

MINUTES

PRESIDENCY OF MONTENEGRO

26TH INTERNATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

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The 26th International Decade Steering Committee was the last meeting under the Montenegrin presidency. The meeting had gathered representatives of Decade Member and Observer States and Decade Focal Points as to discuss the achieved progress in the priority areas of the Roma inclusion in each respective country. The SC meeting started with formal handover of the presidency to Bosnia and Herzegovina, between ministers for human rights of both countries, Mr Suad Numanovic (MNE) and Mr Damir Ljubic (B&H).

This session was opened by the Head of Cabinet of the Ministry, **Ms Sanja Zugic**, who welcomed all the participants and handed the word to the Secretary of Ministry for Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro, **Mr Mersudin Gredic**. Mr Gredic expressed the commitment of Montenegro to achieving the full integration of Roma population and welcomed all the achieved results in this field. The Montenegrin Minister, **Mr Suad Numanovic**, focused mostly on the achievements in the area of civil registration, education, health, employment and housing. Representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Minister for Human Rights and Refugees in B&H, **Mr Damir Ljubic** and **Ms Saliha Djuderija**, Assistant Minister, presented their Decade Presidency Plan. Namely, Bosnia and Herzegovina will focus on three main issues: ensuring the transition of the Decade from its current term to its successor after 2015; ensuring coordinated policies on education of Roma that prepares them for the job market; and ensuring sustainable housing programs by including housing measures in integrated social inclusion programs.

Session I: The Future of the Decade of Roma Inclusion

Mr Rob Kushen, Managing Director at the Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation, introduced the meeting participants with recent developments, follow up of the Bucharest meeting and its conclusions. This session addressed the key issues with regard to future of the Decade and provided recommendations for the improvement of the Decade process.

Namely, Mr Kushen presented main conclusions from the Bucharest meeting, stating that: 1) reporting should be unified under the EU and Decade processes; 2) the issue of presidency, whether it should be shorter and continued, was not agreed; 3) funding is to be raised and allocated through government contributions and the European Commission and Open Society Foundation support; 4) priority areas are to be discussed with Decade focal points; 5) Roma participation is a key component; 6) observer status is to be continued, but it must be clarified.

Government representatives were further asked to express their attitude with regard to continuation of the Decade after 2015. Each country, except Hungary, said it is normatively pro-continuation (representatives of Romanian government were not present, Bulgarian representative did not provide opinion with this regard). The summary is that Decade needs certain remodeling, the new methodology and new concept need to be developed, but it should be continued as it brought many benefits for the Roma population countries-wide.

As regards presidency, there was still no full agreement on the model, some countries think the current model is working fine, other were suggesting that each presidency period should be dedicated to one specific priority, and possible shorten the mandate to 6 months, so that more countries can be involved in presidency.

The EU Commission representative, Ms Jana Balazova, Policy Officer at EC DG Justice, stated that DG Justice and DG Enlargement are compiling and that currently there are on-going negotiations between European Commission and Decade Secretariat about possible support for this process after 2015. The decision will be brought in August 2015.

Roma CSOs and Decade Focal Points strongly support the continuation of this process.

Session II: Progress Reports - PART 1

Each government had 10 minutes to give a short presentation on specific issues of its Progress Report (to be discussed with the Decade Secretariat). The respective Decade Focal Point had 10 minutes to comment the progress report of the governments and ask up to 3 specific questions. The government had 5 additional minutes to respond and reflect on the questions.

SERBIA

Serbian government (**Mr Dragoljub Ackovic**) reported on the issues of monitoring over policy implementation, institutional set-up and gender equality.

Each year, Serbia prepares the Report on implementation of the Strategy for Roma inclusion.

Office for Human and Minority Rights has distributed The Questionnaire to the local self-governments in order to foster cooperation and improve monitoring mechanism over implementation of the Roma integration policies, and particularly to collect data on number of Roma employed in the self-governments. The monitoring findings are, as follows: there is increase of 5% Roma participation in 4 municipalities, no Roma person is employed in 14 self-governments, in 15 municipalities there are 0,4 to 5 % employed Roma persons.

Working groups for the Action Plans accompanying the Strategy are established and composed of all stakeholders, and they address issues of housing, social protection, health, anti-discrimination, education, gender equality, etc. Although established, these WGs have not shown to be efficient in practice.

In the area of gender equality, there is an AP with set of goals and activities for the improvement of the work of female associations. The budget for this AP is 0 RSD and 45.000 EUR through donation by SIDA. The budget for education component is 0, while for participation in political and public life of Roma women amounts 1.000.000 RSD and no funds through donations. In 70% of areas within gender policy is 0, which is quite discouraging for the work in this area.

Decade Focal Point Serbia (Mr Osman Balic), said that 2013 was the weakest year in the terms of implementation of the Strategy. He finds the number of employed Roma in public sector as satisfactory. Monitoring system should be redefined and it should include standardised and precise indicators. Cooperation between the Commissioner for Human Rights, Ombudsman and League of Roma as Decade Focal Point is good. Institutional framework is inefficient. National Roma Council is corrupted. Roma Women Network works well, but their work is not transparent.

CZECH REPUBLIC

Czech Republic (**Mr Martin Martinek**) reported on education, consolidated AP in this area and overall situation of Roma in 2013.

Government representative presented consolidated Action Plan with measures following the ECHR judgment in 2012 in order to eliminate all forms of discrimination in schools. The AP envisages the following measures: establishing mechanism for collecting data on children in schools, annual surveys on number of Roma children with disabilities in new education programs, while preschool education requires special measures. Namely, preparatory phase, preschool must be compulsory, financial aid to Roma families will be provided and draft amendment to Education Act is to be adopted.

Decade Focal Point CZ (**Ms Emilie Horackova**) asked why the Agency for Social Inclusion changed the name and eliminated the part of the title 'in Roma excluded localities'. The reason behind is the implementation of the new approach and the aim to involve all excluded localities, no matter of ethnicity. The second question referred to whether is no EU structural fund for 2014 – 2020 for Roma issues and why Roma were not included in monitoring bodies over the operating programming. Mr Martinek said the Roma people will be involved and announced specific calls for Roma.

Audience questions: Whether children will be able to enrol the school without testing, as testing may be risky for Romani children to be prevented to enrol? Is timing of the amendment to the Education Act good? What will government do to prevent further violence against Roma children in school?

Answers: Testing will be precondition for all children. The amendment will, most probably, be provided in time (Sep 2014). Violence in schools is being dealt with on every-day occasions. Ministry of Interior keeps visiting localities where possible violence may occur again. There is also special AP which tackles this and other Roma related issues.

BULGARIA

Bulgaria (**Ms Ahavni Sarkis Topakbachian**) reported on education and health.

First point of the Bulgarian representative was that, although, Bulgaria did not explicitly expressed its view with regard to the future of Decade, but it doesn't mean that Bulgaria will withdraw from its responsibilities within Roma integration process, which is long-term focus of this country.

Special focus of Bulgaria in the area of education was put on the early leave from schools with providing specific measures to mitigate this issue. The Government adopted the Strategy for reduction of share of early-school leavers to 2020, adopted amendment to Children Allowance Act which is now dependant on compulsory 2-year pre-school attendance. Number of early-school leavers has significantly reduced. The percent of Roma children in preschool institutions was increased for 10% in school year 2013 – 2014. National funds for implementation of the Strategy for Roma are complemented by the funds from the EU operational programs and other international donors.

In the area of health, Bulgarian government conducted awareness campaigns and raised the number of medical mediators.

The main conclusion is that in order to achieve all goals and measures envisaged the integrated and well coordinated approach.

Decade Focal Point BG (**Mr Vergil Ibryam**) asked whether the improvement of health condition of Roma population is realistically achievable by the number of distributed informational brochures and wanted to know what measures are undertaken to really measure the health state of the population. Mr Ibryam indicated that for the improvement of the education sustainable solutions to the issue of the drop-out are necessary, instead of the short-term activities which do not give results. He also wanted to know what the role of Roma CSOs is in the social integration process in Bulgaria.

Answer: Roma CSOs are involved in all phases of the process and that local CSOs are particularly important. Health measurement mechanism is quite important, and monitoring system will be revised and improved in the following programming period. There is clear commitment to apply sustainable solution in the field of education.

Q: What are desegregating measures undertaken with regard to education institutions? How Bulgaria tackles the housing issues? Further funding of the process?

A: Good practice with regard to housing – social housing construction for vulnerable groups as part of social package covering also education, social protection and other measures. Desegregation is ever present dealt issue. Co-financing will most probably be provided only by the EU.

Session III: Decade Exchange

Ms Jana Balazova, Policy Officer, DG Justice, European Commission spoke about recent Roma related developments in the European Union. By July 2014 new President of the EC and by October new commissioner for Roma issues will be posted. Two Roma persons became MPs in European Parliament, which is a big success. The EU Council adopted recommendations on Roma effective measures in September 2013 – the first EU legal instrument referring specifically the Roma population. The EC adopted progress report on progress with implementation of the strategies for Roma inclusion in

member states; more efforts are needed, but countries have done a lot in this regard. The Roma summit was organised on the EU level in order to foster MSs to deal more thoroughly with Roma issues and to foster dialogue between Roma and non-Roma stakeholders. The EU wants to see results from the introduced instruments, and MS will be strictly evaluated in this sense.

Osman Balic, The League of Roma, delivered the presentation on security of Roma. In Serbia, harsh violence against Roma people occurs, but the main problem is the marginalisation of these cases. The authorities keep closed eye when ethnic deterioration occurs, which is unacceptable. Two Roma young men have been sentenced to 17 years of jail for the theft of waste, while sentence for murder in Serbia is up to 15 years. Police officers do not defend Roma population properly. The official government report of Serbia states there have been 30 ethnic incidents in 2013, which is not true. This number was quite higher. The judiciary sends clear message by not punishing those committing violence against Roma.

Q: To O. Balic: Do you have problem with hate speech against media in Serbia and how do you deal with this issue? To J. Balazova: Is it efficient to deal with Roma issue on the EU level?

A: Hate speech is condemned by the EU, but the real achievement will be provided when national authorities start introducing harsh punishments and sanctions for these crimes. Follow Roma web page on the EU level. Roma CSOs has no power in relation to Serbian media, but this is situation with entire population as well.

Session IV: Progress Reports - PART 2

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Bosnia and Herzegovina (**Ms Ljiljana Santic**) presented the state in fields of housing and education.

Housing: B&H has allocated 2 mil € for addressing the housing needs of Roma population. The main priority is actually improvement of the living condition *en general*. Criteria for the allocation of housing units are following: number of family members, residential location, right to social and health protection, education, etc. B&H regularly applies for IPA funds, the planned amount for IPA 2013-2014 goes up to 3.800.000€. All beneficiaries are registered in unique data base for the reasons of avoiding double treatment and having precise overview of addressed and non addressed families. Total invested funds: 8.2 mil €, projects implemented in 60 municipalities, over 580 housing units renewed and reconstructed.

Education: Action Plan on the Educational Needs of Minorities revised and amended in 2010, focus on Roma, expert team for monitoring of the implementation of the AP established. There is no Roma segregation in schools. There is still a problem with high rates of early drop-out. Government of B&H and UNICEF office in Sarajevo issued guidelines for the improvements of living and educational conditions for Roma children.

Decade Focal Point B&H (**Ms Sanela Besic**) recommended that integral approach to housing is needed, and that it must be in line with international standards. Key point in Roma integration, in her opinion, is determination of the location for social housing, as informal and illegal construction still makes a huge issue. Education: the monitoring system under AP is decentralised, progress is hard to follow, different

interpretation of law in different cantons, Roma children are not included in preschool education, a better cooperation between Ministry for Civil Affairs and Roma community is needed.

HUNGARY

Hungary (**Mr Laszlo Ulicska**) reported on institutional framework and education.

Institutional framework: There is a coherent coordination system between Roma Coalition Council, Committee for the Monitoring over the National Strategy and Inter-ministerial Committee for Social Inclusion. Roma Affairs Council established in 2013. There is regular round table on anti-segregation. There is a solid cooperation at the local level. Hungary applies explicit, but not exclusive targeting. National strategy focused on the poverty reduction. Funds are being allocated for the scholarships to Roma pupils and student and for female entrepreneurship.

Education: The government established program Sure Start Children's Centres, with the EU supported, now it is being funded by the state budget; so far, 113 children enrolled through this program. Special focus is put on the provision of free meals to Roma students in need and on development of preschool facilities. There is a program applying integral approach for the improvement of conditions of Roma children and their families. Mentorships are provided in area of higher education. There is need for new colleges.

Decade Focal Point HU (**Mr Karoly Herfort**) said the official report does not contain quotations, therefore readers and particularly Roma CSOs do not know where these data come from. Mr Herfort wanted to know how many out of 113 children actually are Roma and what criteria for enrolment are. Segregation? Answer: Sources should have been put in the report. Almost the third of Roma students are receiving support from Hungarian government, the other part of funds are allocated through tendering procedures. Students in Roma Christian College apply if they are Roma, they do it themselves. Segregation will be addressed through government regulations.

SPAIN

Spain (**Ms Rocio Arino**) focused its presentation on education and anti-discrimination.

Education: There is an evident progress in the area of the preschool education since 1994; in 2009 almost 90% of children are involved. In primary education, almost full normalisation is achieved. In secondary (compulsory) education 64% of Roma students failed to finish this phase, therefore Roma students are less educated than their peers from general population. There is high school drop-out rate among Roma students. Education will remain the focus of the Spanish government. Government has specific call for proposals and grants for Roma NGOs targeted at Roma education needs, both children and adults needs. So far, 64 projects have been implemented through this program.

Anti-discrimination: Initiatives by Government in 2013 were various. Network of Centres for Victims of Discrimination, two Roma NGOs are part of the network. In 2013, 15 EU attorneys engaged to work on hate crimes. Two projects in the area of security forces, guidelines on treatment of victims of discrimination and guidelines of management of diversity. New government map on discrimination in

2014 is being conducted, it particularly targets Roma. In 2013, Spain joined advocacy campaigns of CoE NO HATE and Yo soy tú. Penalty Code will be also adapted to include hate crimes treatment.

Decade Focal Point E (**Mr Fabian Sanchez**) reminded that there is a still great gap between Roma and majority population in educational. Roma adults lack necessary skills. Working groups' outcomes are unsatisfactory. Roma are still the most discriminated group in Spain. National active campaigns are needed as they are more effective in tackling Roma population. Implementation of strategic documents requires stronger monitoring.

MONTENEGRO

Montenegro (**Mr Leon Gjokaj**) provided report on the legal status / civil registration and housing.

Legal status: Almost all domicile Roma have resolved their legal status, current focus is on the IDPs, as legal status is prerequisite for all other rights. Ministry for HR and Minorities annually allocates 20% of its budget (230.000 €) for this purpose. AP for Roma issues adopted in 7 municipalities, adoption of AP for Podgorica planned. Ministry organised more than 20 trips to Serbia and Kosovo in order to obtain all necessary document for the resolution of legal status of 900 IDPs and obtain almost 3.000 documents. The deadline for the regulation and obtaining the status of foreigner is 31.12.2014. Until 2013, 11.300 people have applied for the regulation of this status, out of which 8.200 requests positively resolved, 71 negative, other are still in procedure. 1.100 IDPs became Montenegrin citizens, around 130 still have to submit the certificate of release from citizenship of other country.

Housing: In 2013, Law on social housing adopted, Montenegro is a signatory of Sarajevo process since 2005. Regional Housing Program will be implementing until the end of next year. Currently in focus: sustainable housing solution for Camp Konik II, phase: electing the most favourable offer. Plans: 120 housing units in Podgorica, 62 units in Niksic. Home for the Elderly will be built in Pljevlja. A lot has been done, but further efforts are necessary.

Decade Focal Point MNE (**Mr Samir Jaha**) emphasised the good cooperation between Ministry and NGO Young Roma as Decade focal point. In the area of civil registration, it is necessary to differentiate 3 categories: 1) internally displaced persons; 2) juvenile stateless and 3) domicile Roma. Question: Is it realistic to expect that 700 remaining IDPs will have their legal status resolved until the end of year? Around 100 domicile Roma still haven't resolved their status. The official report lacks specific data. More Roma representatives should be involved in the monitoring over the implementation of the Strategy and accompanying APs. The progress may be achieved in mutual efforts are being put.

Q: What will happen if these 700 IDPs still don't resolve their status by the end of 2014? Ministry of Interior has prolonged the deadlines, but is it the deadline an obstacle or is it the procedure itself a problem?

A: Montenegro will do its best to prevent these faces come into situation of illegal stay in MNE. Ministry will organise additional trips to countries of origin. The registration of children who were not registered in the book of births will be resolved, and the children will be enrolled in the education system.

Codification of the Roma language and publishing of Roma dictionary are priorities. Process of Roma integration requires full Roma participation; Ministry will be supportive in this sense.

Session V: Progress Reports - PART 3

CROATIA

Croatia (**Mr Aleksa Dokic**) focused on education and health.

Education: In 2013, progress recorded in the number of preschool children of Roma origin. Almost 5500 Roma pupils attend primary education institutions. There is a still problem of segregated classes (almost 60) and drop-out; however, there is an evident decrease of repeating classes by Roma pupils. Since 2011, Croatian government provides assistance to Roma pupils in learning Croatian language. Training agency works on increasing the quality education of Roma pupils and students. Number of Roma students in colleges is still very low, no exact data exists.

Health: Concern still remains in collecting data on Roma population in general. There is a limited participation of Roma CSOs in health policy. Also, the vaccination rate is quite lower among Roma population in comparison to general population. The Government plans to develop precise indicators for measurement of health conditions and needs of Roma.

Decade Focal Point CRO (**Mr David Orlovic**) – cooperation between Decade focal point and Government is getting better. Monitoring over the implementation of Strategy has shown it needs certain revision. Roma language must be introduced in the education system. Croatian health institutions do not keep records on ethnic affiliation, therefore it is hard to follow any progress in this regards. In the field of legalisation, the Law on legalisation of informal objects offers too short and fixed deadlines.

Q: What Government of Croatia does in order to reduce the school drop-out rate of Roma children?

A: Ministry of Education monitors the percentages, but cannot do much without conducting thorough study research and providing clear recommendations derived out of it. The introduction of language requires agreement between different Roma communities.

MACEDONIA

Macedonia (**Ms Mabera Kamberi**) on housing and employment.

Employment: Unemployment rate in Macedonia at national level is 29.6 % in 2013, unemployment of Roma equals 70%. 1743 unemployment Roma are registered with Employment Agency (15000 Roma persons were registered before). In 2013, government made distinction between categories of persons registered with EA: active job seekers and passive or other job seekers. Weak educational status of Roma persons makes them unqualified for many jobs in the labour market. Every year, Macedonia prepares active employment measures, Roma can apply in all of them. Employment agency also offers the services of mediation, consultancy, etc. 150 Roma persons work in Macedonian ministries.

Housing: Each year the Macedonian national budget envisages the funds for regulation of this issue. In 2013, government allocated 150.000 € for implementation of AP for housing; street reconstruction in 10 municipalities provided. In 2013, 220 social houses built under the program for social housing for vulnerable groups. Under the government decision, each year the government provides 10% of planned social housing to Roma families. In 2012, Macedonia started with legalisation of informal objects; currently, research is being conducted on the exact number of legalised Roma houses.

Decade Focal Point MK (**Mr Shenaj Osmanov**) – Employment Agency is manipulating with number of Roma registered unemployed persons. If you are passive job seeker you can not apply for active measures, this is not being explained to Roma community. In Eastern Macedonia, no Roma house is legalised. The Government has to undertake concrete measures to tackle this issue.

Answer: The Government is aware of this manipulation, but measures are already undertaken, so now 500 Roma persons have been transferred to active job seekers category. The information on Eastern Macedonia is new to me, because we have information that number of these houses are legalised.

ALBANIA

Albania (**Ms Blerina Zoto Tepelena**) presented the report on housing and employment.

Integration of Roma is one of the top priorities of the new government. Albania ratified and signed necessary international conventions and relevant documents on human rights.

Employment: Social Inclusion and Social Protection Strategy is in the preparation process. In 2014, Albania adopted National Employment and Skills Strategy 2014 – 2020, with focus on vulnerable groups, including Roma. In 2013, the government promoted vocational trainings and social inclusion programs for Roma and Egyptians. State provides financial aid to all persons involved in this training course. In comparison to 2012, number of employed Roma increased in 2013.

Housing: Improvement of the living conditions of Roma is in the focus of the Ministry of Urban Development and Tourism. Law on Social Housing has been amended to include also rural areas, in addition to urban. Roma community is now beneficiary of all social housing programs. There are specific small grant programs targeted explicitly to Roma population. The government will raise 30 mil € for the housing program, out of which 40 Roma families will have their housing needs met.

Decade Focal Point AL (**Ms Melege Renja**) indicated to pure status of human rights of Roma, who already started living Albania and going to Western Europe. Housing situation of Roma people in Albania, especially in Tirana, are poor, therefore they leave the country.

Q: 1) What will happen with the families living in barracks if the local authorities start implementing infrastructure project in these settlements, given the Law on legalisation does not envisage any provisions on protection of these families, living in informal settlements? 2) Do you have data on how many of trained Roma are now employed? 3) Will the Ministry of Education extend the duration of the initiative “Food in School” during the next academic year, as promised?

A: 1) Barracks cannot be legalised, but alternative solution will be found in terms of permanent apartments for these families, with specific recognition of needs of Roma people. 2) 200 unemployed Roma were trained through these programs, 9 Roma were employed. 3) This was pilot project in one school, but we hope this project will be continued.

SLOVAKIA

Slovakia (**Mr Jan Hero**) presented the report on situation of Roma in education and anti-discrimination.

Education: Slovakia updated National Strategy for Roma integration in 2010 and set the aim to reach the coverage of Roma pupils in schools from 18 % in 2010 to 50% in 2020. In 2013, Slovakia used EU financial support, three main projects: 1) Education of teachers to work with children from marginalised communities, which involves different programs, such as: education programs for parents and training program – Second chance, to help Roma persons to finish primary school; 2) Inclusive model for education at pre-primary level of education, focus on kindergartens, for teaching staff to improve its work with Roma children; 110 kindergartens covered; 83 teaching assistants are Roma; 3) National project of inclusive education (EU structural fund – 50 mil EUR?), focus on primary education.

Anti-discrimination: In April 2013, Slovakia amended Law on Anti-discrimination to prohibit discrimination and to foster achieving equality in all areas. Law now envisages temporary special affirmative measures for Roma people, which can be passed wherever necessary. Another novelty is that these measures can now be brought not only by the government bodies, but by other entities such as private companies, CSOs, etc.

Decade Focal Point SK (**Mr Jan Balaz**) welcomed all positive steps in the area of anti-discrimination, but 1) pointed out to the certain gaps and wanted to hear about concrete examples bringing results out of this new legal framework. Further, the new Law on anti-discrimination is based on voluntary action; and although it is well written, its strength is questionable. 2) Module school is good initiative. What is the progress regarding special education (schools)?

Answer: Results – this process is in its mere beginning, example: allocation of resources for construction companies to employ long-term unemployed persons in their activities (cooperation with Ministry for social affairs). Government is preparing the handbook for the implementation of the Law in practice. 2) There are intentions to improve situation in this regard. Schools won't be built in the segregated settlements. Committee was established to prevent enrolment of Roma people only to special education schools. The aim is to these children to be enrolled in mainstream school.

ROMANIA

Representative of Romanian government did not attend the meeting. Romania did not submit its progress report to the Secretariat.

Decade Focal Point RO (**Ms Mariana Sandu**) presented situation in education and health.

Education: Main priority, set of measures provided certain positive results in practice, such as setting the network of Roma mediators, setting the curriculum for Romani language and history, identifying the issue of segregation and implementing the program “Second Chance”, etc. More than 1900 Roma teachers engaged in vocational trainings for the engagement in education system – secondary education and academic level. Roma Human Resources – 200 Roma teachers and more than 900 Roma mediators engaged, currently. The program of Roma mediators was uncertain and project-dependant, which is not good approach. Peer segregation was registered in almost 67% of monitored schools.

Health: Poor housing conditions, lack of access to drinking water and other similar issues affect the increase of the vulnerability of Roma persons to transmitted diseases such as Hepatitis A and tuberculoses. Low educational status, poor nutrition, weak communication between medical staff and Roma population, lack of information to health issues and lack of IDs – all together contribute to the lack of access to the health services. Very good achievement and good practice obtained through introduction of the health mediators for vulnerable groups. However, the government is about to cease this program.

Session VI: Decade Intelligence Project

Ms Alexandra Bojadjieva, Research and Policy Officer, Decade of Roma Inclusion, opened the session by presenting the common statement of the 26th International Steering Committee Meeting, stating:

The 26th International Steering Committee of the Decade of Roma Inclusion (the ISC) discussed the future of the Decade. Governments and Roma civil society representatives again noted the need for streamlining and harmonizing the processes of the Decade and the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies. To that end, the ISC urges all Decade partners to ensure:

- 1) A unified, public reporting process by governments on progress in Roma integration and inclusion, that focuses on concrete indicators; and*
- 2) Active participation of Decade participating governments in EU sponsored meetings related to Roma integration.*

The ISC also requests that the European Commission and Decade participating governments from EU Member States takes up the question of enlargement country participation in the meetings of National Roma Contact Points at the next such meeting and their involvement in the work undertaken at EU level in regards to setting up indicators for measuring progress in Roma integration.

Decade Intelligence Project provides analysis of 42 project evaluation. This is a tool of for Roma inclusion agents to see what issues should be taken into the account and to provide Roma CSOs with project ideas and possible actions. Positive and negative aspects of these projects are delivered in 5 chapters, including general recommendations and actual examples from the ground; approach - explicit, but not exclusive targeting, to be applied. Next steps: distribution of the report, possible translation to as many partner languages as possible, uploading of the data base of all projects, discussion of findings.

Session VII: Decade Exchange

Ms Marijana Jasarevic, Operations Analyst, World Bank, presented the Decade Trust Fund Status Report. Namely, the Decade Trust Fund is based on countries' fees (currently 12 countries + OSF contribute to its budget); available funds: 85.000 €. So far, 33 projects supported through the Fund. The Fund supports the Decade Presidency Plan. WB administers the Trust Fund on the donor behalf. The Trust Fund will be active until 31 December 2015; however, the donors and WB can think about the possible extension; this issue may be discussed in September 2014, during the conference run under the B&H presidency.

Mr Idaver Memedov, Officer on Roma and Sinti Issues, OSCE/ODIHR, provided presentation on the implementation of the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area, Status Report 2013. The activities of this AP are complementary to the activities of the Decade. The first report was launched in 2008. Status report is based on the information from the Questionnaire, but it also includes other thematic reports from countries and European Commission. The main developments since 2008: 41 responses to Questionnaire received from the participating countries; countries achieved the stage where Roma policies became standardised and the activities are better funded in comparison to the previous 5-year period (due to increased EU funding). Positive results have been achieved in terms of adoption of anti-discrimination legislation and strengthening of the mechanisms for anti-discrimination in many countries. There is increased number of housing initiatives; however, the deterioration of Roma housing conditions was registered in many countries, coloured by the lack of access to basic infrastructure conditions, house evictions, etc. In terms of health, expanding the program of health mediation registered in number of countries. Access to education for Roma population has improved; there are various programs and initiatives. Political representation has progressed. Negative aspects: no progress has been registered in data collection; monitoring mechanisms mostly poor; increased number of hate crimes and hate speech against Roma; negative health trends still remain; equal access to quality education still not achieved, school segregation – main issue; Roma are still disadvantaged in terms of political representation; economic crisis particularly affected Roma employment; repatriation remains to be problematic. The focus of the ODIHR in future: 1) the situation of Roma and Sinti women and girls; 2) Youth and Children and 3) racism and discrimination against Roma and Sinti.

Mr Miodrag Dragisic, Assistant Resident Representative and Social Inclusion Team Leader; UNDP Montenegro provided the update on UNDP's regional programs. UNDP supports Decade since its beginning. 3-level engagement: 1) UNDP offers support field activities in different countries; 2) UNDP Regional Centre contributes to coordination of the activities in different countries and fosters the information and knowledge exchange and 3) providing the basic platform for data collection in many countries. In this regard, UNDP was mainly supported by Swedish SIDA and Swiss Development Cooperation. UNDP work is complementary to the country-specific priorities. At the regional level, the platform for information and best practice exchange will be established. Important activity to be implemented in near future – UNDP will work tightly with Fundamental Rights Agency in six-period time to adapt and improve WB countries mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of activities in Roma integration process. UNDP is ready to support any measures aimed at improving the situation of Roma, initiated by Decade Secretariat and Decade partners.

Q: 1) Data collection is still very bad – is that the main message? And what are suggestions to improve this situation? 2) What happens if Roma person does not declare as Roma, but he or she is a person in need?

A: Quality data collection varies from country to country. Countries defend themselves by stating they cannot collect data based on ethnicity; outcomes are, therefore, hardly measurable. OSCE tries to implement the same methodology to every country, in order to make this data comparable. UNDP will support building capacities of countries by providing trainings on implementation of methodology to ensure better data quality. 2) The protection of this person does not cease if he or she does not clearly state he or she is Roma. You treat this person as person in need. Local authorities have a crucial role in identifying these persons' needs.

Closing Remarks

Mr Leon Gjokaj, National Decade Coordinator and Assistant Minister for Human and Minority Rights in Montenegro, thanked everyone for presence and active participation. Main conclusion: The progress in the area of social inclusion is evident; a lot has been done, but hard efforts are to be made in order to achieve full integration of Roma in our societies.