

**Third Meeting of the Roma Decade Steering Committee:
Minutes and Summary
June 24-25, 2004
Budapest, Hungary**

I. Introduction and Background

The third meeting of the Roma Decade Steering Committee was held in Budapest from June 24-25, 2004. The objective of the meeting was to review the preparations of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, 2005-2015 in preparation for its launch in January 2005. The meeting was opened by the new Hungarian Minister for Equal Opportunities, Ms. Kinga Goncz, who succeeded Katalin Levai upon her election to the European Parliament earlier in June. In her opening remarks, Minister Goncz expressed her strong support for the Decade and noted its value-added as a source for learning across countries. Mr. Róbert Kiss, President of the Government Office for Equal Opportunities and Mr. László Teleki, State Secretary for Roma Affairs also welcomed the participants on behalf of the Government of Hungary.

Representatives of eight governments attended the meeting, along with Roma civil society leaders and representatives of partner organizations, including the European Commission, UNDP, World Bank, Open Society Institute, Council of Europe, Council of Europe Development Bank, OSCE, and ERIO. A full list of participants is included as Annex 1.¹

The meeting reviewed progress on the development of the Decade Action Plans prepared by the countries and Roma participation in the preparation of the Decade. The meeting also focused on four important topics: (i) financing of the Decade; (ii) communications; (iii) data issues and; (iv) preparations for the launch of the Decade in January 2005. The ISC was updated on the work of international organizations and on progress in establishing the Roma Education Fund. A summary is provided as Annex 2.

II. Country Decade Action Plans

All countries have made substantial progress on the preparations of the Decade Action Plans since the last ISC meeting in April. During the meeting each country presented the current version of its plan which include the goals, targets and indicators proposed for each of the four Decade priority areas: (i) education; (ii) employment; (iii) health; and (iv) housing. Countries are on track to complete the work on the plans by the fourth Steering Committee in October, however further work, discussed below, will be needed to finalize the plans. Major remaining challenges are securing necessary financing for their implementation, and ensuring that data are available and monitoring mechanisms in place to monitor the progress during the Decade.

The Czech and Slovak governments indicated that they had not originally included health in their Decade Action Plans. The Czech representative noted that they had understood that countries could choose areas of focus within the four priority areas.

¹ The participating countries are: Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, FYR Macedonia, Hungary, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, and the Slovak Republic. It was restated at the meeting that the Decade is open to any other countries interested in participating.

The ISC clarified that the decision taken at the December meeting was that all countries had agreed to the four priority areas. The Slovak representative mentioned that health would be included into their plan. The Czech delegation will discuss this further internally prior to the October ISC meeting. Both countries did participate in the health workshop.

Sectoral Workshops. Participants noted that the sectoral workshops have been particularly helpful in developing the plans and involving technical officials from line ministries in identifying issues, goals, and targets. Three workshops have been held so far, education (February); employment (May); and health (June). The workshops involve government officials, Roma leaders and sector experts and focus on defining the goals, targets, and indicators for each area. The final workshop on housing is planned for September 27-28, 2004 in Budapest, prior to the fourth Steering Committee meeting. The summaries of the employment and education workshops were made available the Steering Committee members. The summary of the health workshop will be made available in July.²

In addition to the sectoral workshops, the World Bank, together with OSI, coordinated a workshop on Social Accountability and Monitoring for the countries of Southeast Europe in Belgrade. The workshop introduced the participants to tools which civil society can use to monitor the performance of governments. The workshop included about 45 participants and conducted a field visit to a Roma community.

Next Steps. Countries will continue to refine the Decade Action Plans prior to the final Steering Committee meeting in October. Common issues to be addressed across countries include:

Data and Monitoring:

- Goals, targets, and indicators should be clearly distinguished and defined;
- Indicators should measure **outcomes and results** *not* inputs or process indicators. For example indicators should focus on increases in the employment rate, rather than the number of persons trained;
- DAPs should focus on achieving progress on **relative measures** that would close gaps in outcomes between Roma and non-Roma – rather than on absolute measures. Relative measures assess the status of Roma in relation to the non-Roma population. For example, in countries with large disparities between Roma and non-Roma in employment, a goal could be to raise Roma employment rates to equal that of non-Roma.
- **Data** for monitoring indicators should be available in each country, or a process should be underway to make it available (e.g. through a new or revised survey), statistical offices should be involved in these discussions. Countries are encouraged to participate actively, through their statistical offices in the Data Working Group convened by UNDP (discussed further below);

² Summaries are available at www.worldbank.org/roma.

- If data are not yet available, **qualitative surveys** and information can be used in the meantime to fill information gaps. Countries should draw from multiple sources to monitor the Decade outcomes, including household surveys, administrative data, and qualitative data.
- Where possible, the next versions of the DAPs should include **specific numbers** for the indicators, to allow for monitoring of progress. For example, “increasing Roma completion rates in primary education from X% to Y%.”
- Plans should indicate the **timing and phasing** of measures and priorities. This should indicate when the measures will be phased in during the Decade. What happens now? What happens later? What happens by Year 2; Year 4; the end of the Decade?

Another area for on-going work is the important effort needed to include the cross-cutting themes of gender, discrimination, and poverty into the plans. Judit Bari from the Hungary delegation presented a proposal for including women’s issues into the Hungary Decade plan.

Finally, countries are reminded to keep the Decade plans as simple, practical and manageable as possible. The plans should not be comprehensive, but rather should identify a small number of priority goals for each of the priority areas (2-3), with manageable and quantifiable targets. Many of the plans which were presented were extensive with a large number of goals and targets which will be extremely difficult to monitor over the Decade.

III. Roma Participation

Kalinka Vassilieva spoke on behalf of the Young Roma Leaders at the opening of the meeting. She described the on-going challenge of ensuring real, substantive Roma participation in the Decade. While Roma have a strong voice within the ISC, outside their voice is weaker. Roma have a responsibility to act, organize, network and engage a broader spectrum of Roma groups in the Decade, however they need help with capacity building and resources to make this happen. Roma need support from the international community to expand their outreach, organize, lobby, and build links with governments. Specific training on monitoring and local development/working with local governments is needed for Roma to play an active and meaningful role in the Decade. Mechanisms for facilitating communication among Roma within and across countries are also needed (for example, websites and email lists for information exchange).

The issue of Roma participation was raised throughout the meeting. Many countries have set up mechanisms for Roma to participate in the Country Working Groups for the Decade, however greater efforts are needed by governments and Roma organizations to expand this reach. During the country discussions, Roma representatives specifically raised the challenge of communicating about the Decade to a broader audience of participants. This will be an on-going issue to be addressed by the Steering Committee. Nicholae Gheorghe proposed that holding a specific workshop on Roma participation in the Decade should be considered.

IV. Financing

Financing the Decade Action Plans. An essential next step for the success of the Decade is to ensure that each country estimates the costs involved in implementing the plans, and ensures that the necessary resources are allocated in the budget. This is an urgent exercise, as most countries are in the process of finalizing their budgets for 2005 right now. Only the country teams from Hungary and Romania presented preliminary cost estimates for their plans at the ISC meeting. Prior to the next ISC meeting each country should involve their Ministries of Finance in the discussions of the Decade Plans. Financing plans should estimate the additional resources needed to implement the proposed actions to achieve the goals of the Decade. While some programs included under the Decade will be included within the existing budgets of line ministries, and cannot necessarily be separated out as “Roma programs” –such preschool programs in education – other initiatives will require separate and additional financing.

Countries need to approach their Ministries of Finance as soon as possible with a concrete financing plan for the Decade. Any needs for external financing (e.g. loans) should be made after first seeking funding from within national budgets. Capacity needs should also be identified, it was recognized during the discussion that adequate funding is necessary, but not sufficient, and that the necessary human resource and institutional needs should also be estimated, costed, and identified. Representatives of Ministries of Finance should be invited to the October ISC meeting.

The World Bank will organize a breakfast meeting to discuss financing of the Decade with Ministers of Finance during its Annual Meetings in October in Washington. Countries should make sure that they submit their financing plans to the Ministries of Finance before this meeting, in order to ensure a basis for discussion. Countries with the opportunity to include budgetary proposals for line ministries should do so. Mr. Soros and Mr. Wolfensohn will also write to Ministries of Finance to encourage them to engage actively in the discussions of the Decade.

Tony Lockett from the European Commission explained that the financing mechanisms for the EU Structural Funds between 2007-2013 are currently under negotiation. The structure, amounts and criteria still open for discussion. The Council of Ministers is keen to include Roma and other disadvantaged groups as targeted groups. The new member states should raise this in their dialogue with the Commission.

Roma Education Fund. Nicholas Burnett gave an update on the preparations for the design of the Roma Education Fund. The Fund is expected to be established in early 2005 and a donor’s conference is planned for the Fall (date to be announced). A full summary is attached as [Annex 2](#).³ Preparations for the design of the Fund are underway. Most notably a needs assessment of the situation of Roma education in each of the participating countries is being undertaken by a team of local researchers. The study aims to quantify the financing needs in each country and to identify possible future interventions by the Fund, based on the needs in each country and the existing experience of government and NGO projects and programs. The needs assessment is expected to be completed by the end of the Summer.

³ Updated information on the Roma Education Fund is also available on the World Bank’s website.

Eva Schwebel from the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) announced that the CEB has taken the decision to host the Fund at its premises in Paris. The Fund would be established as an independent legal entity, located at the CEB. The CEB would provide office space, as well as logistical and administrative services to the Fund at cost.

V. Data

Andrey Ivanov from UNDP Bratislava updated the meeting on the regional baseline survey which will be conducted prior to the launch of the Decade. The questionnaire is close to completion and will be finalized following a meeting of the Data Experts' Group (see next paragraph). The data should be available for all Decade countries by October. The World Bank is funding technical assistance to help with the sampling design for the survey. Roma are fully involved in the survey, through their involvement in the Data Experts' Group, as well as being involved in the implementation of the survey as interviewers. The survey will include gender disaggregated data. In parallel to the preparation of the baseline, countries should be assessing what data sources are already available to monitor the Decade, as well as developing plans to upgrade their statistical instruments.

The first meeting of the Data Experts' Group is scheduled for July 27-28 in Bratislava and a second meeting is anticipated by the end of the calendar year. The objective of the meeting is to identify the existing barriers and problems in the area of ethnically-sensitive data collection in the region and in particular countries, as well as to outline possible ways of improving the existing status. The meeting will include government officials, Roma leaders, academics, statisticians and other experts involved in the collection, analysis and use of data. Eurostat will participate. Anyone interested in the Data Experts' Group should contact Andrey Ivanov directly. Steering Committee members should meet with the representatives from their country who will be attending the Data Experts' Group before the meeting.

VI. Communications

The communications working group, including representatives of the Decade Secretariat, OSI and the World Bank updated the Steering Committee on the preparations of the draft communication strategy. The group has been working closely together since the last ISC meeting, and met in Brussels in May to brainstorm with a broader group of media specialists and representatives of Roma NGOs. The media has a potentially critical role to play in the Decade. However currently the media has been contributing to negative stereotypes of Roma, as Roma are being used as a scapegoat for negative reporting on EU enlargement. There is also a lack of public understanding of what the Decade is, and a major communications effort will be needed to disseminate information about the Decade at the European and country level.

The team presented the outcomes of its "SWOT" analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing communications for the Decade. Strengths include the powerful start and high-level political commitment of the 2003 Roma conference, multiple partners, and international interest. Weaknesses include the low profile of the Roma agenda, very high expectations, diffused responsibility, and a weak coordination structure, as well as limited staff and budget. Opportunities are the potential for change and a real positive impact on Roma, demonstrable progress, and multi-level

involvement. Finally, threats are a weakening of high-level political commitment over time, the failure to provide budget support for the Decade and growing skepticism.

The communications strategy should build upon the strengths and opportunities to tackle the weaknesses and threats. A first step will be to define the content of the communications campaign. This should start with a clarification of the vision and values of the Decade, as well as analysis of public opinion in each of the countries. Andre Wilkens of OSI circulated a vision statement that could serve as the basis of a common approach. This document is included as Annex 3. Comments should be forwarded to the Decade Secretariat.

The approach of communications for the Decade will be largely decentralized to the country level. National level communications should focus on local priorities and be supported by regular opinion research. Roma ownership is key for success, and the approach should be open to anyone who wants to be involved. The Secretariat will play a key role in coordinating the campaigns. It will not finance communications, but rather coordinate and ensure consistency across countries. The World Bank and OSI will help look for funds to support the communications work leading up to the launch. However a lot can be done with limited resources – for example, by having Roma leaders and government officials give interviews, write articles, and raise the issues publicly. The work should start now and countries should not wait for additional resources.

Next Steps: The communications team identified the following next steps.

- A competition to design a **logo** for the Decade will be launched and coordinated by the Secretariat. The finalists will be presented to the ISC in October.
- A common **website** will be launched.
- Preparations for the **media campaigns for the launch events** should start now. An award will be given to the government, civil society organization or international organization that generates the most coverage of the Decade.
- A **communications steering committee** will be constituted to guide communications leading up to the launch.
- A **workshop on communications** to build capacity of government communications officials will be held in mid-September. Each country should nominate communications experts to attend.
- Resources will be sought to support the **public opinion research** needed to support the country campaigns.

VII. Launch of the Decade

State Secretary Laszlo Teleki introduced a discussion of the preparations for the launch of the Decade. The launch is critical to rekindle and solidify the political commitment that will be essential for implementing the Decade and achieving its goals. The State Secretary introduced a draft of a pledge that Prime Ministers would be asked to sign at the outset of the Decade. Countries were asked to forward their comments on the pledge to the Secretariat by **31 July**. A number of comments were made during the

discussion which were accepted, including a mention that Decade plans should be fully financed, and text indicating that the international community and civil society are committed to supporting the Decade.

The format for the launch of the Decade was discussed. This should include an international launch in Europe, during which the Prime Ministers would sign both the pledge and the individual country Decade Action Plans. In addition to the international event, each country should have a set of launch activities at the national level, involving government officials, civil society, and other partners. The country level events will be critical to disseminate information about the Decade to a broader set of stakeholders and to generate support and ownership at the country level. The Secretariat will circulate a proposal for the content and timing of the launch to the countries for feedback, prior to the October ISC meeting. Countries should bring their proposals for country level launches to the next meeting.

A ministerial meeting, to be chaired by Minister Goncz, should be held in the Fall to finalize launch plans and secure the necessary political commitment for the Decade.

VIII. Next Steps

The final meeting of the Steering Committee is scheduled for October, in advance of the launch of the Decade in early 2005. The main focus of the meeting will be to discuss the final versions of the Decade Action Plans and the launch arrangements. The final versions of the Decade plans should be forwarded to the Secretariat in advance of the meeting so that they can be discussed fully by the Steering Committee. For the launch, countries should send their comments on the Decade pledge and launch proposal to the Secretariat in advance of the meeting.

The next steps are as follows:

Decade Action Plans

- Countries to initiate discussions of the Decade Action Plans with Ministries of Finance. Financing plans for the first year of the Decade should be forwarded to the Secretariat by **September 3, 2004**.
- Countries to finalize Decade Plans by the October Steering Committee meeting. Final versions should be forwarded to the Secretariat in advance, by **October 1, 2004**.

Decade Launch

- Countries to send their comments on the Decade pledge and launch plans to the Secretariat by **July 31, 2004**.
- Countries to develop their plans for country –level launches, to be presented at the October Steering Committee Meeting.

Upcoming Events

- Data Workshop, **July 27-28, 2004**
- Communications Workshop, **September 13-14, 2004**
- Housing Workshop, Budapest, **September 27-28, 2004**

– Fourth Steering Committee Meeting, **October 14-15, 2004**

Annex 2: Roma Education Fund

Update: June 15 2004

Background

In July 2003, the first high-level regional conference on Roma: “Roma in an Expanding Europe: Challenges for the Future” was held in Budapest. Participating countries were Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, and Slovakia. It was co-financed by the World Bank, the Open Society Institute (OSI), the European Commission, UNDP, the Council of Europe Development Bank and the governments of Hungary, Finland and Sweden. The conference was highly successful and resolved to (a) establish a Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015, during which countries would focus on reducing disparities in key economic and human development outcomes for Roma; and (b) to establish an international Roma Education Fund. At the conference the World Bank committed to undertake the technical work necessary to establish the Education Fund in a year’s time, in consultation with international organizations and donors, Roma and other stakeholders.

Purpose

The Roma Education Fund will assist countries improve educational outcomes for Roma and so contribute to achieving the Decade education goals. It will likely have three functions:

- To make grants to public and private education sectors to help improve educational outcomes for Roma – the Fund will not substitute for what governments themselves finance, but will rather serve a critical catalytic and partnership-brokering role, being flexible in what it finances against a set of agreed criteria, with a view to countries’ eventually establishing sustainable programs;
- To serve as an information clearinghouse on Roma education;
- To advocate improved educational outcomes for Roma – for example, through a regular report on the status of Roma education.

Likely Operations

The projected duration of the Fund is planned from 2005-2015. It is intended to have the Fund operational by early 2005, to coincide with the Decade, as it would be a key instrument in supporting the Decade’s education goals. Initial attention will focus on the eight Decade countries, but the Fund could possibly later be extended to benefit other countries with Roma populations.

The size of the Fund is to be determined. The World Bank is currently organizing a needs assessment of the participant countries to refine the total budget estimates. At this stage it is envisaged that the Fund will make grants to both the public and private (including civil society) sectors in the eight participating countries, on the basis of competitive applications, suitably adjusted for the different sizes of Roma populations in the various countries. Such grants could be used directly for education, through supporting both Roma demand for education (e.g. scholarship schemes) and supply (e.g. Roma teachers’ aides), and also for necessary analytical work. It is recognized that some private donors may wish to limit their funding to non-government beneficiary organizations.

Education Workshop

First steps towards country-specific as well as common goals in the education sector were made during a Roma Education Workshop for the eight countries, held in February 2004 and sponsored by the World Bank and the Open Society Institute. The outcomes of the workshop will help in both the development of the Roma Education Fund and in the setting of national education goals for the Decade of Roma Inclusion. A limited number of key goals will be established per

country and possibly also some common regional goals that may apply to all countries. These goals will be focused and strategic, looking toward results and improving educational outcomes for Roma. The workshop also stressed the importance of the need to monitor progress towards these goals and of access to reliable data. These goals, like those for other sectors, are now being worked on by the countries and will be presented to the International Steering Committee of the Decade for Roma Inclusion.

Background Studies

- a. A demand assessment is underway in the eight Decade target countries.
- b. A background study is being organized on the experience of desegregation and other compensatory programs in the US and several European and Latin American countries.
- c. A review is underway of donor activities to support Roma education.
- d. A draft review of World Bank activities to support Roma education to date has been completed.

Governance and Management

Options for institutional arrangements for the Fund are currently being discussed. It is envisaged that the Roma Education Fund would be a legally independent entity. Ideas for its governance structure are being developed; such a structure would include participant country governments, Roma, and donors.

It is anticipated that the Fund would have a very small staff (say, 4-5 people), supplemented with partnership arrangements with other agencies with relevant expertise. The World Bank is prepared to finance or second one staff member. Ideally the small Fund can be hosted by an existing European organization with relevant education and financing experience, to which the Fund can make payments for overhead services (such as accounting, human resources services, etc.).

Financing

Sources of financing for the Roma Education Fund are being explored. It is estimated that the size of the Fund will be \$60-100 million over the Decade, including operational costs. The Open Society Institute has made a commitment to transfer funding of Roma education programs to the new Fund for 10 years. The World Bank is exploring options for its own contribution to the Fund, in addition to the staff member mentioned above, with a target of \$6 million over the first five years of the Fund.

A donor pledging conference is anticipated for fall 2004. Preliminary discussions have been held with a number of potential partners, including bilateral donors and private foundations. Some bilateral donors have expressed interest in various levels of involvement with the Fund. The members of the Minorities and Multiculturalism Interest Group of the European Foundation Centre (EFC) have taken an active interest, and convened a special meeting on the Fund during the EFC Annual Meeting on 1 June 2004. Other bilateral governments and foundations will also be approached in advance of the pledging conference.

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Annex 3: Vision Statement for the Decade

The Decade of Roma Inclusion, 2005-2015

Vision & Values

Europe has borne witness to the dramatic transition, consolidation and expansion of democracy and democratic values over the last decade. However, these developments and opportunities have largely excluded one group, the Roma. They remain the most deprived ethnic group in Europe. Their appalling predicament stands as one of the gravest challenges facing today's Europe.

The Decade of Roma Inclusion is a major **international** effort to meet this European challenge in a **coordinated, open, inclusive and transparent** way.

Decade partners* are united by a **common vision** to close the gap in opportunities and living conditions between the Roma and the non-Roma and to break the cycle of poverty and exclusion over a period of 10 years.

The Decade is driven by a commitment to **shared values** of social inclusion and anti-discrimination, to promote equal opportunities and bring an end to segregation. Central to the values and vision of the Decade is a commitment to embrace innovative approaches, foster international cooperation, promote transparency and Roma participation.

United by this common vision and shared values, Decade Partners established **concrete and measurable goals** in the four priority areas of **education, employment, housing and health**.

Through an international peer review system and through independent civil society monitoring, the Decade partners will be held **accountable** for fulfilling their Decade goals.

While concrete action will mostly be at national level, the Decade Partners are coordinating their initiatives and **share best practice**.

'Nothing about us, without us': **Roma participation** will make or break the Decade. Roma representatives and civil society organizations are involved in every stage of the Decade. Roma shaped and defined the vision from the very outset. Roma civil society groups and experts identified policy priorities and played a key role in defining Decade goals and targets. Roma participation will be central to regular oversight and monitoring of the process over the next ten years.

The Decade is **open** to new partners, open to new ideas, open to new sources of funding. The Decade remains open to all who share its broad vision and values and the commitment to work together to make this vision a reality.

The Decade is not an institution or a bureaucracy. Neither is it a new pot of money. It works within the context of existing national and international structures and funding

instruments, and aims to **align** them with each other as well as the policies and funding instruments of the European Union.

* The Partners of the Decade of Roma Inclusion are the governments of Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia & Montenegro, Slovakia, the World Bank, the European Union, the Council of Europe, The COE Development Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Open Society Institute.