

## DRAFT



DECADE OF  
ROMA  
INCLUSION  
2005-2015

### **V. International Steering Committee Meeting Minutes and Summary April 15, 2005 Budapest, Hungary**

#### **I. Introduction and Background**

The V. International Steering Committee Meeting was held in Budapest on 15. April 2005. The objectives of the meeting were (i) to discuss the institutional arrangements (location, permanent or rotating), tasks, staffing and financing of the envisaged Decade Secretariat, (ii) to discuss the new Terms of Reference for the implementation of the Decade, (iii) to present the UNDP survey on Roma in the Decade countries, (iv) to discuss the future interaction with and involvement of the European Union in the Decade process, (v) to discuss proposals on co-operation and the next joint activities, and (vi) to report about the national launches of the Decade.

*Mr. László Teleki*, State Secretary for Roma Affairs, Ministry of Youth, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, opened the meeting. Representatives of nine governments attended the meeting, along with representatives of the partner organizations World Bank, Open Society Institute, UNDP, Council of Europe (CoE), Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB), Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), European Roma Information Office (ERIO) and European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC). A full list of participants is included as Annex 1.<sup>1</sup>

#### **II. Institutional Arrangements Of The Envisaged Decade Secretariat**

The majority of participating governments voted for having a Decade Secretariat rotating with the presidency of the ISC and for the establishment of a permanent, international

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<sup>1</sup> The participating governments are: Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, FYR Macedonia, Hungary, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, and the Slovak Republic.

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body in support of the rotating presidency. 1<sup>st</sup> July 2005, Romania takes over the ISC presidency and hosts the Decade Secretariat from 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2005 to 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2006.

In a joint effort, the delegation of Romania and the current Decade Secretariat supported by OSI and the World Bank, develop a new draft Terms of Reference for the institutional framework of the Decade Secretariat and the envisaged permanent, international office.

**30<sup>th</sup> April 2005:** The Romanian delegation prepares a first detailed proposal on tasks and priorities as well as on staffing and budget for the Secretariat for the period between 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2005 and 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2006.

**30<sup>th</sup> April 2005:** OSI, World Bank and the current Secretariat prepare the first detailed proposals on the additional permanent, international body (tasks, staffing, budget) and on the relationships between and responsibilities of ISC presidency, Decade Secretariat and the permanent, international office.

**6<sup>th</sup> May 2005:**\* The current Secretariat sends out new draft Terms of References for the institutional framework of the Decade Secretariat and the envisaged permanent, international technical office to participating governments and international partner organisations.

**13<sup>th</sup> May 2005:** Countries and international partner organisations submit comments on new draft Terms of Reference for the institutional framework of the Decade Secretariat and the envisaged international technical office to Budapest Secretariat.

**26-27<sup>th</sup> May 2005:** The 6<sup>th</sup> ISC meeting, which will be held in Prague decides upon and adopts the new Terms of References for the institutional framework of the Decade Secretariat and the envisaged permanent, international body.

**\* Due to the time-consuming co-ordination between all stakeholders it is recommended to extend the deadline for drafting the new Terms of References over the 2<sup>nd</sup>. May 2005 deadline proposed at the ISC meeting to 6<sup>th</sup> May 2005.**

The country representatives expressed their appreciation for the work of the Budapest Secretariat and thanked the Hungarian Government for the financial support of the Secretariat.

In this context, the Romanian delegation reiterated his readiness to host the Decade Secretariat for one year from 1<sup>st</sup>. July 2005 when it takes over the presidency of the ISC and stated that the respective financial resources have already been allocated.

Preparatory material disseminated prior to the meeting by the Hungarian Ministry of Youth, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities inspired the discussion on the institutional arrangements of the envisaged Decade Secretariat.

The material outlined two possibilities for a Decade Secretariat:

- a) The Secretariat will be attached to the presidency of the International Steering Committee (ISC). This option would require that the Secretariat rotates annually with the presidency of the ISC, that staff will be recruited from the ranks of civil servants of the government holding the presidency and that consequently, the staff of the Secretariat changes every year.

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- b) The Secretariat will be an independent, non-governmental organisation based permanently in one Decade country and with a board in which all participating countries are represented. It would report to the ISC and the presidency and not be attached to any one government. The core staff should be internationally recruited following a transparent and competitive process and will in principle be permanent for the duration of the Decade. The international secretariat will be financed by all countries and the international partners.

In the course of the discussion, a number of further options were raised; none of them, however, could gain the full and unanimous support of the participating governments. The discussion revealed that on one hand the majority of the governments now preferred a rotating Secretariat attached to the presidency, but on the other hand wanted to secure the continuity and sustainability of the Decade process.

In order to reach continuity and sustainability, in addition to the rotating Secretariat to be attached to the Presidency and funded by the host government, the meeting also endorsed the need for an international body to provide continuity and professional support to each of the 8 countries. However, the governance and funding of such a body remains to be defined.

OSI and the World Bank announced that they would be willing to provide financial support to such an institution, but only on the condition that member governments also provide some financial or in kind support. OSI, supported by the World Bank, agreed to draft a description of the proposed body to be reviewed and commented on virtually (electronically) by the country delegations."

Finally, the participants agreed to vote on the two following options:

- A) The Decade Secretariat rotates with the presidency of the ISC. No additional body will be established.
- B) The Decade Secretariat rotates with the presidency of the ISC. In addition to the secretariat a permanent, international body will be established. OSI and World Bank would contribute to the financing of this technical body along with member governments.

Option B found the majority of six votes (Bulgaria, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovakia), while option A was supported by three delegations (Croatia, Czech Republic, Romania).

The delegations realised that the current draft Terms of References for Decade Implementation refer solely to a permanent Secretariat. Since several delegations obtained a mandate to decide only on a permanent Secretariat, it was decided that in a joint effort OSI, World Bank, the Romanian delegation (National Agency for Roma) and the current Secretariat develop a new draft Terms of Reference for the institutional framework of the Decade Secretariat and the envisaged permanent, international body, which should also address the financial implications of this structure.

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The Terms of References for the institutional framework of the Decade Secretariat and the envisaged permanent, international body should constitute an integral part of the general Terms of Reference (see chapter III.)

### III. General Terms of Reference For Decade Implementation

In addition to the amendments referring to the Decade Secretariat and the envisaged permanent, international body, the existing draft Terms of References should be reviewed in terms of consistency and with the aim of turning them into a legal document to be signed by all countries. In a joint effort the current Decade Secretariat with the support of OSI and the World Bank complete the new draft Terms of Reference.

The participating governments are encouraged to send already now their approved comments and/or proposals to the current Secretariat.

**6<sup>th</sup> May 2005:** The current Secretariat sends out new draft Terms of References to participating governments and international partner organisations.

**13<sup>th</sup> May 2005:** Countries and international partner organisations submit comments on new draft Terms of Reference to Budapest Secretariat.

**26-27<sup>th</sup> May 2005:** The 6<sup>th</sup>. ISC meeting, which will be held in Prague decides upon and adopts the new Terms of References.

**1<sup>st</sup> July 2005:** Romania takes over the presidency of the International Steering Committee

*Dr. Andor Ürmös*, Head of Department for Roma Integration Issues, Ministry of Youth, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Republic of Hungary, introduced the participants to the draft Terms of Reference (TOR) for the implementation of the Decade.

The reporting and monitoring mechanism, the participation of Roma in the Decade process and the financing of the Decade were the major issues discussed. The delegations of the participating governments, in particular the delegation of the Czech Republic, and the international partner organisations offered a number of amendments and additions to the current draft Terms of References.

The Czech Republic disagrees with any obligatory submission of annual reports and requested clear statements regarding Decade membership definition and the governance of the Decade. Furthermore, the Czech Republic proposed that participating governments should contribute to the Decade budget from 2006 on and opposed to base the financial contribution of the countries on UNDP estimate of the Roma population; rather the costs should be divided equally among all participating governments.

In general, the participants reiterated the importance of defining the participation of Roma in the Decade process in the TOR. In the discussion on the participation of Roma the question was raised, if Romani representatives should be given voting rights on certain issues.

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It was decided that the next Terms of References should reflect the following amendments and additions:

The Terms of References should

- a) Use statute form and legal language.
- b) Describe clearly possible forms of monitoring and reporting, take into account existing activities (existing reporting systems or obligations) and make use of international initiatives regarding monitoring (Council of Europe).
- c) Define clearly the statute of membership of the Decade and the process of joining the Decade.
- d) Define precisely the governance of the Decade process, in particular the obligations, competencies and rights of the ISC presidency.
- e) Define clearly financial responsibilities of participating governments and international partner organisations.
- f) Mention the National Working Groups as an important tool of institutionalised participation of Roma in the Decade process, and define the participation of the Roma at the international level of the Decade.
- g) Extend the participation to international organisations such as ERRC and PER.
- h) Pay attention to co-ordination with international partner organisations in order to avoid overlapping activities.

OSI offered to provide legal input in order to bring the Terms of References into the requested more legal language and form and proposed that the new Terms of References after being accepted at the next ISC meeting could be signed by the National Co-ordinators.

Council of Europe recommended that all relevant documents should be translated in the languages of the participating countries and into Romani.

#### **IV. Presentation Of The UNDP Survey On Roma**

All data and indicators of the survey will be soon available on the UNDP website

Mr. *Andrey Ivanov*, UNDP Bratislava, briefly informed on the latest developments and introduced the participants to methodology and impediments of the survey. The publication of the survey, which will be soon available on the UNDP website, provides for detailed information on a variety of data and indicators regarding the situation of the Roma in a number of countries, primarily referring to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

UNDP intends to co-operate with participating governments on a country-to-country basis in order to identify in which way the participating governments can make use of the survey. The survey was conducted in close co-operation with national statistical offices

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and experts. UNDP hopes that this co-operation can be continued and lead to further surveys during the period of the Decade in order to measure the progress made.

The publication "Faces of Poverty", which has been commented critically after its publishing is available on UNDP website with some changes such as corrected table headings to avoid any misunderstanding in reading the data. Future publications based on the data and analyzing vulnerability issues at national level will be also placed on the website.

### V. Future Interaction With and Involvement Of The European Union

OSI suggested establishing a closer cooperation between the Decade and the EU with the aim to align the two processes more closely. A first step could be a joint meeting in Brussels of the National Co-ordinators with the Inter Service Group on Roma of the European Commission.

The current Secretariat - with the support of OSI - drafts a letter, which will be sent out by the current presidency of the ISC, Hungary, suggesting such a meeting to the EC.

The representative of the European Commission reminded the participants that the countries and the Roma civil society should make full use of the existing funds, which are also available for Roma-related activities.

Based on conversation among the heads of the national delegations, OSI and the World Bank and representatives of the European Union at the International Launch of the Decade, OSI suggested arranging a meeting of the National Co-ordinators with the Inter Service Group on Roma of the European Commission in Brussels.

For May 2005, a session of the Inter Service Group on Roma of the European Commission is scheduled. It is intended to arrange the meeting already during the May session of the Inter Service Group with the intention of raising the profile of the Decade of Roma Inclusion and to establish a close co-operation with the European Commission.

It is timely to arrange such a meeting soon in order to make a real input on the current EU debate of its next 7-year budget cycle and on the review of the EC's financial instruments.

Dr. *Andor Ürmös*, Head of Department for Roma Integration Issues, Ministry of Youth, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Republic of Hungary, informed the participants about a meeting of the Prime Minister of Hungary, Mr. *Ferenc Gyurcsány* with Mr. *George Soros*, in which Mr. Gyurcsány offered his support for raising the profile of Roma-related issues in the EU in general, and in relation to the Decade of Roma Inclusion Program in particular.

The representative of the European Commission reminded the participants that the countries and the Romani civil society should make full use of the existing funds, which are available for Roma-related activities.

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Some participants raised certain concerns regarding the accessibility of the funds for Romani civil society and that the European Commission does not always allow for directly targeting Roma.

The representative of the European Commission stated that he is aware of these constraints, but reminded that “Technical Assistance Funds” could be used to increase the capacity among Romani civil society, which should increase the likelihood that Romani NGOs could win projects in the framework of EU funds.

### **VI. Information On Other Decade-Related Activities**

Co-operation between OSI Archives and Decade of Roma Inclusion envisaged.

OSI and World Bank conduct opinion poll on attitudes of the majority population towards Roma.

OSI will launch a call for proposals to support Roma media in the framework of the Decade.

Council of Europe offered co-operation and co-ordination in the framework of its next EU-sponsored programme on monitoring training for Romani activists.

Council of Europe proposed that in autumn a joint meeting of the ISC and the MS-G Rom should be held in Bucharest.

Roma Education Fund officially was established as a Swiss Foundation.

The first ISC organised by the Romanian presidency will discuss the proposals made in an open letter of Roma media to the Decade ISC.

OSI Archive offered a co-operation with the Decade with regard to establishing a “virtual archive” of the Decade, introduction of the knowledge-based approach and extension of existing web page. In addition, young Roma could be trained on these issues. It was agreed that OSI Archive and the current IT expert of the Decade will convene a meeting to further discuss these issues.

OSI and World Bank will soon start conducting the opinion poll on attitudes towards Roma in the Decade countries as a benchmark for designing national anti-prejudice campaigns.

Council of Europe prepares its (third) joint CoE/EC program on Roma in South East Europe. The project will provide training and assistance for Romani activists and inter-ministerial commissions, (i.e. officials from line ministries involved in the national programs for Roma with special regard to members of the national Country Working Group of the Roma Decade Program) in order to improve monitoring skills and methodology of monitoring.

Council of Europe offered its co-ordination in the monitoring activities of the Decade Program in the future in relation to monitoring activities organized by the WB, OSI and other partners especially in those countries not addressed by the CoE/EC project such as

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Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary – with the aim to promote the exchange of good practices.

The World Bank representative, Mr. *James Stevens*, informed the participants on the latest development of the Roma Education Fund. It has been registered as a foundation under Swiss law, and its Governing Board has been established. Only the representative of Canada on the Governing Board has to be appointed yet. It is expected that in near future the Director and the Deputy Director will be selected. Two staff members are already hired; additional 5-6 staff members should be hired soon.

Despite some delays in hiring a Director, the Board still intends for the Roma Education Fund to begin its operations during the May/June period. The goal is to select initial project proposals to finance during spring 2005 so that initial projects can start implementation beginning with the next school year, starting in September 2005.

OSI reminded the ISC members of the open letter sent by a network of Roma media which was addressed to the last ISC meeting. It was agreed that the first ISC under the Romanian presidency will deal with the proposal made in this letter and the role of Roma media in the Decade in general.

### **VII. Reports On National Launches and National Decade Action Plans**

Several countries already held the national launches. National Decade Action Plans adopted by a number of Governments and/or Parliaments.

Participating governments agreed to send relevant information on state of affairs of National Decade Action Plans to Decade Secretariat.

A number of countries (Romania, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovakia) already held their national launches of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, while all the other countries intend to hold the national launches in May 2005, the latest. The national launches were characterised by a variety of activities, ranging from cultural events and conferences to special sessions of the Parliament

In most of the countries, either the Parliament or the Government already adopted the National Decade Action Plans. In order to establish an overview, the participating governments agreed to send relevant information on the state of affairs of the Decade Action Plans to the Decade Secretariat.

All countries reported a positive media coverage and feedback of the national launch events.

### **VIII. Next ISC Meeting**

The Czech delegation kindly offered to host the next ISC meeting 26-27<sup>th</sup> May 2005, in the framework of the National Launch of the Decade in the Czech Republic. The other participating governments accepted the offer.