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Preface

With the expansion of the EU in May 2004, an estimated 1.5 million Roma in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) became EU citizens. When Bulgaria and Romania join, scheduled for 2007, that number will increase to some 4.4 million.¹ What will this mean in practice for the majority of CEE Roma, who continue to experience discrimination in every aspect of their lives and on a daily basis?² Roma constitute the largest and most marginalized ethnic minority group in Europe; and its biggest civil rights issue. Although most people agree that the enlargement process is likely to bring positive changes for Roma in the region, the impact of EU membership can only be assessed in the years ahead in terms of real, measurable progress in such key areas as equal access to education and levels of employment comparable to those of the majorities.

Romania has the largest Roma population in Europe, estimated at some 2.5 million people.³ Although Romania is not yet an EU member State, the strong desire to join the EU has fostered some positive results. As in other candidate countries with a significant Roma minority, the Government has formulated a national plan aimed specifically at improving the situation of Roma. Adopted in April 2001, the “Strategy of the Government of Romania for the Improving the Roma Condition” (hereafter, Strategy) established a detailed program for addressing the discrimination and poverty faced by Roma communities. In addition, the Romanian Government adopted the first anti-discrimination law in response to the EU’s Race Equality Directive in August 2000. It has been revised several times.

¹ Dimitrina Petrova, The European Roma Rights Center (ERRC), “The Roma: Between a Myth and the Future”. Accessed on the web at <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=1844&archiv=1>

² For example, unemployment in Roma communities is estimated at between 50 and 90 per cent. See “EU support for Roma communities in Central and Eastern Europe”, European Commission, Directorate General for Enlargement, published by the Enlargement Information Unit. Accessed on the web at http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/docs/pdf/brochure_roma_oct2003_en.pdf

³ In some cases, estimates are considerably higher than official figures, due at least partly to the reluctance of some Roma to identify themselves as such. According to the 2002 census in Romania, the official figure for the Roma population was 535,000. Dimitrina Petrova, The European Roma Rights Center (ERRC), “The Roma: Between a Myth and the Future”. Accessed on the web at <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=1844&archiv=1>

In 2002, the Open Society Institute's (OSI) EU Monitoring and Advocacy Programme (EUMAP) monitored the implementation of such strategies and plans at the national level.⁴ The 2002 monitoring report commended the Romanian Government's Strategy for its straightforward approach to problems of discrimination, and for creating new structures at the central and local levels to give Roma a greater role in decision-making. However, it also challenged the Government to do more to implement concrete projects called for in the Strategy.

Two years ago, Prime Minister Nastase acknowledged that, "The Strategy is excellent, we adopted it, everybody was satisfied and after that we put it in the drawer."⁵ These same concerns persist to this day. Now, more than ever, Romania must take steps to ensure that the gains made in the past are the foundation for continuous and expanding efforts to improve the situation of the Roma. This will require local interagency coordination; sufficient resources; the will to implement the plan; the inclusion of broadly representative Roma in the design and management of its implementation; and transparent monitoring of progress, so that adjustments can be made as needed. To promote social inclusion and facilitate equal access to public services, the Government will have to adjust its anti-discrimination legislation to be in full compliance with the Race Equality Directive.

This report follows from the 2002 EUMAP report on Romania and extends the monitoring from the national to the local level. Three years after the Strategy's adoption, it is precisely at this local level that real improvements for Roma should now be expected. However, the findings and conclusions of this local-level monitoring emphasise the need for further effort on the part of the Romanian Government to seriously implement the Strategy measures in full. The five county reports include success stories where small-scale initiatives, many of them supported with EU funds, have had a direct impact on local communities.⁶ The Government must take steps to ensure that these smaller projects have the necessary resources to be sustainable and to be scaled up where appropriate, and also draw lessons from the local level to improve policy at the national level. Short-term local results must be incorporated into a longer-term vision for improving the situation of Roma.

This monitoring project highlights the need for Governments across Europe to maintain focus on the problems faced by Roma and to ensure that their policy

⁴ *Monitoring the EU Accession Process: Minority Protection*, Volume 1. An Assessment of Selected Policies in Candidate States. All EUMAP reports are available on the EUMAP website, at <http://www.eumap.org/reports>

⁵ Prime Minister Adrian Năstase, Video-conference with Counties and Bucharest municipality, Friday, 6 September 2002, 9.00 hrs. Available at <http://www.gov.ro>

⁶ Funded through PHARE's Civil Society Development Fund for Improvement of the Situation of Roma, and the Partnership Fund for Roma.

decisions have a real impact on the daily lives of their Roma citizens. The Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005–2015) is a regional initiative focused on closing the gap between Roma and non-Roma in a limited number of key sectors over a ten-year period. The Decade, a joint initiative of eight countries, supported by OSI, the World Bank, the EU, UNDP, OSCE and COE brings together representatives from the CEE countries with significant Roma populations.⁷ The participating countries are in the process of establishing national goals, targets and indicators in four key areas: education, employment, health and housing, with discrimination, gender and income poverty as cross-cutting issues in each. As part of the Decade initiative, Governments have agreed to monitor progress toward the goals annually and in a transparent manner. In addition, Roma and other actors recognize that regular, independent monitoring of progress is essential.

This report provides an example of how monitoring can be effectively transposed from the international to the community level, providing much-needed guidance to policy-makers at the local, national and international levels. This report also illustrates the importance of the active involvement of Roma in decisions affecting their communities. Carried out by young Roma activists engaged by *The Resource Centre for Roma Communities, in Cluj*, the local level monitoring was able to assess in detail the limited progress to date in achieving the ambitious targets established in the Strategy. It was also able to underscore the main factors which have impeded progress at the grassroots level, and make appropriate recommendations aimed at moving forward the Strategy goals.

For the situation of Roma to improve over the coming decade there is an urgent need for similar types of monitoring exercises to be initiated across the enlarged EU and its candidate countries. However laudable the aims of the EU Social Inclusion Process and its requirement for National Action Plans, without measurable progress they will remain just so many good intentions. The EU has been the major funder of Roma projects and its legacy there is well-known. The accession process, however, provides an important new impetus for national and local policy reform. Our collective goal now should be to seek and obtain measurable, lasting improvements in the lives of Roma across Europe.

Deborah A. Harding,
Vice President,
Open Society Institute (OSI).

⁷ Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia. Further information on the “Decade for Roma Inclusion” can be found on the OSI website, at http://www.soros.org/initiatives/roma/focus_areas/decade

A. Executive summary and recommendations

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings from a local-level monitoring of the implementation of the Strategy of the Government of Romania for the Improvement of the Condition of Roma (hereafter, the Strategy),¹ which covered five Romanian counties. The monitoring was a joint project of the Resource Center for Roma Communities in Romania, together with the EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program (EUMAP)² and the Roma Participation Program (RPP) of the Open Society Institute (OSI) Budapest. Five teams of young Roma civil society activists carried out the monitoring.

The Strategy was adopted in April 2001. It includes ten general sections and a Master Plan of Measures detailing more specific actions to be carried out by both central and local government bodies. In the three years since its adoption, the majority of the administrative structures called for in the Strategy have been established. These include Prefecture-level County Offices for Roma; local experts at the town level; and the organisation of Joint Working Groups at all levels where appropriate. However, local monitoring revealed that while most of these bodies now exist in form, they lack the resources and authority that would enable them to carry out constructive activities at the local level.

For the County Offices for Roma (hereafter, BJR), a lack of real collaboration with other local bodies has hampered efforts to bring a coordinated approach to local policy for Roma. Monitoring indicates that participation in local working groups has been poor in some counties, with participating institutions delegating only low-level staff to attend. There are concerns about the politicisation of the selection process for the BJR staff in some areas, as the nationally dominant Roma Social Democrat Party (RSDP) has been the only organisation consulted in the nomination process, although there are many other active NGOs representing Roma interests.

In the specific areas addressed by the Strategy, few broad-based initiatives have been carried out in the five counties monitored. A number of small-scale initiatives, many funded through the EU's Phare programme, have been successful, notably in assisting Roma in acquiring identity papers, offering family planning advice, increasing access to

¹ Strategy of the Government of Romania for the Improvement of the Condition of Roma, (hereafter, the Strategy), Government Decision 430 25 April 2001, published in Official Gazette number 252, 16 May 2001.

² In 2002, EUMAP produced a report monitoring the development and implementation of the Strategy at the national level. The report on Romania can be accessed at: <http://www.eumap.org/reports/2002/content/07>

schools, and job training. However, the resolution of issues such as the legalisation of property, low education levels, and high unemployment will require much more sustained and far-reaching efforts than have been made so far.

Based on the monitoring carried out at the local level, this report contains a series of specific recommendations, to the national Government, to local authorities, to Roma organisations, and also to international organisations and donors. These recommendations highlight the importance of consultation and cooperation with a wide range of Roma organisations at the central and local levels; of mapping out specific tasks and responsibilities of all participating bodies; and of increasing the resources available to carry out implementation of the Strategy goals. In particular, the recommendations urge international donors to enhance opportunities for Roma to participate directly in all phases of planning and implementing projects intended to benefit their communities.

While recent international initiatives such as the Decade of Roma Inclusion bring new focus to the areas of life where Roma face obstacles and inequality throughout the region, the Romanian Government Strategy remains a relevant document. Even as many of its measures are carried out, the need for additional human and financial resources and a reiterated commitment to the Strategy's principles are more important than ever. Broad-based Roma participation, both through the employment of more Roma staff in official bodies, and through collaboration with civil society, is a critical element in ensuring that the implementation of the Strategy meets the needs of Roma communities at all levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the national Government:

Participation

- The Government should set a good example by consulting with a broad spectrum of Roma civil society representatives in the development and implementation of the Strategy.
- In the elaboration of the National Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion, the Government should draw upon the Strategy and consult with representatives of Roma organisations to ensure that Strategy objectives are not abandoned in the development of new policy.

Coordination

- The Government should take steps to promote the implementation of the Strategy at the local level, including through the allocation of resources specifically targeted to the experts and bodies established at the county and city level, to ensure that they have the capacity needed to address the needs of Roma in their area.
- The Government should continue to work closely with the European Union and other international institutions to support capacity development among local authorities, contributing financial resources accordingly.
- The Government should encourage collaboration between Roma NGOs and local authorities, to take advantage of expertise that civil society has developed and to ensure that local projects meet the needs of Roma communities.

Training

- The Government should ensure that all County Offices for Roma receive training on anti-discrimination legislation and on the role of the National Council for Combating Discrimination.

To local governments:

Administrative measures

- Where county strategies have not yet been developed, local authorities should take the initiative to draft a local plan for implementation of Strategy objectives, in accordance with the Master Plan of Measures activity 13. Where county plans have been elaborated, there should be annual revision and updating, to include schedules, specific objectives, and periodic reporting by the responsible bodies.
- Local authorities should provide adequate support for the County Offices for Roma, including appropriate office space, transport and administrative support, to enable the office to carry out the tasks assigned to it under the Strategy (Section VIII. 3.).
- Where a Local Joint Working Group has not been established at the county or local level in line with activity 10 of the Strategy's Master Plan of Measures, local authorities should take immediate steps to organise such a Working Group. In all counties, Working Groups should contribute directly to the county strategies and establish specific terms and objectives, including methods for implementation and reporting requirements.

- All local institutions participating in Local Joint Working Groups should delegate representatives with appropriate decision-making authority and a clear mandate to fully participate in the working groups' activities.
- The Prefectures should establish the responsibilities of the County Office for Roma and the local joint working group in the implementation of programmes at the local level.
- All county and local bodies should undertake measures to hire Roma professionals as civil servants, particularly within the County Offices for Roma, ensuring that selection is based on fair competition and professional merits, not political affiliation.
- Local authorities should ensure that budget requests to the Government include sufficient allocations for the implementation of the Strategy at the local level.

Participation

- Local authorities should ensure that input and participation from a variety of Roma groups is incorporated into all activities that have an impact on Roma communities, helping to de-politicise the implementation of the Strategy at the local level.
- Local authorities should take steps to increase the number of Roma working in local institutions for Roma issues, drawing from the substantial pool of qualified and experienced Roma activists.
- Local authorities should approach Roma civil society groups for cooperation and collaboration in Strategy implementation, as these groups possess extensive expertise and experience in planning and carrying out projects to benefit Roma communities.

Training and communication

- In cooperation with civil society, local authorities should elaborate programmes to inform all civil servants about the Strategy's objectives and their role in implementing its measures.
- Local bodies should develop programmes for raising the awareness of the Roma population regarding fundamental human rights, and for civic education regarding the role of institutions, their rights and obligations to the local administrative institutions.
- Local authorities should organise courses for civil servants on minority rights and official responsibilities at the level of local administration institutions.

- Local authorities should elaborate programmes in collaboration with the Roma NGOs to inform the Roma community about the content of the Strategy.

To Roma organisations:

Coordination and cooperation

- Wherever possible, Roma organisations should formulate a joint approach to common problems, and advocate for issues of mutual interest.
- Roma NGOs should maintain open communication and cooperation with local and national authorities to help ensure that the expertise developed in the civil sector is accessible for Strategy implementation.
- Roma organisations should continue to work with the National Council for Combating Discrimination towards combating all forms of discrimination.

Monitoring

- Roma organisations should continue to monitor the implementation of the Strategy at both the local and national level, and follow up any negative trends with the appropriate authorities.

To international organisations:

Monitoring

- International organisations should promote the regular assessment and evaluation of Strategy implementation by supporting the preparation and discussion of domestic monitoring reports and critiques.

Participation

- Where possible, donors should promote capacity-building programmes for Roma organisations, as well as programmes for monitoring the implementation of public policy. Roma participation in all aspects of design and implementation of public policy should also be a priority, according to the principles elaborated in the Decade of Roma Inclusion and the Roma Education Fund.
- International donors should adopt eligibility criteria and application procedures that increase the access of local-level Roma NGOs to funding opportunities.
- Participants in the Decade of Roma Inclusion and Roma Education Fund should encourage the incorporation of Strategy goals and measures into the programmes elaborated under these international initiatives.

B. Overview

INTRODUCTION

The Strategy of the Government of Romania for the Improvement of the Condition of Roma (hereafter, the Strategy) was adopted in April 2001. It is the first governmental initiative to take a comprehensive approach to addressing the problems facing the Roma minority in Romania, undertaken as part of the EU accession process and fulfilment of the political criteria established by the Copenhagen declaration (1993).³

The Strategy was primarily developed by the National Office for Roma which, at the time, was a body within the Department for the Protection of National Minorities in the Ministry of Public Information. A number of Roma organisations offered input in the elaboration of the Strategy, although concerns regarding the level of Roma participation in drafting the Strategy were raised early on in the process.⁴ Nevertheless, Roma welcomed the Government Decision adopting the Strategy as a positive development.

Three years since its adoption, however, the Strategy's level of implementation remains low. Despite some successful initiatives, the objectives of the Strategy have not been successfully translated to the local level and there is a general lack of awareness of how the Strategy should be implemented in practice. The administrative structures at the central and local levels are still functioning poorly and lack financial and material resources, especially at the local level.

This joint monitoring project follows on from an EUMAP report on minority protection in Romania, published in November 2002. Two important objectives were targeted by this joint project:

- monitoring the implementation of the Strategy at the local level; and
- developing the capacity of the Roma organisations to monitor and report on the implementation of public policies towards Roma.

Due to time and resource constraints, the monitoring covered only five counties.⁵ In selecting the target counties, the partners involved local Roma students' organisations,

³ For an earlier analysis of the Strategy's content and national implementation, see the EUMAP report, *Monitoring the EU Accession Process: Minority Protection*, Budapest, CEU Press, 2002, pp. 476–524. Also available online at <http://www.eumap.org/reports/2002/Minority> (hereafter, EUMAP, *Minority Protection 2002*).

⁴ EUMAP, *Minority Protection 2002*, p. 483.

⁵ Romania has 41 counties, including the capital Bucharest.

selecting Cluj, Iași, Dolj, Timiș and Brăila counties, located in the main historical regions of Romania – Transilvania, Moldova, Banat, Dobrogea and Muntenia. In the choice of counties to be monitored, consideration was also given to the capacity of local NGOs.

A team of two young Roma was selected from each county, and trained in the field of public policy monitoring. A single methodology was discussed and prepared for use by all teams. The teams started their monitoring activity in the summer and autumn of 2003, collecting relevant data and interviewing public authorities and civil society representatives at the local level. After the first drafts of the county reports were prepared, they were subject to critique by the public authorities and civil society during roundtables organised in each county. The relevant discussions and information were included afterwards in the final draft of the reports.

The five teams of monitors that prepared the draft reports, all young Roma activists,⁶ encountered both positive and negative reactions during their work.⁷ Sometimes, simply the teams' presence and questions may have prompted interviewees to think more carefully about their role in the implementation of the Strategy.

The roundtables organised by the five teams of reporters were an example of good practice for local meetings, in which problems were put on the table and openly discussed by a broad range of representatives of institutions and civil society.⁸ These meetings also helped to create communication channels that can be used for solving future problems.

The findings presented in this report are intended to contribute to raising the awareness both of Roma and non-Roma about the problems faced by Roma communities. The report aims to present accurate information about the best practices and less successful aspects of the transformation of the Strategy into local practice.

The work involved in drafting the report and its findings proves that there is still a vital need for the continuation of monitoring and reporting, particularly on the public policy addressed specifically to the Roma community. In addition, it proves once again that the participation of Roma in the entire process is essential; the capacity of Roma civil society for this monitoring already exists, and it must continue its watchdog role concurrent with its active involvement in putting the policies into practice.

⁶ Maria Ursu and Adrian Moldovan in Cluj County; Laura Constantin and Daniela Rusu in Iași County; Anton Gîna and Parnica Anisoara in Brăila County; Valentin Pepenel and Carmen Marcu in Timiș County; Costache Marcel and Silviu Bratu in Dolj County.

⁷ In one county, one of the young Roma monitors was threatened by the local leader of the RSDP; in other cases the monitors had to request information under Law 544 regarding access to information, due to the fact that the public authorities refused to release the information.

⁸ Approximately 120 persons participated in the five roundtables organised in November-December 2003, both representing local public institutions and Roma and non-Roma NGOs;

Section one of this Overview Section highlights some of the latest developments concerning Government implementation of the Strategy since its adoption in April 2001. The second section resumes the main findings from the monitoring carried out in the five counties. In section three the main conclusions from the monitoring are presented.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Central Government bodies

In 2003, the Romanian Government introduced a number of structural changes that led to the transformation of the Ministry of Public Information into an Agency for Governmental Strategies.⁹ Consequently, the National Office for Roma was re-named as the Office for Roma Issues¹⁰ and moved under the umbrella of the Department for Interethnic Relations,¹¹ part of the Government General Secretariat. The Department for Interethnic Relations assumed responsibility for minority issues in general and took over coordination of the Strategy.

The Joint Committee for Monitoring and Implementation,¹² the main structure responsible for the implementation of the Strategy, remains the primary structure for the implementation of the Strategy, while the Office for Roma Issues is the executive body.¹³ The level of representation of Roma in the Joint Committee is still limited and there were several attempts to expel some of the Roma members of the Committee, disregarding the established rules.¹⁴

After the Government's structural changes and the signing of a political protocol between the Social Democrat Party (SDP)¹⁵ and the Roma Social Democrat Party

⁹ Government Decision no 754/2003 regarding the Organisation and Functioning of the Agency for Governmental Strategies.

¹⁰ The officially used name of the office does not fully correspond to the literal translation from Romanian – *Oficiul pentru Problemele Romilor*, which is literally Office for the Problems of the Roma.

¹¹ Changes were made to the office staff: Sub-State Secretary Ivan Gheorghe was replaced by Ilie Dincă, another important leader of the Roma Social Democrat Party. The former president of the National Council for Combating Discrimination, Cristian Jura, became Chief of Department for Interethnic Relations, having a State Secretary status.

¹² Provided for in the Strategy, Section VIII. 1, and established by Order of the Ministry of Public Information no. 259/02; the committee is comprised of State Secretaries representing the relevant Government ministries and leaders of Roma NGOs.

¹³ The Strategy names the National Office for Roma as the executive body; following reorganisation in 2003, responsibility was transferred to the Office for Roma Issues. Strategy, Section VIII. 1.

¹⁴ The Roma members of the Joint Committee are: Nicolae Păun – President of RSDP and M.P., Vasile Ionescu – President of Roma Centre for Public Policies Aven Amentza and expert of the Ministry of Culture and Denominations, Delia Grigore – President of AS-TRA/SATRA, Costel Bercuş – Executive Director of Romani CRISS, Mariaea Ionescu – Expert in the National Office for Roma.

¹⁵ The Social Democrat Party (SDP) is the party in government.

(RSDP) in November 2003,¹⁶ the RSDP sought to assume leadership of the Roma movement and gain direct access to important funding from the State budget.¹⁷ In 2004, the RSDP received ROL 35.85 billion (approximately €900,000).¹⁸ Several Roma NGOs expressed concern about this allocation and repeatedly requested that the RSDP publish the details on how this significant sum of money has been spent.¹⁹

The Ministerial Commissions on Roma are structures created in the most relevant ministries, headed by a State Secretary and comprised of a member of the Joint Committee and three to four additional members, one of whom is to be a Roma person nominated by Roma organisations.²⁰ There is practically no information regarding the activities of these commissions in the past year.

1.2 Funding the Strategy

Since its adoption in 2001, the Strategy has received a very low level of direct governmental funding, in view of the needs identified and according to the Government's own estimate of approximately €105 million for the ten-year period covered by the programme.²¹ According to this estimate, the Government should contribute 31 per cent and the remaining 69 per cent could be funded from extra-budgetary resources, mainly international donors. However, three years from the adoption of the Strategy, the Government has not allocated more than €3 million in total, representing approximately ten per cent of its proposed share of €32.55 million.

A Government report of April 2003 on the implementation of the Strategy mentions that out of 123 measures included in the Master Plan of Action, 60 are complete; 48

¹⁶ Political Agreement signed between SDP and RSDP, 24 November 2003.

¹⁷ Official Gazette no. 137, Government Decision on distribution and use of the funds mentioned in the Law no. 507/2003 regarding the State Budget for 2004. The decision establishes the amounts allocated to all minorities represented in the Council for National Minorities.

¹⁸ The exchange rate is calculated at €1 = ROL 39,833

¹⁹ Gelu Duminica, Director of Community Development Agency Together, Vasile Ionescu, President of Roma Center for Public Policies Aven Amentza, Costel Bercus, Director of Romani CRISS, Moisă Florin, Executive President of Resource Center for Roma Communities expressed this request in their public presence in various conferences and seminars and in the media. There has been no result on this matter so far.

²⁰ As provided for under Strategy Section VIII. 2. See EUMAP, *Minority Protection 2002*, p. 487.

²¹ Estimate completed by MEDE European Consultancy after consultation with each ministry involved in the implementation of the Strategy, 2001.

are in the process of implementation; and 15 have not been accomplished.²² This means that the Government considers 50 per cent of the Strategy objectives to already have been accomplished, in spite of the low level of funding. However, the measures that have been carried out are primarily of a structural nature, such as the nomination of the local experts, which were given little in the way of continuing support.

In more specific terms, in 2003 approximately €1.6 million was allocated from the State budget for 26 local development projects related to the Strategy.²³ The funds were allocated to local authorities for projects on infrastructure, vocational training and income generating activities.

The most important funding for the Strategy comes, however, from the European Union (EU). Approximately €16 million has already been allocated through the following programmes:

- Support to the national strategy to improve Roma conditions, Phare 2002 – €6 million plus the €1.6 million from the Romanian government mentioned above;
- Improving access to education of disadvantaged groups, with a special focus on Roma, Phare 2001 – €7 million plus €1.33 million from the Romanian Government;
- Fund for Improving the Roma Situation, Phare 2000 – €1.15 million.

The Department for Interethnic Relations and its Project Implementation Unit, in collaboration with the European Commission Delegation in Romania, are in the process of preparing a multi-year programme in order to continue the implementation of the Strategy.

²² Romanian Government, Report on the Progress of Implementation of the Governmental Strategy for Improvement of the Roma Condition, April 2003.

²³ €1.6 million, respectively ROL 56 billion allocated for local development projects in 2003, and administered by the Project Implementation Unit within the Department for Interethnic Relations. These projects and their budgets were never made publicly available, and the information has been kept confidential.

1.3 Roma NGOs and the Strategy

In 2003, the relationships continuously deteriorated between the RSDP and other active Roma NGOs, especially the members of the Roma National Network,²⁴ the former members of the Working Group of Roma Associations.²⁵

Several active Roma NGO leaders have tried to work directly with the RSDP and even to become local leaders of the RSDP, in an attempt to support an internal party change. In most cases, however, this attempt was not well received by other Roma NGOs and they faced a certain level of exclusion.²⁶ These leaders also found that the RSDP's level of control over their activity and resources made it difficult to take action effectively at the local level. The RSDP reportedly controls its decision-making process very strictly from the central office in Bucharest, and the regional branches of the party cannot register legally and consequently have only limited access to applications for different funding and support programs. Furthermore, there is a lack of financial resources allocated to the county level; although the RSDP receives a generous allocation from the State budget, the local branches do not receive enough resources for their day-to-day activities. Local leaders are thus compelled to use their private funds or to use their influence to attract funds, sometimes at the limit of legality.²⁷

The last Regular Report on Romania's Progress Towards Accession issued in 2003 by the European Commission specifically mentions that the Romanian Government's choice to work only with a single Roma organisation, in contradiction with the principles established by the Strategy, is a matter of concern.²⁸

In an attempt to overcome this situation and ensure at least nominal participation of various Roma NGOs, the RSDP organised a new network of Roma NGOs, after several other attempts to attract Roma civil society failed. A group of Roma NGOs known as For Romanguie and consisting of 76 Roma NGOs was created in 2003.

²⁴ The Roma National Network is a virtual network of NGOs created and supported by the Resource Center for Roma Communities in 2002 and containing 23 of the most active and important Roma NGOs in the country.

²⁵ The Working Group of Roma Associations, known as GLAR, was a group of Roma NGOs, including the Roma Party (after 2002 RSDP), that actively participated in drafting of the Strategy.

²⁶ Interview with Geza Otvos, President of Wassdas Foundation Cluj; he took over the leadership of the RSDP in Salaj County, February 2004.

²⁷ Information collected during round-tables in Cluj, Iași, Timiș, Craiova, Brăila during November-December 2003; also, discussions with several Roma leaders in different counties who requested anonymity.

²⁸ 2003 Regular Report, p. 30.

Available at http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/report_2003/pdf/rr_ro_final.pdf

However, a review of the names of the organisations listed indicates these groups are again closely tied to the RSDP: approximately 60 of the organisations listed were identified as being run by leaders of the RSDP in the region.²⁹

1.4 The Strategy and new international initiatives

A major initiative of the Open Society Institute (OSI), and the World Bank, in cooperation with the European Union, supported also by Governments and Roma civil society, started in 2003. The proposals for a Decade of Roma Inclusion and a Roma Educational Fund (REF) were launched in Budapest on June 30–July 1 2003 at the international conference “Roma in an Expanding Europe. Breaking the Poverty Cycle”.³⁰

Such new international initiatives will hopefully lead to a new approach towards the improvement of the Roma condition in the region. It is the expressed wish of the Roma to be part of this process, and not simply the subject of activities organised by different international institutions. The presence at this conference of a delegation of young Roma activists was therefore of major importance for the Roma movement.³¹ Their participation in the conference was a result of a selection process based on criteria established by the conference organisers and the participants’ own interest to contribute.

The young Roma Delegation from Romania prepared a document that was presented together with the other country delegations; this document was prepared and had the endorsement of the Roma National Network members and of Roma organisations that participated in a seminar before the Budapest conference. All the participating organisations agreed that the Delegation needs to have the endorsement of the Roma movement and that the use of the Working Group of Roma Association is the most suitable and known for the international community.

The Delegation presented the main points of concern regarding the situation of Roma in Romania and a set of priorities of the Roma civil society in order to deal with the

²⁹ Observations made by Gelu Duminica, Director of Community Development Agency Together, March 2004.

³⁰ Further details on the Decade of Roma Inclusion are available at the World Bank website, [http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/ECA/ECSHD.nsf/\\$\\$vwbyid/5ACB3FB63019D944C1256D6A00438015?Opendocument&Start=1&Count=5](http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/ECA/ECSHD.nsf/$$vwbyid/5ACB3FB63019D944C1256D6A00438015?Opendocument&Start=1&Count=5)

³¹ The Romanian delegation was comprised of 9 young Roma activists: Costel Bercus, Dezideriu Gergely, Maniana Buceanu – Romani CRISS, Delia Grigore, Lavinia Olmazu – Aven Amentza, Dan Pavel Doghi – Resource Center for Roma Communities Cluj Napoca, Gruiua Bumbu – Roma Democratic Union Alba Iulia, Cosmina Novacovici – Roma Women Association Timișoara, Gelu Duminica – Community Development Agency Together.

broad range of issues affecting Roma in the coming ten years on a European level. The document presented by the Delegation is in line with the principles and directions of the Strategy. Moreover, the document emphasises the problem of police violence against Roma communities, an element that was not properly addressed by the Strategy. This issue has been widely documented by domestic and international human rights observers, and must be addressed together with the promotion of anti-discrimination measures.

The strong position of the Delegation was both appreciated and criticised, especially by government bodies, but it proved once again that the problems faced by Roma are complex and must be discussed and analysed by different actors. It also reaffirmed that Roma participation is essential, and that change can be produced only if the target of the change process is actively participating in all stages.

2. FINDINGS FROM LOCAL-LEVEL MONITORING

This section resumes the main conclusions of the local-level monitoring carried out in the five Romanian counties. Further details on the findings in each county are addressed in the full-length county reports in the second part of this volume.

2.1 Administrative bodies

2.1.1 County offices for Roma (BJR)

The County Offices for Roma (*birourile județene pentru romi* – hereafter, BJR) were the first structures created in all 41 counties and remain the most important public institutional contact point for Roma issues at the local level.³² In all five counties monitored, the office was created by an order issued by the Prefecture, according to the rules established by an order of the Ministry of Public Administration.³³ However, not all the Prefectures immediately implemented the orders from the Ministry of Public Administration; in Cluj and Brăila the establishment of the office was delayed.

The main responsibilities of the BJR are the organisation, planning and coordination of the activities conducted at a county level for the implementation of the targets and tasks in the Master Plan of Measures for the Implementation of the Strategy.³⁴ According to internal rules on their organisation and function,³⁵ the offices have the following responsibilities:

- evaluating the situation of Roma in their area of responsibility;
- identifying solutions to the needs of the local communities;
- mobilising community resources in order to accomplish the objectives of the Strategy;
- ensuring continuous communication with local administration authorities;

³² Strategy, Chapter VIII Structures, 3. County Offices on Roma, “The county offices on Roma are structures organised at a county level, within the prefect’s offices and they are subordinated to the Ministerial Commission on Roma under the Ministry of Local Public Administration.”

³³ Order of the Ministry of Public Administration no. 408/28.06.2001.

³⁴ Strategy, Chapter IX, Master Plan of Measures for the Implementation of the Strategy, No. 5.

³⁵ Order of the Ministry of Public Administration no. 548/27.11.2001, regarding the approval of the framework rules for organisation and functioning of the County Offices for Roma (*Regulamentul de organizare și functionare*).

- highlighting problems for which the local authorities are responsible in order to resolve them;
- initiating partnerships between members of Roma communities and local authorities;
- collaborating with decentralised institutions;
- mediating any interethnic or inter-community conflicts;
- regular reporting to the General Directorate for Relations with Prefectures (*Directia Generala pentru Relatiile cu Prefecturile*) within the Ministry of Public Administration and Ministry of Public Information.

Each BJR is expected to have a staff of three to four, at least one of whom should be a Romani person. There is little detail in the Strategy as to the specific responsibilities of the staff within the BJR. It has been noted that there are inconsistencies in the Strategy's terminology, with the words "councillor" and "expert" used interchangeably. In each county monitored, a Romani person has been hired as the Councillor for the Prefect on Roma Affairs (hereafter, Councillor). These Councillors have various levels of expertise regarding the situation of Roma in the monitored counties. In a positive development, in all five counties the experts are university graduates and are quite young, only one over the age of 40. The expert in Timiș County is on a half-time contract, while the four other experts are employed full-time by the Prefecture. All five experts were hired after consultation with RSDP, although in Timiș and Brăila the RSDP is not well developed as an organisation and consultation with additional local groups would have been advisable.

The composition of the BJR in the five counties is fairly uniform, with two to three public servants nominated to be members of the office. Monitoring revealed that their activity is limited, however, because they generally lack experience in the field of Roma issues and have other current responsibilities. A particular situation exists in Timiș County, where the office consists of four Roma local leaders, members of RSDP acting on a voluntary basis. This situation does not conform to the structure specified in the Strategy, which calls for the office to be subordinated to the Ministry of Public Administration and the four volunteers in Timiș do not have the status of civil servants.³⁶ It therefore appears that the Timiș office has not fulfilled the criteria for its legal establishment.

The Roma experts in the BJR identify the main difficulties in their activity as the low level of involvement of the public authorities in the Strategy implementation; the experts' lack of capacity to make decisions; and a lack of the financial resources

³⁶ Order of the Ministry of Public Administration no. 548/27.11.2001, article 2.

available at the local level.³⁷ In the counties monitored, a lack of space and resources were also common problems for the BJR. The space allocated for the offices tends to be rather small and not easily accessible to Roma clients. The offices are equipped with computers and printers. The resources at the disposal of the experts in the BJR are limited and their capacity to make a decision is seriously restricted. In order to make a site visit or to participate in an event related to Roma issues, the expert must have the approval of the Prefect which can delay or impede an effective response in a crisis situation.

The Roma population generally requests assistance from the BJR for issues such as social support; access to social services; public support documents; unemployment; housing; identity; and property documents. Although their work has been hindered by the lack of resources and authority delegated to their office, the BJR have nonetheless been involved in a number of successful programmes, often in cooperation with local Roma NGOs. In Brăila, for example, the BJR has assisted Roma in acquiring property and personal identification documents. In several counties, the BJR has helped to organise job fairs for Roma.

2.1.2 Local experts on Roma affairs

The local experts on Roma affairs are responsible for carrying out actions to improve the situation of Roma at the local level. They operate under the Mayor's offices and are subordinated both to the County Offices on Roma (BJR) and to the Mayor. The Strategy does not clearly set out the responsibilities of the local experts on Roma affairs, noting only that they are the chief mediators between the public authorities and Roma communities.³⁸ No specific reporting responsibilities or competence is detailed in the Strategy, which gives the Mayors' offices a wide margin of appreciation in determining the extent of the local experts' activities.

Although the local experts have an essential role in the implementation of the Strategy at the community level, the hiring process has been greatly protracted, for several reasons. Frequently, local mayoralties do not have the resources to hire another staff member. For example, none of the towns in Timiș County has yet hired a local expert on Roma affairs.

The Strategy does permit the local experts on Roma affairs to have additional responsibilities. The majority of experts were therefore selected from the local

³⁷ Interviews with Titi Marius, Roma expert, COR Cluj, 13 October 2003; Florin Andronache, Roma expert, COR Dolj, 18 June 2003; Grosu Sandel, COR Brăila, 1 July 2003.

³⁸ Strategy, chapter VIII, no. 3, Local experts on Roma affairs.

administration and simply given a new title and an additional portfolio. However, few such experts are members of the Roma community. For example, in Cluj County, where 43 local experts were nominated, only five are members of the Roma community. Out of these five Roma, only one actually has been hired for the position of local expert for Roma affairs; the others, although performing the same function, were given different positions available in the institution such doorman, maintenance, or simply receiving the minimum guaranteed income.³⁹ In Brăila County, only five local experts of Roma origin have been hired, with an additional 40 community workers trained in a Phare project in 2003 that are working on a voluntary basis in 40 rural areas.⁴⁰ It is also significant that a local expert for Roma affairs has been hired in only two of the five regional capitals,⁴¹ while the remaining Mayors' offices appear unable to fulfil this measure, three years since the adoption of the Strategy.

In most counties, the reports found dissatisfaction regarding the fact that the nomination of the local experts for Roma affairs was made in direct collaboration with RSDP, while other Roma organisations were not involved, and that the required professional criteria were not respected in the selection process.

The local experts on Roma affairs have expressed the view that their activities would be more effective if they were to have adequate office space for maintaining their relationship with their clients. They also expressed concern that insufficient personnel had been allocated to their office and suggested that their additional responsibilities should be reassigned to lighten their workload. The local experts also indicated that Roma themselves should develop a better understanding of the context and limitations of their activities and that the Roma communities should participate in the electoral processes and elect representatives at the local level.⁴²

The most common problems for which the Roma are approaching the local experts on Roma affairs are related to housing and access to utilities, including electricity, water, and gas, but also for problems related to minimum income benefits, property and identity papers, and unemployment.

³⁹ Interview with Titi Marius, Roma expert, County Office for Roma Cluj, 13 October 2003

⁴⁰ The "Equality relations" project funded under Fund for Improvement of the Situation of Roma, Phare RO0004.02.02, administered by Prefecture in partnership with local branch of the Alliance for Roma Unity.

⁴¹ Local experts for Roma affair were hired in Iași and Brăila.

⁴² Interviews with Liliana Ecedi, local expert for Roma affairs, Gilău, Cluj County, 10 September 2003; Sebastian Hoda, local expert for Roma affairs, Feleac, Cluj, 10 September 2003; Simona Fizeșan, local expert for Roma affairs, Florești, Cluj, 10 September 2003.

2.1.3 Local joint working groups

According to the Strategy, the County Offices for Roma (BJR) are responsible for establishing Local Joint Working Groups, (at the county or local level as appropriate), consisting of both public institutions and NGOs.⁴³ The precise activities of these working groups is not set out in the Strategy or the Master Plan of Measures. A Government report issued in April 2003 underlines the importance of three essential elements for the success of this social intervention: the expertise of the NGOs in the identification of needs, elaboration and implementation of projects; communication with local authorities; and the authority of Roma leaders or their representatives in the local communities.⁴⁴

Unfortunately, there is still a large gap between the stated intentions of this Government report and the actual situation. As of autumn 2003, a working group had not been established in Brăila or Dolj counties. In Dolj County, the Roma expert prepared a list of 20 representatives of public institutions and the RSDP. This selection was criticised both by Roma representatives and some civil servants.⁴⁵ In the case of Timiș County, a structure called the “County Council on Roma” was instead created. This structure has a name similar to the County Council, which is the main administrative public structure existing at the county level. This “County Council on Roma” is constituted and run by the same group of Roma representatives as the BJR and there is no evidence that other entities are participating.⁴⁶

In those cases where such Working Groups have been established at the county level, the level of participation of the public structures in the Working Groups activities is rather low. These institutions usually delegate civil servants who lack decision-making authority and often do not have enough knowledge about the subject or great motivation to participate in the meetings.⁴⁷ There are no financial resources allocated for the organisation of the meetings and their frequency is usually once every one to two months, generally concluded without taking important decisions. A possible measure to improve the efficiency of the Local Joint Working Groups would be for the

⁴³ Strategy, Chapter IX, Master plan of Measures, measure no. 10.

⁴⁴ Report on the progress in implementation of the Governmental Strategy for Improvement of the Situation of Roma, Bucharest, April 2003, page 6.

⁴⁵ Interviews with Velcu Vasile Năzdrăvan, President of Roma Union Craiova, 20 June 2003; Sorina Popa, councillor at Direction for Culture, Denominations and National Cultural Patrimony Dolj, at Rounda Table, Craiova, November 2003.

⁴⁶ Statement of constitution of the County Council on Roma, 7 December 2002, Timișoara and Report of Timiș Prefecture, 7 April 2003.

⁴⁷ Round table in Cluj Napoca, December 2003; Round table in Iași, Timiș, Brăila, Craiova, November 2003.

County Council to adopt a Decision to validate the structure, which would also bring some financial resources.

The role of the Roma NGOs and their collaboration with public structures in the implementation of the Strategy is considered crucial. One of the problems mentioned by several Roma activists is the lack of cohesion among different Roma organisations, including the difficult relationship with the RSDP. Due to this poor cooperation, the Roma are not able to present a coherent point of view in relation to the public institutions, and it is almost impossible to start and maintain a stable partnership.⁴⁸

Examples of public institutions that are part of the Local Joint Working Groups are: the Agency for Training and Occupation of Labour Force; the Agency for Housing; the Directorate for Labour and Social Solidarity; the Directorate for Public Health; the House for Health Insurance; the Police Inspectorate; the School Inspectorate; the Directorate for Youth and Sports; the Directorate for Culture and Denominations; and the Directorate for the Protection of Children's Rights. Local Roma NGOs also participate in the Committees.

2.2 Housing

The Strategy is generous in proposing measures for improving the housing situation of the Roma communities, in particular regarding the ownership situation of land and houses and the building or rehabilitation of houses.⁴⁹

Unfortunately, however, the local monitoring revealed almost no concrete results of the Strategy measures at the local level and almost no funds have been allocated for such activities. Instead, more Roma families were evicted from some towns and moved to other places. For example in Cluj Napoca, two new segregated settlements, Pata Rît 2 and Pata Rît 3, were created nearby an existing Roma settlement called Pata Rît, by transferring Roma families and other homeless citizens from different areas of the town.⁵⁰ After the RSDP branch and Amare Phrala Association made several attempts to bring this to the attention of public opinion and wrote several letters to the public authorities, in December 2003 the Local Council for Cluj Napoca allocated a budget of ROL 200,000 (approximately €5,000) for heating materials, food and electricity.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Interview with Dinu Iulian, President of Roma Student Association Romanitin Iași, October 2003.

⁴⁹ Government Strategy, Chapter VII, Section B.

⁵⁰ Pata Rît is a community near the city garbage dump, where approximately 400 Roma are living and collecting recyclable materials.

⁵¹ Round Table, Cluj County, December 2003.

In some counties, limited rehabilitation activities were carried out. For example, in Brăila county, some rehabilitation activities for “Colonia KM 10”, a Roma majority community, were started in August 2003.⁵² In Dolj county, four families received construction materials from the town budget for rehabilitation of their houses, and some other buildings will be bought by the Town Hall and transformed into social housing.⁵³

One of the most important problems faced by Roma communities is the legal status of their housing, from ownership of the land to the lack of property documents of their houses. However, there were very few cases of legalisation of properties in the counties monitored. In Iași county, a large majority of the Roma houses do not have property documents and also lack construction authorisation. In Zanea village, out of 159 houses, some of which are new, only four have land registration documents and none have construction authorisation. In Timișoara, Timiș county, a number of houses built by Roma families without proper authorisation are in danger of being destroyed by the authorities.⁵⁴

It is a general opinion expressed by Roma representatives that the local councils do not take a real interest in resolving the legal status of land and houses and that these problems are exacerbated by the large number of Roma who lack identity documents and are unaware of property regulations.

The Government report on the status of the Strategy implementation mentions only that the BJR collected information on the housing status of the Roma communities and that the future Phare-funded program “Support for the National Strategy for Improvement of the Condition of Roma” will target small infrastructure and social housing problems. Starting in 2004, the program will allocate €2,000,000 for such projects and another ROL 64 billion (approximately €1.6 million) will also be allocated by the Government in 2004 for projects run by public authorities in this area. These projects will be most effective if they address the underlying problems, including the lack of personal documents and low awareness of property regulations among Roma.

⁵² Interview with Ion George, inspector, at Housing Department, 2 July 2003, Brăila.

⁵³ Interview with Vasile Bulucea, Major Craiova, Dolj County, 30 June 2003.

⁵⁴ Interview with Mirecea Barbu, reporter for Romani language radio program, 12 July 2003.

2.3 Social protection

The 2003 Government report⁵⁵ presents some of the measures taken by the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, including benefits for children under Law no. 61/1993; benefits for children in foster families, according to Government Ordinance no. 26/1997; minimum guaranteed income, under Law no. 416/2001; support for heating, according to Law 416/2001 and Government Ordinance no. 121/2002; benefits for new-born children according to Law no. 416/2001; and urgent support according to Government Ordinance no. 118/1999. However, all of these measures are directed at the general population and do not focus on the specific needs of Roma communities or the goals of the Strategy.

In the five monitored counties, most of the activities related to social protection concern the minimum guaranteed income, according to Law no. 416/2001. In practice, local councils are reducing the amount of monthly income benefits during the summer months, on the assumption that beneficiaries are performing seasonal work and receive a certain income. However, such reductions should be imposed only where individual recipients are shown to have an income level above the established benefits threshold.

A very important issue related to the access to social protection is the lack of identity documents, a situation that exists in all five counties. Children born to parents who married according to traditional practice and did not register the marriage lack identity documents and are formally ineligible for social support. These factors further reduce the access of Roma to social services, already compromised by very complex time- and resource-consuming procedures.⁵⁶

In Cluj, Iași, Timiș, and Dolj counties, where there are universities, there are important Roma student groups, with a large number of Roma studying social work.⁵⁷ Unfortunately, however, only a small number of them have found employment in social services. There are few new positions opening up in social work institutions and all graduates of the social work faculties have difficulty finding jobs.⁵⁸

Several activities in the area of social protection have been initiated by the Roma NGOs, most of them in partnership with non-Roma organisations and in some cases with public authorities. In Cluj Napoca, a project funded by the EU's Phare

⁵⁵ Report on the progress in implementation of the Governmental Strategy for Improvement of the Situation of Roma, Bucharest, April 2003, page 12.

⁵⁶ Roundtables in Cluj, Iași, Timișoara, Craiova, Brăila, November-December 2003.

⁵⁷ Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj Napoca, A. I. Cuza University in Iași, Timișoara University in Timiș and Craiova University in Dolj.

⁵⁸ Roundtables in Iași, Timiș, Dolj, November-December 2003.

programme in 2002, a partnership between the Town Hall and the Roma Students Association Romano Suno aimed to improve access of the Roma to the social services offered by the institution.⁵⁹ Approximately 80 Roma received information and consultation through the project. Brochures with information about local services were printed and distributed, and training in the field of human rights, anti-discrimination, child protection issues, and health was offered to Roma and non-Roma. An information and consultation office has been opened and equipped within the Town Hall premises, but no permanent jobs were created for its continuous operation.⁶⁰

In Brăila, another project funded by the Phare programme and initiated by the Prefecture/County Office for Roma and the Alliance for Roma Unity, aimed at better integration of the Roma communities into the society.⁶¹ As a result of the project, a Roma NGO was created at the county level with four branches in the rural area, and 40 Roma from Brăila County were trained as community workers and directly involved in the identification of problems at the local level, mediation, and information activities. Four of the community workers involved in the program were hired by the local mayoralties. In addition, identity cards and marriage documents for 292 Roma were issued. The partnership between the Prefecture / BJR and the local Mayors' offices and the local Roma NGO, Alliance for Roma Unity Brăila County, was essential in the project's success. This was facilitated by the fact that the Roma expert is also the president of the Alliance for Roma Unity in Brăila.

2.4 Health

Greater inclusion of the Roma within the health insurance system is probably the most important issue for the health area of the Strategy. However, the results so far are not satisfactory and continuous efforts should be made by the health system for human resources organisation and reorganisation and legislative measures should be adopted in order to put the provisions of the Strategy into practice.⁶²

A project started in 2001 and aimed at identifying, training, and employing health mediators for the Roma community is still at a low level. After the position of health mediator was added to the registry of recognised professions, approximately 166 health

⁵⁹ Phare RO 0004.02.02, Civil Society Development, Fund for Improvement of the Situation of Roma.

⁶⁰ Resource Center for Roma Communities, project monitoring fiche FISR.

⁶¹ Phare RO 0004.02.02, Civil Society Development, Fund for Improvement of the Situation of Roma.

⁶² Roundtables in Iași, Timiș, Dolj, November-December 2003.

mediators' jobs were created at the national level. However, a number of Roma representatives consider this far too low to meet demand.⁶³

In Cluj County, of four health mediators trained only one was hired with the Public Health Directorate, while in Brăila and Dolj County three health mediators were hired in each. In Timiș County three Roma were trained, but none was hired. In Iași County the situation is better, as eight Roma were hired as health mediators. A matter of dissatisfaction was the collaboration with the RSDP in the selection process, who insisted in recommending persons who are related to their organisation.⁶⁴ In one case, monitoring revealed that one of the health mediators was asked by the local leader of the RSDP to promote registration of members of the Roma community with the RSDP, which is at odds with employment by a public institution.⁶⁵

The medical staff working directly with the health mediators generally perceive their activities as useful. Some recognise that more mediators are needed to have an impact on the target communities. The main activities performed by the health mediators are related to identifying health problems and associated social problems; preparing registration with family doctors; preparing vaccination campaigns; disseminating information regarding the health system, hygiene, contraception and family planning; and improving communication with medical staff.

Although in the five counties monitored there are almost no programmes initiated or funds allocated for the health measures of the Strategy, some civil society initiatives have targeted the health problems faced by Roma communities. In Cluj County, a partnership between Association for Roma Women Emancipation, the Romanian Cancer Society and Cancer Institute Ion Chiricuta was created in order to implement a project funded by the Phare programme.⁶⁶ This project promoted cervical cancer screening for Roma women and health education. As a result of the project, Pap tests were administered to approximately 1,600 women, who were offered treatment where necessary; 11 Roma women were trained as health mediators and worked during the project's implementation; and a mobile unit with medical equipment and medicines is ready to be used for other communities.

In Dolj County, an initiative of the Roma Students Association Eurodrom and Vasiliada Association targeted schools in Craiova, where 1,000 leaflets on health care

⁶³ Roundtables in Cluj, Iași, Timișoara, Brăila, Craiova, November – December 2003.

⁶⁴ Telephone interview with Mariana Buceanu, program coordinator at Romani CRISS.

⁶⁵ Interview with health mediator, anonymity requested.

⁶⁶ Phare RO 0004.02.02, Civil Society Development, Fund for Improvement of the Situation of Roma.

were distributed and 40 Roma children from disadvantaged families participated in a weekend programme for health education, hygiene, and extracurricular activities.⁶⁷

2.5 Economic initiatives

The Strategy approach to the economic development of the Roma communities is based on the key issues of poverty reduction and access to labour market. However, in all counties monitored, the local authorities appear to have made more progress registering Roma for the guaranteed minimum income than in developing viable projects to increase employment and self-sufficiency in Roma communities.

The most frequent activities in the field of economic development are related to professional training and qualification of the Roma. In 2003, all of the five counties organised job fairs for Roma based on collaboration between County Agencies for Professional Training and Occupation, the County Offices for Roma, and Roma NGOs. The Roma who took part in the job fairs were satisfied by these type of activities and are hoping that subsequent fairs will be more successful, and include more companies offering more diverse job opportunities.⁶⁸

In Cluj, Iași, Timiș and Dolj Counties, the Community Development Agency Together, in partnership with Roma students associations and County Agencies for Professional Training and Occupation, is implementing a project called “Facilitation of access of Roma to the labour market”, a project funded by European Union Phare programme.⁶⁹ Approximately 200 Roma were trained in professions needed on the market. The process of finding jobs is, however, more difficult and a low number of the trainees found jobs.⁷⁰

Except for a project initiated in Iași County, income-generating activities are not promoted in the five counties. In Tîrgu Frumos, Help Association in partnership with Romani Chance Association and the Local Council, are implementing a project for

⁶⁷ Project funded by Resource Center for Roma communities Cluj Napoca, Archbishop Craiova, and World Vision Craiova.

⁶⁸ Roundtables in Cluj, Iași, Timișoara, Brăila, Craiova, November – December 2003.

⁶⁹ Phare RO 0004.02.02, Civil Society Development, Fund for Improvement of the Situation of Roma

⁷⁰ Interview with Roxana Acojocariei, Community Development Agency Together monitor, 4. 07. 2003.

tailor training and employment of 20 Roma women; the project has approximately €56,000 of Government funding.⁷¹

In the field of income generating activities and professional training, the Phare programme allocated €1.8 million for 2004 towards projects in partnership between local authorities and Roma communities.⁷² The programme started in May 2004 and will also support small infrastructure and social housing (€2 million) and the health sector (€652,000). It will be administered by the Resource Center for Roma Communities.

There is no evidence that the Roma were given land for agricultural activities or building of houses according to government policies.⁷³

2.6 Justice and public order

The Justice and Public Order section of the Strategy targets the development of information programmes for Roma and non-Roma to address cases of discrimination, initiation of legal education and delinquency prevention programmes, and hiring citizens of Roma origin to work in the law enforcement services and the police force.

At the local level, only a few initiatives have been taken, such as the organisation of regular meetings between Roma leaders and representatives of the police. A common feature is the signing of collaboration protocols between the RSDP and Police Inspectorates. However, unfortunately these protocols rarely have a concrete impact for the members of Roma communities.

In the five counties monitored, there are no educational programs targeting members of the Roma communities, although such programmes would enhance access to justice. The large majority of Roma remains unaware of the main legal procedures and regulations and is subject to frequent fines from the police. However, this situation is complicated by the lack of identity documents, a lack of resources to comply with regulations, as well as discrimination in the justice system.⁷⁴

⁷¹ The budget is contribution of the Government for the Phare 2002 “Support for the National Strategy for Improvement of the Condition of Roma” programme. The total budget allocated by the government is approximately €1.3 million.

⁷² Phare 2002 “Support for the National Strategy for Improvement of the Condition of Roma” programme has two components, institutional building and grants scheme. The Contracting Authority is the Central Finance and Contracts unit and the Implementing authority is Department for Interethnic Relation within the Government.

⁷³ Government Decision no. 256/18.03.2003 regarding agricultural land given for Roma at the community level.

⁷⁴ Round-tables in Cluj, Iași, Timișoara, Brăila, Craiova, November – December 2003.

The issue of racially motivated violence is not mentioned in the Strategy, which is a serious omission as problems have been highlighted by both domestic and international organisations.⁷⁵ The incidents in Craiova in September 2003 are a relevant example.⁷⁶ Here, a violent confrontation between a group of young Roma and, allegedly, some members of an anti-Roma group was the subject of media coverage across the country. In response, the police arrested 33 Roma, although the initial cause of the confrontation was that Roma had accused the owners of several restaurants and clubs of denying service to Roma.

The Aven Amentza Roma Center for Public Policies, the Ministry of Culture and the National Council for Combating Discrimination organised a “Caravan for intercultural education and revitalisation of Roma culture” in all the counties, including the five monitored. It was an occasion to connect the National Council for Combating Discrimination with Roma organisations, as well as with representatives of public administration and to inform them about the latest developments and procedures for combating discriminatory activities.

In a project initiated by Romani CRISS, Roma NGOs participated in a consultative process for the improvement of the anti-discrimination legislation.⁷⁷ The result was a set of recommendations for the National Council for Combating Discrimination and creation of a good communication structure with this institution.⁷⁸

2.7 Child protection

All reports and measures taken by National Agency for Child Protection and Adoptions note that there is no discrimination in its policy, be it positive or negative. For example, both Roma and non-Roma children live in state institutions for child protection, and it is likely that the majority of children receiving support from the County Child Protection Directorates are Roma. Roma are also the main beneficiaries from de-institutionalisation and alternative family care projects.⁷⁹ However, Roma organisations have expressed concern that this general policy does not respond to some

⁷⁵ Human rights monitors are participating in a projects run by Romania CRISS and documenting such cases on a permanent basis.

⁷⁶ Interview with Vasile Velcu Nazdravan – Roma leader; “Aven Amentza” magazine, September 2003.

⁷⁷ Project funded by Open society Foundation Romania.

⁷⁸ Ivan Gheorghe, former head of National Office for Roma was recruited in 2003 as councillor for the President of NCCD.

⁷⁹ Report on the progress in implementation of the Governmental Strategy for Improvement of the Situation of Roma, Bucharest, April 2003, p. 29.

of the specific needs of Roma children, living with their families or not, and that some specific measures should be taken, especially regarding the preservation of their cultural background.

In the five counties monitored, there are few consistent initiatives related to the situation of Roma children. In Cluj Napoca, the County Directorate for Child Protection implemented a project called Wonder Land Day Centre,⁸⁰ designed for pre-school children from a disadvantaged community living near the Cluj Napoca garbage dump.⁸¹ In this project, a number of pre-school children and their families are being provided with support for a better integration in the first school year. So far, out of ten children attending the first year of activity of the Centre, three are integrated in the mainstream classes while the rest are included into the special education classes existing in the Day Centre for Roma pupils within School 12 in Cluj Napoca.⁸² It is expected that at the start of the 2005–2006 school year, students entering School 12 from the disadvantaged community will be integrated in mainstream classes, an important shift away from more segregated education.

The low level of employment among Roma social workers in the child protection system is a serious problem. Although many Roma have graduated in the fields of social work, sociology, and psycho-pedagogy and who could be an important resource from which to draw staff, the number of Roma working in this area is very small.⁸³

2.8 Education

In a context in which the cycle of poverty remains very strong, education is among the most important issues that can bring about positive change. A lower level of education exists in the Roma population compared the majority population in Romania and with other minorities, and since the adoption the Strategy several positive developments have taken place. These include a substantial Phare programme, “Access to education for disadvantaged groups, with special focus on Roma”, with a total budget of €8.6 million, out of which €1.6 million is a governmental contribution.

⁸⁰ Funded by the Phare Child Protection programme

⁸¹ The Pata Rît community has approximately 500 people living in poor conditions, through recycling of metals, glass, paper, etc collected on the garbage dump. The children living in pata Rît are going to School 12, where a Day Centre is organised and where the curricula is the according to the special schools level. Clothes and food is offered to them, together with afternoon support for homework.

⁸² The school has a special number of classes attended by the children from the Pata Rît community.

⁸³ Roundtables in Cluj, Iași, Timișoara, Brăila, Craiova, November – December 2003.

Within the Phare “Access” programme’s newly created Steering Committee, there are several Roma activists and other professionals supporting the Ministry of Education and research. As a result of their positive work together, the issue of discrimination in education, and especially the issue of school segregation, is on the regular agenda of the committee and the ministry. A notification regarding the school segregation situation has been issued by the Ministry of Education and Research, creating the environment for better access of the Roma children to quality education and inclusive schooling.⁸⁴ The notification is the first educational policy paper to support equal access to quality education for all children and to recognise that the segregation in education is a severe form of discrimination.

The Phare “Access” programme targeted ten School Inspectorates, including Cluj County. Here, eight schools are expected to benefit from the programme, which includes classroom and extracurricular activities, training for teachers, and infrastructure rehabilitation. Significantly, although the County strategy elaborated by the School Inspectorate mentions the participation of Roma communities, the project did not have any Roma organisations as partners, in a county where the Roma civil society is perhaps the most developed. Roma organisations have expressed their dissatisfaction with this situation, and the process of revitalising direct collaboration with the institution took some time.⁸⁵

Cluj County also benefited from two educational projects funded by the Phare programme. One project was implemented by the Industrial Chemistry School Group in Turda, in partnership with a local Roma organisation. Roma pupils received support for improving their school results, health education, meals, etc. Since the Phare contract ended, the project has continued with support from the Town Hall and School Inspectorate. The second project was implemented by the “Association of Gabor Roma wearing hats” (*Asociația Gaborilor cu Pălărie* in Romanian) in partnership with the School Inspectorate and created a kindergarten programme for Gabor Roma children.

In all the five Counties, the number of Roma children receiving Romani language education is increasing, as is the number of available teachers. Brăila is traditionally the host of the National Romani Language Competition, organised in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Research and Roma organisations.

All Roma children attending school benefit from the “milk and doughnuts” governmental programme. This supplementary food programme has encouraged an

⁸⁴ Ministry of Education and Research Notification No. 29323/20.04.2004 forbidding segregation in education.

⁸⁵ Roundtable in Cluj Napoca, December 2003.

increased number of Roma children to attend school, again demonstrating that the level of extreme poverty among Roma communities is a real barrier to education.⁸⁶

Other educational activities have been organised in all of the five counties, from support for exam preparation, training for teachers, cultural and intercultural activities, among other projects.

2.9 Culture and denominations

Several cultural activities take place in the five counties, especially music and dance festivals. For example, in Cluj County there is an annual festival in the memory of a well known violinist, Alexandru Țitruș. In Brăila County, near the winter holiday season, there is an event where all minority groups present their traditional Christmas carols; in Timiș County a cultural group of Roma children was organised by the Roma Women's Association For Our Children.

It is now a tradition to celebrate International Roma Day on 8 April, with meetings, cultural events, marches and conferences.

As mentioned in section 2.6, the Roma Center for Public Policies Aven Amentza in partnership with Ministry of Culture and National Council for Combating Discrimination, organised a "Caravan for intercultural education and revitalisation of the Roma culture" in all counties monitored.

2.10 Public participation

The level of public participation of Roma in the five Counties monitored is still at a low level. After the 2000 local elections, a small number of local councillors were elected, mostly from the RSDP lists. However, due to a lack of collaboration between the Roma organisations at the local level, which split the votes of the Roma community between them, the representation of the Roma remained low, with almost no voice at the local level.⁸⁷

Romania experienced a serious setback in 2004, as for the first time in the country's post-1989 democratic history the new Law on Local Elections prevented associations of national minorities from participating in the local elections, with the exception of those already represented in the Parliament. The consequence is lower representation at the

⁸⁶ Roundtables in Cluj, Iași, Timișoara, Brăila, Craiova, November – December 2003.

⁸⁷ Roundtables in Cluj, Iași, Timișoara, Brăila, Craiova, November – December 2003.

local level, where several associations, particularly of Roma local communities, were previously represented.⁸⁸

The new political protocol signed between the RSDP and SDP promotes the participation of Roma candidates on the SDP electoral lists. However, this agreement is likely to create disadvantages for Roma candidates as the local branches of the RSDP have only limited negotiation capacity.

The presence of several active Roma NGOs is promising in the five counties. In addition, affirmative action measures taken by the Cluj, Iași, Craiova and Timișoara Universities support the further development of a new generation of Roma leadership.

2.11 Communication and civic participation

Unfortunately, many public institutions still lack knowledge of the content of the Strategy, especially due to a low level of participation in the Local Joint Working Groups. In the media, little has been done to encourage a more balanced and accurate reflection of Roma life and culture.⁸⁹ However, there have been some initiatives in this area in the counties monitored.

In Timiș County, the local state radio station started a radio program for Roma in 2003, with the direct support of the Roma Students Association PARUDIMOS; the program has 60 minutes weekly and presents aspects of the life of Roma, news, and music.

In Cluj and Timiș County a new initiative to train Roma as television journalists started in 2003, based on a partnership between the Resource Center for Roma Communities, Romanian TV Stations in Cluj and Timișoara, the Roma Students Association Romano Suno in Cluj Napoca and Roma Students Association PARUDIMOS in Timișoara. Twelve young Roma students were trained for the television work and started their practical activities with supervision from local professionals. The existing “Amari Emisiunea” program in Cluj continues and a new another program started in Timișoara.

In all the five counties, the Roma organisations, especially those run by students, are organising various events, training sessions, cultural activities, and round-tables. NGOS bring the issue of discrimination to the public agenda whenever possible, but

⁸⁸ “Brief Assessment on Romania’s Compliance with the EU Accession Political Criteria”, drafted by Open Society Foundation – Romania, Institute for Public Policies, Center for Legal Resources, Center Partnership for Equality, May 2004, page 18.

⁸⁹ Roundtables in Cluj, Iași, Timișoara, Brăila, Craiova, November – December 2003.

there are no formal governmental programmes for raising awareness and combating discrimination for Roma and non-Roma.

In Cluj Napoca, the active Roma NGOs have a weekly meeting hosted by the Resource Center for Roma Communities, in which they discuss the most urgent problems and solutions for the benefit of the Roma communities.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Three years from its adoption, the Strategy remains an essential document for the improvement of the situation of Roma in Romania. The Strategy brought together the most important and active Roma organisations in the country and created a positive environment for the active involvement of a broad group of institutions and NGOs. The Strategy set out an extensive list of measures to be carried out at the State and local levels, assigning responsibility and deadlines to relevant actors.

A number of important measures implementing the Strategy goals have been carried out. The creation of a network of specialised offices throughout the country responsible for addressing issues related to Roma has the potential to greatly improve the efficiency of local government efforts to improve the situation of Roma. Unfortunately, the positive momentum has been lost and the Government and its partners have been unable to bring about concrete changes in the condition of Roma thus far.

An initial surge of activity and support that followed from the adoption of the Strategy led to the establishment of County Offices for Roma and the appointment of experts at the local level. Yet as these structures were not invested with the authority or the resources to take effective action in their areas of responsibility, confidence in the Strategy has subsequently dwindled. The limited coordination with Roma organisations apart from the RSDP has also discredited official practice related to Roma issues at the local level. Too little has been done at the national level to ensure that local authorities understand, accept, and implement the Strategy's aims. The Strategy itself lacks specific definitions and sets out only very limited guidelines as to the responsibilities of local authorities. More detailed instructions should be issued to ensure that tasks are carried out and goals are met.

Certain areas have seen improvement in the past three years. While there has been some progress in terms of improving Roma access to health, through the training and employment of Roma community mediators, housing needs remain critical, as large numbers of Roma families remain at risk of eviction due to their undocumented property status. The need to integrate Roma into mainstream schools on a national level has been recognised by the Ministry of Education and Research, but further steps are needed to ensure that Roma have full access to quality education throughout the country. The high level of unemployment among Roma communities remains unchanged, although local projects have demonstrated that successful partnerships can create jobs on a small scale.

The goals of the Strategy remain relevant and urgent, and it is critical that the Government does not step back from its achievements so far, but rather continues to build upon the established structures and experiences gained. Romania boasts an active

and established Roma civil society, which could offer expertise and direct knowledge to develop more effective policy for Roma. EU funding, channelled to local projects, is also a resource that the Government should use to guide its policymaking. Many good practices and valuable experiences could be drawn from these small-scale projects and elaborated into larger initiatives at the national level.

It is a matter of utmost importance to renew the constructive relationship between the public authorities and Roma civil society and to put the Strategy back on the public agenda. New regional initiatives, such as the Decade of Roma Inclusion, should assess the Strategy and its results, and incorporate it into forward-looking policies. The situation of Roma in Romania will not improve without sustained, coordinated and collaborative efforts on the part of the Government, civil society, and international actors. Continuous, independent monitoring of these efforts is an essential factor in ensuring that all activities work towards the continuous improvement of Roma in Europe and in Romania.

Monitoring Local Implementation of
the Government Strategy for the
Improvement of the Condition
of Roma in Romania
in Brăila County

BACKGROUND

Brăila county is located in south-east Romania and has a total population of 373,897 people, of which 1.6 per cent are Roma.¹ According to the two latest censuses, the number of people who identify as Roma has increased by 30 per cent.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Brăila county, there has been some limited progress in implementing the objectives of the Strategy in the fields of social protection, healthcare, justice and public order, and education. However, the implementation of the Strategy has yet to contribute significantly to resolving the Roma community's problems of poverty and discrimination; difficult access to quality education; lack of housing and employment; and lack of identity and property documents. The great majority (approximately 80 per cent) of Roma in Brăila are living on the minimum guaranteed income.

At the time of writing, Brăila County had not developed a county strategy for implementing the Strategy. A County Office for Roma (hereafter, BJR) has been established in Brăila county and local experts on Roma affairs nominated. However, although called for in the Strategy, a county level Joint Working Group had yet to be established.

More than two years since its adoption, the Strategy is not yet known in all Brăila county institutions. Even in those institutions which are familiar with the Strategy, there are no coherent organisational measures for improving the condition of Roma at the county level. The Strategy is also not well known among Roma communities. The only person who has played an essential role in informing the Roma community has been the Councillor for the Prefect on Roma issues (BJR). However, his efforts to promote the implementation of Strategy measures have not been greatly successful.

The BJR has been able to achieve make progress in some areas; for example, the BJR has assisted over 200 Roma in obtaining identity cards. However, the fact that the county-level Joint Working Group was not constituted, the lack of consultation with Roma organisations, the lack of knowledge concerning the terms for the implementation of the Strategy, and, in particular, the lack of financial resources, remain the most serious issues related to the lack of Strategy implementation in Brăila county.

¹ The structure of the population according to ethnic differentiation of the 2002 Census.

2. LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION

2.1 Administrative bodies

2.1.1 The county office for Roma (BJR)

In Brăila, the County Office for Roma (hereafter, BJR) was established in September 2003. The BJR has three members: the Councillor for the Prefect on Roma Affairs (hereafter, Councillor), the Executive of the Directorate for Programmes of Brăila Prefecture, and the Executive of the Directorate for Decentralised Services of Brăila Prefecture. Within the BJR, the Councillor works exclusively on Roma issues, while the other two employees have additional responsibilities. There were two applicants for the position of Councillor; the current councillor has 22 years of professional experience including 15 years in executive positions.

The BJR communicates with local government bodies in order to facilitate the access of Roma to public services; contacts Roma organisations and informs them about funding opportunities; and communicates with the Prefecture directorates and with town councillors. The main achievements of the BJR in Brăila include the establishment of a county-level network to respond to the needs of the community; 36 branches were set up in the county, four with legal character.²

According to the Councillor, the main issues impeding the implementation of the Strategy in Brăila include the lack of direct financing sources for local level implementation of the Strategy measures and the very low degree of involvement of local institutions in the implementation of the Strategy. There is also a lack of sanctions for failure to achieve Strategy goals, and a lack of clear instructions regarding the establishment of the county level joint working group and of its responsibilities.³ In addition, the BJR would be more efficient if three or four additional staff were employed to elaborate, co-ordinate and monitor implementation of the Strategy. Moreover, if the BJR were further developed at the County Council level, it would have greater access to financing.⁴

2.1.2 Local experts on Roma affairs

In Brăila county there are five local experts on Roma Affairs, four of whom were employed by the Town Halls of Suțești, Viziru, Galben, and Bărăgan with support

² Interview with Săndel Grosu, prefect's councillor on Roma issues, 1 July 2003.

³ Interview with Săndel Grosu, prefect's councillor on Roma issues, 1 July 2003.

⁴ Interview with Săndel Grosu, prefect's councillor on Roma issues, 1 July 2003.

from the Phare programme “Equality Relations”. This project also included the training of 40 Roma as community workers who now volunteer throughout the county.⁵ The fifth local expert was employed at the Brăila county level. The local experts were nominated by the Alliance for Roma Unity (hereafter, AUR) Brăila, the most prominent local Roma NGO. The local experts maintain good communication with the BJR and have weekly meetings within the AUR Brăila. Generally, the local experts are requested to handle social issues, especially related to social welfare and identity cards.⁶

2.1.3 Local joint working group

Although the Strategy calls for Joint Working Groups to be established at the county level, this has not yet been accomplished in Brăila county. The BJR has drawn up a list of the individuals and institutions that are to be represented in the Working Group. The creation of the Working Group was intended to take place by the end of November 2003, by a decision of the Local Council.

On the initiative of the BJR, Joint Working Groups were created in spring 2003 at the local level in Suțești, Bărăganul, Gradiște, Râmnicelu, Chiscani, and Victoria. These each have five to six members, usually the mayor, the vice-mayor, the school director, the priest, the chief of police, and the community worker representing the Roma community. Unfortunately, these local Working Groups are not yet functioning to their full capacity.⁷ Working groups have not yet been established in Ciocile and Mircea-Vodă, as the administrations in these towns have indicated there are no Roma residents in their respective areas and a working group is therefore unnecessary.⁸

2.2 Housing

In Brăila county, there has been little activity related to the Strategy’s housing measures. With the support of the AUR, the property situation of 11 Roma families will be

⁵ Phare RO 0004.02.02, the Fund for Improvement of the Condition of Roma, the project “Equality Relations” developed by Brăila Prefecture in partnership with the AUR, with the Service for Electronic Registration of the Population and with Brăila Town Hall.

⁶ Interview with Isofache Georgian, expert on Roma issues, 23 June 2003.

⁷ Interview with Săndel Grosu, prefect’s councillor on Roma issues, 1 July 2003.

⁸ Address no. 601/4.04.2003 from Mircea-Vodă; Address no. 402/18.03.2003 from Ciocile Town Hall to the BJR.

legalised.⁹ In addition, some rehabilitation activities for “Colonia KM 10”, a community with an 80 per cent Roma majority, started in August 2003 and are still in progress. The Directorate for Public Services of the Brăila town hall developed these activities.¹⁰ Housing and living conditions are a serious problem for the Roma communities in Brăila county; many families live without access to electricity or drinking water.¹¹

2.3 Social protection

The establishment and activities of the County Directorate for Social Work has considerably increased the number of Roma beneficiaries for the guaranteed minimum income. The Directorate instructed county administrations to discontinue the practice of reducing benefits in the summer on the assumption that recipients have other sources of income from seasonal labour; instead, beneficiaries are required to declare any additional sources of income.

A Commission for Social Mediation will be established in 2004 within the County Directorate for Dialogue, Family, and Social Solidarity, and expected to handle complaints related to social services. Its staff will be drawn from the Directorate for Dialogue, Family and Social Solidarity, the Public Service for Social Work, the County Directorate for Protection of Children’s Rights, the Directorate for Public Services, and a civil society representative.¹²

The Phare-funded project “Equality Relations” has helped to improve access to public services for Roma by training 40 community workers from Brăila county and five neighbouring counties.¹³ The project also assisted Roma in acquiring identity documents. At the county level, the Roma community also benefits from another project financed with EU funds, “A Step towards the Future”.¹⁴ This programme aims to train 16 computer operators, and to establish an internet centre for Roma children to use computers and receive tutoring.

⁹ Interview with vice-mayor Radu Musat.

¹⁰ Interview with Ion George, the Locative Fund, 2 July 2003.

¹¹ Interview with Stanciu Florin, chief accountant of D.S.P., 2 July 2003.

¹² Government Emergency Order no. 118/1999 regarding the set up and the utilisation of The National Fund for Solidarity. Law no. 366/2001 for the approval of the Government Emergency Order no. 118/1999, article 5, paragraph 1, letter e.

¹³ Project financed by the Phare programme RO 0004.02.02, the Fund for Improvement of the Condition of Roma. The other counties included Tulcea, Buzău, Constanța, Vrancea and Călărași.

¹⁴ Project financed by the Phare programme RO 0004.02.02, the Fund for Improvement of the Condition of Roma.

At the initiative of the BJR, the Directorate for Dialogue, Family and Social Solidarity, the CAS and the County Agency for Labour Force Occupation have visited local Roma communities to inform the Roma population about their rights and obligations under the unemployment insurance law; employment legislation; the guaranteed minimum income act; and social inclusion regulations.¹⁵

The Directorate for Dialogue, Family and Social Solidarity sends quarterly reports to the Ministry for Labour, Social Solidarity and Family regarding the implementation of the Strategy. The National Antipoverty and Social Inclusion Plan is monitored by the County Council through an Antipoverty Commission. However, there are no Roma representatives on this Commission, although 75 per cent of the Roma population is very poor.

2.4 Health care

The Association for Roma Unity (AUR) Brăila and the Brăila Directorate for Public Health Care, with the support of the prefecture and the town hall, have established a medical office in a local clinic to improve the Roma community's access to health care. Roma who are not registered with a general practitioner may receive free medical care through this service.

A home health care system was established as part of the “National Programme no. 3”, initiated by the Ministry of Health. Under this programme, three members of the AUR received three months of training and practice as health mediators, and were afterwards hired by the Directorate for Public Health Care.¹⁶ As there is a need for more mediators to work in the Roma communities, it has been proposed that the NGO Romani CRISS should train two additional health mediators.

The health mediators provide information and education to Roma population with regards to vaccination, contraception, identification of tuberculosis and other diseases. Some 150 children under the age of three were vaccinated in various campaigns, and ten people with tuberculosis were diagnosed and treated. The health mediator and the family doctor supervise the treatment of young children, and offer family planning consultation within the Hospital of Obstetrics and Gynaecology.¹⁷ The activity of health mediators is generally well received both by the Roma communities and by the

¹⁵ Interview with Preda Racovita Anica, interim executive of the Social Work Service.

¹⁶ Training programme developed by the Ministry of Healthcare and Family in collaboration with Romani CRISS.

¹⁷ Interview with Dr. Aurel Stanciu specialist in internal diseases, 16 June 2003.

medical system. The doctors are satisfied because the health mediators are able to achieve results in places where medical personnel have limited access.¹⁸

The BJR has also supported the implementation of research on the health situation of two Roma communities, financed by the UK Embassy.¹⁹

2.5 Economic initiatives

In Brăila, implementation of Strategy measures in the economic sphere are modest, due to the fact that the relevant public institutions have not focused on these objectives and the projects that have been developed have a more general approach and do not specifically target Roma communities.

In May 2003, a job fair for Roma was organised where 12 employers offered a total of 57 vacancies. However, only 12 of the available positions were filled, although a large number of Roma attended the fair, indicating there is keen interest in employment issues.²⁰

The County Agency for Labour Force Occupation, in cooperation with representatives of the BJR, the Directorate for Dialogue, Family and Social Solidarity, the Association for Roma Unity, and the CAS have organised monthly activities to inform Roma communities on various economic issues, such as the current legislation, professional retraining, social work, and other rights.²¹

2.6 Justice and public order

In Brăila, the BJR has assisted 292 Roma in obtaining identity cards and marriage documents.²²

There are no programmes to address legal education and delinquency prevention among young Roma. The only activities in this sphere consisted of information

¹⁸ Interview with Dr. Liliana Venter, 16 June 2003.

¹⁹ In the Roma community from Nedelcu Chercea district and in the Roma community from the village of Lanurile, Brăila county.

²⁰ "The Labour Market", article in the newspaper *Monitorul de Brăila*, 10 May 2003.

²¹ Interview with Marilena Raileanu, executive of the department of professional rehabilitation of AJOFM, 1 July 2003.

²² Phare RO 0004.02.02, the Fund for Improvement of the Condition of Roma, the project "Equality Relations" developed by Brăila Prefecture in partnership with the A.U.R., with the Service for Electronic Registration of the Population and with Brăila Town Hall.

campaigns regarding legal education, organised by the AUR in larger towns, with the participation of the county police force. The public institutions that have authority in this field have stated that there is no need for programmes targeting Roma specifically, because there are no discriminatory measures against Roma at this level.²³ At the county level, there have been no efforts to recruit Roma to the police force, and there appears to be a perception that Roma lack the qualifications for police work.²⁴

2.7 Child protection

The County Directorate for Child Protection is not currently developing any programmes exclusively for Roma children, as the institutional policy forbids discrimination. The Directorate is collaborating with local NGOs like The Light (*Lumina*) Foundation, Euro 21, and the Franciscan Clarice Sisters in identifying children and families with difficulties, including Roma, and proposing possible solutions.

Measures taken by the County Directorate for Child Protection currently extend to over 900 children, of whom 500 are in family placement and care. 70 per cent of the remaining children in institutionalised care live in family-style day centres where children with disabilities are offered counselling and rehabilitation services. There have been no special initiatives to recruit Roma personnel for the child protection institutions, but there are Roma employees in these institutions.²⁵

2.8 Education

In Brăila county, the number of Roma students who are studying Romani as their mother tongue is increasing. Of an estimated 1,200 Roma pupils, 737 are studying Romani in schools in a number of cities and towns. The Ministry of Education and Research grants free places in summer camps to Roma students who participate in the National Romani Language Competition. In addition, once a semester the “Pedagogic Romani Language Club” is organised, in which one teacher has a Romani language class with Roma pupils.

Brăila county has hosted several activities to the improve teaching the Romani language, including:

²³ Interview with police sergeant Grosu, 26 June 2003.

²⁴ Interview with police sergeant Grosu, 26 June 2003. His response to the question if there are any efforts made for the employment of Roma citizens in the police force and in the gendarmerie was: “Hey, man, they should learn if they want to get here”.

²⁵ Interview with Alexandrina Broasca, the General Executive of DJPDC, 12 June 2003.

- 27-29 May 2002 – National Seminar of the Inspectors for Roma Education. The meeting evaluated the concrete measures initiated in each county in the field of Roma education and efforts to match local goals to the strategic benchmarks from Strategy Action Plan.²⁶
- 2-19 July 2002 – The Fourth Edition of the National Courses in Romani language,²⁷ during which 45 course attendants were trained in teaching Romani as a maternal language, including courses on Romani language, teaching methodology, elements of psychology and pedagogy and child rights.
- 1-15 September – National Courses in History and in the Methodology of Teaching Roma History and Tradition – First Edition,²⁸ attended by 40 Roma and non-Roma experts in this field. In addition to Roma history and the methodology of teaching history and Roma traditions classes, there were also several classes on Roma traditions and a course on Roma social history.
- Beginning of the school year 2003–2004 – a Brăila school was established as “The Resource Centre for Roma Communities”. A classroom will be set up with all the materials necessary for the study of Romani language and Roma culture.²⁹ Currently, the same school is developing an EU-supported “Socrates Comenius I” Project³⁰ with participants from school institutions from Belgium, Italy, Poland, Romania; this project has improvement of communication between schools as its objective.³¹

There are no instruction modules concerning the specific needs of Roma students, but once a month, the School Inspector for Roma Education organises a meeting with all the Roma teachers in which they discuss problems they have encountered and search for solutions.

²⁶ Note no. 31013, 3 May 2002 regarding the development of the sixth working meeting of Roma inspectors

²⁷ Courses organised by the Ministry of Education and Research and financed by UNICEF and the Phoenix Foundation, Bucharest.

²⁸ Courses organised by the Ministry of Education and Research and financed by UNICEF.

²⁹ Interview with Viorel Mortu, general school inspector.

³⁰ “The overall objectives of COMENIUS are to enhance the quality and reinforce the European dimension of school education, in particular by encouraging transnational cooperation between schools, contributing to the improved professional development of staff directly involved in the school education sector, and promoting the learning of languages and intercultural awareness.” See http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/socrates/comenius/moreabou_en.html

³¹ Interview with Mrs. Tincuta Burlacu, headmaster of the Elementary and Secondary School no. 9, 27 October 2003.

During the school year 2001–2002, 20 Roma children attended a local kindergarten with the support of the “Step by Step” Centre for Education and Professional Development. They received free meals from the Centre, and clothes and writing materials from Brăila Town Hall. All children attending school are eligible for the government’s “milk and doughnuts” programme, which has led to an increase in the number of Roma children attending schools. The fact that even limited food supplements is a strong incentive for Roma families to send children to school illustrates the high level of poverty in these communities.

In an isolated case, a teacher’s decision that the clothes of Roma pupils should be put in a different place from the other children’s clothes was annulled at the intervention of the BJR.³²

According to the Strategy, young Roma are encouraged to pursue higher education. The AUR has provided recommendation letters to those Roma interested in continuing their education and places are allocated for Roma students at a number of universities.³³

Both Roma and non-Roma children have received social scholarships and free school writing materials from the Town Hall and the Prefecture of Brăila in order to encourage school attendance and to reduce the number of school drop-outs

The project “Together for a Better Community”, co-ordinated by the Education 2000+ Centre and financed by the Council of Europe and UNICEF, is ongoing in two Brăila county schools. The project aims to improve communication between Roma communities and schools, and includes a module for establishing a school tutor programme.³⁴ The project also includes a teacher training component, informing teachers about Roma traditions and customs. Parents are involved in school and extracurricular activities.³⁵

³² Elementary and Secondary School Lanurile.

³³ Interview with Săndel Grosu, president of the Alliance for Unity of the Roma.

³⁴ Interview with Anton Nicu, school mediator.

³⁵ Interview with Mrs. Tincuta Burlacu, headmaster of the Elementary and Secondary School no. 9, 5 June 2003.

2.9 Culture and denominations

There are no specific cultural programmes for the affirmation of Roma identity, but the Office for Minorities of the Directorate for Culture generally promotes minority culture throughout the year.³⁶ During the celebrations held on the occasion of the International Day of the Roma, the AUR organised a commemorative march and performance in collaboration with the Brăila Prefecture and Town Hall.³⁷

At present, there are no events dedicated exclusively to the promotion of Roma culture, traditions and folklore on the agenda organised with the support of the County Directorate for Culture, Denominations and National Patrimony.³⁸

2.11 Public participation

The number of Roma representatives in local councils and in the County Council is very low, although Roma were included on the electoral lists in the 2000 local elections. Five Roma are employees of the public local administration; four in the larger towns³⁹ and two in Brăila itself.⁴⁰ At the Brăila county level, there is no Roma political party. There are a number of Roma NGOs, of which the most active is the AUR.⁴¹

2.10 Communication and civic participation

Local public institutions lack comprehensive knowledge of the content of the Strategy and there are no media programmes for combating discrimination. The perception of some local media representatives is that Roma leaders should do more to raise awareness of the Strategy's measures.⁴²

³⁶ Interview with Monica Popoaca, Executive of the Directorate for Programmes Prognoses External Financing of Brăila Town Hall, 5 June 2003.

³⁷ Interview with Săndel Grosu, prefect's councillor on Roma issues, 1 July 2003.

³⁸ Interview with the councillor for minorities, the County Directorate for Culture, Denominations and National Patrimony.

⁴² The four community workers trained during the programme "Equality Relations" are employed in Suțești, Viziru, Bărăganu and Galbenu.

⁴³ The prefect's councillor on Roma issues Săndel Grosu and the local expert on Roma issues Isofache Georgică.

⁴⁴ Interview with Săndel Grosu, prefect's councillor on Roma issues, 1 November 2003.

⁴² Interview with Silvia Preda, manager of the newspaper *Obiectiv – vocea Brăilei*, 6 July 2003.

Nevertheless, media attention in Brăila county has been focused on Roma issues. Journalists from the newspapers *Obiectiv – vocea Brailei* (*Objective – the voice of Brăila*) and *Monitorul de Brăila* (*The Brăila Monitor*)⁴³ have written articles about minority issues on their own initiative. Most of the areas covered by the Government Strategy have been addressed in various articles published by these newspapers.⁴⁴

⁴³ Interview with Sava Gabriel, copy editor of the newspaper “Monitorul de Brăila”, 6 July 2003.

⁴⁴ The newspapers *Monitorul de Brăila* and *Obiectiv –vocea Brailei* published articles such as: “Măsuri pentru școlarizarea romilor” (Measures for the School Housing of the Roma), “Mai multe locuri pentru romi în universități” (More Places for Roma in Universities), “Bursa locurilor de muncă” (The Labour Market), “Romii vor să muncească” (Roma Wish to Work), “Romii au birou în Prefectură” (Roma Have Their Office in the Prefecture), “Coșmarul de la km 10 continuă” (The Nightmare from km 10 Continues), “Cel mai rău lucru pentru țigani este autodiscriminarea” (The Worst Thing for Roma is Self Discrimination), “Romii-minoritate în curs de modernizare” (Roma-a Minority that Is on the Path of Modernisation), etc.

Monitoring Local Implementation of
the Government Strategy for the
Improvement of the Condition
of Roma in Romania
in Dolj County

BACKGROUND

Dolj county is located in the south-west of Romania, close to the Danube that forms the border with Bulgaria. Dolj county is composed of three municipalities, two larger towns and 95 towns with 380 villages in an area of 7,414 square kilometres. According to the 2002 population census, Dolj county has a population of 734,231 people, of whom 31,544 people (or 4.3 per cent) identified themselves as Roma.¹ The estimates of the Dolj branch of the RSDP state that the real number of Roma is 40,000, while the estimates of the Roma Ethnic Community put the number at over 70,000 people.²

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Dolj prefecture has elaborated a County Strategy for Applying the Government Strategy,³ which sets out 43 measures, 19 of which are related to education. However, the County Strategy was elaborated only after a delay and without consulting a range of Roma NGOs. It does not mention deadlines or the institutions responsible for carrying out the measures.

The Government Strategy has been poorly publicised in Dolj county. Although the institutions responsible for the implementation of the Strategy at local level are familiar with it, there are few who know its measures in detail or the methods of implementing them. The authorities' efforts to inform the Roma community on the Strategy content have been minimal and the only institutions making an effort were the County Office for Roma and some Roma NGOs.

¹ According to the 2002 Census, Ethno-demographic structure of population

² Roma organisations have identified several causes for this situation: many Roma people are ashamed of their origin due to the "association of the word 'Roma' with the word 'criminal' (Roundtable, Craiova, 28 December 2003, Velcu Vasile Năzdrăvan, Executive President of Union of the Craiova Roma and prime vice-president of the Roma Ethnic Community from Romania); at least 50% of the Roma population is abroad (Roundtable, Craiova, 28 December 2003, Silvian Filoti Ilie – executive president of the Roma Ethnic Community from Romania); and the census commissions did not have any Roma members. (Roundtable, Craiova, 28 December 2003, Aurel Raicu vice-president of the Segarcea branch of the Roma Ethnic Community from Romania).

³ The document was elaborated in February 2003 (without a registration number) by the Prefecture in collaboration with the County Office for Roma (hereafter, BJR) and the School Inspectorate for Minorities, within the County School Inspectorate.

The institutions involved in implementing the Strategy at the local level have consulted, in their limited activities, only one of the county Roma organisations (RSDP), although there are other Roma NGOs interested in collaborating in the implementation of the Strategy. Following pressure from other NGOs on the County Office for Roma and on the Prefecture, three local experts representing these NGOs were hired. However, these experts are facing difficulties because they are not members of the RSDP.⁴

Although there are qualified staff at the Dolj county level, they are not respected and due to insufficient financial resources, the efficiency of the County Office for Roma and of the other institutions responsible for implementing the Strategy is poor.

2. LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION

2.1 Administrative bodies

2.1.1 The county office for Roma (BJR)

The county office for Roma (hereafter, BJR) was established in November 2001. The BJR has three members: the Councillor for the Prefect on Roma Affairs (hereafter, Councillor), a Prefecture employee; a councillor within the Directorate Coordination for Local Public Services; and the assistant economic manager of Dolj County Council.

The Roma BJR member was nominated by the RSDP. The Councillor is a graduate of the College of Economic Sciences and has experience in the field of finance / accountancy. The contribution of the other two members is purely formal, due to the fact that they are employees of the Prefecture and have other current responsibilities. There is no job description for the BJR members, rather “the programme and responsibilities being established by the Prefect.”⁵ No financial resources have been allocated to the BJR.

The BJR lacks administrative support staff and has no means of transportation for field activities. According to Roma NGOs the degree of involvement of the BJR in the resolution of relevant issues is inadequate. Their opinion is that the activity of the BJR

⁴ Interview with Ștefan Buzdugan, local expert from the Roma Ethnic Community at Segarcea Town Hall, 18 June 2003.

⁵ Roundtable, Craiova, 28 December 2003, Florin Andronache, BJR member and the Prefect’s councillor on Roma issues.

is strongly influenced by the leader of the county branch of the RSDP.⁶ Representatives of other institutions also share this opinion.⁷

2.1.2 Local experts on Roma affairs

As of autumn 2003, 36 local experts on Roma affairs had been appointed within the county mayoralties at the proposal of the RSDP; two at the proposal of the Roma Ethnic Community; and one representing the Union of Craiova Roma. All 39 local experts are Roma. Local Roma NGOs report that the high number of RSDP-affiliated experts is a result of numerous nominations sent by the Prefecture in the area.⁸ Roma groups have requested that the local community should appoint the experts on the basis of certain criteria.⁹ Only 14 of the local experts are paid for their services, due to the lack of funds.

The local experts designated by the RSDP communicate with the BJR during the weekly meetings of the RSDP, or when the need arises.

The activity of local experts generally consists of supporting the Roma in preparing applications to receive the minimum guaranteed income, obtaining identity papers, registration in the health insurance system, and obtaining construction lands for housing.¹⁰

2.1.3 Local joint working group

Although the Strategy calls for the establishment of county level Joint Working Groups, as of autumn 2003 this has not been accomplished in Dolj county. At present, there is a list of 20 representatives proposed as members of the group, drawn up at the initiative of the County Council, the Prefecture and the BJR.

Although the Strategy mentions that the Joint Working Group should have representatives of the local NGOs as members and representatives chosen from the

⁶ Interview with Velcu Vasile Năzdrăvan, Executive President of Union of the Craiova Roma and prime vice-president of the Roma Ethnic Community from Romania, 20 June 2003.

⁷ Roundtable, Craiova, 28 December 2003.

⁸ Interview with Velcu Vasile Năzdrăvan, Executive President of Union of the Craiova Roma and prime vice-president of the Roma Ethnic Community from Romania, 20 June 2003.

⁹ Roundtable, Craiova, December 28, 2003, Felix Costache, R.E.D member.

¹⁰ Interviews with Zaharia Ionel, president of Union of the Roma, Amărăștii de Jos branch; Oiță Gheorghe local expert, Sadova.

Roma community, most of the people proposed are either members of the RSDP local branch, or local public administration employees; the BJR did not consult any other NGO when drawing up the list.¹¹ To date, the local council has not issued any decision to establish the working group.

Efforts have been made to improve collaboration between the local public administration and Roma communities. The County Council and the Prefecture periodically organise meetings with formal and informal Roma leaders from various localities of the county.¹² However, Roma have expressed concern about some mayors offices' lack of interest regarding the content of the Strategy.¹³

2.2 Housing

At the county level, there are few cases of Roma acquiring ownership of construction land. Forty Roma families from the village of Ocolna, in the area of Amărăștii de Jos, received half a hectare each from the Mayor's Office for housing.¹⁴ The Mayor's Office intends to continue the allocation of land based on requests received and the available land.¹⁵ In Ostroveni, eight Roma families also received land for housing by Decisions of the Local Councils.¹⁶ The property registration was legalised within the framework of activities specifically targeting Roma. However, in several areas concerns have been raised regarding the local councils' failure to take action to legalise housing built by Roma without proper authorisation.¹⁷

The Office for Social Work of the Craiova Bishopric, in collaboration with the "Romano-Euro Drom" Association of Roma Students and Young People (hereafter, RED) has initiated a project to improve the housing conditions of Roma from Lăpus-Barăci

¹¹ Interviews with Velcu Vasile Năzdrăvan, Executive President of Union of the Craiova Roma and prime vice-president of the Roma Ethnic Community from Romania 20 June 2003; Sorina Popa, councillor within the Directorate for Culture, Denominations and National Cultural Patrimony Dolj, Roundtable, Craiova, 28 December 2003.

¹² Interview with Ion Voiculescu, President of Dolj County Council 25 June 2003; Roundtable, Craiova, 28 December 2003.

¹³ Roundtable, Craiova, 28 December 2003.

¹⁴ Interview with Zaharia Ionel, president of the Union of the Roma, Amărăștii de Jos branch, 22 June 2003.

¹⁵ Phone interview with Sever Pisciă, vice mayor of Amărăștii de Jos.

¹⁶ Interview with Gheorghe Oprescu, mayor of Ostroveni, 28 June 2003.

¹⁷ Roundtable, Craiova, 28 December 2003; Costel Matache – leader of the Roma from Malu Mare.

district, Craiova.¹⁸ The same community received construction materials from the Mayor's Office for the rehabilitation of four of the most affected houses. The municipality intends to purchase these houses, which are presently the property of the Ion Țiriac Bank, in order to transform them into social housing for Roma from this district. The value of this acquisition is approximately ROL 3 billion.¹⁹

In 2002, Craiova City Hall transformed a hostel into social housing for 50 Roma families, 13 of which had been living in shacks in the livestock market.

2.3 Social protection

The County Directorate for Social Work was established in 2003 to increase access to social services for needy persons, including Roma. To date, however, the County Directorate for Social Work has only assumed the responsibilities of the Territorial State Inspectorate for Persons with Handicap.²⁰

At present, there are no social work measures specifically targeting the Roma population. Most of the Roma population in Dolj are beneficiaries under the minimum guaranteed income act (Law no. 416/2001): of a total of 4,741 recipients in Dolj, 83 per cent are Roma.²¹ Some concerns over access to social benefits have been reported: civil servants may over-estimate family incomes of Roma in drawing up applications,²² and transportation to the place of employment is not guaranteed,²³ causing Roma to lose the right to benefits.

Discrimination remains an issue with regard to access to public facilities. Most reported discrimination cases are regarding access to pubs and discotheques in Craiova.²⁴ As the

¹⁸ Interview with Sister Viruța Maxim, social worker within the Office for Social Work of Craiova Archbishopric, 3 July 2003.

¹⁹ Interview with Vasile Bulucea, Mayor of Craiova, 30 June 2003.

²⁰ Interview with George Vilă, manager of the County Directorate for Social Work, 24 June 2003.

²¹ No. 124.225/29.07.2003 of the Social Work Service of Craiova City Hall.

²² Interview with Ștefan Buzdugan, local expert from the Roma Ethnic Community within Segarcea Town Hall, 18 June 2003.

²³ Interview with Zaharia Ionel, President of the Union of the Roma, Amărăștii de Jos branch, 22 June 2003.

²⁴ Interview with Velcu Vasile Năzdrăvan, Executive President of Union of the Craiova Roma and Vice-president of the Roma Ethnic Community from Romania, 20 June 2003; also see the local newspapers *Gazeta de Sud (South Gazette)* and *Ediție Specială de Oltenia (Oltenia Special Edition)* from 4 December 2002.

Executive Board of the National Council for Combating Discrimination was only established in July 2002, the Union of Roma from Craiova (hereafter, URC) were addressed to the police, Prefecture and City Hall in the meantime; the cases “were not solved and no measures were taken in this respect.”²⁵ The police report that there was no discrimination of Roma in these cases, because they were refused access in discotheques due to “prior violent behaviour”.²⁶

Roma also report discrimination related to social housing; there were numerous protests, including a hunger strike outside Craiova City Hall.²⁷

2.4 Health care

The implementation of the Strategy’s measure to develop a system of health mediators started late, in September-October 2002, reportedly because the Dolj branch of the RSDP did not submit nominations for these positions in time.²⁸ Once the proposals were made, four health mediators were selected; they are residents of the towns in which they work.²⁹ Only three of the mediators participated in the training course organised by Romani CRISS. They were hired for one year, with the possibility of extending the contract, and are subordinated to the municipal hospital Filantropia in Craiova.

At present, only three of the mediators are active, and one has resigned. The mediators facilitate communication between community members and medical personnel, they cultivate reciprocal trust between local public authorities and the community, and mobilise the community for vaccination, information and education campaigns. Some 2,500 people have benefited from the mediators’ services since the programme began, and demand for these services exceeds the current mediators’ capacity.

The activities of health mediators are concentrated mostly on informing and educating the Roma population on various subjects: family planning, increasing the number of periodical medical check-ups in the community, and the early identification and

²⁵ Interview with Velcu Vasile Năzdrăvan, Executive President of Union of the Craiova Roma and Vice-president of the Roma Ethnic Community from Romania, 20 June 2003.

²⁶ Interview with Constantin Petrescu, Second-in-command of the marshal of the Dolj County Police Inspectorate, 27 June 2003.

²⁷ See *Gazeta de Sud (South Gazette)*, 19 March 2003.

²⁸ Interview with Dr. Beneduc Ionuț Adrian, specialty inspector within the Office for Mother and Child Assistance within the Dolj County Directorate for Public Healthcare.

²⁹ Health mediators were hired in Craiova and in Vârtop, Caraula, and Lipov.

treatment of tuberculosis.³⁰ The mediators report weekly to their medical supervisor, and monthly to the Directorate of Public Healthcare.

The intervention of health mediators in the Roma communities has helped to increase the Roma community's receptivity towards health services. Local general practitioners report that the Roma community accesses medical services more regularly in areas where the mediators are working. In general, the mediators have contributed to improving medical services and increasing the health and medical awareness of the Roma beneficiaries.³¹

Within Dolj county there are many localities that need health mediators to better disseminate information on medical issues in Roma communities; therefore, the Dolj Directorate for Public Healthcare has requested ten additional health mediators.³²

Civil society has also been active in the field of health care; the Roma Students Association Eurodrom has developed two projects in this respect, one focusing on hygiene and health awareness among schoolchildren, and the other on HIV-AIDS awareness. The ARAS Association – Oltenia has established a project on reproductive health education in Sadova,³³ and the Alliance for Roma Unity is developing a project of sanitary education in the Băilesti schools and communities with a budget of €15,000.³⁴ Although the Directorate for Public Healthcare and local NGOs have developed informational-educational campaigns regarding health, there is an obvious need for the expansion of these programmes.

2.5 Economic initiatives

In the sphere of employment, the local institutions have not yet accomplished the objectives established by the Strategy. The measures for improving the practice and revival of traditional Roma handicrafts were not applied due to a lack of requests from the community. The same holds true for the development and implementation of

³⁰ "Activity Plan for May 2003" of the health mediator from Vârtop.

³¹ Phone interview with Dr. Nedelea Vanda Luiza, family doctor in Vârtop.

³² Interview with Dr. Beneduc Ionuț Adrian, specialty inspector within the Office for Mother and Child Assistance within the Dolj County Directorate for Public Healthcare.

³³ The project is financed by FRDSC with a budget of \$8,000. Interview with Oana Mateescu, programme coordinator at ARAS Oltenia.

³⁴ Interview with Lucian Cherata, school inspector for minorities within the Dolj County School Inspectorate, 24 June 2003.

specific programmes for the financing of income generating activities and small businesses for Roma families/communities, including Roma women.³⁵

The only initiative in the domain of qualification/re-qualification of the Roma at local level has been taken by the Together Community Development Agency, which has developed a project with Phare support. This project is developed in five municipalities, including Craiova; in Craiova city, ROMANO-EURO DROM Roma Students and Young People's Association implements the project, in partnership with the Dolj County Agency for Professional Training and Occupation. The objective of this project is to provide support for the integration of Roma on the labour market. After graduating from qualification courses in August 2003, 20 Roma were expected to receive diplomas as PC operators, 20 as bricklayers-painters and ten as barbers. The County Agency for Professional Training and Occupation Dolj (hereafter, CAPTO) has provided professional counselling and will certify the diplomas.

The first edition of the Job Fair for Roma was organised in May 2003 at the headquarters of the Dolj County Agency for Professional Training and Occupation. The BJR and the Together Community Development Agency cooperated in organising the fair; however, the RSDP branch in Dolj did not provide the support requested.³⁶ The Fair offered 190 places of employment, 159 for socially marginalised persons. One month after the fair, 45 Roma were employed. However, only 23.7 per cent of the job offers were filled, due to problems "caused by the elaboration of hiring documents by local town halls".³⁷

The poor participation of Roma in the fair was due to the insufficient information disseminated in the Roma communities regarding this event. Roma who did participate in the Fair reported that the initiative of organising such an event was useful and would be more successful if held again.³⁸ Few Roma took advantage of an advantageous credit system, due to the fact that the Roma were not informed about this opportunity.

The newly created "County Commission for Applying the Government Decision no. 256/18.03.2003 for the approval of the Programme regarding the elaboration of normative documents necessary for the attribution in property of lands for Roma" will

³⁵ Interview with Adriana Breazu, Executive Director of the Dolj County Agency for Professional Training and Occupation, 23 June 2003.

³⁶ Address no. 6147/05.05.2003 from the Dolj County Agency for Professional Training and Occupation to the National Agency for Professional Training and Occupation.

³⁷ Information of the Dolj CAPTO, June 2003.

³⁸ Interview with Gheorghe Puşulache, informal leader of the Roma from Lăpus-Barăci district, participant in the Fair, 24 June 2003.

establish agricultural lands available for Roma, on the basis of information received from the local commissions.³⁹

2.6 Justice and public order

There are no legal education and delinquency prevention programmes developed by public institutions or NGOs; the only activities in this respect are sporadic meetings of the representatives of the County Police Inspectorate with Roma leaders from the county, who then disseminate the information to the Roma communities.⁴⁰ NGOs have supported various programmes monitoring cases of discrimination and raising human rights awareness among Roma communities in Dolj.⁴¹

Conflicts are generally resolved at a local level between the authorities and Roma leaders.⁴² Nevertheless, young Roma report that they experience discrimination, especially regarding access to public bars.⁴³ Long-standing tension between young Roma and members of a reportedly anti-Roma group known as “Frăția” (The brotherhood)⁴⁴ led to a riot among the Roma community in September 2003. To control the crowd, the police used rubber bullets, injuring seven of the 50-60 young Roma participating in the riot. After these events, 33 Roma were arrested on various charges.⁴⁵ Roma have alleged that they were discriminated against, as they were not called to the police headquarters for statements before their arrest.⁴⁶

³⁹ The commission was set up by Prefect’s Order no. 61/08.04.2003.

⁴⁰ Interview with Costache Gheorghe, informal leader of the Roma from Craiova-Făcăi, “peace judge of the Roma” from Oltenia, 25 June 2003.

⁴¹ Interview with Marcel Costache, member of the implementation team of the programme “Defend your Rights” in Dolj county, 27 June 2003.

⁴² Interview with Constantin Petrescu, Second-in-command marshal of the County Police Inspectorate, Dolj, 27 June 2003.

⁴³ Roundtable, Craiova, 28 December 2003.

⁴⁴ Interview with Velcu Vasile Năzdrăvan; see the publication “Aven Amentza”, September 2003.

⁴⁵ See the newspapers *Gazeta de Sud* (*South Gazette*) and *Ediție Specială de Oltenia* (*Oltenia Special Edition*) from 19 and 25 September, and 23 October 2003.

⁴⁶ Interview with Ion Parnică – Vilifort, participant in the riot.

2.7 Child protection

The Dolj County Directorate for Child Protection monitors, assists and protects, by measures of temporary or final protection, including adoption, 1,009 children in difficulty. The majority of these children (80 per cent) are Roma,⁴⁷ though the Directorate does not develop specialised programmes to address the specific situation of Roma children.⁴⁸

To prevent abandonment and improve reintegration of children within the family, the County Directorate for Child Protection collaborated with several local and international NGOs (ARAS, World Vision, Save the Children) and a Roma representative.⁴⁹

The opportunities for Roma to become maternal assistants or to adopt institutionalised children are limited due to the low levels of education and low income among the community.⁵⁰

2.8 Education

Although the County Strategy has 19 educational objectives, many of these remain in the proposal stage as there have been no concrete initiatives for implementation. The educational and professional qualification level of the Roma from Dolj county is generally low.

The structure of the school age population at the level of Dolj county is the following:⁵¹

- Pre-schoolers: 18,914, of whom three per cent are Roma;
- Elementary school: 33,272, of whom eight per cent are Roma;
- Secondary school: 37,017, of whom five per cent are Roma.

⁴⁷ Interview with Victoria Croitoru, executive manager of Dolj County Directorate for Child Protection, 26 June 2003.

⁴⁸ Roundtable, Craiova, 28 December 2003, Maria Manolache vice manager of Dolj County Directorate for Child Protection.

⁴⁹ Member of the Commission is Dumitru Tatian, president of the RSDP Dolj.

⁵⁰ Interview with Victoria Croitoru, executive of the Dolj County Directorate for Child Protection, 26 June 2003.

⁵¹ Interview with Lucian Cherata, inspector for minorities within the Dolj County School Inspectorate, 24 June 2003.

There are 265 schools in the county; 142 elementary and 123 secondary. The enrolment at four schools is almost exclusively Roma.

In addition to isolated cases of teachers who visit Roma communities to provide counselling for Roma parents and children, the County School Inspectorate and the schools themselves are also making efforts made to encourage school attendance among Roma children. These include:

- The appointment of a school inspector for minorities within the Dolj County School Inspectorate.
- Within the EU Socrates-Comenius 1 programme,⁵² in partnership with schools from Spain and France, two of the Craiova schools with a majority of Roma pupils are developing activities to support the integration of Roma children in the educational system and improve their school results.
- The Providence foundation Bucharest is developing a project from 2002–2004, to provide after-school tutoring and snacks for 35 Roma children, in collaboration with the Dolj County School Inspectorate.
- Romano-Euro Drom Roma Students and Young People’s Association organised a campaign for supporting young Roma who want to go to college by providing information regarding the special places allocated for Roma by the University of Craiova.⁵³
- Dolj County School Inspectorate, in partnership with the House of the Teaching Staff and with the Psychology Faculty of the University from Chieti (Italy), initiated the Virgilio Programme for Trans-national Cooperation to reduce school dropouts in disadvantaged communities (especially in Roma communities). The programme is in development for the period February 2003–2005.⁵⁴
- The governmental “Milk and Doughnuts” programme and distribution of writing materials to low-income pupils (including Roma).

⁵² “The overall objectives of COMENIUS are to enhance the quality and reinforce the European dimension of school education, in particular by encouraging transnational cooperation between schools, contributing to the improved professional development of staff directly involved in the school education sector, and promoting the learning of languages and intercultural awareness.” See http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/socrates/comenius/moreabout_en.html.

⁵³ The University from Craiova has allocated 17 special places for Roma for the school year 2003–2004 – Order no. 4120/09.06.2003 of the Ministry of Education and Research.

⁵⁴ Interview with Lucian Cherata, inspector for minorities within Dolj County School Inspectorate, 24 June 2003.

To improve teachers' knowledge and understanding of the special needs of Roma pupils, the Dolj County School Inspectorate drafted notifications to several schools containing excerpts from two important laws.⁵⁵ The Inspectorate also requested that directors of schools with Roma pupils submit the preliminary schedule for Romani language classes, as well as information regarding the requests for special places for Roma children in high schools and trade schools, according to the affirmative action measures taken by Ministry of Education and Research.⁵⁶ Approximately 30 per cent of the schools responded to this request.⁵⁷ For the places allocated to Roma for the school year 2003–2004, 25 pupils were registered in high schools; 65 in trade schools; and 14 for completing their high school studies. According to the school inspector, there is generally good cooperation with the school directorate, although some directors have spoken to Roma parents about the “uselessness of the Romani language”.⁵⁸

During the school year 2002–2003, 13 substitute teachers were hired for teaching Romani language. In the school year 2003–2004 this number was increased to 22, of whom 13 are taking courses at CREDIS Bucharest and three graduated in 2003. Romani language teachers are also attending a course organised by the County School Inspectorate, in collaboration with the House of the Teaching Staff. After graduating from this course, the teachers will receive diplomas. In some schools, however, the directors have not cooperated in the establishment of Romani language departments.⁵⁹

There are 65 students registered for the special places for Roma at Craiova University. For the school year 2003–2004, 17 special places for Roma were allocated, but the demand for these places proved even greater. However, there are concerns that given the high volume of applications, some Roma NGOs may have recommended non-Roma students for these places. According to one estimate, “90 per cent of the places for Roma are occupied by [ethnic] Romanians”.⁶⁰ There have been calls for a

⁵⁵ Law no. 48/2002 regarding the prevention and sanction of all forms of discrimination, and Law no. 116/2002 regarding the prevention of and combat against social marginalisation. Address no. 2446/13.05.2003 of the Dolj County School Inspectorate for all schools with Roma pupils from Dolj county.

⁵⁶ Address no.1328/26.02.2003 of the Dolj County School Inspectorate for all schools with Roma pupils.

⁵⁷ Interview in with Lucian Cherata, inspector for minorities within Dolj County School Inspectorate, 24 June 2003.

⁵⁸ Interview with Lucian Cherata, inspector for minorities within Dolj County School Inspectorate, 28 June 2003.

⁵⁹ Interview with Lucian Cherata, inspector for minorities within Dolj County School Inspectorate, 28 June 2003.

⁶⁰ Interview with Lucian Cherata, inspector for minorities within Dolj County School Inspectorate, 28 June 2003.

commission formed by representatives of all county NGOs to consider each application, to remove suspicion regarding the candidates' recommendations.⁶¹

2.9 Culture and denominations

The role of local government bodies in the implementation of cultural programmes for the affirmation of Roma identity mentioned by the Strategy is minimal.

The Ministry Commission on Roma affairs of the Ministry of Culture and Denominations in collaboration with the Roma Center for Public Policies Aven Amentza, with the Dolj County Directorate for Culture, Denominations and National Cultural Patrimony and with the support of the representatives of the National Council for Combating Discrimination organised a “Caravan for Intercultural Education and Revitalisation of the Roma Culture” in Craiova in February 2002 and April 2003. At a local level, this activity received support from “Romano-Euro Drom” Roma Students and Young People’s Association. During this event, collaboration for the Strategy implementation between the local Roma NGOs and the local structures of the ministries was established.

During the events organised on the 2002 Day of National Minorities (December 18), the Interethnic Forum Dolj in collaboration with Dolj County Directorate for Culture, Denominations and National Cultural Patrimony organised a round-table during which the Roma guests familiarised the other participants with aspects of Roma history and culture.

Starting in January 2001, Radio Horion (a private local radio station) allocated an hour a week for debates concerning Roma issues, with Roma leaders from the county; another seven hours were allocated for the broadcasting of Roma folk music. In May – September 2003, the executive board of the radio station financially conditioned the participation in debates.⁶² Also, the local private TV station Oltenia TV offers a programme for minorities entitled “Ethnies”. The hour-long programme invites representatives of the minorities from Craiova each week; minority representatives take turns appearing on the show.

In contrast with these private initiatives, the public regional TV and radio stations have not scheduled any regular broadcasts with or about the Roma community specificity.

⁶¹ Interview with Lucian Cherata, inspector for minorities within Dolj County School Inspectorate, 28 June 2003.

⁶² Interview with Velcu Vasile Năzdrăvan, Executive President of Union of the Craiova Roma and Vice-president of the Roma Ethnic Community from Romania, 20 June 2003.

The lack of financial resources limits the initiative of local Roma NGOs in promoting Roma culture and traditions. On the International Roma Day (8 April), the Union of the Craiova Roma and the Dolj branch of the Roma Ethnic Community organised the festival “Miss Roma Oltenia”. The Craiova Union of the Roma and of the Roma Ethnic have recently set the foundation stones of a church that will be built in Ocolna.

The Faculty of History-Philosophy-Geography of Craiova University, in collaboration with the Dolj County School Inspectorate is elaborating a scientific study called “Ethno-socio-cartography of the Roma Population in the Area of Oltenia”.

2.10 Public participation

The lack of unity among Roma NGOs in Dolj county prevented the election of any Roma candidate at the municipal/county level.⁶³ There are 13 Roma town councillors in the county, elected on the lists of the Dolj RSDP.

The civic organisations of the Roma from Dolj county include the RSDP, the Union of the Craiova Roma; the Roma Ethnic Community; the Democrat Union of the Roma from Dolj-Sadova county; the Party of Bricklayers (“*caramizari*”, in Romanian) – Segarcea; and the Emancipation and Schooling of Roma Children Foundation – Dioști. Politically, the most active groups are the RSDP; the Union of the Craiova Roma; and the Roma Ethnic Community from Romania.

The lack of unity and solidarity of Roma NGOs led to a situation where the President of the RSDP Dolj organised a party meeting at the exact hour when the round-table organised for discussing the preliminary report on the local level implementation of the Strategy was held. Thus, the local RSDP members could not attend this roundtable.

From the data available, there appear to be no Roma hired in public administration at the county level, except in the offices created by the Strategy.

2.11 Communication and civic participation

In the absence of other programmes for informing and combating discrimination against Roma, the Prefecture of Dolj county mentions the “Project for Combating the Discrimination of Roma in the Media”,⁶⁴ in the County Strategy, a project that has not been elaborated as yet.

⁶³ Interview with Ion Voiculescu, President of the Dolj County Council, 25 June 2003.

⁶⁴ *County Strategy*, point 37.

Cases of discrimination against Roma were brought to public attention by the media or addressed to the Mayor's office and to the Prefecture by the Union of the Craiova Roma.⁶⁵ The hiring of a Roma journalist at one of the local newspapers has increased the representation of Roma issues in the county.

⁶⁵ Interview with Velcu Vasile Năzdrăvan, Executive President of Union of the Craiova Roma and Vice-president of the Roma Ethnic Community from Romania, 20 June 2003.

Monitoring Local Implementation of
the Government Strategy for the
Improvement of the Condition
of Roma in Romania
in Cluj County

BACKGROUND

Cluj county is located in Transylvania, in the north-west of Romania. The county population is 703,269,¹ in an area of 6,674 square kilometres. In the 2002 population census 20,052 residents identified themselves as Roma, 2.9 per cent of the county's total population.² This is an increase of approximately 20 per cent since 1992, in a period in which the total number of residents decreased by 36,000. Nevertheless, unofficial estimates claim that there are between 35,000 and 45,000 Roma living in the perimeter of Cluj county.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Cluj County, three years from the adoption of the Strategy, the implementation did not bring about the desired change in the life of the Roma population. However, a County Office for Roma (hereafter, BJR) and Local Joint Working Groups at the county and local level have been established, and local experts on Roma affairs nominated. In spite of these positive aspects, the level of involvement of the Local Joint Working Group is weak and almost no resources are allocated for implementing the Strategy measures.

At the time of writing, Cluj county had not developed a County Strategy for implementing the Strategy, but in February 2004 the Prefecture approved a County Action Plan based on the Strategy, with measures in all ten domains that the national Strategy covers.³

The presence of an active group of Roma non-governmental organisations seems to be insufficient for improving the participation of Roma in public life, and a constant lack of cooperation with the public institutions exists. A relevant example is the project implemented by the County School Inspectorate in several localities and schools with large Roma populations, where there is no partnership with the relevant Roma organisations.⁴

¹ According to the data of 2002 Census, Ethno-demographic structure of population chapter

² According to the data of 2002 Census, Ethno-demographic structure of population chapter

³ Interview with Titi Marius, councillor for the prefect on Roma affairs, Cluj-Napoca, 110 April 2004.

⁴ The county School Inspectorate is implementing a project within the framework of Phare RO-0104.02: "Access to education of disadvantaged groups, with a special focus on Roma" programme. There are no Roma NGOs as formal partners in the project, although they expressed their openness for participation.

The BJR, together with the local experts on Roma affairs, have made some progress in implementing the objectives of the Strategy. However, lack of decision-making authority and lack of funding have been identified as main factors impeding the activities of the BJR in Cluj county. Only low progress in the main areas of the Strategy can be noted, including in health, housing, employments, and social services.

2. LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION

2.1 Administrative bodies

2.1.1 The county office for Roma (BJR)

In accordance with the Strategy,⁵ the County Office for Roma (hereafter, BJR) was established in Cluj County in April 2002. The Prefect of Cluj is the President of the BJR, which is funded through the budget of Cluj Prefecture. The BJR has five members, one of whom is Roma. The BJR members have other daily tasks in addition to their responsibilities as BJR members.

The BJR members include the Councillor for the Prefect on Roma Affairs, (hereafter, Councillor) who was hired by Cluj Prefecture following an open selection process. The Councillor was educated in the social work department of Babeş-Bolyai University and was previously a member of the Romano Suno Association of Roma Students from Cluj Napoca. The Councillor is currently the vice-president of the RSDP in Cluj Napoca. The four non-Roma BJR members have been working with the Directorate for European Integration and External Affairs, Directorate for Governmental Strategies and Relations with Trade Unions, Juridical Department, Public Relations within Cluj County Prefecture for over eight years.

When he first started, the Councillor faced various problems, from organisational to relational ones, including the lack of knowledge on the part of the BJR members of the BJR's role and context within the Strategy. The Councillor has only very limited resources at his disposal and low decision-making authority. All decisions must be approved through the Prefecture's administrative hierarchy, and thus it is impossible to react immediately or effectively in a crisis situation.

⁵ GD 430/2001, Government Strategy for Improving the Condition of the Situation of Roma.

The BJR's activities are carried out according to a schedule proposed for each three months by the Councillor and approved by the Prefect.⁶ The schedule includes office hours for the public and work in the field. The hours with the public, the so-called audiences, are held twice weekly. Monthly site visits to the local mayors' offices in Cluj county have been organised to advise the local experts on Roma issues and improve the relationship between Roma communities and local authorities. The Councillor also visits local public services, NGOs, Roma communities and other institutions in Cluj Napoca in accordance with the measures of the Strategy.

The Councillor's office is furnished with a computer and a printer, access to the telephone and fax machine, and limited Internet access. However, allocation of additional office space within the Prefecture exclusively for the BJR would facilitate its activities. The Councillor is allowed to use the Prefecture's means for transportation, but only with previous approval. In crisis situations, where it is not possible to make arrangements in advance, the Councillor must appeal to Roma NGOs and to the RSDP.

In the implementation of the Strategy at Cluj county level, the main difficulties identified were the low involvement of local authorities from certain mayors' offices in the implementation of the Strategy and the insufficient allocation of funds from the local budget for activities established in the Master Plan of Measures for Applying the Strategy.⁷ In addition, the Councillor does not have decision-making powers, but only the possibility to make proposals to the county mayors' offices and to solicit information.⁸

The Councillor considers the collaboration with the local institutions participating in the working group to be successful. Various projects have been carried out in partnership with the police, the Directorate for Culture and Denominations, and the County School Inspectorate.

The relationship of the BJR with county Roma NGOs has also been productive, and has resulted in joint project applications and a cooperative approach to problem solving. The RSDP is a constructive partner, both at the local and county levels. The representative of the RSDP for Cluj Napoca is member of the working group and participates in joint problem solving for the Roma communities.

⁶ Interview with Titi Marius, councillor for the prefect on Roma affairs, Cluj-Napoca, 13 October 2003.

⁷ Interview with Titi Marius, councillor for the prefect on Roma affairs, Cluj-Napoca, 15 April 2004.

⁸ In accordance with Law no. 215 on Local Public Administration. Interview with Titi Marius, councillor for the prefect on Roma affairs, Cluj-Napoca, 13 October 2003.

The perceptions of Roma NGOs regarding the activity and results of the Councillor varies. Many groups draw attention to the failures of the Councillor, while acknowledging that the lack of material resources and limited decision-making capacity restrict the possibilities for the Councillor to work effectively.

2.1.2 Local experts on Roma affairs

At the level of Cluj county Mayors' offices, 43 local experts were hired. Of these, 38 were already employed by the Mayors' offices and were assigned new responsibilities, while the remaining two are volunteers. However, only five of these local experts are Roma and of these only one has been hired officially as a local expert for Roma affairs, while the others were performing the same tasks but given different positions or are volunteers.

In most cases, the local experts on Roma affairs who were given the position in addition to their existing work with the Mayor's office. Most are not sufficiently familiar with Roma issues, although many already worked in positions such as social workers which required substantial interaction with the Roma communities. Many of the local experts lack the motivation to work for real change as they consider the extra responsibilities burdensome, and they receive no additional salary to compensate for the additional work.⁹

At the time of reporting, there was no local expert on Roma affairs hired by Cluj Napoca City Hall, as a new position in the administrative staff chart had not been established. The mayor of Cluj Napoca has signed a document committing to modify the staff table in order to hire a local expert.

The work and responsibilities of the local experts varies greatly. Some have a job description,¹⁰ while others only have a job description for their other responsibilities.¹¹ There are a significant number of local experts who are not aware of whether or not

⁹ Interviews with Liliana Ecedi, Local Expert on Roma Affairs, Gilău, Cluj, 10 September 2003; Takacs Tunde, Buza Mayor's Office, Cluj, 10 September 2003; Nagy Ana, Local Expert on Roma Affairs Suatu, Cluj, 10 September 2003; Sebastian Hoda, Local Expert on Roma Affairs Feleac, Cluj, 10 September 2003; Simona Fizeşan, Local Expert on Roma Affairs Floreşti, Cluj, 10 September 2003.

¹⁰ Interview with Simona Fizeşan, Local Expert on Roma Affairs Floreşti, Cluj, 10 September 2003.

¹¹ Interview with Sebastian Hoda, Local Expert on Roma Affairs Feleac, Cluj, 10 September 2003.

they have a job description.¹² Many of those who took on the position of local expert in addition to other responsibilities have stated that they do not have time to focus on resolving on the problems of Roma communities and therefore only interact with Roma in connection with their other work.

In some cases, the local experts state that they have regular meetings, usually once a week, with representatives of the Roma from the respective area, where they discuss the current issues that the local community is facing.¹³ They generally regard their communication with the Councillor for the Prefect on Roma Affairs as good, with weekly consultation by telephone or fax and more often when necessary.

The achievements that the local experts on Roma affairs consider most important include:

- developing a relationship based on trust with the Roma;
- organising of the Roma community at the local level so that there are one or more leaders who can represent the community in relations with local authorities; generally, these are informal leaders, respected by their communities and accepted as such by local authorities;
- persuading Roma groups to work the necessary number of hours in order to receive minimum guaranteed income;
- paving an access road to one of the Roma communities, with the direct participation of the Roma themselves.

The local experts on Roma affairs consider that their activity would be improved if the following was made available:

- office space exclusively for meeting with Roma communities;
- employment of community representatives as local experts on Roma affairs, thus assuring a closer relation with the community, and better understanding of the relevant issues;
- additional employment of personnel or reducing the other responsibilities of local experts as the volume of work with Roma communities is time consuming;

¹² Interviews with Liliana Ecedi, Local Expert on Roma Affairs Gilău, Cluj, 10 September 2003; Takacs Tunde, Local Expert on Roma Affairs Buza, Cluj, 10 September 2003; Nagy Ana, Local Expert on Roma Affairs Suatu, Cluj, 10 September 2003.

¹³ Interview with Szatmari Levente, volunteer Expert on Roma Affairs Unguraş, Cluj, 10 September 2003.

- developing a cooperative atmosphere among Roma, to build awareness that their issues cannot be resolved by the mayor alone, but the involvement of other local structures and their own involvement is essential;
- fostering the participation and election of Roma representatives within the decision-making structures at the local level.

Roma generally approach the local experts on Roma affairs¹⁴ for advice about utilities, including the lack of electricity, water, sewer connections, and gas. There are also problems with the preparation of paperwork for obtaining the minimum guaranteed income, for the registration of houses in the cadastral register, the lack of land for construction, unemployment, and other issues.

2.1.3 Local joint working group

At the Cluj county level, the Local Joint Working Group was formed in 2001, prior to the Ministry of Public Administration's order to do so.¹⁵ The working group was formed by consensus,¹⁶ at the initiative of the Councillor for the Prefect on Roma affairs, who brought together the representatives of local institutions and Roma NGOs in accordance with the Government Strategy. Later, the Working Group became official by an order of the Prefect (no. 518/29.08.2002).

County level Working Group members are both representatives of local institutions and of Roma NGOs. The activity of the Working Group has developed without specific funds from the budget. Its responsibilities are in accordance with those set out in the Strategy¹⁷ and are mainly connected to the evaluation of the most important needs of the Roma community according to the Strategy's Master Plan of Measures.¹⁸

Unfortunately, to date there have been no significant accomplishments of the Working Group, although there has been support from various institutions for the accomplishments of the BJR. Since autumn 2002, the Working Group meetings take

¹⁴ Interviews with Liliana Ecedi, Local Expert on Roma Affairs Gilău, Cluj, 10 September 2003; Sebastian Hoda, Local Expert on Roma Affairs Feleac, Cluj, 10 September 2003; Simona Fizeșan, Local Expert on Roma Affairs Florești, Cluj, 10 September 2003.

¹⁵ With Prefect's order no. 328/18.04.2002.

¹⁶ Interview with Titi Marius, councillor for the prefect on Roma affairs, Cluj-Napoca, 13 October 2003.

¹⁷ Interview with Titi Marius, councillor for the prefect on Roma affairs, Cluj-Napoca, 13 October 2003.

¹⁸ Strategy, Chapter XI, Master Plan of Measures for Applying the Strategy of Improving the Roma Condition.

place once in two months, with a fairly high level of participation, although often the representatives of public institutions lack decision-making capacity, and are merely delegated by the respective institutions. The efficiency of the Working Group could improve with better organisation and direction of its meetings, and with the elaboration of clear plans and schedules for achievement.

The Local Joint Working Group needs funds for the development of activities and for the specific activities institutions should develop according to the Strategy. To date, all its activities were accomplished without funds allocated from the institutional level, but with good collaboration.¹⁹ Improving collaboration with Roma NGOs would also help to increase the working group's efficiency as many NGOs have expertise and experience that should be utilised. The clarification of each partner's responsibilities is essential, and the real partnership between public institutions and civil society must be transformed from an abstract concept into a common reality.

2.1.4 Other administrative measures

At the level of the County Council, a Roma university graduate was hired as Assistant Councillor within the Public Institutions Service of the General Directorate for Public and Judicial Administration.²⁰

In addition, training courses are currently being organised for local experts on Roma affairs and other working group members in writing financing proposals, human rights, and community development. These courses were organised at the initiative of the Councillor for the Prefect on Roma affairs, in collaboration with Ramses Foundation in Dej and the Foundation Resource Center for Roma Communities. Through this project, 30 people have received training to date.

2.2 Housing

In Cluj county, a strategy at the local level is required to ensure that local authorities allocate the necessary financial resources in a timely fashion, assuring the access of underprivileged persons, Roma included, to decent living conditions.

¹⁹ Interview with Titi Marius, councillor for the prefect on Roma affairs, Cluj-Napoca, 13 October 2003.

²⁰ Interview with Lakatos Marius, Assistant Councillor within the Public Institutions Service of the General Directorate for Public and Judicial Administration, Cluj County Council, Cluj-Napoca, 21 November 2003.

In autumn 2003, the Councillor for the Prefect on Roma affairs (hereafter, Councillor) was not aware of any cases of Roma becoming owners of agricultural or housing land. Roma NGOs, the Councillor and the RSDP petitioned Cluj City Hall to improve the situation of the Roma from Byron district, who had no rent contracts for the spaces in which they lived. As a result, all of the 24 families, approximately 170 persons, are now living under legal conditions with rent contracts.

A national programme for the rehabilitation of houses and the environment, including areas populated by Roma, was to be elaborated by January 2003 in accordance with the Master Plan of Measures for Applying the Strategy.²¹ Information was collected by the BJR but there is no sign of such a national programme. In late 2003, the Councillor received and sent to the Ministry of Public Administration and Internal Affairs an up-to-date situation of their housing rehabilitation needs and of the number of houses in the areas populated by Roma; this information was received from the county mayors' offices.

With Governmental funds, the mayoralities of Catina implemented a housing rehabilitation project and the mayorality of Calatele rehabilitated an access road for the Roma community. The value of the two projects is approximately ROL 3 Billion (approximately €75,000).

Housing projects have been elaborated and forwarded for financing. These projects have as objectives the building of houses for the Roma communities in Pata Rît and Negreni, as well as the rehabilitation of Roma houses from Byron district. The Councillor, together with the assistant Councillor within the County Council, members of Roma NGOs and civil servants elaborated these projects. At the date of an interview, the financing requests had not received an answer.

The transfer of Roma families and other homeless citizens from different areas of the city has led to the creation of two new shantytowns, Pata Rît 2 and Pata Rît 3. There has been no support for the families involved, who have no access to heating or water. The authorities have attempted to hand over responsibility for these families to civil society but this has not resolved the problem, as Roma NGOs lack the necessary financial resources for building houses. As a result of petitions to Cluj Napoca Local Council from the Councillor, the Assistant Councillor, Amare Phrala organisation and the RSDP, ROL 50 million was allocated to the Roma in Pata Rît 2 for heating materials and food and ROL 800 million for electricity during the winter holidays.

²¹ Strategy, Chapter IX, Master Plan of Measures No. 24.

2.3 Social protection

Between October 2002 and September 2003, a project to increase the Roma community's access to local services in Cluj Napoca was carried out in partnership between the city hall and the Roma Students Association Romano Suno, with Phare funding.²² When the project concluded, only half of the budget had been spent, although most of the activities were accomplished. These activities included opening an information and consulting office for Roma in the city hall, and the employment of one Roma staff member, and the creation of a database mapping the needs of the Roma communities. A pamphlet outlining the available services was also printed and distributed and some 850 Roma were informed through the office's awareness campaigns.

There has been no specific project focusing on assisting Roma in acquiring personal and property documents, although local institutions and NGOs have made efforts to address this issue through existing programmes. In 2002, the Association for Roma Women's Emancipation provided information on how to acquire identity documents and to prepare documents to qualify for the minimum guaranteed income; child allowances; the social support canteen; and compensation for caring for people with disabilities. The project was called "Information in Your Community" and it also provided assistance in filling out applications for the relevant institutions. The County Police Inspectorate cooperated in this project by providing a list of people in need of identity documents. The process was interrupted in this phase, however, because the Association did not have enough resources to cover the taxes for issuing the documents.²³

Within a Phare project called "Children First", the Cluj County Directorate for Child Protection, through the Wonder Land Day Centre has supported 50 Roma children and 35 adults from Pata Rît in obtaining identity papers.²⁴ The foundations Wassdas,²⁵ Ecce Homo,²⁶ and Family Help (*Ajutorul Familiei*),²⁷ also supported numerous Roma

²² Phare RO 0004.02.02, Civil Society Development, Fund for Improvement of the Situation of Roma; the project received €67,000 in support from Phare. Interview with Radu Sabău, Inspector within the Control Directorate, Cluj Napoca City Hall, project coordinator for "Increasing Roma Access to Services Offered by Cluj Napoca City Hall", Cluj Napoca, 25 November 2003.

²³ Interview with Ioana Francisca Etves, President of AFER, Cluj Napoca.

²⁴ Interview with Claudiu Caulea, Director of the Wonder Land Day Centre for preschoolers, Cluj Napoca, 10 September 2003.

²⁵ Interview with Geza Otvos, President of Wassdas Foundation, Cluj Napoca, 18 September 2003.

²⁶ Interview with Flavia Irimie, Ecce Homo, social worker, Cluj Napoca, 9 December 2003.

²⁷ Interview with Ioana Szanday, Family Help, social worker, Cluj Napoca, 9 December 2003.

in obtaining identity documents, but this activity was accomplished with their own resources, and not as part of a project with public funding.

2.4 Health care

The identification of solutions for including all Roma in the health insurance system, for registering with the family doctor and for compensatory medicines, is probably the most important issue of the healthcare area of the Strategy. In the second half of 2003, the NGOs working in Roma communities from Cluj were still searching for concrete solutions to this issue. However, as result of the efforts of the County Directorate for Child Protection and Wonder Land Day Centre, 35 Roma children were registered with a family doctor.

Within a programme initiated by the Ministry of Healthcare and Family, the development of a system of health mediators within Roma communities is planned. In Cluj County, although four health mediators were trained, only one was hired within the Public Health Direction, at the Cluj Napoca Children's Hospital.²⁸ Medical personnel consider that the mediator activity is good but not sufficient, due to the fact that there is just one active mediator.²⁹ Two of the other trained mediators are students and may still have opportunities to work with Roma communities.³⁰

In Cluj Napoca, the Association for the Emancipation of Roma Women, in partnership with the Directorate for Public Healthcare and the Cluj branch of SECS, implemented a project called "Roma Women Choose Health" which aimed at improving access to information about family planning for Roma women in Cluj county. SECS trained 23 women from Roma communities in Cluj-Napoca, Răscruci, Bonțida and Gilău as family planning councillors.³¹ The councillors advised young Roma women in Cluj county on available resources at family-planning consulting centres, and assisted in the dissemination of Romani-language flyers containing information on contraception, access to public healthcare services and family planning.

²⁸ A programme for training health mediators carried out by Romani CRISS in partnership with the Ministry of Healthcare and Family.

²⁹ Interview with Filip Tarni, representative of the Directorate for Public Healthcare in the working group, Cluj Napoca, 18 July 2003.

³⁰ Interview with Titi Marius, councillor for the prefect on Roma affairs, Cluj-Napoca, 9 December 2003.

³¹ Phare RO 9803.01.011, Partnership Fund for Roma.

Contraceptives were also distributed free-of-charge, together with instructions for usage.³²

In Cluj County, a partnership between Association for Roma Women's Emancipation, the Romanian Cancer Society and the Ion Chiricuta Cancer Institute was established to implement a project aimed at cervical cancer screening for Roma women from the Cluj area. The project trained 11 Roma women as health mediators, and administered Pap tests to 1,500 Roma women from Cluj county. Through these examinations, women diagnosed with various conditions also received assistance in registering with a general practitioner to receive free treatment.

In Cluj county there have been no measures taken to create a system of home medical assistance for the Roma communities. There are no information programmes regarding maternal care that specifically address Roma communities.

The Directorate for Public Healthcare has initiated influenza and hepatitis B vaccination campaigns especially in the Pata Rît community; the Wasdas Foundation has acted as a mediator, helping the medical staff access the community. In December 2003, the Councillor for the Prefect on Roma affairs, together with the Assistant Councillor, initiated a vaccination campaign in the Roma community from Pata Rît; the Directorate for Public Healthcare provided vaccines and medical staff. The space for medical examinations and vaccination was provided by the Family Help foundation, and the assistant councillor for Roma affairs within the County Council, Amare Phrala organisation and the RSDP promoted the campaign in the community.³³

2.5 Economic initiatives

In 2002, the Amare Phrala Organisation developed the project "Qualification Courses" with financing from the Partnership Fund for Roma.³⁴ The beneficiaries of this project were 83 young Roma who benefited from qualification courses in 14 trades, including tailoring, PC operation, waiting tables, bartending, and hairdressing, for six months. The project was successful in part because this was the third such project the NGO has organised and this experience proved very useful. Good collaboration with a local trade school lowered the costs of the course, and an innovative solution to reduce dropouts – a contractual agreement obliging parents to pay if the child leaves – helped to maintain

³² Interview with Claudia Kovacs, Coordinator of the project "Roma Women Choose Health", Cluj Napoca, 7 October 2003.

³³ Phone interview with Titi Marius, councillor for the prefect on Roma affairs, Cluj-Napoca, 12 December 2003.

³⁴ Project Phare RO 9803.01.011, Partnership Fund for Roma Project.

attendance in the courses. The Amare Phrala Association attempted to collaborate with the County Agency for Professional Training and Occupation of Labour Force during the project, but the Agency had very limited availability and cooperation proved impossible.³⁵

Another local-level initiative in the field of Roma qualification/re-qualification was developed by the Community Development Agency Together with Phare funding. In Cluj Napoca, the Association for Roma Women Emancipation in partnership with the County Agency for Professional Training and Labour Force Occupation implemented the project, to support the integration of Roma on the labour market. Upon completing training qualification courses, 50 Roma obtained diplomas in trades where there is demand on the labour market.³⁶

The first Job Fair for Roma was organised at the county level on 9 May 2003 and was initiated by the Community Development Agency Together and organised by the County Agency for Professional Training and Labour Force Occupation. Seven Roma found work at the job fair.

As a result of the collaboration between the County Agency for Professional Training and Occupation and Cluj prefecture, 250 jobs were allocated for Roma at the level of Turda County Council, on the basis of the Law no. 76/2002 regarding the stimulation of the labour force.

There are no initiatives to train the staff of the County Agency for Professional Training and Occupation with regards to the employment of Roma, the services that the Agency offers are the same for all clients.³⁷ At the level of Cluj county, there are no programmes for supporting young Roma graduates in finding a job.

Implementation of the Strategy's goal to revive traditional handicrafts and trades is contingent upon Roma reaching the level of studies required under the law to practice their trades.³⁸ People who have not attained the necessary qualifications are not eligible for attend courses offered by the County Agency for Professional Training and Labour Force Occupation. NGOs, together with the County Agency, are to gather data on

³⁵ Interview with Doghi Pavel, President of Amare Phrala, Cluj-Napoca, 21 November 2003.

³⁶ Interview with Etves Francisca – AFER, local coordinator for the city of Cluj within the project "Facilitation of Access of Roma to the Labour Market", Cluj Napoca, 20 November 2003.

³⁷ Interview with Don Daniel, Director of CAPTOLF Cluj, member of the local working group, Cluj Napoca, 18 July 2003.

³⁸ Government Strategy, Master Plan of Measures, No. 56.

people in this situation, and on the basis of this survey organise qualification courses in collaboration with County School Inspectorate.³⁹

2.6 Justice and public order

Programmes for legal education and delinquency prevention that are carried out in state institutions or by NGOs do not target Roma communities. The only activities in this respect are sporadic meetings of the County Police Inspectorate with county Roma leaders. Local leaders and NGOs disseminate the information from these meetings in Roma communities. The access to justice of Roma is made more difficult by the lack of information in this field, and by poverty. The BJR has assisted Roma from the Pata Rîta area in acquiring identity documents, in collaboration with the police.

The Resource Center for Roma Communities has made efforts to inform Roma about certain laws as part of the “Defend Your Rights” programme, financed by Phare.⁴⁰ Romani CRISS Bucharest has developed monitoring, prevention and combating of all forms of discrimination against Roma in the county by hiring a local monitor on human rights between November 2001 and March 2003.

The Resource Center for Roma Communities also implemented a counselling project between March and September 2003, with funds from the European Roma Rights Center. The project offered legal counselling to Roma who had been discriminated against; one of the cases handled by the project was brought to the attention of the National Council for Combating Discrimination.⁴¹

Roma NGOs have expressed interest the future recruitment of Roma into the law enforcement services and the police force, and to this end they were requested to recommend eligible Roma for consideration.⁴²

No programmed addressing probation or social rehabilitation programmes in Cluj county have been adjusted for the specific needs of Roma in the criminal justice system, and the Ministry of Justice has not requested any proposals in this respect. There are Roma who receive counselling from the Office for Social Reintegration of the Cluj Court.

³⁹ Interview with Don Daniel, Director of CAPTOLF Cluj, member of the local working group, Cluj Napoca, 18 July 2003.

⁴⁰ Interview with Claudia Macaria, Coordinator of the project “Defend Your Rights”, Cluj Napoca, 10 December 2003.

⁴¹ Interview with Ursu Maria, Coordinator of the project “Monitoring of the Observance of Human Rights”, 10 December 2003.

⁴² Interview with Doghi Pavel, President of Amare Phrala, Cluj Napoca, 21 November 2003.

2.7 Child protection

At present, the County Directorate for Protection of the Children's Rights is not developing any programmes specifically for Roma children, due to the fact that the policy of the institution is not to discriminate on ethnic criteria.

The Directorate for Protection of Children's Rights has set up the Day Centre Wonder Land for pre-schoolers from Someşeni district and Pata Rîţ community. The school year 2001–2002 was the first year of operation and 10 Roma children from Pata Rîţ have finished their first kindergarten year following a curriculum designed to prepare them for primary school. Three of these children were assessed as having special educational needs and placed in special classes, while the others were placed in mainstream schools. However, most children from Pata Rîţ have not been able to register at the school nearest to their homes, so while some attend a technical school in the city centre, the others are attending special classes.⁴³

2.8 Education

According to the data of the County School Inspectorate, in the school year 2001–2002, 4,150 Roma pupils were registered in public schools and Romani language was introduced as an optional component in four schools, at the request of parents.

A collaboration protocol with Babeş-Bolyai University, representatives of Roma NGOs, and the BJR has been signed, as a result of which 28 places for Roma students have been allocated, as compared to the 20 initially proposed.

The County School Inspectorate has received Phare financing for a project entitled "Educational and Specific Integration Support for Roma Communities",⁴⁴ with a total budget of €423,225, €45,347 contributed by the Inspectorate. The goals of the project are to improve inclusion of Roma in the educational system through improving coordination among the relevant institutions and creating a more open and participatory school environment. The project targets eight schools in rural and urban areas, and will include both educational structural rehabilitation activities.

Increased attention will be given to segregation in the school system, such as in School no. 12 in the Someşeni district, which includes a day centre for Roma pupils that follows a special education curriculum. In 2003, first-grade children were not

⁴³ Interview with Claudiu Caulea, coordinator of the Wonder Land Day Centre for pre-schoolers, Cluj Napoca, 18 November 2003.

⁴⁴ Phare RO-0104.02: Access to education of disadvantaged groups, with a special focus on Roma.

integrated into mainstream classes, and indeed, the County School Inspectorate's strategy notes that "segregated schools seem to be institutional formulas within which it is not likely that any change will occur".⁴⁵ There has been little effort to include Roma civil society organisations in the process of school reform, although there are many local NGOs with relevant experience that could be useful partners with the Inspectorate.

The Industrial Chemistry School Group, in partnership with the Free Democratic Union of Roma in Turda developed a project that created a semi-residential setting to encourage Roma to continue their education at the high school and university level.⁴⁶ The project was initially funded through Phare, and continued with the costs of teachers' salaries covered by the County School Inspectorate.

The Association of Roma Gabor Wearing Hats in Romania developed a literacy and kindergarten integration project with Phare financing.⁴⁷ The project objective was combating illiteracy among Roma children and the integration of Roma children in kindergartens. The County School Inspectorate paid the wages of the two kindergarten teachers and searched for a space in which the activities could continue after the end of the project.

2.9 Culture and denominations

The only programme for the promotion of Romani culture and the creation of a positive image of Roma at the Cluj county level is "Amari Emisiunea", a monthly television broadcast of the local studio of the State television. Two Roma students have been working on the programme since December 2001, which was the initiative of the studio. In 2002, the Resource Center for Roma Communities pledged financial support for the programme, covering the wages for the cameraman and director, travelling expenses, and the cost of filming and materials. The broadcast covers ten counties in Transylvania and lasts for 15-20 minutes.⁴⁸

The Ministerial Commission for Roma of the Ministry of Culture and Denominations, in collaboration with the Roma Center for Public Policies Aven Amentza and the Cluj County Directorate for Culture, Denominations and National Patrimony, and with the support of the representatives of the National Council for

⁴⁵ County School Inspectorate, "The Strategy of assuring the access to education of disadvantaged groups, with a special focus on Roma", p. 33.

⁴⁶ Phare RO 0004.02.02, Fund for Improvement of the Situation of Roma.

⁴⁷ Phare RO 0004.02.02, Fund for Improvement of the Situation of Roma.

⁴⁸ Interview with Zita Moldovan, broadcast director, Cluj Napoca, 5 November 2003.

Combating Discrimination, organised a “Caravan for Intercultural Education and Revitalisation of the Roma Culture” in February 2002 and April 2003. At the local level, this event received support from the Romano Suno Roma Students Association. The event focused on identifying solutions for collaboration at the local level between Roma organisations and local bodies of the ministries in Strategy implementation.

2.10 Public participation

There are many active Roma organisations in Cluj county, in comparison to other counties.⁴⁹ These include the Wasdas Foundation for Socio-Educational Support of Roma in Cluj Napoca; the Amare Phrala Association in Cluj Napoca; the Romano Suno Roma Students Association in Cluj Napoca; the Ramses Foundation for Social Development of Roma in Dej; the Association of Roma Gabor Wearing Hats in Cluj Napoca; and The Resource Center for Roma Communities, a member of the Soros Open Network.

At the Cluj county level, there are nine Roma councillors, of whom five were elected from the RSDP and four from the Cluj branch of the Alliance for Roma Unity, the two organisations that are politically active at the Cluj county level.⁵⁰

The RSDP branch from Cluj is not legally registered, which, given the high level of centralised decision making, contributes to a lack of transparency. There have been ongoing conflicts between local RSDP leaders and local representatives of other politically oriented Roma organisations. This impedes the resolution of issues confronting Roma communities and does not contribute to improving their public image.

2.11 Communication and civic participation

Local representatives of Roma NGOs are not aware of the existence of any programmes for combating discrimination in the media or for combating discrimination in the field of employment.⁵¹ Most discrimination cases against Roma were brought to public

⁴⁹ Interview with Florin Moisă, Resource Center for Roma Communities, Cluj Napoca, 15 September 2003.

⁵⁰ Interviews with Titi Marius, councillor for the prefect on Roma affairs, Cluj-Napoca, 13 October 2003; Doghi Pavel, President of Amare Phrala, Cluj Napoca, 21 November 2003.

⁵¹ Interviews with Titi Marius, councillor for the prefect on Roma affairs, Etves Francisca – president of AFER, Cluj Napoca, 20 November 2003, Geza Otvos, President of the Wasdas Foundation, Cluj Napoca, 18 September 2003, Doghi Pavel, President of Amare Phrala, Cluj Napoca, 21 November 2003.

attention through the media. Although the representation of Roma in the media is often negative, quite frequently the media also presents more objective reflections on crisis situations in local communities.⁵²

At the initiative of the Wassdas Foundation for Socio-Educational Support of the Roma, Roma NGOs started to have weekly meetings in order to discuss current issues and adopt the best solutions. The Ramses Foundation from Dej is developing a project for the promotion of communication between Roma communities and local public administration.⁵³ Within this project, there are activities for improving communication with public institutions and instruction for local joint working groups from Cluj, Bistrița-Năsăud, Sălaj, Maramureș and Bihor counties.

⁵² Interview with Doghi Pavel, President of Amare Phrala, Cluj Napoca, 21 November 2003.

⁵³ Phare project RO 0004.02.02, Development of Civil Society 2000.

Monitoring Local Implementation of
the Government Strategy for the
Improvement of the Condition
of Roma in Romania
in Iași County

BACKGROUND

Iași county, in Northeast Romania, has a total population of 800,329, of which 9,624 have declared themselves as Roma.¹ Roma in Iași County live in 15 rural and urban communities.²

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Iași county, implementation of the Strategy has not contributed significantly to the improvement of the living standards of Roma communities. These continue to face more serious problems than the rest of the population, in particular poverty and discrimination; difficult access to quality education; lack of housing and employment; lack of identity documents and property deeds; and limited access to drinking water.

At the time of writing, Iași county had not developed a county-level strategy; however, the Councillor for the Prefect on Roma Affairs prepared a document for 2004 as the “county strategy”, but without even discussing it with the main actors at the local level.³ A County Office for Roma (hereafter, BJR) and Local Joint Working Groups at the county and local level have, however, been established in Iași county and seven local experts on Roma affairs have been nominated. So far, however, the activities of the BJR have mainly been limited to discussion rather than more concrete actions, and some Roma representatives have stated that only RSDP members are invited to the BJR meetings. Similarly, lack of resources and lack of cohesion among Roma NGOs have meant that the Local Joint Working Groups have also so far had only a very limited impact.

An important point raised by interviewees was that the imprecise and inconsistent wording and of the Strategy has hampered the implementation of the Strategy objective of fuller participation of Roma in decision-making processes.

¹ According to the 2002 Census, data obtained from the Office for Statistics of Iași County Council; data of the local RSDP branch concludes that the real number of Roma is much higher. Roundtable, Iași, 21 November 2003.

² Iași (total population 1,793; Roma – 0.55%), Pașcani (417; 0.98%), Hârlău (519; 4.60%), Tg-Frumos (910; 6.68%), Ciurea (601; 10.19%), Dagâta (495; 10.19%), Grajduri (259; 7.94%), Lungani (1,386; 27.39%), Mironeasa (329; 7.61%), Miroslăvesti (603; 8.53%), Moțca (454; 8.91%), Podu-Iloaiei (491; 5.04%), Raducăneni (256; 3.32%), Stolniceni-Prăjescu (325; 5.78%), Dolhești (152; 5.39%).

³ Roundtable, Iași, 21 November 2003.

There have been very few initiatives by the local authorities in implementing Strategy objectives in the key areas of housing, social protection, health care and economic initiatives. Those successful projects, such as the training of health mediators, were initiated by Roma NGOs (in this case Romani CRISS). The most important progress has been made in the area of education, in particular with respect to Romani-language education and the number of Roma graduates.

2. LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION

2.1 Administrative bodies

2.1.1 The county office for Roma (BJR)

The BJR was established within the framework of Iaşi Prefecture in April 2001. The members of the BJR are the Prefect;⁴ the Councillor for the Prefect on Roma Affairs; the General Inspector for Roma of the County School Inspectorate; and the Director of Directorate for Public Healthcare.⁵ The presence of the high rank civil servants in the BJR has not resulted in a greater level of support for the Strategy, however.

Although Roma organisations in Iaşi recognised the BJR's establishment in 2001, they have not been informed of, and are not familiar with, the composition and role of the office. Furthermore, people who should interact regularly with the BJR staff appear not to be informed about those institutions that have representatives in the BJR.⁶ When interviewed in 2003, two of the BJR members were unsure of their responsibilities within this body or, indeed, whether they were members of the office or not.⁷ In late 2003, the BJR members and members of the Local Joint Working Group (representatives of local institutions) did not participate in the OSI-organised roundtable for the Iaşi Prefecture. The only member who participated was the inspector for Roma (a representative of the County School Inspectorate).⁸

⁴ Order no. 397/21. 08. 2003.

⁵ Interview with Ştefan Roman, prefect's councillor for Roma affairs, 24 June 2003 and 3 November 2003.

⁶ Interviews with Sava Remus, member of the Local Joint Working Group, Iaşi, 19 June 2003; Ion Şerban, member of the LJWG, 14 June 2003.

⁷ Interview with M. Dumitriu, general inspector of the County School Inspectorate, BJR member, 10 July 2003; also interview with Ştefan Georgescu, representative of the Directorate for Public Healthcare 9 July 2003.

⁸ Roundtable, 21 November 2003.

In general, the BJR is perceived as being represented by one person – the Councillor for the Prefect on Roma Affairs (hereafter, Councillor).⁹ The Councillor is also the president of the Iași branch of the RSDP and vice headmaster of the Trade School in Târgu-Frumos. He has a wide experience in the field of education.¹⁰

The Councillor has indicated that the degree of active involvement of the NGOs and of Roma students in the BJR is not satisfactory, but that there is good collaboration among the local administrative bodies and with other important bodies.¹¹ Although the Strategy does not clearly specify the organisation of meetings, the Iași BJR holds monthly meetings attended by BJR members; representatives of Roma communities and local institutions; presidents of Roma NGOs; local Roma councillors and local leaders of the RSDP.¹² These meetings generally focus on social issues, particularly access to the minimum guaranteed income.¹³ One of the experts on Roma issues notes that these meetings follow a rigid format, during which the BJR presents its activity reports, focusing on the number of applications for welfare that have been processed.¹⁴

According to many Local Joint Working Group members, attendance at the BJR meetings is not a priority for the individuals or the institutions they represent.¹⁵ The attendance of Roma NGOs is also low and, according to an NGO representative and member of the local joint working group, membership in the RSDP is a prerequisite for an invitation to the meetings.¹⁶ Other sources corroborate this view, although the RSDP has denied that such practices occur.¹⁷

The purpose of the meetings is to evaluate the main needs of local Roma communities and the implementation of programmes for their support. In practice, however, the representatives attending these meetings express their discontentment with the lack of concrete decisions for resolving problems and meeting the needs of Roma that they

⁹ Interviews with Ion Șerban, member of the Local Joint Working Group, 14 June 2003; Acălușariței Cristina, health mediator in Grajduri, 27 June 2003.

¹⁰ Interview with Ștefan Roman, 24 June 2003.

¹¹ Interview with Ștefan Roman, 24 June 2003.

¹² Interview with Ștefan Roman, 24 June 2003.

¹³ Roundtable, Iași, 21 November 2003.

¹⁴ Interview with Mantu Florin – Ciurea LJWG, 18 June 2003.

¹⁵ Interviews with Pop Mariana, school inspector for Roma, the County School Inspectorate, member of the Local Joint Working Group, 8 July 2003; Ștefan Georgescu, County Directorate for Healthcare, BJR member, 9 July 2003; Mihai Elena, member of the Local Joint Working Group, Podu-Iloaiei, 21 June 2003.

¹⁶ Interview with Dinu Iulian, president of “Romanitin”, member of the Local Joint Working Group, 12 June 2003.

¹⁷ Roundtable, Iași, 21 November 2003.

present during the meetings. Some representatives have indicated that during meetings the problems of Roma from various communities are analysed, but the BJR does not propose solutions or follow up with concrete measures for their resolution; everything remains at the level of “discussions”. As a result, the rather formal character of the meetings has led to a loss of confidence in this forum.¹⁸

The BJR prepares regular reports for the Office for Roma Affairs within the framework of the Government’s General Secretariat and for the Prefecture’s directorate for strategies and programmes. Unfortunately, however, these reports contain little specific data regarding activities and programmes that have been developed, and therefore these activities cannot be verified or evaluated.

Although one of the BJR’s responsibilities is to support NGOs in the development of projects for Roma, the Iaşi BJR has concretely supported only one Roma organisations – the Romani Chance (*Şansa Romani*) Association in Târgu-Frumos.¹⁹ This organisation itself has signed only one partnership agreement, with the Help! Foundation. As of writing, two projects are in development and the organisations are working on the elaboration of projects for emergency food supplies, a cultural project, and a project regarding child protection.²⁰ Several Roma organisations have expressed concern that non-Roma organisations initiate projects for which they enlist the participation of Roma organisations only to comply with eligibility criteria.²¹

2.1.2 Local experts on Roma affairs

There are seven local experts on Roma affairs in Iaşi County: at Iaşi City Hall; Târgu-Frumos Town Hall; Ciurea Mayor’s Office; Podu-Iloaiei Mayor’s Office; Lungani Mayor’s Office; Hârlău Mayor’s Office; and Holboca Mayor’s Office.²² Although the

¹⁸ Interviews with Ion Şerban, 24 June 2003; Dinu Iulian, 12 June 2003; Mihai Elena 21 June 2003; Mantu Florin, 18 June 2003.

¹⁹ President is Daniel Roman, BJR councillor at Târgu-Frumos Town Hall, Romani teacher at Ion Creangă School.

²⁰ “Training Stage of Roma Intercultural Mediators”, financed by the European Commission. This project will last for a year, and the project partners are the RSDP, the Trade School from Târgu-Frumos, Iaşi Prefecture through the BJR, “Romani Chance” Association. Interviews with Roman Ştefan; Cătălina Farcaş, president of “Help!” Association, 21 June 2003.

²¹ Interview with Iulian Dinu, president of Romanitin, 12 June 2003.

²² “Following a Decision of Iaşi Prefecture I was sent in Holboca to occupy the position of LERA, but the mayor there did not agree. Subsequently, I was sent to Grajduri, but the mayor there has a discriminatory attitude and his secretary threw me out from the office. Nevertheless, I have worked as volunteer for three months, and I have paid all my own expenses” Round Table, Iaşi, 21 November 2003.

Iași Prefecture requested that Pașcani Town Hall should also designate a local expert on Roma affairs,²³ no one has been hired because the Mayor has systematically refused to accept this position in his institution.²⁴

In the job description of the local experts, the position's responsibilities are described as "being actively involved in the relationship between local public administration and Roma communities in order to apply the Strategy for Improvement of the Condition of Roma."²⁵ All the local experts in Iași County are hired as civil servants, but they are not involved in the local public administration's routine decision-making processes that affect Roma, and generally work on applications for minimum guaranteed income, or for other forms of social support.²⁶

Theoretically, the majority of Strategy's general objectives are well established, but a lack of detail has created complication in their application. For example, the measures regarding the objective of including the leaders of Roma communities in the decision-making process lack explicit instructions for implementation.²⁷ Moreover, the measures of the Government Strategy are vague with regard to the local experts, and this creates contradictions between the Strategy and other current regulations, such as the Local Public Administration Act.²⁸ An expert on legal issues has highlighted the confusion caused by the ambiguous text of the Strategy, primarily the inconsistent and interchangeable use of the terms "expert" and "councillor".

These inconsistencies in the text of the Strategy give local authorities the possibility to interpret the measures to hire a local expert in the way most favourable to their own situation.²⁹ Where local experts have been hired, in many cases a non-Roma administrator simply takes on a new title and additional responsibilities to fill the position. In other areas, Roma nominated by the BJR are hired by the mayors' offices as civil servants.³⁰ However, even in these cases, Roma leaders are not fully included in

²³ Address no. 9601/2.06.2003.

²⁴ Interview with Ștefan Roman, 24 June 2003.

²⁵ Job description of the councillor Sava Remus, Iași City Hall.

²⁶ Mantu Florin, Mihai Elena, Sava Remus, LERA.

²⁷ Interview with Iulian Dinu, 12 June 2003.

²⁸ Law No. 215/2001 of the Local Public Administration, Art. 30 – "(1) the position of councillor is incompatible with: b) the position of civil servant in the specialty apparatus of authorities of local and central public administration ..." The Strategy, however, in Section VIII. 4 provides that local experts can hold other positions in addition to their responsibilities as experts for Roma affairs. Interview with Romeo Chelaru – director of the prefect's office, jurist, 24 June 2003.

²⁹ See the cases of Vasiliu Vasile (mayors of Holboca and Grajduri) and Prodănescu Gabriela (mayor of Pașcani).

³⁰ Interview with Romeo Chelaru, director of prefect's office, legal advisor, 24 June 2003.

the “process of making political decisions with impact on the economical and social life of Roma communities”.³¹

2.1.3 Local joint working group

The Iași county Local Joint Working Group was formed by the BJR and established by Decision no. 331, on 11 September 2001. It includes representatives of Roma NGOs³² and local institutions,³³ local leaders of the RSDP, and local experts for Roma.

The role of Roma civil society, as well as its collaboration with local institutions, is perceived as a key factor in Strategy implementation.³⁴ In Iași County, a serious problem in the implementation of the Strategy is the lack of cohesion among Roma NGOs, including the RSDP. Due to this poor cooperation, the lack of a united point of view in the dialogue with bodies of local administration is a real shortcoming.

The Working Group meetings are the only vehicle for collaboration among civil society organisation and there has been no common project resulting from a partnership between Roma NGOs.³⁵ Indeed, the number of projects and programmes initiated by Roma NGOs from Iași for the improvement of the situation of Roma is very low, but there are important partnerships with non-Roma organisations and with well-developed associations and foundations from Bucharest or Cluj.³⁶

In general, Roma representatives attribute this low level of activity to the lack of financial, human, information and logistic resources.³⁷ Although Roma organisations have the possibility to access funds from local and international sources, this is limited by the lack of timely information and by lack of trained persons within the organisations to prepare applications.³⁸ Roma cite concerns about the difficulty of applying for Phare funds and

³¹ Interview with Romeo Chelaru, director of prefect’s office, legal advisor, 24 June 2003.

³² Ion Șerban, Barbu Lăutaru Cultural Association; Dinu Iulian, Romanitin Roma Students and Young People Association; Sava Adolf, Romani Foundation.

³³ Dr. Todosiciuc Vicuța, County Directorate for Healthcare, school inspector for Roma; Pop Mariana, County School Inspectorate, Penciu, General Directorate for Child Protection; Mrs. Onuțu, County Police Inspectorate; Bogdan Bârleanu, Directorate for Culture.

³⁴ Interview with Dinu Iulian, Romanitin Iași, 12 June 2003.

³⁵ Interview with Ion Șerban, president of Barbu Lăutaru, 14 June 2003.

³⁶ Interviews with Dinu Iulian, president of Romanitin, 12 June 2003; Ion Șerban, president of Barbu Lăutaru, 14 June 2003.

³⁷ Interview with Ion Șerban, 14 June 2003.

³⁸ Interview with Sava Adolf, 12 July 2003.

view the eligibility conditions as prohibitively complex for newly created or small organisations, which includes most of the NGOs from this region.³⁹

Local public institutions have also not been highly successful in accessing Phare funds and all local authorities cite the lack of resources as an impediment to implementing the Strategy.⁴⁰

2.2 Housing

There is no real strategy regarding the improvement of Roma living conditions at the level of Iași County. The areas populated by Roma are located mostly at town's limits, where there is no infrastructure: roads are unpaved, access to water, gas, and electricity is minimal.⁴¹ Roma housing is often constructed without proper authorisation and on land that they do not own; in Zanea village there are 159 houses, of which only four have property deeds for the land, and none have proper construction authorisation.⁴² Generally, the number of persons living under the same roof is twice the national average.⁴³

There is a database regarding the situation of Roma communities' houses, and concrete measures are planned for the future. To date, only a small number of Roma have benefited from official support; nevertheless, local authorities consider that they have made progress.⁴⁴

2.3 Social protection

Due to the high proportion of unemployed people without other sources of income, the majority of Roma in Iași county benefit from the minimum guaranteed income

³⁹ Roundtable, Iași, 21 November 2003.

⁴⁰ Interviews with Sava Remus, member of the Local Joint Working Group, Iași, 19 June 2003; Ștefan Georgescu, County Directorate for Healthcare, 9 July 2003; Sava Adolf, president of RSDP, Iași city, 12 July 2003.

⁴¹ Interview with Liliana Florea, Târgu-Frumos, April 2003.

⁴² Interview with Mantu Florin, Local Expert on Roma Affairs, Ciurea, 18 June 2003.

⁴³ Interview with Mihai Elena, Local Expert on Roma Affairs, Podu-Iloaiei, 21 June 2003.

⁴⁴ Interview with Stefan Roman, BJR councillor, 24 June 2003.

measures, as well as from other forms of state support such as child allowances, emergency aid, and pensions.⁴⁵

There have been concerns regarding the practice of withholding a portion of the guaranteed minimum income in summer on the assumption that many Roma find informal work, even where there is no documentation to demonstrate beneficiaries have other sources of income.⁴⁶

The lack of identity documents or registry documents prevent many Roma from accessing benefits to which they are entitled.⁴⁷ Without property or land ownership documents, Roma cannot provide a domicile address, which is a prerequisite for many forms of support. Couples who are not officially married, and minors without birth certificates also find it difficult or impossible to access to certain forms of support, goods and services, including medical care.⁴⁸ The complex, time consuming and expensive legal procedures for acquiring documents discourage many Roma from pursuing their claims. According the Councillor for the Prefect on Roma affairs, however, the situation has been greatly improved through efforts to better inform the Roma community about social benefits and their rights and obligations.⁴⁹

Iași county is home to a large number of Roma social worker graduates, whose expertise is a valuable resource for Roma communities. In addition, the majority of Roma councillors working in the city halls have graduated from the faculty of social work, are well prepared provide the necessary information to the population and to facilitate the access to the rights that they have by law.⁵⁰

An NGO, “Social Alternatives – From Roma Communities to Roma Communities”, organised a successful project to assist Roma in obtaining identity documents. More than 50 people received support through this six-month project.⁵¹

⁴⁵ Interview with Mantu Florin, Local Expert on Roma Affairs, Ciurea, social worker, 18 June 2003.

⁴⁶ Cătălina Farcaș, Roundtable, Iași, 21 November 2003.

⁴⁷ Interview with Daniel Roman, social worker, Local Joint Working Group member, Târgu-Frumos, 16 April 2003.

⁴⁸ Interview with Ion Șerban, social worker at the Centre for Receiving Minors in Urgency Conditions (14 June 2003).

⁴⁹ Interview with Ștefan Roman, BJR councillor, 24 June 2003.

⁵⁰ Interviews with Mantu Florin, Local Expert on Roma Affairs, Ciurea, 18 June 2003; Sava Remus, Local Joint Working Group member Iași, 19 June 2003; Roman Ștefan, BJR councillor, 24 June 2003.

⁵¹ Project financed under the Phare Partnership Fund for Roma in 2001.

2.4 Health care

The staff of the BJR includes the Director of Iași Directorate for Public Healthcare, but when interviewed the Director indicated that he is not familiar with his responsibilities as a BJR member. According to the Director, no health programmes specifically targeting Roma are planned, as “resolving all problems, without regard to ethnicity, will also solve the problems of minorities.”⁵²

Very few measures have been initiated by local authorities in the healthcare field.⁵³ The only concrete measure identified at this date is a project training health mediators, organised by the Romani CRISS organisation in Bucharest in partnership with the Ministry of Healthcare and Family. After completing these training courses, eight health mediators have been hired in Iași. Subsequently, their number has decreased, although their presence in the local 15 Roma communities is vital.⁵⁴ According to a Romani CRISS representative, the RSDP was also collaborating in the training project, by identifying and recommending the trainees, but that the level of cooperation had been unsatisfactory.⁵⁵ The lack of monitoring and follow-up by the BJR was also disappointing.

The mediators have contributed to improving the number of vaccinations and developing a more detailed picture about the health situation of the Roma communities.⁵⁶ As a result of this project, a data was collection on the number of people infected with HIV, tuberculosis, and suffering from diabetes and cancer. Family planning advice was also offered for a time, but this was discontinued as the mediators were uncomfortable discussing contraception methods among the community.⁵⁷

Although there are small difficulties at the administrative level, there is hope that the mediators will help to resolve these problems, especially as both the population and local authorities are now aware of the importance of mediators’ presence in their communities.⁵⁸ Although the number of health mediators hired in Iași County is superior to the number in other counties of the country.

⁵² Interview with Dr. Georgescu, director of the County Directorate for Healthcare, 9 July 2003.

⁵³ Interview with Dr. Todosiciuc Vicuța, County Directorate for Healthcare, 8 July 2003.

⁵⁴ Interviews with Dr. Todosiciuc Vicuța, County Directorate for Healthcare, 8 June 2003; Mihai Elena, Local Joint Working Group member Podu-Iloaiei, 21 June 2003.

⁵⁵ Mariana Buceanu, coordinator of the healthcare department, Romani CRISS, telephone interview on 8 June 2003.

⁵⁶ Interview with Cristina Acălugăriței, health mediator in Grajduri, 27 June 2003.

⁵⁷ Interview with Dr. Todosiciuc Vicuța, County Directorate for Healthcare, 8 July 2003.

⁵⁸ Interview with Dr. Todosiciuc Vicuța, County Directorate for Healthcare, 8 June 2003.

2.5 Economic initiatives

In Iași, a Job Fair for Roma was organised by the Iași County Agency for Professional Training and Occupation of Labour Force, offering 469 positions to the 512 visitors. The job fair was quite successful: 69 people found work as a result, placing Iași County third among those counties that organised such fairs.

The Community Development Agency Together, in collaboration with Romanitin Roma Students Association, the Iași County Agency for Professional Training and Occupation of Labour Force, S.C. Romar S.R.L, and the Centre for Adult Qualification (Training) and Consultancy in Work Legislation are working together to implement a Phare project “Facilitation of Access of Roma to the Labour Market.” Through this project, 41 people have qualified in various trades;⁵⁹ however, to date none of the participants has yet found employment.⁶⁰

In 2000, the Social Alternatives organisation initiated a training project for the Roma in Pacureni district (Iași), financed under the Partnership Fund for Roma. The partners in the project were the Barbu Lăutaru Cultural Association, Elena Cuza primary school, the Alexandru cel Bun primary school, and the Centre for Adult Training. Classes in shoe repair and metal work were planned for 15 young Roma, but after some delays, the Roma community suggested that training in braiding would be more marketable, and the course was changed accordingly. The training continued for two months, and those who completed it were eligible for a diploma. A Roma goldsmith taught the metalworking course, in which 12 children took part. Throughout this project, the collaboration with the Roma partners was limited to the involvement of a Roma teacher. More active involvement of the Roma partners and of the Roma community was an essential condition for the continuation of this community project.⁶¹ Two years after the end of this project, none of the participants has been hired.⁶²

In 2000, 20 young Roma received diplomas as civil servants in public administration through a project sponsored by an international foundation, but to date none of the graduates has been hired by public institutions.

In Iași County, there are no programmes for the stimulation of traditional trades, for the financing of economic activities in Roma communities, nor programmes for increasing the access of Roma to agricultural activities or for obtaining credits for small and medium businesses. Although employment places for Roma women have been

⁵⁹ Telephone interview with Roxana Acojocăriței, monitor, Together Agency, 4 July 2003.

⁶⁰ Interview with Dinu Iulian, president of Romanitin, local partner, 12 June 2003.

⁶¹ Interview with Florin Moisă, executive president of RCRC Cluj, 3 November 2003.

⁶² Interview with Florin Mantu, project volunteer, 9 November 2003.

sought, there has been little success in this area. The project initiated by the Help! Association and supported by the Local Council and by Romani Chance aims to find employment for 20 Roma women as seamstresses, with a budget of ROL 2.7 billion.⁶³ This project is financed with funds from the Romanian Government and managed by the Office for Roma Affairs within the General Secretariat of the Government.

2.6 Justice and public order

In 2002, the BJR and Iași County Police Inspectorate signed a collaboration agreement.⁶⁴ This protocol calls for monthly or quarterly meetings between police representatives and Roma community leaders, as a means of crime prevention. In Roma communities, local presidents of the RSDP collaborate informally with the police to prevent conflict, and the representative of the Police County Inspectorate in the Joint Working Group takes part in the quarterly visits to Roma communities for legal education activities.⁶⁵

The gendarmerie has also signed a protocol stipulating that it will collaborate with Roma communities.⁶⁶ To date, no specific activities have been initiated to increase Roma enrolment in the police and gendarmerie forces, although these institutions have indicated that when positions are available, they will hire Roma and send them to qualification courses.⁶⁷

2.7 Child protection

Several initiatives have been developed for improving the protection of children's rights. These include the hiring of young Roma staff in child protection institutions, such as the "Emergency Placement Centre for Minors", in the framework of the General Directorate for Children Rights Protection in Iași County.⁶⁸ In 2003, two Roma graduates were also hired as social workers at the Directorates for Children Rights Protection in Iași and Târgu-Frumos.⁶⁹

⁶³ Interview with Ștefan Roman, 3 November 2003.

⁶⁴ Police Protocol no. 4385/5.03.2002.

⁶⁵ Interview with Ștefan Roman, 3 November 2003.

⁶⁶ Gendarmerie Protocol no. 281.789 /24.10.2002.

⁶⁷ Interview with Ștefan Roman, 3 November 2003.

⁶⁸ Interview with Ion Șerban, 14 June 2003.

⁶⁹ Ferariu Geanina in Iași, Sângheorghe Veronica in Tg-Frumos. Interview with Roman Ștefan, 3 November 2003.

Traditional Roma practices received international attention in 2003 when the underage daughter of a Roma leader was married in a large ceremony. Many Roma in Iași support these customary early marriages, considering them advantageous as there are no cases of divorce, abandonment or single-parent families in their community.⁷⁰

2.8 Education

In Iași County, there is school inspector for Roma who works half-time, while a representative of the County School Inspectorate is a member of the BJR. The school inspector for Roma emphasised that the governmental “Milk and Doughnuts” programme has led to an increase in Roma attendance in schools. A programme offering writing materials to low-income students has also reportedly contributed to improved attendance.⁷¹

Romani language instruction has been quite successful in Iași. There are 11 Romani language teachers in the county, all graduates of the long-distance system education programme developed by Bucharest University and CREDIS. These Roma instructors teach in ten schools in rural areas, and in six schools in urban areas. Currently, 63 Roma pupils from Iași County have participated in the National Romani Language Competition. There is also a Romani language club that meets on a monthly basis. In October 2003, Romani language teachers met with Roma pupils to discuss several current issues, including the way in which they have been received in schools. The students raised a number of issues, particularly the costs for housing and meals for students coming from rural areas.⁷²

In the 2003–2004 school year, 46 places were allocated, based on affirmative action measures taken by the Ministry of Education and Research, to Roma pupils in high schools and 60 in art and trade schools. Nevertheless, the number of occupied places is low: only 25 of these reserved slots have been taken by Roma pupils.⁷³

⁷⁰ Interview with Mantu Florin, Local Joint Working Group member, Ciurea social worker, 9 November 2003.

⁷¹ Interview with Pop Mariana, school inspector for Roma County School Inspectorate, 10 November 2003.

⁷² Interview with Pop Mariana, school inspector for Roma, CSI, 10 November 2003.

⁷³ Places set aside for Roma were filled as followed: Ion Neculce High School in Târgu-Frumos – 5 students, The Trade School in Târgu-Frumos – 1 student, Unirea School Group in Pașcani – 3 students, Economic High School No. 1 Iași – 2 students, Sports High School Iași – 1 student, Normal School Iași – 6 students, Anghel Sallini School Group Iași – 1 students, Virgil Madgearu School Group Iași – 6 student. Interview with Pop Mariana, 10 November 2003.

While there is wide agreement that the number of Roma graduates and students from the faculties in Iași has increased,⁷⁴ there is no available data on the number of Roma students and graduates from the Iași academic centre who are actively involved in working in Roma communities.⁷⁵

2.9 Culture and denominations

The inspector for culture from within the Directorate for Culture and Patrimony was initially a member of the Joint Working Group, but due to his lack of involvement in cultural activities for Roma, he was no longer invited by the BJR.⁷⁶

The Councillor for the Prefect on Roma affairs reports that each year on the national day of minorities, the Prefecture and the County Council support the organisation of activities for the affirmation of Roma culture and identity. According to the Councillor, the most important accomplishment of the BJR is its “involvement in social and cultural issues”. In previous years, four of the Roma NGOs in Iași developed cultural activities: Barbu Lăutaru, Romanitin, Romani Association, and the RSDP. This year, a performance financed by the RSDP and an exhibition at the Culture Palace⁷⁷ were organised on Minorities Day. In addition, performances were organised with music from orchestra of the Cultural Association Barbu Lăutaru.⁷⁸

Issues related to Roma are rarely presented by radio and television stations in Iași, although on occasion Roma are invited to various broadcasts. The Prefect’s Councillor has made several appearances on local radio and television. The station “Radio Iași” features a broadcast entitled “Intercultural Dialogue”; during this broadcast, all minorities have broadcasting time, including Roma.⁷⁹ Local newspapers continually publish articles on Roma issues, and do not include only negative facts. Recently, there have been articles about the future implementation of a project initiated by the Government for the training of Roma councillors in eight regions of the country; this project will last for two years, from January 2004.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ Interview with Ion Șerban, 14 June 2003.

⁷⁵ A database of Roma students has been established, but it is incomplete and not updated.

⁷⁶ Interview with Roman Ștefan, 24 June 2003.

⁷⁷ Interview with Iulian Dinu, president of Romanitin 12 June 2003.

⁷⁸ Interview with Ion Șerban 14 June 2003.

⁷⁹ Roundtable, Iași, 21 2003.

⁸⁰ Interview with Roman Ștefan, 3 November 2003.

2.10 Public participation

No Roma representative has been elected to a public position at the level of Iași County. All positions occupied by Roma in local administration institutions have been filled following recommendations from the RSDP, which is the only politically-oriented Roma organisation in the county. The dominance of the RSDP is a cause for concern among some civil society representatives, who have raised questions whether the appointments of Roma are made on political criteria rather than competence.⁸¹

The Iași branch of the RSDP is not legally registered and is run by the central office in Bucharest. Consequently, this branch cannot participate in the competition for various financing programmes, including for EU. It also cannot develop the required expertise and the necessary human resources for implementation of the Strategy.

2.11 Communication and civic participation

Iași County had the lowest rate of participation in the referendum on the new Constitution of Romania, only 9.6 per cent. The only locality in Iași County in which all citizens voted in the referendum was Zanea, a community of traditional Roma.⁸²

Generally, most activities aimed at increasing public participation and civic awareness have been initiated by civil society groups. In 2001, The Resource Center for Roma Communities Cluj, in collaboration with Romanitin Roma Young People and Students Association developed an information campaign, “Defend Your Rights!”, with regard to new anti-discrimination legislation.⁸³ In the same year, Romanitin, Romani CRISS and Minority Rights Group International developed the “RIPPLE Programme”, which included monitoring of human rights at local level.⁸⁴ As response to several complaints, local monitors and Romani CRISS⁸⁵ organised “tests” of possible discrimination in local discotheques. Roma students were denied access in three discotheques out of the five

⁸¹ Interview with Iulian Dinu, president of Romanitin, 6 June 2003.

⁸² Information from the electronic publication “Info Rrom”, no. 657/20. 10. 2003.

⁸³ Interview with Iulian Dinu, president of Romanitin, 6 June 2003.

⁸⁴ Monitors within the department Human Rights: Ferariu Luiza Public Administration student, and Laura Constantin, Law School student.

⁸⁵ Mădălin Morteau, Law School student, assistant of the department Human Rights – Romani CRISS.

tested, and Romani CRISS together with Romanitin brought the owners to trial. At present, they are involved in two lawsuits at the Iași County Court.⁸⁶

Although there have been cases of discrimination toward Roma, officials deny that there is discrimination in Iași.⁸⁷ In the same time, the Roma in communities declare that they do not always have access to public services.⁸⁸

The Roma population in Iași is not well informed about their rights and the role of the institutions or the administrators that are responsible for handling various issues.⁸⁹ A lack of confidence in these institutions has developed, based on the discriminatory attitude of civil clerks toward Roma, a situation that is widely noted by the Roma community.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Details in the publication “Positive Practices: International Jurisprudence Regarding the Discrimination of Roma in the Access to Public Places”, Dezideriu Gergely, 2002 – p. 33.

⁸⁷ Interviews with Roman Ștefan, BJR councillor, county president of the RSDP, 24 June 2003; Sava Adolf, president of Romani Association, municipal president of the RSDP, 12 July 2003.

⁸⁸ Interviews with Mihai Elena, 21 June 2003; Lăzărică Costică, vice-president of the RSDP – Pașcani, interview on 21 June 2003.

⁸⁹ Interview with Mihai Elena, Local Joint Working Group Member Podu-Iloaiei, 21 June 2003.

⁹⁰ ERRC/RCRC Monitor, Laura Constantin, extract from ERRC/RCRC Report March 2003.

Monitoring Local Implementation of
the Government Strategy for the
Improvement of the Condition
of Roma in Romania
in Timiș County

BACKGROUND

Timiș county is the westernmost county of Romania, bordered to the west by Csongrad county, (Hungary) and to the south-west by the province of Vojvodina (Serbia). The Romanian counties neighbouring Timiș are Arad to the north, Hunedoara to the east and Caraș – Severin to the south-east. Timiș county is the largest county in Romania and has a population of 677,926. It is rightly considered a multiethnic county with a Romanian majority, (83.4% – 565,639), with Hungarian (7.4% – 50,556), Roma (2.4% – 16,084), Germans (2.09% – 14,174), Serbs (1.9% – 13,273), Ukrainians (1.07% – 7321), Slovaks (0.28% – 1908) and other minorities (Bulgarians, Turks, Russians, Tatars, Lipovans – 1.3%).¹

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Timiș county, there has been almost no progress in implementing the objectives of the Strategy. At the time of writing, Timiș county had not developed a County Strategy for implementing the Strategy. Although the Strategy was initially received as an important step towards involving Roma in the resolution of their own issues and as a means to give Roma the status of equal partners in discussion, expectations have since fallen. According to one Roma representative, “I don’t think that the improvement of the condition of Roma is desired, the Government merely wants to show the EU that it is concerned with the Roma.”

Although the Strategy calls for a high degree of involvement of Roma in central and local bodies, there has been almost no effort to include Roma in decisions regarding Roma issues in Timiș county. A County Office for Roma (hereafter, BJR) has been established, but the time of writing the county-level Joint Working for called for by the Strategy had not been formed and none of the towns in the county had hired a local expert on Roma affairs. According to local Roma representatives, “Mayors request our services only when there are problems or when Roma are causing trouble. It is then that they remember us. When we come to them to solve issues regarding our community, they don’t have time for us.”²

Roma leaders assert that “the Strategy looks good on paper, but it cannot be practically implemented because there is no political will.” In particular, Roma representatives believe that Strategy implementation has not progressed at the Timiș county level

¹ Population Census 2002, Ethno-demographic structure of population.

² Interview with Bot Ioan, volunteer councillor, Lugoj, 29 June 2003.

because officials at the Prefecture do not fully understand the goals of the Strategy. In addition, lack of funding has been a serious obstacle to the activities of the BJR.

2. LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION

2.1 Administrative bodies

2.1.1 The county office for Roma (BJR)

The Timiș Prefecture County Office for Roma (hereafter, BJR) was established on 17 September 2001. The first Councillor for the Prefect on Roma Affairs (hereafter, Councillor) was appointed the same day, but resigned three months later for medical reasons. During these first months of operation, funding was insufficient to hire additional personnel for the BJR, although a staff of three was originally planned. The Councillor reported that working relations with other representatives at the county level was quite difficult, as communication was carried out only on an *ad hoc* basis.³

A new Councillor was chosen in February 2002, following a competitive selection process. The Councillor, a member of Roma minority and a former teacher at a special education school, has little direct experience working on Roma issues, but was the only applicant who had completed university, as the other applicants were students. At present, the BJR employs the Councillor part-time and also has five volunteer staff. The role of the Prefecture in implementing the Strategy has thus been limited, as the BJR's capacity to plan, organise, or coordinate activity is greatly constrained by the lack of personnel.

The volunteer members of the BJR are members of the Christian Democrat Union of the Banat Roma (*Uniunea Creștin Democrată a Romilor din Banat*) and were appointed by the President of the organisation, who is also President of the RSDP in Timiș county. The BJR volunteer staff has varying degrees of experience and responsibilities appear to be only loosely divided amongst the members. One of the volunteers has been appointed as the expert consultant, and appears to make most decisions unilaterally.⁴

Although the BJR maintains official working hours, no schedule is posted for the public, and clients cannot rely upon finding the staff in the office at any given time. According to the BJR staff, their field activities preclude adherence to a fixed schedule for the public.

³ Interview with Gheorghe Crișan, 17 of June 2003.

⁴ Interview with Mihai Nicolae, BJR expert-consultant, 27 of June 2003.

Every six months, the BJR sends information regarding the local level implementation of the Strategy to the Office for Roma Issues in the Department for Interethnic Relations, part of the Government General Secretariat. These reports do not give sufficient detail to indicate whether the BJR initiated the activities listed, or to what extent it took part in more general projects, and there is no information regarding the concrete results of their actions. Attempts to verify or collect more detail on these activities were unsuccessful.⁵

There are few connections between the BJR and Roma NGOs in Timiș county and most of these organisations stated that the BJR did not provide support for the elaboration of projects.⁶ In fact, some NGOs expressed concern that the BJR had complicated the implementation of certain projects, through the dissemination of inaccurate information, or by failing to provide information to NGOs and their partners.⁷ NGOs representatives report that believe that the staff of the BJR lacks the training and skills to effectively implement the Government Strategy.⁸

According to the BJR staff, the lack of funding is the most serious obstacle to Strategy implementation. The BJR members indicate that their activities would improve if the Government and the EU increased the financial resources available for Strategy implementation. Indeed, the resources available to the BJR are extremely limited – even the office furniture was provided by a staff member, and there is no assurance that travel expenses will be reimbursed. A structural issue may also be impeding the level of BJR activity, as the majority of funds are allocated by county councils, and not by the Prefecture. According to one local Roma representative, “... as long as the BJR functions within the Prefecture and not within the County Council, nothing will move.”⁹

Within the Prefecture, there are concerns that the lack of support from Roma civil society is hampering the activities of the BJR. Some Prefecture employees have suggested that local Roma communities must unite and elect a leader to represent themselves, to participate in resolving the issues related to Roma.¹⁰ However, as these employees acknowledge that there has been no discussion of the Strategy at local

⁵ Interview with Florin Vlad, BJR councillor, 17 June 2003. The councillor on Roma issues refused to provide detailed information about specific activities on the grounds that the BJR expert-consultant was not available.

⁶ Interviews with Laurențiu Crăciun and Ramona Sein, president of Roma Acces Association, respectively president of Parudimos Association, 23 July 2003; with Olimpia Leonte, coordinator of the Legality and Rights project, Timișoara, 12 July 2003.

⁷ Interview with Ramona Sein, president of PARUDIMOS Association, 23 July 2003.

⁸ Interview with Ramona Sein, president of PARUDIMOS Association, 23 July 2003.

⁹ Interview with Mircea Barbu, editor of the radio broadcast in Romani language at Timișoara Radio, 12 of July 2003, Timișoara.

¹⁰ Interview with Gheorghe Crișan, prefect councillor, 17 June 2003.

meetings, efforts to transfer responsibility from the government to civil society appear disingenuous.¹¹

2.1.2 Local experts on Roma affairs

None of the towns in Timiș County has yet hired a local expert on Roma affairs. In 22 towns the authorities have requested funding for a local expert post, but no support has been identified in any of these towns.¹² There were intentions to employ a local expert on Roma affairs in Jimbolia, but the candidate was instead hired as a social mediator. A vacancy was advertised in Timișoara for a local expert on Roma affairs, but neither of the two applicants appeared for an interview.¹³ The vacancy for a Roma expert in Timișoara is within the Timișoara Community Centre for Social Work and the candidate will work under the supervision of the Centre rather than the Mayor or the BJR.¹⁴

2.1.3 Local joint working group

Although most representatives agree that establishing a county Local Joint Working Group in Timiș would be an important step in Strategy implementation, it has not yet been formed. This Working Group should comprise representatives of both public institutions and NGOs active in the relevant fields and which could contribute to the implementation of the Strategy. However, in December 2002 a structure named “The County Council for Roma” was instead established.¹⁵ As this name is similar to the main county administrative structure, it could create misunderstandings. Indeed, there already appears to be confusion regarding its function, as the “expert-consultant for Roma affairs” appears to regard the County Council for Roma as the Joint Working

¹¹ Interview with Grigore Rus and Suci Nicolae, councillors of Timiș County Council, respectively of Timișoara Local Council, Timișoara, 16 July 2003.

¹² Banloc, Becicherecu Mic, Biled, Cărpiniș, Cenad, Cenei, Ciacova, Comloșul Mare, Făget, Giarmata, Iecsa Mare, Jebel, Jimbolia, Lovrin, Lugoj, Moșnița Noua, Peciu Nou, Periam, Recaș, Sacalaz, Sânmihaiu Roman, and Sannicolau Mare.

¹³ Interview with the chief of the Human Resources Department of the Timișoara city hall, 22 of July 2003.

¹⁴ Interview with Maria Stoianov, chief of the Communitarian Centre Iosefin, 25 July 2003.

¹⁵ Minute of establishment of the County Council for Roma, Timișoara, 7 December 2002.

Group.¹⁶ The County Council for Roma has a five-member executive; four of these representatives are members of the Timiș BJR.¹⁷

2.2 Housing

In Timiș county accomplishments in the field of housing are inconsistent. The BJR was involved in seeking a solution to the problem that a number of houses built without proper authorisation by Roma families in Timișoara were in danger of being destroyed by the authorities. However, the necessary construction authorisations have not been obtained to date and some houses have already demolished. Some Roma believe discrimination is a factor in these cases: "... I think this is all about racism and envy, because there are other people who have houses built without proper authorisation, but they have not demolished them, like in the case of the Roma".¹⁸

Giarmata Town Hall took the only concrete measure for the resolution of the issues connected to the right of property for the lands and houses of the Roma. In partnership with the Roma Women Association For Our Children (*Pentru Copiii Noștri*), it received Phare funds from the Partnership Fund for Roma to legalise Roma property in Giarmata market town.¹⁹ A total of 27 properties were entered into the cadastre through this project, 24 for houses and three for land. Although the Giarmata Town Hall initiated the project, the Local Council has not supported it and those involved with the project report a lack of support from some councillors.²⁰

The problems arising from the Roma community's lack of property documents are acute in Timișoara. In December 2003, 36 people were evicted, including 20 children. These families have lived their homes for 60 years and they are presently living on the same land in a temporary structure made of cardboard and cellophane.

¹⁶ Florin Vlad, Roundtable, Timis Prefecture, 27 November 2003. The so called "BJR expert-consultant" is Nicolae Mihai, president of the Christian Democrat Union of the Banat Roma, and leader of the RSDP Timiș.

¹⁷ Minutes of establishment of the County Council for Roma, on 7 of December 2002, Timișoara, and the report of Timiș prefecture to the Romanian government, 7 April 2003.

¹⁸ Interview with Mircea Barbu, editor of the radio broadcast in Romani language at Timișoara Radio, Timișoara, 12 July 2003.

¹⁹ Phare RO 9803.01.010, Partnership Fund for Roma, scheme of grants with the total value of €900,000 distributed for 30 financing contracts.

²⁰ Interviews with Olimpia Leonte, coordinator of the project Legality and Rights, 12 July 2003, Timișoara; Iadranca Bișin, Legality and Rights project assistant, Timișoara, 11 July 2003.

2.3 Social protection

The Timiș County Directorate for Social Work does not provide social work services targeting the Roma community specifically. The Timiș County Agency for Employment has not organised any qualification or professional reorientation courses for Roma “because no Roma person came to us and asked for such a thing”.²¹

The Roma Women’s Association in partnership with the Timișoara City Hall is implementing a project to provide professional training, legal and psychological counselling, and women’s rights awareness orientation for approximately 50 Roma women and girls.

2.4 Health care

The position of health mediator has been added to the list of recognised professions in Romania, and the National Strategy calls for the training and coordination of such health visitors in Roma communities. Although three Roma in Timiș County have completed health mediator courses, organised by the Ministry of Healthcare and Family in partnership with Romani CRISS, the Directorate for Public Healthcare has not yet hired a health mediator. The PARUDIMOS association made an official request to the Directorate for training and hiring mediators in the seven largest towns, but the Directorate did not respond. According to the staff, the Directorate lacks the resources to implement such measures.²²

The Timiș Directorate for Public Healthcare has organised several campaigns for the identification and prevention of infectious diseases in Roma communities in the Cunti district of Timișoara, Banloc, and Sacălaz.

2.5 Economic initiatives

The Timiș Directorate for Work and Social Solidarity (hereafter, DWSS) sent a draft partnership agreement to the County Office for Roma in 2002, but to date has not

²¹ Interview with Sorin Munteanu, manager of the County Agency for Employment, Timișoara, 26 July 2003.

²² Interview with Paul Jurchescu, doctor within the Directorate for Public Healthcare, Timișoara, 3 August 2003.

received a reply.²³ The DWSS has signed a partnership with the PARUDIMOS Association, and has made space available for the association to develop its activities.

In order to identify potential employers who will hire Roma citizens, the Timiș County Agency for Professional Training and Occupation organised a job fair for Roma. Nine of the 96 employers invited to participate were Roma, but none of these nine took part.²⁴ The number of jobs that were available was relatively small and most required only a low level of qualification. There were a few jobs where a higher level of education was required, such as an insurance agent. Of the 227 visitors to the job fair, 113 were Roma; 14 Roma found work through the fair, including four women.

In Jimbolia, with Phare funding the Mayor's Office collaborated with the Roma Access Association to offer three-month vocational training for 34 people.²⁵ Twenty-one Roma men received training in bricklaying and 13 Roma women in sewing, and all the participants graduated from the training course. At present, most of the men who graduated from the bricklaying course have found work abroad.

Between November 2000 and December 2002, the international project RECITRAVE was developed in Timișoara, with participation from a county in three EU member states and the Timișoara City Hall. The objectives of this project included the social reintegration of the Roma, recycling, job creation, and development of a strategy for the socio-economic development of Timișoara city. The European Commission, at the proposal of Commercial of London Borough of Bromley, financed the project.²⁶ However, when the project concluded, no Roma remained employed. Moreover, the city hall refused to release the final report to the Roma partner organisation (the Social Cultural Association of Banat Roma), even after an official request.²⁷

²³ Interview with Radu Groza, executive president of DWSS, Timișoara, 14 July 2003.

²⁴ Interview with Sorin Munteanu, manager of the County Agency for Professional Training and Occupation, Timișoara, 26 July 2003.

²⁵ Phare RO 9803.01.010, Partnership Fund for Roma, scheme of grants with the total value of €900.000 distributed for 30 financing contracts.

²⁶ The total project budget was €312,552, of which €33,908 was contributed by Timișoara City Hall.

²⁷ Interview with Ioan Mirescu, president of the Social Cultural Association of the Banat Roma, 23 August 2003.

2.6 Justice and public order

The Giarmata Town Hall, in partnership with the Roma Women's Association, issued 30 identity cards and 25 birth and marriage certificates and other personal documents.²⁸

A number of NGOs, including the Social Cultural Association of the Banat Roma, and the PARUDIMOS Association, together with the Timiș County Police Inspectorate are developing the "Equal Chances" project, related to the reintegration of young people on probation. The project is financed by the Measures of Trust programme of the European Council.

The Humanitarian Association Saints Peter and Paul, in partnership with the Timiș County Council; Timișoara City Hall; Timiș County School Inspectorate; the Police Inspectorate; Timișoara Penitentiary; with the Faculty of Sociology and Psychology (Timișoara West University); the Clinic of Forensic Medicine; and the Social Cultural Association of the Banat Roma, have developed the project "Equal Chances in Justice."²⁹ The project offers support to 260 Roma convicts by providing social and educational programmes during their detention, for better subsequent reintegration.

2.7 Child protection

There is no partnership between the Roma NGOs and the Timiș County Child Protection Directorate to date. However, the directorate's staff includes seven Roma employees.

2.8 Education

There are 28,172 children in Timiș county who attend school, of whom 2,332 identify as Roma. Roma children are the most numerous school dropouts, especially among elementary pupils. In order to decrease this phenomenon, six schools established daily reintegration classes in 1999.³⁰

²⁸ Phare RO 9803.01.010, Partnership Fund for Roma, scheme of grants with the total value of €900,000 distributed for 30 financing contracts.

²⁹ Phare RO 9803.01.010, Partnership Fund for Roma, scheme of grants with the total value of €900,000 distributed for 30 financing contracts.

³⁰ Elementary and Secondary School no. 5 Lugoj, Elementary and Secondary School no. 4 Timișoara, Elementary and Secondary School Becicherecu-Mic, Elementary and Secondary School Dudeștii – Noi, Elementary and Secondary School no. 1 Jimbolia, Timișoara Energetic School Group.

An inspector who handles the issue of Roma children is hired half-time within Timiș School Inspectorate. The Inspectorate elaborated a strategy for integrating the Roma children in society, dating from a 2002 a project proposal for Phare funding.

A variety of NGOs and educational facilities have undertaken measures to improve the education of Roma. These include:

- a partnership between Timiș School Inspectorate and the Roma Women's Association For Our Children with the purpose of starting an educational project for Roma children;
- In Timiș county "A Second Chance" programme, implemented by the Timișoara Technical College and the Auto School Group; 21 pupils are part of the programme, most of them Roma;
- The foundation Education Centre 2000+ is financing the programme MATRA "Equal Chances for Roma Children through Education" in 5 schools from Timiș county;
- The Timișoara Intercultural Institute's Eurrom project, financed by the European Commission, Socrates – Comenius Programme, which trained and supported teachers in developing activities for working with Roma children.

2.9 Culture and denominations

Starting in 2001, the Christian Democrat Union of the Banat Roma, in partnership with Timiș Prefecture, annually organise celebrations for International Roma Day on 8 April.

Starting in July 2003, on the initiative of the PARUDIMOS Roma Students Association in partnership with Timișoara Radio Station, a hour-long radio transmission in Romani is broadcast weekly. With Phare funding, Roma students' associations from Timișoara and Cluj have agreed with local television stations to train a team of young Roma in television broadcasting at the regional level.

2.10 Public participation

Although many Roma from various localities participated in the 2000 local elections for town councillors, only in Lenaouheim (Grabaț) was a Roma candidate elected to the town council. Otherwise, no civil servant identifies as Roma.

The Social Democrat Roma Party does not have a legally registered branch at county level, but the Banat Roma Christian Democrat Union seeks to represent Roma in the political sphere.³¹

2.11 Communication and civic participation

Activities in the areas of communication and public participation have been organised by NGOs and the Timișoara Intercultural Institute. Several round-tables with local authorities and Roma leaders were organised in this respect. Also, they implemented, in partnership with Roma Social Cultural Association in Banat a project called “Together with Roma from Banat: for a sustainable local development”, project funded by the Council of Europe.³²

PARUDIMOS Association implemented a project called “Investment for the future” in order to improve the organisational capacity of the Roma communities; 14 young Roma were trained in fields like communication, community development, legal issues, and fundraising.³³

³¹ Interview with Mihai Nicolae, president of the Christian Democrat Union of the Banat Roma, BJR expert-consultant, 27 June 2003.

³² Round-table, Timișoara, 27 November 2003. The project was implemented in the Periam and Satchinez villages.

³³ Interview with Ramona Sein, president of PARUDIMOS Association, 23 July 2003.

PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS

The Resource Center for Roma Communities (RCRC)

Cluj-Napoca, Romania; A member of the Soros Open Network

Website <http://www.romacenter.ro>

The Resource Center for Roma Communities aims to become the most important partner of Roma NGOs and Roma communities in Romania, through the preparation and implementation of coherent programmes designed for improvement of the situation of Roma and the development of the communities where they live. The mission of the RCRC is to contribute to the improvement of the life conditions of the Roma communities in Romania. The Center supports initiatives made by Roma communities to solve the specific problems they face, and contributes to the identification and prevention of the different forms of discrimination encountered by the Roma. It also contributes to the improvement of communication between Roma and non-Roma, and supports a network of Roma NGOs capable of developing, in partnership with the authorities and local communities, concrete solutions to the problems they face.

The EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program (EUMAP)

Budapest, Hungary; an OSI Network Program

Website <http://www.eumap.org>

EUMAP, formerly the EU Accession Monitoring Program, monitors the development of selected human rights and rule of law issues in both the European Union and in its candidate and potential candidate countries. The Program works with national experts and NGOs to compile reports which are distributed widely throughout Europe and internationally. The reports are designed to encourage broader participation in the process of articulating the EU's common democratic values as well as in ongoing monitoring of compliance with human rights standards throughout the union. At present EUMAP is working on two projects, on the rights of people with intellectual disability and on media policy.

The Roma Participation Program (RPP)

Budapest, Hungary; an OSI Network Program

Website http://www.soros.org/initiatives/roma/focus_areas/rpp

The Roma Participation Program is a grants program that supports Roma activism in Central and Eastern Europe and encourages the Roma to take charge of their lives; participate in decisions that affect them; and advocate for their rights as equal citizens of their own countries. RPP provides institutional support and training to ‘grass-roots’ Romani NGOs engaged in advocacy on community issues. In addition, RPP supports broad-based campaigns aimed at systemic policy reform at the national level through funding projects run by Romani NGOs which have the requisite professionalism to operate on the national and international levels. The desegregation of schools is the primary, current example of this type of funding. Roma political leadership training is another.