Beyond Rhetoric: Roma Integration Roadmap for 2020

PRIORITIES FOR AN EU FRAMEWORK FOR NATIONAL ROMA INTEGRATION STRATEGIES

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Introduction

As the most forthright and detailed expression of intent from the European Commission on the issue of Roma inclusion to date, the Open Society Foundations welcome the Communication "An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020" issued on April 5, 2011.[1] The Council Conclusions issued on May 19 fully endorsed the Framework and mark the highest level of political recognition that concern over the plight of the Roma needs to move beyond the rhetoric to the substance of Roma integration.[2]

The Commission's request that all member states develop and implement targeted strategies, and devote sufficient resources to promote integration in four priority areas of education, employment, health, and housing takes its cue from the Decade of Roma Inclusion, and may signal the point when Roma integration has moved from the margins to the mainstream of policy concerns within and beyond the European Union. The prospect of a robust monitoring mechanism with annual reporting by the European

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[1] European Commission (2011) *An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020*. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions. Brussels: European Commission, April 5, 2011. COM (2011) 173 final. Available online: http://www.eu2011.hu/files/bveu/documents/An_EU_Framework_for_National_Roma_Integration_Strategies_up_to_2020.pdf.

[2] Council of the European Union (2011) *Council Conclusions on an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020.* 3,089th Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council meeting, Brussels, May 19, 2011. Available online: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/lsa/122100.pdf.

Commission to ensure that strategies will be implemented, tangible progress will be made, and that money directed to Roma integration will reach its final beneficiaries is most encouraging.

There is an explicit commitment to help the aspirant countries of South Eastern Europe at the regional and national levels to enhance their efforts on Roma inclusion in three ways: to improve the delivery of support under the Instrument on Pre-Accession Assistance; strengthening the involvement of civil society; and close monitoring of the progress made by each country. Such a commitment holds the prospect that, in contrast to earlier waves of EU enlargement, the issue of Roma rights and inclusion might actually matter, and that the Copenhagen Criteria[3] will count when it comes to new countries joining the European Union.

The Commission recently confirmed in the Task Force report that "member states do not properly use EU money for the purpose of effective social and economic integration of Roma." It noted that a lack of know-how and capacity on how to absorb EU funds is compounded by weak inclusion strategies and bottlenecks at the national, regional, and local levels. The declared intent in the Framework Communication to "surmount capacity issues" and to work with member states to change operational programs in order to address new needs, simplify delivery, and speed up the implementation of priorities should be lauded.

The Communication also makes welcome mention of Roma participation and consultation. As the Commission has asserted elsewhere, "the quality of EU policy depends on ensuring wide participation throughout the policy chain—from conception to implementation." And if the Framework is to be a success, then it should provide for meaningful and structured consultation and Roma participation. The Council Conclusions invite the Commission in cooperation with the member states

41. to promote the empowerment, active involvement and necessary participation of Roma themselves, at all levels of policy development, decision-making and implementation of measures, including by raising awareness of their rights and duties, as well as to consolidate the capacity of Roma NGOs and encourage the better involvement of civil society and all other stakeholders.[4]

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[3] Passed in December 1993 at the conclusion of the European Council meeting in Copenhagen: "Membership requires that candidate country has achieved stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, respect for and protection of minorities, the existence of a functioning market economy as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union. Membership presupposes the candidate's ability to take on the obligations of membership including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union." This was precluded by Article 49 of the Treaty of Maastricht of 1992.

[4] Council of the European Union (2011) *Council Conclusions on an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020.*

The time has passed when Roma can simply be viewed as an undifferentiated, passive, and dependent population. The Commission has a vital role to play to promote substantive Roma participation in this process and to strongly encourage member states to embrace the idea that active citizenship is fundamental to social inclusion, and includes all of the citizenry regardless of their ethnicity. Roma communities and representatives must be accorded the opportunity for participation in shaping the policies and initiatives that directly impact their lives.

The recommendations already contained in the Report to the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs,[5] and endorsed by an overwhelming majority in a European Parliament Resolution on March 8, called on the Commission to link social inclusion priorities to a clear set of objectives that include:

- protection of citizens against discrimination in all fields of life;
- promotion of social dialogue between Roma and non-Roma to combat racism and xenophobia; and
- for the Commission, as guardian of the treaties, to ensure full implementation of relevant legislation and appropriate sanctions against racially motivated crimes.

While this was not explicit in the Communication, the Council has reaffirmed the vital importance of this linkage. In the opening preamble to its conclusions, the Council of the European Union states that it is empowered to take appropriate action to combat discrimination, and has exercised these powers 'when adopting Directive 200/43/EC implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin and invites the Commission

30. to pursue rigorous monitoring of the implementation of Council Directive 200/43/EC which is a powerful instrument for combating discrimination based on ethnic origin[6]

If the Framework is to live up to its billing as "10 years to make a difference," then the Commission must do everything within its remit and competences to signal to member states and aspirant countries that nothing less than a zero-tolerance approach will suffice when it comes to anti-Gypsyism and all forms of discrimination against Roma.

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[5] Report on the EU Strategy on Roma Inclusion (2010/2276(INI)) Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Rapporteur: Livia Jaroka Rapporteur for the opinion (*): Kinga Goncz, Committee on Employment and Social Affairs. Available online: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/file.jsp?id=5884532.

[6] Council of the European Union (2011) *Council Conclusions on an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020.*

The Open Society Foundations are fully committed to do everything possible to work with the Commission and member states in a concerted drive to follow up on the Council's invitation

40. to foster positive changes in attitudes towards Roma by improving public awareness of Roma culture and identity and combating stereotypes, xenophobia and racism.[7]

It was a matter of some concern and much surprise that gender equity hardly featured in the Communication. Tackling the multiple discrimination faced by Roma women needs to be mainstreamed into every priority area of National Roma Integration Strategies:

• First, as a legitimate affirmative action in its own right; and

• Second, for the wider, long-term impact on the community and wider societal cohesion. The experience of the Open Society Foundations with the Decade is that unless this is made explicit, many states will omit the component of gender mainstreaming from their national strategies.

Roma women act as the primary carers for their children and are most often the mediators between family, state institutions, and service providers. The active engagement of Roma women in community development and policy implementation is essential for success in areas such as child protection, education, and healthcare. As the Commission itself has stated: "Investing in Roma women … lays the foundations for a longer-term and effective inclusion of future Roma generations."

The Council conclusions have remedied this oversight by "stressing" that:

17. Special attention should be paid to the interests and difficulties of Roma women and girls, who face the risk of multiple discrimination, and thus a gender perspective needs to be applied in all policies and actions for advancing Roma inclusion.[8]

Between now and 2020 there is a need for a coordinating mechanism proportionate to the tasks that lie ahead. The Communication acknowledges that the role of the EU Roma Platform needs to be reinforced. The Report to the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs is explicit in saying that the Open Method of Coordination has not been up to the task of fostering Roma inclusion. This is hardly likely to change. We would urge that the Commission makes greater use of the mechanisms of the Decade of Roma Inclusion. The work of the Platform could be greatly enhanced by embracing

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[7]   *Ibid.*

[8]   *Ibid.*

the Decade. The Commission could utilize its convening power, draw extensively from lessons learned since 2005, and step up its own active participation within the Decade.

The Decade can serve to complement and bolster the EU Framework and function as a mechanism to coordinate the development of National Roma Integration Strategies. In promoting Roma integration beyond the borders of the EU, the Decade is a huge asset as both member states and the governments of new accession countries participate on an equal footing within the Decade. From mid-2011, the aspirant countries of the Western Balkans will hold the Decade presidencies. By embracing the Decade, the Commission can use its structures and unique array of partners, which includes UN agencies, international organizations, civil society, and participating governments to sustain the necessary momentum to ensure that this EU Framework will make a difference by 2020.

It is clear from the Framework communication and the Council conclusions that the primary responsibility for the rights, well-being, and security of all citizens remains with national governments. This is after all, as the Commission has been at pains to stress, a framework for *national* Roma integration strategies. However, primary responsibility differs from sole responsibility. Civil society activists have long insisted that the European Union has a vital role to play to protect the rights of minorities including Roma, and to coordinate the efforts of member states to promote equity and implement effective social inclusion policies. As President Barroso declared at the first EU Roma Summit in 2008, "there is no place for a *laissez-faire* or business-as-usual approach." The Framework, bolstered by the Council conclusions provides a roadmap for Roma integration by 2020. It is also emphatic in asserting that to go beyond the rhetoric to make integration a reality for Europe's largest ethnic minority requires the active participation of Roma themselves. The task that lies ahead is for national governments to "make the kind of difference by 2020" that will have a tangible impact in the settlements, ghettos, towns, and villages where millions of Roma subsist in conditions of dire poverty and exclusion.

The recommendations in Part 1 are based on the vast experience garnered by the Open Society Foundations in over fifteen years of work promoting Roma participation and integration, empowering Roma civil society, and combating anti-Roma prejudice. The country-specific sets of recommendations in Part 2, covering five EU member states who participate in the Decade of Roma Inclusion, have been solicited from independent experts and do not represent the views of the Open Society Foundations.

PART 1

The Open Society Foundations' Experience and Good Practice

Education

A key policy priority for Roma inclusion is to scale up and coordinate efforts to combat all forms of discrimination and segregation in the sphere of education. Government efforts to date have failed to meet this challenge in a substantive and sustainable manner. We know from the work of the Open Society Foundations and the Roma Education Fund (REF), from the preschool to postgraduate programs we support, that change is possible, and that contrary to prejudiced perceptions, the young generation of Roma is a generation with huge creative potential, possessed of vast reservoirs of talent, and very much able to contribute to the future of Europe.

The Roma Education Fund asserts that breaking the cycle of deprivation and exclusion urgently requires increased, long-term investments in the education of Roma, alongside more effective actions to address other facets of exclusion—employment, healthcare, and housing, as they have a mutually reinforcing effect. Promoting effective inclusion requires combating deep-rooted discrimination and intolerance towards Roma. Since its inception, REF has developed specific approaches that guide its multifaceted and complex range of interventions. These pillars should also guide the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies to develop sustainable policies to promote equity and integration and meet the objective of full and equal access to quality education for all Roma children.

Ensure the Institutional and Financial Means for National Policies Are Implemented on the Local Level

- When seeking to improve Roma inclusion in education, it is essential that the actions at the local level be aligned with appropriate national policies. It is also essential to ensure adequate institutional and financial means so that national policies can actually be implemented. Furthermore, local initiatives must receive sufficient support from local institutions, such as the schools themselves, the education inspectorate, municipalities, local branches of line-ministries, and teachers' trade unions, to cite only the more obvious. In many cases, policies and programs fail to have an impact because of the absence of an adequate policy framework or because they underestimate the very strong negative incentives built into the education system and the level of institutional changes that are needed.

- There is a need to support assessments of policies and policy implementation and disseminate and share this experience across countries and among various groups of stakeholders. The Roma Education Fund is well positioned to help convene stakeholders around common objectives, to provide constructive advice on the design of policies with a specific focus on institutional changes, and to finance programs at the local level. Governments in the region are engaged in the design and implementation of very complex reforms in the education sector, and these reforms are politically difficult. The attention given to equity and inclusion of minorities varies, and this goal may not always appear consistent with actions focusing on quality education or the more political push towards rapid decentralization.

- The inclusion of Roma cannot determine the overall reform agenda for education, and it should not. Therefore, institutions must be careful not to promote a separate education reform agenda for the Roma. Roma inclusion means, in large part, desegregation of education systems and full participation of Roma children and parents in public education. National inclusion reforms should also be promoted as being as beneficial to the majority as they are for various minorities. When it comes to education reform agendas and their impact on Roma, implementation is every bit as important as the content to ensure equitable outcomes.

- It is important to create a close link between program financing and policy reforms. Projects must be combined with studies and analyses, so that organizations can build an understanding of the policy framework for the actions they finance and the reasons for bottlenecks in program implementation. Based on this understanding, more effective policy advice may be given to governments. The EU Framework could play a key role in promoting dialogue on policy reform and close cooperation with multilateral actors.

Create Synergies between the Human Rights and Economic Efficiency Agendas

- In policy terms, there is an increasing convergence between a rights-based approach and arguments for economic and social efficiency, and a growing recognition that the costs of exclusion and discrimination take a heavy toll on social cohesion, and that social inclusion is economically smart and ethically sound. Put very simply, the argument for linking economic and human rights concerns centers around the contribution of human rights to creating more cohesive and equitable societies. Respect for basic human rights creates more cohesive and stable societies, and stable societies generate stronger growth and economic development. Studies show that inclusive education policies directed towards the youngest, fastest growing, and most impoverished demographic segment of Europe's population will yield substantive benefits in the future and enable young people to compete in the labor market and to take their place in society as active citizens. Roma inclusion needs to be seen not just as beneficial for Roma, for integration brings with it benefits for the entire society in terms of lower rates of welfare dependency and higher rates of production.

Stress the Centrality of Roma Participation

The participation of its beneficiaries is vital to any development program, and the development literature has stressed the positive impact of participation: when well-designed and implemented participatory approaches increase commitment from the participants in a project, they also increase sustainability by creating a forum to discuss issues and problems and to reduce the risk of conflict. Greater participation also improves the efficiency of the actions implemented through the project by increasing trust and creating communication channels between the various stakeholders. The shortcomings of participation are also well known: it takes time, it can take more resources in the short term, with benefits only felt in the medium and long term, and it requires adapted institutions, specifically trained staff, and well-designed methods. Poorly-designed participation mechanisms can actually produce a worse outcome than no participation at all.

- Participation creates commitments and also motivation. Efforts to create open space for participation, if well managed, can create the trust and confidence that is required for successful programs.

- Participation is important, especially for Roma parents who tend to be less involved than other parents in school management and interactions with school staff. This is due to many factors, such as Roma's lower levels of education, their perception

that they will not be heard, or the fact that the coping mechanisms required to deal with poverty do not give them the time and resources necessary to participate effectively. The experience with Roma education projects shows that low parental involvement can change very rapidly, and that it is not as much of a problem as some would maintain. If parents are listened to at the level of the school, and they get the minimum support and explanation required through outreach programs such as school mediators, their attitudes may swiftly change. The programs also show that when parents' participation can be enlisted, it has a direct and rapid impact on the success of Roma children in school.

- The participation of Roma organizations and Roma staff in implementation is important: stereotypes on both sides have often eroded trust between the Roma and non-Roma communities. The Roma communities usually respond much better to Roma organizations and Roma staff. These organizations can be excellent intermediaries between non-Roma organizations and the Roma community. Roma staff and organizations are often also excellent role models, which can show relatively closed communities that integration does not necessarily mean losing one's identity and exposing oneself to discrimination.

Partnerships for Promoting What Works

Partnership is essential to move forward the agenda of reducing the education gap between Roma and non-Roma and to achieve the necessary reform in education systems. As a consequence of the fast yet uneven pace of political and financial decentralization in the last two decades, central governments often have a limited ability to ensure that national policies are implemented properly. Local partners are therefore needed, but partnerships require some prerequisites, which first and foremost require a better understanding of the impact of policies; documenting what works and what does not work is of utmost importance. Much has been written about Roma education in Central and Eastern Europe, but there is still very little knowledge about what works and what does not work—and about the impact of recent reforms. This progress is important because it helps combat the negative stereotypes about Roma and education that still strongly influence the attitude of the public at large, governments, and even development agencies and donors. The success of certain policies has been documented through the Council of Europe's work on education, the Open Society Foundations, the World Bank, UNDP, and a number of universities. The benefits of such good policies are also confirmed by the first feedback from REF-financed projects. These include knowledge that:

- Desegregated education improves the performance of Roma children in school and some models are working.

- Scholarships are very important for secondary and tertiary education. We know that these scholarships have a strong impact on school participation by Roma, but they are even more effective if mentoring is also included and advisory services are available.

- Enrollment in one year of pre-education is probably the most effective investment for helping children to succeed in primary school and even beyond, in secondary education.

- Recognition of the values of culture and indigenous language create an environment that favors integration.

- Parents and communities' involvement is central to increasing enrollment rates, and also to improving the performance of children.

- Placing Roma in special schools or classes for children with learning disabilities is an unmitigated disaster and should be abolished without delay.

- In Central Europe, most people have positive attitudes toward the idea of public funding for Roma education.

- Countries that have comprehensive policies with good incentive systems are succeeding better than the ones that avoid the issue.

- More needs to be found out about how to best organize the work of Roma mediators in education; how to ensure that teachers use what they learn from special training in multicultural education; and how to set up an incentive system for school desegregation in decentralized environments.

- Most crucially, more needs to be done to scale up and pass on what we know to programs that have national and regional impact. Even when some successes are clear, governments need to be convinced of the effectiveness of good policies, and the opposition of particular interest groups must be circumvented.[9]

Based on the series of reports *Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma,* by the EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program, the Open Society Foundations set out "10 Goals for Improving Access to Education for Roma":

1. Collect reliable, comprehensive, and comparable data on enrollment, completion, and performance rates

2. Regular monitoring, review, and revision of educational policy to ensure that principles of equity and non-discrimination are fully applied at local level.

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[9] This text has been excerpted from Roma Inclusion in Education Position Paper of the Roma Education Fund for the High Level Meeting on Roma and Travellers organized by the Council of Europe in close association with the European Union, Strasbourg, October 20, 2010. The full text is available online: http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/roma_inclusion_in_education_position_paper.pdf.

3. Develop robust mechanisms to confront and combat racism and discriminatory practices in the schools to ensure that Roma children are not humiliated by ethnic majority staff or pupils.

4. Design and scale up effective national desegregation policies, setting clear implementation targets for all municipalities within a defined timeframe to bring an end to all forms of segregation that deny Roma children full access to quality mainstream education in an integrated environment.

5. Coordinate a Europe-wide drive to ensure that all Roma children acquire a minimum of two-year's preschool. Ensure wide access to early childhood interventions which are vital for cognitive development and especially needed to compensate for the multiple disadvantages faced by Roma children.

6. Reduce the impact of poverty and bureaucracy on enrollment, attendance, and completion of school. Simplify standard requirement procedures and provide the necessary package of benefits to cover free meals and expenses associated with schooling for all disadvantaged children. Provide after-school support programs for those children from deprived home environments.

7. Introduce child-centred teaching methods and provide teachers with diversity training. In the countries monitored, despite official policies requiring more interactive child-centred teaching methods, it was clear that teachers have been slow on the uptake and are often and obviously unprepared for working with diverse groups of children. Countries need to adopt standardized requirements for teachers to regularly update their skills, including training to meet the challenges of working in a diverse and multicultural environment in general, and with Roma children in particular.

8. Involve Roma parents and the community in education. There is a need to establish formalized channels of communication with parents and communities to overcome the legacy of long-standing segregation and isolation of Roma communities, to build trust between the community and institutions, and to empower the parents as active participants in their children's progress and well-being.

9. Establish teacher training and programs in bilingual education. Governments should ensure that Roma children whose first language is not the language of instruction receive assistance by supporting in-service and pre-service teacher training courses in language acquisition, bilingual education methodology, and the teaching of Romanes.

Governments should develop preschool programs that place particular emphasis on language acquisition and bilingual techniques. Governments should ensure systematic solutions for the professional engagement of Roma teaching assistants,

and find incentives and affirmative action measures to include more Roma in the training and education necessary for this job.

10. Integrate diversity and Roma culture into the curriculum for all children, to counter the biased and distorted stereotypes of Roma, to compensate for the dearth of available information about the history and identity of Roma, and to sensitize all children to cultural diversity and mutual tolerance.

Early Childhood Education and Care

The European Commission's Communication on February 17, 2011 on early childhood education and care (ECEC) emphasizes the key role that ECEC can play in overcoming the educational disadvantage faced by Roma children. The communication states that "although their needs are greater, participation rates of Roma children in ECEC are significantly lower than for the native [sic!] population, and expanding these opportunities is a key policy challenge across the EU." Meeting this challenge must be at the forefront of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies. Given the limited coverage of early development services in many countries for newborns and children under the age of three, and the number of years it takes to meet "key policy challenges," there is a grave danger that thousands of children will be passed over without direct intervention.

The Framework should give urgent consideration to the suggestion made in the recent UNICEF/European Social Observatory (OSE) discussion paper that a special Early Child Development (ECD) fund facility should be created to support innovative early development programs and allow for scale up of what works—embracing one of the key Common Basic principles: "explicit but not exclusive" targeting of Roma populations, bearing in mind the research evidence that disadvantaged children derive the greatest benefits from ECD interventions.[10]

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[10] "Preventing Social Exclusion through the Europe 2020 Strategy: Early Childhood Development and the Inclusion of Roma Families." Revised discussion paper prepared on behalf of the Belgian Presidency for the 4th EU Roma Platform meeting. Paper developed jointly by UNICEF and the European Social Observatory (OSE) in collaboration with the Belgian Federal Programming Service (Ministry) for Social Integration.

The working definition of *early childhood* proposed by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in its guidance document is the period below the age of eight, including the prenatal period, babies at birth and throughout their infancy; young children during the preschool years and bridging into the early years of primary school. To a large extent, experiences in early childhood determine the life chances of an individual. Evidence shows that investment in comprehensive, accessible, and quality early years' provision reduces the equity gap and has the potential to break the cycle of exclusion and poverty.

Despite the abundance of research evidence and sound practice, early childhood development has remained underappreciated for too long as a strategy to promote social inclusion and equity of the Roma minority in Europe. One lesson learned from the Decade is that the target of a minimum of two years of preschool provision for all Roma children needs to be extended. It must be extended to include coordinated services to families to support healthy development of the youngest and most vulnerable—the under-threes.

There is new and growing scientific evidence showing how important the prenatal period and first three years of life are in terms of health, neural organization, language acquisition, and cognitive development. If in terms of a person's cognitive development, "the race is already halfway run" before schooling, then early childhood education and care should not be viewed as a desirable optional extra but rather as the European Commission states: "an essential component of the infrastructure for sustained economic development." Research by the Open Society Foundations and the World Bank confirm that investing in inclusive policies for the young generation of Roma will yield significant benefits for the entirety of European society in the future, not least because Roma constitute the youngest and fastest growing demographic segment of the population in a region otherwise characterized by falling birth rates.

While there is much merit in framing such debates in terms of future economic returns, it is important to emphasize that what is at stake is the fate, future, and dignity of millions of rights-bearing young individuals in all their diversity and uniqueness. The Convention on the Rights of the Child has been ratified by all the countries included in this report, and it is therefore the obligation of their governments to guarantee the rights of all children without any kind of discrimination, in respect of the human rights principle of the universality of rights. Effective and inclusive early education and care programs that target Roma and all socio-economically disadvantaged children should be an essential component of any "inclusive growth" strands in the Europe 2020 strategy. Such interventions are essential to improve school readiness and can provide Roma children with a sure start as they enter primary school, reducing the likelihood that they can be dispatched to inefficient and segregated "special schools." To paraphrase UNICEF, early childhood education and care needs to be at the core of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, "not only because this offers a strong return

on our investment (although it does) nor because the vulnerability of childhood calls upon our compassion (although it should), but rather for a more fundamental reason: because it is their right."

STRONG BEGINNINGS FOR ROMA CHILDREN: STRATEGIES THAT WORK

Emerging evidence from the Roma Early Childhood Inclusion project (RECI)[11] indicates that Roma families face common and often overwhelming barriers for improved access to high-quality and effective ECD services in their communities. One example is the importance of the empowerment of women, in addition to the whole community, as a prerequisite for improving outcomes for children. Therefore ***comprehensive, community-focused early childhood services for under-threes*** that mobilize mothers and enable them to access prenatal and postnatal care, birth registration, support for breast-feeding, good and routine health services, information and resources for adequate nutrition, family support and literacy, in addition to vocational training, amongst other opportunities, are likely to be effective.

Early intervention programs provide an assessment of children at risk of delayed development and provide intensive supports. Such programs help prevent the segregation of children into classrooms or programs for children with disabilities. Reducing the overrepresentation of Roma children in special education will also require ***flexible financing models***, particularly in cases when responsibility for early childhood is decentralized to local governments. Sustained central government funding rather than one-off, project-based activities is central to effective interventions. This is of special significance since European Structural Funds are directed primarily at central governments. Potential approaches to funding include per capita models where funds are allocated per child and follow the child to different types of provision. For example, additional funds can be made available for children experiencing particular social disadvantages, therefore providing incentives to early childhood services to encourage the participation of Roma children in mainstream settings.

Ensuring ***at least two years of high-quality preschool education*** for each Roma child has been one of the targets of the Decade since its inception. Arguments for two years of high-quality and inclusive preschool, specifically for Roma children, rest on claims that preschool:

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[11]   RECI is a partnership project by REF, UNICEF, and the Open Society Foundations' Early Childhood Program which aims to gather data, analyze policies, and make recommendations that will support the inclusion of Roma children in appropriate services in the Czech Republic, Macedonia, Romania, and Serbia.

- enables Roma children to access both the language of school instruction and the range of diverse early learning and social experiences that provide the foundations for improved educational outcomes and a positive sense of belonging;

- better equips children to perform well in primary school and in entry tests, therefore escaping selection for special education;

- facilitates the engagement of Roma parents with the education system from an early point, providing preparation for support of their children's later educational experiences.

Since its inception in 1994, the Open Society Foundations' Step-by-Step Program has been instrumental in developing successful preschool interventions for Roma children and families. Essential program components include:

- adaptation of curriculum to the individual needs of children and families;

- extensive training and mentoring for teachers in child-centered approaches, bilingual and second language learning strategies, family involvement, working with diverse children and families;

- family literacy and support programs;

- elimination of financial barriers and provision of clothing, medical, and nutrition support, where needed;

- social justice/anti-bias training for professionals and parents;

- placement of family coordinators and Roma teaching assistants in preschools.

Lastly, the impact of quality preschool on reducing the equity gap is largely lost if children are then placed into poor-quality primary schools, which are ill-equipped and unprepared to provide an integrated and supportive learning environment for Roma children. Greater investment in the early primary (appropriate curriculum, teacher training, Roma assistants/family mediators, free lunches/books/clothes where needed) is essential.

Experience from a range of initiatives supported by the Open Society Foundations reveals that elements of successful approaches, at both the national and community levels, include:

- The requirement for a national plan of action for early childhood that covers all disadvantaged children and highlights specific plans for Roma children

- Comprehensive services from birth onwards with effective transitions among services

- Removal of barriers to enrollment in mainstream services with targets for access

- Effective professional education for health professionals, preschool workers, and others including training on anti-discriminatory practice and social justice

- Community empowerment of Roma ensuring participation in determining and managing services

- Recruitment of Roma assistants and professionals

- Engagement with parents from an early stage

- Measures in place to respond to diverse language requirements and reinforce cultural identity

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations below draw on and expand those recently proposed at a meeting on early childhood convened by the European Forum of Foundations for the 2010 Roma Summit meeting in Cordoba.

- The Commission should provide a set of **common guidelines** to promote policies for the provision of care and education services for children from birth to the age of eight. Services should be universal, with particular attention paid to **ensuring access for the most marginalized groups** in society, including Roma children.

- Particular emphasis should be placed on **comprehensive services for newborns and children under the age of three and their families**. Good inter-sectoral service provision is in the best interests of the youngest children, including high-quality prenatal and postnatal healthcare, social welfare and protection, as well as family support and community-based care and education services.

- Every Roma child should be enabled to **access two years of mainstream, high-quality preschool education from the age of three or four.**

- Guidelines must be put in place to address **funding mechanisms that will facilitate the access** of Roma children to early childhood development services.

- Efforts are required to ensure **effective transitions** between home and family support services and into primary school from preschool, requiring effective communication between agencies, and coherence in curricula and school ethos.

- Efforts should be made to ensure a **welcoming whole-school environment** and appropriate programming and supports for Roma and/or other children with learning difficulties.

- **Access to early childhood care and preschool services for Roma children and families must be monitored**, in cooperation with Roma communities, to ensure action can be taken if rights to access are unrealized.

Data Collection

One glaring deficit in countries participating in the Decade is the lack of ethnically disaggregated data. The Open Society Foundations' report, *No Data—No Progress*, confirms our long-held assertion that the lack of disaggregated data is a major barrier to progress and weakens the impact of policies to promote equality and non-discrimination. Such failures can result in actually worsening the situation for the impoverished, the marginalized, and the disenfranchised.

The reality is that the European Commission itself (2000/43/EC) has long acknowledged the crucial role played by statistics in activating anti-discrimination policies and increasing its capacity to ensure social cohesion and promote diversity and equality. Ethnic data—as one component within disaggregated data—can be generated and used in ways that protect the privacy of individuals and groups while providing critical information to help policymakers fight racism and discrimination and draft viable equality programs.

The European Common Basic Principles for Integration, adopted in 2004, call for clearly defined objectives and highlight the need for evaluation and monitoring. But little has been done by the EU to support and encourage governments to collect data disaggregated by ethnicity. This lack of consistency creates confusion and complicates harmonization of policies at the European level.

The lack of disaggregated data has also caused problems regarding the accession obligations of governments of EU candidate countries. In the process of working with the Employment and Social Affairs Directorate of the European Commission on Joint Inclusion Memoranda, the deficiency of reliable Roma-related statistics was a major obstacle to the rights-based policy of Roma inclusion.

The Commission should issue guidelines on the interpretation of its regulations on ethnic data collection and processing to clearly and authoritatively prevent misconceptions that the regulations prohibit the use of data regarding ethnicity.

Within the remit of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, it is time for the Commission to move beyond its habitual *laissez-faire*, business-as-usual approach that "… it is for the member states to decide whether or not ethnic data should be collected." The Commission could play a vital coordinating role in guiding and coordinating the efforts of national governments to collect the sort of disaggregated data needed to make a difference, a difference of a kind that can be monitored and measured.

Detailed findings from the research conducted across all 12 countries participating in the Decade of Roma Inclusion can be accessed online, covering findings on both data collection and Decade Indicators (Available online: http://romadecade.org/no_data_country_findings). Some key common characteristics across the countries on data collection can be summarized as follows:

- **Misinterpreted Legislation Hinders Data Collection Policy**

  The data protection legislation, coupled with any laws regulating statistics, constitute the supporting framework for data collection policy in each country reviewed. Thus, every country has a policy, but those laws are either over-interpreted, which impedes ethnic data collection, or there is insufficient legislation, such as the Race Relations Act 2000 in the United Kingdom, to derogate those safeguards. It is simply a myth that the collection of ethnic data in countries is forbidden.

- **Census Inappropriately Used to Calculate Data on Other Indicators**

  The census is often the only instrument used to collect ethnic data; it is also often used by the state to measure indicators other than the current population (due to the lack of data on ethnicity collected through other means), although it was not designed to collect data on those indicators. Using a census for this purpose is not applicable. In countries with Roma populations, census data on the Roma are unreliable and account for only a fraction of the number of people who may identify as Roma. Figures calculated from this flawed basis are even less trustworthy.

- **Underutilized Data Sources**

  There are three main sources of data on the various indicators: official national-level sources, international intergovernmental sources (UNDP, Council of Europe, UNICEF, etc.), and academic and NGO publications and materials that draw upon these official datasets as well as upon authors' own research. The Open Society Roma Initiatives' research has shown that where there are large gaps in official data, often data exist from other sources that fill those gaps. The initiatives' review of government national action plans, however, indicates that few governments are drawing on these sources to monitor their compliance with their Decade commitments.

- **Weak Monitoring**

  Governments have officially published only very limited evaluations on Decade progress. The reports that are available lack analytic depth and often amount to little more than a restatement of the action plans' goals. The lack of data from which to monitor progress, and the existence of indicators for which there are no data, are major factors behind the dearth of monitoring and evaluation of the Decade so far.

No Data—No Progress offers clear and achievable recommendations, and scuppers any doubts that getting solid data is a realistic goal that can have a real impact on policies and people. Some states object that the collection of ethnically disaggregated data is not permitted, that it cannot be done. It is high time to dispel this self-serving myth. As the report highlights, there are adequate procedural safeguards in place to ensure that personal data is not put to improper use. Good practice in the United Kingdom clearly demonstrates that that an appropriate legal framework coupled with clear directives can allow the collection of ethnic data in a manner that allows for more informed and nuanced policymaking and appropriate targeting of resources to address the needs of a diverse population.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Open Society Roma Initiatives urge the European Union, as well as governments participating in the Decade, to take action within *the first year of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies* to improve the collection of data relating to Roma.

- The European Commission should issue guidelines on the interpretation of its regulations on ethnic data collection and processing to clearly and authoritatively prevent any misconceptions or misinterpretations that the regulations are an absolute prohibition on the use of data regarding ethnicity.

- The EU Platform for Roma should support and facilitate the collection of disaggregated data in European countries as part of its work toward the effective inclusion of Roma-related data into European and national policies.

- Governments should collect ethnic data and use it for the purposes of inclusion policies; to this end, the Decade governments should ensure that any restrictions on the use of personal data are proportionate to the security measures laid out in international data protection guidelines to avoid over-interpretation at the national level that could impede disaggregated data collection. It is up to public authorities in the member states to acknowledge and act upon provisions in data protection laws that make it possible to collect "sensitive data."

- National policymakers should ensure that disaggregated ethnic data collection is used as a means for measuring and overcoming discrimination, and as a complement to initiatives aimed at reducing prejudice and negative stereotyping.

- Governments should take up UNDP's work to establish guidelines and set clear indicators for monitoring the effects and impact of national action plans and planning policies, with appropriate support and follow-through. Such action is a practical step to achieving real monitoring of the Framework.

- From the research covering Decade governments, there is a need to strengthen national statistical agencies; a research center or NGO with solid expertise in data collection, monitoring, and evaluation should be assigned to work closely with these agencies to develop methodologies that increase Roma participation in data collection processes.

- Governments should adjust their statistical systems to collect data disaggregated by ethnicity. Governments can incorporate ethnic data components into regular statistical surveys of the labor force and household budgets. They can also obtain data by conducting specialized sample surveys in marginalized Roma communities. Most of the indicators for monitoring living conditions can be constructed in manifold ways and data gleaned with diverse methodologies.

- National statistical agencies should gather and process data not only on the national level, but also *ad hoc* within local and regional initiatives, to confirm whether the mainstream policies are reaching Roma beneficiaries.

- National statistical agencies should explore various census methodologies, such as allowing respondents to choose both primary and secondary identifications as a national or ethnic group, providing multiple identity categories to help improve the chances of Roma self-identification, and using ethnically-neutral markers such as traditions, language, etc., as proxies to help determine ethnicity.

- National statistical agencies should include Roma in census activities as data collectors, as they have much greater access and credibility in Roma communities, which can result in more Roma self-identification and responses to the census. Data collectors should also inform the Roma community about basic terminology when filling in the census forms, for example, understanding the difference between "nationality" and "ethnicity" to help improve the accuracy of data collected during censuses, and encourage members of the Roma community to declare their Roma identity.

- Different statistical and data collection institutions within and between countries should coordinate their efforts, using similar definitions and methodologies for collecting data. The primary goal should be to ensure more standardized national data collection to facilitate the compilation of reliable, cross-sectoral data that would also allow for international comparability.

Combating the Multiple Discrimination Faced by Roma Women

One critical lesson from the Decade's experiences is that gender equity is doomed to oblivion if it is to be deemed a "cross-cutting theme" in governments' National Action Plans. To address the multiple discrimination faced by Roma women, the issue must be emphasized in the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, and fully and actively mainstreamed into each of the priority areas.

The principle of gender equity needs to be affirmed and re-affirmed until it permeates the common sense of the entire endeavor—if the Framework intends to really "make a difference." The Open Society Foundations' experience working in partnership with Roma women activists and organizations confirms the existence of a broad-based and dynamic constituency, and that further empowerment, deeper engagement, and substantive participation of this constituency are indispensable components for any tangible progress in addressing the multiple discrimination endured by millions of Roma women.

The European Parliament passed a Resolution in 2003 on the situation of women from minority groups in the European Union, that, having regard to the equality directives of 2000:

> draws the attention of the Commission and governments to the need to ensure (a) the effective application of policies implemented at Community and national level that are likely to improve Roma women's economic, social and political situation, their involvement in the decision-making process and

protection of their human rights, (b) the inclusion of the issues concerning Roma populations in general, and equality of treatment and opportunity for Roma women in particular, in all relevant polices and programmes relating to employment policies and social inclusion, the European Social Fund, the Equal initiative, education and training programmes, the Daphne programme, and legislation and the action programme against discrimination, (c) consultation of Roma women when drawing up any programme or project likely to affect them and when adopting positive measures on their behalf.[12]

The case is made convincingly in a synthesis report, published in 2008 and commissioned by the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (now DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion). The report states that, while the dimensions of disadvantage are similar to those experienced by women from other ethnic minority groups, "Roma women typically face additional or more pronounced forms of marginalization and discrimination." Roma girls perform even poorer than boys, and the report states that:

> the low educational level of Roma women is particularly negative because it affects future generations, as the children of mothers with higher levels of education are more likely to attend school than children of mothers with low educational levels. [13]

Roma women experience greater health risks due to a combination of factors including poor housing and living conditions, inadequate access to healthcare, early and multiple pregnancies and abortions, a heavy workload at home, and malnutrition.

In common with the experiences of other ethnic minority women, the labor market is a sphere where Roma women face significant prejudice, have less power of negotiation, and are more vulnerable than men to unfair treatment and exploitation, especially when employed in the informal economy and private households. The report highlights that in the absence of a secure job, Roma women who are single mothers or widows, or who have escaped domestic violence, face particularly acute problems when trying to secure

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[12]   Quoted from Barbara Giovanna Bello (2009) "Multiple Discrimination." *Roma Rights* 2, April 2009. Available online: http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?page=2&cikk=3564.

[13]   Marcella Corsi et al. (2008) *Ethnic Minority and Roma Women in Europe: A Case for Gender Equality?* Synthesis report for the European Commission Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities G.1 unit. Available online: http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=492&type=2&furtherPubs=no.

economic well-being for their households. The precarious labor market position and extreme poverty of most young Roma women increase their vulnerability to and risk of resorting to "subsidiary survival strategies," and greater exposure to criminal exploitation.

The importance of explicit but not exclusive targeting of Roma women in National Roma Integration cannot be overstated: first, as a legitimate affirmative action in its own right; and second, for the wider, long-term impact on the community and wider societal cohesion. As primary caregivers for their children and most often the mediators between family, state institutions, and service providers, the active engagement of Roma women in community development and policy implementation is a prerequisite for successful interventions in areas such as child protection, education, and healthcare. As the Commission's own *Ethnic Minority and Roma Women in Europe* states: "Investing in Roma women … may lay the foundations for a longer-term and effective inclusion of future Roma generations."

Policing

There is a need to stop discriminatory policing and ethnic profiling that target Roma communities. Studies show that they are counterproductive, misdirect policing resources, and alienate some of the very people whose cooperation is most needed for effective crime detection. Communities inevitably become less willing to turn to the police to control crime in their neighborhoods. Ethnic profiling also serves to stigmatize whole groups as "suspect communities."

A way forward for governments and police is clearly demonstrated by a highly-innovative collaboration led by the Open Society Justice Initiative, with human rights NGOs and law enforcement authorities in the STEPSS project, which sought to improve police relations with minority communities by:

- Improving police training, operational and legal guidance, and the supervision of ID checks, stops, and searches.

- Developing a monitoring system that enhances police management of and accountability for stops.

- Creating a forum and increasing minority communities' ability to participate in dialogue with the police and set local policing priorities.

- Creating replicable models of good practice that can be disseminated regionally.

One clear outcome across all pilot sites was that the elimination of ethnic profiling led to more efficient policing, in terms of crime detection and crime prevention, as well as increased legitimacy and trust from the communities.

Recommendations to senior-level police officers included:

1. Reach out to minority communities through public forums and discussions to enhance mutual understanding and trust.

2. Develop community policing initiatives and create specialized outreach units in the police.

3. Recruit candidates from minority groups to create a police service representative of the community it serves.

4. The police should avoid using explicit information about ethnic origin in public statements unless it is directly relevant and necessary. In the release of information to the press and public, where the ethnicity of victims or perpetrators is not pertinent to the crime, then this information should not be released. There is a need for a heightened sense of responsibility to avoid creating unwarranted associations between ethnic minorities and crime.

Recommendations to political authorities across Europe on the issue of police community relations, and with an explicit but not exclusive emphasis on improving relations between Roma communities and law enforcement authorities, include the following:

1. Political leaders at the national and local levels play an important role in shaping public opinion and should speak out against all forms of discrimination, including ethnic profiling.

2. Review laws and operational guidelines regulating police powers and strengthen non-discrimination standards and practices. Establish clear and precise standards for initiating and conducting stops, searches, and ID checks. Operational guidelines should clarify the nature of "suspicion" and state categorically that ethnicity may not constitute the reason for a stop.

3. Create robust public complaint mechanisms that include specialized independent oversight or control mechanisms. Include civilian oversight as this can enhance the legitimacy of the complaints process and improve policing by identifying problematic processes.

There is a need to step up and intensify the international exchange of best practices and convening local and regional workshops with community groups and police officers. This should become a concerted process rather than a series of one-off, *ad-hoc* events; a process which draws on the expertise of law enforcement authorities more versed in policing and policy in multicultural societies; and one which makes full use of available resources such as *Understanding and Preventing Discriminatory Ethnic Profiling: A Guide* by the Fundamental Rights Agency in collaboration with the Justice Initiative and Warwick University and the OSCE *Handbook on Policing Roma and Sinti Communities*.

Public Health

The objectives set out in the EU strategy, *Together for Health: A Strategic Approach for the EU 2008–2013,* are particularly relevant to the health of Roma. Just as pertinent is the argument set forth in the Commission 2009 Communication, *Solidarity in Health: Reducing Health Inequalities in the EU*, that health inequalities in the EU challenge the Union's basic principles of solidarity, social and economic cohesion, human rights, and equality of opportunity. To date, these objectives have failed to generate visible changes for Roma, and unless there is concerted and coordinated action, the EU will continue to fail to meet its goal of reducing health inequalities in Europe.

Various research findings show that Roma, as a group, have both worse health status and worse health service access compared to majority populations in EU countries.

Life expectancy at birth in the EU is 76 years for men and 82 for women.[14] For Roma, it is estimated to be 10 years less.[15] While the infant mortality rate in the EU is 4.3 per thousand live births,[16] there is evidence that the rate is much higher among Roma communities. In particular, a UNDP report on five countries noted that Roma child mortality rates are two to six times higher than for the general population,

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[14]   Available online: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/product_details/dataset?p_product_code=TSDPH100.

[15]   COM (2009) 567 final, *Solidarity in Health: Reducing Health Inequalities in the EU*. See also: Fundacion Secretariado Gitano, op cit., and K. Sepkowitz (2006) "Health of the World's Roma Population," based on the situation in Czech Republic, Ireland, Slovakia, and Bulgaria.

[16]   Ratio of the number of deaths of children under one year of age during the year to the number of live births in that year. Eurostat Data, 2009. Available online: http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=demo_minfind&lang=en.

depending on the country. High levels of infant mortality among Roma communities are also reported in other countries.[17] Although few countries have national-level Roma health data, research also shows that Roma are disproportionately unvaccinated;[18] have poorer than average nutrition;[19] and experience higher rates of tuberculosis.[20] Among newborns and children under three, the incidence of influenza, ear infections, intestinal infections, and viral diseases was significantly higher among the Roma than among the majority population of a comparable socio-economic status.[21]

This disparity reflects the overall gap in general health between Roma and non-Roma, which is mainly due to their poor living conditions, lack of access to quality healthcare, and persistent discrimination and marginalization. In a Fundamental Rights Agency survey,[22] discrimination by healthcare personnel emerged as a particularly acute problem for the Roma: nearly one-fifth indicated they had experienced discrimination in this area in the last year.

Member states should take all necessary measures to ensure the elimination of individual and systematic discrimination against Roma in healthcare services by providing access to quality healthcare and social services to the Roma at a similar level and under the same conditions as for the rest of the population. In this context, member states should establish concrete targets with concrete timelines for the following: raising the life expectancy of Roma; raising child vaccination rates to the level of the non-Roma

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[17]   UNDP (2003) *The Roma in Central and Eastern Europe, Avoiding the Dependency Trap.* Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic. And: Equality and Human Rights Commission (2009) *Inequalities Experienced by Gypsy and Traveller Communities: A Review.*

[18]   H. Orlikova, J. Rogalska, E. Kazanowska-Zielinksa, T. Jankowski, J. Slodzinski, B. Kess, and P. Stefanoff (2010) "Spotlight on Measles 2010: A Measles Outbreak in a Roma Population in Pulawy, Eastern Poland, June to August 2009." *European Surveillance*, 15 (17): ii-19,550; A. Kraigher et al. (2006) "Vaccination Coverage in Hard to Reach Roma Children in Slovenia." *Collegium Antropologicum*, 30 (4): 789–794; S. Loewenberg (2006) "The Health of Europe's Most Marginalised Populations." *Lancet*. 368 (9,553): 2,115; T. Georgakopoulou et al. (2006) "Current Measles Outbreak in Greece." *Eurosurveillance*, 11 (2).

[19]   I. Koupilova et al. (2001) "Health Needs of the Roma Population in the Czech and Slovak Republics." *Social Science & Medicine*, 53: 1,191–1,204.

[20]   M. Ionita, M. Nastase, and T. Mihaescu (2001) "Tuberculosis in a Rural Gypsy Community—Romania." *European Respiratory Journal*, 18 (Suppl. 33): S323 (Abstr.).

[21]   The study used maternal education as a marker of socio-economic status. Controlling for maternal education did not account for the entirety of the association between Roma ethnicity and the diseases indicated. in: M. Dostal, J. Topinka, and R.J. Sram (2010) "Comparison of the Health of Roma and Non-Roma Children Living in the District of Teplice." *International Journal of Public Health*, 55: 435–441.

[22]   Fundamental Rights Agency (2009) European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey, Main Results Report.

population; and lowering infant and maternal mortality rates to the level of the non-Roma population. Where possible, there should be an increased involvement of qualified Roma in healthcare programs targeting their communities. Action to improve the health of Roma populations requires a commitment to the shared values of solidarity, equity, and participation, which should be manifested in health policies, resource allocation, and service delivery.

ROMA HEALTH MEDIATION: A TARGETED PROGRAM WITH PROVEN RESULTS[23]

When implemented as part of a comprehensive governmental strategy to improve Roma health, Roma health mediation can be a cost-effective program that promotes long-term health and inclusion.

Roma health mediators are members of the Roma community who facilitate access to health and social services. Their tasks may include:

- Assisting Roma in registering births, obtaining identity documents, or enrolling in health insurance;

- Informing the community about the importance of vaccination, gynecological check-ups, nutrition, exercise, and other preventive behaviors;

- Providing linguistic translation or other assistance to individual clients during doctor appointments;

- Informing Roma patients about the appropriate fees for various services (thus decreasing Roma vulnerability to being asked to make unofficial out-of-pocket payments);

- Helping individuals to make physicians' appointments or to navigate other procedures associated with receiving healthcare;

- Referrals to social protection or other relevant services, such as smoking cessation and social housing; and

- Training (or informally educating) healthcare providers about particular aspects of Roma culture or living that are salient in a healthcare encounter.

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[23]   This section has been excerpted from Roma Health Mediation Policy Brief drafted by consultant Marta Schaaf.

Mediators may be employed by NGOs, local governmental authorities, or the Ministry of Health. There are currently Roma Health Mediators working in Bulgaria, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Spain, and Ukraine, among other places. Some mediators work exclusively on healthcare, and others have been trained to facilitate access to public services overall, including health, education, social protection, and employment services. Roma Health Mediation has been identified as a good practice by the Council of Europe[24] and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In many countries, mediation has become an official profession regulated by a ministerial decree or similar system. Some countries have national associations of Roma health mediators.

While the number of mediators has increased over time in some countries; their numbers remain inadequate, given the extent of the need. As shown in Table 1, Romania has 430 mediators and an approximate Roma population of 1.5 million.[25] In comparison, Romania has about 222 practicing physicians per 100,000 inhabitants.[26] Bulgaria has 105 mediators for an approximate Roma population of 600,000 to 800,000;[27] and 361 practicing physicians per 100,000 inhabitants.[28] Finally, Slovakia has 30 mediators for an approximate Roma population of 360,000 to 520,000,[29] and about 300 practicing physicians per 100,000 inhabitants. This is not intended to imply that the ratio of mediators to the Roma population should equal that of practicing physicians to the number of inhabitants, but these figures provide a perspective on the relative prominence of mediators in the health system.

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[24] Council of Europe (2003) *Breaking the Barriers—Romani Women and Access to Public Health Care*. European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities. Available online:http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/roma-travellers/documentation/health/ reporthealthwomen03_en.pdf.

[25] M. Schaaf (2010) "Roma Health." In: *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Europe, Health Systems Respond*. Copenhagen: World Health Organization.

[26] Eurostat.

[27] M. Schaaf (2010).

[28] Eurostat.

[29] M. Schaaf (2010).

Table 1.
Number of Mediators and Physicians

Country	Number of employed mediators	Approximate number of Roma	Number of physicians per 100,000 inhabitants
Romania	430	1.5 million	222
Bulgaria	105	600,000–800,000	361
Slovakia	30	360,000–520,000	300

Roma health mediation programs have been funded by the European Social Fund, pre-accession instruments (including Phare and the current IPA), the European Public Health Programme, private foundation donors, and national governments. Indeed, several mediator projects that were initiated using European Union Funds are now supported by national governments and municipal funds. Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovakia, for example, now use national and local financing to support mediators that were initially trained and paid with Phare funding.

The Open Society Foundations' Roma Health Project conducted a review of Roma health mediator programs in several countries in 2005.[30] The review identified several successes and ongoing challenges. In terms of successes, the review concluded that mediators were very effective at assisting individual clients to obtain documents and to effectively access the health system. The most successful mediator programs were those:

- that benefited from substantial input from mediators themselves,
- that had greater involvement by health professionals and local authorities,
- that maintained clear lines of responsibility and regulations,
- that aimed to promote rights and entitlement knowledge and health literacy among excluded Roma, and
- that were part of a continuum of governmental services aiming to improve Roma health.

Ongoing challenges included the need to:

- improve supervision and support to mediators;
- strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems; and
- ensure that complementary programs address issues mediators do not address, such as discrimination.

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[30]   Open Society Institute (2005) *Mediating Romani Health.* Budapest: Open Society Institute.

Moreover, mediator expertise was insufficiently leveraged. During the course of their service and interventions, mediators develop substantial knowledge about the health of their communities, but they are too rarely asked to share their expertise. Mediators could contribute more if they were more involved in training healthcare providers, and if they were consulted as experts in the development of governmental and nongovernmental programs.

Since 2005, several mediator programs have been established in new countries. Moreover, fiscal decentralization, the financial crisis, and other continued threats to financial sustainability threaten the continuation of mediator programs. Given this, the Open Society Foundations decided to undertake a qualitative update of the 2005 review. Indeed, since the Decade is half over, the consolidation of lessons learned is timely. This ongoing research will ultimately be published in a report containing country-specific and general conclusions. However, some preliminary information is available now.

The two countries included in the 2005 and the current review—Bulgaria and Romania—have made improvements in their program in the interim. For example, both countries have hired new mediators and provided additional training to existing mediators, and created a national professional association of mediators. Mediation began in both countries in 2001, and the participating stakeholders highlighted the importance of having a long-term program in subsequent interviews. The Romanian and Bulgarian Roma health mediators and advocates also assert that these programs must continue; the positive impact of mediation increases with learning and investment. Building trust between the Roma community and local health providers, increasing community demand for preventive care, and significantly increasing the number of Roma with health insurance all take time. These insights show that effectiveness analyses of Roma health mediation programs should consider long-term, community-level impacts, and not only short-term process indicators such as vaccination coverage.

Indeed, recent contributions to the health cost-effectiveness literature note that assigning a monetary value to activities and their health impacts is insufficient to capture all effected changes.[31] Nonetheless, health programs do have the potential to: (1) directly affect health and (2) change the nature of the community in which the program occurs. Indeed, in some cases, this second outcome can be even more significant in the long run than direct health improvements. Moreover, *hierarchical* health programs that focus *only* on improving health indicators can have an overall negative effect, as they perpetuate exclusion and disempowerment. For this reason, health economists and

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[31] S. Jan (1998) "A Holistic Approach to the Economic Evaluation of Health Programmes Using Institutionalist Methodology." *Social Science & Medicine,* 47 (10): 1,565–1,572; D.G. Walker and S. Jan (2005) "How Do We Determine Whether Community Health Workers Are Cost-effective? Some Core Methodological Issues. *Journal of Community Health*, 30 (3): 221–229.

policymakers have started to assess measures related to community transformation in their cost-effective analyses. These measures might include community involvement in health and policymaking, social cohesion, and rights knowledge and empowerment.[32]

In the case of Roma health mediation, the Open Society Foundations' ongoing review suggests that mediators both directly affect health and change the nature of the community in which the programs occur, at a relatively small cost. Indeed, Decade Watch survey respondents in Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Romania gave relatively high marks to government activities to improve Roma women's health. These positive responses may be due to the existence of mediator programs.[33] Table 2 summarizes some costs and benefits of mediator programs. Salaries vary, but as a general rule, mediators are paid about half the salary of nurses. These salaries may be adequate in certain contexts, but when they are substantially lower than the other healthcare worker wages, they risk perpetuating Roma marginalization, and may communicate to mediators, the Roma community, and other health workers that mediator work is not that valuable. Moreover, in some cases, salaries may not reach the level of a living wage.

Preliminary data from the current review show that the numbers implicated in the benefits enumerated above are substantial. For example, according to data provided by the Slovak Office of Public Health, mediators aided 3,534 Slovak Roma children to undergo a pediatric check-up in 2010. According to data provided by Romanian Ministry of Health, in the first two years of the Romanian program, mediators helped 108,632 children to register, 40,015 people to obtain health insurance, and 1,180 people to obtain identity documents. The Bulgarian professional association of mediators reports that in 2010, Bulgarian mediators assisted in the emergency vaccination of 188,703 children following a measles outbreak in a Roma community. The Foundations' full review will also include the results of stakeholder interviews, national document reviews, and focus groups conducting among Roma mediators. These data will further illuminate the benefits and challenges of mediation.

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[32] S. Jan (1998) "A Holistic Approach to the Economic Evaluation of Health Programmes Using Institutionalist Methodology." *Social Science & Medicine*, 47 (10): 1,565–1,572.

[33] Open Society Institute (2010) *Decade Watch: Results of the 2009 Survey*. Budapest: Open Society Institute.

Table 2.
Roma Health Mediation Costs and Benefits

Costs	
	• Mediator salaries
	• Mediator activity costs (health education materials, travel and communication funding, etc.)
	• Mediation program management (monitoring and evaluation, financial and human resources management, fundraising, etc.)
	• Mediator training and continuing education
	• Mediation program design costs
Benefits	• Roma obtain birth registration, identity documents, and health insurance
	• Increased use of preventive care, including regular check-ups, family planning services, gynecological exams, sexual health services, and vaccination
	• Improved efficacy of health care visits where mediators are present, and after several such visits with mediators, improved efficacy in the absence of mediators
	• Roma awareness about health and social protection entitlements raised
	• Other governmental and nongovernmental programs for Roma enhanced by input from mediators
	• Health provider knowledge about Roma exclusion (and culture) improved; some healthcare providers report changing their behavior toward Roma patients
	• Roma clients referred to social assistance, housing, and other services
	• Roma mediators become leaders and role models in communities where unemployment is high and opportunities appear to be rare
	• Community trust in public services enhanced
	• Mediators trained, and some go on to higher education in nursing, social work, and medicine

Many important public health activities are endangered by the current financial crisis. Moreover, even prior to the financial crisis, financing for Roma health mediation was tenuous—with fiscal decentralization and inadequate governmental commitment leading to mediator layoffs and/or failure to hire the mediators who had been trained. In some cases, mediators faced predictable annual delays in approving and processing their contracts. Mediators are thus subjected to insecurity and periods without salary, eroding both morale and program efficacy. Moreover, many of those who are contracted, rather than being hired as permanent staff, are denied benefits such as sick leave, vacation pay, and pension contributions. The Council of Europe has allocated funding to provide further training to mediators, but unfortunately, no money to support salaries.[34] To be

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[34] Council of Europe (2011) ROMED: European Training for Programme for Roma Mediators. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

sure, the entire health sector is suffering; staff hiring freezes and the re-introduction of user fees are other manifestations of current financial challenges.[35] However, in the case of Roma health mediators, the financial crisis is exacerbating an already shaky financial commitment to program continuity. The need for health and social programs increases as the financial crisis continues. As outlined in a recent International Labour Organization and World Health Organization report on the global financial crisis, cuts to health and social sector programs serving the most marginalized will cause both short- and long-term damage. Such damage might include deterioration in health status and long-term impoverishment.[36]

Based on the expertise and best practices of the Foundations' Roma Health Project, the following four priority areas need to be addressed:

1. **Epidemiological data to inform sound policies:** Much of the existing health data is fragmented and focused on priorities articulated by non-Roma. It is also underpinned by misconceptions that attribute the responsibility for ill health on Roma themselves. The absence of national level disaggregated data and comparable epidemiological information makes it difficult to develop and target interventions to combat systemic discrimination in healthcare, and to measure improvement in the health of Roma populations or decreases in health disparities. The Roma Health Project, with the Regional Roma Health Intelligence Center and other grantees, has been generating, disseminating, and enhancing the use of epidemiological data in the countries of the Decade. In the absence of disaggregated data, the Roma Health Project has turned to budget monitoring to give visibility to the inequities of health systems. While such strategies are useful in calling governments to account, they cannot replace the need for ethnically disaggregated and comparable data within and across countries.

    In 2006, the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers requested that member states carry out an adequate assessment and analysis of the health problems of ethnic minorities, develop strategies that allow for appropriate data collection on the health needs, health determinants, and healthcare received by multicultural populations, and that relevant data be analyzed to influence the design of policy and services, and to allow for the development of strategies for the improvement of the quality of healthcare services in multicultural societies.

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[35]   E. Holt (2010) "Doctors in Eastern Europe Prepare to Walk out over Pay." *The Lancet*, 376 (9,737): 221–222.

[36]   International Labour Organization and World Health Organization (2009) *The Social Protection Floor*. Geneva: International Labour Organization and World Health Organization. Available online: http://www.un.org/en/ga/second/64/socialprotection.pdf.

The EU should improve the mechanisms to obtain and assess knowledge across the Union, and establish a set of common indicators to monitor health inequalities among majority and minority ethnic groups, with a particular focus on Europe's largest minority, Roma. This could be done through the allocation of dedicated resources to the European Observatory on the Social Situation and Demography created by the Commission in 2005, which already hosts multidisciplinary research teams, including one on health status, healthcare, and long-term care.

2. **Technical Assistance to maximize use of Structural Funds for health:** According to the EU's own regulations, guidance indicates that, in addition to training and education of health professionals, EU Structural Funds can be used to support healthcare, including health infrastructure (modernization of healthcare system, construction and renovation of facilities, medical equipment, etc.); investment in health promotion and disease prevention; and institutional capacity in health and social inclusion in healthcare. Limited use of these provisions has been made to advance Roma health to date.

   The direct experience of the Foundations' Roma Health Project in building a consortium to secure structural funds to extend the Roma Health Scholarships Program in Romania confirmed that accessing EU funds is an inordinately complex and arcane process. The Open Society Foundations' Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma initiative provides technical assistance to navigate the complexities of the application process. The Commission needs to provide similar support across the newer member states so that those most in need can make the most of EU Funds to address health inequities, and build infrastructure and capacity in systematically underserved Roma communities. A dedicated "explicit but not exclusive" Technical Assistance Facility should be established for this purpose.

3. **Use of EU existing mechanisms to exert pressure and hold governments to account:** While some member states have now subscribed to the principle of reducing health inequalities, the extent to which action is being taken varies substantially from one country to the next. While some discrete measures have been implemented, general comprehensive strategies are too often lacking, inadequately designed and funded, or unimplemented. In addition, the policies that are actually implemented lack any assessment or evaluation, which limits knowledge of policy effectiveness. Concerted advocacy by the Open Society Foundations and their partners, in concert with dialogue with the Commission, has led to Roma becoming more visible on the European health agenda. The impact at the national level remains limited.

The EU should use its leverage with newer member states and accession countries to push for the advancement effective health policies for Roma. To date, neither the Open Method of Coordination nor peer review processes have yielded much in the way of progress in reducing discrimination and inequality in the healthcare sphere. The EU's new Strategy for Roma Inclusion must prioritize reducing health inequalities for Roma, provide a framework for national strategy development, coordination, and implementation; foster exchanges of good practices, knowledge, and information; hold governments to account; and monitor their progress in meeting the objectives of the EU strategy "Together for Health."

4. **Comprehensive approach to tackle issues of documentation and healthcare access:** A lack of documentation underlies a substantial part of the discrepancies in access to the healthcare system. Many Roma still lack citizenship, personal identification, or health insurance, limiting their access to health and social services. Lack of documents continues to be a problem in places such as Bulgaria, where Roma may not have one or more of the documents required to secure health services. Roma's significant involvement in informal sector employment also means that they disproportionately lack access to benefits based on social insurance contributions (e.g., Romania). The Roma Health Project's partners (European Roma Rights Center, Romani Criss) have documented this problem and its related consequences both in countries of the EU and in countries seeking accession. These conditions contribute to inequities between Roma and other populations within the health system, and cannot be addressed solely by focusing on health.

The EU Health Strategy 2008–13 should be coordinated effectively within the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies. There is a need for systematic coordination between the European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Consumer Policy (DG SANCO) and Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion on the issue of documentation as a barrier to accessing health care.

Harnessing EU Funds for Roma Inclusion

The stalled and uneven progress towards Roma inclusion has been characterized by a lack of concerted political will at the national and local government levels, and the failure of any substantive "trickle down" of EU funding to promote social cohesion and combat poverty in a systemic fashion for Roma communities. On average, the European Union allocates EUR 50 billion per year in Structural Funds to "resolve structural economic and social problems." Yet to date, a negligible amount has targeted Roma, Europe's most economically and socially deprived population. Those in most need are effectively least able to access EU funding.

This prompted the Open Society Foundations to launch a comprehensive initiative, Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma (MtM), that harnesses European Funds in 12 EU member states and accession countries to promote equal access of Roma to education, employment, healthcare, and housing. Its expertise and resources are driven by EU non-discrimination and equality standards for the design and implementation of projects that seek EU funding.

MtM not only aims to strengthen Roma inclusion as a high priority on regional and European political agendas, but also promotes Roma expertise and involvement in different phases of project development and implementation. Interventions work across all sectors, supporting coalitions of civic and governmental actors and financial institutions, and assist them to reach a common understanding of social inclusion and concrete, mutually-beneficial modes of cooperation.

The interventions are comprised of technical assistance and a project development fund to strengthen stakeholders' work toward Roma integration; mentoring for Roma

representatives involved in programming and monitoring EU funds; pre-financing and non-eligible cost funding to increase the impact of EU-funded projects and to support access to or the flow of EU funding towards communities, offering NGOs and smaller/poorer municipalities involved in Roma projects monetary assistance; and influencing EU policies in new or pre-accession countries in South Eastern Europe.

These interventions seek to give substance to the EU's 10 Basic Principles for Roma Inclusion, providing best practice in "explicit but not exclusive targeting" of EU funds for Roma, and through a combination of political and financial incentives to move Roma inclusion from the margins to the mainstream of development policies.

Since its launch, "Making the Most" has leveraged some EUR 11 million from European Structural Funds for more than 100 projects aimed to boost Roma inclusion in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia. An additional EUR 20 million in project proposals is currently under evaluation by national authorities.

MtM interventions to date have involved hundreds of Roma in the design and preparation of project targeting over 20,000 beneficiaries. The interventions comprise technical assistance for project development and mentorship to enhance project beneficiaries' competence for the delivery of inclusion targets. It also involves support with supplementary funds for innovative and cross-sectoral projects. In accession countries, Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma works to promote policy dialogue and to build capacity of formal and informal policy actors in order to integrate Roma inclusion objectives into mainstream policies.

The challenges associated with harnessing and managing these funds are enormous, and the experiences and lessons learned through the initiative's activities are of profound strategic benefit to inform and influence the processes and policies at both the EU and national levels to ensure that European funding actually reaches targeted populations and to support effective initiatives that can promote sustainable social cohesion and combat exclusion.

Below is a set of ten recommendations based on MtM experience:

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

1. **Require institutional guarantees for the enforcement of the principle of non-discrimination and equality in the programming and implementation of Structural Funds.**

    The Structural Funds' regulations should introduce compulsory institutional guarantees at the national level for mainstreaming the principles of non-discrimination and equality. In addition to national-level mechanisms, the European Commission should create a mechanism on the EU level to monitor the implementation of the horizontal principle of non-discrimination.

    The Commission should provide member states with detailed instructions about the implementation of the principle of non-discrimination and equality in the context of Structural Funds. Non-discrimination should be understood as requiring a range of proactive government measures to eliminate existing patterns of segregation, especially in education and housing. Large differences in basic welfare indicators among social groups shall be considered as an instance of structural discrimination and addressed as such.

2. **Condition availability of Structural Funds to member states to the achievement of social inclusion targets.**

    Social inclusion achievements can be measured with some robust, EU-wide indicators and benchmarks, for example, by the share of funds allocated to most depressed micro-regions, an increase in the level of education of Roma, an increase in the rate of employment of less-qualified people, or an increase in the availability of social housing.

    Member states with stronger social inclusion achievements could be remunerated, for example, by access to additional amounts of EU funds (a kind of a European performance reserve, at least five to ten percent on top of the initial allocation of the given member state). Member states with very weak social inclusion achievements could also lose access to EU funds, including the Cohesion Fund.

3. **Monitor implementation of Roma inclusion commitments by member states.**

    The Commission should develop a mechanism to ensure the implementation of the Roma Inclusion strategies. As a minimum, it should specify what are the foreseen mechanisms to ensure result-orientation in the Cohesion Policy for the next period, and especially for Roma integration.

4. **(Re-)introduce a community initiative for social inclusion.**

   Higher returns and higher risks are part of how financing more innovative or more comprehensive activities works. Social inclusion, especially Roma inclusion, is an area where innovative and comprehensive activities are needed. The Commission should consider (re-)introducing a Community initiative for social inclusion, with explicit but not exclusive targeting of Roma. Introduction of such an initiative will have a positive impact on launching innovative and comprehensive projects, transfer of good practices, and even using the simplified procedures introduced by EU regulations (if the Commission applies flat rate, national authorities cannot neglect applying it as well).

5. **Encourage member states to partner the Open Society Foundations' Making the Most initiative with their Structural Funds resources.**

   Implement capacity-building programs for a range of stakeholders, including local governments, Roma, and other NGOs to generate and manage Structural Fund projects towards the inclusion of the Roma.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND MEMBER STATES

6. **Comprehensive/integrated programs.**

   The European Commission should strongly recommend to member states that they develop integrated Roma programs still in the current planning cycle (2007–2013), in line with the possibilities created by the recent amendments to the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) allowing housing improvement. Integrated Roma programs should also be one of the main tools for Roma integration in the next planning cycle 2014–2020.

   Member states shall allocate an amount to each most depressed micro-region/settlement for the development of such programs. Comprehensive programs can ensure a more effective allocation of funds, as they can better adapt to local needs, and a more equal allocation of funds, as involved micro-regions/settlements do not "compete" against one another.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO MEMBER STATES

7. Use Structural Funds to eliminate patterns of segregated education.

Governments should use Structural Funds to launch programs to cease segregated education. The European Social Fund can be used for moving Roma children from segregated schools to mainstream schools outside Roma neighborhoods and for training of teachers. The European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund can be used for reorganizing schools in order to eliminate patterns of segregated education.

8. Use Structural Funds to develop early childhood education programs.

Governments should launch programs targeting early childhood development. The measure can have a more focused or a more comprehensive target. Early childhood development can be supported by setting up and operating children's houses, where children under the age of five and their parents (mainly mothers) can play, meet experts (e.g., family protection advisor, health visitors, remedial teacher, pediatrician) and use the infrastructure (kitchen, bathroom, etc.). This can be focused on the most depressed micro-regions, settlements, or parts of larger settlements.

9. Use Structural Funds to increase capacities of kindergartens.

All relevant member states use significant amounts of money on human infrastructure development. These amounts shall be focused in several aspects by giving priority to: (i) education, especially kindergartens and preschool institutions, rather than other human infrastructure; (ii) increasing capacities (by building new institutions or enlarging existing ones), rather than just renovation; and (iii) settlements with a high share of socially disadvantaged children (e.g., whose parents are unemployed and have no middle-level education).

10. Use Structural Funds to build the capacity of NGOs.

National authorities shall finance community development and capacity building activities (development of both technical capacity and social inclusion capacity) of national or regional NGOs in marginalized communities that are unable to absorb EU funds at the moment. This shall include the costs of the presence of a community development expert (wage, travel) and a flexible budget for organizing community events and supporting local civic groups.

Empowering Roma Communities

Integration should be understood as a two-way process, and Roma inclusion will remain an elusive aspiration unless the principle and substance of Roma participation is embraced by international institutions, national governments, and local municipalities. Without consultation and dialogue to assess the needs and aspirations of communities, and without a participatory "bottom-up" approach to developing integration policies, future efforts will prove to be as ineffective as those of the past. A Framework Strategy for Roma Inclusion must promote Roma as active citizens rather than passive recipients.

Within the Framework, the Commission must strive harder to meet its own general principles and minimum standards when it comes to consultation and participation of Roma. In its Communication "Towards a Reinforced Culture of Consultation and Dialogue" the Commission affirms that wide consultation is one of its duties according to the Treaties. Through wide consultation,

> the Commission ensures that its proposals are technically viable, practically workable and based on a bottom up approach … improving the quality of the policy outcome and enhancing the involvement of interested parties and the public at large.[37]

The Communication states that the Commission should ensure adequate consultation opportunities for those affected by the policies in question and those involved in

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[37] European Commission (2002) *Towards a Reinforced Culture of Consultation and Dialogue—General Principles and Minimum Standards for Consultation of Interested Parties by the the Commission*, Brussels, 11.12.2002, COM (2002)704 final. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/governance/docs/comm_standards_en.pdf.

the implementation. Furthermore, where formal or structured consultations do not exist for wider constituencies and specific target groups, including ethnic minorities, the Commission should consider how best to ensure that "all interests are being taken into account through other forms of consultation." The communication reaffirms the importance of participation and consultation and explicitly asserts that "the quality of EU policy depends on ensuring wide participation throughout the policy chain—from conception to implementation." To go beyond the rhetoric and get to the substance of Roma participation and active citizenship, the points below reflect the experience of the Open Society Foundations:

1. **Strengthen Roma civil society:** The NGO sector, within the broader sphere of civil society, has proven to be *the* entry point for Roma participation in public life over the last decade. It is largely due to Roma civic activism that there is any public awareness or recognition of Roma issues. In addition to their role as advocates for Roma rights, NGOs with strong ties to local communities are key to the success of any initiatives or interventions targeted at Roma.

   To date, direct investment in Roma and Roma-led NGOs has built up a substantial number of Roma activists. For over a decade, the Open Society Roma Initiatives have provided core institutional funding support and training opportunities for Roma NGOs to be effective and credible stakeholders in the policy process. Staff members from most of these NGOs have been beneficiaries of internship placements and intensive English-language training and have participated in international conferences, seminars, and workshops funded by the Roma Initiatives. In addition to continued support for our established partners, the Roma Initiatives maintain its "starting from scratch" approach to find the best, most effective, and most innovative of emerging leaders and organizations.

   However, for millions of Roma all talk of civil society remains fanciful, as they have never come into contact with the thin stratum of Roma activists and organizations. In proportion to the size of the Roma population, the civil sector is undersized, underdeveloped, and overstretched.

   A Framework Strategy for Roma Inclusion must prioritize a systematic scale-up of capacity building and direct investment to bolster the civil sector. There is an urgent need for all stakeholders to coordinate their activities and take a strategic and structured approach to provide a very specific and targeted set of skills to Roma activists, building on existing potential, and starting from scratch in towns and villages where this potential has remained untapped to date. Such an approach requires a concerted five-year strategy, to "go deep" country-by-country, region-by-region, right down to towns and villages.

2. **Voter empowerment:** Until Roma communities have the political weight commensurate with their numbers, governments and political parties will continue in their neglect and refusal to address the issue with any sense of seriousness and wider public contempt for Roma will remain undiminished. A community that exercises its right to vote, and whose votes are not for sale, is an empowered community, and moreover, a mobilized political constituency. A recent voter registration campaign coordinated by the Open Society Foundations with Roma NGOs and 120 grass-roots activists in Serbia resulted in 44,000 Roma registering to vote in the June 2010 elections for the Roma National Council. The series of public meetings, door-to-door canvassing, high registration, and voter turnout confirmed the real potential in mobilizing Roma as voters and active citizens. There is a need for a Europe-wide drive to support voter registration, informed choice, and civic education programs to promote active citizenship as the necessary first steps to political inclusion.

3. **Census registration:** National censuses will be conducted across the Western Balkans and Central Europe over the next few years. As the national census takes place once every ten years, this is an opportunity for all concerned stakeholders to combine to mobilize Roma communities to inform and encourage individuals to declare their identity as Roma. This is especially important in the scope of the Decade as affirmative action programs and resource allocations in the Western Balkans are linked to ethnic and/or national identities. It also provides an historic opportunity to begin to address the perennial problem of the lack of reliable data. An added importance is that this is an opportunity for the undocumented to be counted.

4. **Complex and comprehensive approaches to community development:** To promote inclusion and meet the needs of diverse communities that endure differing levels of deprivation, policy approaches must be both complex and comprehensive. There has been little evidence to date of coherent policy interventions to simultaneously combat poverty, provide access to health services and quality education, and resolve housing and infrastructure issues. Such approaches require political will, resolve, and imagination. There are best practices and lessons to be learned from community-based civil society organizations to guide such developments.

One illustrative example is the Ruhama Foundation in Romania. The approach and portfolio of activities undertaken by this Roma organization, provides a working model of what makes for a comprehensive approach to community development. Ruhama provides a wide range of services to multiply disadvantaged communities. The team includes sociologists, social workers, economists, jurists, teachers, psychologists, employment agents, and caregivers, and its work is supported by dozens of volunteers, students, and interns. Ruhama is an accredited provider of social services. They extended their provision of homecare for the elderly and people with

disabilities to cover medical care for the homebound. They set up a Citizens Advice Bureau and provide free information and counseling services on a daily basis since 2002.

In the sphere of community development and housing, the Ruhama Foundation works in 35 towns to improve living conditions and develop local infrastructure (roads, electricity, potable water supplies, mobilizing and empowering Roma citizens, and in one project in the village of Telechiu, the actual construction of five homes for the most deprived families). With support from the World Bank, they established the Bihor County Youth Forum to promote civic involvement and develop social skills among younger Roma and to engage them in information campaigns and community work. The Ruhama Foundation has long been engaged in education issues, and in 2006 in collaboration with its local partners managed to organize 23 summer kindergartens for about 500 Roma and non-Roma children who had not yet attended public kindergartens with a chance to prepare for school attendance. The foundation also runs programs targeting Roma children in primary and secondary schools, as well as university students, Roma parents, and tutors working with Roma children. Ruhama is an accredited provider of professional training programs, and developed a Professional Training Department within the organization. Between 2004 and 2009 the foundation expanded its portfolio to a total of 19 employment training courses, including qualifications for construction workers, florists, waiters, retailers, trainers, database operators, social workers, and caregivers.

It should be apparent that in order to design effective interventions, to define the needs of target communities, and to close the implementation gaps in strategies and action plans for Roma inclusion, there is a need for structured consultation with Roma communities and civic organizations at every stage: conception, design, implementation, and monitoring. As discussion and deliberation about what a strategy for Roma Inclusion might look like gathers pace, there is much to be learned from experience garnered by organizations such as Ruhama, their working methods with and for target communities, the combination of service provision and rights-based advocacy, and the organization's capacity to build coalitions and partnerships to sustain a complex and comprehensive approach that tackles the key priorities of education, employment, health, and housing on the local community level.

5. **IDPs, Refugees, and the Undocumented:** The Council of Europe has repeatedly and eloquently made the case that national governments must ensure that every child has a right to a nationality; that forced removals from Germany and other EU states to Kosovo are premature; that a post-conflict society does not yet have the capacity to absorb and integrate returnees; and we fully endorse Commissioner Hammarberg's statement that "return" is not a purely technical administrative act:

"*it means to receive and re-integrate returning people and families in dignity and security, and in a sustainable way.*"

The interventions of two Roma NGOs based in Macedonia are our examples of best practice in this regard.

The National Roma Centrum (NRC) in Kumanovo has been running a campaign "Empower the Woman: Empower the Community," supported by the Roma Initiatives since 2007. The NRC has successfully registered about 490 people, with 96 cases currently pending. Among the factors that inhibit Roma from registering their children are a lack of awareness about the obligatory registration of all newborns; additional costs and complex procedures for registering children after the statutory 30-day period from the date of birth, compounded by the refusal of hospitals to issue documents for Roma mothers not covered by health insurance. For children born abroad, it is difficult, complicated, and expensive to access the necessary documents once "returned"; those born in times of war and flight amidst the chaos and collapse of bureaucratic administrations face similarly costly, lengthy, and legally complex obstacles.

The NGO LIL has also been actively campaigning on behalf of the undocumented for nearly five years in four settlements near Skopje. Director Sarita Jasarova stated that the lack of birth certificates, identity cards, or other legal documents prevents many Roma from acquiring citizenship or residence permits, and denies them access to the most basic services "without which a normal life cannot be imagined." As part of wider efforts to combat school dropouts, Jasarova persuaded one local school to accept 20 children informally while the necessary papers for enrollment were being processed and proudly announced that in the past year every newborn Roma child was delivered in a hospital and registered at birth in the four settlements. The team at NGO LIL works tirelessly, canvassing Roma settlements, coping with a stream of urgent and desperate clients, alternatively badgering and mediating with local authorities, frequently commuting between Skopje, Pristina, and Belgrade to sort out complicated cases. In their work to date with Roma from Kosovo, they have obtained the necessary documentation for 61 families to enable them to acquire Macedonian citizenship.

Challenging Negative Attitudes and Combating Prejudice

A strategic priority for the Open Society Roma Initiatives is to challenge negative stereotypes and anti-Roma prejudice and counter media disinformation, discriminatory practices, and populist and racist discourse. Towards this end the Roma Initiatives work with a diverse and broad range of civil society partners to promote positive and affirmative images of Roma people and culture in order to repudiate racism, and to transcend perceptions of Roma as an undifferentiated mass of passive victims.

The current crisis of anti-Gypsyism requires positive and innovative interventions to promote positive and affirmative images of Roma. Sustained government and EU-funded programs must challenge racist and discriminatory attitudes, and make a massive drive to ensure that all public bodies embrace the principles of non-discrimination.

The experience in other countries like the United Kingdom in managing diversity and shifting public opinion beyond resentment and discrimination to a common-sense respect for, and acceptance of, minorities as equals in the public sphere may take decades. And once achieved, constant vigilance is required to sustain this as a core value. But experience shows that such shifts are achievable.

Bland, pan-European public opinion campaigns have often proven to be *ad-hoc*, high-cost, and low-impact initiatives that leave little behind. Campaigns need to resonate in the vernacular, should actively engage minority and majority populations, and public campaigns need to move beyond the capital city limits and reach towns, villages, and settlements that are often the loci of community conflicts. Furthermore, such initiatives should not be one-shot, "here today, gone tomorrow" efforts, but rather have concrete and durable deliverables that leave a legacy integrated into part of a longer-term process to promote and sustain social dialogue.

Public campaigns supported by the Roma Initiatives have combined all these components and serve as a model of good practice that can be scaled-up and replicated. Please find two illustrative examples below:

- *Read with Us,* **Hungary:** Inspired by the success of "Read with Me" run by the Open Society Foundations' partner Valeriu Nicolae in Romania, a similar campaign was launched at a school in Budapest on April 2010. "Read with Us" has enlisted Hungarian celebrities—among them actors, musicians, authors, television personalities, and sports stars—in a broad-based public campaign targeting schools and families in multiply disadvantaged regions. A series of public events which include readings by celebrities, puppet theater, poetry recitals, and musical performances continues across Hungary; thousands of books have been donated by publishers, distributors, and the general public. These donations are passed on to the schools, the children, and their parents. The rolling book donation events aim to increase the culture of personal and corporate responsibility and link those who donate with the schools and local communities. The emphasis is on promoting social dialogue, and all events include Roma and non-Roma children and adults. The campaign continues to expand and grow as it generates increased media attention and new partners from the public and private sectors.

- *Equal Chances against Cancer*, **Hungary:** In partnership with the Joint American Jewish Distribution Committee, the Open Society Roma Initiatives have supported this campaign for over two years. The campaign, an example of "explicit but not exclusive targeting" of Roma populations, has provided breast cancer screening for over 4,500 women in over 30 locations in the poorest micro-regions of Hungary. In addition to screenings and information campaigns about breast self-examination, there are public health days, with screenings for lung diseases, high blood pressure, allergies, and free consultations with health professionals, plus workshops and conferences to promote healthier lifestyles, drawing attention to the particular health problems of disadvantaged communities, and to initiate dialogue between the Roma community and health professionals. In every location Roma are, at a very minimum, involved in the program design and community outreach. In many of the locations, the lead facilitating partners are either Roma civic organizations or Roma mayors. What is important here is that Roma organizations and Roma public figures are seen bringing benefits to the entire community, Roma and non-Roma alike, which is poorly served, geographically isolated, and socially disadvantaged. Health days are designed to attract the whole family to ensure that as many women as possible can attend. The campaign continues to attract press, TV, and radio coverage and is helped in this by a pool of TV actors and other well-known performers who volunteer and perform for free on the open days.

Both campaigns have clear deliverables and distinct objectives, do not solely target Roma populations, and rather promote partnership and integration that are truly inclusive. They are cost-effective, involve wide coalitions of volunteers from the civil sector, and importantly recognized thanks to popular volunteers from the worlds of arts and culture, media, and entertainment. In the sphere of culture, Roma Initiatives runs the online photography competition *Chachipe,* and has also supported film and documentary making by Roma directors. Two examples of high-quality, innovative documentary work by Roma women and supported by the Roma Initiatives are as follows:

- ***Mundi Romani:*** The documentary series "Mundi Romani—The World through Roma Eyes" (www.mundiromani.com), is a co-production of the Romedia Foundation and Hungary's Duna Television. Each episode of this 24-part television documentary series presents a different aspect of Roma culture in locations spanning Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and the Americas. The series provides insights into Roma culture entirely new to most viewers, including Roma themselves. In September 2009, the "Ukraine 2008—School Segregation" episode of the series received the Best Visual Coverage Award at the Uzhgorod International Television Festival. A year earlier, the episode "Trapped—The Forgotten Story of the Mitrovica Roma" won the Best Television Production Award at the same festival and was also nominated for Best News Documentary at the prestigious Monte Carlo Television Festival. Another Mundi Romani episode, "Granada, the Maya Family," was selected as winner of the 5th Hungarian Ethnicity Film Festival in March 2008, and "Lashi Vita—Beautiful Life," which explored the plight of Roma communities in the face of an unprecedented wave of anti-Gypsyism across Italy in 2008, was nominated for the CIVIS Media Prize in 2009. Following Duna Television's selection as one of two broadcast media partners for UNESCO's 2010 International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures, Mundi Romani is one of eight programs about minorities and culture that bear the logo of the Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures.

- ***Me, My Gypsy Family & Woody Allen:*** The debut feature-length documentary produced by young Roma filmmaker Laura Halilovic tells the story of Halilovic's family, who came to Italy from Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was the most-awarded Italian documentary in 2009—with six prizes and two special mentions. Awards include the URTI Grand Prize for Author's Documentary and nomination for the 2010 European CIVIS Television Prize. In June 2009, Halilovic's film won its first major award, the UCCA Prize 2009 at the Bellaria Film Festival in Bellaria, Italy. The regional office of the Ministry of Education in the region of Piedmont also agreed to facilitate screenings of the film at more than 200 high schools. From 2010, the documentary is available in the teachers' resource catalogue, and schools also have the possibility to organize

screenings followed by discussions between Halilovic and students. In July 2009, Halilovic received the "Cinema against Racism" award at the XV International Anti-Racism Meeting in Livorno, Italy, and in September her film received the Alberto Manzi Prize for Best Television Program. In mid-October, "Me, My Gypsy Family & Woody Allen" and the educational activities related to the film were presented at a meeting of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. In 2010, distribution of the film has widened beyond Italy: as of May, the Zenit Arti Audovisive production company had made agreements for distribution of *Me, My Gypsy Family & Woody Allen* to schools or community centers in the Czech Republic, France, Romania, and Sweden.

- **Roma Mentor Program:** One important aspect of challenging negative attitudes is to instill and affirm positive self-image among Roma children and students about their own identity. The Roma Mentor Project (RMP) run by the Open Society Arts and Culture program and supported by the Roma Initiatives, connects successful Roma individuals with public schools and after-school learning programs, where the majority of the children are Roma. The RMP draws on a network of Roma volunteers willing to mentor, work with, and inspire children by communicating a philosophy of Roma emancipation, Roma pride, and Roma self-assertion. Drawing on their personal experience, education, knowledge, and cultural heritage, they have fostered very dynamic forms of meaningful interaction with children in 50 schools at 38 locations across five countries in Bulgaria, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, and Slovakia. The program has expanded to include themes of civic awareness, self-confidence, and broader issues of identity and social integration. RMP improves the self-esteem of Roma children; it motivates them to go to school and study; and it helps develop their skills and boosts their talents. Beyond its direct impact on the children directly participating, RMP also promotes positive attitude changes in other children in the relevant schools, as well as teachers, parents, and the wider community.

Beyond EU Borders: Roma Inclusion in the Western Balkans

As the Commission Communication on Enlargement states, "Much is at stake in the enlargement process both for the EU and the aspirant countries." Despite the deficits of reliable and comprehensive data covering all countries in the Western Balkans, the available data does indicate that there has been a serious deterioration of the situation of Roma in the region during the past two decades. A widening gap between Roma and non-Roma is characterized by extremely high rates of illiteracy, unemployment, poverty, and infant and child mortality among Roma, and much lower rates of life expectancy and school enrollment rates. The plight of Roma IDPs and refugees in the region is even worse.[38]

The Commission explicitly acknowledges that:

> Roma constitute a particularly vulnerable minority; they are affected by poverty, discrimination and segregation in access to education, employment, housing and social services, including health care. A significant number of Roma still lack civil registration or personal documents. Many of them still live in camps as Internally Displaced Persons as a consequence of the recent wars.[39]

Expressing its commitment to helping "aspirant" countries to improve conditions for vulnerable groups including Roma, the Commission suggests that they should make better use of the opportunities provided by the Decade and "consider setting explicit and

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[38] For a detailed analysis of this situation, please see: Mensur Haliti (2011) *Blindspot: Kosovo Roma and the Decade*. Budapest: Decade of Roma Inclusion.

[39] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2010–2011 Brussels, 9.11. 2010 Com(2010) 660, p. 7.

ambitious targets on employment, education and poverty reduction of disadvantaged communities, in particular Roma." An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies must fully embrace the aspirant countries of the Western Balkans, for to be blunt, it would be a mistake to confine efforts within the extant borders of the European Union members and only pay attention to the Western Balkans when the next "Roma migration crisis" hits the headlines. The 2010 report, *Pathways to Progress? The European Union and Roma Inclusion in the Western Balkans,* asserts that until the Commission develops and applies a long-term, sustainable, and comprehensive approach to Roma inclusion—and utilizes every opportunity to ensure that governments in the aspirant countries adopt such an approach—the situation of Roma will continue to deteriorate.[40] As the Commission has stated that addressing the needs of Roma communities is "critically important for maintaining social cohesion in South East Europe." The following recommendations are drawn from this report:

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Policy

- In close cooperation with national governments and Roma civil society, develop a comprehensive and sustainable long-term policy framework as well as action plans for each country and the region as a whole.

- Follow a common methodology and identify priorities and projects as well as implementation and monitoring structures in the policy framework of all countries.

- Align the new policy framework with the existing national strategies and action plans (including Decade action plans) and with initiatives on the European level.

- Ensure that the Western Balkans countries are included as full partners in the Integrated Platform for Roma Inclusion; that the aspirant countries be bound by the 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion; and that the Western Balkans should be an integral component of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies.

- Consider encouraging governments to apply a program-based approach in assistance programs for Roma and to take into account further international standards in development cooperation.

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[40]   Stephan Muller and Zeljko Jovanovic (2010) *Pathways to Progress? The European Union and Roma Inclusion in the Western Balkans.* Commissioned by the Open Society Roma Initiatives, March 2010.

- Invite the EU member states and potential donors to apply a program-based approach.
- Ensure that, with the 2014–2020 funding period, the situation of Roma will be more appropriately addressed, both quantitatively and qualitatively.
- Make Roma civil society or Roma representatives part of the planning, implementation, and monitoring process.
- Carefully scrutinize the accession experiences of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia in order to identify lessons learned for application in the Western Balkans.
- Initiate projects offering legal assistance to forced returnees enabling them, for example, to reclaim their property.
- Ensure that Roma forcibly returned from Western Europe are assisted with comprehensive integration programs.

Target Group/Indicators

- Make the situation of Roma an indicator for assessing the accession process.
- Develop indicators allowing for continuous measurement of progress made across all countries in the accession process.
- Ensure that relevant mainstream projects mention Roma as an explicit target group and include the change of their situation as an indicator.
- Ensure that projects targeting Roma include clear and realistic development goals, expected results, and indicators.

Reporting

- Ensure that documents guiding the accession process contain realistic and comprehensive analyses of the situation of Roma.
- Define sectors and develop indicators for assessing the situation of Roma, either within the framework of the Progress Reports or in specific annual reports on the situation of Roma in the Western Balkans.
- Include a specific chapter on Roma in the annual Progress Reports, or develop annual reports on progress regarding the inclusion of Roma, both for individual countries and for the Western Balkans region.
- Encourage more active participation of Roma civil society in assessing the situation of Roma in the Western Balkans.

Participation

- Implement the "General Principles and Minimum Standards for Consultation of Interested Parties" in IPA assistance in all Western Balkans countries.

- Implement a targeted approach by European Commission Delegations to consultations with Roma civil society based on the practice established by the Brussels-based consultations organized by the Directorate-General for Enlargement.

- Allocate funds under IPA assistance for the development of Roma civil society.

- Strongly encourage and assist the governments of the Western Balkans to increase the participation of Roma in public administration. It should also collect disaggregated data on minority participation in public administration.

- Strongly encourage and assist the governments to implement laws regulating the political representation of Roma.

- Establish clear rules for consultation that would allow timely, effective, and meaningful dialogue and participation by civil society, including Roma civil society organizations, in planning and monitoring IPA assistance.

- Find ways to overcome language barriers in communication with Roma representatives.

- Support projects to help Roma develop the capacity to work with public administration more effectively.

The Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies*

Recommendations for
Bulgaria
Czech Republic
Hungary
Romania
Slovakia

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* The views expressed in this section are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Open Society Foundations.

Recommendations for Bulgaria*

PREAMBLE

As an important step in preparation for the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies in 2010, Bulgaria adopted a new Framework for Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society (2010–2020). This is a national strategic document that sets out priority areas and directions for action. The policy recommendations made below underline the program's principles and main priorities, and they are complemented, reviewed, and redesigned in the context of placing Roma in the focus of the European political agenda.

The Framework for Integration of Roma into Bulgarian Society (2010–2020) is based on the idea that the problems of Roma in Bulgaria are inseparable from the country's larger problems, which require specific and timely intervention.

It continues and develops the strategic areas and guidelines set by a previous framework from 1999, and approves the new framework needed for further and renewed action in the new European realities of Bulgaria, reflecting the obligations of its membership in the European Union. It is consistent with the policy framework of the European Union for the protection of human rights and respects the principle of ensuring equal opportunities for all citizens and non-discrimination. The program is synchronized with the development of European policies for the integration of the

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*   This policy paper was prepared by Elena Marshiakova and Vesselin Popov from the Society for Minority Studies, *Studii Romani,* Sofia.

Roma community, and with common basic principles for the inclusion of the Roma adopted by the EU Council on June 8, 2009. It acknowledges the need for increasing governmental efforts for achieving visible, durable results from integration actions targeting Roma, and is consistent with the relevant European policy instruments and institutional mechanisms, programs and initiatives. The Framework for Integration of Roma into Bulgarian Society (2010–2020) is consistent also with Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on policies for Roma and/or Travellers in Europe.

This framework document corresponds also with the Governmental Program for European Development of Bulgaria 2009–2013 and with the National Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015. The declared approach of the government is the active participation of Roma in Roma policy. This declared approach of cooperation of the state administration with the Roma community is reflected in the established consultative mechanisms and structures at the national, regional, and local levels; however, the actual activities are till now far from efficient.

The Bulgarian Framework includes, at least as a declaration of its intentions for the implementation the 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion adopted by the EU Council on June 8, 2009, namely:

1. Constructive, pragmatic, and non-discriminatory policies

2. Explicit but not exclusive targeting

3. Intercultural approach

4. Aiming for the mainstream

5. Awareness of the gender dimension

6. Transfer of evidence-based policies

7. Use of Community instruments

8. Involvement of regional and local authorities

9. Involvement of civil society

10. Active participation of Roma

Without denying the efforts made to date by the Bulgarian state, and regardless of the demonstration of political will at this stage, the Roma community continues to suffer from inequality, vulnerability to social risks, and discrimination in public life, while understanding that most of the declared intentions are just on paper, far removed from the daily reality of poverty and social exclusion in Bulgaria. In order to refine this program for social inclusion, the adopted Bulgarian Framework for Equal Integration of Roma into Bulgarian Society (2010–2020) must correlate with the upcoming adoption of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies. Moreover, the main

policy recommendation in the case of Bulgaria is to elaborate a mechanism for putting the recommendations into practice, which has not been the case until now.

STRATEGIC GOAL AND PRIORITY AREAS

As a major strategic objective of the Framework for Equal Integration of Roma into Bulgarian Society (2010–2020), the creation of the necessary conditions for the equal integration of Roma into Bulgaria's social, economic, and political life is determined by the achievement of equal opportunities and equal access to rights, goods, and services; Roma participation in all public areas; improvement in the quality of life; and respect for the principles of equality and non-discrimination. So formulated, this strategic objective fits perfectly into the objectives set out in the future EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, and is a solid foundation for future action.

PRIORITY AREAS FOR ACTION

Education

The educational integration of Roma children is the starting point for the equal integration of Roma into Bulgarian society. It is integral and indispensable element to the modernization of Bulgarian education. Without the educational integration of Roma, Bulgaria could neither meet its European requirements for inclusive education nor the job market's requirements for a well-qualified workforce. Educational integration is an important prerequisite for inclusion in the labor market, and for the subsequent improvement of Roma health and living conditions due to better economic prospects for young, well educated Roma.

Roma in Bulgaria are in a far less favorable position in regards to their educational background in comparison to the rest of the population, and many major challenges and problems lie ahead if integration is to be achieved. Just one of them is the lower grade of enrollment of Roma children in preschool education when compared with children from other communities. Yet another problem is the high percentage of dropouts among Roma children. But for Bulgaria the biggest problem is that Roma children in urban neighborhoods and rural villages are still learning in separated, *de facto* segregated "Roma" schools where the quality of education and possibilities for integration into society-at-large are low. Until now, the issue of the secondary segregation of ethnically mixed schools has been underestimated. Insufficient attention has been paid to the requirement for Roma students to learn in the Bulgarian language in school as well as

to the issue of weak intercultural education. The widespread practice of enrolling Roma children in schools for students with disabilities has not been entirely stopped.

Necessary but not yet sufficiently insured, significant investments of human and financial resources are required in the efforts to guarantee equal access and quality education for Roma children and pupils, education that is commensurate with the education of children from the majority.

Equal access should not be understood as "equal care towards all children," but as differentiated care according to their different needs, that is, as the need for additional measures targeting Roma children and pupils who do not have equal starting opportunities, and special care for ensuring their full participation in the educational process.

To be successful the overall educational integration Roma children in Bulgaria needs to follow some basic, urgent lines of action:

- Inclusion of all Roma children nearing preschool age into preschool preparatory groups or preparatory classes.

- Inclusion of all Roma children of school-age in the educational system;

- Inclusion in nurseries and kindergartens of all Roma children whose parents wish it so, and the provision of financial support for children from low-income families in order to give them access to nurseries and kindergartens.

- Creating conditions for all Roma children and pupils, who are living in places with mixed populations, to study in an ethnically mixed environment in kindergartens and schools.

- Closure of the segregated "Roma" schools in segregated Roma neighborhoods.

- Improving the quality of education in schools that teach exclusively Roma children in rural areas where there is no practical opportunity for desegregation.

- Establishing and implementing a comprehensive strategy to prevent children from dropping out and for the reintegration of those who have already dropped out.

- Providing institutional support for the preservation and development of the ethnic and cultural identity of Roma children through the education process.

- Provide institutional support for the introduction of an intercultural approach in the overall educational process.

- Provide additional training for teachers for work in ethnically mixed multicultural environment.

- Work with Roma families to build a suitable environment for the upbringing of their children, aimed at personal and professional development.

- Involve Roma parents in the educational process and encourage their active participation in school life.

- Prevent the enrollment of healthy Roma children in the special schools;

- Take Roma pupils out from special schools and create the conditions for their integration into mainstream schools.

- Create the conditions and provide support for Roma children to continue their education in secondary education (preparation for entry exams).

- Create conditions and provide support for Roma children to continue their education in tertiary education (preparation for entry exams).

Employment

Roma in Bulgaria are among the most disadvantaged in the labor market; many have a low level of education and insufficient social literacy, without adequate skills, abilities and qualifications, which then significantly impede their successful participation in the labor market. These factors, compounded by existing forms of discrimination towards Roma, put them at a striking disadvantage for the few jobs that are available. Therefore, the unemployment rate among Roma remains the highest in comparison with the general population, and many Roma have been forced to migrate abroad or to turn to the informal "gray" economy where they usually work without any contract.

The main objective of active state policy in the labor market in regard to Roma should be reducing unemployment, while maintaining and aiding employment. By targeting the long-term unemployed with an active labor policy of training and subsidized employment, some improvements can be expected in preventing poverty and the marginalization of disadvantaged groups like the Roma.

Creating the conditions that ensure sustainable employment and improve the overall situation of the Roma in the labor market requires undertaking a series of targeted and synchronized activities in the following priority areas:

- Elaborate, together with representatives of employers, trade unions and municipalities, the policies and employment programs at the national, regional, and local level as well as development of specific mechanisms to ensure the sustainable employment of Roma of working-age.

- Introduce legal and economic mechanisms to encourage employers to employ Roma, including so-called "subsidized" employment.

- Establish legal and economic mechanisms to encourage Roma who wish to be self-employed or to develop their own small businesses.

- Encourage young Roma to acquire higher qualification through the possibilities of the educational system.

- Develop special vocational training programs, appropriate for Roma and responsible to the markets demands.

- Provide additional measures to facilitate access of Roma to the labor market by developing training programs, qualification courses, and requalification.

- Motivate and facilitate access of Roma adults to different forms and programs for adult and continuing education and for obtaining additional qualifications.

- Create the conditions for disseminating and promoting the values and principles of lifelong learning in Roma communities.

- Promote the use of different forms of education upgrading, training, qualification courses, and requalification in accordance with the professions demanded on the labor market.

- Motivating the Roma for their involvement in training to develop entrepreneurial culture and to manage their own businesses.

- Promote the process of exiting from the borders of the shadow economy and establishing a mechanism for the legalization of economic activity of Roma entrepreneurs.

- Encourage further training for employers and managers to manage cultural diversity and to work with Roma.

- Provide mechanisms for effective protection against discrimination of Roma in the labor market and workplace.

- Prepare and further train specialists in the field of employment and social assistance for work with Roma.

- Encourage the education and professional realization of Roma as specialists in the field of employment and social assistance.

- Conducting information campaigns and building partnerships at national, regional, and local level to promote labor access and employment among the Roma.

Health

Socio-economic factors such as housing, living conditions, and educational level all directly affect Roma's health status, which significantly lags behind the majority along nearly every indicator. Life expectancy is lower for Roma than the general population, matched by high morbidity and high mortality rates (including mothers and infants). There is an urgent need to implement programs in field of healthcare in order to improve Roma's health status and life expectancy, as well as in field of family planning,

sexual and reproductive health, prenatal health, nutrition, epidemiology, parenting, and promoting knowledge about available medical services.

The provision of equal access to quality healthcare for Roma requires the adoption of systematic and consistent measures. In order to succeed in the drive for equity in the field of healthcare targeting the Roma community, the following priority actions are needed:

- Increase the number of Roma with health insurance, with the objective to achieve universal coverage of Roma in the health insurance system.

- Provide and conduct public information campaigns in order to inform Roma about their rights and obligations as health-insured individuals and to improve health attitudes and behavior and to increase their health awareness and access to health services.

- Provide health education, differentiated by age and gender, about diseases and risk factors, including those related to immunization and early marriages and births.

- Introduce and implement programs in health and sexual education for young people in and outside the school environment, and for people of all ages in the community; prepare and disseminate appropriate health educational materials.

- Extend the implementation of prophylaxis activities among the Roma population and educate about the key role of health prevention and medical check-ups;

- Form the health and social skills of young Roma for health preservation, family planning, and risk control behavior.

- Conduct informational activities focused on explaining the risks of early marriage and early births.

- Implement activities for family planning and the capacity raising of families for bringing up their children.

- Reduce infant mortality, maternal mortality, and early births through early coverage and monitoring of pregnant women and maternity consultations.

- Conduct awareness campaigns to activate parents and the community during the immunization campaigns to maximize coverage of the subjects of immunization, including the temporary establishment of temporary immunization posts and mobile teams.

- Implement screening programs, early diagnoses, and timely treatment of common diseases.

- Create the conditions for access of Roma to the existing national programs for prevention and control of cardiovascular diseases, cancer, drug addiction, diabetes, hereditary diseases, regular nutrition, etc.

- Increase access to health services, including overcoming geographical distances, by opening the health and social centers in compact Roma neighborhoods and use mobile medical units where needed.

- Strengthen and expand the network of Roma health mediators and conduct periodic training to maintain their expertise and provide training for new health mediators to ensure their professional realization.

- Promote the role of Roma health mediators through a massive campaign as part of a policy for improving access to health services.

- Prepare students in medical universities and colleges and current medical professionals for work in Roma communities and multiethnic environments.

- Target the preparation of Roma for study in medical universities and colleges.

- Strengthen the partnerships and coordination between health institutions, general practitioners, municipalities, health mediators, and other responsible bodies should be institutionalized as a sustainable policy.

Housing

The vast majority of Roma in Bulgaria live in separate Roma neighborhoods where conditions are extremely unsuitable (especially in big cities) for the development of any opportunities for Roma to have healthy, prosperous, fulfilling lives. Segregated neighborhoods continue to be one of the main obstacles to full social integration of Roma, as their living conditions lead to a deepening sense of isolation and a severe reduction in their opportunities for improving their educational, social, economic, and health status, resulting in utter despair for many people.

Roma neighborhoods often exist in a legal and physical limbo: no cadastral maps detail property ownership, there are no general or detailed urban plans, land ownership is opaque, many buildings are illegal, infrastructure is inadequately built and badly maintained with no sanitation, there is limited access to social services and communal utilities, and a significant daily struggle over scant resources. The low socio-economic status of inhabitants living in separate, segregated Roma neighborhoods further deepens their vulnerability as clients of public utility services.

Targeted and effective measures are needed in order to improve the housing and the living conditions of Roma and for the redevelopment of detached neighborhoods with predominantly Roma inhabitants. The efforts of all interested institutions in the country should be unified, coordinated, and concentrated in the following priority areas for action:

- Supplement and improve the existing legislation and administrative arrangements in regard to the situation of compact Roma neighborhoods.

- Elaborate community programs for improving housing conditions in detached compact Roma neighborhoods, aimed at providing a modern living environment.

- Prolong and continue the process of land and housing legalization, elaborate local and neighborhood development plans, cadastral maps, and records in order to cover all existing compact Roma areas.

- Design and (re-)construct the complete utility infrastructure (water, sanitation, electrification, road network, public works, etc.) in detached Roma neighborhoods;

- Design and (re-)construct the social services infrastructure for the use of health services, education, administration, and cultural activities in detached Roma neighborhoods.

- Improve the quality of existing houses in detached compact Roma neighborhoods in order to meet legal and regulatory requirements.

- Detach and consign new land plots for housing and the elaborationg of urban development plans for Roma housing in order to deconcentrate segregated Roma neighborhoods.

- Develop and implement a system of effective measures for financial and credit support for Roma in needs of housing in order to give them opportunity to build their own houses.

- Rethink and revise the concept of social housing in order to prevent the creation of new Roma segregated neighborhoods or apartment buildings.

- Cease the practice of forced eviction of Roma families from their houses in cases of pursuing of common public works, without prior providing them with alternative decent housing.

- Training and further qualification of specialists in residential environments and housing for work with the Roma population.

- Encourage the preparation and participation of experts from Roma origins for work in specialized structures for housing policy and town and territorial planning.

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

Set out in the Framework for Integration of Roma into Bulgarian Society (2010–2020), the main priorities for action should be implemented and bound together with the cross-cutting themes of combating poverty and social exclusion, eliminating discrimination and anti-Roma prejudice, developing Roma culture, and upholding gender equality.

These mutual cross-cutting of these themes with the main priorities of the activities set out in the Framework can be realized on two levels.

The Framework Program specifies two separate areas of activities: Non-discrimination and Equal Opportunities, and Culture.

In the area of Non-discrimination and Equal Opportunities, the following priorities should be underlined:

- Ensure the proper functioning and development of legislation, institutional structures, and instruments for protection against discrimination in order to increase the guarantees for effective protection of Roma rights, their equality, decent living, and full participation in society.

- Strengthen the administrative capacity and the sensitivity of state and local administration on issues of discrimination.

- Increase the participation of Roma in state and local administration.

- Improve the efficiency and competency of employees in law enforcement institutions for work in multicultural environments in compliance with human rights standards.

- Promote gender equality and ensure the prerequisites for a successful professional development of Roma women.

- Strengthen measures for the protection of Roma children in compliance with the legal mechanisms and work with families to improve their understanding and respect of the rights of children.

- Promotion of cultural pluralism in the media and the application of professional standards for ethical coverage of Roma issues.

- Large-scale awareness and information campaigns to raise awareness and intolerance to all forms of discrimination, including intolerance towards all forms of anti-Gypsyism.

In the field of Culture, such priority areas of activities must:

- Create, strengthen, and support the conditions for the preservation and development of culture, traditions, customs and artistic work of Roma as an inseparable part of national culture.

- Support traditional and contemporary forms of Roma art and culture.

- Develop the capacity of community centers, so-called *chitalishta* (reading houses), in compact Roma neighbourhoods as well as elsewhere for the preservation, development, and dissemination of Roma culture.

- Promote the principles of intercultural dialogue and effectively regulate for ethno-cultural pluralism in the public media.

- Support and promote of Roma culture, traditions, and art through museums, galleries, the media, and other art forms.
- Support and organize public and media campaigns to promote Roma culture and the contribution of Roma artists to national culture.

No less important is the second level of mutual cross-cutting between the above topics with the main priorities of the activities set out in the Framework Program. This cross-cutting can have various forms, for example, the desegregation of separate schools with Roma pupils is, at the same time, an important factor for combating discrimination against Roma; including the requirements for equal participation of women in employment leads to upholding gender equality, etc.

CONDITIONS AND WARRANTIES FOR AN EFFECTIVE ROMA POLICY

If the achievement of Roma inclusion in Bulgaria is to succeed, all policies must be implemented on the basis of a coherent, effective, and targeted use of available managerial and financial resources on the national, regional, and local levels as well as on the European level. The central government must take the lead in this effort since Roma are full-fledged Romanian citizens scattered throughout every corner of the country, while the European level must set the general framework and priority areas and have the authority to monitor the implementation and flow of Roma inclusion processes.

Of particular importance is the application of a mainstreaming (horizontal) approach, whereby the needs, problems, and rights of Roma must be integrated into general and sectoral policies and measures in order to create the appropriate conditions for achieving equal opportunities, equality, and equal participation of Roma in social, economic, and political life. Simultaneously, it is necessary to undertake temporary positive incentive measures in different sectors, which should not be misconstrued as privileges, but rather developed as a means for overcoming existing inequalities and inequities among Roma, and also for preventing future crises.

The last and most important recommendation for securing the success of measures for Roma inclusion is to ensure the proper implementation of the Framework for Integration of Roma into Bulgarian Society, reinforced by the respective amendments spelled out in detail above. Cooperation among all the relevant institutions at the national, regional, and local levels with representatives of the Roma community is absolutely essential for this to happen. The active participation of Roma at each stage of design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies at all levels will enrich the process in terms of community interests and the competence of the experts working on Roma issues. Foremost, this requires the strengthening of the political representation and civic participation of representatives of the Roma community in the administration and will be the guarantee for the real, effective participation of Roma in the processes.

Recommendations for the Czech Republic*

This strategic document describes the situation and presents key measures proposed for education, employment, housing, and health. It includes an Appendix on measures in the area of social legal protection of children, institutional upbringing, and social services

EDUCATION

Educating Socially Disadvantaged Children in the Czech Republic

The first impulse in the Czech Republic to initiate fundamental reforms with regards to the education of socially disadvantaged students was prompted by the critical and embarrassing verdict of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) on the case of *D. H. and Others v. Czech Republic*: the Czech Republic was convicted of systemic discrimination against Roma children within its education system.

A proposal to rectify matters was drafted in 2008. This was a commitment approved by the government and that contained specific measures to be sent to the ECHR. The key measure was the drafting of two national strategic documents: the National Action Plan for Inclusive Education (NAPIE)[41] and the Action Plan for Implementing a Concept of Early Care for Children from Socially Disadvantaged Environments.[42]

NAPIE is the first framework document focusing on equal access to education for all persons. It contains essential measures to advance an individual approach in the Czech school system and have a preventative effect against the social exclusion of individuals and entire social groups.

The implementation of NAPIE is divided into two phases: a preparatory phase from 2010–2013, and an implementation phase thereafter. The goal of the preparatory phase is to hold wide-ranging discussions among representatives of the relevant government departments, academics, professional groups, field experts, and nonprofit organizations, leading to the drafting of a specific strategy and measures to support inclusive education at all levels of the education system.

The second phase will implement the drafted and approved measures, and in theory achieve a maximum level of expansion for inclusive education in the Czech Republic. Notably, both action plans were approved by the Czech government. But more progress on improving the conditions of education for socially disadvantaged students largely depends on the quality and scope in which the measures arising from these two plans are implemented by the Czech Ministry of Education and other affected bodies.

Early Childhood Education and Care

To ensure regular preschool preparation of children, close cooperation must be coordinated among employees of the Ministries of Education, Labor and Social Affairs, and Health, and those bodies offering social legal protection, as well as municipal authorities and nongovernmental and nonprofit organizations active in the field.

The key measures in the field of pre-primary education would include steps to:

- **Implement and monitor early childhood education and care pilot projects** that include interventions for newborns and children under three, and prenatal services to support preparation for parenthood.

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[41] The full wording of the National Action Plan for Inclusive Education is available in Czech at: http://www.msmt.cz/socialni-programy/narodn-akcni-plan-inkluzivniho-vzdelavani.

[42] The full wording of the Action Plan for Implementing a Concept of Early Care for Children from Socially Disadvantaged Environments is available in Czech at: http://www.msmt.cz/socialni-programy.

Standardize early childhood education and care activities and draft proposals for sustainable financing at the national level which target all the disadvantaged.

- **Standardize and systematically support social activation services for families with children** that support parents in acquiring the necessary skills for developing their children's potential in all socially excluded areas of the Czech Republic.

Social activation services need to be connected with early care services and on-the-ground social work; these activities need to be taken into account in local strategic documents (e.g., Medium-term Social Service Development Plans in individual regions).

- **Ensure the right to preschool education** by creating sufficient space at preschool facilities, including alternate forms of preschool preparation for children age two to six.

Incorporate school and lunch fees at preschool institutions into the social welfare system for the poorest segments of the population, potentially using a system of separate beneficiaries (whereby the preschool institution would receive the fees directly in order to prevent the funds from being used for other ends).

- **Actively screen high-risk families** in cooperation with bodies providing social legal protection for children; provide timely and coordinated provision of social activation services and early care services for these families.

- **Ensure mandatory participation in preschool education for children in indicated cases** (in the case of high risk for insufficient family support for developing the child's potential) and formulation of a mechanism that would ensure regular attendance of preschool institutions by children from the highest risk families.

- **Eliminate preparatory classes for socially disadvantaged students** at schools for students with minor mental disabilities. Preparatory classes should prepare students for integration into regular mainstream schools; there is no legitimate reason for them to continue to attend schools for mentally disabled students.

- **Initiate long-term information and outreach campaigns focused on families with children in socially excluded areas** or areas in danger of social exclusion.

The information and outreach campaign should communicate to parents the importance of preschool preparation and its influence on the children's later success in school. Parents also need to be made aware of their rights and responsibilities in connection with education at nursery and elementary school (e.g., on the right to education at the catchment elementary school), and the importance for continuing on with education to complete secondary school.

Primary Education

In the Czech Republic, students from families at risk of social exclusion form a significant proportion of the students at elementary schools for children with minor mental disabilities. Students from such environments are also less able to cope with the dominant selectivity of the Czech elementary school system, and for this reason often have a lower success rate at school.

Basic measures for primary education:

- **Increase the inclusivity of elementary schools and the systematic preparation thereof for an individual approach to the needs of students with special educational needs.**

  Ensuring the universal provision of intensive pre- and post-graduate education and training for teachers should focus on increasing the professional abilities of education workers in terms of facilitating the education of socially disadvantaged children and creating a positive social climate in the school and classroom. The teacher's will and ability to develop the potential of each and every individual pupil are fundamental conditions for the successful education of children and youth at all levels in the education system.

  Two essential steps would be to introduce nationwide supervision of educational workers at schools and school guidance facilities, followed by the establishment of guidance offices at schools, ensuring a sufficient number of special educators and psychologists to provide individual care to students in need of assistance at regular schools.

  Change the diagnostic methods that monitor the child in his or her context—at school, in the family environment—and focus on support for each child (e.g., mapping the individual progress of each child). Current practice primarily makes use of standardized diagnostic tools that aim to determine whether the monitored individual is "at level" or not. The central goal of the current school guidance system is to form a diagnosis, with the appropriate support and intervention second in terms of importance. The goal of the diagnosis should above all be to establish the proper educational support for the child.

  Create an inclusion standard for the teaching profession (definition of an inclusive teacher and their abilities in relation to the needs of socially disadvantaged children) that then should be reflected in the system of career advancement.

- **Regular inspections carried out by the Czech School Inspectorate** should focus on checking the scope and quality of support for students experiencing failure in regular school education for reasons other than mental disability or other health problems. Support should always aim to even out students'

disadvantages and help them achieve the expected output from regular school education.

- **Transform the system of schools for students with minor mental handicaps,** with the goal of integrating students with minor mental handicaps into mainstream schools through individual or group integration.

- **Introduce legislation** that expressly forbids that students without disabilities be placed in special schools or educated according to the curriculum designed for mentally handicapped students.

- **Systematic support for schools and organizations** providing leisure activities for socially disadvantaged students, including tutoring for students that need assistance preparing for class and activities for the primary prevention of high-risk behavior.

- **Ensure active cooperation** at the regional level between schools and professional partners from the fields of healthcare, social services, nonprofit organizations, and families.

Secondary and Post-secondary Education and Entering the Workforce

In the Czech Republic it has long been evident that socially disadvantaged individuals, including Roma, have much lower levels of participation in secondary and post-secondary education.

Key measures in the field of secondary and post-secondary education that need to be adopted include:

- An analysis focused on determining the current number of students that enter secondary and tertiary education and the factors that influence the graduation rates for both the above segments of education.

- Provide accessible, quality, individualized career counseling for students in the second half of elementary school and secondary school (including site visits of future workplaces and tools to motivate continuing in education).

- Create and provide stable financial support for programs preparing students for secondary school entrance exams and follow-up assistance programs for increasing the likelihood they will successfully complete their education.

- Ensure the accessibility of programs preparing Roma secondary school students for the transition to university.

- Provide bursary programs for university students from low-income families.

Legislation and Funding for Socially Disadvantaged Students

All the measures proposed above must be dealt with in terms of legislative measures and adequate, committed funding.

The stigmatizing and exceedingly dysfunctional system of legislative categorization of students according to their disabilities must be changed to a categorization based on the level of support they require.

Currently, the implementation and funding of support measures are dependent on the diagnosis and type of institution where the child is enrolled. It is essential that funding be tied to a specific form of assistance for each student (assistant teacher, special aids, etc.), regardless of the type of school where the child is taught. But preference should be given to education at regular schools.

Essential measures in the field of legislation and funding include:

- Recodification of § 16 of Act No. 561/2004 Coll. (Education Act).

  The new wording of § 16 of the Education Act should redefine students by their need for minor, increased, intensive, or exceptional assistance. This approach is much more suitable, as it is not based on the child's problems, but on the level of teaching support the student needs and subsequent assignment of specific assistance measures.

  In this regard, it is necessary to create a detailed catalogue of assistance measures that will describe in detail the support options designed for individual groups of socially disadvantaged students. This catalogue will serve school guidance facilities and schools in determining the best form of support for a given student.

- Securing funding for implementing assistance measures and for socially disadvantaged children by revising Decree No. 492/2005 Coll.

  Although the Education Act guarantees the right to educational assistance for all children and students with special needs (including socially disadvantaged children), the funding for implementing such assistance is only provided to students with physical disabilities. It is therefore essential that, in connection with the change to § 16 of the Education Act, that the funding for implementing assistance measures for socially disadvantaged children at nursery, elementary, and secondary schools also be secured by amending Decree No. 492/2005 Coll.

- Revising the funding of regional schools. Funding provided to schools primarily for teacher salaries) is currently derived from the number of students at each school. Thus, it is economically advantageous for schools to put more students in classes, which negatively impacts the quality and level of individualization of education.

The proposed measure is to establish a financial normative per class and set a maximum number of students per class at individual levels of education, which would be based on the optimum number of students for the given age-group.

Further Measures

- Secure professional education on how to apply the model of inclusive education for all those involved at the regional level (local public employees responsible for the education sector, school and guidance management, etc.), with an emphasis on applying a multidisciplinary approach.

- Continually monitor and collect data on the development of individual education in the Czech Republic.

EMPLOYMENT

The Czech Republic must react to a number of specific problems if it is to address the unemployment of socially excluded Roma. This stalemate is made of several strong determinants:

- Marked regional differences in the level of unemployment and the ability of the labor market to absorb the long-term unemployed with low qualifications; heavy competition on the labor market for low-wage jobs in some regions has exacerbated competition on the labor market and had lead to social tensions between the majority population and the Roma minority, especially if the members thereof are unemployed and collect state social support and material needs assistance

- In socially excluded areas,[43] the unemployment rate tends to be as high as 90 percent and people primarily work in the "gray economy" without the protection of labor laws; some entrepreneurs exploit the situation and provide under-the-table.

- Discrimination on the labor market, and not primarily ethnic discrimination, but based on lack of qualifications and long-term unemployment.

- A generation of young people born after 1989 has now matured in socially excluded locales; their parents lost their jobs and many of them never returned

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[43] Based on a Labor and Social Affairs Ministry study from 2006, according to which there are 330 socially excluded locales in the Czech Republic with approximately 80,000 inhabitants, of which Roma comprise roughly three-quarters.

to work; their children thus never adopted the norm of acquiring funds through legal employment.

- For a considerable segment of the population in excluded locales, particularly for men, there has been a complete loss of work habits, which have been substituted by partially or fully illegal subsistence strategies.

- For the above reasons, it is necessary to state that a large part of the population in excluded areas do not suffer long-term unemployment, but absolute unemployment (due to both workers and employers); intervention in such cases must focus primarily on the upcoming generation of children, where the key is preventing replication of their parents' untenable strategies

- The situation is further complicated by an insufficiently targeted active employment policy and the small difference between the minimum wage and the accessible social payments.

- Short-term strategies chosen by larger families are also problematic: a trade certificate is acquired in the name of one family member, with multiple family members working on it, then the annual tax and insurance payments become too high to make working worthwhile.

Measures to Make Active Employment Policies More Effective

- **Standardize individual action plans implemented by employment office employees.**

  Individual action plans (IAPs), which are obligatorily drawn up with clients that are unemployed for longer than five months, are completely ineffective. Employment office employees are often unqualified to draw them up, rarely having sufficient contact with the client. The optimization of IAPs is possible with proper collaboration with nonprofit NGOs coupled with the appropriate active employment policy tools.

- **Target requalification implemented in cooperation with employers.**

  In order to maximize the potential of requalification programs, it is imperative to regularly evaluate the local labor markets and compare them with national and global employment trends. Keeping this in mind, requalification courses should also be tailored to the unemployed, optimally in keeping with the individual action plans of individual clients (note: this is an implemented, active employment policy tool). The key to increasing the applicability of requalification is involving employers, who create the demand for labor.

- **Outsource requalification courses and other active employment policy tools; regular evaluation of their effectiveness.**

  Employment offices purchase requalification courses from professional organizations and employers. They then evaluate the effectiveness thereof by the number of requalified workers who find positions in the local workforce. This increases the effectiveness of requalification courses and their ties to the local labor market.

- **Extend support for Paid Community Service and targeted requalification.**

  Paid community service (PCS) can play an activating role to reintegrate the long-term unemployed back into work in a manner that also benefits municipalities and towns. Support for PCS should be extended and tied to targeted requalification programs to increase the skills-set and opportunities for the unemployed to compete in the labor market.

- **Continue the work of employment offices.**

  In the past period, projects run by employment offices (EO) with European Social Fund (ESF) funding proved to work well. Some EOs implement programs to motivate the long-term unemployed to find work, programs for monitoring and suppressing under-the-table work, etc. It is important to strengthen this activity so that individual EOs can react appropriately to the situation in their region.

- **Better connect employment offices, nonprofit sector services and employers: support services supporting a return to the workforce.**

  Nongovernmental, nonprofit organizations provide services, particularly from ESF funding, that support a return to the workforce for the long-term unemployed. As a pilot project this consists of services for making contact between clients and employers, helping the clients put together their curriculum vitae, helping them look for work, and activating the client in their search for work, debt counseling, etc.

  The goal is to better tie together the work of nonprofit NGOs and employment offices and fostering cooperation between them in drawing up individual action plans is key. They will also be hired for implementing the above services by employment offices directly.

- **Link the education process and support for entering the labor market; career counseling at elementary schools, tying elementary school education to vocational schools and secondary schools.**

It is essential to introduce standardized career counseling in the latter half of elementary school, which should optimally be implemented along with secondary schools. Children spend a long time preparing for their advancement to the next level of education depending on their individual preferences, abilities, and motivations.

The vocational fields at vocational technical schools have free capacity, which these schools offer to all young people without discrimination; active outreach is needed to attract and stimulate young people from socially excluded areas.

Targeted Investment Incentives in Underdeveloped Regions with High Unemployment

- **Support entrepreneurial activities.**

  Based on an analysis of the potential for development on the local labor market, direct investments for starting enterprises will be implemented through business incubators, advantageous loans, and tax breaks.

- **Support social enterprises.**

  Based on an analysis of the potential for development on the local labor market, direct subsidies will be provided for starting social enterprises, that is, those that do not make pure profits in money terms but also make a profit in the pursuit of sustainability and development of their businesses and their employment of persons at a disadvantage on the labor market. This allows for the development of sectors that might not otherwise be successful on a commercial basis on the local market, but are sustainable as social enterprises.

Measures against Debt Accumulation

The practice of using so-called consumer contracts, which have created a disproportionate accumulation of debt by residents of socially excluded areas due to unethical advertising on the part of retailers, should be curtailed.

The Ministry of Justice is currently preparing to implement an accessible free legal counseling program; legal aid services offered to residents of excluded locales by certain NGOs has also proved useful. The demand for this service is, however, rapidly surpassing supply.

Helping to improve the clients' knowledge and awareness on the part employment offices, social services offices, and NGOs would also add to the potential prevention of

indebtedness. To this end, it is imperative to improve the quality of professional education for public employees at these offices.

Notably, blanket education of the inhabitants of socially excluded areas has proved to be ineffective since many are ill-prepared to digest the complicated and extensively structured information provided.

Measures to Support Employment through Public Tenders

Some Czech towns have been introducing directives for public procurement that prescribe that at least five to 20 percent of workers employed in the tender must come from among the long-term unemployed registered at the employment office. This measure naturally opens the doors of the labor market to people who, under other circumstances, would not have the opportunity to join the workforce. This measure could be made obligatory in, for example, regions with high rates of long-term unemployment as part of the Public Procurement Act.

HEALTH

The authors have observed many problems in terms of the general health of socially excluded populations in the Czech Republic:

- Basic hygienic standards are inadequate in socially excluded areas, primarily caused by poor-quality houses and flats (damp, mould, no indoor plumbing, pest control, etc.). This results in frequent epidemics of infectious diseases.

- Insufficient healthcare (inaccessibility determined both by location and social factors)

- Insufficient financial resources for inhabitants to purchase healthcare and medicine

- Poor eating habits and irregularity of meals as a result of irregular income

- Insufficient disease prevention, neglect of regular health check-ups

- Excessive use of alcohol, tobacco, including among children and youth, as well as a significant amount of drug addiction.

- No sexual education for youth, risk of spread of sexually transmitted diseases

- Early pregnancy, insufficient prenatal care, alcoholism during pregnancy and nursing

- Insufficient and irregular pediatric care for newborns and children

Measures to promote better health for all Roma are deeply connected to the overall improvement of the housing situation for inhabitants of excluded locales. Preschool facilities and elementary schools also play a key role in prevention, as they can be a substitute for insufficient health education in Roma families.

Measures to Improve Access to Healthcare Services and Healthcare Social Intervention

- **Support healthcare social workers.**

  A pilot project is being tested among Czech healthcare social workers who fulfill the standards of a social worker, as per Act No. 108/2006 Coll., on Social Services, and in addition who have a basic healthcare certificate. It is essential to support these services systematically, optimally as part of an amendment to the Social Services Act and by supporting funding.

  Healthcare social workers teach clients to take better care of their health, to secure medical care, to improve their hygienic standards, and to prevent illnesses. They accompany their clients to the doctor's office and help them follow the prescribed treatments. They also help with preventative drives in excluded neighborhoods.

- **Involve pediatricians in multidisciplinary OSPOD teams.**

  As part of the transformation of the social and legal protection of children in the Czech Republic, there will be a preference for multidisciplinary cooperation of social and legal child protection bodies with their local authorities, nonprofit NGOs providing social services, schools and educational institutions, and other important parties in caring for children. It is essential that pediatricians be obliged to cooperate in a multidisciplinary team. They can contribute significantly as part of early interventions, being in contact with children at an early age, and can make important suggestions to social workers about children's developmental milestones, request coordination with social workers, and cooperate in preventative drives in socially excluded areas.

- **Systematically support Social Activation Services (SAS).**

  Social activation services for families with children are advancing across the Czech Republic, representing some of the most important social prevention services in socially excluded locales. Every year, public funding for prevention services is reduced; this cut is replaced with intervention from the European Social Fund. In future, it is essential to stabilize the public funding of prevention services (in connection with a systemic Labor Ministry project in securing a network of services and funding thereof), and at the same time, to use further

interventions from the European Social Fund for the 2014–2020 period to increase the scope and volume of services in excluded areas.

Addiction Prevention Measures

- **Support preventative school programs and nonprofit NGOs, including youth "drop-in" centers.**

  Preventative activities play a fundamental role, and their accessibility is lowered to a level where they can be accessed by children from socially excluded locales as well. Nonprofit NGOs at youth drop-in centers, even those without their own base at specific facilities, preschool facilities and schools, must have sufficient support to also realize preventative programs in health, prevention of risky behavior, and sexual education.

- **Support K-centers, primary and secondary prevention in socially excluded areas.**

  The network of facilities to help drug addicts and implement preventative programs hardly are able to meet demand. It is important that EU Structural Funds pick up on the experiences from the IOP program on infrastructure support and support for integration of socially excluded inhabitants into society and to support the expansion of the K-center network into areas with many socially excluded residents in the 2014–2020 funding period.

HOUSING

In terms of housing for socially excluded Roma, the situation in the Czech Republic is perennially dissatisfactory, primarily for the following reasons:

- Aside from the housing allowance, there is no comprehensive and effective strategy or concept for housing assistance for low-income families, no development concept for deprived areas, and no concept for preventing homelessness

- No law on social housing has been adopted; in order to retain the reduced VAT rate, a "social" flat is defined quite inappropriately by the floor space of the flat—by this definition all flats with a floor space under 120m² are included in the category of social housing—this lack of a clear arrangement is further intensified by the as yet incomplete deregulation of rents in the Czech Republic—it is not clear what the final impact of completing the deregulation process will be on the financial accessibility of housing and social exclusion.

- Instead of a comprehensive concept for developing social housing or housing for low-income households, the state merely uses partial grant titles from the Ministry for Regional Development and the State Housing Development Fund, which due to the amount of the grants are unattractive for potential beneficiaries, in particular cities and municipalities, and do not motivate them to renovate or build housing for low-income households.

- In the 2007–13 EU programming period, a pilot project for revitalizing Roma excluded housing estates continues to be implemented in six Czech cities, the results and success of which are different in all areas.

- Municipalities and cities are autonomous in their housing policies and the state essentially does not interfere with them; a majority of cities and municipalities do not even operate or support adequate rental housing for low-income families.

- NGOs have tended to focus on providing crisis (transitional) housing and only in exceptional cases have access to their own housing stock for the purposes of training or long-term rental; this situation is largely caused by fears of the potential economic risks.

- The situation is complicated by the fact that municipalities and cities have privatized a significant portion of their housing stock (it is estimated that to date municipalities have privatized nearly four-fifths of their original municipal housing), and therefore do not have sufficient housing stock for an effective housing policy for socially excluded residents, in particular Roma.

- As a result of managed migration in the 1950s, concentrated housing estates of underqualified, primarily Roma households were created; these housing blocks began to deteriorate in the 1990s with the drop-off in employment among residents and have occurred primarily in areas where industrial production ceased and unemployment spiked; according to a Labor Ministry study from 2006, there are more than 300 such excluded locales of various sizes.

- These deprived areas are altogether isolated socially, economically, and in terms of their infrastructure; the housing stock is unsuitable, and operational costs are generally overpriced due to the poor technical state of the buildings.

- Access to the open housing market for residents of excluded locales is practically impossible, as there are essentially two parallel housing systems existing side by side in the Czech Republic—standard for the Czech majority and substandard for inhabitants stigmatized by social exclusion (connected to ethnicity), and they are mutually impermeable; due to the high economic risks for landlords in terms of tenant protection, low-income households, large families, immigrants, and ethnic minorities, in particular Roma, are at a considerable disadvantage in the housing market and encounter overt discrimination—yet there is no

instrument to effectively reduce this risk and thus allow better use of private rental housing for social ends.

- This situation allows for a number of businesses to operate overpriced accommodation of substandard quality for socially excluded Roma; there is also controlled migration of inhabitants from areas with higher apartment prices to areas with lower apartment prices, where the supply of housing exceeds the demand (the principle of "forgiving" the debt of an excessively indebted tenant for exchanging flats); controlled migration is carried out by both business entities and with the involvement of representatives of local governments to get rid of what they categorize as "unadaptive" residents.

Develop a Housing Concept for Low-income Households

- **Adopt a social housing act.**

  Only those types of social housing found under Act No. 180/2006 Coll., on Social Services, have a legislative basis, meaning asylum housing, halfway houses, homeless shelters, and sheltered housing. These are designed only for a narrow target group.

  In order to move toward systematic support for housing for low-income households and inhabitants in a housing crisis, it is key to lay out in legislative terms the basic parameters of other, more permanent types of social housing.

- **Prompt public and policy debate to increase the responsibilities of the municipalities to implement social housing.**

  The municipality should deal with the housing situation of its inhabitants in keeping with local conditions, but it does not have a direct legally codified obligation to deal with every specific situation. What is more, its jurisdiction is limited by the Municipality Act to only residents of the municipality, that is, to persons who have permanent residence in the municipality. Act 128/2000 Coll., under § 35 (2), entrusts municipalities with the role of creating the conditions for development of social care and satisfying the needs of its inhabitants in keeping with local expectations and customs. Explicitly, it refers to satisfying housing needs. Although this provision is often characterized as declarative, it is possible to consider it as a basis for defining the obligatory tasks of local government in the area of housing as well.

  In the field of social services the municipality does not have a direct obligation to establish an asylum house, but it can be supposed that the municipality is obligated to offer persons on its territory without accommodation the possibil-

ity of temporary accommodation or to secure the provision of asylum house services (sheltered housing, halfway houses, etc.) by other providers.

The above facts form the basic framework for the discussion that must be held on the division of social housing jurisdiction and obligations in the Czech Republic.

- **Adopt a concept for the development of low-income housing.**

No concept for developing low-income housing has been put together in the Czech Republic, nor has a concept for preventing or reducing the impact of homelessness. The competencies for this have not been delegated in public administration. The drafting of such a concept must become the basic strategic framework for the development of social housing in the Czech Republic.

- **Harmonize the system of social support payments and material need assistance with housing support.**

Low-income households can draw support for housing from social transfers through both social support payments and material needs assistance. These social transfers are not accessible to clients with boarding house contracts and sometimes even with rental contracts. This makes them inaccessible for a significant segment of the clientele in need. This system must be simplified with an emphasis on supporting the acquisition of standard rental housing even for low-income families, as well as for temporary forms of housing.

- **Evaluate the advantages of pilot projects for revitalizing excluded Roma housing estates under IPRM—IOP 5.2.c.**

A pilot program for revitalizing excluded Roma housing estates is being implemented in Most, Prerov, Ostrava, Brno, Orlova, and Kladno, and will be completed in 2013.

It is important to evaluate this program in detail, both in terms of building renovations and the development of associated infrastructure, sustainability of the measures, coordination of infrastructure measures with measures to support social integration, and the development of skills for living and returning to the workforce.

The pilot program must be followed up with systematic activity to support deconstruction/revitalization of the excluded areas according to the area's potential for further development and full integration into the infrastructure of the respective municipality.

Support for Rental Housing

- **Support rental housing for low-income households.**

  Around 100,000 inhabitants live in socially excluded areas. In order to improve their housing, it is not possible to expect the revitalization of the majority of buildings in these neighborhoods, nor the mass construction of social or other specific housing. An acceptable and sustainable strategy is to increase the attractiveness of the target group of tenants from excluded locales for owners of unoccupied housing; this can be based on the fact that there is an oversupply of rental housing in the Czech Republic.

- **Support nonprofit social housing.**

  Models of mediated housing are being tested in the Czech Republic, where the owner of the flat leases it to a nonprofit organization, which then sublets it to clients in need with the support of activating and integrating services.

  The main barriers to further expansion of mediated housing are the unstable funding of nonprofits for social services (i.e., additional services along with housing) and the accompanying instability of the nonprofit sector and poor accessibility of subsidy titles for renovation of flats in order that they could increase their stability in providing mediated housing through direct ownership.

- **Implement a pilot project on multilevel assisted housing.**

  Since 2008, the Agency for Social Integration has been made operative by the government of the Czech Republic. Since 2010, the Agency has been preparing to implement a pilot project of three-stage housing with guarantees. The model includes elements of the mediated model. In the first step, the client is taken in by social services at asylum housing. During the second stage, training is carried out (by NGOs or the municipality) accompanied by a social program aiming to build the skills for maintaining long-term rental housing. In the third stage, the client acquires a standard rental flat with the help of social services. For providing a standard rental flat, the landlord receives a guarantee covering the main risks associated with renting for a certain period. The guarantee in this system means insurance against non-payment of rent, damages caused by the client in the flat, and any potential court cases associated with terminating the contract.

  To establish this system as a systematic tool for supporting the integration of residents from excluded locales into the rental market in the Czech Republic, it is key that the pilot implementation be carried out successfully, which is currently not guaranteed.

Funding for Social Housing

- **Modernize the subsidy titles from the Ministry for Regional Development and State Housing Development Fund to support social housing.**

  Subsidy titles must be adjusted in order that they be used on a larger scale by both municipalities and NGOs to support construction and renovation of social housing.

- **Revitalize excluded areas with the support of the European Social Fund and the European Rural Development Fund.**

  Following a detailed analysis of the effectiveness of the pilot housing programs, the most needy areas and neighborhoods should be selected for long-term, sustainable revitalization, secured by a combined intervention from ESF and ERDF funds in the 2014–2020 structural fund period.

APPENDIX

Summary of Measures in the Area of Social and Legal Protection of Children, Institutional Care, and Social Services

The social and legal protection of children and institutional care in the Czech Republic does not currently adequately reflect the situation of children from excluded neighborhoods. The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs has reacted by preparing and implementing a transformation and unification of the system for taking care of at-risk children.

The social and legal child protection authorities (OSPOD) are not equipped, in terms of both methodology and capacity, for preventative activities aimed at inhabitants of socially excluded locales; another obstacle is the considerable administrative burden and shortcomings in terms of education and other professional preparations for OSPOD employees. OSPOD does not make sufficient use of support for prevention services and does not cooperate optimally with nonprofit NGOs, schools, and educational institutions, pediatricians and other parties involved or involvable in the social and legal protection of children. They often only react once there is a situation that requires an invasive (repressive) solution, that is, punitive measures or taking a child out of a family on the basis of a court ruling.

Institutional care facilities are overflowing with children taken from their families for social, economic, and housing reasons; a significant number of children taken from

such families come from socially excluded households. There is no developed and standardized institution of foster care in the Czech Republic, and the OSPOD and institutional care facilities do not cooperate sufficiently or at all with the biological family after children are taken into state care; children are only rarely returned to their original families. There are no standards for work in institutional care facilities, and children are not systematically prepared to leave the institution.

The national action plan (NAP) for the transformation and unification of the system for at-risk children reacts to this situation and addresses it in the aforementioned areas. Not implementing or only partially implementing the NAP would have catastrophic ramifications on addressing the incompatibility of the system for taking care of at-risk children in excluded locales.

Social services underwent professionalization with the adoption of Act No. 108/2006 Coll. The system of planning through municipal community plans and regional medium-term plans for development of social services is not, however, sufficiently able to ensure an adequate network of social services to match the needs of inhabitants; services are particularly lacking in less developed regions of the Czech Republic where NGOs are virtually inactive. The public funding for services is also reduced every year.

For this reason, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs is implementing an extensive project, "Support for Processes in Social Services," which aims to improve the processes for planning and funding services, in particular by mapping prices for services and stabilizing the funding for service providers. There is a certain risk in transferring responsibility for financing these services to the regional level.

It is also important to involve municipalities and cities in the process of organizing preventative social services and increasing their responsibility to ensure citizens' access to their services.

Recommendations for Hungary*

"No life is born useless, no life is anwarranted"

—Viktor Orban, in response to a comment to his opening speech
by Jobbik President Gabor Vona, Hungarian Parliament, on February 4, 2011.

PREAMBLE

Unemployment and Poverty

Only two-fifths of adult Roma men of working-age are employed and 10 percent from this group live from temporary or informal work. The proportion of the poor in the Roma population is almost four times higher than the national average. Spatial and social mobility is very limited. The majority of Hungarian Roma has not had a stable income since the evaporation of the state economy over two decades ago, and is exposed to the mercy of local politics and public administration. They have poorer physical health than the Hungarian national average due to poor education, poor housing conditions, and also inadequate access to health services. Their life expectancy is a full decade shorter than the Hungarian average (Janky 2004, Kemeny-Janky 2003, Kertesi 2005, Kosa et al. 2007, Voko et al. 2008).

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*   This policy report was produced by the Budapest Institute for Policy Analysis, March 2011. Available online: www.budapestinstitute.eu.

Low Education and Spatial Segregation

Four-fifths of Roma adults—compared to one-third of the total population—only have primary education. A little over two-fifths of Roma children go to nursery school, as compared to an overwhelming majority of the total population. Among 20–24-year-olds, five percent of Roma and 55 percent of the total population completed secondary education (A levels). Though there has been some increase in the levels of educational attainment, it has been much slower among Roma that among children from the majority, and the gap between Roma and non-Roma has widened.

In 2003, the Roma population was loosely estimated to be around 600,000, with almost two-thirds living in northern Hungary, one of the country's most underdeveloped regions. Well over one-third of Roma live in villages below 5,000 inhabitants, which is only slightly higher than in the total population (just over one-third).[44] However, over well over two-thirds live in spatially segregated housing with only or mostly Roma neighbors and just over one-quarter of the Roma population lives in segregated Roma settlements with little or no infrastructure (for example, six percent in Kemeny et al. 2004, estimates of 20–26 percent in Ungvary et al. 2005 and Kosa et al. 2009).

But Roma Are Not a Homogenous Community

In terms of origin, the Roma population is divided into at least six clearly distinct groups. Around 90 percent speak Hungarian as their mother tongue, but this group is further divided according to their past vocation or trade (musician, basketweaver, etc.). Some six percent speak a dialect of Romanian (the so-called *Beashi)*, while four percent speak different dialects of Romanes as a first language (*Lovari, Kalderashi)*. Language groups are further divided by kinship, craft, income, and locality. Attitudes to majority norms and integration vary by subgroup (Szuhay 2000, Kemeny et al. 2004).

Welfare Costs Are by Far Lower Than Perceived (by the Majority)

According to the estimations of Hablicsek (2007), the Roma population will rise to around 660,000 in 2011. The average number of children is higher in Roma families (3.5 per family) than in the non-Roma population; however, the gap is gradually narrowing. In 2003, 300,000 Roma were inactive in the 15–64-year-old age-group, vis-à-vis the

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44   Based on the Roma survey of Kemeny (2004) conducted in 2003 (where Roma were identified both by their neighbors and themselves).

three million non-working adults within the total population; that is, only one-tenth of inactive adults are Roma. The proportion of Roma among recipients of child benefits and unemployment benefits varies between 10 and 12 percent and is below one percent in the case of pensions. [45] Earmarked government spending on Roma integration amounted to HUF 26 billion in 2006 (ASZ 2008), which is less than one-tenth of annual public expenditure on cultural, leisure, and religious activities (HUF 330 billion).

Escalating Tensions

The share of Roma among convicted property offenders is relatively high, but not higher than for similarly educated and poor non-Roma (Huszar 1999, OKRI 2008). The police seem unable to provide a sense of security to either party: the majority perceive the police to avoid any conflict and take that as a sign of partiality (i.e., a sort of badly implemented political correctness) or intimidation, while the Roma often experience prejudiced treatment (Pap and Simonovits 2007).

The emergence of the Magyar Garda, a far-right militia, and Jobbik, a far-right political party,[46] along with hesitant government communication with regard to ethnic conflicts that received extensive international media coverage has reframed Roma/non-Roma relations and public discourse in Hungary. The far right proposes illegal means (the Garda calls on citizens to be vigilantes, while Jobbik calls on the government to take autocratic and racist measures) to reassure the Hungarian public, which has heightened tensions and made it extremely difficult for the concerned parties to stay in dialogue, while it also underlines the quite legitimate need for an appropriate response to the weakening of the sense of public security (OKRI 2008). Government communication and actions have been incoherent, rebuking discriminative actions but overlooking racist attitudes in public institutions and making gestures to appease the majority's demand for "law and order."

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[45] Own calculations based on Kemeny et al. (2004) and government fiscal reports.

[46] Established in 2003, far-right Jobbik ("The Movement for a Better Hungary") won three of the 22 Hungarian seats at the EU elections in 2009 and won 12 percent of the seats in the national Parliament in 2010. Magyar Garda (Hungarian Guard) is a closely related movement established in mid-2007 and banned in late 2008. Both are still active at the time of writing.

Economic Shock of the Transition

Like many traditional communities imperiled by modernity, the demand for traditional Roma skills has declined during the early 20th century, though the decline was slow enough for Roma communities to adapt. Forced industrialization in the state-socialist era provided ample employment opportunities for low-skilled workers. Until the mid-1980s, the employment rate of non-Roma and Roma men were similar, and the living standard of Roma families was close to the national average. The crisis of the planned economy and the transition to a market economy was incredibly rapid: it eroded the market value of primary education within a few years' time and unskilled workers were the first to lose their jobs in declining industries (Kertesi 2005).

Policy Failures

Government employment and social policy has tended to have a narrow focus on easing social consequences of the transition, mostly by providing cash benefits, rather than supporting adaptation to the new circumstances. Workers without secondary education were typically excluded from retraining programs (which were inefficient anyway). The repeated increases of the minimum wage, high taxes on labor, and the large administrative costs that disproportionately burden small firms have held back the growth of demand for unskilled labor (Nagy 2008, Kertesi and Kollo 2004, Kollo 2009).

The problem of low-skilled workers is reproduced by the education system that magnifies the disadvantages of uneducated parents—rather than compensating for it. The inherent deficiencies of public education (lack of monitoring, adverse selection of teachers, obsolete teaching methods and curricula, the dysfunctional operation of the child-protection network) are worsened by segregation (cause and effect at the same time), and prejudice (strengthened by the earlier, ill-designed earmarked funding for disadvantaged pupils, which provided an incentive for segregation) (Fazekas et al. 2008).[47]

Public services that were devolved within a very fragmented municipal system in 1990 are seriously underfunded, which poorer regions are unable to compensate for. Since Roma are highly overrepresented in such localities, their access to such services is particularly limited. The evaluation of social benefit claims is also in the remit of municipalities, which, due to the lack of monitoring, stirs up ethnic tensions and/or reinforces the recipients' vulnerability (Nagy 2008 and Szalai 2004, 2005).

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[47] Education policy has improved considerably since 2002. EU-funded integration projects in education have reached one-fourth of public schools providing materials and training in up-to-date teaching methodology. A very thorough evaluation of the programs has indicated a significant improvement in the school performance of disadvantaged (and Roma) pupils with no negative side-effect on the performance of non-Roma children (Kezdi and Suranyi 2008). For a qualitative evaluation of the programs in SROP, see Reszketo et al. (2010).

Whether state-run or managed by NGOs, funding for the programs promoting integration is volatile and unpredictable and their impact is rarely measured or evaluated (ASZ 2008). Integration programs typically aim at alleviating deprivation and segregation, while there are no public institutions to promote tolerance and a formation of Roma identity (such as a national Roma Archive or a Roma Cultural Center).

Grass-roots Organization, Weak Roma Elite, and Few Role Models

The Roma political, economic, and cultural elite is narrow, highly fragmented and—like the non-Roma elite—does not act as a unified advocacy group. Although there are a number of truly devoted Roma activists who work for their community, most Roma organizations are little rooted in local communities: they represent them without participating in their lives. State funding (including EU structural funds) for local private initiatives is erratic: even successful organizations work in precarious and unpredictable financial circumstances, which constrains capacity building. Typical routes of upward social mobility[48] that are visible and feasible for the Roma (usury, receiving stolen goods, illegal employment) do not conform to majority (middle-class or elite) norms. Limited access to resources and unequal opportunities lead to survival strategies condemned by the majority.

Politics

The system of minority self-governments can do little to facilitate Roma integration: their relation to local governments (the division of functions and responsibilities) is not clear, they lack professional and financial capacities, and they are often used by national politics as the means of building their clientele. Just as in the Communist era, successive governments have aspired to control Roma organizations or used them to collect votes.

The political commitment to integration policies has never been very firm over the past 20 years, but the necessity of dealing with the problem has moved higher on the Hungarian political agenda, partly due to increasing pressure from the EU. The previous government joined the Roma Decade and published a strategy in 2007 (SPH 2007) and the new government taking office in 2010 established a new ministerial unit with considerable resources for promoting the integration of disadvantaged (and among them, Roma) people.

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[48] The few alternatives (e.g., Romaversitas or REF scholarships) are far too small to reach all Roma communities.

Prejudices, Legal Environment, and Media

Prejudices persist—both in the general population and among employers.[49] Anti-discrimination legislation and administrative procedures that tackle ethnic discrimination have taken a very long time to be established and their enforcement is still quite weak (Majtenyi 2009).

Many of the non-Roma poor live in deprivation; moreover, widening income inequalities and increasingly uncertain economic prospects have shaken the lower middle class, who now feel left behind and their livelihoods threatened. Many have had negative experiences during conflicts stirred up in ethnically mixed areas. Such experiences are exaggerated by the media, which tends to present Roma in conflict situations in order to attract a wide audience, and make little effort to provide a balanced coverage of Roma people's lives (Bernath and Messing 1998, Terestyeni 2004, and SZMM 2007). Due to the Magyar Garda and the hesitant reactions of authorities to their activities, ethnic tensions have taken a fundamentally new framing that carries the possibility of intentional physical violence. The Garda holds explicitly racist views (such as the genetic criminality of Roma people) and promises effective protection to non-Roma communities as a substitute to inept authorities. This offers an excuse, legitimization, support, and the illusion of protection to all of those who are prejudiced against Roma on account of their everyday grievances.

Public discourse is dominated by biased emotional monologues leaving little room for the impartial discussion of facts or explanations. In the debates about possible solutions, the two fractions do not listen to one another, unable to understand the other's point of view. One side emphasizes the harms caused by racism and ethnic discrimination, while the other points to the presupposed idleness, criminality, and irresponsibility of Roma people.

POLICY SOLUTIONS

The complexity of the problem outlined above obviously requires coherent and complex government action and sustained political commitment.

In this section, we review Hungarian policymaking itself and six selected policy areas. Four of these are Roma Decade focus areas (education, employment, health, and housing), and two (empowerment and policymaking) are added on account of their

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[49] A survey by Tarki in 2005 found that almost two-thirds of the adult Hungarian population agree more or less with the statement: "criminality is genetically coded in Gypsies" and four-fifths believe that the "problems of the Roma would be solved if they finally started to work." Hungarians tend to be intolerant of other minorities and subcultures (Dencso and Sik 2007).

importance in the Hungarian context. The review examines strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) in each policy area, focusing on issues within the remit of the national government. In particular, we consider the existing situation and resources, available policy tools and expert capacity, awareness of problems, stakeholder interests, and political commitment.

The review of Hungarian Roma policy is based partly on the previous section and partly on two workshops (with academic experts and practitioners) held on February 25 and March 7, 2011.[50]

Table 1.
SWOT Analysis of Six Selected Policy Areas

1. Education	
Strengths	**Weaknesses**
• Committed and highly-qualified experts in/near policymaking	• System induces selection by family background and early tracking
• Increased capacities to support development: mentors and trainers in the Pedagogy and Integration Program (IPR)	• Anti-Roma attitudes in EU
	• IPR did not take root in teacher training
• Monitoring tools like the National Competence Test (OKM) and PISA	• Rebirth of conservative family model hinders early childhood development
• Green Book: identified proplems and solutions, a government initiative with strong expert involvement and extensive consultations (Fazekas et al. 2009)	• Some badly designed programs (especially scholarships) and unstable financing
	• NGO innovations not mainstreamed
• Active NGOs, professional organizations	• Segregation persists in many areas/schools
• IPR: a successful national program	
• Conditionality of development funding (on equal opportunity): a promising tool	
• Some local success stories (and many mixed)	

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1. Education (continued)

Opportunities

- Majority less intolerant of equal opportunities (and positive discrimination) in education
- Municipal reform
- Political landslide weakened mayors' lobby: easier to close poor-quality small schools
- Continue Sure Start and IPR program
- Redesign scholarships
- Support Gandhi high school, Romaversitas, etc.
- Publicity for role models

Threats

- Lack of political will, conflict within government
- Adverse selection in exiting school staff
- Schools remain a municipal responsibility with little monitoring
- NGO funding unstable/cut further
- Dismantling conditional development funding
- Discontinuing existing successful programs
- Policy U-turn: benevolent expansion of segregation

2. Employment

Strengths

- Nature of problem well understood by experts, tools clearly identified (Kollo 2009)
- Public Employment Service (PES) relatively well organized and devoted
- Some NGO good practices

Weaknesses

- Low demand for unskilled labour (partly exogenous and slow to change)
- Insufficient expert capacity in employment and rehabilitation services
- NGO innovations not mainstreamed
- Discrimination by employers

Opportunities

- High on political agenda/commitment
- High awareness of its importance
- Municipal reform/strengthen employment services of PES + NGOs
- Cut administrative burden to support SMEs

Threats

- Impatience and ignorance leading to badly designed policies that worsen the situtation (for example, minimum wage hike in 2001)
- Large rents in existing system of wage subsidies – stakeholders block reforms

3. Empowerment

Strengths

- Some authentic Roma politicians (mostly women!)
- NGOs aware of lack of capacities/ cooperation (social capital) at the local level
- Equal opportunity policies mainstreamed during previous planning period in several sectors and urban development

Weaknesses

- Party politics hijacked/strangled grassroots initiatives
- Token Roma representatives
- Minority self-governments: ill-designed
- Dependency on the state
- Strong paternalist attitudes
- No expert consensus on solutions
- Lack of capacities at local level to plan, apply for, and absorb (EU) grants
- Lack of national donors (or of a donor strategy)

3. Empowerment (continued)

Opportunities

- Some public support for political representation of minorities
- Evaluate and redesign minority self-government system (use absolute majority in parliament)
- Monitoring of EU structural funds
- Support choice of Roma identity for newly integrated Roma

Threats

- Private donor dependency

4. Health

Strengths

- Existing services relatively high quality
- Network of special medical personnel for pregnant women (*vedonok*)
- Awareness/consensus on importance of public health/prevention at expert level
- Government public health strategy (NNP 2003)
- Some pilot projects

Weaknesses

- Unequal access to services
- Poor health consciousness of public
- Poor understanding/misconceptions of cultural differences among Roma communities re: health/medical treatment
- Lack of preventive measures, lack of political will to implement public health strategy
- Corrupted financing (*halapenz*)
- Affordability of medication is critical

Opportunities

- Some pilot projects, good practices (CEE region)
- Train/sensitize healthcare staff
- Increase share of preventive healthcare
- Raise health consciousness in Roma communities
- Conditional cash transfers (CCT) to promote prevention
- Reach parents via children (Sure Start)
- Geographical targeting

Threats

- Short-term costs dominate long-term benefits
- Deterioration of healthcare services reach a critical level: the poor are more vulnerable to consequences

5. Housing

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Some pilot projects	• Low-quality housing stock is high
	• Unresolved legal/property issues
	• Poorly designed/underfinanced pilots
	• Poor monitoring: no data on pilots
	• Bad targeting of housing subsidies (middle class instead of the poor)
	• Inappropriate policy tools (subsidies for buying property not renting/maintaining)
	• Weakness of local political institutions (civilian involvement, transparency, etc.)
	• Resources locked in past (badly designed) policy measures
	• Construction industry highly corrupt
	• Discrete problem: ghetto

Opportunities	Threats
• Analyze pilots, identify good practice	• Housing conditions limit access to services, labor market, and education
• Understood need for complex solutions	• No policy change aggrevates situation as costs are increasing
• More flexible EU funding	• Government unable to design complex solutions
• Transfer of good practice (from education): mentors in settlement elimination	• EU migration (the lack of)
• EU-wide mobility	• Migration of the Roma elite

6. Majority attitudes

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Equal Treatment Authority (EBH): small but committed	• Overwhelmingly negative attitudes
• Some effort in previous governments: Roma Media Green Book identified problems and some solutions, pilots of media apprenticeship	• Limited NGO capacities (in shaping attitudes)
	• Quality and consistency of government communication has weakened
• In public speech, political correctness is expected from government-level politicians	• Consensus/commitment to political correctness weakened
• Some committed members in government (Balog, Navracsics)	• Extreme right (Jobbik) in Parliament + Magyar Garda
• Coming out of economic crisis	• Balog is more a politician than an expert
	• Demand for scapegoats (crisis)

6. Majority attitudes (continued)	
Opportunities	**Threats**
• Some policy tools (Roma Media Green Book) • Strong central government (absolute majority) • Strong media authority • Increased public trust in government • Firm government leadership	• Intragovernmental fights: negative outcomes or stalemate in integration policy • Redesign of welfare system generates new tensions, fuel to ethnic conflicts

Table 2.
SWOT Analysis of Policymaking in Roma Integration

Policymaking in general	
Strengths	**Weaknesses**
• Integration is on the government agenda, assigned to separate government unit (KIM) • EU presidency priority • Well designed policy tools (especially, conditionality of development funding) • Increased centralization of decision-making • Committed/highly-qualified experts in/near policy-making	• Divided discourse: no interaction between liberal/conservative/extreme fractions • New government not relying on expert input and consultation—or not in public • No use of indicators and no accountability • No evaluation and no feedback/sanctions to poor performers at any level of government • No monitoring, no reliance on empirical evidence in policy design • No long-term strategy, no attempt at coherent policy formation • Lack of capacities for implementation • No involvement of stakeholders • Poor management at National Development Agency in public administration • No legitimate Roma self-representation at central government level
Opportunities	**Threats**
• Strengthening the combination of Roma-targeted and mainstreaming approach • Geographical targeting of most disadvantaged micro-regions (LHH) • EU structural funds » may elicit strategic thinking, assessment • External watchdogs • Involvement of NGOs + mainstreaming • Monitoring and evaluation	• Fragmented responsibilities: NEFMI, BM, KIM, NGM • Jobbik as partner or rival • Criminalization of petty crime • Neo-paternalism • Dismantle conditional development funding • Unable to detect and correct mistakes • Unaware of (negative) impact of government communication

Abbreviations

CCT   Conditional Cash Transfer

EBH   Equal Opportunity Authority (*Egyenlo Banasmod Hatosag*. Available online: http://www.egyenlobanasmod.hu/index.php?g=english.htm)

IPR   *Integracios Pedagogiai Rendszer* (teaching methods for integrated education)

LHH   *Leghatranyosabb helyzetu kistersegek* (most disadvantaged micro-regions)

OKM   *Orszagos Kompetencia Meres* (National Competence Test)

PES   Public Employment Services

SME   Small and medium enterprise

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above review of integration policies and following a consultation with many experts, we identified five key measures that are feasible, in the remit of the Hungarian government, and if properly implemented, that would efficiently and effectively contribute to integrating Roma in Hungary. These are all specific to Hungary, both in the sense that they relate to the Hungarian context and that they reflect inefficiencies in the Hungarian administration of EU or national funds rather than EU-level rules (which would, in fact, allow most of what we propose).

1. **Provide additional public funding for mainstream employment and welfare services in disadvantaged communities, based on geographical targeting.**

   Extra funding should be given via regular channels of government finance in such a way that it improves access to and quality of services. This requires a careful design of tools and targeting to safeguard against interference by political and stakeholder interests.

   Positive examples:

   • Additional funding for integration programs and mentoring made available to schools in areas with disadvantaged populations over two-fifths (implemented in SROP projects).

   • Additional central government funding for combined community and daycare services for children in disadvantaged rural areas (proposal available online: http://www.childpoverty.hu/).

Negative examples:

- General wage rise for teachers in public education as opposed to a bonus for teachers working with disadvantaged pupils (government plans versus proposal of Green Book).

- Defining disadvantages too widely and on the basis of a multitude of indicators, whose selection is biased by political motivation and subject to frequent change (current practice).

2. **Identify and remove/curb mechanisms within mainstream welfare programs (especially healthcare, education, housing, employment) that regenerate exclusion).**

Targeted programs for disadvantaged groups can never compensate for disadvantages generated by mainstream welfare services. For integration policies to be efficient and effective, regular policies must support equal opportunities and provide a basis for targeted programs.

Positive examples:

- Development project in public education improved general quality of teaching by promoting up-to-date methods, which supported teachers of disadvantaged children (implemented in SROP).

- Development funds made conditional on designing and implementing local equal opportunities policy (implemented in education, plans of further extension suspended).

Negative examples:

- Freedom of school choice and early tracking in public education contributes to the inability of the education system to compensate for disadvantaged family background (current practice).

- Reducing the school leaving-age will have the same effect (newly announced government plan).

3. **Implement social diagnosis-based complex development in seriously deprived areas.**

In some crisis-ridden areas, human and social capital has been eroded to a degree that makes them incapable of absorbing funding via the regular channels and mainstream programs, no matter how well designed and well targeted. No community planning is possible in places where there is no sense of community and no amount of grants will make a difference if there is no forum/tools to identify the problems and no leaders to find and implement the right solutions. In such areas, development

should be very specifically tailored to local needs identified by social diagnosis, and combined with community development. Funding should be provided on the basis of need as opposed to competitive grants. The assessment of eligibility should rely on valid, internationally accepted indicators, and the involvement of experienced NGOs.

Positive example:

- The Hungarian Maltese Charity has worked out this approach in Tarnabod (a small village in Eastern Hungary), securing funding from several sources. They recently started three other projects using the same approach (Available online: http://kktt.tutoralapitvany.hu/).

Negative example:

- EU grants for disadvantaged regions have failed to reach the most disadvantaged villages, as they were unwilling or unable to prepare grant applications.

4. **Secure long-term funding for complex programs.**

Complex programs, and especially those that involve community development as well (see No. 3 above), take longer to implement and become self-financing than most simple projects, such as infrastructure development. If the funding period is too short, projects are usually halted or abandoned before fruition, which may do more damage than good as it erodes even existing local reserves of trust, legitimacy, and resources. The idea here is not about sustainability, but the preceding stage: the implementation phase should be long enough (five to eight years) and safely financed so that results are firmly established before the challenge of securing new sources of finance emerges.

Positive example:

- None in complex projects.

Negative example:

- Roma community houses were established from EU funding and then closed down as there was no follow up to help them secure stable funding.

5. **Understand the complexity of programs.**

The disadvantages of the Roma are almost always multiple, and therefore need to be tackled by complex programs (even when communities are strong enough to absorb funding) with a strong employment component, making use of available multi-fund financing tools. One-dimensional programs often do more harm than good.

Positive examples:

- EU-financed Sure Start provides early development, preventive health services, family care, and community development via fostering relations between parents and schools (Available online: www.biztoskezdet.hu*).*

- Complex housing project in Szomolya (unfinished yet) (see Petrovacz et al. 2010).

Negative example:

- Most housing projects aimed at Roma settlements were unsuccessful due to the failure to combine them with employment and social services and community development.

RECOMMENDED TARGETS FOR 2020

Table 3.

Employment and Education Targets

EU 2020 Indicator	Baseline	Cautious target	Ambitious target	NRP target*
Employment rate (ages 20–64)	20 (2003)	24	29	75
Early school leavers	55 (2009)**	30	20	10
Completed tertiary education	0.3 (2003)	10	15	30.3

*   For the total population in the Draft NRP of 2010. Data for 2003 is based on Kemeny (2004).

**   Estimate by Kertesi and Kezdi (2010) based on microdata on school attendance for 2007.

Notes for the recommended targets:

- Ambitious targets are assuming above-average improvement in the Roma population in relative terms, so that the ethnic gap begins to narrow.

- Cautious targets:

    — Employment: is the pre-crisis employment rate for the total population with only primary education was nearly one-quarter.

    — School dropout rate: the proposed 30 percent is based on the argument that earlier reforms in public education should make it possible to considerably reduce inequality in education and on the recent, fast-improving trend (see Kertesi and Kezdi 2010). (Note that the definition of this indicator is not completely clear for Hungary as it depends on the distinction between lower and upper secondary education. Figures reported to Eurostat have been contested by some experts.)

— Tertiary education: five percent is based on the proportion of Roma youth with upper secondary education (for the youngest cohort about five percent in 2003 and 21 percent in 2009).

— Poverty: no target is proposed as the indicator for the national target set in the draft NRP was not clearly defined.

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APPENDIX

Cross-cutting issues affecting all policy areas	
Strengths	**Weaknesses**
• Increased centralization of decision-making	• Lack of capacities at local level to plan, apply for and absorb (EU) grants
	• Unequal access to existing services
	• Unstable financing of international programs
	• NGO innovations not mainstreamed
	• Dependency on the state
	• Strong paternalist attitudes
	• Lack of political will to continue integration effort
	• New government not relying on expert input and consultation
	• No evaluation and no feedback/sanctions to poor performers at any level of govmt
	• No monitoring, no reliance on empirical evidence in policy design
	• No long-term strategy, no attempt at coherent policy formation
	• Poor management at National Development Agency and in public administration
Opportunities	**Threats**
• Strong central government (absolute majority)	• Impatience and ignorance leading to badly designed policies that worsen the situation
• Increased public trust in government	• Discontinue existing successful programs/ conditional development funding
• Firm-handed government leadership	• Government unable to design complex solutions or detect and correct mistakes
• Municipal reform	• Neo-paternalism
• Targeting, mostly in socio-economic and not ethnic terms	• Intra-governmental fights
• Geographical targeting (LHH)	• Short-term costs dominate long-term benefits
• Monitoring of EU structural funds	• Jobbik as partner or rival
• EU structural funds may elicit strategic thinking, assessment	
• External watchdogs	
• Monitoring and evaluation	
• Involvement of NGOs + mainstreaming	

Recommendations for Romania*

PREAMBLE

According to the last official Census, conducted in 2002, the Roma population numbered 535,250 (2.5 percent of the total population of the country). This figure is widely disputed by most experts. Unofficial estimates vary and range between 1,400,000 and 2,800,000 persons. Due to a long history of persecution and contemporary discrimination, Roma have been reluctant to declare their ethnic identity to government officials. As in many neighboring countries, since 1989 the majority of Romania's Roma population was devastated by a massive rise in unemployment, rising levels of poverty, and limited access to basic services in education, healthcare and housing. As the 2008 European Parliament report on "The Social Situation of the Roma and Their Improved Access to the Labour Market in the EU" clearly states:

> The effect on the Roma population has been disproportionately harsh due to widespread discrimination and prejudice, leading to social marginalisation, economic exclusion and widespread poverty transmission through the generations combined with lack of education, and large families with no employed members.[51]

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* Comments and contributions to this brief were provided by the Center for Policy Center for Roma and Minorities, Bucharest. Available online: www.policycenter.eu.

[51] European Parliament, Policy Department Economic and Scientific Policy, The social situation of the Roma and their improved access to the labour market in the EU(IP/A/EMPL/FWC/2006-05/SC4). Available online: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/activities/committees/studies/download.do?file=23375.

Although authorities did develop a set of measures to increase Roma access to the labor market—including Roma job fairs and training projects for unemployed Roma—their success has been limited. Several factors account for the difficult occupational integration of Roma in Romania: discrimination on the labor market; remote communities isolated from areas of economic development; and the tendency of local authorities to employ Roma persons only as street and park cleaners.

The situation in Romania regarding public healthcare is grim. A survey from 2008 reported that the amount of money earmarked for healthcare in Romania is a mere USD 470 per capita per annum, clearly below the world average of USD 650 per capita. Insufficient funding and an uneven distribution of healthcare resources also has had a disproportionately negative effect on underdeveloped rural regions and impoverished communities. It is estimated that tuberculosis affects Roma communities about ten times more than the rest of the population. Life expectancy is lower for Roma, and according to one health correspondent:

> Most frequently, death is attributed to heart conditions, cancer, various accidents, neurological conditions, brain congestion, and lung diseases. Similarly the Roma are more exposed to the risk of developing liver conditions and various transmittable diseases. Among the Roma children, the respiratory diseases have the highest incidence (14.2 percent), followed by the infectious and parasitic diseases (1.3 percent) and those associated with the nervous system (1.2 percent).[52]

Access to healthcare is obstructed by the physical separation of Roma from the mainstream of social and economic life into segregated communities where public services are restricted or entirely unavailable. It is further impeded by factors such as a lack of identity papers, a lack of medical insurance, a low level of awareness concerning patient rights, and a lack of information about what treatments are actually available, not to mention the need to make informal payments to health providers. As the ERRC report *Ambulance not on the Way*, states:

> […] in its most egregious forms, racial discrimination in the provision of health care manifests itself as denial of treatment of Romani patients by health care providers and/or in inappropriate and negligent treatment. Furthermore, reports of segregation of Roma in medical facilities, verbal abuse and degrading treatment reveal a pattern of substandard level of health care provided to Roma.[53]

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[52]   Marian Chiriac and Daniel Ganga (2007) "Ferentari: Life in the Fast Lane" Bucharest: Center for Independent Journalism. September 26, 2007. Available online: http://www.soros.org/initiatives/health/focus/roma/articles_publications/articles/ferentari_20070926.

[53]   European Roma Rights Center (2006) *Ambulance not on the Way.* Budapest: ERRC. October 2006. Available online: http://www.soros.org/initiatives/health/focus/roma/articles_publications/publications/ambulance_20061004.

Directly related to and deeply detrimental to the health status of the population is the appalling housing conditions endured by large sections of the Roma population. According to the 2009 *Report on the Housing Conditions of Roma and Travellers,* the statistics revealed a broad pattern of deep poverty associated with segregation, a significantly larger percentage of Roma living in insecure dwellings targeted for eviction, poorer living conditions in general, with low comfort dwelling or even improvised dwellings, much lower access to utilities, and a much lower number of household goods. Cases of forced evictions and relocation to environmentally hazardous areas without utilities have been registered and reported in the United States Department of State's Human Rights Reports for Romania.

The 2007 *Roma Inclusion Barometer,* published by the Open Society Foundation–Romania, offers valuable data on Roma housing conditions. The study also mentions that Roma communities have fewer shops, schools, and kindergartens than other communities, and it reveals large *disparities* in urban areas in terms of access to public utilities:

- Three-quarters of Roma do not have access to natural gas (just over one-fifth for other ethnicities),

- Nearly three-quarters have no sewerage (15 percent for other ethnicities),

- Similarly, nearly three-quarters of Roma have no running water in the house (one-tenth for the rest of the population),

- Over one-tenth of Roma have no electricity (one percent for other ethnicities), and

- Well over one-tenth of Roma use waste for heating their homes or do not heat them at all (two percent for other ethnicities).

Overcrowding also has serious consequences for Roma health, with the rate of overcrowding more than double for Roma (13 percent as opposed to 26 percent), and also far fewer square meters per person (8 m²/person as opposed to 19.5 m²/person). Two-thirds of Roma households with a kitchen also use it as a bedroom to save on heating costs, while one-tenth of Roma households do not have a kitchen as opposed to two percent for other ethnicities.[54]

As part of the Decade, the Romanian National Agency for Roma defined five objectives in its 2008 National Action Plan on Education and established five major objectives: (1) to increase the preschool participation of Roma children;(2) to encourage participation of Roma youth in mandatory education (1st to 10th grade) and upper secondary education (11th to 12th grade); (3) to encourage Roma youth to enroll in col-

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[54]   G. Badescu, V. Grigoras, C. Rughinis, M. Voicu, and O. Voicu (2007) *Roma Inclusion Barometer.* Bucharest: Open Society Foundation.

lege education; (4) to develop an inclusive educational environment; (5) to value and preserve Roma cultural heritage. As the 2010 Decade Watch Report puts it

> Despite the obvious efforts to improve the Roma access to education and the quality of education for Roma, the educational system continues to be inequitable: "About 80% of the children never enrolled in school are Roma, out of which 38% are functionally illiterate. The proportion of Roma children enrolled in primary education is 64%, as compared to 98.9%, the national average" (Report of the Presidential Commission 2007:8). Significant differences between Roma and non-Roma can be encountered to secondary and college education. Thus, for the people aged 18–30, 9% of Roma are high-school graduates and 2% are college graduates, as compared to 41%, respective 27% of non-Roma (Fleck and Rughinis 2008:167). Also, 11% of Roma aged 14 to 17 are out of school, as compared to only 3.2% persons of other ethnicities in the same age group (157). The main problems affecting Roma children are school non-enrollment, school dropout, school segregation, and the absence of intercultural elements in the curricula.[55]

Any prospects for progress on Roma inclusion across the four main areas of health, housing, education, and employment hinges on the capacity of local administration to access European funds. Many town halls do not have the qualified staff to write such proposals. In rural areas it is estimated that only one-seventh of municipalities have an EU funds department as opposed to nearly three-quarters in urban areas. A Roma-specific component in Local Development Strategies would ease their access to funding opportunities that target Roma. Moreover, there is a need for a local administration network that could function as a consultative body for the Management Authorities and the European Commission when drafting the Operational Plans and negotiating their reviews. User-friendly guides on how to access European Structural Funds should be prepared for local administrations, combined with an investment in training to increase the absorption of these funds. There needs to be an overhaul of the Communications Plans of the Management Authorities to use clear and comprehensible language in their outreach and to include a Roma-focused chapter. Operational Programs should include built-in incentives for local authorities to tackle the social inclusion of Roma. For instance, projects targeting infrastructure and rehabilitation of Roma settlements, could have the required two percent of own contribution for projects targeting Roma waived.

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[55] Iulian Stoian and David Mark (2010) Decade Watch Romania Report: *Midterm Evaluation of the Decade of Roma Inclusion*, Country report. Available online: http://www.acrr.ro/download/DecadeWatchRomaniaReport_2010_EN.pdf.

EDUCATION

While numerous reports acknowledge the efforts made by the Romanian government in terms of pro-Roma policies and programs, the general verdict is that implementation of these policies has been far weaker than the ambitious targets suggest, and Roma children still face formidable obstacles to quality education. This is especially urgent considering the size of the Roma population and the high proportion of young Roma. Available data suggests that increasing numbers of children are enrolling in school, but non-completion rates are alarmingly high. Segregation persists despite a 2009 government decree explicitly forbidding it as discriminatory and having negative effects on children's educational prospects. The Decade Watch Report, a study conducted one year later, revealed that implementation is weak and uneven and that in some two-thirds of schools some forms of segregation persist. Despite the vital contribution that preschool makes to later success in schooling, large numbers of Roma children do not attend kindergarten, due to costs, lack of available places, and geographical isolation.

Drawing from the Open Society Foundations' report, *Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma*, the following recommendations should be incorporated into the National Roma Integration Strategy under the EU Framework:

- The Ministry of Education and Science should improve data collection mechanisms related to Roma students and ensure the public availability of data disaggregated age, gender, and ethnicity to identify trends in school achievement.

- The Ministry of Education and Science should: monitor desegregation actions and their impact on the beneficiaries; initiate evaluation research in order to document the impact of different interventions, projects, and programs; balance quantitative data collection mechanisms with qualitative data collection in order to get system-related data, as well as information related to people's real lives.

- School Inspectorates should: monitor and respect quality standards for the school's environment, including ensuring adequate space, heating, lightening, space available per child; to this end, the ARACIP (the Romanian Agency for Ensuring Quality in Pre-university Education) quality criteria and self-assessment forms should be used at the school level.

- The Ministry of Education and Science should ensure that all children have access to full-day, two-year preschool by: extending the compulsory preparatory class (*grupa pregatitoare*) to two years for all disadvantaged children; ensuring that adequate space is available to accommodate all children; this could be through construction of new classrooms, revisions in class scheduling, or reviewing the requirements for the number of children per class; providing free, full-day educational programs for disadvantaged children.

- Make provisions for those children who do not have the appropriate papers to have access to preschool education; allocate funding for primary and secondary schools to ensure that children who qualify can receive support such as meals, clothes, and after-school programs.

- Continue and encourage more "Second Chance" classes where necessary, and further ensure appropriate implementation of the recruitment, teaching, assessment, and certification procedures for "Second Chance" students.

- Ensure that there is an appropriate division of labor and responsibilities set out to end segregation in a decentralized system. Allocate governmental and EU funds as a priority to locations which demonstrate real efforts to improve social cohesion through school desegregation initiatives. Set in place effective monitoring systems and impose financial and professional sanctions on those directors who continue to discriminate against Roma pupils.

- Train county school inspectorates for the effective implementation of desegregation, including teachers, parents, and pupils, to create and maintain a welcoming school environment; support inspectors in developing monitoring and placement procedures and providing integrating schools with the necessary financial and professional support.

- Provide assistance to the county inspectorates, to ensure that experts on community facilitation and desegregation go into schools and the community, to provide mediation and counseling in case of debates or conflicts.

- Address the non-educational barriers to desegregation occasioned by poverty, and ensure that free transportation of all children to the host schools as required by law is available as needed.

- Encourage and support in-service and pre-service teacher institutions to offer courses in language acquisition, methodologies for bilingual education and techniques, intercultural education, inclusive education. Provide incentives to attract better-qualified teachers to the schools in disadvantaged regions, specifically in rural areas and to reduce the turnover of staff in such schools.

- Stimulate increased involvement of Roma parents, and foster links with Roma organizations to strengthen community participation, building on good practices and experiences from donor-funded projects.

- Provide support for and enlarge the scope of efforts and campaigns that challenge discriminatory attitudes, anti-Roma prejudice, that promote active citizenship and social dialogue, and that also engage the majority population. Broad-based popular support for integration and equal opportunities is necessary to achieve sustainable change.

EMPLOYMENT

During the Communist era, and the regime's drive for full employment from 1970, most Roma abandoned self-employment and the informal economy to work in industry and agriculture rather than face the risk of being accused of "social parasitism," "anarchism," or deviance from the "socialist way of life" and face prison or forced labor. While the toppling of the Ceauşescu regime brought the potential for new political and economic opportunities for Romania's minorities, it spelt disaster for most Roma. As Ringold et al., put it, Roma were disproportionately affected by trends of rising unemployment, growing poverty, shrinking social assistance, as well as limited access to housing, education, and healthcare. High levels of Roma unemployment in the formal sector reflected low levels of qualifications. In 1993, it was estimated that three-fifths of employed Roma were unskilled, and only two percent reported having middle or higher qualifications. Labor market opportunities were limited by exclusion and discrimination and Roma reported that, in general, they were the last to be hired and the first to be fired. There is also a relationship between geographic and economic exclusion, with rural communities hardest hit, lacking basic infrastructure and utilities, and with limited economic opportunities.[56] Little has changed in the intervening years and long-term unemployment, in addition to the blight of inter-generational transmission of poverty, condemns communities to dependence on sparse social benefits and sporadic informal work opportunities, which makes reentry into the labor market very difficult.

Some remedial steps to amend and address Roma unemployment and provide new opportunities for Roma of working-age to fully participate in Romania's robust yet sometimes troubled economic rebirth would include:

- Provide tailored training for Roma in business management to encourage entrepreneurship.

- Promote employment opportunities through the application of temporary affirmative action in the primary labor market and through public procurement in the institutions of state and government, setting minimum quotas for Roma hires.

- Utilize European funds for rural development programs that target Roma communities explicitly but not exclusively.

- Create incentives for private sector companies to employ suitably qualified Roma.

- Develop special vocational training programs, appropriate for Roma and responsive to the demands of the market.

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[56]   Dena Ringold, Mitchell A. Orenstein, and Erika Wilkens (2005) *Roma in an Expanding Europe: Breaking the Poverty Cycle*. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank. Available online: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTROMA/Resources/roma_in_expanding_europe.pdf.

- Actively encourage and ensure that Roma adults have information and access to all available programs for continuing education and job qualification schemes.

- Promote the use of different forms of education upgrading, training, qualification courses, and requalification needed to compete for available employment opportunities.

- Ensure that anti-discrimination legislation is fully implemented and adequate measures are taken to root out the pervasive anti-Roma prejudice in both the public and private sectors that impedes suitably qualified Roma from gaining appropriate employment.

- Provide adequate measures to protect Roma from discrimination within the workplace.

- Provide anti-bias training for all professionals working in employment and social assistance offices and ensure they are adequately prepared to meet the needs of Roma clients.

- Actively encourage training and professional development for Roma to work as specialists in employment and social assistance offices.

- Create effective micro-loan programs to support small and medium enterprises in localities with substantial Roma communities.

HEALTH

The dire disparities between the overwhelmingly poor health of Roma and the generally good health non-Roma call for a raft of measures to close this clearly discriminatory gap.

One essential initiative to any improvement in Roma access to healthcare has been the introduction of a health mediation system since 2002. Some 700 Roma, mainly women, were trained to liaise between health service providers, doctors, and Roma patients, of which about 400 were eventually employed.

In step with efforts to dramatically improve Roma access to health services, a systematic overhaul of health service provision should strive to raise its quality, while also campaigning to raise Roma's awareness of health issues:

- Closely monitor the impact of decentralization on health service provision. The number of reported incidents where local authorities refused to accept the transfer of health mediators and proceeded to obstruct their functioning deliberately undermines the efficacy of health mediation. The Decade Watch Report recommended monitoring how local authorities handle decentralization with regards to health mediators; that this monitoring involve consultation with the representatives of County Directors of Public Health, with a view to identifying and overcoming the dysfunctions and shortcomings of this process.

- Annually evaluate the performance of health mediators to assess their impact, quality, and worth in terms of individual professional standards, and the wider perspective of increasing the Roma population's access to quality and non-discriminatory healthcare

- Devise a system of appropriate data collection on the health needs, health determinants, and healthcare received by Roma communities. Existing data is fragmented and the absence of national level disaggregated data and comparable epidemiological information makes it difficult to design effective targeted interventions to combat discrimination in healthcare, and to measure improvements in the health of the population or decreases in health disparities.

- Analyze this data to influence the design of policy and services, and allow for the development of strategies for the improvement of the quality of healthcare services in a diverse society.

- Use more of the European Structural Funds to support healthcare. Funds can be used for this purpose, including: health infrastructure, investment in health promotion and disease prevention, and institutional capacity in health and social inclusion in health. Limited use of these provisions has been made to date to advance Roma health. The fact that hardly one-third of local development strategies, which also have a health component, mention Roma does not augur well for the future absorption capacity of structural funds in Romania and needs to be remedied as a matter of urgency.

- Many Roma still lack citizenship, personal identification or health insurance, limiting their access to health and social services. The significant involvement of Roma in informal sector employment also means that they disproportionately lack access to benefits based on social insurance contributions in Romania. These conditions contribute to inequities between Roma and other populations in health system use, and their effective resolution requires a cross-sectoral and comprehensive approach.

- Combating discrimination must take priority. In the Fundamental Rights Agency survey,[57] discrimination by healthcare personnel emerged as a particularly acute problem for the Roma across the European Union: nearly one-fifth of Roma indicated they had experienced discrimination in this area in the previous year. Reports from a Health Mediator survey of Roma families indicated that in Romania, over one-third of Roma believe they are discriminated against when it comes to health services. The Ministry of Health needs to initiate

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[57] Fundamental Rights Agency (2009) European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey, Main Results Report.

close monitoring of direct and indirect discrimination against Roma within the health system and take appropriate disciplinary measures to eliminate such practices. Medical staff should receive anti-bias training and be fully prepared for non-discriminatory work and appropriate communication in culturally diverse environments.

- There is a direct correlation between high rates of illiteracy, abject poverty and very little information or knowledge concerning health problems, preventative healthcare, or rights and entitlements. The government needs to be proactive in generating partnerships with voluntary organizations and civic organizations to promote healthy lifestyle choices, harm reduction, and clear information about rights, entitlements, and access to healthcare among Roma communities.

HOUSING

As stated in the Fundamental Rights Agency Report, the main legal framework for housing in Romania consists of Law 114/1996, the Housing Law, and Law 50/1991, which regulates the authorization of construction. Law 114/1996 defines adequate housing and contains provisions for building social housing, but Roma are not included among the target groups for social housing and there are no provisions in national legislation against forced evictions. At the level of policies, the most important document is the Romanian Government Strategy for the Improvement of the Condition of Roma adopted in 2001 under pressure from the EU and amended in 2006. Independent evaluations of the strategy's subsequent implementation show housing to be the least developed of all its fields.[58]

The practical impact is that many Roma families do not own the land on which their houses are built or the houses themselves, or they lack authorization for construction. Roma who migrate from rural to urban areas often end up building temporary unauthorized dwellings on state or private land, or purchasing properties and holding receipts that are legally invalid. In many cases Roma do not have lease contracts for their houses. In many cases when local authorities proceed with evictions, Roma are not provided with alternative accommodation and in many cases are relocated next to waste collection sites or other environmentally hazardous locations.

Clearly, the failure to provide adequate living conditions has a deleterious effect on the health of the Roma community and leaves Roma vulnerable to illnesses associated

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[58] Delia Luiza Nita (2009) Romania RAXEN National Focal Point; Thematic Study, *Housing Conditions of Roma and Travellers*. Available online: http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/ RAXEN-Roma%20Housing-Romania_en.pdf.

with poverty and overcrowding, exposure to extremes of climate, poor hygiene due to proximity to waste collection sites, lack of fresh water supplies, and poor diet. Examples include anemia, parasites, tuberculosis, skin diseases, malnutrition, stomach illnesses, dental problems, respiratory diseases, infections, and frostbite.[59]

The segregation associated with poverty seems to be synonymous with less access to jobs and income, education, and services. According to the qualitative data of the NGO Romani Criss that has opposed such evictions in the courts, local authorities accompanied by the police have repeatedly been documented behaving in a discriminatory, illegal, and abusive manner.

Unfortunately, very little changed during the Fundamental Rights Agency's reporting period: Roma housing remains segregated and poor compared to the majority population, and no concerted policy or legislative initiative was implemented to tackle the housing situation of Roma in connection with discrimination or harassment. Overall, the situation of Roma housing seems to have been the last priority for the Romanian government.

In the area of housing and within the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, the Romanian government must ensure that:

- It sets a timeframe and clear targets, explicitly but not exclusively focusing on Roma communities, for the adoption of the necessary legislative, administrative, financial, educational, and social measures that will ensure the full realization of the right to adequate housing. This right is defined as comprising of the following elements: legal security of tenure; availability of services, materials, facilities, and infrastructure; that housing be affordable, habitable, and accessible; that the location is neither contaminated nor hazardous and allows access to employment, health, education, child care and other social services; and that homes are culturally appropriate.

- In the shortest time possible, the government should provide potable water, electricity, waste removal, public transportation, roads, and other infrastructure to Roma settlements lacking any of the above.

- Criteria pertaining to the equality of opportunity and the prevention of discrimination should be introduced in all infrastructure projects (sewage, electricity, gas, water supplies) and in the urban regeneration programs that tend to end where the Roma community begins. The Management Authority responsible for drafting the guidelines for the projects with European and national funding should introduce conditionality to ensure that both large- and small-scale infrastructure projects explicitly promote social integration, equal treatment, and equal access for all.

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[59]   Marian Chiriac and Daniel Ganga, Op. cit.

- The national government and local authorities should ensure the active participation of Roma in planning, implementation, and review of housing policies at all levels. Their participation should reflect the heterogeneous nature of these groups and address the concerns of particular groups within them, for example, women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities.

- The national government must ensure that international rights standards are applied and that the routine abuses reported during forced evictions cease forthwith. Evictions should not render persons homeless or more vulnerable to other human rights violations. There must be provision of adequate and reasonable notice as to when eviction will take place and the availability of judicial remedies either to prevent eviction of provide compensation. Evictions should not take place during bad weather or at night. If those evicted cannot provide for themselves, then the state must take all reasonable measures to provide alternative adequate housing.

- In light of the low awareness of anti-discrimination legislation, as evidenced by the Fundamental Rights Agency's EU-MIDIS survey and the European Commission's Eurobarometer, the government and equality bodies should initiate efforts to raise awareness and disseminate information regarding anti-discrimination legislation and the possibilities for redress, targeting particularly potential victims of discrimination in access to housing.

- The absence of disaggregated data precludes effective, targeted, and properly resourced interventions. Without comprehensive disaggregated data on housing needs, there can be little substantial and systemic progress. The government should collect such data, and in line with the recent European Parliament Resolution, develop a crisis map identifying the most impoverished rural and urban settlements, assessing their needs, and devising complex interventions targeting the most deprived.

Recommendations for Slovakia*

PREAMBLE

One of the most challenging issues facing Slovakia, and other Central and Eastern European countries, is that of Roma inclusion. According to various estimates, approximately 430,000 Roma live in Slovakia and they amount to some eight percent of the population. More than one-seventh of all school-age children in Slovakia are Roma. Of 23 countries included in a 2005 study by UNICEF, Slovakia had the highest enrollment rate in basic special education programs. A report by the Roma Education Fund in 2010, *School as Ghetto,* identified that well over half of the children in special education in Slovakia are Roma. The report states that "it is clear that the vast majority of these children do not belong in special education," and demonstrates that special education "is a losing proposition for young people—they cannot get gainful employment—and for the state—the lack of gainful employment means fewer taxes and higher welfare spending." According to UNDP estimates, only 11 percent of Roma men and barely five percent of Roma women were employed in Slovakia, while nearly three-quarters of Roma households received social assistance from the government. The economic costs of exclusion are staggering. On the other hand, as research conducted by the Open Society Foundation–Bratislava demonstrates effective Roma inclusion policies leading to an increase in the active workforce would benefit the whole of Slovak society and could boost the country's GDP by between seven and 11 percent per annum.[60]

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*   This policy paper was compiled by the Open Society Foundation–Bratislava

[60]   Anton Marcincin and Lubica Marcincinova (2009), *The Cost of Non-Inclusion: The Key to Integration Is Respect for Diversity,* Open Society Foundation–Bratislava, July 2009. Available online: http://www.romadecade.org/the_cost_of_noninclusion_2009.

The size of the population and the complex of factors inhibiting integration requires a coherent and comprehensive policy approach. During Slovakia's accession process to the EU, pressure was exerted on Slovakia to adopt measures to improve the situation of Roma as a condition of membership. But since Slovakia joined the EU, this external pressure has ceased to have any impact, and Roma inclusion has become a matter of domestic concern.

The following constitutes the basic dimensions that define the situation of Roma in Slovakia:

- overall low social status of Roma,

- high degree of social exclusion of Roma population,

- inadequate levels of education and qualification of substantial parts of the Roma population, who are ill-prepared to compete in the labor market,

- high rate of unemployment that persists and even increases due to unemployability of certain groups of Roma as a result of a lack of basic qualifications and workplace skills needed for employment,

- dire housing conditions endured by large proportions of the Roma population, namely those who live in settlements (separated or segregated) lacking basic infrastructure and services,

- poor health status of many Roma, aggravated by inaccessibility (or low accessibility) of health services,

- large concentrations of the Roma population in the most underdeveloped and economically impoverished regions which makes them victims of dual deprivation on the basis of ethnic exclusion and geographic marginalization,

- the persistence of socio-pathological phenomena associated with deep poverty and deprivation in Roma settlements (criminality, usury, alcoholism, sexual harassment) leave Roma vulnerable to exploitation and more likely to be victims of crime,

- a low level of participation of Roma in public life, and as a consequence there is little capacity among Roma to advocate for their specific interests and needs and to have influence in the policy process and take an active role in the integration process (in 2011 there are no deputies of Roma descent in the National Council [parliament] of the Slovak Republic; there is only one Roma deputy among deputies of all eight regional assemblies; and there are only 29 Roma village mayors),

- weak political mobilization of the Roma population: there is no high-profile and trusted Roma political elite who would be able to represent Roma and to articulate their demands,

- unclear status of Roma from the point of view of their belonging to the Roma community defined ethnically (as "Roma ethnic minority") whose members represent only a minority of the real Roma population,

- high degree of social distance between the Roma and non-Roma population and widespread anti-Roma prejudice,

- evidence of direct and indirect discrimination against Roma in the labor market, and in other spheres of public life, cases of racially motivated violence against Roma by extremist groups.

It became evident immediately after the collapse of the communist regime of Czechoslovakia in 1989 that Roma in Slovakia belonged to those groups of society least prepared for the upcoming socio-economic upheaval. Two decades after the transition to democracy, Roma have been trapped and labeled as "losers of the transformation." Post-communist economic restructuring turned what had been substantial Roma employment levels into almost universal unemployment. The lack of any efficient programs targeting Roma and "softening" the impact of this abrupt transition deepened social dependency, and the exclusion of Roma became a real and persistent problem.

The residential structure of the Roma population worsened substantially with the mushrooming of separated and segregated settlements in some localities. The demographic profile of Roma, due to lower life expectancy and higher birth rates, is much younger than the national average. Inappropriate and inadequate educational provision, leaving young people ill-prepared for gainful employment, greatly increases the risk of deepening welfare dependency among Roma.

Although the crisis of the Roma population became evident from the outset of the transformation, it was not a priority for the dominant political elites who were preoccupied with building democratic institutions, liberalizing the economy, rolling back the state, dealing with the Hungarian minority issues, and integrating Slovakia into the EU and NATO. Opportunities to address the situation of the Roma in a progressive manner during this period of transition were not taken.

The situation was further complicated by wide discrepancies between the approaches adopted by the country's different political forces to the Roma issue. Over two decades since the fall of communism, no conceptual strategic approach has emerged on Roma integration that could serve as a platform for cross-party consensus. The fact that nationalist populist forces, renowned for their unfriendly policies towards minorities, and preference for ethnic majoritarianism, spent considerable time in government did not augur well for positive progress.

During the last two decades, two different approaches emerged within Slovakia's political establishment towards solving the Roma issue. The first approach emphasizes the social integration of Roma citizens, and how best to overcome their social exclusion. The social inclusion approach differentiates between particular groups within the Roma

population according to applied social criteria and works with the term "Roma communities." The basic features of this concept characterized the approach of government to the Roma issue from 1998 to 2006. The second approach places more emphasis on the ethnic aspect of the Roma agenda, with a focus on ethnic self-identification, language, culture, etc.; in contrast to the first approach, this works with the term "Roma ethnic minority" as opposed to "Roma communities." This approach constituted the substance of governmental policy in 2006–2010.

The 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma inclusion will guide this multidimensional approach to the Roma minority in Slovakia. These principles are:

1. Constructive, pragmatic, and non-discriminatory policies

2. Explicit but not exclusive targeting

3. Intercultural approach

4. Aiming for the mainstream

5. Awareness of the gender dimension

6. Transfer of evidence-based policies

7. Use of community instruments

8. Involvement of regional and local authorities

9. Involvement of civil society

10. Active participation of Roma

Furthermore, three main principles for a policy strategy to solve the problems of the Roma population in Slovakia are:

- implementing comprehensive and systematic activities and projects as a result of close coordination between governmental authorities, local self-governments, NGOs, and marginalized Roma communities in cooperation with the entrusted EU agencies,

- gathering financial sources from EU Structural Funds, state budget, local and regional budgets, nongovernmental funds, and private donations,

- supporting motivation of Roma, including those from marginalized communities, to have an active approach on improving their own conditions, taking into account equal opportunity principles.

Four areas can be considered as a crucial for overcoming the unfavorable social situation of Roma in Slovakia in order to remove the consequences of open and hidden discrimination: education, employment, health, and housing. In addition, gender equity and racism could be added to the list.

EDUCATION

State of Affairs

Despite the fact that discrimination and segregation in education are prohibited by several laws, Slovak legislation lacks a clear description of segregation that would allow the introduction of targeted and applicable measures to prevent and eliminate it. The following three types of segregation can be identified in the Slovak education system: separated education of Roma pupils in special elementary schools (classes or elementary schools for pupils with special needs); separated education of Roma in elementary schools with a majority of Roma pupils or strictly Roma schools (schools in the proximity of socially segregated or excluded areas); separated classes in elementary schools reserved for Roma pupils (classrooms may be located in separate buildings).

Policy Proposals

In the long term, the process that should lead to quality education for all children requires desegregation and inclusion. The proposed recommendations to eliminate school segregation include:

- Incorporate provisions into the anti-discrimination act limiting the mechanisms that allow temporary or permanent segregation of disadvantaged groups.
- Monitor the evaluation procedures for mental retardation diagnosis (single evaluation and strict reliance on IQ tests is insufficient).
- Monitor the admission procedures in schools for special needs students and two-year re-evaluations of mental retardation diagnoses.
- Increase the quality of academic and general education in schools attended by a large number of children from marginalized communities.
- Monitor and penalize segregation in kindergartens and elementary schools.
- Ensure strict compliance of education policy with integration of children in preschool and their admission to standard (regular) classes.
- Strengthen the authority of state and local administration and education departments to monitor segregation and to enforce inclusive education.
- Monitor and survey the compliance of the education program with the goals and principles of academic and general education in terms of inclusion.
- Reflect cultural identity issues in the curricula, introducing the texts that allow easy orientation and development of cognitive processes.

- Implement cooperative teaching concepts to benefit not only the Roma students but also majority students.

EMPLOYMENT

State of Affairs

Authorities in Slovakia do not collect data regarding Roma unemployment, stressing that the employment policy in Slovakia is based on the "civic principle." However, according to a UNDP survey from 2007, the unemployment rate among Roma men was 72 percent (the average unemployment rate among men was just under nine percent) and among Roma women 51.5 percent (the average unemployment rate among women was just under eight percent). In 2010, the situation worsened due to the global economic crisis; Slovakia's average unemployment rate increased at the end of 2010 to nearly 15 percent. A very likely consequence of this has been an increased level of unemployment among Roma. According to the Mid-term Strategy of Roma National Minority Development in Slovak Republic: Solidarity—Integration—Inclusion, 2008–2013, the main problems related to Roma unemployment include economic and social exclusion, segregation and discrimination, low qualifications, and the demotivation of children by their parents and communities.

National employment programs developed by the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family have included vocational training, subsidized employment, and public works projects, funded both from the state budget and from the European Social Fund. No information as to the actual number of Roma beneficiaries is available. Some smaller programs have explicitly targeted Roma by seeking to employ Roma in particular positions, like community (field) social workers or teaching assistants, but the scope of these programs appears to be very limited. Public works have been presented as the biggest opportunity for the employment of Roma; however, this type of employment is usually short-term, so the numbers of long-term unemployed remained unchanged.

Policy Proposals

If addressing the obstacles faced by Roma in the labor market is to become a priority, then the following areas should be taken into consideration when designing new policies and strategies: training and retraining according to the needs on the labor market, creating job opportunities for Roma as a systemic and long-term approach, self-employment and entrepreneurship, and ensuring the principle of equal opportunities for Roma on the labor market.

Recommendations in the area of Roma employment include:

- Provide opportunities for continuing, lifelong education for people with incomplete education, with a view to preparation for the labor market.

- Elaborate mid-term "demand-driven" programs for the employment of Roma.

- Increase the level of employability of Roma through active labor market measures and by creating the systematic provision of social services.

- Create conditions for long-term support for social fieldwork in communities with a high number of Roma, and providing systemic education, training, and professional development of social fieldworkers.

- Systematize "assistance" positions—teachers' assistants, health mediators, police assistants—and ensuring long-term financing from the state budget.

- Support the increase of employment through self-employment.

- Create micro-loan programs to support small- and medium-sized enterprises/entrepreneurs in the localities involving marginalized Roma communities.

- Promote employment opportunities through the application of temporary affirmative action in the primary labor market and through public procurement in the institutions of state and government.

- Set the conditions for public procurement contracts in the forestry and agriculture sector so as to create new incentives for low-skilled jobs.

HEALTH

State of Affairs

The Decade Presidency was held by Slovakia from July 1, 2009 until June 30, 2010 with the following priorities: integrated school system and multicultural education, Roma identity, and revision of the National Action Plan. Although the health priority within the Decade is the weakest and most underdeveloped area, several significant opportunities appeared under the Slovak presidency. Representatives of the Slovak Public Health Authority commented on and drafted a new framework for the health part of the National Action Plan; however, the Slovak Ministry of Health is still unwilling to become fully involved in the process.

There are specific programs dealing with health issues of Roma. The state program is called the Program to Support the Health of Disadvantaged Roma Communities and is planned for 2007–2015. It contains a declared emphasis on health mediators (Slovak term is "community health assistant") and also refers to the Phare project (2004– 2006)

as well as to the Roma Health Program of the Open Society Foundation–Bratislava. The responsible bodies for the implementation are: the Ministry of Health, the Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities, and Regional Public Health Offices.

NGOs asked responsible institutions to support the Health Mediator Schemes (HMS) by including these positions on the government payroll. In 2010, NGOs repeatedly presented HMS as the best practice in the area of overcoming barriers Roma face when accessing healthcare services and their disadvantage in accessing health information. Despite proactive communication and advocacy based on reminding Slovakia of its obligations under national and international laws and policies (including the Decade), only limited progress has been achieved.[61] The lack of progress was highlighted in the Evaluation of Legislative Provisions and Policy Measures adopted to improve Roma health conditions.

Policy Proposals

Main recommendations in the area of Roma health include:

- Support the development and implementation of health policies ensuring Roma's ability to receive healthcare through advocacy activities directed on strengthening the position of health mediators.

- Encourage the government and other relevant official bodies to draft and implement a legislative base to ensure the health mediator position within official payrolls and secure its further development.

- Use standard advocacy methods to encourage relevant ministries and offices to revise and redesign National Action Plans, and make them compatible with their Decade obligations on Roma health.

- Apply measures to achieve a reduction in the incidences of infectious diseases.

- Enhance and improve sanitation in villages and urban concentrations.

- Support the establishment and operation of Health Centers in Community Centers in marginalized Roma communities.

- Improve the access to healthcare services, ensuring geographic and financial accessibility of medical care in segregated localities.

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[61] Open Society Foundation–Bratislava (OSFBA) secured 30 health mediator job positions on the government payroll for 2010. In cooperation with the Association of Community Centers and ACEC and with the support from the Plenipotentiary of the Roma Communities, OSFBA submitted a document titled "Roma Health Programs Improvements to the Deputy Prime Minister for Knowledge-based Society, European Affairs, Human Rights and Minorities."

- Increase awareness and counselling services focusing on health promotion and disease prevention, awareness about health risks related to nutrition, lifestyle, smoking, and consumption of drugs (support the implementation of specific programs aimed at education for parenthood, reproductive health, maternity, and child care).

HOUSING

State of Affairs

Housing is one of the areas where the social exclusion of Roma is the most visible since the majority of Roma live in housing that is considered inadequate. The main problems here include residential segregation, informal housing/substandard slum settlements, missing access to technical infrastructure, unsatisfactory technical conditions of dwellings, cases of forced evictions, and obstruction of land use/denial of planning permission. Approximately half of the real Roma population of Slovakia (approximately 320,000 persons) lives dispersed among the majority population, while another half lives in settlements or in separate community/city neighborhoods.

Due to the specific conditions of many settlements, it is unrealistic to believe that all settlements can be fully integrated into nearby local communities. Where this is unfeasible, efforts should be made to improve the conditions for the inhabitants of the existing settlements, and provide the necessary infrastructure and public transport links to overcome spatial segregation.

Policy Proposals

According to international norms, the state must provide all citizens with the following seven core components of adequate housing: security of tenure; availability of services, materials, facilities, and infrastructure; affordability; habitability; accessibility; location; and cultural adequacy. Therefore, state housing policy toward Roma should:

- Recognize the right to adequate housing (in legislation and policy).
- Ensure housing affordability for all income groups and prevent the rise of costs to levels depriving dwellers from accessing and satisfying other basic needs.
- Regulate rent levels or provide housing subsidies in compliance with the affordability principle.
- Elaborate the strategy and main principles of distribution of flats (housing) to Roma inhabitants.

- Provide for building of houses near employment options, schools, healthcare centers, and open spaces, not in dangerous areas where threats to environmental health and hygiene exist.

- Ensure access to safe drinking water and sanitation.

GENDER EQUITY

State of Affairs

Desk research and sociological surveys conducted within the Roma community, including opinion polls carried out in the regions of Kosice, Presov, and Banska Bystrica (618 surveyed persons from 98 locations of different size and type) with the support of the Open Society Institute–Budapest and the Open Society Foundation–Bratislava, revealed the many obstacles Roma women encounter in their efforts to arrange their lives. Among them, the following gender-related problems were identified:

- *Inadequate education (particularly that of women), poorer availability and negative experiences in elementary school:* compared to the total population of Slovakia, Roma lag behind in education significantly, and particularly women: they finish the elementary school level more often than men but very few women complete vocational school.

- *Generally low rate of work activity (lower in women), frequent non-standard types of work, and gender-specific reasons for exclusion from the labor market:* Roma men tend to suffer most from unemployment in most Roma settlements, while women fulfill traditional roles in the home. Roma women from non-integrated communities are excluded from the labor market primarily due to child and family care and their economic status is usually determined by their families. The number of housewives and mothers on parental leave decreases with regard to their education: better educated mothers are less likely to have many children. While Roma men saw the reasons for their unemployment mostly in the external conditions, that is, in the lack of vacancies and prejudice by the majority against Roma, Roma women attributed their status primarily to their family responsibilities.

- *Extensive experience of Roma women (as well as men) with unequal treatment and deficiencies in the availability of services:* the limited access to necessary healthcare and loss of housing are particularly alarming. Traditionalist and conservative attitudes with regards to the roles of men and women, and the different criteria and standards that apply to men and women, also contribute to a specific type of inequality within many Roma communities.

Policy Proposals

Basic recommendations to promote gender equity and to tackle the multiple discrimination faced by Roma women include:

- Establish targeted and time-constrained affirmative action in relation to increasing women's participation in public life and in employment.

- Implement a gender-sensitive perspective in the provision of health services and ensuring access for girls and women from marginalized Roma communities.

- Promote lifelong learning as a method to influence the development and implementation of public policies on gender equality and the Roma issue.

- Implement systematic training programs on gender sensitivity and cultural specificities for social services and healthcare providers.

- Support comprehensive integration of gender sensitive and multicultural education into the education system in relation to the marginalized Roma communities.

- Create a complex information and education pack to work with the media, and developing a communication strategy, including codes of ethics in the field of Roma issues, gender issues, and the prevention and elimination of violence against women.

RACISM

State of Affairs

Social distance and racial prejudices against Roma are persistent among the majority (non-Roma) population of Slovakia. According to a sociological survey carried out by the Institute for Public Affairs (IVO) and the Research Cabinet for Social and Biological Communication (KVSBK) in 2008, Roma face the greatest social distance of all ethnic groups; according to the Bogardus test, as many as 69 percent of respondents would not want a Roma family for neighbors. Such attitudes fuel negative stereotypes about Roma and lead to the widespread conviction that the mutually beneficial coexistence of Roma and non-Roma is not possible, and strengthens the inclination towards support for repressive methods to "solve the Roma problem." It also creates a favorable environment for the activities of radical, nationalist, far-right extremist groups that propagate racial hatred and engage in violence against Roma on any pretext.

In the last two years, there has been an escalation of tension and an increase in extremist activities against Roma in some regions of Slovakia. In 2009, an extremist

group called *Slovenska pospolitost* (Slovak Community) organized several public rallies in eastern Slovakia, protesting against "Roma criminality" and tried to demonstrate its ability to propose viable, feasible, and practically enforceable solutions to the problem. In the village of Sarisske Michalany, *Slovenska pospolitost'* organized an anti-Roma march after a violent assault by two local Roma on an employee of the local football stadium. Before the march, *Slovenska pospolitost* declared its "national mobilization" against alleged long-standing "Roma terror." During the march, approximately 200 members and sympathizers of extremists clashed violently with the police, provoking many local bystanders to support and even join in with the extremists. Shortly afterwards, extremists organized marches and rallies against "Roma criminality" in other towns of eastern Slovakia.

In 2009–2010, extremists used every opportunity to present their views on the "Roma issue," mentioning the alleged inability of authorities to deal with them, and their failure to protect local people from the criminal activities of some Roma inhabitants. Such heightened tensions are a real threat to Slovakia: not only do a substantial part of the population in some regions identify with the extremists' position on the "Roma issue" but they might also come to accept such extremism as a legitimate social and political force. Public events organized by extremists (e.g., protests against "Roma criminality") are attracting increasing numbers of residents from towns and villages where they are held. These events have attracted a wide constituency beyond the typical cadre of young men attracted to extremism, which includes the middle-aged and elderly, pensioners, women, students, pupils, and even mothers with children.

Openly anti-Roma sentiments and prejudices were propagated by groups of mainstream nationalists as well as far-right extremists. The Slovak National Party ran a patently racist billboard campaign in the run-up to the 2010 elections depicting Roma as parasites and abusers of the state welfare system.

Policy Proposals

The main recommendations in the area of combating racism and racial prejudices include:

- Elaborate a clear, value-based, and feasible state policy to combat the threat of extremism.

- Put in place the appropriate sanctions and preventive and prophylactic measures against extremists.

- Equip state institutions in terms of organization, ideology, and structure to be competent in combating racism and in providing adequate protection to possible targets and victims of extremism.

- Create a model of interaction, coordination, and dialogue among the various actors committed to halting extremism in Slovak society.

- Promote education and training programs in schools and other youth institutions to diminish racial prejudices against Roma.

- Support public and social campaigns against racism and extremism that promote a vision of Slovakia's indigenous multiculturalism and the long-standing coexistence of numerous ethnic groups, who comprise constituent parts of the country's population.

- Increase the level of sensitivity of the media and opinion-makers to issues related to racial hatred, prejudices, and discrimination.

CONCLUSIONS

Any viable solutions to the problems of the Roma population should be based on comprehensive policies to address the multiple exclusion and discrimination that they experience in their daily lives. Long-term planning and a commitment of financial resources are compulsory for the implementation of Roma-related projects. For these different interventions to have a synergistic effect, a multisectoral approach is required. One essential factor for success is close cooperation between national and local actors when implementing these complex programs. The core value should be effective Roma participation in public and political life, and empowering communities to take an active role in setting the agenda and finding solutions. Programs piloted by NGOs (or based on NGOs' good practices), such as health mediators, teaching assistants, and desegregation initiatives, are of great importance. Data collection can help to develop some specific policies and to enable the effective implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of projects in Roma communities.

Improvements in the area of education, employment, health, and housing are urgently needed for an improvement in the situation of Slovakia's Roma population. A modern democratic nation such as Slovakia cannot allow itself to shove aside the problems of a substantial part of the country's population. Continued neglect has already lead to two parallel societies—a non-Roma majority, fully integrated into the social system and benefiting from this, and Roma themselves, excluded from society's networks and deprived of the opportunity to benefit from and contribute to social cohesion. The persistence of multiple forms of discrimination, increasing social distance between the majority and minority populations, and growing racial prejudice against Roma will only serve to worsen and aggravate an already alarming situation.

The biggest responsibility lies with Slovakia's political elites, government, and policymakers. Those in power should do their utmost to create the proper conditions for real solutions, to elaborate viable strategies and approaches in accordance with EU basic principles, and to approve and implement legislative measures that aim to reduce inequality, exclusion, and discrimination. For social inclusion and integration strategies

to succeed, a long-term investment must be made in public education programs and efficient communication strategies to raise the awareness of the majority population about Roma's full participation in Slovak society, and to reduce endemic public hostility towards the Roma population.

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The EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies is the clearest declaration yet from the European Commission that concern over the plight of the Roma needs to move beyond rhetoric to the substance of Roma inclusion.

The Framework, taking its cue from the Decade of Roma Inclusion, calls on member states to develop and implement targeted strategies, and to devote sufficient resources to promoting integration in health, housing, education, and employment. The Decade's structures, convening power, and unique array of partners can contribute much to ensuring that the Framework will make a difference by 2020.

To make integration a reality for Europe's largest ethnic minority requires the active participation of Roma themselves. The task ahead is to make a tangible difference in the lives of millions of Roma who subsist in conditions of dire poverty and exclusion.

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