

**XI. International Steering Committee Meeting**  
**Minutes and Summary**  
**October 3-4, 2007**  
**Budapest, Hungary**

*I. Introduction and Background*

The XI. International Steering Committee National Meeting was held in Budapest on 3-4 October 2007. The objectives of the meeting were (i) Anti-segregation policy, the aim of this session was to introduce anti-segregation policies in Eastern-European countries and to prepare common anti-segregation strategy of Decade countries, primarily in the field of education and housing; (ii) Corporate Social Responsibility policy, the aim was to make an overview on existing CSR strategies and to prepare common strategy of Decade countries; (iii) European Roma policy, the main objective of the session is to introduce the idea of European Roma Policy and to define necessary steps for preparation first version of the document ; (iv) Representation of Roma civil society in Decade of Roma Inclusion, the main objective of the session is to prepare overall aspects of representation of Roma civil society in the Decade of Roma Inclusion.

**I. Opening session**

**Opening speech**

- Ms. Monika Lamperth LLD, Minister of Social Affairs and Labour, Hungary
- Iulius Rostas, Director of the Decade of Roma Inclusion Program, Open Society Institute
- Arup Banerji, ECSHD Sector Manager, World Bank
  
- **Summary of last ISC meetings (Bulgarian Presidency)**  
Mr. Baki Hyuseinov, Deputy Minister, Bulgaria

*Ms. Mónica Lamperth*, Minister for Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, opened the meeting. Representatives of eleven governments attended the meeting, along with representatives of the partner organizations World Bank, Open Society Institute and UNDP.

A full list of participants is included as Annex 1.<sup>1</sup>

*The minister* focused her remarks on how best to achieve the integration or inclusion of Roma. She emphasised that certain conditions have to be met before: social tolerance and the open welcome of the society. A good programme will not be successful, if it does not have the acceptance of the society.

*Ms. Lamperth* opinion was that the Decade is a good opportunity to achieve changes, if:

- all sectors have good programmes
  
- there exists a common and concerted effort at international level and if social tolerance and acceptance prevails at national level

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<sup>1</sup> The participating countries are: Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Macedonia, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Montenegro, Slovak Republic. Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina was represented as an observer governments.

*The Minister* raised that it is important to realise first and reach it at the end that the issue of Roma inclusion becomes an issue of the society at-large. With regard to European Union, the EU Member States participating in the Decade should lobby that Roma inclusion is high on the EU's agenda and the EU should develop an European Roma Strategy.

*Mr. Arup Banjeri* representative of the World Bank despite frustration about the slow progress, the Decade shows first impacts – other countries are interested in participating and the EU reacts on the Decade with raising the profile of Roma-related activities.

*Mr. Banjeri* told that the following Progress made:

Decade Watch though scepticism it has been recognised that things have been moved forward.

Good practices could be found in each country.

Monitoring: the indicator working group established to set up monitorable indicators.

The international conference on social inclusion was looking at new tools or review methods in order to identify best practices. However, the policy still has to move from project level to develop fully comprehensive, mainstream policies.

*Mr. Iulius Rostas (OSI)*

Supports the idea of developing a European Roma Policy and emphasised the role of the EU and also the possibilities of establishing common mechanisms for EU Member States and non-Member States and how they can profit mutually.

With regard to social inclusion he considered the inclusion of businesses into the process as crucial in addition to the role of the Governments and civil society.

Further he reminded of the importance to have a strong participation of the local level and of the Romani civil society.

*Mr. Maksim Stanisic (BiH)*

Presented us an introduction to the situation of Roma in BiH and informed about activities of the Council of Ministers of BiH such as the adoption of the Roma Strategy and the envisaged adoption of relevant action plans; the action plan on education has been adopted already in February 2004.

*UNICEF*

Joins the Decade as new international organisation and presented four main lines of input or support:

General strategies for all children – include Roma

Multi-sectoral approaches

Human rights approach (RBA)

Support to work on education-related issues (De-institutionalisation; birth registration) and to have the right of the child considered across all programmes.

*Deputy Minister Hyuseinov* summarised the activities of the Bulgarian Government during the Decade presidency from 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007. In addition to the ISC meetings important events were held and crucial developments initiated. In May 2007 an international seminar on “Exchange of good practices in the sphere of employment” was conducted. The Steering Body of the Decade Trust Fund was created. The establishment of a permanent Decade Secretariat was initiated. Decade Watch reports were published. The process on the establishment of the “Common Indicator” Working Group has started. At national level, in January 2007 a plan of activities according to the Decade was developed. In 2006 and 2007 10 regional seminars in order to inform Roma were conducted and additionally eight seminars, specialised on Romani women.

Social research was conducted and a scientific conference on Roma integration was held in January 2007.

## **II/A. Anti-segregation policy**

**The main objective of the session is to introduce anti-segregation policies in Eastern-European countries and to prepare common anti-segregation strategy of Decade countries, primarily in the field of education and housing.**

### **Presenters:**

- **Anti-segregation policy in the field of education**  
Ernő Kadét, Expert, Ministry of Education and Culture
  
- **Experiences of the Roma Education Fund in anti-segregation projects**  
Alexandre Marc, Director, Roma Education Fund
  
- **Anti-segregation policy in the field of housing**  
Andor Ürmös, Head of Department, Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour

*Mr. Ernő Kadét, Expert, Ministry of Education and Culture:*

Hungary started to address segregation in the field of education from 2002, with plans where was clearly stated that there were no equal opportunities in the education process, which further had consequences on Romani life. This was concerned as not only human rights issue but also as a problem that impacted state competitiveness.

First step was in creating legal rules and mechanisms for anti-segregation. This was not possible to do in 5 years time in order to stop segregation, especially hidden segregation. This was followed with problems within Romani community on new treatment in the education where they had choices which school to attend with limitation that schools can receive only local Roma pupils.

Lessons learned:

- Anti-segregation policy should be followed up with integration policy, supported with extra funds on creating proper conditions for education
- Not enough to raise funds and adopt policies – need for deep assessment of local context

*Mr. Alexandre Marc, Director, Roma Education Fund:*

Mr. Marc presented REF findings how the discrimination and segregation works in the educational processes especially in the states that are reforming education. Through analyses of existing policies and work of the institutions the REF finds how this impacts discrimination and how policies facilitate discrimination. There are also many good policies which are badly designed and also at the end have negative effects on the educational success. He mentioned recently adopted antidiscrimination laws in many European countries which is not sufficient because the laws are not supported by adequate institutional set up. The discrimination is mainly produced from the decentralization process where is very hard to control how the local authorities are implementing laws. Special schools and elitist schools also discriminate all children, but the concerns of Roma are more focused on the high number of special schools in the region which have only Romani pupils. He mentioned the new law on obligatory preschool education in Serbia, which is not enough for Roma because there is not enough space and facilities to assume all children. Affirmative action at universities also can produce informal segregation if are not carefully considered. REF says yes for anti-discrimination policies but within the educational

reforms. The main challenge is to build Romani identity within the school and to introduce mechanisms for parents' involvement.

*Mr. Andor Ürmös, Head of Department, Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor:*

Mr. Ürmös introduced definition on segregation followed with explanation on low status people and children. Antidiscrimination measures are important but not enough to solve all problems. He gave examples on impact of housing segregation from national censuses and surveys. Mainly the lack of data impacts planning of measures and institutional approach to solve housing issues. There is need for setting up minimum integration standards in the housing sphere and also linking of education and housing anti-segregation policies.

### **Discussion:**

Mr. Costel Berkus as a moderator of this session raised 3 key questions for debate:

1. Do we need common understanding of anti-segregation
2. How the other policies at governmental level are influencing segregation
3. Propose idea or policy approach how to address segregation

One of the participants from Romania stated that there is need for clear distinction between desegregation and anti-segregation as processes. This implies different action on the ground.

ERRC director discussed about experience of EU anti-discrimination laws on segregation.

Mr. Arup Banerji discussed about the ongoing decentralization process in SEE countries and possibility that this might lead to new forms of segregation. The complexity of policy arena in this regard is addressing next steps on taking out segregated to non segregated areas.

Mr. Berkus mentioned that desegregation is not only physical move of the people and is complex issues with several components.

Representative of Slovak government asked panelists how to act if Roma do not want to integrate. Mr. Alexander Marx corresponded to this question saying that is not enough once to try integration but rather to have continuous action and explanatory approach to Roma communities why should they integrate.

Next discussant gave example of self-segregation of Roma from Romania. The discussion of other participants was focused on both positive and negative aspects of segregation with conclusion that there is nothing positive in the segregation. Segregation should be forbidden and move from projects to systemic policies. Segregation do not have only ethnic component; it has also social component in the background of the people. The session was closed with conclusion that there is still need for common understanding of segregation and all the questions remain open.

## **II/B. Corporate Social Responsibility policy**

**The main objective of the session is to make an overview on existing CSR strategies and to prepare common strategy of Decade countries.**

### **Presenters:**

- **Hungarian Business Leaders Forum – ROMASTER program**  
Adriány Kincső, Executive Director
- **Regional CSR Project**  
Krisztina Kiss, Representative of the UNDP

### ***Focus points of discussion:***

Private sectors bear an important role in generating jobs and thus providing income.

Suggestions on how companies and company owners can -in addition to government programs:

- contribute to achieving the social inclusion of Roma and improving their living standard
- empower Roma people? E.g. “I need a job” so I can secure my family and send children to school. On the other hand what is the use of education when Roma are not employed by companies

### ***Adriány Kincso ROMASTER program:***

Hungarian Business Leaders’ Forum (HBLF) – established 15 years ago. There was a need to focus on equal opportunities. Hungarian Romani community got targeted with an education approach.

- Promotion of CSR and sustainable development principles

The question on what business actors might think about employing Roma was examined by a study carried out in 2005 in three countries. This has initiated a dialogue about how companies should be incented to employ Roma people and also find a guide to the introduction of equal opportunity principles in companies’ employment policy.

Business forums are existing in most of the Decade countries. The Bulgarian business forum is undertaking Hungarian approach. Countries as Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, and Romania will be considering this approach soon. Educational support program Romaster achieved great results in Hungary (as examined in Romaster 2005 study) and should be replicated. Civil sector should be encouraged to contact those forums and start collaboration on CSR that will include Roma in target group.

### **Major conclusions:**

- Involvement of the target sector is rather crucial is without them no significant results can be achieved.
- Diversity and equal opportunity policy should be elaborated by companies
- Companies operating on large scale should definitely be committed (does not refer to small and medium size business actors)
- Applying affirmative action tools is highly required.
- Romaster program should be introduced from above as it can only succeed with a powerful drive from the management level.
- Use Roma faces in advertisements (not applied in Hungary although the initiative is coming from the government)
- Collaborate with new partners to have new more companies who recruit Roma people
- Frequent excuses for not having Roma faces in the media: there are not enough Roma speaking English, or if there are then they don’t look like Roma
- International examples should be used on how other countries tackled this issue (e.g. USA with Spanish and Hispanic people).

Similar activities to Romaster are going under the REF collaboration with Hungarian Business Leaders Forum.

**Important lesson:** If we don’t try, we don’t know if we success of you fail.

CSR is a tool for sustainable development, considered also as the long term goal of EU.

*Kristina Kiss (UNDP)*

CSR is very fashionable in the today's world. Talks, shows, conferences, workshops, presentations are focusing on CSR. There are many talks about CSR; so much affords to make the strategies, but very little put it to the action.

UNDP undertook surveys, studies, booklets related to the topic – they are available on website (in CZE, HU, Pol).

PPT definitions:

“A concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis.”

UNDP definition:

“The management of, and response to, social, environmental, broader economic and ethical issues – and the extent to which businesses are responsive to stakeholder's expectations on these issues.”

Some countries involve in the UNDP CSR programs are in the Decade. Some others are also participating in the program such as Turkey.

Program results will be placed in the Decade Secretariat so it all Decade countries can learn from good UNDP practices.

Global compact secures keeping 10 principles/benchmarks for CSR. Global Compact is supported by 6 UN institutions, and by the local networks. Specific information on CSR are available at [www.unglobalcompact.org](http://www.unglobalcompact.org). The project however is not specifically targeting Roma. – The assessment/interviews of companies did not involved specific questions related to Roma

**Reccomendation:**

- government should identify a government department who will systematize the CSR strategies
- anti-discrimination measures are highly needed at public level
- awareness raising campaigns
- joint public events (i.e. Slovakia – music event)

**In conclusion is needed to say that** CSR is important for businesses as well as public institutions. Governments are responsible for building up and implementing strategies for CSR. Global compact, especially in Decade countries should be more sensitive to Romani involvement. Even though most of the Constitutions are not allowing to force individual to tell her nationality, but there is a possibility to ask. The impossibility of data collection is the myth. Alumnae of Roma Memorial University Scholarship program are the living example.

## **II/C. European Roma Policy**

**The main objective of the session is to introduce the idea of European Roma Policy and to define necessary steps for preparation first version of the document.**

**Presenters:**

- **Mark David, Roma Initiative Fellow, OSI**
- **Eniko Petohazi, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Hungary**

The main objective of the session is to introduce the idea of the European Roma Policy and to define necessary steps for preparation first version of the documents.

Bernard Rorke, Director of the Roma Participation Program of OSI Budapest, was chairing the session, and Toni Tashev, Chairman of the Board of the Regional Policy Development Centre, was the rapporteur of the session.

Main panelists of the session were Mark David, Roma Initiative Fellow, and Eniko Petohazi, Senior expert of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary.

Mark David gave a presentation “Towards an EU Policy for Roma Inclusion”. He rose rhetorically **“Why do we need EU policy on Roma?”** and further he answered to it:

- Roma issue is considered as the most complex issue
- The EU Roma Policy could be a result of the Roma Decade Initiative
- Increasing the targeting of Roma issues by the Structural funds and its absorption
- Increasing the impact of EU funded Roma projects
- To set objectives, provide guidelines and set benchmarks

#### **“What means EU Roma Policy in practice?”**

- This is an EU framework strategy on Roma inclusion, a policy umbrella
- The strategy is soft instrument for Roma inclusion
- The Strategy’s main objectives are the same of the Roma Decade

#### **Its elements:**

- Elaboration of an EU framework strategy on Roma inclusion
- Establishment of Roma Unit in DG Social Affairs
- Establishment of Intergovernmental High-level Group on ministerial level within the EU

#### **“How do we reach this?”**

Proponents – (i) Roma and non-Roma NGOs (ii) EU member states in the Roma Decade

Diplomatic channels for proposing – through the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and its delegations in the European Union

Target – European Council of Ministers

#### **Role of the ISC of the Roma Decade:**

- To provide a framework for cooperation, especially among the five EU member states in the Decade
- To be the engine of the initiative by:
  - Establish contacts with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and its delegations in the EU
  - Developing contacts with the EU Parliament paying special attention to the Slovenian, French and Spanish and others Presidency
  - Organizing an ambassadors` meeting

Eniko Petohazi from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary said in her presentation that “strategic and comprehensive approach to the EU level is supported by the Hungarian government”.

A representative of UNICEF raised his concern regarding the objectives we set and how realistic they are in order to not repeat the mistakes of other similar processes of mainstreaming.

Christian Bodewig from the World Bank said that the Decade started because of the understanding that the Roma issues are not only national, but also international issues. And the Roma issues should be in the agenda of the European Union. Through the EU it will be also ensure the participation of the national governments – Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance, etc. The EU Roma policy provides opportunity to advance our agenda.

### **III. Decade Organization**

#### **III/A. Related projects**

##### **Presenter:**

- **Anina Botošová**, Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities, Slovakia - **European conference on Roma Issues during Council of Europe presidency program – Slovakia 2007 – 2008 (Education and training of Roma Children and Youth – alternatives and visions)**

#### **III/B. Representation of Roma civil society in Decade of Roma Inclusion**

**The main objective of the session is to prepare overall aspects of representation of Roma civil society in the Decade of Roma Inclusion**

Presenters:

- Nadir Redzepi Macedonia,
- George Radulescu, Romania - Good practices, overview

#### **III/C. Decade - Next Steps**

Presenters:

- **Christian Bodewig**, Economist, World Bank - **Indicator Working Group**
- **Anush Bezhanyan**, Senior Operations Officer, World Bank **Decade Trust Fund – overview and next steps**
- **Andor Urmos**, Chair of the Board, Decade of Roma Inclusion Foundation and **Iulius Rostas**, Director of the Decade of Roma Inclusion Program, Open Society Institute - **Decade Secretariat**

During the session there were a series of problems raised by different representatives and some solutions.



### **Problems:**

- A clear lack of Roma capacity and human resources which reflects in practically all the aspect related to the implementation of the Decade.
- Discrepancies between the initial expectations and the results (the deflating balloon effect which leads to a normal but regrettable pessimism and lack of concrete action)
- Tensions and misunderstandings among different Roma fractions reflects negatively in the communication towards the governments.
- Roma issues are extremely complex and require a comprehensive long term efficient sectorial strategies focused on the Decade's priorities.
- Complex problems related to the monitoring involving the Roma NGOs and involvement of the local authorities especially in the condition of frequent changes within governments.

Problems related to strategic planning following on existing good practices ( as in Macedonia where there is no planning focused on the follow up of the Roma students)

### **Solutions:**

- Step by step guides on how to do it reflecting the Bulgarian, Serbian and Croatian government examples related to increasing involvement of the local authorities ( action plans at the local level, involvement of the local administrations with the help of UNDP in Roma related projects as in Serbia ) and the capacity building of Roma human resources.(Croatia)
- Step by step guides on positive practice related to the interactions among REF , Civil Society and local governments (Macedonia in improving the participation of Roma children to school )
- Step by step guide on prioritizing the Decade goals through targeted working groups ( focused on budgets) at the level on governments and increase participation in the governmental bodies( Romanian and Hungarian experience)
- Step by step guide on how to increase the political pressure and engage the highest level of the governments in the Decade as well as participation in the most relevant existing monitoring bodies ( Bulgarian experience)

### **Next steps of the Hungarian Presidency**

- The **Hungarian and Croatian Governments** propose a study tour in Hungary and Croatia to visit Roma settlements and see/evaluate the implementation of the Housing and Social Integration programs
- Questionnaire about anti-segregation policy will be sent out to all participating countries, aimed to summarize existing policies, best practices and future steps.
- The next ISC meeting is planned to hold in January.