



The Government of Romania 2005-2006
THE DECADE OF ROMA INCLUSION 2005-2015
Technical Secretariat

**The International Steering Committee of
the Decade of Roma Inclusion (ISC 7)**

Meeting report and summary

Bucharest, Romania, 17-18 November, 2005

A brief presentation of the Decade of Roma Inclusion

Within the Conference "Roma in an Expanding Europe: Challenges for the Future" held in Budapest in June-July 2003 and as a follow up of the debates, the participants decided that it is a need of a coherent approach of the Roma exclusion phenomenon through a system of long-term impact policies.

Within this conference, the leaders of the participant Governments¹ agreed upon the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015) launch, in order to generate a common working framework for the actions meant to improve the social and economic status of the Roma living in the Central and Eastern Europe. The working method proposed, mainly supposes three steps:

¹ The participant-countries are: Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, FYR of Macedonia, Hungary, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro and Slovakia.

- A clear drawing of the objectives, at the national scale, regarding the improvement of Roma condition;
- The development of National Action Plans, in all the Decade participant countries in order to attain the proposed objectives;
- A continuous Monitoring of the implementing status of the proposed objective.

It was agreed, also, upon the establishment of the Roma Education Fund, with the purpose of improving the educational outcomes of the Roma, thus contributing at the completion of the educational objectives of the Decade of Roma Inclusion.

The Decade of Roma Inclusion represents a political commitment, multi-national-scaled effort with the purpose of eliminating the gap of opportunities and living conditions that had occurred between Roma and the rest of the society. This purpose can be achieved by applying new measures in the field of: social inclusion, anti-discrimination, equal opportunities, eliminating the segregationist practices.

Within the 2003 Conference, it was stressed the importance of the Roma Civil Society involvement in the Decade. The *motto* of the Roma participant delegations was: “*Nothing about us, without us*”.

The year 2004 was declared to be a preparatory year of the Decade, in which the governments, through their representatives, established the necessary details of the Decade launch that took place at the beginning of 2005.

Thus, in December 2003 and during 2004, four meetings of the Decade’s International Steering Committee took place.

Within these meetings, the participant-states delegations established four priorities fields of action and intervention in order to improve the Roma condition: Education, Health, Employment and Housing but also three cross-cutting themes: discrimination, poverty and gender equality.

During the year 2004, there were also organized workshops by the World Bank on the above-mentioned fields.

The international launch of Decade took place at Sofia on 2nd of February 2005, the event being organized by the Government of Bulgaria.

Each participant country organized a National Launch of the Decade according with its specific at a certain date, established by the government of the respective country.

On the 15th of April 2005 took place the fifth meeting of the Decade's International Steering Committee and the main points for debating were the Secretariat and the Presidency of the Decade, respectively their location and functioning.

Romania, through the National Agency for Roma, is the first country in the line of the nine member-states involved in the Decade for Roma Inclusion programme, that holds the Presidency and Secretariat of this programme, for a one year period, starting with the 1st of July 2005. For the preparatory period of the Decade, the Presidency and the Secretariat were secured by the Hungarian Government.

The summary of the meeting

Within this context, between 17 and 18 of November 2005, took place in Bucharest the first meeting of the International Steering Committee (ISC) of the Decade of Roma Inclusion.

The meeting was organized by the Technical Secretariat of the decade under the presidency of the Decade of Roma Inclusion.

The partner in organizing the event was the Open Society Foundation. This meeting was attained by the representatives of the Decade members-states (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, FYR of Macedonia, Hungary, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro and Slovakia) participants, international organizations and the International Young Roma Leaders Group. The scope of this meeting was to analyze the National Actions Plans of each member-state and also to analyze the Terms of reference of the Decade of Roma Inclusion.

First day, 17th of November

In the opening session conducted by Mss. Mariea Ionescu, Secretary of State and the Coordinator for the Decade of Roma Inclusion spoke the following important guests:

- Mr. Calin Popescu Taricianu, the Prime Minister of Romania;
- Mr. George Soros, President of the Open Society Foundation;
- Mr. Shigeo Katsu, Vice – President of the World Bank of Europe and Central Assia;
- Ms. Renate Webber, councilor of the Romanian President;
- Mr. Marko Attila, Secretary of State on behalf of Mr. Marko Bella, deputy prime minister of Romania;
- Ms. Anne de Ligne, European Union Delegation in Romania;
- Mr. Laszlo Teleki, Secretary of State, Hungary.

Following the above mentioned speeches, three working sessions took place:

1. Presenting the progresses achieved in each member state in implementing the National Action Plans

The delegations of the participant governments presented a report regarding the progresses achieved in implementing the National Action Plans in each country for each field of intervention: Employment, Housing, Health and Education. Within this session there were presented also by the governmental delegations those obstacles occurred in the implementation process of the National Plans of Action of the Decade (e.g. the Czech Republic case).

2. Involving the civil society in the Decade of Roma Inclusion

Within the second session of the ISC meeting there were debates over:

- The ways of involving the civil society in the accomplishment and the implementation process the National Action Plans;
- The Decade as a initiative which must be carried out together with the Roma people not (just) for Roma people;
- Involving the International Organizations which are partners to this programme.

3. In the last session of the day there were gathered proposals from the international organizations involved in the Decade in order to improve the Roma participation in the Action Plans implementing process. Another proposal stipulated the inclusion of Roma representatives in the different departments of the international organizations.

The second day, 18th of November

In the 2nd day there were debated and analyzed the draft of the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Decade of Roma Inclusion.

Each governmental delegation presented its own position regarding the Roma Decade Terms of Reference and regarding the ways of using the funds from the “DECADE TRUST FUND”.

Both the representatives of the governments and the civil society representative came up with objections and suggestions regarding the administration of the “Decade trust fund”. The World Bank argued its point of view by the intermediate of its representative, Mr. Christian Bodewick.

The representatives of the member-states governments agreed upon the final form of the ToR and signed the Terms of Reference (except the Bulgarian government representative who was not empowered with the right of signature).

In the 2nd part of the 2nd day there were presented reports over the two working days of the Meeting of The international Steering Committee of the Decade of Roma Inclusions.

The two-days meeting conclusions were presented by Mrs. Mariea Ionescu, the coordinator of the Decade of Roma Inclusion:

One can appreciate the open and pro-active attitude of the governments to communicate relating to applying the best practices and overcome the obstacles.

One must find ways of communicating between the civil society and governmental institutions. The public institutions should also to prove more transparency both in the consulting process with the civil society and related to the problems faced by Roma ethnics.

By the intermediate of the Decade of Roma Inclusion there will be made all the necessary efforts both from to part of the governments and civil society representatives to include Roma representatives in the local and central administration structures.

All the international organisations involved re-stated their will to support the Decade for Roma Inclusion, both by the intermediate of the existent financial instruments offered by the European Commission and by the intermediate of the support and technical assistance from the World Bank and Open Society Institute.

Founding the Roma Decade Trust Fund, as an annual contribution from the member-states governments, is the proof of the common interest of the governments involved in the process.

The Romani language was also introduced as an official language of the Roma Decade Terms of References.

Once ToR adopted, the consulting process among the governments involved was completed; the next step will consist in the application of the National Action Plans of the every single member-state.

Annexes:

Annex No. 1: The Meeting Agenda

Annex No. 2: List of Participants

Annex N0. 3: The Terms of Reference of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, signed by the participant governments.