a long-term action plan for the Decade. However, Hungary is the most advanced on implementation progress across most of the priority areas.
2. Following at a substantial distance from Hungary is the main group consisting of **Bulgaria, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Romania and Croatia**. Their scores are very similar, and the five countries show mixed performances with examples of both systematic and limited government action across the priorities.
3. **Macedonia and Serbia** lag slightly behind mainly because of their reliance on donor-financed measures as opposed to the governments' own leadership in implementing the Decade.
4. **Montenegro** remains in a pre-Decade stage of commitment and action.

Table 2: Comparative Performance

RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE
1	Hungary	2.29
2	Bulgaria	1.84
3	Slovakia	1.82
4	Czech Republic	1.76
5	Romania	1.72
6	Croatia	1.70
7	Macedonia	1.37
8	Serbia	1.24
9	Montenegro	0.63

Note: Scores presented in this table are averaged across all indicators. Scores vary from 0 (lowest) to 4 (highest).

No country performs consistently well across all areas...

...and differences are explained by the degree to which governments have rolled out systematic policies

The DecadeWatch methodology has limitations...

...but is based on indicators that capture necessary inputs to make the Decade a success

It is obvious that any **assessment of progress based only on the review of whether governments have put measures in place has limitations**, as by definition it does not capture whether these measures are having an effect. A further limitation lies in the fact that the choice of indicators can be subject to debate. However, DecadeWatch has chosen a set of indicators that are key to the Decade's success in achieving its aims.

DecadeWatch argues that success in Decade implementation relies both on the right institutional framework and on the policies put in place by governments in the four priority areas. The ranking presented in Table 2 is, therefore, based on a range of indicators covering:

- availability of *action plans* with indicators and targets and associated tracking and reporting mechanisms;
- *institutional arrangements* for Decade implementation; and
- *government measures* across the four priority areas of education, employment, health and housing, including on data availability and collection, as well as the availability of EU-compatible anti-discrimination legislation.

The top score is 4, awarded to best practice performance, while 0 measures no government input. As Table 3 explains, the intermediate scores differentiate between the various degrees of government involvement. It is worth noting that the score of 4 is not necessarily 4 times better than 1—but that 4 reflects the standard of what is achievable. The difference between 0 and 1 is therefore more relevant than the difference between 3 and 4.

Table 3: Defining DecadeWatch Scores

SCORE	SUMMARY DEFINITIONS
0	No action by the government
1	Sporadic measures, initial steps taken, but not regular and systematic action
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4	Integrated policy, setting the standard for government action and ownership

The DecadeWatch scores present an average across the indicators—without a weighting of individual indicators. Where countries had the same scores, they were ranked the same. Attaching different weights could result in slight changes to the ranking, but would not change the rankings as listed above. The detailed DecadeWatch scorecard methodology is presented at the end of this overview chapter.

The country scoring reveals that, **overall, progress on Decade implementation falls between the scores of 1 and 2—suggesting that sporadic measures and some initial steps dominate, but they do not yet amount to systematic programs or integrated policies.** Most countries show a mixture of strengths and weaknesses. For example, Hungary is more advanced than other countries in terms of putting policies in place across most of the four priority areas, and would be closer to the score of 3—had the government approved a long-term Decade Action Plan before the end of 2006. The same is true for Romania, which is to adopt its Decade Action Plans only in 2007. Macedonia is more advanced than most countries in terms of the institutional arrangements for the Decade and scores high on such indicators, but this has yet to be translated into systematic government action. The following sections explain the ranking by providing an overview across the Decade priority areas and the individual country developments.

The overall picture: a dominance of sporadic measures and initial steps and the challenge to develop them into policies

Summary Findings by Priority Area

Decade Action Plans with clear indicators and targets are a key added value of the Decade, as these action plans typically provide a greater implementation focus than previous national strategies or programs for Roma integration, including by allowing for a clear reporting framework for implementation. If they do not foresee a year-by-year structuring, such plans should be ideally complemented by shorter-term (annual or biannual) priority operational plans for government action. With respect to the Action Plans, DecadeWatch assesses whether countries have adopted Decade Action Plans (1.1 in the scorecard) or short-term operational plans (1.2), whether there is any formal reporting mechanism (1.3), whether the Decade Action Plans include baseline data (1.4) and whether there have been any efforts to develop municipal or regional action plans (1.5).

Action Plans

Table 4: Action Plans

RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5
1	Czech Republic	2.30	3	4	4	1	0
2	Croatia	1.60	2	2	0	2	2
2	Macedonia	1.60	1	4	0	0	3
4	Slovakia	1.30	2	1	2	0	2
5	Serbia	1.20	3	2	0	0	1
6	Bulgaria	1.10	3	1	0	0	2
7	Hungary	0.60	0	0	0	0	3
7	Montenegro	0.60	3	0	0	0	0
9	Romania	0.00	0	0	0	0	0

By the end of 2006, most countries, with the exception of Hungary and Romania, had approved 10-year Decade Action Plans—the quality of which, however, varies. Clear indicators and data sources as well as credible deadlines and targets

have been identified only in a few areas of a few Decade Action Plans and there are therefore doubts as to how effective they are in guiding government policy. In many countries, there is still some confusion as to how the Decade Action Plans relate to earlier national strategies or programs on Roma integration. Often the authorities choose not to use the action plans as they were intended—as plans with targets, timelines and reporting frameworks. At the same time, some countries have translated the broad 10-year plans into priority action or operational plans, in some cases even backed up with financing. Others have worked to engage municipalities in the Decade. With the exception of the *Czech Republic* and *Slovakia*, governments had not yet issued formal and regular public progress reports on Decade implementation by the end of 2006, although *Serbia* issued a progress report in April 2007 and *Croatia* is expected to do so later in 2007.

Good practice: The *Czech* government's annual priority plans backed up with budget allocations and regular reporting on their implementation, *Macedonia's* 2005 operational plan and its outreach work at the municipal level, development of local action plans by municipalities in *Serbia*.

Institutional arrangements for the Decade

The Decade introduced a process of collaboration between governmental bodies and Roma civil society on the drafting of action plans and on the supervision of their implementation, managed by a National Decade Coordinator, as well as international cooperation among the Decade countries. With respect to institutional arrangements for the Decade, DecadeWatch assesses whether there is a National Coordinator (2.1), what is her/his level of seniority (2.2), and whether she/he is assisted by a support office with designated staff (2.3). It also reviews whether there is Roma representation at senior levels of government (2.4) and whether there is a standing formal consultation body involving Roma civil society (2.5). It also assesses whether line ministries have special inclusion and access units (2.6), whether the government has been represented at International Decade Steering Committee meetings (2.7), and whether it has contributed to the Decade Trust Fund (2.8).

Table 5: Institutional

RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.6	2.7	2.8
1	Hungary	3.13	3	3	4	2	2	3	4	4
2	Slovakia	2.94	3	4	3	3	0	3	4	4
3	Macedonia	2.88	3	3	1	3	4	1	4	4
4	Croatia	2.75	3	4	2	0	4	2	3	4
4	Czech Republic	2.75	3	2	2	1	3	3	4	4
6	Bulgaria	2.63	1	2	2	3	3	2	4	4
6	Romania	2.63	3	2	2	3	0	3	4	4
8	Serbia	1.25	1	1	2	0	4	1	1	0
9	Montenegro	0.50	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0

In 2005 all Decade countries appointed national Decade coordinators, often at ministerial level, and the position has remained filled without disruptions since the launch of the Decade in most countries. Only in *Bulgaria*, *Montenegro* and *Serbia* have there been some disruptions. Day-to-day coordination has mostly been delegated to senior government officials who typically head offices with support staff who handle Decade and related issues. The Decade coordination offices have built up substantial experience over the last years and are essential to their countries' Decade implementation capability. However, in some cases there are doubts among Roma activists as to Decade coordination bodies' real power and their ability to effect change by influencing and supporting line ministries in developing and financing policies that will work for Roma inclusion. At the same time, in a few cases line ministries are reported to have designated units focusing on access and inclusion issues with the capacity to develop and implement policy, so far mostly in the ministries in charge of education. Formal consultation bodies involving Roma civil society meet most regularly in *Croatia*, *Macedonia* and *Serbia*, but their influence on ministerial policy-making varies.

Good practice: *Hungary's* and *Slovakia's* Decade coordination office with close links to line ministries, *Macedonia's* process of involving Roma civil society.

In the priority area of education, Decade Watch assesses progress by looking at the availability of data on Roma education (3.1), of measures to support access of Roma children to preschool (3.2), primary and secondary school, (3.3) and tertiary education (3.4), as well as at the availability of desegregation measures (3.5).

Education

Table 6: Education

RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.5
1	Hungary	3.80	3	4	4	4	4
2	Romania	2.40	2	1	3	4	2
3	Serbia	1.80	2	2	2	2	1
4	Bulgaria	1.60	2	2	3	0	1
4	Slovakia	1.60	0	3	3	2	0
6	Croatia	1.40	1	1	3	2	0
7	Montenegro	1.30	2	1	2	0	2
8	Czech Republic	1.00	0	2	3	0	0
9	Macedonia	0.80	1	2	1	0	0

Education is the area where Decade Action Plans are most developed and convincing, and it is also the area where governments have made the most substantial progress in putting measures and policies in place to improve education outcomes for Roma. As opposed to the other priority areas, in education many countries have moved from sporadic measures to some degree of program or policy. The assessment

reveals that the Roma Education Fund has played a key role in advancing the development of policies and programs, through financing or co-financing activities in many countries. Some form of preschool program is in place in every country, mostly in the form of free-of-charge provision or one year of preschool, and sometimes associated with measures that specifically promote access of Roma to kindergarten and/or early childhood programs. All countries pursue, to varying degrees, measures to promote access to primary and secondary education, including teaching assistants. *Croatia, Hungary, Romania* and *Slovakia* also finance or co-finance scholarship programs for Roma students in higher education. However, explicit and implicit access barriers for Roma remain in many countries, and they likely will only be overcome if governments move to integrate and to better coordinate measures, as well as to involve Roma more and more systematically in policy design and service delivery.

There are wide differences in the degree to which governments have acknowledged segregation between Roma and non-Roma children in schools and developed measures or policies to deal with this problem. *Hungary's* example can show the other Decade countries how to move beyond externally financed or co-financed pilot projects towards the strategic development of government policies on desegregation.

Good practice: *Hungary's* wide-ranging and integrated policy framework to advance Roma access to integrated education.

Employment

In the priority area of employment, DecadeWatch assesses progress by looking at the availability of data on Roma employment and unemployment (4.1), measures to promote access of Roma to training and retraining programs (4.2), active employment programs, excluding public works, (4.3) and self-employment programs (4.4).

Table 7: Employment

RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4
1	Hungary	3.00	1	4	4	3
2	Croatia	1.75	1	3	3	0
2	Serbia	1.75	2	2	0	3
2	Slovakia	1.75	0	2	2	3
5	Bulgaria	1.25	2	2	1	0
5	Czech Republic	1.25	2	1	1	1
5	Romania	1.25	2	2	1	0
8	Macedonia	0.75	3	0	0	0
8	Montenegro	0.75	2	1	0	0

The picture on employment measures and policies for Roma varies widely across Decade countries. Hungary is most advanced in having developed a comprehensive

set of employment promotion programs for those excluded from the labor market—policies accessible to and actually designed for Roma. The other countries finance, on a regular or irregular basis, **individual measures, but often not amounting to a program or an integrated policy**. Even with institutions and measures in place, their outreach into Roma communities often remains limited. There is skepticism among Roma activists whether existing mainstream employment and training programs offered through the public employment services work for Roma. And in the absence of adequate data in many countries, it is often difficult to assess the effectiveness of programs that are not specifically targeting Roma. Self-employment programs are in place in *Hungary*, *Serbia* and *Slovakia*, while in many countries employment measures for Roma focus on public works activities. As public works typically are temporary measures not aimed at promoting stable employment, the DecadeWatch scoring methodology does not take such measures into account.

Good practice: *Hungary's* employment and training programs, *Slovakia's* and *Serbia's* self-employment programs, *Macedonia's* employment data collection.

In the priority area of health, DecadeWatch assesses progress by looking at the availability of data on Roma health (5.1), the existence of measures to provide access to healthcare for Roma (5.2, e.g., mechanisms of health protection for the un-insured), of special health programs for Roma (5.3, e.g., information outreach and health awareness programs or vaccination programs), and of Roma health mediators (5.4).

Health

Table 8: Health

RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.4
1	Romania	2.75	3	1	3	4
2	Bulgaria	1.50	2	2	1	1
3	Serbia	1.25	2	1	2	0
4	Slovakia	1.00	0	2	1	1
4	Hungary	1.00	1	1	1	1
4	Montenegro	1.00	1	1	2	0
7	Czech Republic	0.75	1	0	1	1
8	Croatia	0.50	1	0	1	0
8	Macedonia	0.50	0	1	1	0

Progress on providing access to quality healthcare for Roma is less advanced than on education, with most countries relying on sporadic and externally co-financed measures. *Romania* stands out due to its systematic scaling up of the Roma health mediators program. Some countries have free access to a minimum healthcare package, including for the uninsured. In the case of *Slovakia*, there is the legal possibility for promoting Roma access to health insurance, but there is anecdotal evidence that

in practice access barriers remain. This is particularly true in cases when Roma do not have all the necessary citizenship and residency papers, which is observed most notably in former Yugoslav countries and among the displaced and refugee Roma population. Community outreach is often not yet pursued as a formal program. The Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria is becoming an important tool for Roma health: Often vaccination and prevention campaigns have been conducted as a result of Global Fund programs with a Roma component.

Good practice: The systematic scaling-up of health mediators as well as health awareness and outreach programs in *Romania*.

Housing

In the priority area of housing, DecadeWatch assesses progress by looking at the availability of data on Roma housing (6.1), of measures to overcome non-registration and illegal settlements (6.2), of access to communal services (6.3), and of access to quality social housing (6.4).

Table 9: Housing

RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE	6.1	6.2	6.3	6.4
1	Hungary	1.75	1	3	2	1
2	Croatia	1.50	2	2	1	1
3	Bulgaria	1.25	2	1	1	1
3	Slovakia	1.25	2	0	3	0
5	Czech Republic	1.00	1	1	1	1
6	Romania	0.75	2	0	1	0
7	Macedonia	0.50	0	1	1	0
7	Montenegro	0.50	1	0	0	1
7	Serbia	0.50	2	0	0	0

Countries participating in the Decade pursue widely different approaches to improving the housing situation for Roma. *Slovakia*, for example, has introduced a housing program that risks retaining and deepening segregation, for example by constructing “houses to a lower standard” in segregated settlements. In contrast, *Hungary* has been trying to approach the housing challenge in a wider context by linking housing and infrastructure improvements to employment programs for Roma. *Croatia* has developed systematic physical mapping of Roma settlements and has begun legalization. With the exception of *Hungary*, countries rely on sporadic and/or externally co-financed measures. Illegal housing and unresolved ownership patterns, as well as the lack of residential registration and citizenship documents remain towering obstacles to improving the housing situation for Roma in most countries. In *Serbia*, for example, select individual municipalities have taken issues into their own hands, while central authorities have yet to find a solution for Roma without citizenship and residency papers.

Good practice: *Hungary's* housing and social integration program, systematic physical mapping of settlements in *Croatia*, *Bulgaria's* housing action plan.

DecadeWatch also assesses the availability of anti-discrimination legislation across Decade countries (7.1). Unsurprisingly, the **effort to improve and adopt EU-compatible anti-discrimination legislation is most advanced in those countries that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007**. Candidate countries are trailing behind. There are also wide differences in the extent to which anti-discrimination legislation has been used for Roma, with most cases in the areas of access to employment and access to public accommodations.

Anti-discrimination legislation

Table 10: Anti-discrimination

RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE
1	Hungary	4.00
2	Bulgaria	3.50
2	Romania	3.50
4	Slovakia	2.00
5	Croatia	1.00
5	Czech Republic	1.00
5	Serbia	1.00
8	Macedonia	0.00
8	Montenegro	0.00

Good practice: *Hungary's*, *Bulgaria's* and *Romania's* anti-discrimination laws.

For reasons of scope, this first volume of DecadeWatch did not assess government activities on gender, as well as specific government activities on poverty reduction and the other cross-cutting agendas under the Decade, but there are plans to do so in the next round.

Country Summaries

BULGARIA

Bulgaria's challenge:
Use the Decade as a policy
instrument and commitment
as well as a reporting framework

Bulgaria has twice received substantial international attention—as host of the Decade launch in February 2005 and when it took over the Presidency from Romania in 2006. However, the **Decade as a domestic policy instrument remains underutilized across all line ministries**. While a substantial number of measures adopted in recent years promote the Roma inclusion agenda, they often do not follow the systematic approach intended for the Decade. Bulgaria's challenge in implementation is to use the Decade as a tool to develop integrated policies, and to effectively mainstream Roma inclusion in public policy, including by using European Structural Funds.

Action plans

Bulgaria has **detailed Decade Action Plans that are not effectively used by policy-makers as a commitment and reporting tool** for supporting Bulgaria's social inclusion agenda. Relevant national strategic documents often make reference to the Decade, but not to the details of the action plan. The recent national education strategy does not make any reference to the Decade Action Plan. Bulgaria also has not adopted priority action plans or short-term operational plans, with the exception of a comprehensive housing program that mentions the Decade commitment.

Education

Bulgaria has a range of measures in place that can help improve educational outcomes for Roma, but they do not yet amount to a comprehensive and integrated policy. The Ministry of Education has established a Center for Educational Integration, although with some delay, which resulted in the loss of budgetary resources for Roma education. While mainstream education programs could be utilized in the interest of Roma education, such opportunities sometimes go lost: For example, school buses provided through a nationwide Ministry of Education program are not known to have been used to assist desegregation. Bulgaria has a compulsory year of preschool, but anecdotal evidence suggests that it often remains not implemented for Roma, and there are no specific government-financed measures that would promote access of Roma to preschool. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Labor has become active in promoting access to education by supporting training for Roma teaching assistants, adult literacy programs and free school breakfasts. The receipt of the child allowance benefit is tied to school attendance, and its monitoring and enforcement has recently been tightened. There is no government policy on desegregation, and any efforts in this direction remain externally financed and of a pilot nature. However, Bulgaria's 2006 National Report on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion mentions education desegregation as a goal and sets concrete targets for 2008. As yet, there are also no government programs aimed at promoting access of Roma to higher education.

Over the past two years, the Ministry of Labor has **implemented a series of employment programs involving Roma, although the programs were not necessarily conceived or tailored for Roma.** Specific pilot programs were funded by EU PHARE, while the larger mainstream programs remain funded from the state budget. A notable exception to mainstream programs is a targeted literacy program for Roma that was introduced in 2006. But these activities have yet to solidify into a coherent policy tailored to the specific situation of the Roma community.

Employment

So far, **Bulgaria's approach to Roma health has consisted largely of sporadic measures, although important recent policy changes may have a positive impact on Roma health.** Based on the results of a 2003 EU PHARE-financed study, the Ministry of Health has developed 15 pilot programs aimed at providing training to healthcare professionals working with Roma and setting up informal Roma mediators to facilitate communication between Roma communities and healthcare institutions. With the support of the Open Society Institute, 87 health mediators have been trained in recent years, although health mediators are not yet incorporated into the Bulgarian health system. It is expected that in 2007 at least 60 of the trained mediators will be permanently employed by local municipalities through a subsidy provided by the Ministry of Finance. Moreover, in 2005, the Ministry of Labor established a budget line to finance health expenditures for marginalized individuals without health insurance. Access to this financing is limited to uninsured people and subject to a strict means test. The Ministry of Health has also enacted a number of national programs targeted to disadvantaged groups, including Roma, such as a program for HIV-infection prevention and AIDS control, funded by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis.

Health

The Bulgarian government adopted a National Program for Roma in 2006, which is a result of a joint effort of experts from various ministries and agencies and civil society. Covering the same time span as the Decade, the **National Program for Roma calls for investing in infrastructure developments in Roma neighborhoods, finding alternative locations for some settlements, building new low-income housing from the state budget, and changing the spatial development of segregated Roma areas.** The program envisages clear measures, indicators and budget lines, as well as a solid financial commitment from the state budget. Forty percent of the program is to be funded by the state. However, there is as yet little evidence on implementation and actual budgeting.

Housing

In 2003, **Bulgaria adopted a comprehensive anti-discrimination law based on EU directives in the field.** The law offers extensive protections against discrimination on a wide array of grounds, and allows victims to use regular courts as well as an equality body, called the Anti-Discrimination Commission, to seek remedies. The Anti-Discrimination Commission, set up in 2005, has yet to begin working as an effective equality body.

Anti-discrimination legislation

Bulgaria's comprehensive and EU-compatible Anti-discrimination Law and measures to promote access to general primary education.

Key achievement

CROATIA

Croatia's challenge:
Develop sporadic measures
into systemic social inclusion
policies for Roma

Although Croatia only has a small Roma minority, it **recognizes the Decade as an instrument to promote Roma inclusion**. The authorities have introduced a range of measures, predominantly in education. These measures are often sporadic—which explains Croatia's relatively lower score compared to its peers in Central Europe—and the next step is to integrate them into more systemic and interlinked policies. Croatia has the institutional and policy-making capacities as well as financial resources needed to turn sporadic measures into systemic solutions and make a leap towards effective Roma integration.

Action Plans

The government has approved Decade Action Plans in all four priority areas. Being rather limited in scope, the **action plans perform some guiding function in implementation and reporting**, notably in the case of the Croatian Employment Bureau, which reports on some actions in the frame of the Decade Action Plan. The authorities approved an annual plan with priority measures for 2005, which was, however, little more than a copy-paste version of the long-term plan. Overall the government has not yet publicly reported on the Decade, although a comprehensive report is expected to be published later in 2007.

Education

Croatia has a **range of measures in place that aim at ensuring access to quality education for Roma children, but not yet an integrated policy**. For instance, Croatia has a free preparatory program of approximately 250 hours as part of its preschool education system with a warm meal a day and some transportation. However, only a relatively small number of Roma children participate in it and it is substantially shorter than similar programs in other countries, which typically last one year. In addition, some Roma minority education preschools receive government, Roma Education Fund and Open Society Institute funding. While there is no detailed strategy to prevent drop-outs, the government has announced a free textbook program for all children in primary education beginning with the 2006-2007 school year. Funding for transportation and school transfers is also available. In addition, the Ministry of Education finances Roma teaching assistants, although there is neither a legal framework for their work nor specific training, and they are consequently employed only for short-term one-year contracts. Affirmative action measures in secondary schools include preferential scoring upon admission and more intensive vocational guidance for Roma. However, the Croatian authorities have yet to act to overcome educational segregation, which has been reported in a number of cases. Lastly, the Ministry of Education provides scholarships for Roma as well as free accommodation in dormitories in secondary and higher education.

Employment

Key elements of Croatia's Decade Action Plan have been translated into coherent and well elaborated measures including activities of vocational training, subsidized employment and short-term public works. The Croatian Employment Bureau regularly reports about the number of users of these measures. However, while the planned number of beneficiaries was originally set very low, the number of persons actually served was even smaller, indicating problems with outreach among Roma. There is a complex set of regular activities of the employment services that are

obviously open for Roma as well, but it is not clear whether any specific adjustment in service delivery and outreach are being made to make these mainstream activities work for Roma.

Croatia does not have a systematic policy to deal with the challenges of improving the health status among the Roma population, particularly those residing in compact settlements. Activities, if any, remain at the level of sporadic measures. For example, there is no policy to promote access to healthcare for those without health insurance. Most of the activities undertaken to improve the health situation of Roma to date consist of locally conducted surveys and studies, as well as information drives in particular localities. There have been immunization efforts in some areas with higher Roma populations and in Roma settlements. There is no system of health mediators yet.

The Croatian authorities have made notable progress regarding the legalization of settlements. According to the Office of National Minorities, nine out of 13 settlements in Medimurje County have been legalized. Moreover, a total of 12 counties (out of the 14 that were required to do so) have developed plans for improving conditions in Roma communities, which include spatial mappings, detailed financing estimates and potential sources of funding. The Ministry of Environment has been co-financing the development plans for Roma settlements. Some measures to improve the housing situation of Roma are already in place: For instance, an EU PHARE program co-funded and administered by the government in 2005 and 2006 invested in the infrastructure reconstruction of settlements in Medimurje County. No social housing measures are in place for Roma.

Amendments to Croatian labor law introduced in 2004 included some anti-discrimination protections in line with the European Union standards on employment, but a **comprehensive anti-discrimination law that would protect against racial discrimination in all sectoral areas has yet to be adopted in Croatia.** An anti-discrimination strategy has been in the works since 2004, but, as of this writing, the document had not been adopted by the government.

The systematic physical mapping of settlements in 12 counties and the legalization of settlements in Medimurje County.

Health

Housing

Anti-discrimination legislation

Key achievement

CZECH REPUBLIC

The Czech Republic's challenge:
Develop sporadic measures
into systematic Roma inclusion
policies

The Czech Republic has created an advanced strategic framework for Roma inclusion, through the Decade Action Plans and other documents. The Czech government has been developing and reporting on annual action plans that spell out its Roma inclusion measures. However, its relatively weak performance in comparison to its peers is explained by the fact that the Czech Republic has not been utilizing its mechanisms for systematic action. With some exceptions in education, government action has so far been limited to sporadic measures. As a next step, the Czech government should **develop sporadic measures into systemic Roma inclusion policies across the four priority areas**, including by using European Structural Funds that have already been successfully accessed for Roma inclusion measures.

Action Plans

The Czech Decade Action Plan is based on an earlier government Concept for Roma Integration in the Czech Republic from 2000. It enumerates a series of general directions for action, followed by a list of more detailed areas of activity. Clear, specific deadlines are set for most of the listed actions. **Most of the specific deadlines set in the Decade Action Plan appear realistic, as they are based on timeline estimations for government activities that are already ongoing.** However, in most cases, the formulations of activities in the Decade Action Plan, as well as the assignment of responsibilities, are vague enough to leave plenty of room for inaction by central, regional and local authorities.

Education

The Czech authorities continue to **rely largely on externally co-funded, sporadic measures to advance Roma education but have also put a number of more systemic policy measures in place.** For example, there are programs aimed at drop-out prevention and support of disadvantaged pupils, as well as supporting integration of minority students in mainstream education. Moreover, Roma teaching assistants have been a longstanding institution in the Czech Republic. At the same time, measures to advance access of Roma to higher education remain limited to external or NGO-funding. However, although a court case alleging discrimination and segregation in the country's education system is currently before the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, the Czech government has yet to acknowledge the dimensions of the segregation of Roma in the national educational system.

Employment

Roma are included among vulnerable groups for which broad policies are designed, and some Roma-specific programs are supported through local NGOs from the state budget or from the European Social Fund. **Rather than promising that comprehensive policies for employing Roma will be designed by the Czech government within the framework of the Decade, the Decade Action Plan indicates that the government will address the employment situation of Roma by supporting NGOs that are developing targeted programs.** Although most Roma are registered with employment offices for the purpose of receiving unemployment and other social assistance benefits, few Roma actually take part in job training courses. A host of government or donor-funded active employment programs, which have been developed by NGOs and are run on a local level, have been more successful in build-

ing relationships with Roma clients. Overall, outside of short-term employment in public works projects, few other opportunities for employment are available to Roma. Microfinance and small business loans are in practice not available to Roma, as they often require collateral guarantees that impoverished Roma cannot offer.

The Czech health agenda under the Decade focuses mostly on the development of a system of Roma health mediators. The Ministry of Health financed a pilot health mediators' program to be developed through an NGO resulting in a training module and 18 trained health mediators. The project ends in May 2007, but two local governments and one municipal government have expressed an interest in keeping health mediators employed until the end of 2007. There are no government programs to provide healthcare coverage to the uninsured, although, under the Czech healthcare system, all those employed or registered with unemployment offices, as well as children younger than 18 and mothers of children up to the age of six, have their health insurance covered. NGOs estimate that the number of people left without health insurance coverage is very small. Similarly, there are no government-financed outreach activities, such as vaccination drives or health education campaigns, in Roma communities. Some NGOs conduct small-scale outreach activities on a local level, as do the health mediators mentioned above, but these sporadic efforts fall far short of addressing the needs of Roma across the Czech Republic

Health

Following much negative publicity around the ghettoization of Roma in the Czech Republic, the **government has recognized the need for a comprehensive approach to housing and has committed to adopting an integrated social housing concept by 2008.** At the moment, social housing is usually made available only on the condition that applicants are employed and have no debts, which means most Roma are virtually excluded from accessing social housing. The Ministry of Regional Development currently finances a program for constructing subsidized flats, sometimes referred to as "plain flats" in reference to the pared down finishes and utilities they offer to tenants, but it is not clear how many of these flats are actually given to Roma. The government progress reports under the Decade recognize that this program, just like many other housing measures and policies, lacks an adequate implementation monitoring mechanism to assess its impact on Roma. There are currently only sporadic measures in the areas of access to communal services or overcoming non-registration and illegal settlements.

Housing

Czech law has incorporated some anti-discrimination provisions relating to employment, but has yet to transpose the Race Directive of the European Council of the European Union, which offers protections against racial discrimination in employment, education, housing and the provision of public services. A draft of a comprehensive anti-discrimination law has been rejected by the Czech Senate, despite the fact that both domestic organizations and international groups have repeatedly called for the speedy transposition of European Union protections against discrimination.

Anti-discrimination legislation

The government's annual priority plans, including budget allocations and regular systematic reporting on their implementation.

Key achievement

HUNGARY

Hungary's challenge:
Make comprehensive Roma
inclusion policies work

Having held the Decade Presidency in the crucial run-up to the launch of the Decade in 2005, the **Hungarian government has been instrumental in making the Decade a reality**. Today, **Hungary also stands out among other Decade countries as having advanced furthest in setting in place programs and policies to promote Roma inclusion in most priority areas**. Most notably in education, a host of tools and programs are in place to promote educational integration. However, there is plenty of anecdotal evidence that these programs have yet to have an impact. Hungary's challenge, therefore, is to continue fine-tuning and building on its policies to ensure they work towards Roma inclusion. This entails continued and sustained outreach and efforts to change minds, train and convince local officials and service providers. Moreover, Hungary needs to ensure that its health system, currently under major reform, works for socially excluded Roma, for example through Roma health mediators.

Action Plans

Hungary's overall score is lowered by the fact that within the first two years of the Decade it had **not approved a long-term strategy for the Decade**. However, it has **initiated plenty of policies and programs that are in direct relation to the draft Decade Action Plan**. A draft long-term Decade Action Plan and a two-year priority operational plan have been in the works since the launch of the Decade, and these have been consulted extensively, including at the local level. In the meantime, government action was guided by a Program to Promote the Social Inclusion of Roma that was adopted in 2004. The government has not yet reported publicly and systematically on progress in Hungary under the Decade since its launch.

Education

While non-enrolment and drop-out rates among Roma in Hungary appear to be lower than in other Decade countries, independent reports in recent years have pointed to a host of other problems that Roma face in the educational system, most notably multiple forms of segregation. The **primary objective of reforms to the Hungarian educational system since 2002 has consequently been the elimination of segregation in mainstream schools**. Inclusive education is supported on a systemic level through the development of governmental integration programs and the adoption and enforcement of anti-discrimination legislation that explicitly bans segregation. Preschool education in Hungary is available to children as young as three and is compulsory for children in their preparatory year. There are no tuition fees for public preschools, and children whose families receive regular child support benefits are entitled to free meals. Preschools cannot refuse enrolment of disadvantaged children, including Roma, beginning with the age of three. But in practice this provision is rarely followed, as in many areas there is a shortage of preschools. Hungary also has programs to promote access to primary, secondary and higher education for Roma.

Employment

Hungary has a host of employment and training programs run by the labor centers, including programs for those excluded from the workforce. Most of these **programs are accessible to—and actually designed for—Roma**, even though equal opportunities policies often prevent government officials from saying so explicitly. There are

no official data on how such policies affect Roma in practice, but anecdotal evidence suggests that Roma are indeed among the primary beneficiaries of many of these programs.

Health is the weak spot in Hungary's Roma inclusion agenda. Hungary's draft Decade Action Plan does not mention any measures to expand healthcare services to those who do not have access to health insurance. Health insurance in Hungary is currently tied to employment or registration with labor and unemployment offices. Moreover, health insurance is dependent on residence registration, which in practice means that long-term unemployed Roma living in illegal housing, as well as the homeless, cannot access the country's healthcare system. On the other hand, the Ministry of Health has been financing coordinated health education, awareness and information campaigns. Some pilot outreach programs have been conducted in cooperation with mainstream and Roma media. Training programs for health mediators in Hungary were initiated five years ago, and some of the graduates were assigned to work in some counties. But the mediators were not permanently employed at the end of the program, and no nation-wide health mediator programs have been implemented since. The draft Decade Action Plan presented by the Hungarian government does list the training of Roma healthcare providers as a goal, but no details as to how the policy will be designed and/or implemented are available yet.

Health

The government launched a comprehensive program, the pilot **Housing and Social Integration Program, which aims to support Roma integration by addressing the living situation of Roma throughout the country.** The program deals not only with housing-related issues, such as the clarification of property rights, infrastructure improvement and access to public utilities, but also with issues like employment and public health. To help address these areas, the program brings in local employment offices and health institutions as partners. While the ambitious substantive scope and integrated approach of the program has limited the program to a relatively small number of locations at the outset, the program is expected to grow in coming years. Other Hungarian government measures for improving Roma housing include a program for the legalization of unregistered settlements initiated in 2006. Social housing, on the other hand, is not part of a centrally designed strategy but left to municipalities.

Housing

Hungary's anti-discrimination law offers strong protections, in particular through the Equal Treatment Act and the Education Act and some newly adopted amendments to the Civil Code. The Equal Treatment Authority has taken an active role in the prevention of discrimination, while courts have sanctioned violations not only consistently, but also strategically. Still, for example, these protections too often do not act as sufficient disincentives for potential employers, and Roma job-seekers usually know too little about the protection mechanisms available to them.

Anti-discrimination legislation

The government's wide-ranging and integrated policy framework to advance Roma access to integrated education. The design of comprehensive integrated programs to improve living conditions for Roma in segregated settlements.

Key achievement

MACEDONIA

Macedonia's challenge:
Translate government
commitment into
government action

While the **government remains committed to the Decade, evident in Macedonia's advanced institutional arrangements for the Decade and outreach to the municipal level, this commitment has yet to be translated into systemic government-financed action.** Macedonia's lower score relative to its partner countries results directly from the limited actual involvement of the government and the limited use of budgetary resources for Roma inclusion measures and programs. But Macedonia compares favorably with its peers with regard to the institutional structures it has put in place for Decade implementation. A renewed effort by the government is needed in building on the established and experienced coordinating structures and getting all ministries to consistently put resources and expertise into the Roma inclusion agenda and to rely less on foreign and donor-financed efforts.

Action Plans

Macedonia has action plans for all the Decade priority areas, but with some weaknesses in terms of content as well as targets and monitoring indicators. However, the main priority for the Macedonian government is progress on implementation, and any adjustments of the plans could be done along the way or, even better, through the approval of more detailed operational plans with financial backing. Led by the Decade coordination office in the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and involving Roma civil society, the Decade coordination body conducted an exemplary process of drafting priority operational plans for the Decade in 2005—which, however, have so far not been utilized for implementation.

Education

Education is the Decade priority area where implementation is most advanced, although strongly driven by external financing. While the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy is providing some financing, most activities rely on co-funding by the Roma Education Fund and other donors. Some general policies are in accordance with the Action Plans, for example the introduction of a compulsory preparatory year for primary school in 2006. In 2007, the authorities have introduced measures to promote access of Roma children to preschool, although again with Roma Education Fund support. There is some support available for Roma students in secondary education through a joint scholarship program of the Ministry of Education and the Foundation Open Society Institute Macedonia, with Roma Education Fund support. However, this is not accompanied by other measures to systematically encourage school participation, such as subsidized transportation, free school lunches, Roma teaching assistants or school mediators.

Employment

Macedonia suffers from chronically high unemployment across all groups in society, making progress in promoting employment among Roma a significant challenge. In principle, Macedonia has the ingredients to promote access to employment for Roma. It even has relatively good data collected by the State Statistical Office. **While there are employment programs in place for the population as a whole, specific measures to promote access of Roma to such programs have not yet been developed.** However, there are models to build on: For example, a Council of Europe Development Bank and Open Society Institute-funded microfinance organization

is providing training and loans to Roma entrepreneurs. While no similar programs have been initiated by the government to date, the Ministry of Labor, is expected to develop a microcredit and self-employment scheme in 2007.

Health is Macedonia's weakest spot in Decade implementation, and the health section of the Decade Action Plan remains the least developed part of the document. The overall problems of Macedonian health system in terms of quality of service and access have had an impact on the implementation of the Decade. **There are no governmental programs specifically targeting Roma health, but some of the mainstream programs developed by the Ministry of Health have reached out to Roma beneficiaries**, including, for instance through programs financed by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Vaccination campaigns have also included Roma communities, and they appear to have been largely effective. There are no health mediators in Macedonia. But by far the biggest obstacles Roma face have to do with registering for health insurance, due to missing legal residence and employment status.

Except for **sporadic actions to promote access to utilities and social housing**, mostly funded by external donors and not by the government, Roma housing remains an underdeveloped area. Moreover, despite Macedonia's Decade commitments, there remain cases of evictions of Roma. However, there are recent moves that suggest a possible expansion in government activities in the area of housing. The government has recently initiated the drafting of strategic and legal documents aimed at housing, including legalization of illegal buildings, which may be used to promote improvements in Roma housing. Moreover, the authorities have initiated the development of urban plans for some Roma settlements. The Ministry of Transportation indicated that it would support the building of social housing that would have Roma, among others, as potential beneficiaries, and it will fund the construction of a sewage system in the mainly Roma municipality of Shuto Orizari.

Macedonia recently drafted an anti-discrimination law, but it focuses on gender- and disability-based discrimination only, and, as of this writing, it had not yet been adopted.

The 2005 operational plan for the Decade elaborated by the Decade coordination body with the involvement of Roma civil society and outreach work at the municipal level.

Health

Housing

Anti-discrimination legislation

Key achievement

MONTENEGRO

Montenegro's challenge:
Embrace the Decade as a policy
framework

Although it joined the Decade together with its peers in 2005, Montenegro remains in many ways in a pre-Decade launch mode. Decade coordination is handled at the level of a senior civil servant with unclear high-level backing. Line ministries do not appear to relate action on Roma inclusion to the Decade framework. Overall, Montenegro continues to rely mostly on external donors to initiate and finance measures aimed at the inclusion of Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptians (RAE), and has yet to embrace responsibility for developing integrated programs or policies backed up with budget financing. Government representatives have stated that the government expects 80 percent of the financing for Decade activities to come from foreign donors. Crucially, the Decade Action Plan fails to take into account the most disadvantaged communities, the RAE displaced from elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia and the returned asylum seekers who face many and deep additional barriers to accessing public services. The government has yet to develop a policy for these groups.

Action Plans

Montenegro's Decade Action Plan appears to be **designed as a pro forma document, rather than a comprehensive, detailed policy that the government is actually committed to implement.** It often does not set clear responsibilities for specific line items. There have been no attempts to improve the Decade Action Plan since its adoption, and no operational or shorter-term priority action plans have been adopted. Having had little impact on central government policymaking, the Decade also remains absent from the local level: The government has not yet made any systemic effort to include local authorities in mechanisms to implement the Decade.

Education

There are **few systemic government policies to promote access of Roma to school at any level, and most measures that are in place are of a pilot nature and have been (co-)financed by external donors.** Preschool education is not mandatory in Montenegro, and, although some sporadic incentives aimed at increasing the number of RAE children in preschools are currently in place, substantial barriers remain. Segregation is another problem that RAE children face in the Montenegrin educational system, particularly in areas with large numbers of internally displaced persons from Kosovo. The Ministry of Education has yet to develop desegregation plans for such situations. Free schoolbooks began to be distributed as part of a government initiative in 2005. In 2006, a larger-scale two-year project, the Roma Education Initiative, was introduced by Ministry of Education with financing from the Roma Education Fund. It aims to facilitate the development of models for comprehensive integrated education programs in schools and preschools in five locations in the country. It also seeks to provide RAE students with support and incentives to succeed in school, while supporting schools themselves, and their teaching staff, to develop the tools for successful integration. Any measures to promote access to higher education for RAE are entirely externally financed.

Employment

Montenegro's **efforts to develop employment promotion programs for RAE remain in an early phase.** The Employment Agency of Montenegro is organizing regular anti-bias training sessions for its personnel, as well as developing special applications

forms tailored to the specific situation and needs of Roma job-seekers. It has also set up a working group that aims to develop services for persons with special difficulties in accessing employment, including Roma. There are no programs promoting self-employment that are specifically designed for RAE; regular self-employment programs are available only to those who can fulfil standard requirements, and many RAE applicants cannot access them. Displaced and refugee RAE face legislative barriers to employment.

There is no integrated policy on improving health outcomes for RAE in Montenegro, including for those without residential or citizenship registration. Although there are no government healthcare policies targeting RAE, and no health mediator program has been initiated by the government, healthcare professionals in Montenegro regularly conduct vaccination drives and awareness-raising activities in Roma neighbourhoods. No additional funds are available for most of these activities, and healthcare professionals often participate in them on a voluntary basis. As a consequence, Roma activists estimate that over 90 percent of RAE children have actually been vaccinated in the past five years. Moreover, for those who do not have identity cards or healthcare records, the Red Cross and other agencies facilitate access to subsidized medical care. There are also no government-funded reproductive health programs specifically targeting Roma, but NGOs and international agencies have filled this gap through short-term projects.

The Montenegrin government has approved housing policy documents which include reference to RAE needs, but action has in practice been limited to very sporadic measures. Social housing, for example, has yet to become available to RAE on an as-needed basis. The criteria and procedures for allocating social housing in Montenegro are not clear, and therefore it is difficult to evaluate how many such housing units are in practice available to Roma. However, housing policy documents, even if still only declarative for the most part, have registered some effects with local authorities, which have halted evacuation plans for residents of illegal settlements over the past two years. Moreover, in some cases local authorities have taken steps to provide alternate accommodations to Roma residents who found themselves homeless.

Montenegro has yet to adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation in line with current international standards in the field.

Government support for the Roma Education Initiative to facilitate the development of models for comprehensive integrated education programs in schools and preschools in five locations.

Health

Housing

Anti-discrimination legislation

Key achievement

ROMANIA

Romania's challenge:
Achieve consistent progress
across all priorities and use the
Decade as a strategic instrument

Romania's progress in implementing Decade commitments is mixed, explaining its medium-ranking score. On the one hand, at the end of 2006, Romania had still not approved a Decade Action Plan and did not appear to use the Decade as a tool to promote policies on Roma inclusion. On the other hand, Romania held the Decade Presidency in 2005-2006. Moreover, **Romania has advanced substantially in the areas of education and health** and has put a range of programs and policies in place in these two areas. However, progress is less visible in housing and in employment, where it has yet to move towards more systemic policies and the development of effective programs that work for Roma.

Action Plans

Romania has yet to approve a Decade Action Plan—expected for mid-2007—which would provide a frame for the further development of its Roma inclusion policies. The government has also not approved any intermediate priority action plans or public progress reports under the Decade, except for a report on its Decade Presidency. Although Romania was an early leader in the Decade, having assumed the Presidency from Hungary in mid-2005, it appears that the Decade has yet to be introduced as a process and instrument domestically. However, the Decade Action Plans, when in place, are set to make an important contribution. In the coordination body for Roma inclusion policies, the National Agency for Roma, there appears to be a sense of competition between the Decade Action Plans and associated implementation mechanisms, on the one hand, and those set up for the National Strategy on Roma, on the other hand, suggesting that the Decade is not yet seen as a tool to reinforce the implementation of the Strategy.

Education

Romania has developed a number of substantive policy instruments aimed at promoting educational outcomes for Roma, most notably through affirmative action in higher education, vocational training institutions and high schools throughout the country. There are also some sporadic measures to improve preschool attendance, and more systematic programs to promote primary school attendance for disadvantaged groups by providing free school meals, subsidized school supplies and free transportation. The provision of child allowances was also tied to school attendance until recently, again with the idea of motivating low-income families, not only Roma, to send their children to school. An adult literacy program called "Second Chance" is now underway, and it is reportedly mostly attended by young mothers and Roma who dropped out of school at an early age. The position of Roma school mediators was created to improve school enrolment and attendance and to prevent school abandonment for Roma children, but the number of qualified school mediators is still very low. By the government's own admission, educational segregation is a systemic problem in Romania. The Ministry of Education has adopted a notification that mandates desegregation in the Romanian school system, and, through the ministry, EU PHARE funding was dedicated to desegregation projects.

The advanced policy mix in Roma education in Romania is not mirrored by similar achievements in the area of employment. The Ministry of Labor, which not only coordinates employment policy, but also often serves as a conduit for outside funding, has yet to develop consistent policies for Roma. Job fairs for Roma are not only the sole source of limited information on the employment of Roma—they appear to be the only functioning active employment measures specifically targeting Roma in Romania to date. The success of these fairs is felt on a very small scale, as they are not properly publicized and are therefore attended by only small samples of both potential employers and actual job-seekers. NGOs have additionally pointed out that the program is not adequately tailored to the needs of Roma as beneficiaries, because the majority of jobs on offer at the fairs require qualifications higher than those usually attained by Roma. There are no self-employment programs targeted at Roma, and mainstream programs in effect maintain implicit barriers for Roma.

Romania has made substantial progress in the area of Roma health in recent years. For example, the Ministry of Health has a functioning Ministerial Commission for Roma. The commission is chaired by a state secretary who is charged specifically with oversight of Roma policies. The Ministry of Health is also the only ministry to have a specific budget line for Roma allocated in the annual state budget. Romania is also the leading country in the area of health mediators. The institution of the health mediators in Romania was initiated by the NGO Romani CRISS in a pilot project, and was then officially recognized and taken over by the Ministry of Health in 2003. Health mediators have gradually been accepted as a necessary part of the healthcare system, and their numbers are set to increase over the coming years. National campaigns against tuberculosis, including funded by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, have reached some Roma communities. In recent years, the Ministry of Health's vaccination drives that have included Roma communities have usually been organized in cooperation with the National Agency for Roma.

As part of the National Strategy on Roma, a number of measures to directly improve the living conditions of Roma have been developed at the central government level. The Ministry of Transportation, Constructions, and Tourism created a four-year emergency-measures plan to rehabilitate houses and areas inhabited by a significant number of Roma. The ministry also developed a program for building social housing and a funding system for partnership between private or public companies and NGOs that intend to improve access to public utilities in locations with large numbers of Roma.

Romania has had an anti-discrimination law in place since 2000, and successive packages of amendments have brought the law closer to alignment with EU legislation.

The systematic scaling-up of health mediators as well as health awareness and outreach programs. The development of desegregation and affirmative action mechanisms in education.

Employment

Health

Housing

Anti-discrimination legislation

Key achievement

SERBIA

Serbia's challenge:
Show central government
ownership of the Decade
and develop systemic and
government-financed policies

The extent of central government commitment to the Decade in Serbia remains unclear. There are a number of activities reflecting the Decade agenda, but, as pilot measures, they are often instigated and financed by external sources. There have been some disruptions in Decade coordination after the previous coordinator, a deputy minister at the Serbia and Montenegro Union level, resigned in the wake of the disintegration of the union. Recently a Secretariat for the Decade was put in place in the Agency for Human and Minority Rights, but its staff remains externally financed, such as by the European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR) and through the OSCE Mission. Serbia, like Montenegro, faces a substantial challenge in ensuring access to services for its many Roma without residential or citizenship registration—and has not yet found a solution. In order to make progress on the implementation of the Decade goals, **Serbia needs to show greater central government involvement evident in the development of systemic policies and financed by budgetary resources.**

Action Plans

So far, there appears to have been little coordination on Decade implementation between the various responsible line ministries. However, the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Policy, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry for Capital Investment recently took independent decisions to set up working groups on the implementation of the Decade Action Plan. **While action plans on education, employment, housing and healthcare were adopted by the government in January 2005, they do not appear to have served as reference documents for government action.** To this date, the government did not adopt any priority action plans based on the Decade Action Plan, although in the summer of 2005 the OSCE financed an effort under the auspices of the then-Decade coordinator to develop such plans, including costings of proposed measures.

Education

The government has not engaged in the development of a longer-term policy on Roma education, but, with few exceptions, **continues to rely on individual, sometimes donor (co-)financed measures** such as through the Roma Education Fund or the EAR. The Ministry of Education and the National Roma Council have been using affirmative action to support enrolment of Roma in secondary and tertiary education and are providing textbooks for Roma children in primary education. A compulsory year of preschool has been introduced, and the Ministry of Education has received funding from the Roma Education Fund for piloting measures to promote access of Roma to preschool. Likewise, a pilot project to train and place 20 Roma teaching assistants has been funded by the EAR and is implemented in cooperation with the OSCE in 2006-2007.

Employment

Serbia has a **well-established network of public employment services that offer a host of employment and training programs. Unlike other countries, there is recognition that such mainstream programs may require additional supportive measures to promote Roma access.** Reflecting this, Serbia is organizing access of Roma to training and retraining programs as well as programs to promote self-employment

by using affirmative action. However, participation in such programs remains low. There remain serious access barriers for those Roma residing in informal settlements and without residential and citizenship registration.

The Serbian authorities have taken a **proactive role in implementing some of the health goals of the Decade Action Plan**, openly cooperating with civil society and local authorities in order to facilitate proper implementation. The Ministry of Health is financing special Roma health programs focusing on health education, reproductive health and women's health activities, which are to be implemented in cooperation with NGOs in about 45 municipalities in Serbia. However, information on health status of the Roma remains thin, and the government has not yet moved towards introducing a system of Roma health mediators.

Roma housing policy is problematic in Serbia, with most action initiated locally by a number of willing municipalities in the absence of an overall national policy. The government has allocated some funds for public works in Roma settlements, but no progress has been achieved in resolving the challenge of exclusion from public services of those without residential or citizenship registration. The government has merely approved operational guidelines for local self-government for the legalization of Roma settlements.

Serbia has not yet developed EU-compatible anti-discrimination legislation.

Development of local action plans by municipalities and Ministry of Health-financed Roma health programs focusing on health education, reproductive health and women's health activities, to be implemented in cooperation with NGOs in about 45 municipalities.

Health

Housing

Anti-discrimination legislation

Key achievement

SLOVAKIA

Slovakia's challenge:
Elaborate on policy initiatives
and make them work for
integration

Slovakia has advanced institutional capacities that should enable it to deliver on its Decade pledge, and it has put a range of programs and policies in place to improve the welfare of Roma. However, these activities appear often not driven by an integration policy, but appear to tolerate, if not deepen, segregation of Roma. Slovakia is also more advanced in its education and employment measures than in the areas of health and housing.

Action Plans

Slovakia has action plans for all the Decade priority areas, but with weaknesses in terms of content and targets and monitoring indicators. The Decade Action Plan lists state institutions which are responsible to monitor progress on particular measures, but it does not clarify whether it is these same institutions or other institutions that are directly responsible for implementing the measures. The text of the Slovak Decade Action Plan also exhibits many of the reflexes of recent Slovak policies for Roma: It includes problematic formulations such as “native predispositions” in relation to the health situation of Roma. Slovakia has not adopted priority action plans, but there are internal short-term strategies which guide the work of individual line ministries in the four focus areas of the Decade, and ministries write annual reports on progress under the Decade.

Education

The Slovak government has a **number of programs in place at all levels of the education system.** The authorities developed so-called “zero classes,” which typically consist of a preparatory preschool program affiliated with an elementary school. However, there are also preschool programs in segregated Roma communities that face typical deficiencies associated with segregation. The authorities have also developed some programs aimed at increasing school attendance for Roma. For instance, social assistance for families with children is tied to attendance of compulsory primary education institutions; subsidies for school supplies and school lunches are offered; and a one-year drop-out reduction pilot program was implemented until May 2006. Slovakia also adopted the “Roma teaching assistants” model, which was implemented in some preschools, primary schools and special schools, although teaching assistants are typically hired on short-term, one-year contracts which may or many not be renewed depending on the availability of funding. Other measures include the development of vocational education and second chance programs for students who did not complete primary education, and the provision of higher education scholarships through the office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities. The major challenge in Slovakia remains school segregation, although the Slovak government has shown itself more willing to deal with segregation in recent years and has initiated the implementation of a series of measures aimed at promoting integration.

Employment

Recent Slovak governmental policies in employment have not, for the most part, addressed the situation of Roma directly. Instead, they have focused on the broader category of vulnerable groups, which includes people with disabilities, the elderly and recent university graduates, and their effect on Roma has not been tracked. The Social Development Fund, a state-funded grant-making agency, estimates that about one-third of its funding has gone to programs targeting Roma, but it is not clear whether this estimate measures funding directly reaching Roma or funding

reaching broader categories which also include Roma. National employment programs have been developed by the Ministry of Labor and have included vocational training, subsidized employment, and public works projects, funded both from the state budget and from the European Social Fund. However, vocational training, re-training and qualification courses are often not tailored to the specific needs of Roma. Smaller NGO-run projects have explicitly targeted Roma, but they remain limited in scope. The same holds for self-employment measures targeted to Roma, which are regularly provided by the government.

The Slovak government has initiated a range of programs and measures aimed at improving the health status among the Roma population. The office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities adopted a project aimed at dealing with illegal waste dumps in 50 settlements, and the Ministry of Labor is funding the building of personal hygiene and laundry facilities in some Roma communities. Some progress has also been registered in the area of health insurance. Until September 2006, most Roma, as well as other disadvantaged people, were indirectly excluded from accessing the Slovak system of universal healthcare because of relatively high minimal fees perceived for medical services and medicine and because a permanent living address was required for registration. Many of these obstacles have now been removed through a series of legislative amendments which left in place only a small fee for emergency care. Health mediators and mobile health units, as well as eight small health centers in areas with limited access to healthcare facilities, were established as part of an EU PHARE-funded pilot project which is now slated to continue and expand, with health mediators working under the regional offices for public health.

Housing policy is an issue of concern in Slovakia, given the extent of segregation of Roma communities. Slovakia has adopted a number of programs aiming to improve housing conditions for Roma, but their implementation, in particular by local authorities, has been at best limited and problematic. The Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities designed and financed a sociographic mapping of Roma communities that is being used by the relevant ministries in designing policies for Roma communities. Some new housing for Roma was built in recent years, but there are concerns as to the quality of such buildings, also indicated by the name of the government program “Housing to a Lower Standard”. This program also has been criticized for increasing segregation by creating new Roma ghettos far away from the majority population. The Decade Action Plan mentions the legalization of settlements and the clarification of property issues, but it fails to provide any funding for these. However, some movement in this area has been registered—a few settlements have been legalized, mostly at the initiative of the Office of the Plenipotentiary.

In 2004, Slovakia passed anti-discrimination legislation that was intended to harmonize domestic regulations with European Union directives in the field. The adopted legislation largely follows the requirements of the European directives, but it is still largely unknown and has yet to be tested.

Health

Housing

Anti-discrimination legislation

Key achievement

Measures to promote access of Roma to preschool and general primary and secondary education.

Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015 DecadeWatch Monitoring Framework

		Scores			
		0	1	2	3
Category					
I.	Cross-cutting/ institutional				
1.	Action Plans				
1.1	Is there an approved detailed Decade Action Plan with clear targets, deadlines and measurable indicators?	Plans do not cover all focus areas and have no targets and/or deadlines	Plans cover all focus areas but without targets and/or deadlines	Plans cover all focus areas but have targets and/or deadlines only for some measures	Plans cover all focus areas and have a complete list of targets and/or deadlines
1.2	Has the government approved any annual or biannual priority action plan with cost estimates and a financing plan?	Government has not approved any priority operational plan	Government has approved at least one priority operational plan but not in all Decade focus areas and without cost estimates or a financing plan	Government has approved at least one priority operational plan in all Decade focus areas with cost estimates and a financing plan	Government has approved more than one detailed annual priority operational plan in all Decade priority areas with full cost estimates or a financing plan for their implementation
1.3	Is there a formal government progress reporting mechanism with public progress reports?	Government has not reported publicly on progress under the Decade since its launch	Government has reported only once publicly on progress under the Decade since its launch	Government has reported once a year on progress under the Decade since its launch	Government has been reporting regularly, publicly and comprehensively, with clear link to action plan targets
1.4	Does the Action Plan include baseline data to measure implementation progress?	There is no baseline data	There is baseline and follow-up data for less than 10 percent of identified outcomes	There is baseline and follow-up data for up to 50 percent of identified outcomes	There is baseline and follow-up data for all key identified outcomes
1.5	Are there efforts to develop regional or municipal action plans and/or engage municipalities in the Decade (e.g., to develop local level action plans)?	There has been no outreach and involvement of municipalities	There are donor-financed pilot activities to engage municipalities	Central government has selectively involved municipalities and/or conducted outreach activities	There is proactive and country-wide government strategy of involving municipalities in partnership with association of municipalities; availability of municipal or regional Decade action plans

Category		Scores				
		0	1	2	3	4
2.	<i>Institutional</i>					
2.1	Is there a government Decade Coordinator?	No national coordinator has been appointed or the position is vacant	There has been a national coordinator for most of the time, but there have been disruptions and/or the coordinator was not officially appointed	A national coordinator has been appointed but has appeared publicly in this capacity only once since the Decade launch.	A national coordinator has been appointed and has made a number of public appearances in this capacity since the Decade launch.	A national coordinator has been appointed and has made frequent public appearances in this capacity to give the Decade visibility.
2.2	What is the level of seniority of the current Decade Coordinator?	No national coordinator	Civil Servant	Deputy or Assistant Minister	Minister	Deputy Prime Minister or above
2.3	Is there a Decade coordination office or support office for the national coordinator?	There is no Decade coordination/support office for the national coordinator	There is a Decade coordination office/support office for the national coordinator with 1 staff actually working on Decade issues	There is a Decade coordination office/support office for the national coordinator with 2-5 staff actually working on Decade issues	There is a Decade coordination office/support office for the national coordinator with 6-10 staff actually working on Decade issues	There is a Decade coordination office/support office for the national coordinator with more than 10 staff actually working on Decade issues
2.4	Is there Roma representation at senior level within government (permanently employed civil servants or with a political mandate)?	There is no Roma in central government or civil service	There are Roma in junior civil service or appointed positions in central government (below Head of Directorate)	There are Roma in senior civil service or appointed positions in central government (Head of Directorate and above)	There is at least one Roma in an assistant/deputy minister position in the central government	There is at least one Roma Minister in the central government
2.5	Is there a standing formal consultation body to involve Roma civil society in national Decade implementation and monitoring?	There have been no formal Decade-related consultations between government and Roma civil society since the Decade launch	There has been one consultation meeting with Roma civil society since the Decade launch	There have been irregular consultations with Roma civil society	There is a formal standing consultation body which has met less than once a year since the Decade launch	There is a formal standing consultation body which has convened at least twice per year since the Decade launch
2.6	Do line ministries have special inclusion and access units also in charge of Roma inclusion?	No line ministry has designated staff or units on access and integration of national minorities	Some ministries have designated individual staff working on access and integration issues, but no designated units	One line ministry has designated units on access and integration	More than one line ministry has designated units on access and integration	All line ministries have designated units on access and integration

Category	Scores				
	0	1	2	3	4
2.7	Government has not been represented at any meeting since the launch	Government has been represented at 1 of the last 3 meetings since the launch	Government has been represented at 2 of the last 3 meetings since the launch	Government has been represented at all the meetings held since the launch	Government has been represented at all the meetings held since the launch as well as thematic workshops
2.8	Government has not agreed to contribute to the Decade Trust Fund		Government has agreed, but not yet contributed to the Decade Trust Fund		Government has contributed to the Decade Trust Fund
II.	Decade Priority Areas				
3.	Education				
3.1	Monitoring and evaluation (availability of regularly collected, nationally representative data on outcomes, collected within the last five years)	There is some enrolment data for Roma for some years, but there is no regular updating process and the data is not nationally representative	There is nationally representative enrolment and attainment data for Roma for some years, but there is no regular updating process	There is nationally representative enrolment and attainment data for Roma for some years which is regularly updated	There is annual nationally representative enrolment and attainment data for Roma
	Programs				
3.2	Promotion of access of Roma children to pre-schooling and early child care services (e.g., access to daycare programs and kindergartens, parent support work, out of school activities, etc)	There are no government-supported activities	There are sporadic government-financed and/or externally financed measures endorsed by the government	There is a free preparatory year	There is an integrated government policy on early childhood education for Roma with substantial financial backing
3.3	Promotion of access of Roma children to primary and secondary education (e.g., teacher assistant/mediators, special after class tutorials for Roma children, support during exams and material incentives such as free textbooks, support for transportation costs, meals in school, scholarship programs, etc)	There are no government-supported activities	There are sporadic government-financed and/or externally financed measures endorsed by the government	There are regular government-financed measures in place but not a program	There is an integrated government policy with substantial financial backing

Category	Scores					
	0	1	2	3	4	
3.4	Promotion of access of Roma to higher education (e.g., scholarships programs, etc)	There are no government-supported activities	There are sporadic government-financed and/or externally financed measures endorsed by the government	There are regular government-financed measures in place but not a program	There is an official government program in place with some financing	There is an integrated government policy with substantial financial backing
3.5	Desegregation policy	There are no government-supported school desegregation activities	There are sporadic government-financed and/or externally financed school desegregation measures endorsed by the government	There are regular government-financed school desegregation measures in place but not a program	There is an official government school desegregation program in place with some financing	There is an integrated government school desegregation policy with substantial financial backing
4.	Employment					
4.1	Monitoring and evaluation (availability of regularly collected, nationally representative data on outcomes, collected within the last five years)	There is no data on employment outcomes for Roma	There is some employment data for Roma for some years, but there is no regular updating process and the data is not nationally representative	There is nationally representative data on Roma employment outcomes for some years but it is not regularly updated	There is nationally representative data on Roma employment outcomes which is regularly updated	There is annual nationally representative data on Roma employment outcomes
	Programs					
4.2	Promotion of access of Roma to training and retraining programs	There are no government-supported activities	There are sporadic government-financed and/or externally co-financed measures	There are regular government-financed measures in place but not a program	There is an official government program in place with some financing	There is an integrated government policy with substantial financial backing
4.3	Promotion of access of Roma active employment promotion programs	There are no government-supported activities	There are sporadic government-financed and/or externally co-financed measures	There are regular government-financed measures in place but not a program	There is an official government program in place with some financing	There is an integrated government policy with substantial financial backing
4.4	Promotion of access of Roma to self-employment or microfinance programs	There are no government-supported activities	There are sporadic government-financed and/or externally co-financed measures	There are regular government-financed measures in place but not a program	There is an official government program in place with some financing	There is an integrated government policy with substantial financial backing

Category	Scores				
	0	1	2	3	4
5. Health					
5.1	There are currently no surveys or other activities aimed at improving information base on Roma health	There is some health status data for Roma for some years, but there is no regular updating process and the data is not nationally representative	There is nationally representative health status data for Roma for some years but it is not regularly updated	There is nationally representative health status data for Roma for some years which is regularly updated	There are annual nationally representative health status data for Roma
	Programs				
5.2	Promotion of access to healthcare for excluded groups, including Roma (e.g., mechanism of health protection for the uninsured)	There are sporadic government-financed and/ or externally co-financed measures	There are regular government-financed measures in place but not a program	There is an official government program in place with some financing	There is an integrated government policy to promote access to healthcare with substantial financial backing
5.3	Special health programs for vulnerable groups that can benefit Roma (e.g., information outreach and health awareness activities, vaccination activities, etc)	There are no government-supported activities	There are regular government-financed measures in place but not a program	There is an official government program in place with some financing	There is an integrated government policy with substantial financial backing
5.4	Employment of Roma healthcare providers (e.g., Roma health mediators)	There are no government-supported activities	There are regular government-financed measures in place but not a program	There is an official government program in place with some financing	There is an integrated government policy with substantial financial backing
6. Housing					
6.1	Monitoring and evaluation (availability of regularly collected, nationally representative data on outcomes, collected within the last five years)	There is data on Roma housing conditions for some years, but there is no regular updating process and the data is not nationally representative	There is nationally representative data on Roma housing conditions for some years, but not regularly updated	There is nationally representative data on Roma housing conditions for some years which is regularly updated	There is annual nationally representative data on Roma housing conditions

Category	Scores				
	0	1	2	3	4
Programs					
6.2 Overcoming non-registration and illegal settlements (e.g., provision of tenancy or rental contracts, measures to prevent evictions, development of physical mappings/plans)	There are no government-supported activities	There are sporadic government-financed and/or externally co-financed measures	There are regular government-financed measures in place but not a program	There is an official government program in place with some financing	There is an integrated government policy with substantial financial backing
6.3 Access to communal services	There are no government-supported activities	There are sporadic government-financed and/or externally co-financed measures	There are regular government-financed measures in place but not a program	There is an official government program in place with some financing	There is an integrated government policy with substantial financial backing
6.4 Access to quality social housing	There are no government-supported activities	There are sporadic government-financed and/or externally co-financed measures	There are regular government-financed measures in place but not a program	There is an official government program in place with some financing	There is an integrated government policy with substantial financial backing
7. Anti-discrimination					
7.1 Is EU compatible anti-discrimination legislation in place and adequately enforced?	There is no EU compatible anti-discrimination legislation	The government is developing EU-compatible anti-discrimination legislation	There is EU-compatible anti-discrimination legislation in place but there are no cases of application for Roma	There is EU-compatible anti-discrimination legislation in place and there are some cases of application for Roma	There is EU-compatible anti-discrimination legislation in place and it is systematically applied for Roma

Country Reports

Bulgaria

1. INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

1.1 Decade Action Plan Drafting

After the June 30–July 1, 2003, Budapest conference on “Roma in an Expanding Europe,” the Bulgarian Prime Minister appointed the Minister of Disaster Management Policy as national coordinator of the Decade of Roma Inclusion. The National Action Plan for the Realization of the Decade of Roma Inclusion (hereinafter, DAP) was developed by a national working group that had been created by the Minister of Disaster Management for this specific purpose.

The national working group included officials from governmental institutions; representatives from the Bulgarian offices of the World Bank, the United Nations Development Program, and the Open Society Institute; and 17 Roma activists, including the Roma members of the delegation that participated in the original conference in Budapest. The working group was further divided into sub-groups, each tasked to develop specific sections of the DAP. Each of these sub-groups included representatives from every relevant ministry, as well as nongovernmental organizations.

Following the official launch of the Decade in Bulgaria in early February 2005, the DAP was approved by the Council of Ministers on April 14, 2005.

1.2 Decade Action Plan Content

The Bulgarian DAP is mostly based on the Framework Program for Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society (hereinafter, the Framework Program for Roma), a national strategy on Roma. The DAP also incorporates elements from other policies, such as the Strategy for the Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities, the Health Strategy for Disadvantaged Groups and Ethnic Minorities, or the National Program for the Improvement of Living Conditions of Roma in the Republic of Bulgaria.

On the surface, the Bulgarian DAP appears to address Roma issues under the Decade thoroughly: The DAP lists objectives, tasks, activities, indicators, responsible institutions, timelines, and amounts and sources of financing under each major heading. Moreover, the DAP contains a separate section that highlights activities aimed at combating discrimination. This indicates the Bulgarian government’s commitment to focusing on anti-discrimination as a cross-cutting priority—even if other cross-cutting issues, like gender equality and poverty elimination, do not receive a similarly detailed treatment in the DAP.

But, despite the DAP’s apparent thoroughness, a closer look reveals that it is conceived more as a pro forma, bureaucratic document which acts as a catch-all for existing policies that affect either Roma specifically or all disadvantaged groups, including Roma. Thus, the DAP lists both activities aimed at fostering Roma inclusion, such as establishing a Center for the

Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities, and activities that target Roma but do not necessarily promote inclusion, such as general encouragement for Roma children to learn the Romani language or a call for organization of Roma folklore events (Amalipe, *The Roma Strategies*).

Moreover, the indicators for assessing progress in achieving the objectives of the DAP are not clear, and indicators are not even listed at all alongside a number of activities. When indicators are listed, they are formulated as absolute figures relating to the number of Roma beneficiaries or activities carried out, instead of using a comparison with the same indicators among non-Roma. There are no global indicators—such as, for instance, the total number of secondary school or university graduates—against which the degree of Roma inclusion can be measured. Sometimes indicators are very difficult to quantify, as in the case of the indicator identified simply as “improved quality of education.” To make progress assessment even more complicated, few data-generating activities are listed in the DAP, and those that are listed are formulated so vaguely that they seem unlikely to produce comprehensive, nationally representative figures that can be used to measure progress.

The limited financial engagement of Bulgarian authorities for the Decade deepens the perception that the DAP is conceived as a pro forma document. All activities listed in the action plan are supposed to be financed from the general budget of each responsible institution. This approach closely follows the scheme for the implementation of the Framework Program for Roma—for which no special funding was allocated outside of the ordinary budgets of various state agencies and ministries, and PHARE funding, which is provided by the European Commission. In the case of the Framework Program for Roma, this approach proved to be an insurmountable obstacle for proper implementation, as state agencies and ministries were reluctant to allocate adequate funding for realizing the program (Amalipe).

In the case of the DAP, similar obstacles are looming. For example, in 2005–2006, the contribution from the state budget to Roma-related activities as estimated in the DAP was about BGN 1,745,550 (around EUR 900,000). Out of this, the share financed from the state budget proper is only BGN 1,230,000. An additional

BGN 270,000 is expected to come from “state budget and donors,” presumably as matching funds, while another BGN 145,000 is listed either as contributions from external donors or as coming from unspecified sources. The only special financing earmarked for the Decade of Roma Inclusion consists of BGN 128,000 (approximately EUR 64,000) allocated by the government to cover expenses related to the Bulgarian Presidency of the Decade between July 2006 and June 2007 (Amalipe). In addition, the Bulgarian Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (hereinafter, the Ministry of Labor) allocated close to BGN 1,400,000 for literacy courses targeted to Roma, and it finances a range of other mainstream measures which are open for, but not targeted to, Roma. By far the largest contribution to the activities listed under the DAP is that of foreign donors: EUR 3,446,659, mostly coming from two PHARE projects (2003 and 2004–2006).

Even with the outside contributions, the funding listed under the Decade is insufficient to tackle the severe problems that Bulgaria’s more than 800,000 Roma face. A closer look reveals that the DAP does not even try to claim that it actually does anything to solve these problems. Of the 129 actions listed for 2005–2006, for instance, only 29 have specific budgets quoted in the DAP. For the other 100 actions, the budget column is empty or it notes that “no additional financing is necessary.” Yet it is not clear how many of the existing activities would actually be made to work for Roma, and whether, indeed, no additional resources are needed to ensure that these activities help Roma. The reasons for the lack of budgets differ: Some of the 100 measures with no budget line attached are routine activities, and others are mere theoretical ideas, with no concrete parameters. Either way, the result is that entire focus areas, such as employment or housing, have no financing specified in the DAP.

1.3 Decade Coordination and Implementation

After the DAP was adopted in April 2005, Bulgaria entered a period of political discontinuity. Parliamentary elections held in June 2005 were followed by a long period of negotiation between political parties. A government was eventually formed, following months

of wrangling. As a result, no Decade coordinator was in place for a period of almost one year, until Bulgaria took over the Presidency of the Decade in June 2006 and the Council of Ministers appointed Deputy Minister of Labor Yavor Dimitrov to be the Decade coordinator. While the Directorate for Ethnic and Demographic Issues (hereinafter, the Directorate) represented Bulgaria at international Decade events, it appears that, until the appointment of Deputy Minister Dimitrov, there was no coordination of substantive Decade-related activities at the level of the central government. Further disruption was caused when Deputy Minister Dimitrov left his position in November 2006. In 2006, the Ministry of Labor created a Council for the Integration of Roma whose main task is to advise the Ministry on Roma inclusion issues. It consists of representatives of Roma NGOs and is chaired by the minister and the Decade coordinator. Administrative support to the Decade coordinator is provided by the Demographic Policy and Equal Opportunities Directorate within the Ministry of Labor.

Coordinating the implementation of the DAP is the responsibility of the office of the national Decade coordinator, while oversight of the implementation of the Framework Program for Roma is the responsibility of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Demographic Issues (hereinafter, the National Council) and its subordinate body, the Directorate for Ethnic and Demographic Issues. It appears that there is little synchronization between the office of the Decade coordinator and the National Council, even though many of the activities they are supposed to oversee overlap in practice.

The National Council is an unwieldy, inefficient structure, made up of 55 representatives of state institutions as well as NGOs. It held its first meeting on March 1, 2006. A meeting of the Sub-Commission on Roma Integration was held in April 2006. No other meeting of the National Council as a whole was held between January and July 2006, although the National Council's regulations envisage that meetings be held at least once every three months. But even with regular meetings, the National Council's power would be limited: The Council only has consulting and coordinating functions. It can advise state institutions on their activities for Roma integration, and it can request information from various agencies. But it can-

not mandate them to take specific measures and it cannot undertake actions on its own. For these reasons, some Roma NGOs have decided not to be part of the National Council, and have expressed doubts about the very need to establish such a council (Amalipe). Even the 16 Roma NGOs who are represented in the Sub-Commission for Roma Integration within the National Council do not actively participate in the council's work.

The Directorate for Ethnic and Demographic Issues is a very new institution. Although a director was appointed in July 2005, other key staff positions were filled as late as February 2006. As a result, the Directorate still has limited administrative capacity. It is made up of 17 staff members, five of whom work specifically on Roma integration. The Directorate has launched a series of training sessions aimed at improving capacity in the spheres of public administration and project management. Its staff has worked on clarifying the policy for integration of Roma, organizing training and presenting strategies and plans for action, and analyzed information regarding housing issues and administrative capacity at the regional and local levels. Also, the Directorate has been coordinating the technical implementation of PHARE projects.

The implementation of the DAP is supposed to follow its own action plan, different from the implementation plan for the Framework Program for Roma. But this mechanism is far from consistent. For instance, in 2005, when the DAP was first enacted, no action plan for the implementation of the Framework Program for Roma was developed. The next year, the implementation of the Framework Program fared only marginally better: An action plan was indeed developed by a consortium of NGOs, but this plan was approved only half way through the year, at the end of June 2006. It would seem these differences hardly matter, as the two documents are similar enough that one and the same action could be formally reported as an implementation measure for both policies. Because neither policy has any earmarked funding allocated from the state budget, what gets reported as implementation consists of various activities undertaken by state institutions from their general budget, and these actions are reported both under the Decade and under the Framework Program for Roma.

No priority action plans have been developed

by the Bulgarian government, but the Decade coordinator has started engaging some municipalities in Decade implementation. Additionally, some municipalities report developing local action plans under the Decade, but it is not clear whether these developments are the result of central government action or more local initiatives.

As of this writing, the Bulgarian government had not made public any report on progress under the framework of the Decade.

2. FOCUS AREAS

2.1 Education

Because most governmental efforts with respect to education have been geared toward modernizing the Bulgarian educational system as a whole, Roma education has been a rather low policy priority. As a result, the available data from the National Statistics Institute, which is nationally representative but not regularly updated, reveals sharp discrepancies in the education levels of Roma and non-Roma. For example, according to National Statistics Institute data from 2001, about 63 percent of Roma do not have a basic education degree, while only 16 percent of ethnic Bulgarians lack a basic degree. Furthermore, just 0.2 percent of Roma hold a university degree, but 16 percent of ethnic Bulgarians have such a degree. The illiteracy rate of Roma is 15 times higher than that of non-Roma (Amalipe). Moreover, Roma in Bulgaria are often placed in segregated schools, and sometimes in special schools set up for students with intellectual disabilities (European Roma Rights Centre, *Stigmata*). Often called “ghetto schools,” these educational institutions, overwhelmingly attended by Roma, offer very low-quality education in dismal teaching conditions (Nounev, “Analysis”). Such schools serve to instill in Roma students low expectations and a sense of inferiority in relation to non-Roma.

To address the educational discrepancies between Roma and non-Roma, the Bulgarian government has developed a number of policy initiatives over the past two years. It is too early to assess the effectiveness of

these programs. Still, the documents on which they are based reveal a number of worrying trends with respect to the government’s position on Roma education. First, in June 2004, the Ministry of Education and Science (hereinafter, the Ministry of Education) issued a Strategy for the Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities (hereinafter, Strategy for Educational Integration). This Strategy for Educational Integration is based on specific sections of the Framework Program for Roma, which it develops in more detail, setting specific measures and goals for ensuring equal access to quality education, school desegregation and intercultural education. A five-year action plan for the implementation of the Strategy for Educational Integration was developed one year after the strategy was issued, in June 2005, followed closely by implementation plans developed through local strategies. But the approach to the implementation of the Strategy for Educational Integration did not seek to mainstream integration into other educational policies. Instead, it treated integration as a separate, supplementary burden. For instance, none of the school buses provided through a nationwide Ministry of Education program were used to assist desegregation, so that bus-ing as a component of integration was left to be funded entirely by NGOs.

As mentioned in the DAP, the implementation of the Strategy for Educational Integration will be financed through a Center for Educational Integration, which reports directly to the Ministry of Education. Though its very establishment is a welcome development, the mechanism governing the Center for Educational Integration’s relationship to implementers on the ground appears to have significant built-in flaws: It leaves integration to the good will of local authorities and school administrators, who can apply for project funding as they see fit—or can decide not to desegregate at all. Moreover, the mechanism denies NGOs the opportunity to develop projects independently. This seems to effectively leave Roma integration stillborn, given that, in recent years, NGOs have been the main, and, indeed, only, motor for desegregation.

The Center for Educational Integration is set up to fundraise from foreign donors and receive only supplementary funding from the state. The Operational Program “Human Resource Development” for the programming period 2007–2013 will be co-financed by

the European Social Fund and will support three main areas of intervention under the priority “Improvement in Access to Education and Trainings.” The Center for Educational Integration is one of the potential beneficiaries. The supplementary funding from the state budget envisaged for 2005, a total of BGN 1,000,000 (approximately EUR 500,000), could not be absorbed in 2005, because the internal regulations of the Center were not approved by the Council of Ministers until much later, and the Center began functioning only after that. Consequently, for 2006, financing from the state budget was cut in half.

The reduction of the already meager funding allocated for integration is only a symptom of a larger pattern in which the commitment of the Bulgarian government to desegregation and inclusive schooling seems to go no deeper than the level of pro forma declarations. This pattern seems even more evident after the appointment of the new government in September 2005, when the word “desegregation” entirely disappeared from the public statements of various officials.

This attitude is also reflected in the National Program for the Development of School Education and Pre-School Upbringing and Instruction 2006–2015 (hereinafter, the Program for School Education), which was adopted by the new government as its major educational policy document. Approved by the Bulgarian Parliament, the Program for School Education has greater force as a policy than the Strategy for Educational Integration, which was adopted by a simple decision of the Ministry of Education. The Program for School Education, which is backed by financial resources from the state budget and provides for changes in Bulgarian legislation, makes no provisions for desegregation or intercultural education, which are the main objectives of the Strategy for Educational Integration.

The Program for School Education does not treat education for members of minorities as a significant policy area. When it does refer to minority issues, the Program places them under the heading “Socialization of children whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian,” which suggests that the authors of the Program of School Education not only take the view that minority children are “unsocialized,” but they also falsely believe that most minority students are not familiar with the Bulgarian language and that all their problems

can be addressed by bridging the presumed language gap. The measures listed under this heading include the improvement of the children’s Bulgarian language skills. This section of the Program of School Education also includes a set of social and administrative measures—like free textbooks, free meals, the provision of social benefits through schools, etc.—aimed at ensuring school attendance for Roma, regardless of whether the schools they attend are integrated or not. Moreover, the Program includes a series of policies that might actually worsen the overall educational status of Roma: For example, there is a decision to end basic education with the seventh, rather than the eighth grade, but NGOs say this measure would leave about 7,000 more Roma children per year outside of the educational system altogether (Amalipe).

Despite the apparent lack of interest in the matter, educational integration is still formally on the government’s agenda, and it features prominently in the DAP. When the new government took over in September 2005, educational integration was made the responsibility of a deputy minister, the highest ranking official to deal with educational integration in recent Bulgarian history. But at the time integration was focused on the deinstitutionalization and mainstreaming of students with intellectual disabilities. There is strong political commitment to this process, and the government is reporting progress in this area. The numbers of students with intellectual disabilities in mainstream schools is increasing, while the number of special education programs is decreasing. Regional education inspectorates have appointed experts in integrated education, all of whom deal exclusively with the mainstreaming of children who were previously in special schools (EUMAP, *Rights of People*).

By contrast, there is no similar administrative support at the local level for the integration of minority students. So far, this process has been implemented mainly by NGOs, with little or no support from the Ministry of Education. The deputy minister in charge of integration has promised to build the capacity of regional inspectorates to deal with the integration of minority students, but little action has materialized from those promises, except for sporadic training sessions on multicultural education. In the course of 2006, some experts were appointed to oversee the implementation of the Strategy for Educational Integration at a regional level.

But the main responsibilities of these experts—elementary education, arts, history, mainstreaming of students with disabilities, etc.—still lie outside the area of Roma educational integration. For most of these experts, the implementation of the Strategy for Educational Integration is merely an additional task on top of an already lengthy job description.

According to officials interviewed for the purpose of this report, one other relevant action by the Ministry of Education is its cooperating with UNICEF to develop a study on what causes students to drop out of school. Discussions are underway to prepare an action plan aimed at reducing the numbers of drop-outs and non-enrolled students in compulsory primary education between 2007 and 2009.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Labor has become active in promoting access to education by supporting training for Roma teaching assistants, adult literacy programs, free school breakfasts, etc. In addition, access to the monthly child allowance benefit program is conditional on school attendance, and monitoring has recently been tightened. Some of these programs appear to have improved school attendance, just like the Ministry of Education's introduction of one year of compulsory preschool in 2003. But the programs still do not address the root causes of school drop-out or ensure proper evaluation of educational outcomes. Overall, there appears to be little coordination between the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Education on the issue of Roma education.

Other institutions, such as the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Demographic Issues and the Directorate for Ethnic and Demographic Issues, also implemented projects with educational components, including two PHARE programs for the support of ethnically mixed schools (2003 and 2004–2006).

As of 2006, there were more than 10 desegregation projects unfolding in Bulgaria, according to the Ministry of Education's own estimates. Most of these projects were developed by NGOs, with little or no support from the Bulgarian government. But, despite their leading role in promoting progressive educational policies, Roma NGOs have been called upon less and less as a resource. The Consultative Council for Education of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities, set up in 2003, included several NGOs

with expertise in the field of education. The Ministry of Education has recently committed to re-establish the Council, but in a new reduced formula.

A reform of the educational law and school financing system is currently underway, and it is expected to bring about more financial stability and independence for the schools. Per-capita financing and delegated budgets have been piloted in recent years in several municipalities, and they are to be expanded nationwide in 2007 and beyond. This new, decentralized system is expected to create strong incentives for increasing Roma enrolment and preventing school drop-out. However, effective monitoring and enforcement needs to be in place to prevent the reporting of “ghost” students who are officially enrolled but do not regularly attend school in practice.

2.2 Employment

The Ministry of Labor only became engaged in Roma issues in 2005. Prior to that date, the ministry did not act as an implementing agency for the Framework Program for Roma, nor did it have its own strategy with respect to Roma. It did not even participate in the drafting process for the DAP. No Roma experts used to work in the Ministry of Labor, even though the vast majority of the beneficiaries for all of the ministry's social assistance programs are Roma.

However, in 2005, a Roma expert on employment was named deputy minister of the Ministry of Labor, an appointment that indicated greater openness toward this area. This deputy minister was later appointed Decade coordinator. As of this writing, the Ministry of Labor had also taken on preparing the Operational Program for Human Resource Development, Bulgaria's programming document for the use of European Social Fund financing. The document will regulate most of the areas covered by the Framework Program for Roma. Roma NGOs participated actively in the development process of the Operational Program “Human Resource Development.” As a result of this, Roma issues are included in a separate chapter, which should ensure that this horizontal policy will find adequate reflection in financing of projects and programs.

Over the past two years, the Ministry of Labor began implementing a series of programs involving

Roma communities, though the programs were not necessarily conceived or tailored for Roma. Most of the pilot programs were funded by the EU, while the larger mainstream programs are funded from the state budget. But these programs have yet to solidify into a coherent long-term strategy tailored to the specific situation of the Roma community. Part of the problem might be the lack of reliable data concerning the employment situation of Roma, a lack that obscures any analytical effort. Another problem might be the lack of coordination between various actions—for example pilot programs, on the one hand, and mainstream, nationwide policies, on the other.

Thus, while the adoption of the National Employment Plan in 2006 represents a major milestone for sectoral policies in Bulgaria, for Roma the event went virtually unnoticed. Roma are not even explicitly mentioned in the list of target groups, which includes a series of disadvantaged populations. At best, Roma are presumed to be served by the various provisions the plan makes for these disadvantaged groups. But, as the disadvantaged category is broad, and includes people with disabilities, the elderly and young college graduates, it is more likely that Roma will fall between the cracks of the various policies designed for these groups than be covered by the wide-blanket approach of the National Employment Plan. Moreover, most policies and programs under the National Employment Plan are aimed at reintegrating the unemployed into the labor market, and it is not clear whether the right mechanisms are in place to promote Roma employment, as a large proportion of Roma were never formally employed to begin with.

Indeed, the very concept of activation that governs all employment policy in Bulgaria has been developed at a theoretical level, with little understanding of actual patterns of behavior for both employers and employees. As a result, the implementation of fair employment policies is blocked by a series of primitive assumptions about potential beneficiaries and the actual functioning of work incentives in practice. For instance, the program From Social Assistance to Employment, one of the most expensive programs developed by the Bulgarian government, offers only a very limited range of employment opportunities to program participants—such as sanitation work or office cleaning work. The program was found to have a negative net impact

on employment, and has been scaled back in the last few years (De Koning, *Mid-Term Evaluation*). On the one hand, local administrators complained that the program was too restrictive, as some of the smaller towns do not have enough such work to offer to potential beneficiaries. On the other hand, the program does not act as a genuine incentive for beneficiaries who are paid only minimum wages, especially if they are from families with a large number of children who receive a host of social benefits, including regular child-rearing allowances (USAID, *The Labor Market in Bulgaria*; Bogdanov and Angelov, “The Integration of the Roma in Bulgaria”).

In 2003, Bulgaria adopted a comprehensive anti-discrimination law based on EU directives in the field. The law offers extensive protections against discrimination on a wide array of grounds, and allows victims to use regular courts as well as an equality body, called the Anti-Discrimination Commission, to seek remedies. The Anti-Discrimination Commission, set up in 2005, has yet to begin working as an effective equality body. In the meantime, courts have taken an active role, ruling in strategic cases brought by NGOs, like the Romani Baht Foundation and the European Roma Rights Centre, in the areas of access to employment and school segregation.

2.3 Health

In Bulgaria there is no centrally produced, comprehensive and regularly updated data on the health situation of Roma. Independent reports, however, show that health outcomes for Roma are sharply different from those of the non-Roma population in Bulgaria (Ministry of Health, *Health Strategy*). For instance, according to a UNDP report on Roma health the child mortality rate among Roma is three times higher than the rate among ethnic Bulgarians; the average life expectancy for Roma is 10 years lower than the country average; and more than 68 percent of Roma households have a chronically sick family member; yet almost half of all Roma are not covered by health insurance (Ministry of Health). Roma are more likely to suffer from diseases of the respiratory system (tuberculosis, silicosis, pulmonary emphysema, etc.) and the locomotor system, because of their living conditions and the kind of unskilled work they

perform (Ministry of Health). Roma often do not have the access enjoyed by the rest of the population to early diagnostics for such illnesses as cancer and cardiovascular diseases. While health legislation makes immunization obligatory for all persons under the age of 18, there are also access barriers to immunization programs. More recently, the appearance of a drug culture in inner-city ghettos has led to a sharp rise in HIV, as well as hepatitis B and C infections, along with other drug-related health problems. Residential segregation puts Roma at a greater physical distance from healthcare facilities, and they often live in areas that are not covered by a general practitioner, which effectively places them outside the healthcare system. Recognizing this, the Ministry of Health has been working on introducing mobile health clinics, so far in five cities. Furthermore, Bulgarian health providers are, as a rule, insensitive to the specific needs of the Roma population and often discriminate against Roma patients—either by providing more superficial, lower-quality services, or, sometimes, by refusing service outright. Ambulances sometimes refuse to pick up patients from Roma neighborhoods (European Roma Rights Centre, *Ambulance*).

In 2003, as part of a PHARE program, the Ministry of Health commissioned a study by the Fact Marketing agency of the healthcare situation of Roma in 15 municipalities across the country. Based on the results of the study, the ministry developed 15 pilot programs, aimed at providing medical and sensitivity training to healthcare professionals working with Roma, and aimed at setting up informal Roma mediators to facilitate communication between Roma communities and healthcare institutions. From the experience of these pilot programs, the ministry developed a health strategy, which is reflected in the DAP. Shorter-term action plans for the implementation of this strategy specify objectives, deadlines, and institutions, as well as financing levels and mechanisms.

In 2005, the Ministry of Labor established a budget line to finance health expenditures for marginalized individuals. Access to this financing is limited to uninsured people and subject to a strict means test. Apparently, the number of people having used this funding is small, which may be due to limited dissemination of the program's availability.

The Ministry of Health has also enacted a number of national programs whose main targets are dis-

advantaged groups, including minorities and Roma. This is the case with a program for HIV-infection prevention and AIDS control, funded by the Global Fund for AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis. The program's basic components included distributing prophylactics in Roma communities. Another program sought to set up clinics in rural areas with mixed populations, including five small clinics in Roma communities.

In one other effort worth mentioning, with the support of the Open Society Institute, 87 health mediators have been trained in the past few years. As of this writing, health mediators are not yet incorporated into the Bulgarian health system. Many, however, began working as part of temporary programs for employment. It is expected that, in 2007, at least 60 of the trained mediators will be permanently employed by local municipalities through a subsidy provided by the Ministry of Finance (Ministry of Health, *Letter*).

2.4 Housing

The housing situation of Roma in Bulgaria is notoriously dire. As large numbers of Roma moved to the cities in the early 1990s, inner-city "ghettos" or "shantytowns," sometimes entirely made up of illegally built homes with no utilities or infrastructure, have expanded alarmingly. The privatization of utility companies exacerbated the difficulties encountered by those living in these "ghettos." Companies began switching services off in order to cut their losses, creating explosive situations in Roma neighborhoods and leading to clashes between the discontented residents and police, who were called to enforce decisions of specific utility companies or simply to maintain public order. Adding to these problems is the issue of the legal status of many Roma settlements. Many buildings have been built illegally, the ownership of the land is sometimes unclear, and cadastre mapping with accurate property registration is rare. According to data produced as part of a PHARE program aiming at improving infrastructure in predominantly Roma areas, the main part of the urban Roma population lives in 100 such ghettos in 88 municipalities across the country (Amalipe). The government itself does not have any nationally representative, regularly updated data on Roma housing as of this writing.

The Bulgarian government has adopted two major programs that began to address housing for Roma: the National Program on Improving the Living Conditions of Ethnic Minorities in Urban Areas (hereinafter, the National Program for Minorities) and the National Program for Improving the Living Conditions of Roma in Bulgaria (hereinafter, the National Program for Roma). Both deal with the needs of urban Roma exclusively, leaving Roma living in rural areas with not even a policy on paper to address their housing situation—even though rural Roma make up almost half of the total Roma population in Bulgaria and they are often more impoverished than those living in urban areas.

The first government initiative, the National Program for Minorities, was started in 2005 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as part of an effort to support housing policy development, based on the 2004 National Housing Strategy. The UNDP worked with the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works, and the National Council for Co-operation on Ethnic and Demographic Issues, to develop a complex strategy based on an integrated, multi-sectoral approach that was modeled on internationally accepted models of best practice. Paradoxically, the vulnerability of the strategy lies precisely in this complexity, which presupposes coordination and complementarity for a wide range of measures taken by a large number of stakeholders. As the implementation of the National Program for Minorities relies on the commitment and voluntary participation of different stakeholders, its success is kept hostage to the fragile consensus of the local actors, which is constantly undermined by a history of competition for resources or sheer animosity. The integrated approach of the National Program for Minorities is unlikely to work unless a certain level of synergy is attained, and so the progressive UNDP-designed policy risks becoming another example of discrepancy between the Bulgarian government's sometimes ambitious policy commitments and its capacity for adequate implementation (Amalipe).

The National Program for Roma, adopted in 2006, is a result of the joint efforts of experts from the Directorate of Ethnic and Demographic Issues, the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Labor,

as well as representatives of the Bulgarian National Association of Municipalities, the UNDP offices in Bulgaria and Roma NGOs. Covering the same time span as the Decade, the National Program for Roma calls for investing in infrastructure developments in Roma neighborhoods, finding alternative locations for some settlements, building new low-income housing from the state budget, and changing the spatial development of segregated Roma areas. The program envisages clear measures, indicators and budget lines, as well as a solid financial commitment from the state budget. Forty percent of the program is to be funded by the state, which gives BGN 1.26 billion. Another 30 percent is supposed to be covered by EU structural funds, another 17 percent is to come from local authorities, and the remainder is to come from beneficiaries or other financial institutions, including banks. The state contribution alone makes the National Program for Roma stand out among other Roma-related programs, which rely primarily on the good will of foreign donors. In addition, the National Program for Roma has the advantage of being a targeted policy, tailored to the specific needs of Roma, while at the same time being mainstreamed in the National Housing Strategy, because it is understood that improving living conditions for Roma helps improve the overall housing situation in Bulgaria. The program is also different in that it provides for the involvement of Roma communities, which can give it much-needed acceptance and legitimacy among its beneficiaries.

While it is too early to assess the implementation of the National Program for Roma, several worrying signals have already appeared. For one thing, local authorities have shown themselves reluctant to contribute their own funds in the pilot phase of the program. The mechanisms for ensuring financing from the state budget also appear unclear: The National Program stipulates that financing will be made available through the budget of the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works “depending on opportunities in the budget” and “within the expenditure limits and dependent on other programs within the budget of the Ministry” (Amalipe). The actual funding for 2006-2007 implementation indicates the drawback of this provision. Only about two percent of the total 10-year budget estimate was allocated for the first two years. While some of this disproportionate allocation can be

justified by the claim that most activities during these first two years are of a preparatory nature, this is too weak an explanation for such a sharp discrepancy in funding.

A more likely explanation is that the measures envisaged for the first two years are not meant to address the core of the problem. Thus, for 2006-2007, activities are concentrated only in municipalities where the Roma population makes up more than 10 percent of the total population. This, in effect, leaves out the worst ghettos in large cities like Sofia, Plovdiv or Burgas, as those cities have numerous, diverse populations, and many Roma living there declare themselves to be either Bulgarian or Turkish. According to a statement of the National Council, the National Program for the Improvement of Living Conditions of Roma is applicable for all settlements (towns and villages). This is

subject to conditions, including whether housing issues are a priority in the respective regional and municipal plans for development and there is a cadastral map of the settlement.

The government also appears to have given a mechanistic reading to the original policy document prepared by the UNDP. The official document circulated by the Ethnic and Demographic Issues Directorate presents only a selective copy-and-paste version of the original document. What has been lost in the process is the logic of interdependence among the various actors and stakeholders, as well as some demonstrative projects that could have served as a model against which local actions could have been checked (Amalipe). Gone, too, are important stakeholders for developing local strategies: local NGOs and the Roma communities themselves.

Croatia

1. INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

1.1 Decade Action Plan Drafting and Adoption

The drafting of the Croatian Decade Action Plan (hereinafter, DAP) began in September 2004, during a series of four workshops (one for each focus area) organized by the Office for National Minorities in the Croatian government. The four workshops involved a good range of stakeholders, with representatives from the relevant ministries and government offices, research institutions, regional authorities, and international and domestic nongovernmental organizations, including Roma activists. There was some imbalance, however, in terms of the relative attention granted to each focus area. Thus, while the education workshop lasted for two days and was attended by 27 participants, and the housing workshop lasted a full day and was attended by 22 participants, the other two focus area workshops were compressed into half a day each. There were only eight participants for the health section and six for the employment section, and out of these attendees, four were Roma NGO representatives who belong to the Commission for Monitoring the Implementation of the National Program for Roma and who attended both workshops.

Following the drafting workshops, the DAP was finalized inside the various ministries in charge of specific focus areas, and, later, in various expert groups

within the Office for National Minorities. According to the head of the Office for National Minorities, the expert groups included some Roma representatives, alongside officials from various ministries and government agencies. The exact number and identity of the participants is not known, as the reports of the proceedings have not been made public. The head of the Office for National Minorities declared that the primary role of the expert groups was to bring the drafts resulting from the workshops in line with the recommendations of the International Steering Committee of the Decade of Roma Inclusion and in line with Croatian law. In December 2004, the draft DAP was brought before the Commission for Monitoring the Implementation of the National Program for Roma, which approved it. The draft was then forwarded to the Coordination Committee for Social Affairs and Human Rights, a standing body within the cabinet whose members are ministry officials. Upon the recommendation of the Coordination Committee, the DAP was passed by the government on March 31, 2005. The text of the DAP was published online in English and Croatian, and in hard copy in Croatian, but not in Romani or Bajas, the two languages spoken by Roma in Croatia.

In the time between the initial focus area workshops and adoption by the government, the draft DAP appears to have undergone significant modifications. A comparison of a September 2004 draft and the final text of the DAP, both available online, reveals major differences. It is not clear where and when these modifications took place, and the reports from the draft-

ing workshops provided by the Office for National Minorities do not make reference to how the drafting and amending of the DAP proceeded once the document left the workshops.

The DAP was officially launched on May 2, 2005, in a much-publicized ceremony at the Croatian National Theatre. It was attended by the Prime Minister and Jadranka Kosor, the Vice Prime Minister and national coordinator for the Decade, who also serves as Minister of Family Affairs, War Veterans, and Intergenerational Solidarity, as well as chair of the Commission for Monitoring the Implementation of the National Program for Roma. In her speech, Vice Prime Minister Kosor evaluated the DAP as very clear and concrete. She said that every year reports will be submitted on the implementation of DAP goals. Roma NGOs and National Minority Councils were present, but were not included among the official speakers at the event. Roma were officially featured only as part of the cultural program of the event, which consisted of a Roma folklore interlude.

1.2 Decade Action Plan Content

The reading of both the English and the Croatian texts of the DAP is complicated by translation issues: The English terms “goal” and “target” can both be translated into Croatian using the same word, *cilj*. The Croatian-language version of the DAP tries to distinguish between the two by using *cilj* to stand for the broadest goals, and the word *mjera* (“measure”) to stand for targets. To make matters even more confusing, the English translation of the Croatian DAP translates *cilj* back into English as “target” and *mjera* as “goal.” Moreover, both concrete measures and broader goals are listed in the same column, in the English version of the DAP, under the heading “goals,” rendering the reading of the DAP even more confusing.

Contrary to the recommendations of the International Steering Committee of the Decade, the Croatian DAP mostly lists absolute indicators, which do not compare the situation of Roma to that of the non-Roma population. Many of the indicators measure progress in terms of the number of beneficiaries or the number of actions carried out toward a specific goal, rather than in terms of outcomes or results. This is

hard to remedy as long as a number of Croatian government officials maintain, as they have done to date, that data collection by ethnicity is not permitted under the current regulations on the protection of personal data. Even though the law allows for exceptions precisely for the purpose of designing public interest policies, the Croatian government has been reluctant to generate the type of disaggregated data, broken down by ethnicity, that would make it possible to accurately assess gaps between Roma and non-Roma in all sectoral fields.

Another shortcoming of the DAP is that the deadline column for 48 out of 57 measures is listed as “in the course of the Decade,” sometimes adding “more intensively” in one of the early years of the Decade. This makes it hard to assess how various measures will be phased in relation to each other. The lack of intermediate deadlines also makes it difficult to measure implementation progress at specific moments in the course of the Decade. Moreover, some of the measures for which the DAP sets a specific deadline in 2005 were not included in the 2005 action plan, an oversight that casts doubt on the consistency with which deadlines are understood and monitored by the government.

The DAP states that cost estimates for actions under the Decade are hard to make. Still, the estimated budget for the whole Decade is HRK 60,845,700 (around EUR 8.2 million). A total of HRK 2,852,000 (around EUR 385,000) of this has been secured from the state budget for implementation in the year 2005. For 2006, funding has been increased by 430 percent to HRK 11,886,670 (around EUR 1.6 million). Two European Union PHARE grants (EUR 1,300,000 for 2005 and EUR 2,500,000 for 2006) have also been listed under the project “Providing Support for Roma” on the government’s Decade website. The government is supposed to match 30 percent of each of these two amounts, but, as of this writing, it is not clear what amount of government funding will go toward DAP implementation or toward the implementation of the National Program for Roma and the DAP combined.

1.3 Decade Coordination and Implementation Mechanisms

The official government website providing information on the Decade lists Vice Prime Minister Kosor as the national coordinator for the Decade. Vice Prime Minister Kosor also serves as chair of the Commission for Monitoring the Implementation of the National Program for Roma (hereinafter, the Monitoring Commission), but is not listed as a member of the Working Group for Monitoring the Implementation of the Decade Action Plan (hereinafter, the Working Group) on the official website.

Much of the day-to-day work relating to the coordination of the Decade, however, is done not by the coordinator's office, but rather by the Office for National Minorities, an expert service of the government. The Office for National Minorities has five employees, none of whom are Roma. It is headed by Milena Klajner, who is also the head of the Working Group monitoring the implementation of the DAP and a member of the Monitoring Commission. Indeed, the Office for National Minorities fulfills day-to-day administrative and technical functions between the regular meetings of both the Working Group and the Monitoring Commission, which are made up entirely of volunteers. The Office for National Minorities, thus, holds powers beyond those of a mere administrative or expert body. It also receives some of the funding allocated from the state budget to Roma programs, and, as of 2006, EU PHARE funding, under a project entitled "Providing Support for the Roma" began to be administered through the Office for National Minorities.

The Office for National Minorities can also recommend members of NGOs and/or National Minorities Councils for membership in the Working Group and the Monitoring Commission. The head of the Office for National Minorities said the members that his office recommends are supposed to reflect the geographical and cultural diversity of Roma communities and the suggestions of Roma NGOs themselves. As a result, the current membership of the Working Group includes four Roma representatives. One problem with the selection process for both the Working Group and the Monitoring Commission is that there are no official, publicly available criteria for choosing the Roma representatives who are approved by the government.

On the government side, the current membership of the Working Group is spread across a wide, apparently random range of seniority and decision-making powers within governmental structures. It consists of one assistant minister, two heads of departments within ministries, one senior expert consultant and one expert consultant. According to the government decree establishing the Working Group, ministers in each relevant line ministry appoint a person who is in charge of Roma issues and, as part of the Working Group, monitors the implementation of the DAP. Relevant ministries include: the Ministry of Science, Education, and Sports (hereinafter, the Ministry of Education); the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (hereinafter, the Ministry of Health); the Ministry of the Economy, Labor, and Entrepreneurship (hereinafter, the Labor Ministry); the Ministry of Environmental Protection, Physical Planning, and Construction (hereinafter the Ministry of Environment); and the Ministry of the Sea, Tourism, Transport, and Development. With the exception of the Ministry of Education, which created a Roma unit in June 2006, each of the five line ministries represented in the Working Group have added Roma-related tasks as an additional responsibility for ministry employees who have other duties to fulfill as part of their job description. None of these ministries have employed Roma in these positions, and there have been no measures to promote the employment of Roma.

The first meeting of the Working Group was held on July 18, 2005. While the decree governing the establishment and functioning of the Working Group, published on the government's Decade website, does not specify how often the group should meet, it appears that, to date, the group has been meeting on a fairly regular basis, about once every two months. The Working Group is subordinated to the Monitoring Commission, which is a body charged with overseeing the implementation of the national strategy on Roma. Much of the membership of the Monitoring Commission overlaps with that of the Working Group. But the Monitoring Commission is wider in that it also includes representatives of additional ministries (Internal Affairs, Justice, and Culture), local authorities from the heavily Roma area of Medimurje County, and authorities from the capital of Zagreb. Many of the attributes of the Monitoring Commission overlap with those of the Working Group, as do the above-described

procedures for appointing Roma NGO representatives. Both bodies have a merely advisory role. Government ministries and agencies, which are vested with actual implementing and reporting powers, are assigned the bulk of the Decade-related funding from the state budget. The little influence the advisory bodies have comes from decisions relating to the distribution of Office for National Minorities funding through the Monitoring Commission, though this mechanism is not clearly spelled out in any regulations. The Working Group and the Monitoring Commission can also leverage influence upon local authorities informally. This may explain why both bodies focused efforts on addressing individual issues on a local level, bypassing the development of systemic plans and reforms to address the goals of the DAP.

An annual priority plan was adopted in 2005, but it included cost estimates for only a small proportion of the listed measures. Since the adoption of the DAP and the yearly action plan for 2005, no action plan was developed, for either 2006 or 2007. When interviewed for the purposes of this report, the head of the Office for National Minorities indicated that a plan for 2007 was in the works, but the deadline for its finalization or adoption by the government was not clear.

Several ministries appear to have submitted draft reports on DAP implementation to the Office for National Minorities but, as of this writing, no official report on Croatia's progress under the Decade has been made public.

2. FOCUS AREAS

2.1 Education

Some data on Roma education is available in the 2001 national census, but, as the number of persons declaring themselves Roma to official pollsters is less than one-quarter of the generally accepted estimates, this data is not considered reliable. According to the census, 32.6 percent of Roma more than 15 years of age have no schooling at all, only 18.8 percent have completed elementary school, and only 5.9 percent gradu-

ated secondary schools. For women, the figures are even more alarming, as 44.2 percent have no schooling at all. As compared to Roma, only 2.9 percent of the non-Roma population has no schooling at all. Literacy rates among Roma are very low, and a significant proportion of Roma children apparently never attend school. Those who do go to school tend to drop out before completing their primary education.

Primary and secondary education for Roma is offered only in Croatian. According to independent reports, Roma students in areas with larger Roma populations, such as Medimurje County, are sometimes placed in segregated classes that follow a remedial or simplified curriculum (Roma Education Fund, *Needs Assessment*; European Roma Rights Center, *Shadow Report*; Amnesty International, *False Starts*). This curriculum is often modeled after the special curricula developed for students with intellectual disabilities, and it does not provide a quality education that would allow students to graduate to secondary school. The number of such segregated classes in Croatia is relatively small, and NGO reports indicate that they are mostly found in those counties with larger Roma populations. No desegregation policy was adopted by the Ministry of Education. Moreover, in a recent ruling on a case of educational segregation in Medimurje County, the Croatian Constitutional Court ruled that the establishment of separate classes for Roma students in primary schools is not discriminatory, provided that these classes follow a modified curriculum that aims to assist students in developing the necessary language skills to be included in regular Croatian-language classes. The establishment of similar classes in the later grades, however, is, in the Court's opinion, unconstitutional (HINA, "Posebni").

Some measures aimed at facilitating access to quality education for Roma students are in place in Croatia. For instance, Croatia has a free preparatory program of approximately 250 hours as part of its preschool education system. Preschools offer one warm meal a day and some transportation, where necessary, in cooperation with local authorities and schools. A relatively small number of Roma children participate in the preparatory program—partly because Roma children do not attend preschool education to begin with, and partly because Roma parents are often not aware of the existence of this free program. Some Roma minority

education preschools, as well as local government preschools that have Roma students, receive state, Roma Education Fund and Open Society Institute funding, but their number and capacity is far lower than that of the state system. Moreover, attendance of these NGO-run programs, which range from day-care to regular 10-hour kindergartens, is usually shorter-term and does not substitute for attendance in the state-run two-year preschool system (Roma Education Fund, *Situation*). According to the Office of National Minorities, there were 707 Roma children enrolled in eight preschool programs in 2006-2007, up from 345 in 2005-2006.

Primary education in state schools is free, and the government announced free textbook provision beginning with the 2006-2007 school year. Funding is available for transportation and school transfers, and the implicit understanding among some school administrators is that this provision is intended to prevent segregation. In practice, however, integration does not appear to happen, as school administrators often succumb to pressure from non-Roma parents and place Roma in separate classes (Roma Education Fund, *Situation*).

Few measures to encourage school attendance are in place, other than free tuition and textbooks, and there is no detailed strategy to prevent drop-outs. Some enrolment data is available: According to the Ministry of Education, 3,010 Roma children were enrolled in school at the beginning of the fall 2006 term, a substantial increase from 1,013 in 2005. But the Ministry does not currently collect data on school drop-outs or non-attending enrolled students.

Funding is available for Roma teaching assistants through the Ministry of Education. However, teaching assistants are mostly employed as translators or discipline enforcers in the classroom, and they do not spend much time cooperating with teachers on course planning and delivery. The status of these assistants is still unclear, as there is no legal framework for their work, and they are consequently employed only on one-year contracts. No training for teaching assistants is available. Currently there are about 20 teaching assistants in Croatia, most of them employed in schools with higher Roma populations in Medimurje County (Roma Education Fund, *Situation*).

Affirmative action measures in secondary schools include preferential scoring for Roma seeking admis-

sion and more intensive vocational guidance. Moreover, in the 2005-2006 academic year, the Ministry of Education provided up to 74 scholarships to Roma, as well as free accommodation in dormitories. The vast majority of Roma students in secondary schools, by the ministry's own account, are enrolled in three-year vocational schools, and only a handful of Roma students in four-year high schools have received scholarships. This indicates that most Roma in secondary schools are in three-year vocational schools that offer lower qualifications than four-year programs. Vocational school graduates who want to receive equivalent qualifications must subsequently attend a degree program in a community college (Roma Education Fund, *Situation*).

Similar measures are taken at the university level, where Roma students begin receiving a stipend throughout the course of their studies. There is no quota system in Croatia, but there is a practice according to which Roma students can submit additional recommendations to the deans' office. Anecdotal evidence suggests that these recommendations, often provided by Roma organizations, do carry weight during the admissions process. Still, the number of Roma university students in Croatia is very low: According to the Ministry of Education, only six Roma students receive the mentioned stipends as of this writing.

There are no minority language curricula developed for Roma in Croatia, and no education whatsoever is available either in Romani or in Bajas, the two languages spoken by the Croatian Roma community. Little information on Roma is included in mainstream curricula, and it is mostly in relation to World War II. Where such information is included, independent reports have noted that it often tends to convey a negative image of Roma and to play on stereotypes (European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance, *Third Report on Croatia*).

One other measure worth mentioning is a government-funded adult literacy program that started in 2002 and provides adults with the possibility to complete primary education through elementary schools and open universities (Ministry of Education, *Za Hrvatsku pismenost*). Unfortunately, many Roma in Croatia are not aware of the existence of such second-chance programs. In the 2005-2006 school year, 83 people were reported to be included in the literacy programs. This number is very small, especially

given that 23 of them are inmates in the Turopolje juvenile detention center who participate in the literacy classes as part of a continuing education program (Ministry of Education, *Report 2005-2006*).

The DAP does not adequately address many of the problems that Roma face in the area of education. For instance, no clear understanding of desegregation measures emerges from the DAP. Some sections are merely vague on this issue: One action calls for reducing the number of Roma-only classes by providing the same enrolment conditions for all children, without specifying what “same” means and how “same conditions” can lead to desegregation. The logic of other sections is simply unclear: Desegregation appears only as means for developing multicultural education, a construction that indicates some confusion between cause and effect. Moreover, the indicators used to assess progress are the number of children in desegregated classes and the number of desegregated classes. Without comprehensive data on the ethnic breakdown of school children in each class and the scale of segregation in Croatia, and without a clear definition of segregation and integration based on specific thresholds, the indicator cannot provide a measure of even relative progress on desegregation, much less on the loosely related development of multicultural education. Finally, the fact that no funding is associated with any actions relating to desegregation only raises further concern as to their actual implementation.

2.2 Employment

There is no reliable, periodically produced data on Roma employment in Croatia. The Croatian Employment Bureau began producing data disaggregated by ethnicity in 2005, but it only covers those Roma who are officially registered as unemployed. Assessments are further complicated by the fact that many Roma in Croatia do not identify themselves as Roma for the purposes of the census. Thus it is more accurate to refer to estimates (unofficial as well as government-produced) that place the Roma population somewhere between 30,000 and 40,000 (Kusan and Zoon, *Report*; Liegeois and Gheorghe, *Roma/Gypsies*). For instance, in 2003, the National Program for Roma said that Croatia has

21,381 Roma receiving social assistance. This number is more than double the total number of Roma declared in the 2001 census (9,463), and it can be assumed to represent at least half of the estimated Roma population. Indeed, 74 percent of Roma interviewed for a government-funded survey by the Ivo Pilar Institute mentioned social assistance as one of their most important sources of income (Stambuk, *How Do Croatian Roma Live?*). Furthermore, research conducted by the Croatian Office for Protection of Family, Motherhood, and Youth in 2002 (Uzelac, *Struktura romskih obitelji*), indicated that more than 89 percent of Roma households do not have a single member with regular permanent income. According to the study, only 6.5 percent of Roma are permanently employed, while more than 57 percent are registered as unemployed with the Croatian Employment Bureau. The study also found that 18 percent of Roma are neither working nor looking for a job, and 13 percent are working in the gray economy, either occasionally or on a regular basis. Researchers and independent observers agree that unemployment is even higher among Roma women, mostly because they are generally less educated than men, and also because of labor divisions along traditional gender lines in the family (Kusan and Zoon).

There is evidence that discrimination against Roma seeking employment is widespread in Croatia (Kusan, *Report*; European Roma Rights Center, *Shadow Report*). Activists report that Roma face many discriminatory practices, such as employers claiming that jobs are “already filled” when Roma appear for an interview (Kusan). An Open Society Institute-commissioned study revealed that 79 percent of non-Roma believe that they have a better chance at being hired over a Roma with the same qualifications (Strategic Marketing Research, *Draft Research*). Amendments to Croatian labor law in 2004 included some anti-discrimination protections in line with the EU standards on employment, but a comprehensive anti-discrimination law that would protect against racial discrimination in all sectoral areas has yet to be adopted in Croatia. Although an anti-discrimination strategy has been in the works since 2004, as of this writing, the document had not been adopted by the government (European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance).

The employment section of the DAP consists of a mere seven actions, many of them of a very gen-

eral nature. A clearer picture about the mechanisms for implementing the goals under the Decade can be gleaned only by stepping outside the framework of the DAP: As six out of the seven actions listed in the employment section of the DAP overlap with similar measures in the National Plan for Roma, one can extrapolate the more detailed descriptions from the National Plan to the DAP. Additionally, in 2006 the Croatian Employment Bureau published on its website a detailed description of measures taken under three of the actions listed in the DAP (Croatian Employment Bureau, *Measures*). These descriptions further clarified the manner in which the general outlines of the DAP are interpreted in practice.

Where available, the financing is calculated per person. Thus, totaling the per year number of people encompassed by three of the DAP measures which are further described in a separate Croatian Employment Bureau document, one reaches the conclusion that about 2,150 persons are envisaged as beneficiaries of the employment action plan for the entire duration of the Decade. This is obviously insufficient to address the chronic unemployment problems of the Roma population in Croatia, especially since almost half of the beneficiaries of the DAP are supposed to be engaged in short-term public works (for which usually the term of the contract does not exceed nine months), which represent a merely temporary, palliative measure.

The figures presented on Croatian Employment Bureau web pages indicate that a total of 220 Roma were employed or trained through these measures by the end of November 2006. This exceeds the 215 people originally envisaged per annum in the DAP. However, 194 of the 220 were employed in short-term public works programs, which means that only 26 people were included in long-term training and employment programs. The DAP financing column indicates that, each year, 100 persons were supposed to be hired for public works, 100 more were supposed to undergo vocational training, and at least 15 were supposed to enter subsidized employment. But the figures provided by the Croatian Employment Bureau indicate that 12 people entered subsidized employment and that vocational training measures included altogether 14, less than 20 percent of the originally planned number of beneficiaries. Meanwhile, the number of Roma hired for short-term public works was double the amount

planned, possibly because funding became available as the other measures were not implemented.

Many of the activities presented as falling under the goals of the Decade are in fact part of the regular workload of the Croatian Employment Bureau. The services described in these activities are permanently available to—and are sometimes mandatory for—all registered unemployed, regardless of ethnicity. It is not clear whether any specific adjustments in service delivery and outreach need to be made, and are indeed being made, to make these mainstream activities work for Roma. For instance, reports of the Croatian Employment Bureau to the Office for National Minorities indicate that the first action listed in the employment section of the DAP, “training and employment of Roma in all branches of industry (especially young people and women),” is carried out by means of group and individual counselling, job-search and self-presentation workshops (Croatian Employment Bureau, *Report*)—activities that are part of the regular workload of the Employment Bureau and are not targeted specifically to Roma.

Finally, government reports on measures to improve on the employment situation of Roma reveal at times a curious understanding of what such measures may be. For instance, government reports (though not the DAP) list professional orientation for students graduating elementary schools among the measures benefiting Roma. Roma undergoing such orientation receive certificates that give them certain advantages when competing for secondary school enrolment. However, in order to receive these certificates, they must first be evaluated as disabled—either physically or intellectually, according to the Head of the Croatian Employment Bureau’s Department for Mediation and Active Employment Measures, who was interviewed for the purposes of this report. It is not clear, therefore, why this was reported as an activity in support of Roma employment. The Croatian Employment Bureau reported to the Office for National Minorities that such orientation courses were held for all Roma pupils in Medimurje County (the total number is not known), and that 20 of them received such certificates (Croatian Employment Bureau, *Report*).

Other measures included in the DAP, despite the fact that they have high potential for success, and despite having detailed, functioning implementation mechanisms detailed by the Croatian Employment Bureau,

have not been utilized. Training for a known employer, for instance, is an active employment measure which matches job candidates to potential employers, facilitates the training of candidates and new employees, and provides subsidies for salaries for a determined period of time. Unfortunately, the Croatian Employment Bureau reports that no job-seekers have been placed through this program to date (Croatian Employment Bureau, *Report*).

2.3 Health

Apparently, no reliable data on the health situation of Roma is collected regularly in Croatia. Reports by NGOs and intergovernmental bodies, however, indicate that the health outcomes of Roma are significantly worse than for non-Roma (European Roma Rights Centre, *Ambulance*). In addition, a significant number of Roma in Croatia do not have access to basic health insurance. Health insurance regulations preclude unemployed persons who fail to register changes in their employment status within a specified time frame from accessing health insurance (Kusan and Zoon). Lack of citizenship or other documentation also seems to preclude a certain number of Roma from accessing health insurance (European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance; Kusan and Zoon). Meanwhile, independent reports have pointed out discriminatory practices against Roma in access to health services, including: discriminatory attitudes and practices of medical personnel, failure of community nurses to visit Roma settlements, problems in access to emergency care, and denial of medical documentation to victims of police brutality and racially motivated violence (European Roma Rights Centre, *Ambulance* and *Shadow Report*). The authors of this report have also been informed that segregation in obstetric-gynecological and pediatric care is still a practice in some healthcare facilities in Medimurje County.

The health section of the DAP contains only five areas of action. The indicators are specific enough, though, for the most part, they are still phrased in absolute terms. One exception is the indicator on vaccination rates, which compares vaccination rates among Roma and non-Roma children. The deadlines are more specific, but, like other sections of the DAP,

many deadlines in the health section are listed as the whole course of the Decade. Three out of five actions have set financing associated with them. Local authorities are the sources for most of the financing listed in the health section of the DAP. This could be a major implementation obstacle: Previous experiences show that this system is not likely to work in practice, as local authorities are not eager to allocate funding to Roma programs, and the central government does not have enough leverage to push them to do so.

One important suggestion was made at the DAP drafting workshop: that healthcare should be provided to those who are otherwise not entitled to basic health insurance. But this idea was not adequately translated into the official DAP. The fact that the 2005 action plan mentions that healthcare is provided through “basic health insurance”—which is only available to those who qualify and is not available to many Roma for a variety of reasons—gives further cause for concern that the item did not retain its original meaning during the transition from draft DAP version to official document. This wording means that the most vulnerable groups of Roma population, those who for various reasons do not fulfill legal requirements for basic health insurance, will not be able to obtain adequate access to health protection as part of the Decade implementation process.

While it is commendable that the health section of the DAP foresees some data collection on the health situation of Roma, the implementing plan for this action indicates that the results will be far from reliable. The financing column mentions that one county will be surveyed per year. Even assuming that the seven counties with higher Roma populations will take priority—a fact not explicitly mentioned in the DAP—this means that more than half of the Decade will pass before relatively representative data will be available. Moreover, some of the data collected in the early years of the Decade will have already become obsolete. The chances of following even this flawed plan are already slim: It appears that, due to lack of funding, data collection has been conducted only in selected localities, rather than entire counties. This situation further calls into question the accuracy of the results.

Most of the activities undertaken to improve the health situation of Roma to date consist of locally conducted surveys and studies, as well as information

drives in particular localities. Some pilot projects have also been funded, but the outcomes of these projects are still unknown. Immunization efforts have also been conducted in areas with higher Roma populations, as evidenced by an immunization campaign conducted in 2005 in the Roma settlement Rujevica near Rijeka. But progress assessment is difficult in the absence of adequate data collection and information about other, similar campaigns. According to information provided by the Office of National Minorities for the purposes of this report, 84.8 percent of Roma children enrolled in preschool programs are immunized, 3.8 percent are partially immunized and 11.4 percent are not immunized. Overall, most children in Croatia are immunized by the time they enter primary school, sometimes right at the entry point, by the school itself.

Another measure whose implementation is problematic is the training of Roma health professionals. It appears that nothing has been done in this direction as of this writing. No government reports mention any activities in this regard, and representatives of the Ministry of Health and the National Institute for Public Health interviewed for the purposes of this report could not present any information, either on past actions or on future plans to implement this measure. The authors of the report are aware of four young Roma training in a vocational secondary school in the Zagreb area to become medical technicians and nurses. But their education is facilitated by a scholarship scheme of the Ministry of Education, not by the Ministry of Health.

2.4 Housing

Roma in Croatia frequently live in segregated settlements, in houses that were often built illegally, on private or public land at the edges of larger towns and municipalities. As a result, they often do not have access to public utilities, such as electricity or running water, and are denied basic services, such as garbage collection or telephone connections (UNDP, *Human Development Report*; European Roma Rights Centre, *Shadow Report*).

While the government has commissioned studies on the housing situation of Roma, these studies have not gone beyond counting Roma settlements and urban neighborhoods (Stambuk). The studies develop a typol-

ogy of Roma housing, but fail to investigate the causes and patterns of housing rights violations. Independent reports, however, have helped develop a clearer picture. According to a recent United Nations Development Programme study, almost 50 percent of Roma families live in less than 35 square meters, and 11 percent of these live in less than 10 square meters. Roma occupy 0.66 rooms per household member, compared to the majority population, which occupies 1.25 rooms on average. Ten percent of Roma live in “slums,” but the same is true of only 2 percent of the majority population. Sixty percent of Roma households do not have indoor plumbing, while 4 percent of non-Roma live in such conditions (UNDP).

Social housing is not available to Roma in practice. The system for awarding social housing in Croatia is extremely complicated and non-transparent, and official criteria indirectly discriminate against Roma. Applicants for social housing are awarded points for years in permanent employment, and they are required to prove continuous residence. Neither criteria is typically available to unemployed Roma, who often live in unregistered housing in illegal settlements (Zoon). The authors of this report know of only one instance in which the government developed social housing for Roma: The Donja Dubrava settlement, which, after being struck by a flood, was relocated in integrated housing bought with local and central financing in neighboring villages.

Some measures to improve the housing situation of Roma are already in place. For instance, a PHARE program co-funded and administered by the government in 2005 and 2006 invested in infrastructure reconstruction in four settlements in Medimurje County. Almost EUR 4,000,000 has already been allocated for this purpose, but this represents less than the absorption capacity expected in Croatia. Indeed, the Ministry of the Sea, Tourism and Transportation (hereinafter, the Ministry of Transportation) has publicly stated that local authorities need to be more proactive in developing infrastructure projects and asking for central co-financing on such projects. The Ministry of Transportation itself has co-financed two infrastructure projects for the course of the Decade.

Meanwhile, measures regarding the legalization of settlements have registered some progress in implementation. For instance, a total of 12 counties (out

of the 14 that were required to do so) have developed plans for improving conditions in Roma communities. The plans include detailed financing estimates and potential sources of funding. Specific locations are also being targeted: Before Croatia joined the Decade, only two locations where Roma lived fulfilled all conditions for legalization—including the drafting of physical zoning plans by local authorities, with funding from the Ministry of Environment—but, as of this writing, 11 locations had fulfilled all the conditions. According to the Office of National Minorities, nine out of 13 settlements in Medimurje County have been legalized.

The housing section of the DAP was drafted during a one-day workshop attended by representatives of most stakeholders and relevant government agencies. It is much more specific than other sections of the DAP and contains a detailed narrative part that describes all measures. It divides larger, long-term goals into short-term measures that contribute towards the achievement of the larger goals. It often lists the role of each implementing institution in relation to the other implementers, not just the names of the implementers in no particular order, as is the case with other sections of the DAP.

The indicators, however, are set in absolute terms, and usually measure inputs, such as funding or land allocation, rather than outputs. Deadlines are usually non-specific and are set by default to the entire duration of the Decade. Furthermore, no specific funding is listed for any of the activities. Instead, the funding column of the DAP merely lists potential sources for financing—such as local authorities, who have, to date, proven reluctant to allocate funds to housing programs benefiting Roma—or it says that funding sources are to be determined at a later date.

In contrast, the Ministry of Environment has set an example of good practice by allocating increasingly large budgets for urban planning in the areas inhabited by Roma over the first three years of the Decade. In 2005, the Ministry of Environment reported spending approximately EUR 43,000 towards developing urban planning projects for Roma under the Decade. The funding came from dedicated budget lines for Roma areas, as well as from supplemental funds obtained from regularly budgeted activities. By 2006, the Ministry had more than doubled the sums secured from various sources for the same purpose. For 2007, the Ministry of Environment estimates its expenditures for urban planning in mostly-Roma areas at EUR 137,000.

Czech Republic

1. INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

1.1 Decade Action Plan Drafting

The Czech Decade Action Plan (hereinafter, DAP) was prepared by the Office of the Government Council for Roma Community Affairs (hereinafter, the Government Office for Roma), in cooperation with representatives of relevant line ministries: the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (hereinafter, the Ministry of Labor), the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports (hereinafter, the Ministry of Education), the Ministry of Regional Development, and the Ministry of Health. The director of the Government Office for Roma, Czeslaw Walek, developed early drafts of the DAP and presented them to the Decade Committee. The Decade Committee had been formed in March 2004 for the purpose of advising on the Decade of Roma Inclusion within the Government Office for Roma. The committee was initially chaired by Government Commissioner for Human Rights Jan Jarab. In October 2004, when Jarab moved to a position within the European Commission, the assistant Deputy Prime Minister Ivo Hartman took over the chairmanship of the Decade Committee and the coordination of Decade activities.

Representatives of Roma civic groups and international institutions were invited to take part in a series of workshops aimed at designing the sectoral focus areas for action. These workshops appear to be the only tool for providing consultation with representatives of non-

governmental organizations, and they involved very few people. There were five participants in the education workshop, four in health, and three each in housing and employment—most of them representing ministries or government agencies. One or, in the case of the education workshop, two Roma representatives were present in each workshop, but these participants report that their influence on the actual design of the DAP was minimal. Even the three Roma representatives on the Decade Committee (one each from the Athinganoi and Romea NGOs and one working as an advisor on Roma issues to the municipality of Pardubice) report that, though they were consulted on communications strategies, they were not involved in the actual process of drafting the DAP.

The official decision to join the Decade, and the approval of the DAP, can be found in Government Resolution 136 from January 26, 2005. On February 2, 2005, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Justice Pavel Nemeč signed the Decade Declaration at the official launch of Decade of Roma Inclusion in Sofia.

1.2 Decade Action Plan Content

The Czech DAP is based on the Concept for Roma Integration in the Czech Republic (hereinafter, the Roma Integration Concept), a national governmental strategy for Roma. By the government's own admission, the Roma Integration Concept is not being adequately implemented. On November 5, 2006, Jan Litomisky,

the head of the Government Human Rights Council, stated in a television debate that the Roma Integration Concept was failing. Roma NGOs and other independent observers concur in this evaluation. Unfortunately, as most of the objectives and activities listed in the DAP overlap with those in the Roma Integration Concept, there is a danger that the problems associated with the implementation of the concept will carry over to the implementation of the DAP at the local and regional level.

As it stands now, the DAP enumerates a series of general directions for action, followed by a list of more detailed areas of activity. Clear, specific deadlines are set for most of the listed actions, and the few exceptions are for activities where the implementation schedule is set for the duration of the entire Decade. Most of the specific deadlines set in the DAP appear realistic, as they are based on timeline estimations for government activities that are already ongoing.

But, in most cases, the formulation of activities in the DAP, as well as the assignment of responsibilities, are vague enough to leave plenty of room for inaction by central, regional and local authorities. Moreover, the indicators themselves are not clear. Generally, progress is understood as a mere increase in the number of Roma beneficiaries of a particular measure, with no specific benchmark and no understanding of what the relevant variable among non-Roma would be. As there is no baseline data for most of the listed activities, measuring progress in the implementation of the current Czech DAP is virtually impossible. The government report on Decade implementation in 2006 recognizes this shortcoming, stating that “for most of the objectives that were supposed to be fulfilled in 2006, there is missing statistical data, as well as a qualitative evaluation, therefore it is not possible to say to what extent they were fulfilled and what was their efficiency” (Government of the Czech Republic, *Report 2006*). The report also says, “Each ministry sees [this as] the main obstacle in ensuring the effective monitoring, since it is not possible to define some concepts, on which the indicators of measurement are based, such as Rom, Romani family, Romani community; it is not clear how many Romani children are also from a socio-culturally disadvantaged environment, and which are indicators for some educational objectives.”

Some sections of the DAP are also woefully underdeveloped. For example, the health section of the

action plan has no measures listed other than the training and employment of health mediators with financing from European Union Structural Funds. Even this one measure in the area of health does not appear to be thoroughly thought out, as the indicator listed next to it is the number of (presumably Roma) beneficiaries, and the monitoring tool for the effectiveness of the measure in improving the health outcomes of Roma is puzzlingly identified as “sociological surveys.”

One other problem with the DAP is that it does not adequately reflect cross-cutting priorities. In particular, gender is not incorporated in any of the measures listed in the DAP. However, the 2005 report on Decade implementation reflects an approach that is more sensitive to cross-cutting priorities than the DAP, as it has a special chapter on gender, as well as chapters on poverty and discrimination (Government of the Czech Republic, *Report 2005*). Moreover, gender-sensitive programs are being implemented, even though this is not reflected in the DAP. For instance, in 2006 the Government Office for Roma acted as partners in two projects that were carried out by NGOs and targeted Roma women and girls: The first was a national meeting of Roma women organized by the NGO Manushe, and the second was a political training session implemented by the Roma NGOs Athinganoi and Manushe. This training resulted in three Roma women candidates running in local elections. One of these candidates was elected to office. Another trainee is currently working as Coordinator for Equal Opportunities in the central government.

1.3 Decade Coordination and Implementation

From the establishment of the Decade Committee in March 2004, until the parliamentary elections of June 2006, the Decade coordination and implementation structures functioned relatively smoothly. Those coordinating the Decade met fairly regularly and communicated informally between meetings. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Justice Hartman was national coordinator for the Decade until the parliamentary elections in June 2006. But the indecisive 2006 elections were followed by a long period of political negotiations, and the new cabinet led by Prime

Minister Mirek Topolánek did not take office until January 2007. In this unstable political climate, for more than six months, all Decade-related activities were carried out by Manager of the Decade Jaroslav Maroušek, without any involvement from the office of the Decade coordinator since there was no one appointed.

In January 2007, Minister without portfolio Džamila Stehliková took over as the Decade coordinator. The day-to-day operations relating to the Decade, however, are run through the Government Office for Roma, which is responsible for coordinating the implementation of all governmental policies on Roma. The Government Office for Roma carries out its Decade coordination duties with the assistance of the Decade Committee, which acts as an advisory body and which includes three representatives of Roma civil society. Moreover, some line ministries have civil servants who, in addition to their other regular duties, are specifically assigned to Decade coordination tasks. For instance, the Ministry of Education has tasked Decade coordination and implementation to a civil servant of Roma origin, Margarita Wagner.

One weak link in Decade implementation, acknowledged by the government in the 2006 draft report on Decade implementation, is cooperation with local authorities. Neither the Government Office for Roma nor any of the line ministries appear to have contacted municipalities about Decade plans and implementation. According to the representative of the Government Office for Roma, as of early 2007, most of the regions have strategic plans for Roma integration, but there are questions regarding quality because the plans were developed on local initiative, without any consultation with central coordination structures.

The Government Office for Roma produces yearly reports on Decade implementation. The first Decade report, covering 2005, was passed by Government Resolution on March 8, 2006. In addition to providing detailed information on specific activities and recommendations for the future, it tasked coordination mechanisms to submit a 2006 report together with the Decade budget proposals for 2007 (Government of the Czech Republic, *Report 2005*). The very existence of this reporting and tasking mechanism is commendable, as it is a first step in ensuring government accountability for the commitments made under the Decade.

The reports offer some details of government activities, although the 2006 Decade implementation report does not list anything relating to the implementation of the employment objectives listed in the DAP. Moreover, the reports also point out that, in the absence of comprehensive baseline data and of well-designed indicators, it is virtually impossible to assess progress. Even though the Roma Integration Concept, after which the Czech DAP was modeled, is reviewed annually, and has had specific indicators attached to it since the beginning of the Decade, the Czech Republic still lacks an adequate methodology for data collection and progress assessment where Roma are concerned. Thus, the most recent report on the Decade (Government of the Czech Republic, *Report 2006*) proposes that the government initiate a process to redesign indicators and collection tools for data disaggregated by ethnicity. A first step in this process was the January 4, 2006 passage of Government Resolution 8, which specifies the need to have a concept for the long-term monitoring of the situation of Roma communities. Pursuant to this resolution, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Justice committed to introducing a systematic, comprehensive monitoring methodology, which will allow for annual progress reviews, by December 31, 2007.

Another obstacle in the implementation of the Decade is the absence of specific funding earmarked for activities that fall under the DAP. Decade coordination and administration costs are covered through a small, separate line in the state budget that allocates funds to the Government Office for Roma—as well as through additional funds from the Open Society Institute and others. The total budget for Decade coordination activities in 2005 was CZK 913,370, a little more than EUR 32,000 (Government of the Czech Republic, *Report 2005*); in 2006 there was only a marginal increase in coordination allocations over 2005. But funding dedicated to substantive activities under the Decade is harder to track. The DAP mentions that each ministry will allocate money to activities under the Decade, generally either through the state budget or through funding allocated by the European Social Fund, yet no ministry prepared specific budget lines for DAP implementation for their 2006 or 2007 budgets. The draft 2006 report lists a series of programs that are mostly paid for from the European Social Fund, but also partially

funded from the state budget. These programs primarily cover the areas of social assistance and education for the disadvantaged and total almost CZK 490,000,000 (approximately EUR 17,500,000) (Government of the Czech Republic, *Report 2006*). It is impossible, however, to determine how much of this funding actually went to activities benefiting Roma under the Decade, as many of the listed programs target broader categories of beneficiaries.

2. FOCUS AREAS

2.1 Education

Because the 2001 Act on the Rights of Members of National Minorities prevents state administration bodies from collecting data on ethnic minorities, there is no data on Roma educational enrolment and attainment in the Czech Republic. NGOs and international organizations have conducted some independent studies and surveys (European Roma Rights Centre, *Stigmata*; Roma Education Fund, *Advancing Education*; UNDP, *Tvare chudoby*), but the results of these one-off efforts are neither nationally representative nor comparable, as the methodology for data collection varies.

Nonetheless, NGOs and independent observers looking into Roma education concur that there are gross disparities between Roma and non-Roma in Czech schools, both in terms of opportunities and in terms of outcomes. For instance, despite the fact that the last year of preschool has been free of charge since 2005, and despite the introduction of preparatory classes for disadvantaged children following the adoption of the Early Childhood Education Concept in 2006, the vast majority of Roma children do not attend any form of preschool education prior to enrolment in primary school. One reason for this situation is that Roma parents are not properly informed about changes in the education system, and many do not know of opportunities available for their children. Another reason has to do with simple economics: Even though tuition for the last year of preschool and for the preparatory classes may be free, parents are still expected to pay for school meals and school supplies. The costs associated with

these are often too high for many impoverished Roma families.

In the Czech Republic, many Roma children who have not attended preschool, and even some who have, are directed to take school readiness and intellectual ability assessment tests administered by local commissions. The tests, which require Czech language competence and presuppose familiarity with the elements of formal education, including pen and paper, are often used to stream Roma students into schools that offer substandard education and limited prospects for advancement to secondary—much less tertiary—education. Prior to the adoption of the new School Act in 2004, these schools were officially recognized as special schools for students with intellectual disabilities. As a result of the streaming practices described above, NGOs and special school administrators themselves reported dramatic over-representation of Roma children among special school students. In some cases, Roma constitute 100 percent of the total student body of such schools. Teachers and administrators recognize that the vast majority of these students do not actually have any intellectual disabilities, and were placed in special schools simply as a result of problematic assessment and placement procedures. Until a year 2000 amendment of the old 1984 School Act, Roma students studying in special schools could not access secondary mainstream schools upon graduation. At best, they could engage in low-qualification vocational training (EUMAP, *Rights of People*). Despite changes in the law, actual practice is changing very slowly, and the number of students in special schools is not decreasing (Roma Education Fund). Though a court case alleging discrimination and segregation in the country's education system is currently pending before the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, the Czech government has yet to acknowledge the dimensions—or, for that matter, even the existence—of segregation of Roma in the national educational system.

Still, following the enactment of the new School Act in January 2005, most of the special schools were reorganized as basic practical schools. Formally they have become part of the mainstream education system but in reality they are still incorporated within the special needs education system. In fact, these schools are still listed as special education institutions, even in the official statistics provided by the Institute for Informa-

tion in Education. As far as desegregation goes, the change has been mostly terminological: The vast majority of students in these basic practical schools are still Roma—indeed, segregated Roma settlements often do not have access to schools other than these former special schools (*Socioklub, Romove, bydleni*). The teachers in the basic practical schools are still special pedagogues, and the curriculum, which is still less academically challenging than in mainstream schools, emphasizes manual skills over intellectual development. As a result, basic practical school graduates are not, in practice, able to compete with regular mainstream school graduates for admission to secondary school, even though they are now formally able to proceed to the next level.

While it did not bring about all the needed changes, the 2005 School Act brought along a renewed interest in educational policy reform. This interest resulted in adoption of such documents as the Long-Term Strategy for Educational Development in the Czech Republic and the Early Childhood Education Concept. Most of the reform activities, funded primarily through the European Social Fund, consist of sporadic, often NGO-implemented projects that do not have a systemic dimension. But there are two systemic projects, implemented by government agencies directly accountable to the Ministry of Education, that stand high chances of effecting large-scale changes in the Czech school system. The first one, a program for drop-out prevention and secondary education support implemented by the Institute for Pedagogical and Psychological Counseling from September 2006 through August 2008, introduces a series of measures intended to assist disadvantaged students attending primary and secondary schools. The second program provides for the establishment of five regional centers for minority integration. These centers are supposed to assist with the integration of minority students into mainstream education. As of this writing, it is too early to assess the implementation of these programs, much less their effect on the educational outcomes of Roma students.

Other measures with a high potential to assist with Roma integration in mainstream education are already in place. For instance, teaching assistants, which were unofficially introduced in 1993 and then formally recognized in 1998, have been a long-standing institution in Czech schools. The Ministry of Education

reports that 306 teaching assistants worked in the Czech Republic during the 2005-2006 academic years. Most of them worked in primary schools, and only a few worked in basic practical schools, the remaining special schools, or preschools. One problem that NGOs have pointed out repeatedly is that the hiring of a teaching assistant, as well as the choice of the teaching assistant, is left entirely to school administrators (Roma Education Fund; European Roma Rights Center, *Stigmata*). This arrangement means that teaching assistants are hired only in schools that already have a progressive attitude—and that, in practice, teaching assistants only get their position if they are loyal to school administrators.

Roma students progressing to secondary education have access to Roma minority scholarships, while those progressing to tertiary education can receive social scholarships for disadvantaged students. Other types of support are available either through the Ministry of Education (in the case of secondary schools) or through NGO projects, such as the Romaversitas program run by Athinganoi. According to the figures made available through these programs, approximately 1,800 secondary school students have had access to supplemental funding of this type, and 62 university students have received funding through the Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program. Actual enrolment figures might be even higher, as secondary schools must request supplemental funding from the Ministry of Education, and some schools fail to follow the burdensome administrative procedure required to make a claim.

School curricula and teacher training curricula still need to be reformed to comply with the requirements of inclusive education, especially where Roma are concerned. Thus, while a few school books include some minimal information on Roma culture and history, teacher training programs do little to prepare mainstream teachers to work with Roma students. Most multicultural training modules fail to deal specifically with Roma, and courses dealing with the teaching of Roma students are still taught only in the special pedagogy programs. Some ad-hoc programs are developed by higher education institutions and NGOs, but these fail to address the actual needs of the Czech educational system as a whole (Roma Education Fund).

2.2 Employment

Because state agencies are forbidden by law to collect data on ethnicity, the Ministry of Labor does not keep records relating to the employment situation of Roma. A 2006 study, conducted by Gabal Analysis and Consulting for the purposes of analyzing the housing situation of Roma, contains some one-time data on Roma employment, and this data helps assess the seriousness of the situation. According to the study, in many of the more than 300 mostly Roma localities investigated, the unemployment rate reached 90 percent and, in some cases, even 100 percent, as compared to the 2006 national average of 9.2 percent (Gabal Analysis and Consulting, *Analysis*).

The Czech government does not have any employment policies that target Roma specifically. Instead, Roma are included among vulnerable groups for which broad policies are designed, and some Roma-specific programs are supported through local NGOs from the state budget or from the European Social Fund (Government of the Czech Republic, *Report 2006*). The DAP reflects this approach. Rather than promising that comprehensive policies for employing Roma will be designed by the Czech government within the framework of the Decade, the DAP indicates that the government will address the employment situation of Roma by supporting NGOs that are developing targeted programs.

Training and retraining for job-seekers is conducted through local employment offices. Unfortunately, even though most Roma are registered with these offices for the purpose of receiving unemployment and other social assistance benefits, few Roma actually take part in the job training courses (Winkler et al., *Analysis*). Generally speaking, Roma regard services of the local employment offices as ineffective, because they offer no real qualifications and no guarantees of finding and retaining actual jobs.

A host of government or donor-funded active employment programs, which have been developed by NGOs and are run on a local level, have been more successful in building relationships with Roma clients. Such programs have been developed in Hranice, Olomoc, Brno, and other places, and they have proven successful in linking Roma job-seekers with a variety of local support institutions, such as schools, community centers, and training organizations—as well as

with specific employers. One program, partially funded through the EQUAL Community Initiative Program, entails the formation of an employment agency with offices in four regions of the Czech Republic. The employment agency serves as a clearinghouse for employment-related information and offers job-seekers training programs that are designed in cooperation with Roma NGOs. The project reported 650 users last year, and 80 of these found permanent employment through the project's employment agency. A similar project in Brno reported 40 job-seekers who received temporary or permanent employment as a result of targeted services. These encouraging projects indicate that sustained, targeted efforts made in cooperation with experienced local NGOs have high potential for success.

But, outside of short-term employment in public works projects, few other opportunities for employment are available to Roma. Microfinance and small business loans are in practice not available to Roma, as they often require collateral guarantees that impoverished Roma cannot offer.

Slovak Roma seeking employment opportunities in the Czech Republic are at particular risk, because potential employers can take advantage of their status as temporary, often illegal, economic migrants and refuse to pay adequate salaries and benefits. Few legal remedies are available to the victims, most of whom have too little information about their own rights and the legal avenues to defend those rights.

Czech law has incorporated some anti-discrimination provisions relating to employment, but has yet to transpose the Race Directive of the European Council of the European Union, which offers protections against racial discrimination in a host of other areas, including education, housing, and the provision of public services. A draft of a comprehensive anti-discrimination law has been rejected by the Czech Senate, despite the fact that both domestic organizations and international groups have repeatedly called for the speedy transposition of European Union protections against discrimination.

2.3 Health

There is no nationally representative, regularly updated information on the health status of Roma in the Czech Republic. The above-mentioned 2006 survey on socially

excluded Roma communities in the Czech Republic, which was produced by Gabal Analysis and Consulting and focuses primarily on the housing situation of segregated Roma, contains some one-off data on health indicators, such as access to public services and environmental conditions. While this data can hardly constitute a reliable baseline for policy development in the Czech Republic, the available information on Roma health in the country is bleak (Janeckova et al., *The State of Health*; European Roma Rights Center, *Ambulance*). Average life expectancy for Roma is lower than for non-Roma. Whether they live in isolated settlements with no access to basic amenities, overcrowded inner-cities, or settlements that are at the edges of larger towns and are near environmental hazards like water treatment plants or city dumps, Roma are at higher risk of developing chronic conditions or endemic diseases, including tuberculosis. Infant, child and maternal mortality is reportedly higher in Roma populations, partly because of restricted access to healthcare—either because of the physical distance between healthcare providers and Roma neighborhoods or because some healthcare professionals, including emergency services, are reluctant to work in Roma areas. Anecdotal evidence suggests that healthcare providers often discriminate against Roma. Cases of sterilization without informed consent have also been reported in recent years.

The health section of the Czech DAP is startlingly inadequate in addressing these issues. It contains only one measure aimed at improving the health status of Roma: the development of a system of Roma health mediators, first as a pilot project beginning with 2005, and then on a national scale as of 2007. Indeed, in February 2005, the Ministry of Health presented a proposal for a health mediator project to the government. The proposal provided for a pilot health mediator program to be developed through an NGO. Consequently, a Roma civic group, Drom, developed a training module and, together with the Faculty of Masaryk University in Brno and the Medical Faculty of Ostrava University, trained 18 health mediators. The project ends in May 2007, but two local governments and one municipal government have expressed an interest in keeping health mediators employed until the end of 2007. The future of the health mediator project beyond that date depends on the extent to which European Social Fund financing will be made available for this purpose.

There are no government programs to provide healthcare coverage to the uninsured. Under the Czech healthcare system, all those employed or registered with unemployment offices, as well as children younger than 18 and mothers of children up to the age of 6, have their health insurance covered. NGOs estimate that the number of people left without health insurance coverage is very small. Emergency services and other types of healthcare services are provided to the uninsured, but the debt accrued as a result of receiving such services without insurance can be crippling high.

Similarly, there are no government-financed outreach activities, such as vaccination drives or health education campaigns, in Roma communities. Some NGOs conduct small-scale outreach activities on a local level, as do the health mediators mentioned above, but these sporadic efforts fall far short of addressing the needs of Roma across the Czech Republic.

2.4 Housing

Though government officials had been aware of the existence of a housing crisis for Roma for years, the sheer number of these so-called “excluded communities” came as a surprise to policy makers. The 2006 study by Gabal Analysis and Consulting revealed that more than 300 of these communities are situated in relative isolation with squalid conditions. The situation is seen as the result of growing segregationist trends, as well as a recent wave of evictions targeting Roma in the Czech Republic.

The current crisis began in the early 1990s, with the return of property nationalized under the communist regime and the sale of municipal housing stock to private owners. Roma tenants, many of whom could not afford to pay higher rents or the increased costs of utilities, were evicted by the new owners (Zoon, *On the Margins*). Many Roma lost their dwellings without so much as a court order, as Czech law does not require judicial review of evictions for cases in which rental agreements have expired or are non-existent (Kreck, “The Brief Course”). In some instances, Roma left their own houses after being lured into confidence schemes, under which they were promised (adequate) alternative accommodations if they agreed to leave their residence. Overzealous local officials seeking to win majority votes

have also contributed to the trend by moving entire communities from the center of town to more isolated areas on the margins of municipalities. Consequently, Roma have been concentrated in the cheaper areas of bigger municipalities, forming a large number of new “ghettos,” which are continually increasing in size (*Socio-klub*, *Romove bydleni*, and *Romove ve meste*). Roma in such areas often live without access to basic public utilities or services, such as public transportation, let alone access to quality mainstream schools or adequate primary healthcare. Some of these ghettos have even been built in the vicinity of environmental hazards, like city dumps or industrial waste disposal facilities.

Following much negative publicity around the ghettoization of Roma in the Czech Republic, the government has recognized the need for a comprehensive approach to the issue and has committed to adopting an integrated social housing concept by 2008. At the moment, social housing is usually made available only on the condition that applicants are employed and have no debts, which means most Roma are virtually

excluded from accessing social housing. The Ministry of Regional Development currently finances a program for constructing subsidized flats, sometimes referred to as “plain flats” in reference to the pared down finishes and utilities they offer to tenants, but it is not clear how many of these flats are actually given to Roma. The government progress reports under the Decade recognize that this program, just like many other housing measures and policies, lacks an adequate implementation monitoring mechanism to assess its impact on Roma.

Still, this program, together with other measures, such as the deployment of social workers to prevent evictions, are listed in the Czech DAP. The mention of these efforts indicates that the government is committed to dealing with the housing situation of Roma in a programmatic, comprehensive manner under the Decade. However, it is not clear how many of the good intentions listed in the DAP can be brought to bear actual fruit, as the central government has little leverage over local authorities in the Czech Republic.

Hungary

1. INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

1.1 Decade Action Plan Drafting

Following the “Roma in an Expanding Europe” conference organized by the Open Society Institute and the World Bank in Budapest in 2003, Peter Medgyessy, Prime Minister of Hungary at the time, committed his country to host the secretariat for the preparatory and early phases of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, between September 2004 and June 2005. Hungary had already been working to coordinate the incipient phases of the Decade before the conference. Medgyessy delegated then-Political State Secretary for Roma Affairs Laszlo Teleki to oversee the establishment of the Decade secretariat, the development of operational structures for the Decade, and the drafting of the Hungarian Decade Action Plan (hereinafter, DAP). Teleki was to work directly under the Prime Minister’s office. After the government was restructured, in May 2003, the Decade program and secretariat were transferred to the Office for Equal Opportunities, under Minister for Equal Opportunities without portfolio Katalin Levai. In September 2004, the program and secretariat were again transferred, to the Department for Roma Integration within the Ministry of Youth, Family, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities (hereinafter, the Ministry of Youth). The head of the Ministry of Youth, Minister Kinga Goncz, acted as national coordinator during the preparatory phase.

Consequently, the DAP drafting process was led by the Department for Roma Integration in the Ministry of Youth, in coordination with the office of then-Political State Secretary Teleki—who has been acting as a government Roma expert and member of parliament following the 2006 elections. The drafting of the DAP was the specific task of the National Working Group (hereinafter, the Working Group), which consisted of officials from all relevant ministries, including those in charge of Roma-related issues in specific ministries; representatives of the Minority Ombudsman’s Office; the Office for National and Ethnic Minorities; the National Roma Self-Government; the Central Statistical Office; and, on the Roma civil society side, participants in the Young Roma Leaders’ Forum and the leaders of two major Roma groups in Hungary, the Roma Civil Rights Foundation and Lungo Drom.

When starting the drafting process, the Working Group used as a basis the Government Program to Promote the Social Inclusion of Roma (hereinafter, the Social Inclusion Program), which was adopted by the government as Decree 1021 in May 2004. While the Social Inclusion Program does not mention the Decade, it maps out policies and individual measures aimed at Roma inclusion through the end of 2006, and many of the actions listed in it are understood by the Hungarian government to overlap with Decade goals.

The Working Group designed the broad outlines for a draft DAP. By the time the Decade Secretariat was established in Hungary, in September 2004, the draft DAP had been sent to all relevant line ministries for

approval, and the Working Group appears to have dissolved for all intents and purposes. Coordinating the finalization of the DAP was left to the Interdepartmental Committee for Roma Affairs, an inter-ministerial consultation body that brings together experts working on Roma issues in Hungary's central government. This Interdepartmental Committee was originally designed as a high-level body whose membership was supposed to consist of undersecretaries, commissioners and heads of departments. But, in practice, the members of this committee over the past few years consisted primarily of the so-called "Roma referents"—advisors in various ministries, who have no real decision-making or political power in government structures.

In June 2005, then-Political State Secretary Teleki and Andor Urmos, head of the Department for Roma Integration in the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (hereinafter, the Ministry of Labor), held public debates seeking input on the draft DAP from local authorities, minority self-governments, nongovernmental organizations and other relevant stakeholders. The input from local stakeholders was used in designing a long-term strategy for the entire duration of the Decade.

Until December 2006, all actions under the Decade were governed by the Social Inclusion program which covered the 2004–2006 period. As of this writing in January 2007, Hungary had not officially adopted a DAP. A Long-Term Strategy for the Decade of Roma Inclusion was expected to be adopted by the government and then submitted for parliamentary approval by May 2007. Over the past two years, the Interdepartmental Committee has reviewed several draft versions of the DAP, and several drafts of a two-year operational plan on Decade implementation, none of which has been approved or adopted by the government as of this writing.

2.2 Draft Decade Action Plan Content

The text of the preliminary plan for the Decade publicized by the Hungarian government lists a series of broad goals and targets in the four focus areas of the Decade—education, employment, health and housing—as well as in two cross-cutting priority areas, promotion of equal treatment and gender equality. By

singling out these two priorities, and detailing specific goals, measures, implementing agencies and indicators in these areas, this plan sends a strong message that Hungary is seeking to address race and gender inequalities systematically and thoroughly during the Decade.

On the other hand, the design of the preliminary plan for the Decade as publicized by the Hungarian government falls short of the criteria set for DAPs by the Decade's International Steering Committee (hereinafter, ISC) on a number of counts. Many elements are vague: What the document lists as "targets" are mostly a series of goals and general measures, and, in one case in the health section, government programs that are ongoing. Indicators are not designed as measures of social distance between Roma and non-Roma. Instead success is gauged in terms of relative increases or decreases in absolute numbers or percentages of Roma benefiting from individual programs, measures or services. Sources of data are unclear, and the document calls for producing data on Roma inclusion "every fifth year," which would be insufficient for measuring progress accurately, or for adjusting policies as necessary over the course of the Decade.

Both the agents for the implementation of Decade activities and the system for monitoring various activities are left vague. Implementing bodies are listed merely as "ministries," with no specific assignment of responsibility. Monitoring is tasked to the Working Group, which is called on to "prepare an annual report on the implementation of the national Decade Action Plans in order to document and monitor the progress made in the accomplishment of the goals and targets set, and [...] suggest further amendments or expansions of the Action Plans, involving in these efforts the representatives of the Roma civil society as well." According to the document, this annual report was supposed to be presented before the ISC. As mentioned above, the Working Group appears to have dissolved after the initial drafting of the DAP, and, consequently, no such official annual report on Decade progress in Hungary has been presented before the ISC as of January 2007.

One other problem is budgeting. The design of the preliminary plan for the Decade says: "According to the decision of the Hungarian Country Working Group, the Hungarian Action Plan is meant to be a strategy for 10 years (2005–15), and for that reason it does not contain a budget and percentage figures as indicators." The

plan gives no further explanation as to why the longer term of the strategy precludes specific budget estimates for its implementation. The Hungarian government takes the view that targeted Roma programs financed from earmarked budget lines actually push Roma issues even further away from the mainstream policy agenda. Consequently, the government often refuses to segregate funding benefiting Roma in its public reporting. The resulting absence of specific budget lines for programs and measures affecting Roma under the Decade makes it even harder to estimate the actual impact on Roma of a large number of programs designed for broader categories of disadvantaged groups.

1.3 Decade Coordination and Implementation

In the new governmental term, which began in 2006, the Decade of Roma Inclusion Program came under the authority of Labor Minister Peter Kiss, who is the official national coordinator of the Decade in Hungary. In practice, responsibility was delegated to the Department for Roma Integration within the Ministry of Labor, headed by Urmos. Both the Decade coordinator and the head of the Department for Roma Integration have been actively promoting the Decade in national and international fora. Additional promotion took place in 2005, when then-Political State Secretary Teleki visited a large number of municipalities in Hungary on behalf of the Working Group. Teleki sought to introduce the Decade and garner support for the implementation of Roma inclusion goals on a local level, as well as to receive local feedback on the long-term Decade strategy.

The Department for Roma Integration, which runs day-to-day coordination activities of Roma issues, is one of only two operational inclusion units dealing with Roma within the Hungarian government. The other one functions under the Ministry of Education. The so-called “Roma referents” who were appointed in various line ministries in Hungary following the 2002 elections have all been downgraded or eliminated from ministry structures. Those former referents who are still working in government are now advisors or simply civil servants. The remaining govern-

ment advisors in charge of Roma-related issues are in the Interdepartmental Committee for Roma Affairs, which currently works on the draft long-term Decade Action Plan and is supposed to oversee implementation following adoption.

Another body, which is supposed to provide a mechanism for consultation with civil society, was still being formed as of January 2007. According to government officials interviewed for the purposes of this report, half of this body, called the Council on Roma Integration, will be Roma inclusion officials and advisors in various line ministries, and the other half will be representatives of civil society. This council is expected to function as a standing advisory body for programs and policies relating to Roma integration, including those listed under the Decade. Meanwhile, the head of the Department for Roma Integration in the Ministry of Labor has said that the government also intends to set up an expert group, which would include economists, sociologists and others, and would provide technical support to the government on policies affecting Roma.

2. FOCUS AREAS

2.1 Education

Hungarian data protection law prohibits the collection of data on ethnic and racial issues without the written consent of the self-identified subjects. It is, however, legal to collect some data based on the perceived ethnic or racial identity of subjects, although the government does not keep such records in a systematic manner. Consequently, the little information available on Roma enrolment comes from records kept by schools, based on teachers’ and school administrators’ perception of the ethnicity of students. These records are sent directly to the Ministry of Education, and the data is neither consistent across the school system nor regularly updated.

While non-enrolment and drop-out rates among Roma in Hungary appear to be lower than in other Decade countries, independent reports in recent years have pointed to a host of other problems that Roma

face in the educational system (European Roma Rights Centre, *Stigmata*; EUMAP, *Equal Access and Rights of People*; Roma Education Fund, *Advancing Education*). The major problems that have been reported include: segregation into separate, mostly- or all-Roma mainstream schools and classes, which offer substandard education; placement of Roma students in so-called “catch-up” classes, where they follow a remedial curriculum, which in effect precludes them from actually catching up with their non-Roma peers and transferring into mainstream classes; relegation of Roma students who are perceived as causing discipline problems to “private student” (home schooling) status, which in practice greatly reduces their academic performance and graduation chances; overrepresentation of Roma in special schools for students with intellectual disabilities as a result of flawed assessment and diagnosis procedures; and streaming into dead-end short-term vocational schools, which do not offer the necessary training or qualifications for integration on the labor market.

The primary objective of reforms to the Hungarian educational system since 2002 has consequently been the elimination of segregation in mainstream schools, following up on the campaign promises of the winning government coalition. Achieving this objective requires policies that provide equal opportunities and the development of corrective measures to ensure equality of educational outcomes for vulnerable groups of students, including Roma. Inclusive education is supported on a systemic level through the development of governmental integration programs and the adoption and enforcement of anti-discrimination legislation, which explicitly bans segregation. Both the investigative arm of the Ministry of Education (the Public Education Center for Monitoring and Examination, known by the Hungarian acronym OKEV) and regular courts have proven effective in dealing with cases of desegregation. In a recent case, a regional court ordered the closure of an all-Roma school in the Miskolc area, which sent a strong message on segregation to both educational institutions and the justice system in Hungary (Amnesty International, *Report 2007*; EUMAP, *Equal Access*). Still, individual remedies are unlikely to produce the kind of systemic change that can be effected through government programs. Unfortunately, government programs aimed at the integration of dis-

advantaged groups, though well intended and intelligently designed, have yet to impose systemic changes.

Preschool education in Hungary is available to children as young as 3, but it is only compulsory for children who are in their preparatory year, at the age of 5. There are no tuition fees for public preschools, and children whose families receive regular child support benefits are entitled to free meals. However, parents still incur some costs, in particular with regard to transportation, hygienic supplies or any activities viewed as extracurricular by the preschool administration (end-of-year shows, class trips, etc.). Hungarian regulations adopted in 2003 and then amended in 2005 mandate that preschools cannot refuse enrolment of disadvantaged children, including Roma, beginning with the age of 3. But in practice this provision is rarely followed, as in many areas there is a shortage of preschools, and administrators often use overcrowding as a reason to refuse registration. Furthermore, as many Roma children live in settlements that are far from any preschool, the proportion of Roma who have not attended any preparatory education by the age of 6 is much higher than among non-Roma (EUMAP, *Equal Access*; Roma Education Fund, *Advancing Education*). Moreover, even while the number of inhabitants in Hungary decreases, the number of Roma living in impoverished areas is increasing. Ministry of Education officials interviewed for the purposes of this report estimate that children in 50-60 settlements currently do not have access to a preschool, while another 40 settlements have preschools in their vicinity but do not have sufficient spaces in them for all children who qualify. The Regional Development Operative Program, which is part of the National Development Plan, offers the opportunity to expand the number of places available in kindergartens through a public tender procedure, but the extent to which this opportunity is to include Roma children in preschool education is not known as of this writing.

Children who do not attend preschools before the age of 5 are often referred by school or preschool officials to special boards that evaluate school readiness and assess whether an intellectual disability is present (EUMAP, *Rights of People and Equal Access*). Inadequate diagnosis procedures often lead to the placement of Roma children in special schools, where they follow a reduced curriculum and receive a lower quality educa-

tion, which does not give the kind of qualifications that could be useful in the labor market. The government committed itself to developing new assessment mechanisms, but that reform has yet to take place. Some safeguards are built into the system as part of a government program known as “Out of the Back Row” (European Roma Rights Centre, *Stigmata*; EUMAP, *Equal Access and Rights of People*; Roma Education Fund, *Advancing Education*; Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor; *National Strategy Report*). Disability has been more narrowly defined in the Act on Public Education to exclude mild intellectual disabilities, and school placement decisions are ultimately referred to the child’s parents. But Roma often lack the necessary information to make decisions on placement, and they often report being easily intimidated by the examining board members’ expertise. As a result, children diagnosed as having an intellectual disability are rarely placed in mainstream schools. Another supposed safeguard is the requirement that examining boards must review each child periodically. But, since neither the membership nor the methodology of the board changes from one examination to another, subsequent examinations are unlikely to result in a decision to revoke the initial diagnosis (EUMAP, *Rights of People*).

The 2003 amendments to the Act on Public Education introduced incentives for desegregation of special schools in the education system, so that mainstream schools receive more than double the amount of per-capita funding for integrated students, who would have otherwise been placed in special schools. But special schools still receive relatively high per-capita funding, and they are unlikely to relinquish students to mainstream schools, lest they should lose their financing and be forced to scale down, or even to close down altogether (Roma Education Fund, *Advancing Education*). Consequently, as the government itself acknowledges in the draft DAP, the segregation of Roma into special schools is still an area where more government programs are needed.

The introduction of per-capita funding as part of the decentralization process in Hungarian education appears to have had negative effects on the education of Roma children. School administrators became motivated to keep as many students as possible, and they tried to prevent the migration of non-Roma students to other schools by separating Roma students in so-called

“catch-up” classes, regular all-Roma classes or even separate buildings. Following up on campaign promises for the 2002 elections, the Hungarian government adopted a program supporting integrated education for multiply-disadvantaged students, and it built in a series of incentives for desegregation into the national-level financing and educational support system. Schools and local authorities were invited to apply for integration grants—often referred to in English as “integration normatives” (Mohacsi, “Government Initiatives”; Szendrey, *Short Summary*). Technical support as well as teacher training programs are provided through a newly set-up government agency called the National Network of Educational Integration, and additional after-school support is ensured through a network of study halls (known in Hungarian as “tanoda”) and community centers, located primarily in Roma communities. However, the decision of applying for desegregation grants is entirely up to school administrators and local authorities, and the central government has little leverage to encourage institutions that are reluctant to apply because they fear there will be political repercussions from the local non-Roma electorate. Another incentive for desegregation is provided in the form of one-time grants of HUF 50,000,000 (approximately EUR 200,000) available to local authorities willing to close down segregated schools within their jurisdiction. Unfortunately, according to Ministry of Education officials interviewed for the purposes of this report, only seven applications for these grants were submitted as of this writing—and only two of those were deemed eligible. It appears that closing down segregated schools brings about political liabilities that are greater than the financial burden of maintaining them.

To make matters more difficult, independent reports suggest that some institutions that applied for desegregation funds merely reshuffled their class structure, without actually mixing Roma and non-Roma in integrated classes (EUMAP, *Equal Access*; Roma Education Fund, *Advancing Education*). The government publicly recognizes the need for an adequate monitoring and evaluation mechanism for this program, but it has yet to put one in place as of this writing. The Ministry of Education has initiated an early warning system, aimed at involving government institutions, educational experts, civil society organizations,

and Roma minority self-governments in pointing out cases of discrimination in education (Mohacsi; Roma Education Fund, *Advancing Education*). But thus far, this system has not proven to be an effective tool for dealing with segregation.

Another component of the government's educational program is the funding available through so-called "skill development grants," which go to isolated settlements where integration is physically impossible, either because of distance or because of the high number of Roma children in proportion to non-Roma in the area (Roma Education Fund, *Advancing Education*; EUMAP, *Equal Access*). According to Ministry of Education officials interviewed for this report, about 50 settlements are eligible for such grants, which are intended to ensure the highest quality of education possible in these segregated settings.

Roma students can access the general social support programs that are available to disadvantaged groups and are intended to facilitate access to primary and secondary education on an equal-opportunity basis (EUMAP, *Equal Access*; Roma Education Fund, *Advancing Education*). This support includes the provision of free schoolbooks and sometimes free school supplies, periodic family allowance increases before the beginning of each school year, and subsidies for school meals. Furthermore, in a number of educational institutions, Roma parents from the local communities are employed as school mediators, who seek to assist communication and reduce drop-out rates. Together with the National Employment Fund, the Ministry of Education has decided to support and expand this initiative, and to encourage schools to permanently employ trained and qualified school mediators (referred to as "pedagogical assistants"). According to Ministry of Education officials interviewed for the purposes of this report, over the past four years, 62 pedagogical assistants with elementary school certificates received further training and vocational qualifications—and were employed in the school system.

Merit-based scholarships specifically targeting Roma students were available through the Public Endowment for Hungarian Roma (hereinafter referred to by its Hungarian acronym, MACIKA), founded by the Hungarian government (EUMAP, *Equal Access*). The program was intended to provide money to cover school-related expenses, but many students used the

funding to supplement their families' income. Meanwhile, suspicions were raised that non-Roma were also trying to make use of these grants. Following an ill-advised attempt to require that the ethnic origin of all applicants be certified by the local Roma minority self-governments or NGOs, in 2006, MACIKA's role in managing the scholarships was transferred to the Office for National and Ethnic Minorities. According to Ministry of Education officials interviewed for this report, an overall review of the program structure is pending. The Ministry of Education provides a series of merit-based scholarships targeting senior students in compulsory primary education, senior secondary school students, and students seeking vocational qualifications in "shortage or scarce trades" that would facilitate their inclusion on the labor market.

Additional incentives built into the educational system include fees for mentoring teachers and so-called "success bonuses" for teachers whose students achieve good results. On the whole, however, most teachers in Hungary are ill-prepared to deal with multicultural environments, and they are reluctant to work in non-homogenous classroom settings. University education for teachers offers little in the way of training for inclusive schooling, and it overemphasizes informative knowledge of subject matters rather than formative understanding of a variety of teaching methodologies (EUMAP, *Equal Access*; Roma Education Fund, *Advancing Education*). Little progress has been made on school curricula reform. In some cases reported by NGOs and the media, new textbooks even promoted stereotypes that linked Roma to criminality and portrayed them as difficult to integrate. Those textbooks were withdrawn from circulation following these reports (EUMAP, *Equal Access*).

Affirmative action measures provide free access to state-funded university courses and colleges for minority and disadvantaged students, as long as they comply with admission standards for students who pay full tuition. The Ministry of Education also provides a HUF 10,000 (EUR 40) monthly bonus for senior students who act as mentors for minority and disadvantaged students.

2.2 Employment

Because of data protection laws, Hungarian authorities do not officially record statistics on employment by ethnicity or race. Official estimates regarding Roma employment are therefore not available. Still, regional employment offices seem to account for ethnicity in their records, because, according to officials at the Ministry of Labor interviewed for the purposes of this report, there are approximately 80–90,000 Roma registered as unemployed, and 25–30,000 of these are included in various employment schemes.

Unofficial reports rate unemployment among Roma as being much higher than among the general population (UNDP, *Faces of Poverty*; European Roma Rights Center, *The Glass Box*). Fewer than one-third of Hungary's Roma appear to have employment as their main source of income. Among women, the unemployment rate is even higher—partly because of the more traditional division of labor in Roma households and partly because permanent employment in low-qualification jobs available to Roma are usually in the highly gendered areas of construction, sanitation, etc. (Berliner Institut für Vergleichende Sozialforschung, *Economic Aspects*).

Labor centers offer various courses for their clients. A more limited choice of qualifications is naturally available to graduates of elementary school than to those who completed secondary or tertiary education. Programs for those excluded from the workforce are available in Hungary. Most of these programs are accessible to—and actually designed for—Roma, even though equal opportunities policies often prevent government officials from saying so explicitly. There is no official data on how such policies affect Roma in practice, but anecdotal evidence suggests that Roma are indeed among the primary beneficiaries of many of these programs. For instance, according to Ministry of Labor officials interviewed for the purposes of the report, a governmental program titled “Run Forward,” which provides for the training of 10,000 people with a budget of HUF 3.5 billion (more than EUR 14 million), does not explicitly target Roma, but it is expected to deliver services primarily to unemployed Roma within the next year or so.

According to the same officials, more than 40 other programs provide training, guidance, mentoring

and psycho-social support, as well as follow-up support in the wake of employment. Again, according to officials in the Ministry of Labor, 30 percent of the participants in these complex labor market programs were Roma. An interesting finding for the purpose of policy design is that the training and job performance of Roma in these programs was identical to that of non-Roma in those cases where Roma received minimum-wage-level compensation, rather than the nominal income supplement usually granted to participants in such programs. Based on this finding, Ministry of Labor officials intend to amend the Employment Act so as to provide financial incentives for participation in labor activation programs. Another means to increase participation in such programs would be to facilitate a better flow of information between the 20 regional labor centers, with their 174 local branch offices located throughout the country. Local minority self-government offices, as well as NGOs, could act as conduits for information between Roma communities and government offices that provide training and employment services. Systematizing the flow of information would allow the government to integrate various regional employment programs into a national active employment policy that is designed to be easily accessible to Roma.

Targeted programs explicitly designed for Roma are still few and far between in Hungary, primarily because the Hungarian government takes a mainstreaming approach to Roma integration programs. According to Ministry of Labor officials interviewed for the purposes of this report, 11 out of 39 projects financed through a European Commission EQUAL tender dealt with the reintegration of Roma in the labor market. Run in partnership with NGOs and trade unions, these projects are expected to have positive outcomes for their beneficiaries, but a full evaluation cannot be made until 2008, as most projects were still in the preparatory phase as of this writing.

The Public Foundation for National Employment ran a pilot project aimed at promoting business activities in Roma communities in 2006. The pilot was reportedly not successful, but the Ministry of Economy and Transportation now runs a HUF 200,000,000 (EUR 800,000) annual program that supports Roma entrepreneurs and Roma-friendly business. Despite the relatively low budget of the program, over the past three years, more than 600 Roma or Roma-friendly

businesses have been financed in this manner (Ministry of Economy, *A hazai roma mikro-, kis-, es kozepvallalkozasok* and *A roma valallkozasfejlesztestet*).

Anti-discrimination law in Hungary offers strong protections, in particular through the Equal Treatment Act and some newly adopted amendments to the Civil Code. The Equal Treatment Authority has taken an active role in the prevention of discrimination, while courts have sanctioned violations not only consistently, but also strategically. Still, these protections too often do not act as sufficient disincentives for potential employers, and Roma job-seekers usually know too little about the protection mechanisms available to them (European Roma Rights Center, *The Glass Box*; Bodrogi and Danka, “Litigating Discrimination”; Farkas, “Will the Groom”).

2.3 Health

The government and the National Statistical Office do not collect health data by ethnicity. The little data that is available comes from independently conducted one-time studies that relied on the hetero-identification of Roma subjects and were limited in both geographic and substantive scope. The best such study was conducted during 2000-2001 by the National Institute for Primary Health Care, and it revealed severe disparities between the health outcomes of Roma and non-Roma. The results of the study, however, are by now outdated and cannot be used as an accurate baseline for the design of comprehensive policies. The health section of the Hungarian draft DAP recognizes the need for adequate data—but it goes on to call for data collection every fifth year, with no further details as to how this will be done or how such limited collection can serve the purposes of designing and adjusting policies throughout the course of the Decade.

The draft DAP does not mention any measures to expand healthcare services to those who do not have access to health insurance. Health insurance in Hungary is currently tied to employment or registration with labor and unemployment offices. Moreover, health insurance is dependent on residence registration, which in practice means that long-term unemployed Roma

living in illegal housing, as well as the homeless, cannot access the country’s healthcare system. The highly centralized and user-unfriendly Hungarian healthcare system is currently going through a complex reform that will introduce a number of novelties. Private healthcare insurance schemes are expected to expand, but this is unlikely to affect the situation of Roma, most of whom cannot access the state insurance system because they are too impoverished to afford the costs associated with private insurance (European Roma Rights Centre, *Ambulance*).

The priority area in the health section of the DAP appears to be filling vacancies in healthcare units in areas with larger Roma populations. Indeed, Hungarian doctors and other healthcare providers are often reluctant to take positions in such areas, either because of racist attitudes, or simply because they believe that, as the health outcomes of Roma are much worse than for the general population, they would have to take on a disproportionate amount of work. The Hungarian government has been contemplating solutions to this issue for years now. The government provides additional financial support for healthcare practitioners who take positions in areas where there are no family doctors on an as-needed basis, but no large-scale policy decision had been made as of this writing. According to the DAP, the Hungarian government also intends to develop anti-discrimination and anti-bias training for the health sector, including inter-cultural education and Roma culture modules in nursing colleges. Such programs are urgently needed, as there have been frequent reports in Hungary of discrimination against Roma in the provision of healthcare.

In terms of addressing Roma beneficiaries directly, the Ministry of Health, through the National Institute for Primary Health Care, has reported spending HUF 266 million (approximately EUR 1 million) on coordinated health education, awareness and information campaigns that included diabetes and heart disease screenings, early diagnosis, and treatment of alcohol addiction. Some pilot outreach programs have been conducted in cooperation with mainstream and Roma media—including an oral hygiene screening campaign launched together with the Hungarian “Health” magazine and Radio C, a Budapest radio station that targets a Roma audience (Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, *National Strategy Report*).

Training programs for health mediators in Hungary were initiated five years ago, and some of the graduates were assigned to work in Borsod and Heves counties. But the mediators were not permanently employed at the end of the program, and no nationwide health mediator programs have been implemented since. The draft DAP presented by the Hungarian government does list the training of Roma healthcare providers as a goal, but no details as to how the policy will be designed and/or implemented are available.

2.4 Housing

Large numbers of Roma in Hungary live in predominantly Roma settlements at the edge of towns or in virtually segregated inner-city areas, in substandard conditions. These communities are often without access to basic amenities, such as electricity or running water, and sometimes they lack even basic infrastructure, such as paved roads. Moreover, the wholesale privatization of urban housing stock, coupled with weakened legal protections afforded to tenants, has sparked a wave of forced evictions of Roma from central areas of major towns that are slated for economic development. Thus, in the early years of the new millennium, hundreds of Roma families were evicted without court rulings. Instead, the families were put out pursuant to mere notaries' orders, without being offered alternative accommodations or any other type of compensation (European Commission, *The Situation of Roma*; European Roma Rights Centre, *Housing Rights*).

As with other areas, the Hungarian government does not maintain data on Roma housing on a national level. The last survey that included data on Roma housing dates back to 1993. For policy planning purposes, the government relies on various one-off, independently conducted studies, which are not nationally representative. For instance, in the first half of 2001, the School of Public Health of Debrecen University conducted a sampling study in three northeastern counties with large Roma populations (*Telepek es Telepszaru Lakohelyek*). Based on the finding of this study, the

government launched a comprehensive program, the Housing and Social Integration Program, which aims to support Roma integration by addressing the living situation of Roma throughout the country. The program deals not only with housing-related issues, such as the clarification of property rights, infrastructure improvement and access to public utilities, but also with issues like employment and public health. To help address these areas, the program brings in local employment offices and health institutions as partners. Further funding for an education element for the program was brought in by the Roma Education Fund. The ambitious substantive scope and integrated approach of the program, however, has in practice meant that the number of locations in which it could be enacted from the outset was quite small. Thus, out of 40 settlements originally approached by the government, only 22 ended up being solicited to apply for an average of HUF 150,000,000 (approximately EUR 600,000) each. From those 22, only nine had been accepted by the end of 2006, and another 10 or 11 are expected to join them in 2007 (Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, *Interim Evaluation Report*). The preliminary evaluation of the first phase of the program suggests that governance of the program needs to be improved. Changes needed include the following: integration must indeed be prioritized over conflict avoidance; instead of taking a wholesale approach, those designing and implementing individual projects should work on a case-by-case basis; Roma beneficiaries must be included in project design; and monitoring and evaluation must be conducted regularly and from close-up (Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, *Interim Evaluation Report*).

Other Hungarian government measures for improving Roma housing include a program for the legalization of unregistered settlements initiated in 2006. Social housing, on the other hand, is not part of a centrally designed strategy. In Hungary, the building of social housing is left to municipalities. Experience so far indicates that more regulation is needed in this area, as the allocation of social housing is often subject to allegations of corruption, and municipalities often choose to build very low-quality houses or apartments, which hardly meet the standards of adequate housing.

Macedonia

1. INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

1.1 Decade Action Plan Drafting

Macedonia's Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (hereinafter, the Ministry of Labor) coordinated the planning phase of the Decade of Roma Inclusion and the drafting of the country's Decade Action Plan (hereinafter, DAP). Within the Ministry of Labor, Mabela Kamberi, head of the Department for Coordination and Technical Assistance, was charged with leading these efforts. This appointment presented several advantages: For one thing, as Department Head Kamberi is herself a member of the Roma community, and she has both first-hand knowledge of the situation of the Roma community and legitimacy among the target group of the Decade. Furthermore, since she is a qualified public administrator whose appointment is not political, the choice ensured not only impartiality, but also a degree of stability for Decade-related activities through several organizational and leadership changes in the Ministry of Labor.

Following her appointment, Department Head Kamberi set up a Working Group made up of: representatives of the relevant ministries, state agencies, and institutions; Roma leaders, such as a Roma member of parliament and the mayor of Shuto Orizari, a municipality where the majority population is Roma; and representatives of four Roma nongovernmental organizations. This group worked on drafting the DAP

during four thematic workshops—one for each focus area—organized during the second half of 2004.

1.2 Decade Action Plan Content

Much of the DAP is based on two documents, the Strategy for Improving the Situation of Roma in Macedonia and the Strategy for Development of the Roma NGO Sector, both of which were developed by NGOs. During the discussions surrounding the drafting of the DAP, the role of the NGOs was questioned by some members of the Working Group, who doubted the legitimacy and accuracy of the information presented by NGOs. But the presence of the NGOs helped to push the drafting of the DAP beyond reflexive institutional concerns, which resulted in a fairly balanced document.

Still, some important areas of action are missing altogether from the Macedonian DAP. For instance: no provisions are made for eliminating the segregation of Roma students into special schools; no actions are listed to prevent discrimination by employers in the private sector; and there are no proposals to ensure access to adequate healthcare and subsidized medicine for recipients of social assistance benefits. Similarly, cross-cutting priorities have not been sufficiently incorporated into the DAP, which means women's issues were left out. To address this shortcoming, Roma women's NGOs in Macedonia are currently pressing for revisions to the DAP that would mainstream gender equality in all Decade-related activities.

As it stands now, the Macedonian DAP is little more than an empty shell. Whatever new measures the DAP proposes are not backed up by the detail necessary to ensure proper enactment, and the document remains at the level of pro-forma general statement. The DAP primarily consists of a series of long-term goals and short-term objectives, defined more as “themes” than as realistic goals, and there is no clear assignment of institutional responsibility or funding. Many of the activities listed are in fact already ongoing as part of the implementation of other, primarily NGO-driven programs funded by external donors. Many of the fields are left blank. No provisions are made for monitoring activities under the Decade, most indicators are missing—and, where indicators are listed, they reveal a poor understanding of how to measure progress under the Decade. Specific time frames are often missing or vaguely defined, because, at the time the DAP was drafted, no member of the Working Group was able to determine the time needed for many of the activities. The cost and allocation of funding is also often unclear—both in terms of amounts, and in terms of sources and allotment mechanisms.

Moreover, some extremely vulnerable categories are entirely left out of the DAP. There is no provision for securing personal documents and resolving citizenship issues for Macedonian Roma who do not have identity papers or have not acquired Macedonian citizenship following independence. The Ministry of the Interior is making efforts to solve this problem, but the procedure for obtaining personal documents and citizenship is still overly complicated, non-transparent and costly. Similarly, there are no provisions made for the approximately 2,000 Kosovar Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptians who are living in Macedonia with no clear legal status since the Kosovo conflict (UNDP, *At Risk*). Because of their tenuous legal situation, Roma in these categories cannot access a host of human rights, including civil rights, political rights and basic rights relating to housing, education, employment and health.

1.3 Decade Coordination and Implementation

Officially, the national coordinator for the Decade is the Minister of Labor, but in practice the job is

delegated to Department Head Kamberi. While this situation has some advantages, as mentioned above, it also has its drawbacks. The Decade is just one among a host of programs that Kamberi is responsible for, and she lacks the necessary support staff to effectively devolve all of her duties, including duties relating to Decade coordination.

Work on the Decade is only supported by the National Working Group, which drafted the DAP. Following the parliamentary elections, the Working Group was turned into a coordination body by government decision on November 18, 2005. The coordination body was enlarged with members representing several ministries and with a few new Roma leaders. The body now has 26 members, nine of whom are Roma: Department Head Kamberi, two Roma members of parliament, the mayor of Shuto Orizari, and five Roma NGO representatives.

The effectiveness of the coordination body is a problem, because all ministry representatives have purely administrative functions and do not hold decision-making positions or political influence in their ministries. Working teams were set up in four ministries, each corresponding to a focus area, but, again, the scope of their work and of their influence within government structures is unknown. There is a general understanding that the coordination body has a consultative role with the government, but, as the Ministry of Labor has not finalized the rules of procedure for the body, the scope and nature of its powers remain unclear. Additionally, the coordination body does not have any support staff, and it has no funds at its disposal. The Ministry of Labor provides some logistical support for the regular meetings of the body in the form of one employee who is delegated to send invitations and deal with organizational details relating to the meetings.

Following the adoption of the DAP, operational plans with budget estimates were prepared for the first three years of the Decade. Yearly operational plans, developed on the basis of the general DAP, contain more details as to the implementation of some specific activities and have more specific funding estimates attached to some line items. Still, these plans are not specific enough: It is not clear from where or, for that matter, how, the funding is going to actually be secured, and the plans do not say which of the various state institutions listed is responsible for implementation. Starting

in 2005, the government sent requests for funding reallocation to several ministries. As of this writing, the only ministry to answer the government's request is the Ministry of Labor, which allocated the equivalent of EUR 16,000 for opening local informational offices in several locations. The overall inaction may be due to the fact that, in the period leading up to parliamentary elections, the former government was reluctant to take unpopular decisions, such as earmarking money from the state budget for Roma projects. As a result, these operational plans became mere paper documents, of no practical consequence to Roma inclusion goals under the Decade.

At the initiative of local NGOs and through outreach by Mabea Kamberi, six municipalities have developed their own local action plans. Four of these six plans were actually adopted by municipal councils and mayors—in Tetovo, Stip, Gostivar, and Kumanovo. But this progress was achieved solely as a result of initial action by Roma NGOs and is not yet supported as a systemic nationwide policy by the Decade coordination body. So far, the coordination body has only sent letters containing information on the Decade to local authorities and engaged them informally. A formal meeting with mayors was also planned, but has not taken place yet.

No official report on DAP implementation has been published, although a series of agencies and ministries have submitted reports to the Decade coordinator: for example, the reports for the first quarter of 2006 prepared by the Ministry of Transportation and Communications (hereinafter, the Ministry of Transportation), the Ministry of Labor, and the Ministry of Health. It would appear that the education section of the DAP is the only area where there has been some implementation—primarily of projects financed by external donors, such as the Roma Education Fund, USAID, the Netherlands Embassy, etc. Possibly in response to provisions in the DAP, the Ministry of Transportation issued an internal decision relating to the legalization of unregistered Roma settlements, but to-date it is not clear whether this has been implemented at all. Indeed, recent cases of evictions suggest that the decision has had no effect whatsoever.

2. FOCUS AREAS

2.1 Education

Some schools occasionally send the Ministry of Education enrolment data that is disaggregated by ethnicity, but this data is neither nationally representative nor regularly updated. Moreover, there is no data on the number of children who do not attend school—either because they never registered or because they dropped out of school.

Non-compulsory preschool programs in Macedonia are partly paid for by parents. This means that most Roma children whose families cannot afford preschool fees are in practice excluded from non-compulsory preschool education, unless NGO programs facilitate access to preschool in the area. Preparatory classes for potential first-graders were not mandated by the Law on Primary Education until the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year. To improve the situation, the Ministry of Labor, in cooperation with the Roma Education Fund, has initiated a preschool program aimed at making early education available to Roma children. Fifteen preschools are targeted, but, as the program is still in the early stages, it is not possible to report on outcomes and effects at present. Until September 2006, many schools that did not have the resources to organize preparatory classes did not make them available to children. As of this writing, there is no information on whether every school has complied with the new regulation mandating the organization of preparatory programs for all.

School enrolment is currently left entirely to parents. The DAP mentions increasing parent involvement, but it fails to clarify what it means by the term “parent involvement,” or how it should be accomplished. There are no proactive measures in place to ensure that all children who are supposed to be included in compulsory primary education are registered. In some cases, NGOs and external donor-driven programs fill this gap by facilitating school registration through local education centers (Roma Education Fund, *Advancing Education*). No other measures to systematically encourage school participation, such as subsidized transportation, free school lunches, etc., have been adopted. There are no Roma teaching assistants or school mediators to

facilitate access to quality education for Roma children. Children without identity papers who start going to school often have to stop before completing a full year because registration requirements do not allow them to stay in school without proper documentation. Housing registration issues compound these problems, as Roma often live in unregistered settlements or in settlements which, even if registered, are not included in a particular school district that would have the obligation to take in children from the settlement. As a result, many Roma children are sent to school late, or not at all (Roma Education Fund).

Those who are sent to school in a timely fashion face a series of obstacles. School readiness tests are not culturally sensitive, and many Roma children who are unfamiliar with the context for formal education are directed towards special schools as a result of such tests (Roma Education Fund).

Meanwhile, mainstream schools often turn down Roma students with the claim that they are oversubscribed. Because there is no per-capita funding scheme in the Macedonian education system, schools have no incentives to keep as many students as they can. As a result, Roma students often end up in the least attractive schools, where non-Roma students are less likely to register or stay. Several cases of ethnically segregated schools have been reported (Roma Education Fund). Macedonian law currently does not provide any mechanisms for preventing or punishing such cases of educational segregation.

Roma students who do not do well in school do not get the necessary support and extra tutoring that they need, unless they are supported through non-governmental programs such as the Roma Education Centers. In the early years of school, many Roma children are automatically promoted to the next grade. This practice only makes it harder for Roma students to integrate later in their school careers—or to compete for secondary schools. Many of them end up repeating grades later, and they eventually drop out as a result of this practice (Roma Education Fund).

There is some support available for Roma students in secondary education: A joint program of the Ministry of Education and the Foundation Open Society Institute–Macedonia, with Roma Education Fund support, provides scholarships with a view to increasing the number of Roma students in second-

ary schools. Some 657 Roma students have benefited from Ministry of Education scholarships as of this writing, and an additional 264 have received scholarships through the Foundation Open Society Institute–Macedonia (*Annual Report 2005*). Although there is no clear baseline against which to measure progress, independent observers have noted that the scheme has helped increase the number of Roma enrolled in secondary education, as well as their overall performance in school.

Drop-outs can re-enlist in adult education only after the age of 17. However, adult education classes do not offer the necessary qualifications for employment upon graduation. Meanwhile, vocational training opportunities are limited. For those who did not complete secondary education, the National Employment Services can organize a vocational training course, but only upon the request of particular employers.

Attempts to introduce affirmative-action measures in higher education have not yielded the expected results, as the quotas for Roma students have often been abused by non-Roma seeking admission to university. Some universities have quotas for Roma or for minorities, more generally, but the availability of places varies from year to year. The government funds merit-based scholarships, as well as combined need- and merit-based student loans—which are in practice never repaid—for all students, but the number of Roma students who receive such scholarships or loans is not known (Roma Education Fund).

The Macedonian education system has yet to be reformed to adequately address the needs of a multicultural society. There is no systematic, mandatory anti-bias training for teachers, and no integration of Roma culture and history in mainstream curricula. Anti-bias training sessions organized by the Foundation Open Society Institute–Macedonia received the formal patronage of the Ministry of Education, but no systematic policy was developed based on this model. Where Roma are mentioned in textbooks, they are often represented in a manner that reinforces, rather than combats, negative stereotypes. No Romani language curriculum has been developed, and no language preparation for accessing mainstream schools is available for children whose first language is Romanes. Roma teachers are few and far between, so that most Roma students are taught by people who are burdened with prejudice and negative stereotypes (Roma Education Fund).

While the education section of the DAP gestures toward many of these problems, it fails to address them in the detailed, pragmatic manner that would ensure translation into actual policies and, eventually, practices. Most of the goals and short-term objectives are formulated in such vague terms as to render them meaningless, and no implementation or funding mechanisms are listed to elucidate the manner in which the objectives are supposed to be achieved. For instance, there is no specific understanding of how a “short-term objective” such as “enabling access to secondary education for young Roma students (meeting minimum standards)” is supposed to be achieved. On some level, the current state of affairs ensures that Roma students who meet minimum standards have access to secondary education on a competitive basis, but the problem is ensuring that Roma students have equal chances—including the necessary compensatory conditions—to meet and exceed minimum standards. In the absence of clear mechanisms for implementation, and even funding, it is impossible to surmise what specific measures the Macedonian government intends to implement in order to achieve this goal.

A few more-felicitous formulations at least hint at the manner in which the general objectives listed in the DAP will be implemented. For instance, the statement noting the importance of “providing conditions for inclusion of all Roma children in the (future) compulsory preschool education” indicates that the government did indeed intend to make preschool programs mandatory, even though it does not explicitly commit to do so anywhere in the text of the DAP.

2.2 Employment

No official nationally representative data on Roma employment in Macedonia is available, but the National Employment Agency keeps records of registered unemployed by ethnicity. For instance, the agency reported that, as of March 31, 2006, there were 15,960 unemployed Roma registered in Macedonia (*Review of Unemployed Persons*). This figure, however, hides the real magnitude of the situation, because many Roma who are long-term unemployed are no longer—or never were—officially registered. Thus, according to estimates released by the National Employment Agency in 2004,

for every Roma in full employment there are nearly three Roma without any employment whatsoever. The national Statistical Office estimated that, among Roma, the unemployment rate in 2003 was 83.4 percent, while, among the general population, it was 36.6 percent for the same year. NGOs have reported Roma unemployment to be even higher, reaching 95 percent in some areas (Minority Rights Group International, *Micro Study*).

None of the programs and services devised to stimulate employment target Roma specifically, and none are even tailored to the particular needs of Roma. A few NGO programs addressing the specific employment situation of Roma exist, but their capacity is extremely limited as compared to national agencies. Moreover, there are no indications that the government intends to adopt and expand these NGO models in the near future. Consequently, Roma are primarily served by the National Employment Agency, an institution that appears to be ill-equipped to deal with Roma as a specific disadvantaged group. For instance, the agency was unable to provide any answer to the question of whether its staff had undergone anti-bias or sensitivity training in recent years. Neither the agency nor other state institutions offer any anti-discrimination training or information to employers. Indeed, race and ethnicity are not even among the officially listed grounds for discrimination: Macedonia recently drafted an anti-discrimination law, but it focuses on gender and disability-based discrimination only, and, as of this writing, it had not been adopted. And yet, discrimination against Roma is evidently widespread in Macedonia. A 2004 needs assessment published by the World Bank (World Bank, *Needs Assessment Study*) found that the name, surname and ethnicity of job seekers significantly affect hiring decisions. The report referred to a 2003 survey of 750 Roma, in which nearly 50 percent of the interviewees stated that they had experienced discrimination when applying for work (ISPPI and RMCM).

Thus, Roma can access employment-related services only through the generally available employment-related programs developed primarily by the National Employment Agency. These include counseling and career orientation, matching job-seekers to potential employers, and some training courses. Roma have complained that many of the training courses offered by the agency, such as English or computer classes,

require participants to have a higher education degree, a stipulation that indirectly discriminates against Roma (Minority Rights Group International).

Subsidies are available for employers hiring people with disabilities and for employers contracting job applicants who have been unemployed for at least one year. The subsidies stop after the first three years. Limited vocational training programs are usually available only at the request of specific employers, and they are not initiated by the National Employment Agency. These programs provide a salary during the training and a refund to the employer for offering the training itself. According to the National Employment Agency, 147 unemployed Roma were trained in this manner during the first three months of 2006. Unfortunately, the current status of these Roma trainees is not known. Independent observers have expressed concern that Roma are usually fired after the training period ends, and cases of Roma who underwent several such vocational training periods without ever being kept in permanent employment are not infrequent (Minority Rights Group International).

There are no national microfinancing programs for Roma businesses, though there are models that could be picked up by the government. Most financing for business is available through mainstream commercial institutions, which set terms and conditions that disqualify Roma applicants from the start. A Council of Europe Development Bank and Open Society Institute-funded organization, Horizonti Foundation, is providing training and loans to Roma entrepreneurs, but no similar programs have been initiated by the government to date. The Ministry of Labor, however, is expected to develop a grant scheme for self-employment in 2007.

Consequently, as elsewhere, public works projects are the most common form of employment for those registered with the National Employment Agency, but they are only a short-term palliative solution that does not address the long-term employment needs of most Roma.

The employment section of the DAP addresses these issues in a fairly thorough, pragmatic, and detailed manner. It recognizes the need for developing a targeted, tailored approach to Roma unemployment, beginning with anti-bias training for state employees and ending with setting up local structures for data col-

lection, information dissemination, and employment facilitation services. The DAP proposes, albeit in vague terms, that the legal framework governing employment should be re-examined so as to make room for socially conscious enterprise and affirmative action. It pragmatically acknowledges the importance of the gray economy as a source of subsistence for Roma and suggests that unregistered businesses be allowed to register, but it does not specify how. Furthermore, the DAP indicates a commitment to including Roma in future project design and implementation, and to including them in the public administration and local employment agencies.

Unfortunately, these excellent ideas are not backed up with any specific indications as to how they will be enacted. No implementing agencies are listed, no budgets are affixed to individual actions—or to the employment DAP as a whole, for that matter—and very few clear deadlines are set before the end of the Decade. Under these circumstances, and in the absence of a comprehensive government report on Decade implementation, the government makes it very difficult to monitor the way in which it fulfills the employment inclusion goals set as part of the Decade.

2.3 Health

The healthcare system in Macedonia is generally in a sorry state: It is expensive even for middle-class people, corruption abounds, and healthcare workers have a paternalistic, insensitive attitude towards all patients, but especially towards unpopular groups such as Roma. In addition to the general failures of the healthcare system, the extremely poor living conditions and the environmental hygiene of Roma settlements contribute to the poor health outcomes of Roma. Roma exhibit higher infection rates from endemic diseases, such as tuberculosis, and life expectancy among Roma is lower than among the general population (European Roma Rights Centre, *Ambulance*). Furthermore, infant mortality among Roma is extremely high: According to information from the national Statistical Office, the infant mortality rate among Roma is at 13.9 percent, higher than for any other ethnic group in the country (European Roma Rights Centre and National Roma Centrum, *Written Comments*). More data, however,

needs to be collected, as currently there is no information about vaccination rates or Roma access to health insurance.

There are no governmental programs specifically targeting Roma health, but some of the mainstream programs developed by the Ministry of Health have reached out to Roma beneficiaries, as well as to non-Roma. For instance, some of the money received by the Ministry of Health from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria appears to have reached Roma communities, as well as the non-Roma population (*Grant Performance Report MKD-506-G02-T*). Vaccination campaigns included Roma communities, and they appear to have been largely effective. However, there is no government-supported program for reproductive health that benefited Roma. Some NGOs developed programs in this area, but their model was not followed by the state.

There are no health mediators in Macedonia. The closest equivalent of health mediators are the social workers who are employed in each healthcare institution. Social workers help with filing for one-off health-related benefits and with liaising with relevant social services and NGOs. Unfortunately, the social workers have no health training, they do not have a presence in Roma communities, and they are not prepared or hired to work with Roma specifically.

But by far the biggest obstacles Roma face have to do with registering for health insurance. In order to access health insurance, one often needs to demonstrate legal residence and employment status (or registration with the National Employment Agency). As discussed in the previous sections, Roma often do not have either of these—and therefore are entirely left out of the health insurance system. Another problem, raised primarily by women's NGOs, is the practice of insuring all family members through the one member who has gainful employment or is officially registered as unemployed. Because of labor division within traditional families, most such insurance policies are awarded to men, and they are often used as an instrument for control over women. NGOs have suggested that this practice be replaced by a system that provides direct insurance to each individual member of the family.

The health section of the DAP, though by far the longest section of the entire document, does not cover many of these issues. It focuses primarily on healthcare

education and awareness-raising for Roma, unfairly placing the burden of reform on the shoulders of the Roma community, rather than on the government. It fails to indicate practical solutions, suggesting instead some absurd ones, such as removing systemic barriers to health insurance coverage by disseminating information on health insurance procedures in Roma communities. Finally, it presents as discrete objectives a series of overlapping activities—such as the recurrent short-term objectives that flow from organizing 10 mobile teams and setting up 20 new clinics. As a result, the health DAP manages to appear substantial even as it provides for very little action from the Macedonian government over the entire course of the Decade.

2.4 Housing

The overwhelming majority of Roma in Macedonia live in urban areas, in concentrated slum settlements at the edge of larger municipalities and in inner-city ghettos. Roma neighborhoods often lack basic infrastructure, such as paved roads; public utilities, such as clean running water or sewage; and accessible services, such as garbage removal, telephone communications, etc. Roma live in overcrowded, inadequate housing: For instance, a 2000 questionnaire circulated in Shuto Orizari revealed that more than half of the Roma families in that municipality lived with another family, and that 40 percent of the Roma in town live in less than 10 square meters of space (Ministry of Labor, *Strategy for Roma*). More than half of the respondents did not have facilities to bathe, and as many as 15 percent used improvised toilets.

Under these circumstances, many Roma houses do not meet minimum standards to qualify for legalization. The problem is compounded by the fact that many Roma themselves lack the personal identity documents necessary to initiate the process of legalizing the status of their homes. Furthermore, houses that are not legalized are caught in a vicious circle, as detailed urban plans often exclude unregistered residences. These urban plans are later used by bureaucrats to deny registration to the Roma houses that were not listed in the plans. Another problem is that procedures for obtaining property rights include fees, which in effect render them inaccessible to Roma.

Roma in unregistered homes in Macedonia often find themselves the object of eviction procedures. Forced evictions are not uncommon, especially in urban areas that have some potential on the real estate market. In such cases, authorities do not provide Roma with alternative accommodation.

The housing section of the DAP is especially vague. Some of the activities listed have to do with researching international regulations and harmonizing domestic legislation with international standards. Most of the line items consist of vague, impossible-to-measure short-term goals, such as encouraging Roma lobby groups to actively take up the issue of housing with local authorities, or encouraging local authorities to solve the housing problems of Roma. A few more specific actions listed include the development of urban zoning plans for Roma settlements and the development of the necessary infrastructure and basic utilities systems for these settlements. But these ideas are not backed by plans for implementation or funding mechanisms. The fact that the entire housing section of the DAP does not have any funding associated with each of the listed goals raises serious concerns as to the ability, and intentions, of the Macedonian government to implement the Decade's housing-related inclusion goals.

Some movement in the area of housing has been registered in Macedonia, but most of it pre-dates the Decade and appears unrelated to it, at least in official documents. For example, the Ministry of Transportation, responsible for housing-related issues in Macedonia, has developed some initiatives that could potentially impact the living conditions of Roma in the

coming years. The ministry has submitted a Housing Strategy for 2006–2011 to the government for adoption. As of this writing, there was no indication as to how—or, indeed, whether—the document addresses housing and property rights for Roma in Macedonia. The Ministry of Transportation is also preparing a draft law on the legalization of illegal buildings. Another initiative to automatically legalize all buildings erected without permit prior to 1968 was adopted in 2005 (*Law for Buildings and Construction*), but, again, there is no information on how, or whether, this initiative was implemented. In addition, the Ministry of Transportation has approved a detailed urban plan for the Kocani Roma neighborhood; begun the process of reviewing the new urban plan for the mostly Roma municipality of Shuto Orizari; and expedited the development of urban plans in response to environmental emergencies in the Roma neighborhoods of Veles and Kumanovo.

The Ministry of Transportation indicated that it will support the building of social housing that would have Roma, among others, as potential beneficiaries, and it will fund the construction of a sewage system in Shuto Orizari (*Program for Building and Maintaining of Flats in Possession of Republic of Macedonia*). Similar NGO programs, however, have met with resistance from local authorities, who refuse to cooperate on projects benefiting Roma. Some social housing was indeed built in Shuto Orizari, but the application process has yet to start, as the conditions for accessing the housing have not been made public as of this writing.

Montenegro

1. INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

1.1 Decade Action Plan Drafting

Montenegro's Decade Action Plan (hereinafter, DAP) for the Decade of Roma Inclusion was drafted by a country Working Group, formed in February 2004 at the initiative of the government. The Working Group consisted of 15 people, most of them representatives of ministries and international organizations with offices in Montenegro. However, no representatives of organizations working with internally displaced persons and refugees, such as the UNHCR, participated in the drafting of the DAP. As a result, the DAP does not reflect the needs of internally displaced and refugee Roma, Egyptians, and Ashkalia (hereinafter, RAE), who have lived in Montenegro since the outbreak of the Kosovo conflict and who are by far the most disenfranchised categories in the country.

The Working Group included only one Roma representative, Veselj Beganaj, the director of the "Pocetak" ("Beginning") nongovernmental organization and the coordinator of a network of NGOs called "Roma Circle." The severe imbalance in the representation of RAE in the drafting process was partly remedied by the actions of the NGO members of the Roma Circle, who met every month during the DAP drafting to present comments and corrections on the margin of the draft documents produced by the official Working Group.

Another problematic aspect of the DAP drafting process is the fact that none of the officials actively involved in drawing up the plan actually had any power or influence over the government structures that are supposed to enact it. Among the government representatives participating in the Working Group, only one ranked at the level of assistant minister—Sabahudin Delic from the Ministry for National Minorities and Ethnic Groups, which is not directly involved in Decade implementation. This set-up in effect ensured that the DAP would carry very little weight with government structures and agencies.

A first draft of the DAP was presented at the Decade's second International Steering Committee meeting, held in April 2004. As the first draft needed more detailed work, the Working Group divided into four sub-groups, each of which was dedicated to a particular focus area and was led by representatives of the relevant ministries or state agencies. Education was led by the Ministry of Education and Science (hereinafter, the Ministry of Education); employment was led by the Montenegrin Employment Agency; health was led by the Ministry of Health and the Montenegrin Health Institute; and housing was led by the Ministry of Urban Planning and Environmental Protection (hereinafter, the Ministry of Urban Planning), together with the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (hereinafter, the Ministry of Labor). The final version of the DAP is the result of the work conducted in these sub-groups over the second half of 2004.

1.2 Decade Action Plan Content

Montenegro's DAP is based on a number of domestic policy documents—including the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper adopted in 2003, the National Action Plan for Children adopted in 2004, and the Economic Reforms Agenda adopted in 2003. The drafters of the DAP also referred to some international obligations undertaken by the government, such as various international human rights law instruments to which Montenegro acceded, as well as the Millennium Development Goals. Furthermore, the DAP drafters tried to incorporate the findings of a 2003 household survey of RAE, refugees and internally displaced persons. The survey was conducted by the Institute for Strategic Studies and Prognoses (ISSP) with the support of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and several Roma NGOs that are now part of the Roma Circle and that assisted with data collection and analysis (ISSP/UNDP, *Household Survey*).

Unfortunately, this last one-off study is the only document directly relating to the specific situation of Roma that could be used as a basis for developing the DAP. No government strategy on RAE had been adopted in Montenegro prior to the country's joining the Decade. NGOs in the Roma Circle tried to pressure the government to adopt a national strategy on Roma, but the government showed no interest in developing such a policy before joining the Decade. As of this writing, government officials interviewed for this report have said that the text of the strategy is close to finalization. Once adopted, the strategy is expected to flesh out the implementation of various measures included in the DAP focus areas, and it is also expected to cover issues such as legal subjectivity, political representation and gender equality, which are currently not adequately covered in the DAP.

The DAP appears to be designed as a pro forma bureaucratic document, rather than a comprehensive, detailed policy that the government is actually committed to implement. The DAP contains a narrative section, which explains the overall issues and goals covered by the action plan, followed by a table listing measures, indicators and other details relating to implementation. Even a cursory glance, however, reveals that not all focus areas receive an adequately detailed treatment. The education section is clearly the most developed,

while the employment, health and housing sections are not as thoroughly articulated. Roma NGOs have pointed out, for instance, that the employment section lists objectives that do not concern RAE specifically, but are instead general objectives that the Employment Agency has set for its activities on a national level. This shortcoming makes it difficult to monitor the specific manner in which the government undertakes its commitments to assisting RAE under the Decade. Similarly, the housing section fails to specify the criteria that will determine which RAE households will be targeted, making it impossible to measure outcomes objectively. Issues such as these are covered by a separate policy document, the National Action Plan on Housing Policy, which includes a small, separate chapter listing some measures to remedy the housing situation of RAE. However, although this plan has existed since 2005, most Roma NGOs and civil servants/officials do not seem to be aware of it, and it is most often not taken into account in discussions of Roma issues.

Moreover, the DAP fails to list any measures for RAE returnees from Western Europe who need help to reintegrate into the community. This is a particularly problematic issue in the area of education, where children who have been educated in languages other than Serbian are supposed to be integrated into mainstream schools with no additional support. Similarly, except for some cursory treatment in the employment section, the DAP does not adequately provide for solving the problem of personal documents, a dilemma that prevents many RAE in Montenegro from accessing even the most basic rights.

While poverty reduction and, to a lesser extent, anti-discrimination have been incorporated in the DAP, gender is not adequately addressed as a cross-cutting priority in the relevant sections. This is especially problematic because unofficial surveys estimate illiteracy among RAE women to be over 90 percent, which in effect makes their political and economic participation unthinkable.

Indicators also appear to be badly understood: At best, they are set in absolute terms—i.e., not in relation to the situation of the non-Roma population. Even when expressed in percentages, the indicators cannot be used as an accurate measuring instrument, because it is not clear what baseline they are measured against. Many RAE did not identify themselves as such

in the most recent census, for fear of discrimination and stigma, and unofficial surveys, which may be more accurate, have not been updated in recent years. In the worst cases, the listed activity itself is used as an indicator in the DAP, rendering the entire notion of indicators meaningless.

Funding is another area that is not adequately covered by the DAP. For most of the listed activities, the government did not assign any additional funds other than those already assigned for the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy. Thus, the current budget estimates for DAP implementation stand at EUR 11,385,000, out of which EUR 5,110,000 is supposed to come from sources other than the state budget, most probably donations from international agencies and funds—but the specific sources, funding mechanisms and amounts are not clarified in the DAP. NGOs say they believe that the only funds clearly earmarked for activities under the Decade as of this writing are the ones coming from the Roma Education Fund. When interviewed for the purposes of this report, Deputy Minister of Education and Science Cazim Fetahovic confirmed that less funding from state sources is available than planned, and that the government expects 80 percent of the financing for Decade activities to come from foreign donors, like the World Bank and the European Commission. This funding situation only adds to the confusion about the actual enactment mechanisms for the DAP.

It is also confusing that many of the deadlines are set by default to the entire duration of the Decade. Many of the deadlines appear to be set arbitrarily, without a clear understanding of how objectives will be phased in relation to each other. Some of the early deadlines have already passed without being met, which appears to indicate that they were not devised realistically. Others are set unnecessarily late in the Decade, with no explanation.

One other problem with the DAP is that it often fails to set clear responsibilities for specific line items, making it possible for various state agencies and ministries to claim the DAP itself exempts them from many implementation activities.

There have been no attempts to improve the DAP since its adoption. No efforts to develop more detailed priority action plans are known as of this writing.

1.3 Decade Coordination and Implementation

Despite calls from NGOs and independent observers for the establishment of a fully-supported, independently budgeted national office or council for Roma inclusion, the Decade was delegated fairly far down the chain of command in the Montenegrin government. The appointed Decade coordinator is a senior adviser with the Ministry of Labor, Remzija Ademovic. It is not clear when and how the Decade coordinator was appointed. Until the launch of the Decade in Montenegro, the person in charge of coordinating the Decade preparation process was a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dubravka Lalovic. Soon after the launch of the Decade, in April 2005, this official was appointed to another position, and, for almost one year after that, NGO calls for an official appointment of a new Decade coordinator went unanswered by the prime minister's office. NGOs have not been able to obtain any official document relating to the appointment of a new Decade coordinator. In fact, they only found out that the position had been filled by Senior Adviser Ademovic in February 2006, at a roundtable organized by the Project on Ethnic Relations. It is not clear when the new coordinator was actually appointed, and who was in charge of the Decade between the departure of the first coordinator in April 2005 and the appearance of the new coordinator in February 2006.

Moreover, the current Decade coordinator has no independent decision-making power, no public profile to speak of, no assigned funding, and no support staff for activities under the Decade. This arrangement seriously calls into question the Montenegrin government's commitment to effectively implement the goals set under the Decade.

The Working Group that drafted the DAP appears to have dissolved for all intents and purposes, and it has not met even once since the launch of the Decade. As it was the Working Group's mandate to monitor the implementation of the DAP, no official monitoring of the first two years was in fact conducted, and, therefore, no official report exists against which to measure the findings of this one.

Since the adoption of the DAP, there appears to be no coordination among the members of the Working Group—or among the ministries that are supposed to

implement the DAP. None of the ministries seem to have designated units or officials in charge of Roma inclusion, and there are no Roma or members of related ethnic groups employed in senior positions within government structures or agencies. This document's authors have no knowledge of Roma working in local authority structures, either—with the exception of two Roma experts temporarily employed by the Herceg Novi and Podgorica municipalities.

No implementation units appear to have been set up on a local level, either. Local authorities interviewed for the purposes of this assessment reported that they had not received any instructions relating to Decade implementation. They also said that most of their actions affecting RAE are taken on an ad hoc basis or as a result of ongoing projects developed in partnership with local NGOs, not based on the understanding of a wider national strategy. Representatives of the Roma Circle attempted to remedy this communication gap by organizing presentations of the DAP for most local authorities in municipalities with significant numbers of Roma. According to Roma Circle leader Veselj Beganaj, all local authorities with whom the Roma NGO met showed themselves willing to participate in the implementation of the DAP, but the officials indicated that they expected funding to come from sources other than their own local budgets. Recent local elections also disrupted these early communication efforts, as many of the local officials have been replaced by new ones, who are most probably entirely unfamiliar with the Decade.

The municipality of Herceg Novi is the happy exception to this general state of affairs: In autumn 2006, the municipality, together with the local NGO “Young Roma,” opened a Roma office that employs an ethnic Roma from the municipal budget. This arrangement, however, is only valid for six months to one year, and the fate of the Roma office beyond this term is uncertain.

Government officials, including the Decade coordinator, have said that the implementation of the Decade goals has been disturbed by external factors, including Montenegro's recent independence. Roma NGOs, however, argue that Montenegro has had institutions that were de facto independent for years before the referendum, and that the relevant governmental structures for the process of Roma inclusion

have remained largely unchanged by the declaration of independence—with the exception of the ministries of health and labor, which were merged to form the Ministry of Labor, Health, and Social Welfare.

More specific implementation-related issues are discussed in the sections dedicated to each focus area below. On the general level, it is worth mentioning that no annual priority plans for the Decade have been adopted, and it is not clear how many of the issues listed in the DAP were actually mainstreamed into other national policies. Some of the more recent laws adopted by Parliament have incorporated concepts such as affirmative action—but it is not clear whether this is a result of direct pressure from NGOs or the ripple effect of the Decade.

2. FOCUS AREAS

2.1. Education

There is no regularly collected data that would allow the authorities to track progress in promoting access to education for RAE children. However, some survey data is available, and it gives a snapshot of the challenges: The education gap between RAE and other ethnic groups in Montenegro is wide, and current enrolment among RAE children is low. Data from a 2003 survey (ISSP/UNDP) shows that an alarming 63.1 percent of the RAE population have no education, 21.3 percent have incomplete primary schooling and only 9.2 percent have completed primary schooling. The picture shows little sign of changing, with only 38 percent of RAE children enrolled in primary schools, as opposed to 86 percent of children belonging to other ethnic groups, according to UNDP estimates (UNDP, *At Risk*). This gap widens in secondary education, where the respective ratios are 13 percent and 83 percent. Only a very small percentage of Roma have graduated secondary schools, and very few follow through with higher education. For instance, six Roma students were enrolled in university during the 2004-2005 academic year; by 2006, their number had dropped to two. The drop-out rate among RAE is much higher than in the general population, and literacy among RAE is at 55 percent,

although in the general population it is estimated at 99 percent (Roma Education Fund, *Advancing Education*).

The causes for this situation are primarily poverty and discrimination. Many RAE families do not have the means to support children in school, and often the children themselves need to contribute to the financial support of the family by helping other family members with their work, recycling household waste in town or simply begging. Meanwhile, the education system has yet to become an inclusive, flexible environment that can address the individual needs of each child and easily accommodate children belonging to the RAE minorities. Another problem is that large numbers of internally displaced persons and returning unsuccessful asylum seekers, many of whom are Roma, face obstacles in accessing the Montenegrin education system, either because they do not have personal documents or because they began their studies in other educational systems and in languages other than Serbian. Furthermore, the largely traditional make-up of the RAE population in Montenegro may be a factor behind a significant gap between the school outcomes of girls and boys.

Preschool education is not mandatory in Montenegro. Some incentives aimed at increasing the number of RAE children in preschools are currently in place, primarily in the guise of tuition subsidies, free hot meals, and free transportation to and from preschool.

Unfortunately, economic barriers persist, as enrolment is conditioned on the payment of a one-time EUR 10 fee, in addition to the monthly EUR 30 tuition and miscellaneous expenses fee. Fifty percent of this latter fee can be subsidized by the state for families who receive welfare assistance benefits through the Centers for Social Care. As many RAE do not have the necessary personal documents to register for these benefits, in practice, preschool fees, however low they may appear, are often beyond the reach of impoverished RAE families. Moreover, enrolment is conditioned on the presence of vaccinations and other medical certificates, which are not in practice available to many Roma children.

Segregation is another problem that RAE children face in the Montenegrin educational system. Classes entirely made up of Roma and Egyptian students have been reported, particularly in areas with large numbers of internally displaced persons from Kosovo. Such

classes appear as a consequence of the school administrators' assumption that these students speak mostly Albanian—though many of them speak Serbian as well. To make matters worse, non-Roma students tend to leave schools where large numbers of Roma are enrolled, because the quality of education these schools offer is poor. The exodus of non-Roma students has the effect of lowering educational standards even further, in addition to increasing the isolation and ethnic distance experienced by RAE students. The Ministry of Education has indicated that it intends to develop desegregation plans for such situations, but, as of this writing, no progress appears to have been made on the issue.

Some progress has been made, however, in terms of setting up incentives for increasing school attendance. Failure to enrol children in school can be punished by a severe fine—though this provision appears to be rarely, if ever, applied where RAE are concerned. Free schoolbooks began to be distributed as part of a government initiative in the 2005-2006 school year. Some basic information on Roma culture has been included in mainstream curricula, particularly in civic education classes, with the idea of developing more inclusive educational environments. But other incentives to school attendance—such as free school lunches or transportation, the systematic provision of free after-school support, scholarships below higher education level, etc.—are not firmly in place in Montenegro. Still, enrolment of RAE is growing steadily: According to the Ministry of Education, in the 2001-2002 school year, there were only 536 pupils who declared themselves to be Roma or Egyptians in primary schools in the country. Over the last few years, their numbers grew steadily, reaching 1,236 for the 2006-2007 school year. These numbers are not entirely reliable, as students are registered on a quarterly basis, and the figures provided by the ministry do not account for variations and drop-outs from one quarter to another.

Indeed, in October 2006, in Podgorica, Deputy Minister of Education Fetahovic announced that school enrolment among Roma students grew 100 percent over the past four years. Much of this increase can be credited to a series of nongovernmental programs piloted by UNICEF, the Open Society Institute–Montenegro, and other international organizations in Montenegro. Also, beginning with 2006, a larger-scale two-year

project, the Roma Education Initiative, which built on prior experiences developed by the Open Society Institute in this area, was introduced by the Ministry of Education. The Roma Education Initiative was developed together with the Pedagogical Center of Montenegro, which has the status of an NGO. The initiative was financed by the Roma Education Fund and aims to facilitate the development of models for comprehensive integrated education programs in schools and preschools in five locations in the country. The Roma Education Initiative seeks to provide RAE students with support and incentives to succeed in school, while supporting schools themselves and helping teaching staffs to develop the tools for successful integration. External evaluations conducted to-date indicate that the Roma Education Initiative has contributed significantly to the school success of children included in the program (Roma Education Initiative, *Final Report*).

As part of this program, Roma teaching assistants were introduced in Montenegrin schools to bridge existing communication gaps between the education system and RAE families. Twenty such assistants were trained to date, but only 10 are actually working, primarily because salaries were significantly cut in 2006, when the payroll was transferred from external donors to the Ministry of Education. Independent observers and teaching assistants themselves have expressed concerns that this transfer of responsibilities to the ministry may lead to the elimination of those assistants who are perceived by school administrators as disloyal. Still, there is hope that official structures are slowly realizing the benefits of having Roma teaching assistants, and that training programs for such assistants will be extended.

For now, there is little support for Roma education beyond the limits of mandatory schooling in Montenegro. Vocational training is available only through the general activities of the national Employment Agency, and it is usually not tailored to the specific needs of Roma. Adult literacy classes are organized mostly by NGOs. And higher education scholarships are paid for by outside donors, as is the case with the six Roma students in the university-level preparatory education program, whose scholarships are paid for by the OSCE.

2.2 Employment

There is no nationally representative data on Roma employment as of this writing, though the Employment Agency initiated a survey of the employment situation of Roma as a first step in the implementation of the employment goals of the DAP. The survey was first piloted in the municipality of Niksic in 2005, in cooperation with the Roma NGO “Pocetak.” Then it was extended to the whole of Montenegro, with OSCE financing and support from the Foundation for Scholarship of Roma, in 2006. The results of the survey had not been published as of this writing.

Unofficial surveys indicate that the unemployment rate among Roma is as high as 82 percent (ISSP/UNDP). This estimate is even higher when taking into consideration refugees and internally displaced persons, who have a particularly difficult situation in accessing employment. Similarly, unemployment among RAE women is even higher than among men, primarily because of traditional gender roles, which leave women even less educated, less familiar with the official language, and less informed about employment options and job requirements.

Though discrimination plays an important role in perpetuating this state of affairs, Montenegro has yet to adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation in line with current international standards in the field. Some declaratory bans on discrimination can be found in the Constitution, the Law on Minorities, the Law on Employment and the Law on Labor, but these statements are not associated with any specific enforcement mechanisms or penalties, so they are entirely ineffective.

In a positive development, the Employment Agency of Montenegro has taken the initiative to conduct regular anti-bias training for its personnel and to develop special application forms tailored to the specific situation and needs of Roma job seekers. Moreover, the Employment Agency set up a working group that aims to develop services for people with special difficulties in accessing employment, including Roma.

Unfortunately, these actions at the level of the Employment Agency are not matched by more concrete initiatives to facilitate or stimulate the actual employment of RAE in the public or private sector. A national employment strategy is expected to be adopted

for the 2007–2010 period, and it is to be followed by a more narrow strategy on stimulating employment of hard-to-employ categories. But, as of this writing, state institutions have no affirmative action programs for Roma employment, and there are no incentives for hiring minority candidates in the private sector. Sporadic training sessions for trades such as chimney-sweeping or household waste recycling are made available to Roma through the Employment Agency, but they are not tied to any programs to stimulate employment of those who complete the training.

There are no programs promoting self-employment that are specifically designed for RAE, and no state support for traditional handicrafts, which are simply relegated to the black market. Regular self-employment programs are available only to those who can fulfill standard requirements, and many RAE applicants cannot access them. Indeed, most RAE who are in business are involved in the so-called “gray market” economy, which is not recognized by financial institutions. They also often lack the type of guarantees, such as real estate or other assets, that are required to access credit. Microfinancing is available only through very few small NGO programs, which make credit available to particular vulnerable groups. As a consequence, most self-employed Roma and Egyptians use consumer credit to finance their businesses.

The problems in securing employment faced by internally displaced and refugee Roma have been compounded by the adoption of a new Law on Employment in 2002 and the Law on the Employment of Foreigners in 2004. In addition to erecting extra layers of bureaucracy for job-seekers, these new regulations mean that those who hire refugees and internally displaced persons must pay additional taxes, which naturally act as a disincentive for any employer.

2.3 Health

There is no data disaggregated by ethnicity on the health situation of Roma in Montenegro, but independent research, such as a report published in November 2006 by the UNDP, reveals severe gaps between RAE and other ethnic groups—both in terms of health determinants and in terms of outcomes. The UNDP estimated that more than 7 percent of Roma in Montenegro have

been denied medical services because they lacked personal identity documents, while 62 percent reported that, over the course of the previous year, they had not been able to afford prescription medication at least once (the corresponding figure among other ethnic groups is only 8 percent). Only 17 percent of Roma children have confirmed vaccinations against poliomyelitis, diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough; the status of another 72 percent is impossible to confirm. Poor living conditions, low levels of education, and traditions such as the virginity cult contribute to perpetuating this situation (UNDP).

Still, according to NGOs and other independent observers, these numbers may be more reflective of failures in record keeping than of actual discrimination in the Montenegrin healthcare system. Even though there are no government healthcare policies targeting RAE, and even though no health-mediator program was initiated by the government, healthcare professionals in Montenegro regularly conduct vaccination drives and awareness-raising activities in Roma neighborhoods. No additional funds are available for most of these activities, and healthcare professionals often participate in them on a voluntary basis. As a consequence, Roma activists estimate that more than 90 percent of RAE children have actually been vaccinated in the past five years. Moreover, for those who do not have identity cards or healthcare records, the Red Cross and some welfare institutions can facilitate access to subsidized medical care.

There are no government-funded reproductive health programs specifically targeting Roma. NGOs and international agencies have filled this gap through short-term projects, which revealed the pressing need for such programs. For instance, according to the Niksic-based Center for Roma Initiatives, half of the Roma women examined as part of such a reproductive health project had at least one home birth, and more than 70 percent do not use any family planning means. NGO projects have helped improve this situation to a certain extent: The project conducted by the Center for Roma Initiatives in Niksic (Centre for Roma Initiatives, *Research on the Position of Roma Women in Niksic*) reported that the percentage of women under the age of 30 having home births has decreased to just more than 5 percent in the past five years, while the proportion of couples planning their families increased to 48 percent.

2.4 Housing

The vast majority of RAE in Montenegro live within segregated informal suburban settlements or inner-city ghettos—in overcrowded, substandard living spaces without basic utilities, such as sewage, or public services, such as garbage removal. Many informal settlements grew and became more compact with the addition of refugees and internally displaced persons, especially during the Kosovo conflict.

Survey results from 2003 (ISSP/UNDP; UNDP) show that 48 percent of Roma live in makeshift shacks, and 61 percent live in houses smaller than 30 square meters. Some 81 percent of Roma have less than 10 square meters per family member. While most Roma have access to electricity and some running water, sanitation is often unavailable in unregistered settlements, as local authorities are obliged to provide sanitation only in areas with a clear legal status. Unemployed Roma do not contribute to local taxation and frequently fall behind on their utility bills, and local authorities often cite the lack of payments as a reason to refuse any improvements in infrastructure for Roma communities. To make the situation worse, some settlements are located in the vicinity of landfills or other polluted or hazardous areas. According to the survey, 48 percent of Roma households are located close to garbage dumps, while 22 percent are placed in areas that regularly flooded by sewage, and 17 percent are in locations with highly polluted air.

Some of these issues are addressed by the Action Plan on Housing Policy adopted by the Montenegrin government in April 2005. The plan predicts investments in the housing sector of more than EUR 126,000,000—two-thirds of which is supposed to come from foreign donors—by the end of 2008, and it sets ambitious goals, such as building more than 1,000 social housing flats by the end of 2007. But, as fewer than 100 flats had been built by the end of 2006, it appears that some, if not all, of the targets set by this action plan will not be met as scheduled. Still, some

of the general directions set by the Action Plan on Housing Policy indicate the government's willingness to adequately address the housing situation of RAE. For instance, the action plan envisages that existing illegal settlements be granted legal status and be provided with the necessary infrastructure. In and of itself, this does not represent a major shift in housing policy: The 2000 Law on Building Constructions also required that illegal homes be registered, but local authorities failed to do so on deadline for lack of funding. Still, though it covers old ground, the action plan represents a renewed commitment to solving the legal status of informal settlements.

Such policy documents, even if only declarative for the most part, have registered some effects with local authorities, who have halted evacuation plans for residents of illegal settlements over the past two years. Moreover, in some cases, local authorities have even taken steps to provide alternate accommodation for Roma residents who found themselves homeless. In one instance, the municipality of Niksic provided 13 Roma families whose makeshift homes had burned to the ground with new housing with running water, canalization and other utilities.

Social housing, on the other hand, has yet to become available to Roma on a straightforward as-needed basis. For instance, according to a representative of the municipality of Podgorica present at a roundtable organized in October 2006, approximately one-third of the social housing recently built in the city had been given to Roma families. But some of this housing came with very tight strings attached: Twenty-two internally displaced Roma and two locally resident Roma were provided with housing through a project that gave the municipality the right to transfer the housing to new tenants if the current tenants found full-time employment. More generally speaking, the criteria and procedures for allocating social housing in Montenegro are not clear, and, therefore, it is difficult to evaluate how many such housing units are in practice available to Roma.

Romania

1. INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

1.1 DAP Drafting

In January 2005, as the Decade of Roma Inclusion was about to start, Romania seemed on track in terms of developing a draft national Decade Action Plan (hereinafter, DAP). At the third meeting of the Decade's International Steering Committee (hereinafter, ISC) in June 2004, Romania had not only presented a first draft of its DAP, but also cost estimates for many of the line items included in the draft DAP. By the fourth and final ISC meeting in October 2004, the Romanian delegation had produced a more detailed version of the DAP, which it presented as being close to the expected final form.

The various drafts for an action plan were supposed to be produced in consultation with Roma civil society representatives. To this end, the Office for Roma Issues, the governmental agency coordinating Roma-related activities at the time, began cooperating with Roma nongovernmental organizations on preparations for the Decade as early as March 2004. At that time the Office for Roma Issues cooperated with the human rights group Romani CRISS to co-host a seminar that introduced the Decade process to Roma NGOs across the country. Roma representatives, both from the government side and from among civil society, have participated in the ISC meetings and in various seminars and informal meetings that were organized in Romania in the year leading up to the launch of the Decade.

But NGOs and outside observers have noted that Roma NGOs were not involved in the actual drafting of the DAP. The openness initially demonstrated by Romania's government during the Decade preparations in early 2004 appears to have disappeared by the fourth ISC meeting, when Romania presented a draft DAP that had been produced solely by government representatives, with no input from Roma civil society. Consequently, tensions between Roma NGOs and governmental agencies in charge of the Decade increased. For their part, Roma NGOs have pointed out that too little information was available on specific government activities, that the flow of information was inconsistent, and that the decision-making process often lacked transparency. Meanwhile government representatives questioned the legitimacy of the NGO participation. These officials expressed the concern that the young Roma leaders involved in the preparatory process since 2004 may not be representatives of the diverse Roma communities in the Romania, and they worried that it was not clear to them what NGOs had to offer to the Decade process as a whole.

Despite these troubles, by the end of the 2004 preparatory year, Romania seemed to have taken an early lead among the Decade countries, even announcing its intention to host the first Decade Secretariat in 2005. But Romania's early gestures toward adopting the Decade's framework have yet to be matched by effective action in terms of actual implementation of reforms in support Roma inclusion.

The clearest indicator of Romania's poor implementation is that, as of this writing, the Romanian

government had not adopted a DAP. Such inaction calls into question Romania's commitment to the Decade and, more importantly, to Roma inclusion as a long-term policy goal. Two years into the Decade, the Romanian government is finally able to give a specific date for the adoption of the DAP. This means significant time was lost in terms of coordinating policy on Roma inclusion, mandating specific measures of responsible state agencies, and allocating the necessary budgetary and human resources to reach to the objectives to which Romania subscribed when joining the Decade.

For the purposes of the present report, the lack of an adopted DAP also means that there is no standard document against which progress can be measured in Romania. In the absence of an adopted DAP, no official report or document on the implementation of Decade-related objectives was produced, either. In 2006, the National Agency for Roma produced a report on activities relating to the Romanian presidency of the Decade (*Decade of Roma Inclusion—One Year of Romanian Presidency*), but it does not cover progress in substantive areas. The following analysis, therefore, will use as reference the available drafts of the DAP, along with the whole range of Roma-related policies currently in place until the plans are adopted by the government decision we cannot talk about Action plan implementation.

1.2 Draft DAP Content

Two draft DAPs have been made available to NGOs to date. One version, which is available on the Decade website, appears to be a draft text dating back to the 2004 preparatory year (Government of Romania, *Action Plan*). The other version was published in 2006 as one part of a National Agency for Roma study that was prepared by agency President Mariea Ionescu and Sorin Cace and focused on policies targeting Roma in Romania (Ionescu and Cace, *Public Policies*). The 2006 version closely follows the 2004 draft, with some changes in the segment on housing. The later version focuses much more on reforming the legislative framework affecting the housing situation of Roma, while the 2004 text proposes the rehabilitation of Roma settlements and an increase in the provision of social housing in general.

Despite this difference, the two drafts share a similar outlook. They were both built on the existing government-adopted National Strategy to Improve the Status of Roma in Romania (hereinafter, the National Strategy on Roma), which means they have carried over some of the problems associated with the government strategy in terms of delegating specific responsibilities, coordinating national and local structures, securing adequate funding for actual implementation, and generating data for proper monitoring of progress. As outside observers have noted, since the adoption of the National Strategy to Improve the Status of Roma in Romania, there have been several gaps: the government has failed to ensure the operational effectiveness of the various implementing institutions at both central and local level; no provisions have been made to secure adequate funding for implementation, either through direct allocation or through line ministries; and there has been no close monitoring of progress on specific objectives (Focus Consultancy, *Assessment of the Roma Strategy*).

Thus, while the two draft DAPs both list a similar series of objectives—and the 2004 version even includes indicators for measuring progress—neither version specifies any concrete policy measures and means to achieve the stated objectives. Should the final Romanian DAP closely follow these early drafts, the government risks turning the Decade framework into an empty shell, with no clear actions, outcomes and achievements to show by 2015.

Ionescu, the president of the National Agency for Roma, indicated that a more detailed DAP is being developed by the government. When interviewed by NGO representatives for the purposes of the present report, Ionescu, whose agency is the coordinating body for the Decade in Romania, said the new draft DAP template includes concrete policy measures associated with each objective. She said all of these measures are linked to specific institutions responsible for their implementation, a timeline for action, and an estimated budget; but the new draft has yet to clarify the coordination mechanism for implementing all activities under the framework of the Decade.

In her interview, National Agency for Roma President Ionescu said that not all sections of the new DAP were fully developed. She said the most detailed section of the new DAP is the one on education, fol-

lowed by the one on housing, while the employment section had yet to be developed in terms of specific measures, timelines and budgets. Ionescu said the line-item costs in the new draft DAP are based on each individual ministry's budget estimations, as well as funds available from the state budget, the European Union, and projects financed by outside sources. The National Agency for Roma cannot, by itself, provide direct funds from the state budget, as it is institutionally and financially dependent on the General Secretariat of the government. In the absence of an adequate coordination mechanism, many decisions as to what will actually be done under the framework of the Decade are left to the good will and resources of individual ministries. This system has not functioned to date. No funds from the state budget were allocated by individual ministries to Decade-specific activities in the budgets submitted to Parliament for 2005, 2006 and 2007.

As of January 2006, the following process still needed to take place before a DAP could be adopted by the government: A new draft of the DAP had to be submitted to relevant national institutions for consultation, after which it would be submitted for review to the county Roma offices at the regional level. Only then would the draft be opened for review through consultations with Roma NGOs. Following NGO consultations, the DAP would be submitted to the government. All ministries involved would have a chance to review the draft DAP, comment on it, and formally approve it. Once this process is completed, the government can adopt the DAP as public policy, in the form of a governmental decision. According to National Agency for Roma President Ionescu, this entire process was expected to be completed by mid-2007.

Ionescu said the current draft takes into consideration the need for complementarity among a number of intersecting policy documents that are otherwise very poorly coordinated, including the National Strategy on Roma, the National Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Plan, as well as the Joint Memorandum of Social Inclusion concluded by the government of Romania with the European Commission, and the UN Millennium Development Goals. Indeed, some poverty reduction objectives mentioned in these policy documents crossed over into the first two draft DAPs. Some anti-discrimination objectives, such as school desegregation, equal access to healthcare provision,

and the need for intercultural education, also appear as cross-cutting themes in the first two draft DAPs. The gender dimension, however, is nowhere to be found in the draft action plans. As of this writing, it is not clear whether the new draft DAP being prepared by the government will incorporate gender in all sectoral priorities, according to Decade commitments.

1.3 Decade Coordination and Implementation

Thus far, the governmental structure in charge of coordinating Decade-related activities has been the National Agency for Roma. Set up in 2004, the National Agency for Roma was intended to provide Roma with better, more influential representation at the government level. The agency was expected to take on a wide array of responsibilities, including the development of policies relating to Roma in Romania. In effect, the National Agency for Roma is subordinated to the General Secretariat of the government, and it functions primarily as a coordination and monitoring office, with a very limited independent budgetary allowance, a small office in Bucharest and eight regional offices, each staffed by three employees objectives (Focus Consultancy).

Though still young, the National Agency for Roma is the product of a tumultuous history of representation, delegation and reshuffling of Roma-related issues by various Romanian governments over the past 10 years. The National Agency for Roma is the successor to the National Office for Roma, which was part of the no-longer-extant Department for the Protection of National Minorities—itsself a part of the General Secretariat of the government—between 1997 and 2000. In January 2001, the National Office for Roma was transferred to the Ministry of Public Information, which is also no-longer-extant. In July 2003, the National Office for Roma was transferred back to the General Secretariat of the government and renamed the Office for Roma Issues. In February 2004, the Office for Roma Issues was transferred to the Department for Inter-Ethnic Relations, which was subordinated to the General Secretariat of the government. Before the last general elections, in October 2004, the Office for Roma Issues was replaced by the National Agency for Roma, established by means of an emergency

government ordinance. The head of the Office for Roma Issues was appointed as President of the agency in November 2004, only to be replaced by the current leader, Ionescu, in July 2005. This series of constant transfers and reorganizations severely impeded the development of the institution, leaving it in chronic disarray. Periods of relative institutional stability are overshadowed by an acute awareness of this history and of the fact that appointments to the presidency of the National Agency for Roma are understood to be political, and therefore inherently exposed to the changing winds of Romanian politics objectives (Focus Consultancy).

Nonetheless, the new agency enjoys relative autonomy as compared to its previous incarnations, and, at least in theory, it carries more weight than them, as the head of the institution holds the rank of a state secretary. The current set-up would allow the National Agency for Roma to perform some of its coordination functions under the Decade framework, though outside observers have questioned both the internal management of the agency and its capacity to work directly with line ministries' objectives (Focus Consultancy).

Ionescu, the current president of the National Agency for Roma, is a Roma who came to work for the government after a productive career in the NGO world, and her presence could help ease current tensions between Roma civil society and the government. She has proven herself on occasion to be a powerful advocate, so she can help raise the visibility of the Decade, both inside the government and among the public at large. But in the absence of a DAP, it is difficult to assess how—or, indeed, whether—the National Agency for Roma carries out its substantive duties as Decade coordinator in Romania.

What is clear, however, is that the National Agency for Roma gives priority to implementing the National Strategy on Roma in comparison to implementing goals of the Decade of Roma Inclusion. While the Decade plan is not yet approved, several hundred people have been hired for local implementation of the National Strategy on Roma. According to Ionescu, presenting the Decade as policy priority carries the risk of dramatic cuts, or at least reduced local influence, in the structure for the implementation of the National Strategy on Roma. Ionescu said the National Agency for Roma is not willing to take such a political risk.

2. FOCUS AREAS

2.1 Education

It is difficult to assess the relative success of various educational policies affecting Roma in Romania because no nationally representative enrolment and attainment data for Roma is consistently produced on an annual basis. The few statistical studies in the field are far from comprehensive, and they offer only one-time snapshots of the system, making it impossible to trace the evolution of education for Roma over time (Ministry of Education, *School Participation*). Most of the publicly available data comes from NGO reports and studies commissioned by international development agencies working in Romania (EUMAP, *Equal Access*; European Roma Rights Centre, *Stigmata*; Roma Education Fund, *Advancing Education*). The information that is available hints at a complex picture, in which the educational system has some progressive elements, particularly at the level of the Ministry of Education and Research (hereinafter, the Ministry of Education), while there is a lack of real progress on the lower levels, in primary and secondary schools.

Beginning with the early 1990s, Romania developed a series of affirmative action policies aimed at increasing university and high-school-level attendance among Roma students. What began in 1992, with 10 places allocated for Roma students in the School for Social Work of the Bucharest University, expanded over 10 years to a countrywide program, with 422 places allocated for Roma in 37 universities, according to Ministry of Education officials interviewed for the purposes of this report. This growth was mandated by annual orders from the Ministry of Education. But universities themselves also took on affirmative action policies that went beyond the requirements of the ministry. This is the case with qualification programs for Roma teachers without a college degree: Several universities took the initiative to expand these training programs by 50 places every two years. Similar affirmative action policies were developed for vocational training institutions and high schools throughout the country.

Additional positive developments include programs that aim to improve preschool and primary school attendance for disadvantaged groups by providing free school meals, subsidized school supplies and free

transportation. The provision of child allowances was also tied to school attendance until recently, again with the idea of motivating low-income families, not only Roma, to send their children to school. An adult literacy program called “second chance” is now underway, and it is reportedly mostly attended by young mothers and Roma who dropped out of school at an early age (EUMAP, *Equal Access*; Roma Education Fund).

Romania also developed Romani language programs much sooner than some of the other Decade countries. As early as 1990, a first set of three Romani language classes were set up as an experiment in pedagogical high schools in Bucharest, Bacau and Targu Mures, with the intention of training future Romani language teachers. At the central level, civil servant Gheorghe Sarau of the Ministry of Education spearheaded these efforts by helping to set up a Romani language program at the Bucharest University in 1992. Romani language programs are now scattered throughout the Romanian educational system—serving students from the preschool level to the university level. Inspectors of Roma education have been appointed in each county to coordinate activities relating to Romani language education and Roma culture and history classes (EUMAP, *Equal Access*; Roma Education Fund). Unfortunately, these inspectors often work only on a part-time basis, and they do not have the time to effectively oversee all the programs under their supervision. Moreover, NGOs have noted that the inspectors seem to be appointed based on their political affiliation, which casts suspicion on their length of tenure and their commitment to the issues of Roma education.

One other improvement that should be mentioned is the institution of Roma school mediators in Romania. The position of Roma school mediators was created to improve school enrolment and attendance and to prevent school abandonment for Roma children. The initial idea was to place a school mediator in each school, but the number of qualified school mediators is still very low. This means that each mediator is usually responsible for several schools in one area, a situation that greatly reduces their effectiveness (EUMAP, *Equal Access*; Roma Education Fund). As of this writing, the Ministry of Education had declared its intention to assimilate school mediators into the category of auxiliary teaching staff, and to extend the program to also assist non-Roma who may benefit from additional support. This move is partly motivated by a need to

increase the number of school mediators and to systematize their work.

While affirmative action policies and the introduction of Romani language curricula appear to have improved school attendance at all levels for Roma students, the Romanian education system continues to fail to provide Roma with equal opportunities to quality education in regular programs. By the government’s own admission, educational segregation is a systemic problem in Romania (Ministry of Education, *Notification 29323*). The immediate justifications given for segregation include: the combination of residential segregation with faulty school districting; abusive implementation of educational reforms for ethnic minorities; inadequate diagnostic and assessment procedures for placement in special schools; or simply “white flight” towards private schools or “better” schools, which almost always means predominantly non-Roma schools. Whatever the explanation given, many Roma children study separately from their non-Roma peers—in separate classes, buildings, or schools, and even in special schools originally intended for children with intellectual disabilities. These predominantly or exclusively-Roma classes or schools exhibit appalling conditions. Not only are they missing handbooks and essential supplies, such as chalk or paper; often basic furniture, heating, sanitation, or even windows are nowhere to be seen. Teachers in segregated schools are ill-prepared and unmotivated to work with their students. School abandonment among Roma students in segregated settings is high. Those who do stay in school can spend years without learning to read or to do basic math (EUMAP; European Roma Rights Centre, *Stigmata*; Roma Education Fund).

The first cases of segregation in Romania were documented in 2003 by the human rights group Romani CRISS (*Report on Educational Segregation*). Soon after, other domestic and international NGOs reported more cases. The legal avenues to address the issues proved insufficient. For instance, in response to a complaint submitted on behalf of Roma parents by Romani CRISS, the Romanian anti-discrimination body, the National Council for Combating Discrimination, issued an inconsequential “warning” to the school authorities guilty of segregating Roma children away from non-Roma (Gergely, “Anti-Discrimination Legislation”). In the light of the ineffective application of the law, activists saw that advocacy was the only way to effect policy change. Following increased pressure from NGOs and

other independent observers, the Ministry of Education adopted a Notification that mandated desegregation in the Romanian school system (Ministry of Education, *Notification 29323*). The Notification tasked school inspectorates to present complete and accurate information on the ethnic composition of local schools, and to propose solutions for integrating Roma and majority students in regular schools. Through the ministry, EU PHARE funding was dedicated to such desegregation projects, and a steering committee, which included representatives of civil society and Roma rights groups, was formed to oversee the PHARE-funded desegregation programs (Ministry of Education, *PHARE Program*).

But the ministry's progressive policy document has at least in part failed to produce the expected effects. As of this writing, cases of segregation continue to be documented by rights groups throughout the country. It is not clear how many counties in Romania have actually developed the mandated desegregation plans. There has been no independent monitoring of the use of PHARE funding intended for desegregation projects, but there are indications that at least some of the projects funded through the program did not actually end in the integration of Roma students in mainstream schools (Andruszkiewicz, *School Desegregation*). Under these circumstances, it is hard to imagine how the government hopes to achieve the draft DAP's objective of eliminating segregation by 2008.

2.2 Employment

The only available data on employment outcomes for Roma in Romania has been provided by the job fairs for Roma organized annually since 2003 by the National Employment Agency within the Ministry of Labor, Social Solidarity, and the Family (hereinafter, the Ministry of Labor). The data provides only specific figures for the number of persons attending the fair and the number of successful Roma applicants selected for employment. For example, in 2005, the fair was attended by 8,239 persons, out of whom 2,243 Roma were selected for future employment (National Agency for Roma, *Progress Report*). Outside these very small annual snapshots of the job fairs, there is no reliable, nationally representative, regularly collected data on the employment situation of Roma.

The job fairs for Roma are not only the sole source of limited information on the employment of Roma—they appear to be the only functioning active employment measures specifically targeting Roma in Romania to date. Moreover, the success of these fairs is felt on a very small scale, as they are not properly publicized and are therefore attended by only small samples of both potential employers and actual job-seekers. Roma NGOs have additionally pointed out that the program is not adequately tailored to the needs of Roma as beneficiaries, because the majority of jobs on offer at the fairs require qualifications higher than those usually attained by Roma.

While the job fairs may be imperfect, outside of some short-term PHARE-funded self-employment programs, there are no other mechanisms for actively promoting the employment of Roma. Other positive employment measures—such as offering tax breaks to employers hiring Roma, encouraging the revitalization of traditional crafts and trades, or providing farmland and supporting farming programs for Roma—appear on paper in the National Strategy for Roma, but have not been enacted in practice.

EU programs like PHARE and SAPARD have rarely been available to Roma, because the complex financing system is not conducive to targeting projects whose direct beneficiaries are Roma. Financing is sometimes only available to public institutions, for whom Roma have been a low-priority constituency. Often, such programs as microfinancing for income-generating activities have been available only to legally registered community initiative groups; this excludes, by default, the poorest and most isolated communities, which do not have the resources or know-how to incorporate initiative groups.

Part of the problem may come from the fact that the Ministry of Labor, which not only coordinates employment policy but also often serves as a conduit for outside funding, has yet to develop consistent policies for Roma. It is not even clear whether Roma inclusion in employment is in fact seen as a priority area for the ministry's work. According to the "Impreuna" Agency for Community Development, a Bucharest-based NGO, the Ministry of Labor and the National Employment Agency have not developed mechanisms for communicating with Roma communities, and they have yet to establish a system for cooperation with NGOs. The little cooperation that has taken place to

date occurred around some limited training and retraining programs, which were basically outsourced by the government to Roma groups.

The National Employment Plan, while formally recognizing the existence of the National Strategy on Roma, does not include specific provisions targeting Roma. The National Employment Plan only addresses Roma within the general category of disadvantaged groups. This means Roma are lumped together with recent high school and university graduates, people with disabilities, the elderly, etc. (Government of Romania, *National Employment Plan*). But the problems that Roma face are specific to their group, and this one-size-fits-all approach may not ensure that resources are allocated to Roma inclusion as part of the Decade initiative. The National Agency for Roma, however, informed the authors of this report that an understanding with the Ministry of Labor exists according to which Roma are placed in first position, as a priority target among the broader category of disadvantaged groups.

The flipside of inclusion policies—a system to redress cases of discrimination—has been slightly more effective. Since 2000, Romania has had an anti-discrimination law in place, and successive packages of amendments have brought the law closer to alignment with EU legislation as of this writing (Weber, *Report*). But the actual enactment of the law has been crippled: The implementing body, the National Council for Combating Discrimination, was organized slowly, and when it was finally established, it showed a clear lack of determination to deal with discrimination on racial grounds. The mechanism has proven to be a blunt, imperfect instrument for Roma in the area of employment. True, the National Council for Combating Discrimination punished and actively banned the most overt forms of discrimination, such as job advertisements expressly barring Roma from applying. But the council has yet to deal head-on with other widespread types of discrimination in employment, including victimization and harassment, even though one of the organization's earliest actions was to publish and disseminate anti-discrimination guidelines for employers (Holtmaat, *Catalysts for Change*).

Under these circumstances, it comes as no surprise that the employment sections of the available Romanian draft DAPs are underdeveloped. The drafts list only the broadest objectives for addressing Roma employment needs, and they do not provide for any

specific measures or financing mechanisms to achieve those objectives. Employment is a policy area where Romania is still a long way away from enacting effective programs for Roma inclusion.

2.3 Health

Roma health is an area where the Romanian government has been more actively involved in recent years. For example, the Ministry of Health has a functioning Ministerial Commission for Roma. The commission is chaired by a state secretary within the Ministry of Health who is charged specifically with oversight of Roma policies. The Ministry of Health is also the only ministry to have a specific budget line for Roma allocated in the annual state budget.

The main Roma-related expenditure of the ministry has to do with training and employing health mediators. The institution of the health mediators in Romania was initiated by the NGO Romani CRISS in a pilot project, and then was officially recognized and taken over by the Ministry of Health in 2003.

Since the inception of the program, Roma health mediators have encountered resistance. Health professionals questioned the mediators' qualifications and the very need for their existence. Meanwhile, health-care administrators treated mediators as external to the healthcare system and, consequently, the administrators provided no institutional support, such as offices where health mediators could be found at regular hours, or other logistical assistance Party (Network Public Health Program, *Mediating Romani Health*). In recent years, NGOs such as Romani CRISS have also expressed concern that new mediators could only be included in the program if they had formal or informal affiliation with a specific political organization, the Social-Democrat Roma.

Nevertheless, health mediators have gradually been accepted as a necessary part of the healthcare system, and their numbers are set to increase over the coming years. Official figures set the number of mediators in 2005 at 176, far below the recommended minimum of 600 mediators, which is estimated as the lowest amount needed for adequate nationwide coverage (National Agency for Roma, *Progress Report*).

National campaigns against tuberculosis, funded by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and

Malaria, have reached some Roma communities. In recent years, the Ministry of Health's vaccination drives that have included Roma communities have usually been organized in cooperation with the National Agency for Roma. NGO-led harm reduction programs, such as the ones run by the Romanian Association Against AIDS (known by its Romanian acronym, ARAS) have also included Roma communities.

The draft DAPs make reference to extending the network of health mediators and to developing preventive care and health education programs in Roma communities. They also include a series of incentives for medical personnel working in largely Roma areas, as well as a set of sensitivity training and anti-discrimination measures aimed at ensuring equal access to quality healthcare for Roma. But in the absence of specific measures, timelines, indicators or budget allocations, it is not possible to assess whether the broad goals set by the draft DAPs comprehensively and adequately address the health issues of Roma communities throughout Romania.

2.4 Housing

As part of the National Strategy on Roma, a number of measures to directly improve the living conditions of Roma have been developed at the central government level. The Ministry of Transportation, Constructions, and Tourism (hereinafter, the Ministry of Tourism) created a four-year emergency-measures plan to rehabilitate houses and areas inhabited by a significant number of Roma. The ministry also developed a program for building social housing and a funding system for partnership between private or public companies and NGOs that intend to improve access to public utilities in locations with large numbers of Roma (Ministry of Tourism, *Housing and Environment Plans*). The ministry boasts some measurable achievements under these programs: Between 2003 and 2005, some 10,017 housing units were delivered, and water supply systems were built in 42 villages. The Ministry of Administration and Internal Affairs also states that about 95,620 Roma families who do not own agricultural land have been identified in rural areas (National Agency for Roma,

Progress Report). Former Prime-Minister Adrian Nastase announced that agricultural land will be distributed to Roma during the 2004 election year, but no concrete measure followed this promise.

The two draft DAPs appear to reflect these existing policies. Furthermore, the draft DAP presented in the 2006 study proposes a series of additional legislative measures aimed at regulating property rights and rental agreements, settling issues relating to unregistered settlements, and commissioning a variety of studies on urban planning, the typology of Roma housing, etc. In the absence of specific measures, timelines, indicators or budget allocations, it is not possible to assess whether these different programs and studies amount to a coherent, adequate policy on Roma housing on a national level. At least these programs and documents, produced by the government, do indicate recognition of housing rights for Roma as a legitimate policy area at the central level.

However, the good intentions expressed by the national government are often at odds with the actions of local authorities. Independent monitoring by domestic and international NGOs has revealed a pattern of housing rights violations that further deepen the segregation and marginalization of Roma in both urban and rural areas. In recent years, cases in which local authorities forcibly evicted Roma from their homes and relocated them into extremely inadequate housing—if the authorities provided alternate accommodation at all—have been widely publicized in the press. Houses in unregistered settlements are routinely demolished. Roma families in urban areas are frequently evicted from their homes in the center of town and relocated to the outskirts, where their circumstances are often appalling. For example, Roma have been moved to former state farm stables, the edges of city garbage dumps, or in the proximity of water treatment plants. Despite the strong outcry of civil society groups, and the media attention given to many of these cases, central authorities have made no effort to stop, reverse or correct the actions of local authorities, and the pattern is set to continue in the coming years. It is not clear whether the Romanian DAP, when it is finally adopted, will include any measures to address this serious ongoing housing rights problem.

Serbia

1. INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

1.1 Decade Action Plan Drafting

The process of drafting the Decade Action Plan (hereinafter, DAP) in Serbia was led by the Federal Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, in cooperation with the Open Society Institute, during 2004 and the beginning of 2005. Action plans for the four focus areas of the Decade of Roma Inclusion were drafted, as were plans for implementing additional goals included in the National Strategy for the Integration and Empowerment of Roma (hereinafter, National Strategy). These implementation plans particularly addressed the issues of social welfare, culture, the media, and internally displaced persons and returnees.

The working groups dedicated to each focus area consisted of representatives of the following: relevant state ministries; the National Council of the Roma National Minority (hereinafter, the National Council of Roma); leaders of nongovernmental organizations; members of the delegation of young Roma leaders who participated in the launch of the Decade process; international and inter-governmental institutions and agencies, such as UNICEF, the World Bank, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Open Society Institute, UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration, etc.; and independent domestic experts.

The draft plans on education, employment, housing and healthcare were adopted by the government

on January 27, 2005. To this date, the government and individual ministries did not adopt any priority action plans based on the DAP, even though the OSCE financed an effort to develop such plans, with an estimate of costs, in the summer of 2005.

Since the adoption of the national DAP, several municipalities, acting partly with the support of the European Commission and other donors, such as UNICEF, have adopted their own Roma inclusion plans, based on the goals set out under the Decade. The number of these local action plans is expected to go up in the next few years, even in the absence of a central coordination and support mechanism for such activities. Also on the local level, the OSCE and the European Agency for Reconstruction and Development provided financial support for a project that engaged 20 Roma coordinators, who are to assist with the design and implementation of Decade action plans in 20 municipalities. In addition, similar activities were undertaken without OSCE financing, for example in Valjevo and Pirot.

1.2 Decade Action Plan Content

Much of the Serbian DAP is based on the 2002 Strategy for Integration and Empowerment of Roma, which was developed by the Ministry of Minority and Human Rights through a consultative process. The strategy itself was never adopted at the federal level, but its development helped set directions and priorities for Roma integration. The process of developing a

strategy also led to the establishment of a Secretariat for Roma, which was set up in 2003, with the support of the OSCE. This Secretariat played an important role in the development of the DAP, as well as in the day-to-day coordination of Decade-related activities.

The Serbian DAP takes a comprehensive and detailed approach to the problems that Roma are confronted with, and it covers most areas where action is needed. However, cross-cutting priorities, such as gender equality and non-discrimination, are not adequately incorporated in the DAP. Meanwhile, targets and indicators are not clear. Indicators are at best set in absolute terms, rather than in relation to the corresponding situation among non-Roma. Sometimes the activity itself is presented as an indicator, which confuses attempts at monitoring. One other problem is that, in the absence of reliable statistical baselines, monitoring progress on targets is virtually impossible.

The DAP does not name the specific institutions that are responsible for implementation. The only responsibilities that the DAP does attribute explicitly have to do with monitoring—and the enforcement mechanisms for those tasks are unclear, especially when it comes to making sure that international organizations are monitoring the Decade process.

The phasing in of various activities is fairly clear in the Serbian DAP, especially in the housing section. However, what is less clear is how these activities will be funded: While the DAP lists what appear to be rough estimates for costs of various activities under the Decade, it fails to clarify sources and allocation mechanisms.

1.3 Decade Coordination and Implementation

The first Serbian Decade coordinator appointed was Federal Deputy Minister of Human and Minority Rights Jelena Markovic. Anchoring the Decade coordination for the Republic of Serbia in the federal ministry, and not in an agency within the Serbian Republican Government, was a curious solution. The Federal Ministry's links to the Serbian Republican ministries in charge of education, employment, health and housing appeared weak, because they belonged to constitutionally separate spheres. In June 2006, after

Serbia and Montenegro separated into two countries, the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights ceased to exist. Most of the responsibilities of the former Ministry of Human and Minority Rights were transferred to a newly-formed Agency for Human and Minority Rights, including, according to Agency staff, the responsibility for Decade coordination.

Implementation of Roma-related policies, including the Decade, currently falls under the authority of the Secretariat for Roma within the Agency for Human and Minority Rights. The Secretariat was set up as part of an OSCE project, funded by the European Agency for Reconstruction and Development, that sought to assist with the implementation of the National Strategy. The coordinator of the Roma Decade League was appointed as deputy head of the newly established structure. Some of the Secretariat's four employees, including the head of the Secretariat, are themselves Roma, and this indicates an openness toward including Roma in government structures. But this positive sign of openness is overshadowed by the fact that the Secretariat itself has no authority or autonomy within government structures, and its status beyond the terms of the OSCE project has not been clarified. Another reason for concern is that no additional funding—and, more specifically, no funding under the Decade—has been allocated to the Secretariat, beyond the grant from the European Agency for Reconstruction.

Until the creation of the Agency, there appears to have been little coordination on Decade implementation between the various responsible line ministries, but government officials have indicated that an inter-ministerial group on the Decade is supposed to be set up in the near future, and that the Secretariat for Roma is in the process of developing a system for meeting with relevant line ministries once every three months. After what appeared to be a long period of inaction, on the initiative of the Secretariat working groups on the implementation of the DAP were set up in four ministries. Thus, by the end of 2006, working groups, which included the deputy head of the Secretariat for Roma and Roma NGO representatives, had been set up in the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Policy (hereinafter, the Ministry of Labor), the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry for Capital Investment. As of

this writing, it is too early to assess the effectiveness of these working groups.

There is no official monitoring mechanism for activities under the Decade as of this writing. Authorities have indicated that such a mechanism would be established within the Secretariat for Roma, and in April 2007, the Secretariat for Roma initiated a process—financed by the European Agency for Reconstruction and implemented by the OSCE Mission—that is also aimed at “monitoring.” But, as of this writing, there is no clear timeline for developing this monitoring mechanism. In this situation, there is no official report against which to compare the findings of this report, and the Roma Decade League appears to be the only public source of information on Decade activities (Minority Rights Center, *Yearly Report*). The National Council of Roma, a representative political structure that has offices in 10 towns in Serbia and is supposed to represent the interests of Roma, has yet to become a partner in Decade implementation and monitoring. The mandate of the current body has expired, and no elections have been held as of this writing.

Another obstacle in the implementation of the DAP has been the absence of adequate funding. No specific funding for the Decade has been included in the state budgets. Moreover, as will be reported in the subsequent sections, many of the Decade activities in Serbia were in fact introduced and financed by external donors and partners, and not the government. Ministries were supposed to allocate funds for the Decade from the approved budgets, but there is no mechanism to ensure enforcement of such reallocation requests. At best, funding for specific short-term projects was obtained under the Decade, but there is no commitment to long-term systemic changes. Representatives of ministries interviewed for this report indicated that the following budget allocations have been made under the Decade: Ministry of Health, EUR 700,000; Ministry of Labor, EUR 400,000; Ministry of Education and Sports (hereinafter, the Ministry of Education), no specific figure is cited, but it appears that significant funding has been allocated to Roma programs; Ministry of Capital Investments, no budget allocations appear to have been made.

2. FOCUS AREAS

2.1 Education

There is no regularly collected and nationally representative data about enrolment and educational attainment among Roma. Nonetheless, individual surveys provide snapshots on the challenges the Serbian authorities face in bridging the gaps in educational outcomes for Roma. Roma children in Serbia have significantly lower levels of education than the majority population, and they encounter discrimination in all areas of the school system. Preschool education became compulsory only in the fall of 2006. Before that, preschools indirectly discriminated against Roma by giving enrolment priority to children of parents in full-time employment. Consequently, a 2003 study published by the Roma Children’s Center (Rakovic and Miljevic, *Roma and Education*) revealed that less than 7 percent of Roma children attended preschool, as opposed to 27 percent of non-Roma children.

Alarmingly, many Roma children do not go to school: Data from the Serbia Survey of Living Standards (hereinafter, SLS) from 2003 reveals that 35 percent of Roma children (ages 7-20) are not enrolled in school at all, compared to a rate of 2 percent for non-Roma (Bodewig and Sethi, *Poverty*). The survey furthermore shows that, in 2003, while the net enrolment rate for primary schooling among non-Roma was 98.5 percent, for Roma it was 72.2 percent. There are similar differences for secondary education, with the secondary school net enrolment rate for Roma at 16.7 percent, compared to 64.2 percent for non-Roma. Serbian administrative data from the Ministry of Education confirms high Roma student drop-out rates between the first and eighth grades of elementary school (Mihajlovic, *Needs Assessment*).

Many Roma children are never enrolled in school. One obstacle, found in almost 50 percent of the cases researched by the Minority Rights Center and Argument (Minority Rights Center and Argument, *Roma and the Right to Legal Subjectivity*), is that Roma families cannot afford school-related expenses, such as clothing or supplies. Another obstacle is that some Roma children do not have the necessary documents to register, such as birth records, official registration of residence or medi-

cal certificates, which have to be obtained for a fee. The absence of such documentation was recorded in 20 percent of the cases researched by the Minority Rights Center and Argument. Internally displaced Roma, as well as refugees and returnees, are at a particular disadvantage, because they often lack the necessary documents to access the school system. Moreover, a systemic gap in the education system prevents unenrolled children older than 8½ from registering in school until they reach the age of 16, when they become eligible for adult education. Consequently, according to the Minority Rights Center and Argument, 62 percent of all Roma have not completed their primary education, and only 9.6 percent continued beyond primary school. The National Roma Council reports that, between 2003 and 2005, only 240 Roma enrolled in high school education, and 180 of these followed through to higher education, where their tuition is covered by the state (EUMAP, *Equal Access*).

Segregation into special schools affects large numbers of Roma students in Serbia. While official figures on this phenomenon are not available, unofficial estimates of Roma students included in special schools range between 50 and 80 percent of the total Roma population in school, and as high as 80-85 percent of the total in Belgrade (Mihajlovic, *Needs Assessment*). Administrators often justify streaming Roma students to special schools by saying that Roma children do not have a sufficient command of Serbian to enter mainstream education. Inadequate procedures for assessment and evaluation of school-readiness also contribute to this situation. And provisions for families whose children attend special schools, such as free meals and textbooks and small social care subsidies, may also increase the number of Roma in special schools. Once in special schools, Roma children study a reduced curriculum and fall even further behind their non-Roma peers. Transfers from special schools to mainstream schools are virtually unheard of. Even in mainstream schools, Roma are often segregated into separate classes or separate sections within regular classrooms, often at the back of the class (Minority Rights Center). Neither the education system as a whole, nor individual teachers are prepared to support inclusive education or to foster the kind of multicultural environment that would be more conducive to school success for Roma.

There has been little indication thus far that the government is willing to invest in long-term policies aimed at improving the educational status of Roma. There have only been some shorter-term projects, initiated in cooperation with civil society organizations and funded by outside donors.

The Ministry of Education is involved in two areas of policy: promoting enrolment and opposing segregation. Together with the National Roma Council, the ministry has been providing free textbooks for Roma children in primary education and promoting affirmative action in supporting enrolment of Roma in secondary and tertiary education. About 2,500 Roma children have received the textbook support, to the tune of RSD 30 million (approximately EUR 400,000). The ministry also sent schools instructions that highlight the negative impacts of segregated classes and provide guidance on how to avoid them (Roma Education Fund, *Advancing Education*).

Most activities, however, are launched and funded by external sources, such as the Roma Education Fund or the European Agency for Reconstruction and Development. These activities are supposed to be implemented in cooperation with the National Council for Roma, NGOs and local authorities. For instance, the Roma Education Fund supported a preschool project (“Expanding Access to Preschool Education for Roma Children”) initiated during the 2005-2006 school year. The project provided grants to 24 educational institutions in 24 municipalities and allowed 600 Roma children, aged 5-8, to attend preschool programs. Initial evaluations show encouraging results in terms of school-readiness and school performance, but independent observers have noted that the number of children included in the project by local implementers is much lower than expected. The experience with the pilot is being taken into consideration in a follow-up Roma Education Fund project targeting 1,400 children in 42 municipalities.

Similarly, the Roma Education Fund supported three other pilot projects in cooperation with the Ministry of Education: (i) development of a second-chance education program for Roma who have not completed compulsory primary education; (ii) design of a needs-assessment methodology and of a regional strategy for improving the educational status of Roma in Vojvodina; and (iii) Minority Rights Center training in anti-discrimination issues for regional inspectors

and human rights monitors (Roma Education Fund). Another program, which seeks to pilot the introduction of Roma teaching assistants in Serbian schools and preschools, has been funded beginning with 2006 by the European Agency for Reconstruction. Through this project, implemented in cooperation with the OSCE, the Ministry of Education declared for this report that it expected 20 teaching assistants to begin working during the second term of the 2006-2007 school year. Another 54 assistants were expected to begin training around the same time.

Other programs are run entirely by NGOs and international donors. Such efforts include the provision of preschool education in 30 settlements, through a program of the International Red Cross, and an inclusive education project run by Save the Children UK.

2.2 Employment

As with education, when it comes to employment outcomes for Roma, there is no regularly collected, nationally representative data. Again, individual independent surveys provide snapshots: SLS data shows that almost 32 percent of Roma living in settlements were unemployed in 2003, while the unemployment rate among non-Roma is 15 percent (Bodewig and Sethi). Though significantly fewer Roma in older age cohorts participate in the labor market, labor force participation and employment rates among young Roma, aged 15-24, are higher than for the general population. This situation likely reflects comparatively low school enrolment for Roma children and youths, who are often engaged in various income-generating activity rather than attending class. The 2003 SLS data reveals a strong gender disparity in employment. While the Roma male employment rate is only slightly below that of non-Roma (66.8 percent compared to 69.9 percent), the female Roma employment rate of 34.5 percent is significantly lower than the rate of 54 percent for non-Roma.

There are many reasons for these discrepancies: For one thing, lower levels of education among Roma lead to higher rates of long-term unemployment and push Roma into low-qualification, temporary employment, often in the so-called gray economy. Meanwhile, Roma experience both indirect and direct discrimination in the employment sector. For instance, Roma who live in

informal settlements, and consequently do not have an officially registered residence, cannot register with the National Employment Service, so they cannot access the services and programs available to the unemployed. According to research conducted by Argument and the Minority Rights Center, 35.5 percent of Roma in Belgrade are not registered at all on the labor market (Minority Rights Center and Argument). The Ministry of Labor reports that a new law regulating the registration of unemployed persons, which should remedy this situation, is currently being drafted in Serbia. Along with this indirect discrimination, Roma overwhelmingly report direct discrimination by employers, particularly in the private sector (Jaksic and Basic, *The Art of Survival*). No programs to combat discrimination in employment have been launched by the Serbian government. In the absence of a comprehensive anti-discrimination law in this area, the international instruments to which Serbia is a part and the declarative protections in the Constitution do not offer effective defense for victims of discrimination. The Serbian DAP provides for the adoption of such legislation, but no progress in developing it can be reported to date.

The Law on Employment and Insurance in the Case of Unemployment, adopted in 2003, introduced affirmative action measures for certain categories suffering from a higher risk of unemployment, including minorities, though Roma are not specifically mentioned. The DAP commits the government to make use of these affirmative action provisions. Initial anecdotal evidence suggests that this is the case for participation in employment and training programs. In addition, Roma are explicitly targeted by policy documents, such as the National Employment Strategy for 2005–2010, the National Action Plan for Employment (2006–2008), the Work Plan for the National Employment Service, and the schedule of funds use and transfer for the purposes of active employment support.

In line with DAP commitments, affirmative action measures are being implemented in a self-employment program developed by the Ministry of Labor. The program gives additional points to Roma applicants, but the beneficiary numbers remain very low. The Ministry of Labor distributed the announcement of this program to Roma NGOs in the course of 2006, and, as of December 2006, 224 out of 7,864 applicants for the program reported by the National Employment

Service were Roma (Minority Rights Center). Only 20 self-employment agreements were signed by Roma as a result of this program (Minority Rights Center).

Other attempts to stimulate Roma employment by the Ministry of Labor include public works for improving the infrastructure of Roma settlements. The first major program of this kind was announced in August 2006, but Roma organizations complained that poor communication with the ministry prevented them from reacting to the program announcement in a timely manner. Funds for a similar program are allocated in the state budget for 2007, and it is hoped that the initial communication problems will not recur.

Subsidies for stimulating employment among national minorities are provided for in the 2003 Law on Employment and Insurance in Case of Unemployment, but no data is available as to how this provision has affected Roma—if at all. Similarly, micro-enterprise loans are available through the National Employment Service, but they cannot be accessed by most Roma because they require real estate as a collateral guarantee.

2.3 Health

There are a number of studies and surveys on Roma health status and access to healthcare (Bodewig and Sethi; Oxfam, *Health Status*), but there is no systematic and regular data gathering by the authorities. Overall, the reports reveal that the health situation of Roma is significantly bleak as compared to the general population. For one thing, Roma life expectancy is lower: According to independent estimates, less than one percent of Roma live past the age of 60, as compared to 30 percent of the general population. Infant and maternal mortality are high, and Roma women can expect to have more than 13 abortions on average over their lifetime. Roma children fall ill three to 10 times more often than their non-Roma peers. Health determinants that underlie such outcomes include poor living conditions, lack of health education, lack of family planning and lack of basic medical attention.

Household survey data on health have to be treated with caution, because they reflect self-reported health status only. If only a minority of Roma visit the doctor for regular medical check-ups, such self-reporting may

underestimate the true incidence of health problems. Still, the 2003 Serbia SLS provides some telling information on reported health status among Roma in comparison with non-Roma: 17.4 percent of Roma aged 25-44 reported chronic illnesses, compared to a mere 6.8 percent among the non-Roma. Moreover, half of the Roma aged 40-55 report chronic illnesses compared to 25.9 percent of non-Roma. Although significantly more Roma report chronic illnesses in the survey, except for Roma above 70 years of age, significantly fewer of them actually receive healthcare. Similarly, while more Roma suffered from an acute illness than non-Roma survey respondents, fewer Roma actually utilized health services (Bodewig and Sethi).

A survey of Roma settlements (Oxfam) shows that Roma children often go without immunization: For example, 9 percent of children in surveyed households were never vaccinated while the vaccination status was unknown for 27 percent. Moreover, 68 percent of Roma women reported having visited a gynecologist for child birth, but 80 percent did not go for regular check-ups. In the case of sickness or injury, Roma visit primary care physicians 62 percent of the time, while in 14 percent of the cases Roma treat themselves, and in the majority of the other cases, some serious health conditions were not treated when diagnosed. A total of 80 percent of respondents said they visit a dentist only for tooth extraction.

Under-utilization of the health system can be explained by under-reporting of illnesses and failure to seek health services or to receive them when requested. Access to health services is constrained by systemic barriers, such as non-registration, lack of information or language skills. Moreover, Roma often report that healthcare practitioners discriminate against them—letting them wait until all non-Roma have been treated, or dismissing them after only a cursory look and a rebuke that suggests that Roma bring their own health problems on themselves (Antic, *Roma and the Right to Health Care*).

Since the launch of the Decade, the Serbian Ministry of Health has taken a proactive role in implementing the health goals of the DAP, openly cooperating with civil society and local authorities in order to facilitate proper implementation. Consequently, optimism about the health goals of the DAP runs high, and the budget allotted to 2007 Roma-related activi-

ties of the Ministry of Health has doubled as compared to 2006. The Ministry of Health has allocated EUR 700,000 for health programs focusing on health education, reproductive health, and women's health activities, to be implemented in cooperation with NGOs in about 45 municipalities in Serbia.

Some of the goals set by the DAP have not been achieved within the planned period of time. This is the case with a survey of the health situation of Roma that was supposed to have been completed by the end of 2005. If completed, the survey would have provided an invaluable baseline against which the government could design further policies and measure progress.

Serbia does not have a health-mediator system. Health mediators are mentioned in the DAP, but no actions toward setting up a system of health mediators has been taken to date.

2.4 Housing

There is no official, regularly collected and nationally representative data on the housing situation of Roma in Serbia. However, there are individual surveys that describe the current picture. For example, according to a study published by the Institute of Philosophy and Social Theory in 2005 (Jaksic and Basic), there are 593 Roma settlements, fairly evenly distributed between cities and more rural areas. Of these, 72 percent are not properly legalized. More than half of all Roma settlements do not have basic infrastructure, such as asphalt roads, water supplies or sewage systems. Thirty-five percent of these settlements do not have electricity, and most are more than one kilometer away from public services like clinics, schools or stores. Displaced Roma from Kosovo and southern Serbia, and the more than 10,000 returning unsuccessful asylum seekers, have made this situation even more acute in recent years, particularly in the more developed cities toward which these people gravitated. For instance, a study conducted by the NGO YUROM in Nis revealed that housing conditions for Roma in that city are detrimental to the Roma residents' health (Minority Rights Center). Fortunately, the local government there reacted swiftly to the news and allocated funds to build a sewage system and other infrastructure elements needed in Roma neighborhoods.

Unfortunately, not all relevant authorities in Serbia are as quick to react to the housing situation of Roma. Indeed, Roma housing is listed in a number of policy documents, such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy, and the draft National Strategy for Integration and Empowerment of Roma. However, there is no national policy with concrete measures and financing attached, and any action has been limited to individual municipalities taking the initiative. Moreover, in the absence of clear coordination and implementation mechanisms, too few of the measures listed in the above-mentioned policy documents have been enacted on a local level.

Similarly, housing laws have been slow to show effects on the ground, especially where Roma are concerned. A 2003 Law on Planning and Construction was supposed to re-launch the process of legalizing unregistered settlements, but implementation was stalled, partly because the process of land reform and land registration in Serbia is not yet completed, partly because local authorities still impose unrealistic conditions for including Roma houses in urban plans, and partly because the potential beneficiaries of the law were not properly informed about its existence.

A draft law on social housing has been in the making since 2004, but, as of late 2006, there was no specific timeline for its adoption by the government, much less for its submission to the parliament. This legal gap, however, has not prevented some local authorities from developing social housing projects in locations where enough political will and support could be found. That is why, for instance, 1,200 social housing apartments, which are also open for distribution to Roma families upon completion, were being built in Belgrade as of this writing.

One other important housing issue is forced evictions of Roma. These are still reported on a fairly regular basis. According to current legal provisions, evictions can be carried out based solely on municipal orders, without a court decision. Appeals can be filed only through administrative procedures, and they have no impact on the actual carrying out of evictions. Roma evicted in this way are not provided with alternative accommodation.

Outside of funding allocated for public works to improve conditions in Roma settlements, the Ministry of Capital Investments did not allocate any funds for DAP implementation in 2006. The outcomes of the

public works project announced in August 2006 are not known as of this writing. Meanwhile some movement has finally been recorded, with the establishment of the working group for Decade implementation in the Ministry of Capital Investments, which also set priori-

ties for 2007. For example, the Ministry adopted the “Guiding Principles for the Legalization of Roma Settlements,” an operational guide for local self-governments. According to the Roma Secretariat, there is also funding for 2007 activities allocated from the state budget.

Slovakia

1. INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

1.1 Drafting of the DAP

The Slovak Decade Action Plan (hereinafter, DAP) was finalized during a two-day thematic workshop in which a number of Roma representatives participated with government representatives from most of the relevant ministries. The prevailing feeling among Roma leaders in Slovakia, however, is that the government has done too little to inform Roma about the Decade of Roma Inclusion during the preparatory phase. According to these leaders, the government seems to assume that Roma activists will come into play primarily as monitors, rather than co-designers, of government inputs into the Decade.

Most information about the preparatory phases of the Decade was spread through Roma participants to the thematic workshop and through unofficial channels such as the Roma Press Agency and the newspaper *Romano nevo lil*. The Open Society Foundation in Bratislava facilitated the participation of Roma leaders in the DAP drafting process by assisting with communications among the members of the Roma forum. This ensured that they had considerable input into the development of the DAP within each sectoral working groups which held several meetings through mid-2004. The conclusions of the working groups were forwarded to the government's Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities, which is one of the official drafters of the DAP.

1.2 DAP Content

The adopted DAP, which is available online, contains two sections: A narrative section gives an overview of goals and measures included in the framework of the Decade, and a section with a matrix-style table has headings for goals, tools or measures, indicators, data, deadlines and financing. The table lists which ministries are responsible for monitoring progress on particular objectives. The DAP was adopted through a government resolution which also tasks the Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration, Human Rights and Minorities, together with the Minister of Education, the Minister of Labor, Social Affairs and Family, the Minister of Health, and the Minister of Constructions and Regional Development to coordinate and monitor the implementation of the action plan.

The Slovak DAP, however, does not explain coordination mechanisms and the roles that various state agencies are called to play in relation to each other in implementing the goals listed under the Decade. Moreover, specific deadlines are missing; thus, 2015, the end of the Decade, is listed as the deadline for most of the listed actions, making it difficult to trace the way in which various actions are phased in relation to each other and to monitor DAP implementation on an ongoing basis.

Most of the indicators are formulated in absolute terms, rather than in relation to the situation of non-Roma, with the one exception being the indicator relating to vaccination rates. Moreover, the relationship between government inputs and indicators is sometimes

tenuous. This is the case with indicators relating to the age of mothers at first birth and the age of youngsters beginning their sex life, which are supposed to measure improvements in the “sexual health” of Roma.

Funding is also an area that is often problematic in the DAP, as the allocation mechanisms, and often the available financing, are not made explicit in the official document. The education section leaves the funding column for all line items blank, explaining financial costs in a separate commentary under the table, which mentions only a contribution from the Roma Education Fund. In the employment section, the share of the state budget that would actually reach Roma is not clarified, as it only lists overall figures intended for broader categories, such as disadvantaged groups.

Finally, the text of the Slovak DAP exhibits many of the negative reflexes of recent Slovak policies for Roma: It includes problematic formulations such as “native predispositions” in relation to the health situation of Roma. It explicitly links Roma culture to poor housing conditions when citing the “cultural level” of Roma as a presumed reason for their lack of adequate housing and as a justification for building housing for Roma to a “lower standard.” It similarly links the provision of public utilities, such as running water, sewage and sanitation, to “improving social and cultural conditions” in settlements. It talks about “low motivation” as a reason for unemployment and suggests that “working habits” need to be changed. And it sets low expectations for Roma students by not even considering higher education as a potential area of government action for Roma inclusion.

Slovakia has not adopted priority action plans, but there are internal short-term strategies that guide the work of individual line ministries in the four focus areas of the Decade, and ministries write annual reports on progress under the Decade. Moreover, the Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities is working on the regional level for the adoption of regional policies to implement Decade goals. Still, the Slovak public is not adequately informed about the Decade, and confusion still reigns about the relationship between the DAP and various other governmental programs and strategies.

1.3 Decade coordination and Implementation

Pal Csaky, deputy prime minister for European integration, human rights and minorities, was appointed by the prime minister as Decade coordinator. In turn, Deputy Prime-Minister Csaky appointed Klara Orgovanova, head of the Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities of the Slovak Republic, to be a member of the Steering Committee of the Decade.

In 1995, in the wake of racially motivated violence, the government created the office of the Plenipotentiary for Citizens Requiring Special Care. At the same time, a Secretariat of the Plenipotentiary was also created within the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family. After a series of changes in the structure and leadership of the office, in 2001 Klara Orgovanova was appointed Plenipotentiary of for Roma Communities. The Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities has five regional branch offices. Since 2001, the office has developed and coordinated the implementation of governmental strategies for Roma, and has evaluated the effectiveness of these policies, advocating for course corrections as necessary. In recent years, tensions appeared between the office of the Plenipotentiary and the cabinet itself, so that the Plenipotentiary’s influence over government decisions and policies appears to have significantly decreased in practice.

Most of the day-to-day work relating to the Decade is done by the office of the Plenipotentiary. The office has a rather large staff, primarily due to that fact that it has several regional branches in addition to a small core staff in Bratislava. The office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities also has coordinating, though not managerial, functions for the activities of the relevant line ministries engaged under the Decade: the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, and Family (hereinafter, the Ministry of Labor), the Ministry of Constructions and Regional Development, and the Ministry of Health. This coordination is done on two levels: On the one hand, specialists in the office of the Plenipotentiary liaise with relevant employees in line ministries responsible for specific focus areas under the Decade framework. On the other hand, the Plenipotentiary has initiated an inter-ministerial commission on the affairs of Roma communities, giving that commission the task of advising the government on specific policies.

2. FOCUS AREAS

2.1 Education

No regularly updated and nationally compiled representative data on Roma education in Slovakia is available. The Slovak government's Institute of Information and Prognoses for Education collects some enrolment data, but the methodology for gathering the data appears inconsistent, which makes the resulting information unreliable as a baseline. Most of the information on the educational situation of Roma, therefore, comes from independent but non-representative human rights reports, which paint a rather bleak picture.

Roma in Slovakia are frequently segregated into special schools, so much so that many special schools appear to be attended exclusively by Roma. Diagnostic and assessment procedures that test school readiness and intellectual abilities are flawed at best. Families and students report that evaluation tests are complicated, demanding, lengthy and culturally biased, which partly accounts for the massive overrepresentation of Roma among students directed toward special schools. Other factors may also play a role, including anti-Roma bias, from those charged with conducting the tests, from school administrators and from teaching staff. Special schools offer substandard education in often substandard conditions, and they make it virtually impossible for their graduates to move on to regular secondary schools. Additionally, schools close to larger Roma settlements tend to be all-Roma. As a consequence, generations of young Roma grow up in isolation from their non-Roma peers, a situation that can only contribute to perpetuating the high levels of racial animosity in Slovakia (Roma Education Fund, *Advancing Education*; European Roma Rights Centre, *Stigmata*; EUMAP, *Rights of People*).

The Slovak government has shown itself more willing to deal with segregation in recent years, and it has initiated the implementation of a series of measures aimed at promoting integration. Thus, the Slovak government has taken a number of measures aimed at reducing the number of children from disadvantaged backgrounds, including Roma, placed in special schools, most notably by redesigning and testing new diagnostic and assessment methodologies. Thus, according to information

provided by the Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities for the purposes of this report, the Child Psychology and Pathopsychology Research Institute prepared new psychodiagnostic methodologies as part of the 2001 PHARE project "Reintegration of Socially Disadvantaged Children from Special Schools into Standard Elementary Schools." The new methodologies were distributed by the Ministry of Education and tested in pedagogical and psychological counselling centers, where an initial evaluation showed that they are positively received.

The Slovak government has also developed some programs aimed at increasing school attendance among Roma. For example: social assistance for families with children is tied to attendance of compulsory primary education institutions; subsidies for school supplies and school lunches are offered; and a one-year drop-out reduction pilot program was implemented until May 2006.

Another important measure was the development of so-called "zero classes," which typically consist of a preparatory preschool program affiliated with an elementary school. This measure should help increase the school readiness of Roma children. However, since per-capita funding was introduced in the Slovak school system, many such preschool programs had to be closed down, because they lacked sufficient funds to continue their activity. As a result, many children who suddenly had to commute farther to attend such "zero classes" did not actually do so. To remedy this situation, preschool programs were organized in some Roma communities—but such efforts reportedly often suffered from the usual problems associated with segregated education: poor quality education and teaching conditions, as well as low expectations and low motivation for teachers and students alike. According to the Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities, a recent study by the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education has shown that the number of pupils who attend the zero classes at state and private elementary schools and the schools with zero classes has increased tremendously between 2001 and 2006.

Slovakia also adopted the "Teacher's Assistants model," which was implemented in preschools, primary schools and special schools. According to information provided by the Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities for the purposes of this report, at pres-

ent there are approximately 1,000 such teacher's assistants in the Slovak Republic. In practice, however, these teacher's assistants are typically hired on short-term, one-year contracts, which may affect their motivation. Moreover, teacher's assistants are selected individually by school directors, which in practice means that they are often chosen on the basis of their relationship with school administrators, not on the basis of their relationship with Roma parents and students (European Roma Rights Centre, *Stigmata*; Roma Education Fund).

Other measures that could impact Roma education include: the development of vocational education and second-chance programs for students who did not complete primary education; the provision of higher education scholarships, through the office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities with the administrative support of the Open Society Foundation–Bratislava; and the provision of minority language and cultural education, such as the Roma studies program in a bilingual (Slovak-English) grammar school in Bratislava, a private grammar school in Kosice and the “Ghandi” grammar school in Zvolen for gifted and talented students from the Roma minority.

Many of these areas of action, however, are not included in the education section of the Slovak DAP, which merely skims over the surface of needed education reforms without providing the necessary detail for effective action. Objectives and targets are listed in general terms. For example, an objective such as “to improve the education-related achievements of Roma population” has as its only goal that “all Roma boys and girls pass elementary school.” The DAP often does not give any indication as to the manner in which these general goals are supposed to come about, and it does not mention the complexity of the issue and the need for an integrated approach.

2.2 Employment

A study by the World Bank published in 2005 estimates that the overall unemployment rate among Roma in 2004 was 78.9 percent (World Bank, *Quest for Equitable Growth*), but many of the larger settlements have 100 percent unemployment rates.

Mainstream governmental employment policies have not, for the most part, addressed the situa-

tion of Roma directly. Instead, they have focused on the broader category of vulnerable groups, which includes people with disabilities, the elderly, recent school leavers younger under 25 years of age, parents taking care of three or more children, and long-term unemployed persons. The real effect of such broad policies on Roma has not been tracked due to a lack of disaggregated data collected by ethnicity in Slovakia. The Social Development Fund, a state-funded grant-making agency, estimates that about one-third of its funding has gone to programs targeting Roma, but it is not clear whether this estimate measures funding directly reaching Roma or funding reaching broader categories, which also include Roma.

National employment programs developed by the Ministry of Labor have included vocational training, subsidized employment, and public works projects, funded both from the state budget and from the European Social Fund. No information as to the actual number of Roma beneficiaries is available.

Some of the specific smaller programs have explicitly targeted Roma by seeking to employ Roma in particular positions, like community social workers or assistant teachers, but the scope of these programs appears to be very limited. Moreover, some of the larger government employment programs funded by the European Social Fund were subcontracted, through public tenders, as smaller projects handled by external organizations. These smaller projects could then be specifically dedicated and tailored to Roma. However, other good models developed in the civil society sector—such as a number of Roma-staffed career counseling centers set up in Eastern Slovakia by the non-governmental organization People in Need—have not been taken up for replication by government agencies and subcontractors.

Public works have therefore presented by far the biggest opportunity for employment for Roma. But the employment gained in this manner is usually only short-term, so the numbers of the long-term unemployed remain unchanged.

Other measures have also had only limited impact: Some self-employment support programs, are being implemented through, for instance, the First Contact Centers, the Regional Consulting and Information Centers and the Business Innovation Centers (all of them sponsored by the Ministry of Economy). Subsidies

are being offered on a needs basis, and target Roma among other categories of beneficiaries, but the numbers of actual Roma applicants are not tracked. Some programs seeking to revive traditional crafts were also introduced—for instance, a carpet-making enterprise funded by the Equal Community Initiative in Presov. But opportunities for small business development for Roma are limited. Very little microfinancing is available—most of it through the Integra foundation, in partnership with Citibank—and the majority of business loans involve commercial bank credit, for which Roma usually do not qualify. Some not-for-profit business incubators have begun to function as NGO initiatives, but, again, the numbers of their beneficiaries are extremely low.

Meanwhile, measures designed as positive actions have sometimes had adverse effects. For instance, a Ministry of Agriculture grant-making scheme that gives preferential treatment to Roma applicants has actually increased tensions between Roma and non-Roma in certain localities. The impact on Roma beneficiaries otherwise is as yet unknown.

Following much debate and a number of false starts, in 2004, Slovakia passed anti-discrimination legislation, which was intended to harmonize domestic regulations with European Council directives in the field. The adopted legislation largely follows the requirements of the European directives, but it is still mostly unknown to employers, and has yet to be tested. The first court case under this law—a case relating to access to public accommodations for Roma—was only brought in August 2006, and the reporters have no knowledge of any cases filed in the area of employment.

The employment section of the DAP contains little more detail on how the general Slovak policies relating to employment for disadvantaged groups would be applied to Roma. Following a first target, to provide anti-discrimination training to state employees, most other measures listed in the DAP are almost verbatim transcripts of various provisions included in national employment programs developed by the Ministry of Labor. There is no mention of specific mechanisms to ensure that resources actually reach Roma beneficiaries, or that outcomes for Roma are measured.

2.3 Health

Largely because many Roma live in conditions of poor environmental hygiene and in isolated settlements without readily available access to healthcare assistance, the health outcomes of Roma are overall poorer than for the rest of the population. In addition, healthcare providers in Slovakia often discriminate against Roma, and even segregate Roma from the rest of the patient population in healthcare facilities. Emergency services are often reluctant to go to Roma neighborhoods, with sometimes tragic consequences.

Under these circumstances, the measures listed in the health section of the DAP—which comprise an epidemiological study, several information campaigns in Roma communities and the hiring of temporary healthcare assistants—appear woefully inadequate. They appear to identify Roma ignorance on health issues as the most important area of government intervention, and fail to address even in passing the problem of rampant discrimination against Roma in the healthcare system.

All citizens with permanent places of residence in Slovakia have access to healthcare coverage. However, Roma who do not have a registered permanent address (as is the case of Roma living in illegal settlements) or are otherwise lacking identity documents have difficulties accessing the healthcare system. Moreover, until September 2006, doctor's visit fees and other out-of-pocket expenses placed sometimes insurmountable obstacles to accessing healthcare services for the indigent, including Roma. In September 2006, however, the fee system was replaced by a small SKK 60 (approximately EUR 1.7) flat co-payment for first aid clinical services only, and a SKK 5 (EUR 0.1) co-payment for medicine and nutritional supplements.

While some programs aimed at improving health outcomes for a host of vulnerable groups, theoretically including Roma, have been enacted in Slovakia in recent years, they have failed to have any known direct effects on Roma so far. Roma-specific programs have been few and far between, and have dealt mostly with personal and environmental hygiene. Thus, in 2005 the Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities adopted a project aimed at providing exterminators for 50 settlements, and the Ministry of Labor is funding the building of personal hygiene and laundry facilities in some Roma communities.

A PHARE project aimed at improving the access to healthcare for selected area with high Roma population in Slovakia was implemented between 2004 and 2006 (*Overview*). The project included several components. A first component was the training of health field workers who acted as health mediators and assisted with developing preventive education and vaccination programs, as well as with registering Roma without health coverage within the Slovak health insurance system. A second component of the program was the establishment of eight small health centers in areas with limited access to healthcare facilities. Finally, the program provided for mobile health units (sanitary cars) for areas with large Roma populations that are not in close proximity to regular healthcare facilities; this component has yet to be implemented. A similar program, developed by the Public Health Authorities in cooperation with the Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities, is expected to be adopted in 2007.

2.4 Housing

The overwhelming majority of Slovak Roma live in substandard conditions, often within informal settlements at the outskirts of towns or in inner-city ghettos. Most such settlements lack basic infrastructure, like roads, or utilities such as sewage or electricity. These settlements are often excluded from other public services and public transportation. Environmental hazards prevail. The settlements are often located in flood zones and waste often seeps into drinking water, and toxic waste abounds (European Roma Rights Centre, *Written Comments; Zoon, On the Margins*).

In one well-publicized case, in the settlement of Patoracka outside Rudnany, the houses are located right on the grounds of a former mine contaminated with mercury. According to information provided by the office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities for the purposes of this report, the government has sponsored the construction of 58 new flats for 495 inhabitants of this settlement between 2001 and 2006; but there are still about 150 inhabitants living in an area exposed to environmental hazards.

Despite the attempts to resolve this problem, the housing situation of marginalized Roma populations remains alarming. This is due to the extent of the prob-

lem (according to the Ministry of Construction as many as 4,000 new flats are needed to cover the needs of Roma living in improper conditions in settlements), and to the limited leverage that the central government has upon the actions of municipalities with respect to housing.

With a view to obtaining comprehensive data on the living conditions and situation of Roma in individual Slovak municipalities, their needs and the approach of local authorities to addressing Roma problems, the Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities designed and financed a sociographic mapping of Roma communities (Institute for Public Affairs, *Sociographic Mapping*). The outcomes of the mapping are used by the relevant ministries in designing policies for Roma communities. Thus, the central government has adopted a number of programs aiming to improve housing conditions for Roma, but their implementation by local authorities has been at best limited and problematic.

For instance, government measures that are supposed to facilitate the renovation of housing have been used to forcibly evict Roma from buildings located in the center of town and relocate them to the outskirts. In one example, through an abusive interpretation of legislation relating to building safety, Roma were almost entirely removed from the center of Presov to a newly built ghetto on the outskirts of the municipality. The apartments formerly inhabited by these Roma were subsequently renovated and turned into high-end residential properties. Given such abuses, and the fact that the Slovak DAP does not associate any funding with the measure relating to housing renovations—“higher housing standards for Roma within the urban agglomerations”—there is reason for concern about the government’s commitment to actually enact the measures as designed.

Forced evictions have risen sharply in recent years. They were partly facilitated by 2001 amendments to the Civil Code, which weakened the legal position of tenants in publicly-owned housing. Evictions no longer require a court order; the local authorities’ obligation to provide alternative housing has been significantly reduced; and tenants who fall behind on their rent or on their utility payments can be more easily evicted, with no obligation to provide alternative accommodation. Unemployed Roma thus often find themselves thrown into the street—and suspicions linger as to the

existence of an unfair practice of billing Roma tenants excessively for utilities, as a cover for utility company debts or losses (European Roma Rights Centre, *Written Comments*).

Some new housing for Roma was built in recent years. According to information provided by the Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities for the purposes of this report, between 2001 and 2006, the Ministry of Construction has funded the construction of 1,793 flats in 68 municipalities. However, there are concerns with respect to the quality and adequacy of these flats. Because of favorable subsidy rates, most of what has been built so far consists of 40-square-meter flats, which are too small for most Roma families. Even worse, the minimum standards—which were inexplicably low to begin with, as indicated by the name of the original government program, “housing to a lower standard”—are constantly lowered. As of this writing, the minimum standards included only indoor running cold water sources, but no bathroom or heating.

Moreover, this program has also been criticized for increasing segregation and creating new Roma ghettos, as far away from the majority population as possible. One of the most egregious examples is provided by the municipality of Letanovce, which moved Roma to a newly built area so far away from the center of town that it borders another nearby town, where the dislocated Roma became de facto, if not de jure, residents (European Roma Rights Centre, *Written Comments*).

Programs for improving the infrastructure for Roma neighborhoods and segregated settlements have

also been implemented. Thus, government officials interviewed for the purposes of this report estimated that between 2000 and 2006, the Slovak government provided subsidies of approximately EUR 5 million for the construction of sewage systems, access roads, etc., in around 100 areas inhabited by Roma. A 2001 PHARE program for improving infrastructure in Roma settlements also provided approximately EUR 16.7 million for similar projects in 29 counties. Some criticism, however, was raised with respect to the quality of the work done on a local level; in particular, Roma have complained that many public utilities were installed only pro forma, often at the edges of the settlements, which made them difficult to access for many of the intended users.

One other problem with the DAP is that it mentions the legalization of settlements and the clarification of property issues, but it fails to provide any funding for such work. A 2003 regulation also provides for the possibility of property exchanges, and other compensation for land owners. Some movement in this area has been registered—a few settlements have been legalized, mostly at the initiative of the Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities. The Slovak government tasked the Ministry of Agriculture with developing measures for the legalization of informal settlements. But the Ministry of Agriculture declined to develop a nation-wide policy, as the legalization of informal settlements can only be done on a local level, often only with the involvement of and upon the consent of private landowners.

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DecadeWatch is the first assessment of government action to implement the commitments expressed under the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015.

The Decade aims to give Roma a voice in the process of inclusion. This assessment—which reviews the period from the launch of the Decade in early 2005 until the end of 2006—has been conducted by coalitions of Roma NGOs and activists from all countries participating in the Decade.

DecadeWatch is a contribution by Roma activists toward making the Decade of Roma Inclusion a success.

DecadeWatch is supported by the Open Society Institute and the World Bank.