



DECADE OF ROMA INCLUSION

Republic of Serbia – Taking over the Presidency

Božidar Đelić, Deputy Prime Minister

Budapest, June 24th 2008



Photo: NGO
Society for
Advancing Roma
Settlements



Serbia is the first non-EU country to preside over the Decade of Roma Inclusion

- **Serbia's EU orientation and steps taken towards EU membership create solid conditions for greater engagement in Roma integration**
- **Long tradition of the Roma movement in Serbia:**
 - **First Roma organization founded in 1927 ("Slavari Tetkice Bibije")**
 - **First Roma magazine published in 1936 ("Romano Lil")**
 - **First Roma language TV show broadcast in the world in 1986**



Significance of the Presidency for Serbia (cont/d)

Post-2000 development:

➤ State level:

- **Roma granted national minority status in 2002 with the Law on the protection of the rights and liberties of national minorities**
- **National Council of the Roma national minority established in 2003**
- **Council for the advancement of the Roma minority position and the Implementation of the Decade of Roma Inclusion of the Government of the Republic of Serbia established in 2008**
- **Office for the Implementation of the Roma National Strategy within the Agency for human and minority rights**
- **Roma political parties – two MPs in 2007**



Significance of the Presidency for Serbia: Post-2000 development (cont/d):

- **Regional and municipal structures:**
 - **Office for Roma inclusion of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina**
 - **City of Belgrade Coordination center for Roma inclusion**
 - **Roma coordinators in 30 municipalities (another 40 expected in the second half of 2008)**
- **Highly developed civil society:**
 - **Over 1,000 Roma NGOs**
 - **League for the Decade of Roma Inclusion**
 - **Women's Roma Network**
- **Preparations:**
 - **Successful pilot programs based on which systemic actions have started (over 100 projects with the cooperation of state, non-governmental and international institutions)**
 - **Important documents adopted**



A number of documents adopted on the national and local level

National Action Plans for the Decade of Roma inclusion adopted for education, employment, housing and healthcare

Draft Strategy for Roma integration developed (adoption expected in September 2008)

18 municipalities adopted local strategies for Roma empowerment

All documents harmonised with the Millennium Development Goals and the Poverty Reduction Strategy



Demographic data:

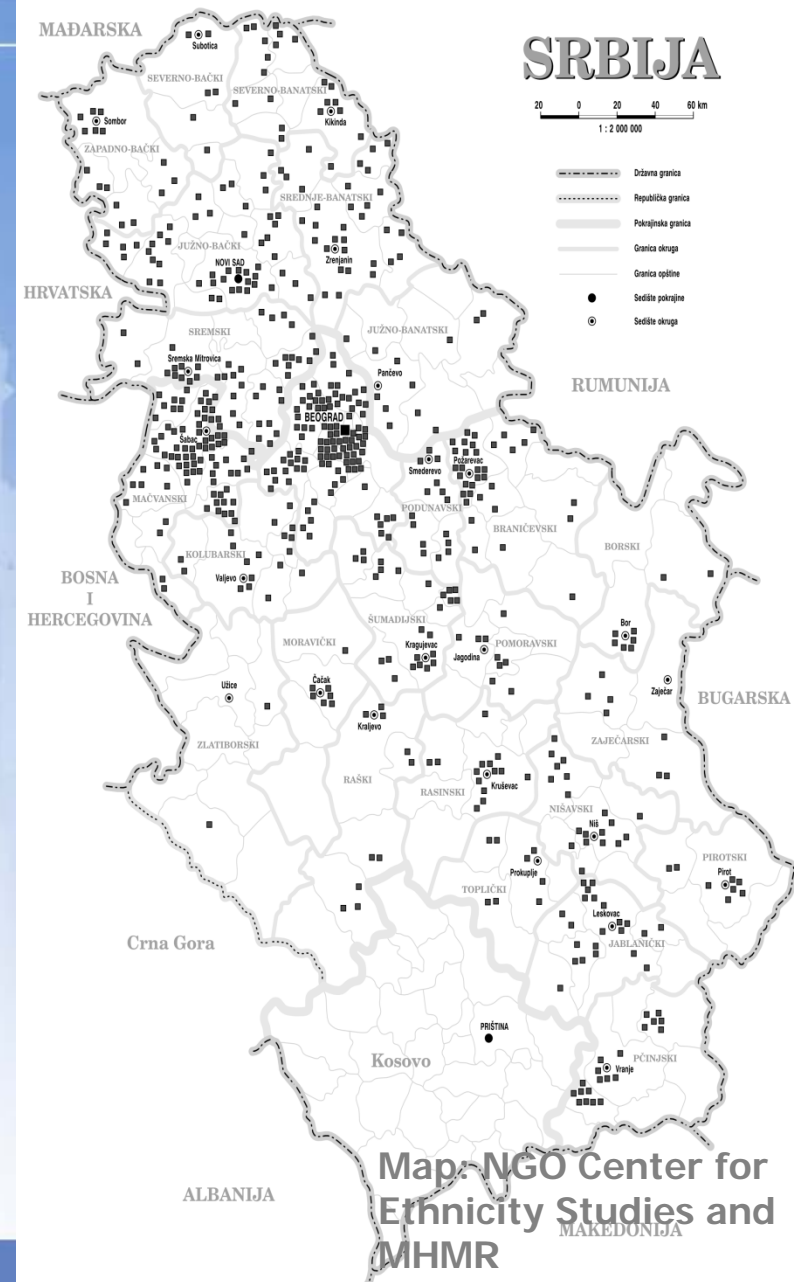
Around 450,000 Roma in Serbia (108,000 – 800,000)

20,000-50,000 Roma IDPs

Around 600 Roma settlements with 270,000 inhabitants, 46,000 of whom are IDPs

Greatest percentage of Roma live in large cities and in southern Serbia

Percentage of Roma declaring their national identity varies: 75% of the Roma in Leskovac declare themselves as Roma, while only 35% do so in Belgrade



Map: NGO Center for Ethnicity Studies and MHMR



Key challenges of the Roma population in Serbia

➤ Poverty

- The poverty rate in the Roma community is 49.2% - half of the population faces an existential poverty threat (LSMS 2007)
- Roma are 7.5 times more exposed to the threat of poverty
- Roma make up 66.7% of the first – poorest – quartile of the population, there are no Roma in the richest quartile

➤ Unresolved housing issues

- 593 Roma settlements, of which 72% are partially legalised or not legal at all, while 43.5% are slums
- Around 60% of Roma live in unhealthy and unsafe environments, around 30% have no access to public water supply, and 70% have no access to sanitation



Key challenges of the Roma population in Serbia cont/d

➤ Low level of education

- **63% of the Roma have not completed primary schooling, while only 0.9% have tertiary education**
- **Education coverage is improving, but it is still very low:**
 - **4% in non-obligatory preschool education**
 - **66% of Roma children enroll into primary school, while only 14% Roma boys and 6% Roma girls enroll into secondary education**
 - **Participation of children living in Roma settlements is only 10.2% (MICS)**
- **Drop-out rates are high among Roma children: 73% in primary and 38% in secondary schooling**



Key Challenges of the Roma Population in Serbia cont/d

Consequences:

➤ Unemployment

- **There are 4 times more unemployed Roma than in the overall population**
- **90% of employed Roma have no qualifications**

➤ Poor health status

- **Access to healthcare is far from universal for Roma children**
- **Only 12% of Roma mothers recognize the gravest children's disease symptoms calling for urgent medical attention**
- **Only 9% of Roma children are fully vaccinated by the age of 1.5**
- **Around 13% of Roma infants have a low birth-weight**



Achievements - 2.6 million EUR for health and employment projects

In 2006, 2007 and 2008 budgetary funds allocated to the implementation of priority measures of the National Action Plans:

- **Ministry of Healthcare – 1.5 million Euro, local medical stations and Roma NGOs implemented public health projects, institutes for public health and Roma NGOs implemented projects for improving sanitation and hygiene conditions in Roma settlements, 15 healthcare mediators engaged**
- **Ministry of Economy and Regional Development – 1.1 million Euro, 25 Roma NGOs are implementing projects for the employment of around 600 Roma in public works**



Achievements - education and infrastructure

- **Ministry of Education – since academic 2003/04 implementing affirmative action for enrollment into secondary and tertiary education – 560 pupils and 376 students enrolled through affirmative action, 28 Roma assistants and around 50 coordinators employed (0.4 million Euros allocated)**
- **Ministry of Infrastructure – adopted Guidelines for the improvement and legalization of Roma settlements, allocated funds for Roma settlement planning in 18 municipalities, Roma and other poor got access to 530 new municipal flats**



Priorities of the Serbian Presidency

- **Housing**
- **Combating discrimination in education**
- **Cross-cutting issues:**
 - **Data, indicators and monitoring**
 - **European Roma Policy and access to EU funds**
 - **Invitation to new countries to join the Decade**



Priorities of the Serbian Presidency – Housing

- **Improvement and legalization of Roma settlements, dislocation and the building of cheap housing**
- **Roma settlements are studied thoroughly in Serbia, relevant literature is available**
- **Documents adopted on all levels are interrelated and can be feasibly implemented**
- **Planning for Roma settlements in the 18 municipalities that have passed legalization decisions has started**
- **These activities may serve as a model for improving Roma settlements in other countries of the region**



Priorities of the Serbian Presidency – Education

- **Continuation of activities initiated during the Hungarian Decade Presidency**
- **Focus on the following types of segregation/discrimination:**
 - Placement in special schools and/or special classes for children with special needs
 - Placement in Roma-only schools/classes
 - Placement of children in adult education schools
- **Serbia will also focus on improving the participation rate and the quality of Roma education, and will address the following issues:**
 - Reducing the number of Roma children enrolled in special schools
 - Socio-economic support to Roma families and pedagogical support to children for attending regular schooling
 - The roles of teachers, psychological and pedagogical services, and the education inspection in the full integration of Roma children



Priorities of the Serbian Presidency – cross-cutting issues

➤ Data, indicators and monitoring

The lack of adequate monitoring and evaluation systems is an issue in all Decade countries. Problems stem from insufficiently reliable data, derived from different sources, inconsistently collected, and are not systematised. The operation of the indicators Working Group will be continued.

➤ European Roma Policy and access to EU funds

During the Hungarian Decade Presidency, the call for developing a European Roma Policy was signed, and it will be complemented by an analysis of the effects of hitherto implemented measures and utilized resources.

Engagement in these issues will be continued, in close cooperation with Hungary and Slovakia.



**Thank you
for your
attention!**



Photo: NGO Society
for Advancing
Roma Settlements