



THE GOVERNEMENT OF ROMANIA

**THE TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT
OF THE PRESIDENCY OF THE DECADE FOR ROMA INCLUSION 2005-
2015**

**Report on the 8th Meeting of the International Steering Committee (ISC)
12th of June 2006, Brussels**

1. Framework and opening workings

The National Agency for Roma (NAR), as the Romanian Government' specialised body in charge with the coordination of the Decade for Roma Inclusion, organised the 8th International Meeting of the International Steering Committee – ISC - of the Decade for Roma Inclusion Programme (the 2nd meeting provided under the Romanian Presidency), which was held on 12th of June at the Sheraton Hotel in Brussels.

This reunion was organized by the Romanian Government, by the intermediate of the National Agency for Roma with the support provided by the European Commission, by the Romanian Official Delegation to Brussels and by Open Society Institute, through its local offices placed in Brussels and Budapest.

The Conference' goal was to identify the methods and instruments of the European Commission which are meant to support the Decade' National Governments involved in the achievement of objectives of the Decade of Roma Inclusion project.

The reunion of the International Steering Committee (ISC) gathered important officials of the European Commission, the representatives of the nine national governments involved in the Decade for Roma Inclusion' programme, representatives of the partner international organisations and civil society activists.

In the conference opening there were held speeches by the following personalities: Mr. Vladimir Spidla, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Mr. Marko Bella, State Ministry within the Romanian Government and Ms. Mariea Ionescu, State Secretary and the President of the National Agency for Roma, the Romanian national co-ordinator of the Decade.

The main messages launched by the conference were the followings:

Ms. **Mariea Ionescu** opened the conference by stressing upon the importance of the moral support from the part of the European Commission regarding the accomplishing of the Decade for Roma Inclusion' objectives, by the intermediate of the EU financial instruments: the pre and the post accession funds.

Another important point of Ms. Mariea Ionescu' message has referred to the technical expertise of the representatives of the European Union and to their lobbying capacities, as key-elements for achieving the goals of the Decade for Roma Inclusion.

Mr. **Marko Bella** underlined the importance of formulating a definition for a common framework, required to alleviate the social and economic discrepancies between the condition of the Roma ethnic groups living in Central Europe and the majority of population. Within this common approach, the responsibility for implementing of the measures should be in the burden of

every single Member State in the Decade, whose territories are inhabited by Roma people and the success of this endeavour still depending on the coordination of all member states within a quest based on solidarity. He also mentioned the fact that the problems the Roma minority is facing (not only social but also ethnic and cultural problems) will have to be tackled simultaneously, both at the individual level and at the level of local communities, the solving of these issues in a long lasting manner being not possible without the direct participation of the Roma ethnics to the decision making process regarding the projects they are directly concerned in. He also did mention the Romania' achievements in its position of being the first state holding the Decade Presidency and he stressed upon the added value that a good integration of the "Decade" in the European Commission projects could bring to the EU future policies.

At his turn, the European commissioner Mr. **Vladimir Spidla** estimated the fact that the Roma social inclusion constitutes one of the main problems of the contemporary Europe, given the fact that the marginalisation phenomenon that this minority is facing still remains while the economic measures adopted by the governments during the transition period affected deeper and sharper this minority, comparatively with the effects on the majority population.

He also has stressed the fact that the solving of the Roma' issues as disadvantaged social group should be approached in a coherent, continuous, integrated manner within different fields of intervention as: education, health, employment, participation to the social life, housing and this it will have to represent a common objective of the EU institutions, of the national and local authorities and of the civil society.

He did also mention the fact that the executive body of the EU (the Commission) does not uphold competencies in the field of social inclusion of Roma people, this task being under the burden of the National Governments. Nevertheless, the EU' Executive advises the national Governments to harmonise the national policies with the EU policies regarding the following aspects: the promoting the collective rights of the national minorities, the prevention and fight against discrimination, the access to the labour market,

the promoting of the affirmative measures and of innovating social policies regarding the social disadvantages groups. These measures can be co-financed by the intermediate of European Social Fund and Regional Development Fund.

2. The reports on the development stage of the Decade National Actions¹

The representative of Bulgaria restated the unconditioned support that the government of his country confers for this international project by appointing a National Co-ordinator for the Decade, by taking over, for one year long 1st 2006 of July -30th of June 2007, the Decade Presidency from the Romanian Counterpart and by instituting the Direction for Demographic Policies, social policies and equal opportunities” which deals, among other things, with the elaboration of policies for Roma

Regarding the stage of the elaboration of the Bulgarian National Plan for Action took the following measures: in the Educational field it was set up Centre for educational integration of children and students from the ethnic communities and the elaboration, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Science , of the municipal strategies and plans for integrating the children who come from these multiethnic communities; the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy implemented a pilot social programme from which almost 200 children (most of Roma origin) are beneficiating; in the cultural field The Ministry of Culture founded Roma Cultural Info Centres and in the Health field there were trained 51 Roma health mediators who have been employed by another programme entitled “From Social Care to Employment” in order to make from this occupation a permanent job, the health mediator profession being already officially recognised in Bulgaria; in the Employment field of the insertion on the labour market of 16,500 persons of Roma ethnic background is planned for 2006 and there were held 10 job fairs for Roma

¹ See the annex enclosed to the present report

people and other 86 official meetings between officials and informal leaders of Roma in order find solutions in the occupational field; in the crosscutting field of combating discrimination there are held weekly trainings called “Police work with ethnic communities”; in the Housing and infrastructure field in March it was adopted in “The National Program for Improving of the Housing Conditions for Roma people in Bulgaria for the period 2005-2015” and in 50 localities (from the total 60) inhabited with more than 10% of Roma ethnic origin population there were elaborated plans for developing the local infrastructure and, finally, within the Ministry of labour and Social Policy a Council for Roma integration is going to be created.

The representative of Montenegro, a brand new state on the world map, estimated the number of Roma people inhabiting this state at the total amount of about 20,000 people, despite the fact that at the last Census only 2061 persons declared themselves as being Roma. The Montenegro national Plan of Action is based upon strategic documents, elaborated with international support and with the help provided from the civil society. The Montenegro Government appointed a National Coordinator in the person of Mr. Remyija Ademovic, the representative speaker of the country to this reunion. On the Decade four fields of action the National Plan of Montenegro looks as followings: in the Educational field, the number of Roma origin children enrolled in the educational system doubled within the last three years, the teachers and the school officials and teachers are attending training courses and seminars while free books and school accessories and materials were offered to the most part of Roma children, on the whole a high level of socialisation and integration of Roma children has been achieved; in the field of Employment, the Offices for Work and Employment are targeting through their policies the growth of employment level within the Roma population, yet there is a need for a updated evaluation of dimension of the target group; in the Health field the *mainstreaming* principle was supported, every citizen having access to the public health services but a targeting action is imagined by seeking to conclude a national program for Roma; regarding the poor housing conditions and it is hoped that the national plans regarding the habitats will have an impact upon the housing condition of the Roma. In

the final part of his speech, the Montenegro representative appealed for financial support meant to sustain the Montenegro National Plan of the Decade.

The Hungary presentation showed a brief framework of the institutional building meant to support the elaboration and the implementing the National Plan of Action, including some financial details. A first draft of the National Plan was elaborated by a National Working Group which included representatives of the ministries, of the Roma Self Government and of the Roma NGOs. In the summer of 2005 regional and national consulting meetings took place gathering more than 700 participants. The national action plan is going to be endorsed every to years by a governmental decree while the budget for the period 2007-2009 had been already detailed. A civil forum will annually evaluate the fulfilling of the tasks and objectives enclosed in the National Plan. The already ongoing projects within the plan are targeting the following fields: housing with an approved budget of 3.2 mil. Euro for 2005 and of 3.08 mil Euro for 2006; de-segregation in educational system with 0.5 mil Euro allotted; equal opportunities, scholarships for Roma children – in 2005 23,000 pupils benefited of 2.2 mil. Euro-; PHARE antidiscrimination campaigns with 2 mil. Euro stipulated for the 2004-2006 period and an information campaign regarding the Decade with an amount of 60,000 Euros. The overall Hungarian National Budget allotted for the Decade mounts to 80 mil. Euro and it is focused mainly on targeting actions while the value of the mainstreaming actions (territorial approaches, long-term employment policies, people living in disadvantaged micro regions etc.) cannot be accurately estimated. The National Development Plans (2004-2006 and 2007-2013) financed by the Structural Funds positively influence the *mainstreaming* type actions.

The Slovakia representative presented the main programmes and projects implemented in the four fields of Decade intervention: in the Health field there were presented the PHARE programmes regarding the improvement of the access to the health services by employing 40 field health workers in 59 localities, by founding of sanitary health centres in 9 localities and of some mobile medical units for remote settlements and also by

developing a disinfection programme in 50 localities in Eastern Slovakia; in the Educational field the programmes PHARE and REF regarding the systematic reform of the educational system were presented, some programmes regarding the de-segregation and adopting in the school curricula of some elements concerning the Romany Language and Roma literature along with the founding in Nitra of an institute of Romology and in Prešov of an Roma Education Centre were among achievements; in the Housing field, The ministry of Construction and Regional Development contracted workings for the Roma settlements respecting the following algorithm: 80% grants for construction and 20% worked off by the construction tenants while the municipality role was to provide the land and the technical documentation for construction; in the employment field, the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family targets actions regarding the equal opportunities, increase of employability of the disadvantaged groups and a program for Community Social Work developed by the Social Development Fund, the EQUAL European funds play an important role by the intermediate of micro-credits and social enterprises.

The Romanian presentation targeted the idea of tightening the connection between the European Commission and the Decade. There were analysed the funding possibilities of the Decade National Plans of Action by the contributions from the national budgets (including the Trust Fund) in the case of all states but also by the intermediate of the PHARE programmes for the candidate states or for the states that are in train to join EU in January 2007, by the intermediate of the structural funds in the case of the states already members of the EU and of other funds (grants or loans awarded by international financial institutions). The range of Romanian public policies for Roma was analysed and their connexions with the funds by the intermediate of which they are financially sustained. The European framework legislation and the international financial instruments related to the Decade were reviewed and, as instead of conclusions, the Romanian delegation' presentation re-stated the necessity for a political support for the Decade, the necessity of funding measures targeting the Roma and an inclusion of the Roma in all the European social policies regarding the social development;

the Romanian counter part proposed the creation of a task force which would include representatives of the EU Direction: Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, the National Co-ordinators of the Decade and representatives of the Roma NGOs in order to harmonise the European policies in the field with the national ones.

3. The “Mainstreaming and Targeting” session

The concept of “*mainstreaming*” was developed by the feminist movement and it is constantly brought to open debates in order to establish the position of disadvantaged groups within the context of equal opportunities.

The *mainstreaming* concept guides those who activate in the process of public policies elaboration aiming to emphasize the disadvantaged groups (*targeting*) when the beneficiaries can be quantitatively estimated as a group affected by a certain context (e.g. social inequality); this concept recommends that, from the elaboration stage until the evaluation phase in the process of public policies endorsement, different interests have to be taken into consideration, along with the profile and the level of development of the group for which the policy is designed.

Targeted approach guarantees us the participation of the group, given our case – the Roma people - , from consultation stage to the implementation and assessment stages; therefore it is recommended to focus on the integration of the targeted measures within a *mainstreaming* framework.

Taking both concepts into consideration, in a systematic manner when referring to the elaboration, implementation and evaluation of the public policies, the two approaches - *mainstreaming* and *targeting* - could prove productive and could be simultaneously accomplished with greater outcomes, if, from the very beginning, the group specificity and differences are taken into consideration in the policies elaborating stage.

These two concepts do not exclude themselves, but the border between these two approaches– *mainstreaming* and *targeting* - must be clearly identified, as they are very similar notions.

One cannot talk about *mainstreaming* policies lacking the political will while the political will is often lacking because the specific needs of disadvantaged groups are not known.

It is our duty to make aware the governments, the institutions and agencies that, in the process of public policies elaboration and in order to cover all the basic needs of the social disadvantaged groups, all active social actors involved in this matter should be consulted. Regarding the harmonisation and the complementing of the Decade National Action Plans, a further process of cooperation and consultation among all the Decade Member States is required in order that the public policies addressing Roma be compounded of targeted measures within an active mainstreaming framework.

4. The EU officials presentations

Mr. **Peter Ungar** from the DG Regional Development spoke about the EU cohesion policy and about the planning and programming cycle, about the national strategic reference frameworks, about the main strategic guidelines concerning the EU regional development, about the EU health policy: the health infrastructure and the national and EU investments in this field, about the EU cohesion policy for the period 2007-2013 etc; He also presented two study cases on health programmes in Italy and Hungary, financed by the intermediate of the structural funds.

Mss. **Rachel Lancry** from The DG Regional Development presented the financing possibilities in the case of entrepreneurs activities for Roma, justifying the focus for this field by the Structural Funds traditional guiding towards the disadvantaged groups by the intermediate of the Lisbon Strategy motto – *growth and jobs* - , following the discussions held by the European commissioners with personalities (e.g. George Soros) which raised the conclusion that the Roma are good entrepreneurs and by the Open Society

Institute experience in financing programmes for sustaining small-business activities in Central and Eastern Europe. Thus, despite the fact that barriers still remain subject to accessing the funds, the trainings and raising awareness one cannot find a reasonable argument not to involve Roma in creating growth and jobs. The EU regional development funds may contribute to this process by the previous experience, micro-credits, access to support and consultancy and raising awareness. These types of support can be included in the financial exercise 2007-2013 by including them in the programmes along with the specification that they are targeting the Roma and, once in documents, the projects sponsor may apply. Her conclusions: Roma have problems but also potential and the Regional Development Fund may help the Roma in solving their problems.

Mrs. **Catherine Magnant** from the DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities presented the project “The 2007 European Year of equal opportunities for all – towards a just society”. The objectives of this programme are raising awareness among general public on benefits of a society that offers the same opportunities to all, irrespective of their sex, sexual orientation, age, racial or ethnic origin, disability, religion or belief and highlighting the benefits of diversity as a source of socio-economic vitality for Europe. This event was initiated because of delays/problems in transposition, the lack of implementation into the domestic law and the lack of knowledge of relevant EU Directives and national legislation. The programme will also approach issues related to gender and will be based upon the humankind values and principles: the respect for human rights, representation, recognition and respect. The total budget allotted for this programme raises to 15 mil. Euro and shall target actions both at national level and at the EY level to alleviate the field legislation implementing and for the great public to be aware of its rights and duties.

Mr. **Colin Wolfe** from the DG Regional Development presented the topics of integrating the Roma problematics in the mainstreaming guidelines of the European social policies referring to Lisbon Agenda, the European legislation against discrimination, the National Action Plans of the decade and the national and international fundings. Approaching the Roma issues should

include the planification with them and for them of the social intervention *pre school training, employment, youth, education, insertion, entrepreneurship, health, housing, security & justice, awareness, habitat, land issues, anti-discrimination etc.* Even during these days of time, within the Member States and those who are going to join EU there are finalised the financial programming details for 2007-2013 by the intermediate of the already negotiated National Strategic Reference Framework and the Current finalization and negotiation of EU Structural Fund "Operational Programmes" the Slovakian case being relevant upon the need for establishing a "Roma Committee" for EU-funding monitoring. The projects concerning and involving the Roma minority have to well designed and prepared by a well prepared training support and consultancy and followed by partnerships conclusion before the drafting and selecting process stages. All will seek the improving the Roma social condition and their economic development conditions.

In a second presentation Mr. Wolfe spoke about housing and infrastructure fields that should be approached as a common package by municipalities in the frameworks of regional and national actors and involved in the housing strategy that should take into consideration the following variables: *the housing, the security, the habitat, the land issues, the pre school training, the- employment, the youth, the education, the insertion, the entrepreneurship and health along with the awareness and the anti-discrimination factors.*

5. The Reunion Final Remarks

At the reunion conclusion, Mr. **Nikolaus Van der Pas**, director of the DG Employment and Equal Opportunities had stressed upon the interest of the European Commission and upon the financial support designed to promote the activities regarding the prevention and combating of the ethnic discrimination against Roma population and particularly to increase the access of Roma people to the labour market. Mr. **Nikolaus Van der Pas** has also mentioned that a priority for DG Employment is the prevention of the discrimination against Roma people, this priority being also previously underlined by the Mrs. Commissioner **Vladimir Spidla**, who restated the engagement of the EU in the antidiscrimination activities and the financial support allotted to the activities in this field. Mr. **Nikolaus Van der Pas** reaffirmed the Commission' opening for any form of collaboration with all the partners that pledge for the same cause: stopping discrimination”

The Commission is supporting and can support more activities concerning these issues but they cannot be successful unless by applying the European Commission support to a concrete, very well defined framework by the Member States and involving the full participation of the actors involved into a inclusive society.

The financial instruments of the European Commission are the structural funds developed within a deepen collaboration of the Member States and with the organisations involved in this issue. The inclusive approach of the Commission refers to a common scheduling and its aim is to pass from the individual action to a common action by approaching the structural funds within the member states' national strategies framework and within the Sector Operational Plans.

The European Commission appeals the member states to pay attention to the Roma people within the national strategies and plans both as a answer to their basic needs and as a mean for including them into society, thus attaining the general aim of the Union.

Another issue at European Union' level is the demographic evolution which has among the consequences the fact that a small percent of active, young population must sustain a bigger percent of old population. Within this context it is important to achieve the inclusion into society, and especially into the labour market, of all human resources, to promote the insertion of this work force and to fructify its productive potential.

Mr. **Nicholas Van der Pas** thanked to the National Agency for Roma which has organized this reunion and appealed to the all the interested parties - active NGOs and institutions involved in the process - to make common efforts regarding these issues.

6. General interest debates within the conference' framework

- The need for solving the problems faced by Roma occupies a high-ranked position on the European Commission' working agenda but within this approach, the national states are those who must take over the initiative and to propose common action projects. The EU executive (the Commission) showed openness towards the idea of supporting the actions deployed within the" Decade" framework, provided these actions' compatibility with the EU sectorial policies (social, health, education etc.).
- It was stressed upon the European Commission engagement for supporting the Decade' members states on the direction of preventing and combating the discrimination cases faced by the Roma minority, category of citizens which accordingly with the EU executive' opinion will have to constitute a top priority in the anti-discrimination campaign.
- The European Commission may bring an added value to this effort provided the case that the national member states, mainly those with a significant number of Roma population, bring also their contribution in a sustainable manner.
- With this regard, the EU executive appeal all those states to pay enough attention to the importance of the Roma category in designing their planning strategic documents meant to address the use of the

funds (from the national budgets and from EU) and to those meant to contribute to Roma social development, in general. Moreover, it promotes the use of the structural funds, accessible after joining to EU for alleviating the minorities' inclusion on the workforce market.

- The European Commission will be able to fund sectorial housing projects for Roma (not the building process of the dwellings itself but, rather, of the additional facilities to the housings), many of these projects not being deployed yet due to the uncertainty of the property status over the fields the Roma are living on.
- In the field of Education (considered as the best mean for social inclusion, but, at the same time, as a field that can perpetrate the social exclusion), the European Commission does not have in its view the funding of Roma minority' specific activities but the financial support for different projects affecting this minority. The emphasis will be on the pre-scholar education and on increasing the quality of education.
- The Romanian Presidency proposal that in every single member state participant to the Decade should be constituted a consultative body (consisting in Roma and non Roma experts) which is to support the competent national authorities in implementing the national plans of action adjacent to the "Decade".
- The World Bank will manage the Trust Fund allotted to the Decade, will finance technical assistance projects in the field, seminars and other actions meant to promote the Roma' dialogue with the majority population and with the authorities. Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro were asked to conclude with the World Bank the contribution agreements to the fund, an instrument that, up to now only Croatia paid the national contribution.
- Regarding the Romania's case, during the period 2001-2003 there were deployed a number of 26 specific projects for supporting the Roma Community, projects financed by PHARE assistance (2/3) and co-financed from the national and local budgets. Most of those funds (1/3) were invested in projects targeting the education field (school rehabilitation and endowment, school manuals editing etc.) and only

10% (a percent estimated as insufficient by the EU) in projects targeting the integration/reinsertion of the Roma on the labour market. From the PHARE budget for the years 2004-2006 there are still stipulated substantial funds accessible starting with the year 2006.

7. The Conclusions of the Conference

The main gain of the Reunion consists in raising the level of the European Commission involvement in the national steps meant to improve the Roma condition, to restate the EC role regarding the Decade for Roma Inclusion, fact that are proved both by the repeated engagements stated by important officials in charged within the Commission and by the high level and high number of EU executive' representatives that attended this event.

The EU officials' presentations brought their contribution to the clarification of some issues concerning the technical procedures required for EU funds accession and which are focused to some projects meant to contribute at the economic and social life' alleviation.

One can consider this event as a successful corolla of the Romanian Presidency mandate of the Decade for Roma Inclusion programme.