



**REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA**  
**MINISTRY OF LABOUR, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

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No. \_\_\_\_\_ Prot.

Tirana, on \_\_\_/\_\_\_/2008

**Re:** Information on the report to be submitted in the 18<sup>th</sup> meeting of the consultative group Task Force EU – Albania

**To:** Ms. Majlinda Bregu  
Ministry of European Integration

**TIRANA**

In reply to your letter No. of Protocol 5820, dated April 24, 2008, regarding the complementing of information on the report to be submitted in the 18<sup>th</sup> meeting of the consultative group Task Force EU – Albania, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, based on the recommendations of the 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the consultative group Task Force EU – Albania, is hereby sending a detailed progress report for the period 2007-2008.

In the framework of the implementation of the National Strategy of the Roma, based on the areas where this strategy has focussed and on the information collected by the line ministries, which are responsible for its implementation, we inform as follows:

**Ministry of Health:**

It should be emphasized that the health staff applies correctly its duties for any group of population in different areas, without any distinction for the Roma community.

Continuous monitoring of the potable water quality is carried out in both urban and rural areas. Such monitoring includes the quality control of potable water in the locations of the Roma community. In general, as per the follow up carried out until now, no particular concerns on potable water have been presented in these locations.

Certainly, the hygienic and sanitation conditions in the living and surrounding premises remain problematic, especially the lack of pipelines for not potable water, the presence of domestic animals, and the lack of removal of urban garbage. Meanwhile, the hygiene and epidemiology inspectors cooperate with the local power authorities as per the joint plans already in place.

The Ministry of Health, through different NGOs, has organised training sessions with participants from the Roma community to increase their awareness for the improvement of the hygienic and sanitation conditions in the premises where they live and those around.

The Public Health Institute has a database mapping the Roma communities throughout the country. Such database should anyhow be complemented with more detailed data such as number of children, the number of inhabitants in general broke down by age groups, etc. Though this, special attention has been reserved to child group ages who fall within the obligatory vaccination scheme as well as to women, so that their pregnancy can be better followed up. In the districts where a large number of Roma population live, special attention is given towards the identification of children (especially the new born) as well as the identification of persons still in need of vaccination. Special vaccination campaigns have been organised in districts such as Durrës, Elbasan, and Tirana by achieving coverage of the population with vaccination up to 98%.

Also, the Ministry of Health, in cooperation with the Public Health Institute and through the support of donors such as USAID, UNFPA, UNICEF, the American Red Cross and the Albanian Red Cross have organised activities related to the promotion and health education on the problems of reproductive health, focusing particularly in the awareness of the population on the modern contraceptive methods. Several community based training session have been carried out on problems concerning mother and child health. Members of the Roma community have been included in these activities.

The implementation of the National Strategy of the Prevention and Control of Expansion of HIV/AIDS in Albania, part of the National Programme on HIV/AIDS/IST for the prevention of the HIV/AIDS infection in the Republic of Albania, provides for a series of specific measures regarding the Roma community living in Albania, such as:

- Training of the Roma organisations working in the field of HIV/AIDS with the aim of building their capacities to work with professionalism in this area.
- Training of the health staff who works close to the locations of the Roma communities.
- Training for education amongst the same age groups within the Roma community.
- Distribution of condoms amongst the Roma population.
- Setting up of QKTVs (centres for counselling and confidential voluntary testing) which will work for the Roma community. The pilot project for a mobile centre of such nature working for the Roma community in Tirana has also been foreseen.
- Members of the Roma community who are users of drugs taken through injections (PDI), males involved in sexual relations with other males (MSM), as well as sex workers from the Roma community shall benefit from the damage e reduction programmes which shall be organised for this category.
- A biological and behavioural study (Bio-BSS) shall be carried out in relation to the risk factors of the HIV/IST with groups which adapt high risk behaviour in Tirana, here including the Roma community.

The activities below have also been implemented by NGOs under the supervision of the national programme on HIV/AIDS/IST, as part of the Global Fund initiative in the fight against HIV/AIDS. These activities have been carried out in the districts of Tirana, Durrës, Lezhë, Shkodra, Fier, Pogradec and Berat. Hence we can mention:

- Production and distribution of IEK materials for the Roma (leaflets, posters, brochures).
- Training programmes for peer educators from the Roma communities in order to strengthen local capacities.
- Distribution of condoms.
- Training for professionals (such as health workers, social workers and teachers), operating in areas close to the locations of Roma communities.
- Support and capacity building for the Roma organisation.

### **Ministry of Education and Science**

Regarding the situation of the Roma education in Albania, the actions mentioned below have been undertaken.

To ensure the increase of participation of Roma children in all levels of education, the Ministry of Education and Science (MASH) has concentrated its work in the following directions:

- Attraction of all Roma children at school. On this purpose, MASH has issued a special instruction for their school registration which is not conditioned by the submission of a birth certificate. The instruction offers all the necessary availabilities for the Roma children to attend school.
- Through the Instruction “On the implementation of the “Shansi i Dytë – Second Chance” Project”, MASH has hired an additional staff of 92 teachers; this has caused a considerable reduction of the school abandon.
- Reconstruction of schools where groups of Roma children are enrolled.
- Continuous cooperation with several associations and foundations for decreasing the poverty amongst Roma families, increasing of awareness amongst the Roma families for children to attend school as well as their better education.

As a result of the cooperation between the SOROS Foundation, the Municipality and the Regional Educational Directorate (DAR), a Community Centre for Roma Children and Youth is carrying out its activities in Elbasan. The mission of this centre is to integrate the Roma children and youth into the society and the fostering of cultural life within the same Roma community. The centre offers courses of Albanian language – to decrease the scale of illiteracy of the Roma children, as well as courses of handicrafts, musical education, physical education, etc.

The educational office of Kuçova, in cooperation with the Albanian Roma Union, managed to set up the “Social Centre for Roma Children”. In this centre, children prepare their school homework, and attend different courses to develop their talent as well as fulfil their wishes.

Special classes or kindergartens have been opened for the education of the Roma children such as the Roma School in Morave, Berat, special classes in Llakatund and Novosele, Vlora, the school “Së bashku – Together”, which depends from the Cajupi School in Gjirokastra, school “Liria – Freedom” in Shkodra, a separate class in the school of Roskovec in Fier, as well as the Roma kindergarten in Korça. Other special classes have also been opened in the elementary schools of districts such as Elbasan, Berat, Pogradec, Korça, while course against the illiteracy have been opened in the village of Zhupan in Fier.

Priority has been given to the opening of non public institutions for the education of Roma children such as the school and the kindergarten “Amaro Tam” in Pogradec and the school for Roma children in Kruja.

Priority has also been given to the professional preparation of teachers working with Roma children aiming to increase the awareness of the Roma parents to send their children to school.

Scholarships have been given to Roma children to enrol in vocational as well as social and cultural schools.

MASH, in cooperation with IKS and NGOs has carried out different activities to promote and achieve human rights especially regarding the rights of Roma children.

Also, MASH has worked towards the inclusion in the different curricula of topics on the dangerousness of drugs’ use, alcoholics, smoking, school abandon as well as other phenomena which represent the most actual wounds of the Albanian society such as prostitution, trafficking, etc.

In cooperation with UNICEF and “Save the Children”, MASH, in the framework of the implementation of the National Strategy “For the Improvement of living conditions of the Roma minority”, has completed a study to evidence the situation of education amongst the Roma in Albania, and is following up the completion of numerous projects for the pre-school education.

It is noteworthy to emphasize that, based on the recommendations of the abovementioned study on the situation of education amongst the Roma – study which is to be published soon – MASH shall undertake further steps to deepen the implementation of the aforementioned Strategy’s Plan of Action.

The budget for carrying out such study was provided by the donors listed above while the activities planned under this Strategy are already provided with the respective budgets by the MASH.

MASH is committed towards the implementation and the deepening of the measures taken under the National Strategy “For the Improvement of living conditions of the Roma minority”, so that the right of Roma to education is effectively guaranteed.

## **Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Telecommunication**

In the framework of the implementation of the National Strategy “For the Improvement of living conditions of the Roma minority”, the Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Telecommunication has followed and applied all the priority measures in accordance with the timeframes that this strategy establishes. After the completion of the identification of the problems related to the living conditions of this community, especially in those areas where most of it is concentrated, it was proceeded with the second stage, that of drafting of studies and projects for the rehabilitation of these areas. Still, in the framework of the implementation of the National Strategy “For the Improvement of living conditions of the Roma minority” for the most recent period 2007 – 2008, the work of this ministry focused in the contacts with the respective municipalities to identify those Roma families who are registered in the Civil State Offices at municipalities. This, since one of the main problems faced by this community is the lack of registration. Upon such identification, these families can be included in the lists of those from this community who are to be supported with housing in the residencies that are under construction funded by the State Budget through the National Housing Entity (EKB). Their ability to live together with the majority community is also a pre-condition as well as a way to integrate these people into the rest of the society. This manner of integration does also carry some risks related to the way of living, traditions and the different culture.

The integration of these inhabitants will be considered under any aspect of the work of this ministry, here including the legalisation process or the investments in the infrastructure.

The funds necessary to intervene in the rehabilitation of the living facilities for this community have already been calculated. They will have an impact on the State Budget for an amount of 886 million leks.

This Ministry has planned in its budget of 2008 a grant of 30 million leks to enable the starting of projects in the framework of the implementation of the Strategy. Such provision aims to support projects which are actually under implementation or which shall be implemented in some local units for the improvement of the living conditions of this community. On this purpose, actually the cases submitted by the local power units before this ministry are undergoing selection. It is foreseen that similarly, funds will be given to this ministry from the State Budget also for the coming years.

## **Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities**

The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (MPÇSSHB) and the institutions which depend from it (such as the National Employment Service and the State Social Service), have taken a series of measures which to include the Roma community in the employment programmes as well as in the poverty reduction ones. Regarding the inclusion of the unemployed Roma on the programmes for fostering of the

employment, measures have been taken for offering easier conditions for the Roma to obtain vocational training for those who are unemployed. Measures have also been taken to prepare the legal basis which facilitates and fosters the vocational training for the Roma job seekers.

Regarding the field of poverty, it is noteworthy to emphasize that together with the revision of the criteria for benefiting Economic Aid, several measures have been taken to duly inform the Roma community on the documentation, procedures and way of application in the Economic Aid scheme. We have to stress that, from a legal point of view, there is no kind of discrimination which would leave the poor families from the Roma community out of the poverty reduction programme. The fact that families from this community might have not been included in this program is more due to the limited access to information as well as to the movement of numerous families eligible for such programme towards other regions of the country.

Regarding the objectives of the Strategy “For the Improvement of living conditions of the Roma minority” in the field of employment and vocational training for the period 2007 – 2008, we inform that:

Upon Decision of the Council of the Ministers (DCM) no. 508, dated August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2007 “On some changes and amendments to the DCM no. 632, dated September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2003 “On the employment encouraging programme for unemployed female jobseekers”, the State funding for the employers who hire unemployed female job seekers from the special vulnerable groups, is respectively 4 and 6 wages (no longer 8 wages);

Regarding the establishment of the cooperation between the employment offices and the Regional Directorates of the Public Vocational Training on institutional basis, a bilateral cooperation agreement has been recently signed between these institutions aiming towards the better functioning and coordination of their work.

The respective report which evaluates the implementation of employment encouraging programmes, gives annual statistics on the beneficiaries who are unemployed job seekers (pupa) who come from the special vulnerable groups (here including the Roma). More concretely, 55 individuals have benefited from the application of the employment encouraging programmes in 2007, mainly in Fier, Durrës, Shkodra, and mainly in professions such as food products, cosmetics, tailoring and shoemaking.

Starting since 2007, reporting on the unemployed Roma job seekers has been added to the statistical reporting from the employment offices, for all the regions of the country.

### **Ministry of Interior**

The Ministry of Interior is responsibly following its duties concerning the fulfilment of the objectives of the National Strategy “For the Improvement of living conditions of the Roma minority” regarding the integration of the later. In the framework of the achievements and problems encountered during the efforts against trafficking – for which

it is noteworthy to mention that they are seen with priority in the commitments of the Government – the Office of the National Anti – trafficking Coordinator, at the same time Deputy Minister of Interior, and the Anti – trafficking Unit under its responsibility, have taken measures for the implementation of the Albanian National Strategy on the Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings.

Regarding the improvement of the legal framework on the fight and the prevention of the trafficking phenomena, the National Anti – trafficking Coordinator has brought forward a proposal for an amendment in the Penal Code of a new provision against the use of children for labour and other forced services as well as against the selling of children. The approval of the legal package with amendments by the Parliament has been achieved.

Also, an important measure is the entry into force since June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007 of the Law No. 9669, dated December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2006 “On the measures against violence in the family relations”, which gives to the Ministry of Interior the obligation:

- to create special sectors for the prevention and fight against domestic violence;
- to train the police troops who will cover the field of domestic violence.

For the implementation of these duties, but also due to the new structure of the General Directorate of the State Police, the ministry has dedicated efforts to set up special sections for the protection of minors and for the fight against domestic violence at regional level (*in all 12 police directorates in the districts*). Also, based on the support given by the OSCE, a special team of trainers amongst the police troops has received adequate training and it will train in the future the police agents and officers appointed to deal with identification, treatment and coordination work for the protection of victims of domestic violence.

Regarding the lack of members of this community amongst the police troops, such reality is in no way related to any discrimination since the process of application and competition to attend the Police Academy and later on the process of enrolment in the police troops, all citizens have equal possibilities and options.

As per the above, the work has focussed in the increase of institutional responsibility as especially the responsibility of the organisations working with this minority, in order to make members of this community aware of the needs and indispensability of their education and qualification.

The Ministry of Interior, considering that the registration process is the first step to know the social and economical situation, have enabled measures to facilitate the registration procedures.

The problem of children registration in the civil state offices is very concrete and touchable, since in all the municipalities and communes where the Roma community is residing, there are unregistered children or even children for whom no act of birth has been issued. Some of the municipalities, on their own initiative, have worked to identify this community and have enabled the registration of these people. Anyhow, such registration is not complete due to the seasonal life that this community conducts. Here

we can mention the municipality of Elbasan, Shkodra and Fier. Meanwhile, the General Directorate of the Civil State Offices, based on requests by several various associations, was well as the obligations set to this directorate by the Strategy “For the Improvement of living conditions of the Roma minority”, regarding the timeframes of registration and lifting of fines, has established a working group which shall enable the preparation of facilitation of registration procedures, only for the Roma community.

Also for this problem, in addition to the act of birth that the child should have so that this child can be registered, the registration can also take place upon the respective court decision, when the legal timeframes have past. A closer cooperation is needed with this regard with various associations which can offer assistance to cover the court expenses so that such problem can be minimised.

### **Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports**

Regarding the implementation of the National Strategy “For the Improvement of living conditions of the Roma minority, the activity of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports has continued as follows:

This ministry has drafted the plan of action in the field of arts, culture, youth and sports for the Roma community.

The ministry has given its financial support for an amount of 500000 leks for the organising of a festival, in cooperation with the “Art dhe Kolor – Arts and Colours” Centre, to promote the artistic values of the Roma minority. The aim is to organise such festival within this year.

The following have been invited and have participated in the national scale activities organised by the National Centre of Folkloric Activities, the Albanian Artists Association, the cultural centres at the municipalities, various groups and artists, and representatives of the Roma community, enrolled in the participating groups which represented various districts or municipalities:

- the typological folkloric festival of the urban popular songs in Elbasan,
- the national folkloric festival of popular dance in Lushnje,
- the folkloric festival “Sofra Dardane” in Bajram Curri,
- the folkloric festival of popular instruments in Gjirokastra,
- the folkloric festival “Oda Dibrane” in Peshkopi,
- the national typological folkloric festival of the popular groups and harmonicas in Korça.

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports, in the framework of the implementation of the Strategy “For the protection of national minorities” and the Strategy on the Roma, has worked towards the integration of the cultural values of communities and national minorities living in Albania into all the national scale activities by it organised, especially in the field of cultural heritage.

Hence, during this period, this ministry has worked to give its assistance in the promotion of cultural values of the Roma community through the participation of its artistic groups in national activities organised by it.



Since five years, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports has financially assisted and organises the work to complete the project of the International Folk Festival “Multicultural Permet”, as the only cultural and artistic activity which includes the folk of the minorities living in Albania.

The respective instances are considering the possibility to include some popular dresses of the Roma minority in the Ethnographic Pavilion of the National Historic Museum.

This Ministry shall continue to support the demands of the national minorities for participation in the cultural, artistic, sport, youth, and publishing activities be they at national or local level.

The “Action Plan for the Roma community in the field of Culture, Youth and Sports” provides that the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports MTKRS, through the National Centre of Folk Activities, shall include their tradition and culture in the following activities:

A – National heritage projects:

- *the national typological folkloric festival of the harmonicas in Korça;*

- *the national typological folkloric festival of the folkloric theme writers in Lezhë;*

These activities are organised each year as cooperation between the National Centre of Folk Activities and the Popular Culture Institute at the Academy of Sciences and the respective municipalities.

The National Centre of Folk Activities sends the programme to all the national minorities’ organisations in Albania so that they can have sufficient information on the annual national activities. Then, it is up to these communities to address the organisers for the participation of their artistic groups in these activities as well as MTKRS to seek for financial support.

B – Cultural tourism projects:

This is a yearly package of activities which are funded and organised in cooperation with MTKRS and its institutions, which foresees the inclusion of the musical tradition from the ethnic minorities. These activities are:

- *the CIOFF International Festival, Përmet;*

- *the Popular instruments Festival, Gjirokastra;*

- *the folkloric festival “Sofra Dardane” in Tropoja;*

- *the folkloric festival “Oda Dibrane” in Peshkopi.*

The collection compiled by MTKRS, “*Spiritual heritage in CD*”, is the first which is offered to the Albanian public in this type. Through this, MTKRS aims to the direct popularisation of the values of the Albanian spiritual heritage which, for their importance and originality, are already known all over the world. For this reason, this selected collection represents and includes the pearls of the Albanian folk music. The presentation of these values in a numeric shape ensures their national and international circulation, for a natural integration in the world mosaic of the cultural spiritual heritage. It is foreseen to include in this collection also a special CD dedicated to the best Roma musical tradition.

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports, concretely the Directorate for the Coordination of Youth Policies, shall take into account the creation and offering of equal opportunities for representation and integration of the youth from the ethnic minorities’

communities; the creation of certain conditions for the promotion of activities of minorities' youth organisations; the identification of alternatives for more youth employment; as well as for their wide participation in debates and round tables. This considers also the fact of making the public opinion aware of the positive aspects of the culture and tradition of ethnic minorities, always criticizing the discriminatory behaviour and attitude against the Roma minority. This initiative aims towards the tracing, collection and study of such tradition amongst different communities and groups of age. It will be achieved through concrete field work through:

- *photographic expeditions;*
- *publishing of this tradition in different editions such as stories for children, etc;*
- *musical transcriptions of the Roma tradition;*
- *organising of ethnographic pavilions with handicrafts part of the Roma tradition.*

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports shall support financially, in accordance with the legislation in power, the cultural projects of particular interest, submitted to it by individuals, popular groups of cultural associations from the Roma community, under the fields of activity of this Ministry.

As per the above, funds have been availed for financial support of all national or local activities where groups, individuals or associations from the Roma minority shall also be invited. The institutions depending from the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports have instructed to include in their draft – budget provisions, also activities where the minorities living in Albania participate.

In this progress report information, an important moment to be mentioned is also the reflection of the Commitment of the Albanian Government to join the initiative “Decade of the Inclusion of the Roma 2005 – 2015”. The inclusion of Council of the Ministers of the Republic of Albania in the framework of the Declaration “Decade of the Inclusion of the Roma 2005 – 2015” through the DCM no. 437, dated April 08<sup>th</sup>, 2008 is a clear expression of the commitment shown and undertakings of the Albanian Government in the framework of the improvement of the living conditions for the Roma minority in Albania.

Thank you for your collaboration,