



Priority Areas and One-Year Plan of the Slovak Decade Presidency

The Slovak Republic as a Member State of the Programme of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005 – 2015 (hereinafter referred to as the “Decade”) shall be the presiding country of the Decade initiative in the period from July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2010.

With regard to the general progress in the Decade and in the European context, deriving from the experience of the previous Presidencies, the Slovak Republic shall focus on the following Priorities during its term of Presidency.

The process of taking over the Presidency from the Republic of Serbia was preceded by the establishment of a Working Group during the course of the Serbian Presidency up to its conclusion. The Working Group was comprised of members representing the Government Office of the Slovak Republic, the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the Roma Communities, the relevant ministries of the Slovak Republic – competent for the particular Priorities of the Decade’s National Action Plan and the civil society representing the non-governmental sector.

The Working Group chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Knowledge-Based Society, European Affairs, Human Rights and Minorities – who is also the National Coordinator of the Decade for the Slovak Republic, has approved the following Priorities of the Slovak Republic by resolution:

- 1. Integrated school system and multi-cultural education**
- 2. Roma identity**
- 3. Fifth year of the Decade – revision of National Action Plans**

The Presidency of each country is charged with the duty of bringing forward new topics which in the context of policy in relation to the life of the Roma population will engage other Decade Member States at the national level, thereby creating conditions for international dialogue on the current issue. The Presidency should also promote the Programme of the Decade itself and increase its publicity among the general public – the majority population as well as the minority population, regarding the significance of the inclusion of the Roma minority in the society.

The Slovak Presidency is not concerned with the number of Priorities and far-reaching or non-realistic goals. It intends to support all Priority Areas of the Decade – Education, Employment, Health and Housing, along with general topics and to continue in the tasks and goals of the preceding Presidency.

The Slovak Presidency intends to bring its national experience into the content of the resolutions of the inclusion of the Roma population, and create opportunities for active meetings at the International Steering Committee level and at the expert level of international seminars and conferences.

During the Slovak Presidency, space will be devoted to the Roma identity as one of the reasons for the current instability and value disorientation of the Roma ethnic minority in

Europe, resulting from the abuse of the concept of national identity that has been the key instrument of political populism in the previous periods. Ongoing disputes within the European society related to the de-jure and de-facto Roma identities manifested by the inability to assume a uniform approach to the process of the advancement of the Roma population, within the Roma ethnic minority itself as well as within the majority population, due to permanent fragmentation, have led the Slovak Republic to open an international dialogue on the Roma identity in Europe as well as in the world.

The Slovak Republic is honoured to preside over the community of states involved in finding the best solution for Roma inclusion, and in cooperation with the representations of the Decade's Member States, it shall do its best to create an active, vivid and beneficiary year 2009 -2010.

INTEGRATED SCHOOL SYSTEM AND MULTI-CULTURAL EDUCATION

Within the Decade's Priority Area – Education, as one of the key instruments of inclusion of the Roma population, and in relation to the previous Presidencies, the Slovak Republic ranks the following as one of the key Priorities of its Presidency: Integrated school system and multicultural education (also with regard to other Priorities).

An integrated school system is closely related to solidarity, inclusion and the subsequent integration of the Roma population in the European society. The Slovak Republic assumes that an integrated school system is the simplest, fastest and, primarily, the most efficient instrument for integrating the Roma population in society.

Differences and cultural variances are typical features of the Slovak society. The exclusion of the Roma population from Slovak society is due to the insufficient acceptance of differing systems of values, rules, features and behavioural patterns on both sides (by the Roma population as well as the non-Roma population) in their mutual contacts. The aim is to lead Roma children as well as the majority population towards multi-culturality by teaching them to become tolerant and capable of accepting other cultures, thereby decreasing the aversion resulting from disinformation and lack of knowledge of cultures in the Slovak society, and supporting and strengthening the uniqueness of cultures.

This Priority will be mainly implemented by the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, through the following activities:

- The international seminar entitled, “Creativity and innovation in the education of children from socially disadvantaged environments” in cooperation with the Roma Education Fund;
- Human Rights Olympics for secondary school students focusing on the topic of the Decade, including a presentation of the creativity, opinions and attitudes of students;
- Elaboration of the goals and content of multi-cultural education for the State Educational Programmes ISCED 0, ISCED 1, ISCED 2 and ISCED 3A, in the years 2009 – 2011, to which the following activities are linked:
 - Further education of pedagogical and non-pedagogical staff in the area of integrated school system and multi-cultural education;
 - Elaboration and evaluation of an international questionnaire on the goals and content of multi-culturality in the school education systems of particular Decade Member States, including Slovenia as the Observer State;

- Development of the project: “E-education for pupils from socially disadvantaged environments and disabled pupils 2010” through the use of information-communication technologies in school activities aimed at multi-cultural education.

The conclusions of the above-mentioned international questionnaire along with other evaluations of all activities focusing on the Priority of Integrated school system and multi-cultural education will be presented at the last meeting of the Decade’s International Steering Committee in Bratislava – June 2010.

The Roma Education Fund will present a study on the Roma ethnic minority and special education in Slovakia, including an expert panel at the first meeting of the International Steering Committee in Spišská Nová Ves focusing on specialized schools.

In co-operation with the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic and St. Elisabeth’s University of Health and Social Work in Bratislava, pedagogical workers and civil servants (on the level of regional/municipal government bodies, school departments) will be educated in the area of integrated school-systems and multi-cultural education.

ROMA IDENTITY

The Slovak Republic perceives Roma identity as a rather hot topic in relation to all of the Priority Areas of the Decade Programme. Due to the wide range of significance of this issue, little attention has been paid to the Roma identity itself in the international or national contexts. The Slovak Republic shall therefore present the Roma identity as a Priority of the Slovak Presidency.

Identity is not related to the preservation and presentation of cultural values, or conservation and development of the language of a minority. The Roma population faces more significant problems with respect to their identity. It is rather well known that the Roma population tends to deny their origin and is reluctant to admit their Roma identity (nationality) which at times is rather justified. The reasons they do not admit to being Roma are well-known in reference to analyses and research carried out not only in the Slovak Republic, but also in other countries. Research has shown that latent racial hatred, extremism, discrimination, segregation, isolation and non-acceptance of the Roma culture within the European society create natural barriers for Roma to admit their identity.

A few reasons for the failure to admit their identity may be summarized:

- poor awareness of their own identity;
- historical aspects: the Roma population was denied the status of a separate nationality in the past, they didn’t become a national minority until as late as 1992;
- the Roma identity is not grounded in and has not developed from the principle of having a separate state formation, as unlike other nations, they have never had their own state;
- in the past as well as at present, there has persisted a high degree of aversion toward the Roma population in the European society, the Roma are therefore afraid of stigmatization/prejudice and stereotypes.

It must be added that the justified concerns of the Roma population are also connected with the growing extremism in Europe. The Slovak Republic has decided to support the idea of fighting extremism and to present its attitude as zero tolerance for extremism. The

Government of the Slovak Republic finds it necessary to strengthen the activities in the struggle for human rights and to support initiatives encouraging tolerance and solidarity, mainly due to a certain aversion towards the Roma ethnic community not only in Slovakia, but also in other countries engaged in the Decade. In the course of its Presidency, the Slovak Republic intends to open discussion on the international level regarding the particular reasons (mentioned above) and effects of their identity denial. These phenomena are connected with the failure of inclusion of the Roma not only in the Slovak society, but also in the societies of other states with Roma populations, and contribute to the failure to resolve the serious situation of the Roma ethnic minority. The Slovak Republic would like to exchange and share its experience with other countries in eliminating extremism and fighting for human rights.

These goals will be achieved through the activities included in the one-year Presidency of the Slovak Republic in the Decade, and they will be funded by means allocated by the Government Office of the Slovak Republic. The Slovak Republic intends to exchange its experience with other states through an international conference entitled “The threat of extremism in Europe, What next? – reasons, effects and solutions”. A panel discussion will provide the forum for discussing xenophobia, discrimination and the segregation of Roma in Europe.

Like other general topics of the Decade Programme, Roma identity plays a significant role. The development of the Roma identity in the European environment is of extraordinary intricacy. The specifics of the “Roma issue” include the exclusion status of the Roma and their deformed social development in the European society. The Roma have been repeatedly losing their intellectual elite. The Slovak Presidency aims to foster emancipation within the Roma national minority itself, and to support and strengthen the process of eliminating aversion toward the Roma population throughout the European society.

We will also pay attention to the media campaign that should focus on emancipation activities, not only related to the Decade Programme and the Slovak Presidency, but also to topics connected with the Roma identity in general, cultural differences, as well as common features with the majority.

By establishing a section of Roma personalities and their work within another permanent exhibition, in the Slovak National Museum in Martin, the Slovak Presidency intends to support the Priority of forming the Roma identity, and of making the entire society more aware of the history, culture and language of the Roma.

In the international context, the Slovak Republic will point out and promote positive examples from among the Roma community, thereby creating space for further motivation of other Roma, primarily among the younger generation. These positive examples will influence the awareness of their own identity. Due to strong prejudice and numerous stereotypes predominant in Slovak society, it is necessary to inform the majority society and give it an opportunity to become familiar with the positive examples from the Roma national minority itself.

For the Slovak Republic, it is important that the national and regional campaigns take place as they have their moral significance. For this reason, on the occasion of the first meeting of the Decade’s International Steering Committee, a gala opening of the International Roma Festival of Kalo Čangalo is planned in Spišská Nová Ves focusing on the Roma

identity. The Slovak Presidency will also support other activities across the regions, as well as the activities of non-governmental organizations during International Roma Day and throughout the whole Slovak Presidency.

FIFTH YEAR OF THE DECADE – REVISION OF THE DECADE’S NATIONAL ACTION PLANS

The Slovak Republic intends to make use of the occasion of its Presidency in the fifth year of the International Programme of the Decade to re-evaluate the situation and invite all of the Decade’s Member States to revise their own National Action Plans.

Undoubtedly, in the course of the five-year period, numerous social changes have taken place and the lives of the majority and minority populations have proceeded further, bringing forward new topics, and fulfilling particular plans and goals. It is necessary to react to these changes. For this reason, an opportunity is now available to invite the Decade’s Member States to re-evaluate their National Action Plans, their particular goals, targets, indicators, and to monitor and evaluate their possibilities.

This serious challenge also applies to the Slovak Decade’s National Action Plan itself that should not represent a duplicate of the Action Programmes of the Government concepts. Rather, it should be incorporated into the overall strategy of the Government’s policy. This activity will involve the cooperation of the UNDP that also represented the expert auspices for the topic of indicators and monitoring during the course of the Serbian Presidency. The Slovak Republic will continue in the work and results of the previous Presidencies and will aim to conclude this process via the following activities:

- The creation of a methodological manual for all of the Decade’s Member States with instructions on how to revise National Action Plans, mainly in relation to the indicators of achieved results and monitoring process;
- The revision of the indicators of achieved results within the Slovak Decade’s National Action Plan according to the following methodology;
- The revision and proposal of monitoring of progress within the Slovak Decade’s National Action Plan.

At the next stage of activities (January 2010 – July 2010) according to the proposed methodology, the Slovak Decade’s National Action Plan will be revised. For this purpose the composition of the Working Group for the Presidency of the Decade with nominees from all relevant entities will be used.

The Decade’s Member States will be encouraged to take similar course in implementing and evaluating their own National Action Plans. This Priority will be implemented via an international seminar scheduled to take place in December 2009 in cooperation with the UNDP. It will be followed by two national seminars with respect to the revision of the Slovak Decade’s National Action Plan. Conclusions will be presented on June 2010 at the last meeting of the Decade’s International Steering Committee in Bratislava.

The Slovak Republic will always point out the significance of all Priority Areas and general topics of the Decade. In the course of its Presidency, within coordination tasks, it will implement activities of other institutions, such as the International conference on the health of

the Roma population in Košice, the International conference entitled “The social sphere of the Slovak Republic, and social work (Europe, law and practice)” in Nitra, the International seminar “Field social work in marginalized Roma communities” as well as activities of the non-governmental sector within the Presidency of the Slovak Republic in the Decade Programme.

All of the activities, including their organizers are included in the Calendar of Events of the Presidency.

The Slovak Republic will also take into account the recommendations of the Serbian Government with respect to the Priorities and the Presidency in order to maintain continuity of common goals of the Decade’s Member States, including the possibility of inviting other selected states to accede to the Decade Programme. This will also include cooperation with European institutions within the context of the European Roma Policy.

One-Year Plan of the Slovak Presidency

I. Take-over of the Presidency from the Serbian Republic in Belgrade

Take-over of the Presidency will occur on June 25, 2009 in Belgrade during the 16th Decade International Steering Committee meeting.

The Slovak delegation consists of the following persons - Dušan Čaplovič, Deputy Prime Minister of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Knowledge-Based Society, European Affairs, Human Rights and Minorities – and National Coordinator of the Decade for the Slovak Republic, along with the competent representatives of the Government Office of the Slovak Republic, the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the Roma Communities, the representative of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, media representatives and the official interpreter.

The Deputy Prime Minister of the Government of the Slovak Republic will officially take-over the Presidency from the Serbian Government and will outline the intentions of the Slovak Presidency in the Decade in an official speech.

II. Meeting of the Decade’s International Steering Committee

The presiding country is bound to organize the meetings of the Decade’s International Steering Committee (hereinafter referred to as the “ISC”). According to the plan of the Working Group, this should take place in two stages:

17th meeting of the Decade’s ISC in Spišská Nová Ves, on September 22 and 23, 2009

During the meeting all of the ISC members will be officially welcomed to Slovakia and presented with activities related to the Priorities of the Slovak Presidency, along with the agenda to be compiled in cooperation with the Decade’s Secretariat in Budapest.

18th meeting of the Decade’s ISC in Bratislava, June 2010

During this meeting, the Slovak Presidency will be concluded, all the activities and Priority Areas will be evaluated, and the Presidency will be passed on to the Czech Republic.

III. Other activities of the Slovak Presidency

Within their tasks and in accordance with the particular proposals of relevant entities, the Working Group has approved the following activities by resolution. The activities shall form a proposal of the Calendar of Activities. The Calendar of Activities is open and new activities may be entered in it, depending on the needs, proposals and time constraints.

September 2009

International conference on the health of the Roma population

September 11 – 12, 2009, Košice

Organized by: Faculty of Medicine, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University, Košice

Kalo Čangalo

3rd year of the International Roma Film Festival

Spišská Nová Ves

Organized by: Institute of Documentation of Roma Culture in relation to the meeting of the ISC in Spišská Nová Ves

November 2009

Establishment of another section of the permanent exhibition within the Slovak National museum in Martin – Roma personalities and their work

Organized by: Slovak National Museum, Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic

International conferences: Days of social work and InteRRa 8

November 11 – 12, 2009, Nitra

Organized by: Faculty of Social Sciences and Health Care, University of Constantine the Philosopher, Nitra

International workshop: Creativity and innovation in the education of children from socially disadvantaged environments

November 18 – 20, 2009, Poprad

Organized by: Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic

December 2009

International workshop: Methodology of the revision of the Decade's National Action Plans

Bratislava

Organized by: International Organization of UNDP

February 2010

International workshop: Field social work in marginalized Roma communities

Regional city of the Slovak Republic

Organized by: Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic

National seminar: Revision of the Slovak Decade's National Action Plan

Bratislava

Organized by: International organization of UNDP
March 2010

Human rights olympics for secondary schools students

Bratislava

Organized by: Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, IUVENTA

April 2010

International conference: The threat of extremism in Europe – What next? – reasons, effects and solutions

Bratislava

Organized by: Government Office of the Slovak Republic

May 2010

National seminar: Revision of the Decade's Slovak National Action Plan

Bratislava

Organized by: International organization of UNDP

All the activities mentioned above, as well as the activities that will be added to the programme of the Presidency, will be organised with the coordination and cooperation of the Government Office of the Slovak Republic and the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Roma Communities.

Organizers reserve the right to change the times, names, venues and content of the activities.

IV. Budgetary coverage of the Slovak Presidency activities

The budgetary coverage of the activities of the Slovak Presidency is allocated within the meaning of the organization, in addition to the financial participation of the respective entities.

The organizers themselves are bound to participate financially with the amounts that they are able to allocate within their budgetary resources.

The Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the Roma Communities via their internal budgetary sources have allocated up to 200,000 EUR to support the activities that will take place in course of the Presidency.

The organizers will also avail themselves of the possibility of supporting the organization of selected international conferences and seminars in the form of the Decade's Trust Fund. It is possible to apply for a subsidy of up to 20,000 EUR for a single activity.

In addition to funding by the organizers, Trust Fund, and Government Office of the Slovak Republic, some activities will be financially covered in cooperation with other partners, depending on the topic of the particular activity.