

## PILOTING GUIDELINES FOR ROMA RESPONSIVE BUDGETING IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

February 2019, Belgrade

**:: CONCEPT NOTE ::**

### Background:

The Roma Integration project is implemented by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)'s Roma Integration Action Team. The project is working to contribute to reducing the socio-economic gap between the Roma<sup>1</sup> and non-Roma population in the Western Balkans and Turkey in the areas of education, employment, housing, health and civil registration. Specifically, the project supports the governments in the enlargement region to increase the implementation rate and budgetary allocations for their Roma integration policies.

The Roma Integration participating economies have put in force Roma integration strategies and action plans. The governments continuously monitor their implementation of Roma integration policies according to the regionally adopted monitoring standards. Roma Integration supports the monitoring and reporting process but also assists the government to improve formulation and prioritisation of relevant policies, measures and programmes. The previous monitoring reports have shown that many of measures envisaged within the Roma integration strategies and action plans remain unimplemented, due to their lack of mainstreaming and budgeting. The issue was also recognized in the European Commission's 2016 Enlargement Strategy that asked the enlargement region economies to "enhance their effort to implement the existing commitments and allocate necessary resources". Based on these and similar findings, the [2<sup>nd</sup> Task Force meeting](#) of the Roma Integration (then Roma Integration 2020) project agreed to form a Working Group that will develop regional standards for Roma responsive budgeting. In 2018, inter-governmental Working Group composed of the Western Balkans representatives was formed. The Working Group developed the [Guidelines for Roma Responsive Budgeting](#) (Guidelines). The [3<sup>rd</sup> Task Force meeting](#) adopted the Guidelines and agreed to pilot them in the 2019 budget cycle.

### Rationale:

The Guidelines were developed and adopted by the Task Force as a regional document. In this sense they propose a minimum common standard approach that can be applied in the budgeting cycle of the Western Balkans economies. At this stage it is necessary to assess the applicability of the Guidelines in each of the economies and understand requirements for further fine-tuning of the proposed approach. Long-term goal is to introduce Roma responsive budgeting in the mainstream budgeting processes and procedures in order to make them sensitive and responsible to the needs of Roma.

The Guidelines will be piloted in the preparation of two selected budget programmes. The budget programmes for piloting will be selected in agreement with the participating governments. In case of economies that do not pursue programme budgeting, the approach will be applied to relevant budget lines.

Considering the ongoing programme budgeting reforms across the region as well initiatives to strengthen the link between budgetary and strategic planning and indicators, this is a crucial moment to test the Guidelines and see how Roma responsive budgeting can be integrated within the more general budget reforms.

### The Action:

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<sup>1</sup> The term "Roma" within the project is used in line with the EU terminology, as an umbrella term which includes groups of people who have more or less similar cultural characteristics, such as Roma, Ashkali, Egyptians, Dom, Lom, Sinti, Travellers, Kalé, Gens du voyage, etc., whether sedentary or not.

The objective of this Action is to contribute to responsible and proper budgeting of both relevant mainstream and Roma targeted policies through achieving the following specific objectives:

- develop knowledge and skills for Roma responsive budgeting among relevant public servants;
- build capacities for independent application of the Roma responsive budgeting by several public servants/officials;
- pilot the Guidelines by applying them during preparation of two selected budget programmes;
- formulate Roma responsive budget briefs for the two selected budget programmes (as an input for sector budget submissions);

The specific objectives to be achieved in the given dynamics<sup>2</sup> are the following:

#### **1. Consultations with the NRCPs and ministries of finance (by mid-April 2019)**

The Roma Integration Action Team will liaise with the National Roma Contact Points and the ministries of finance for them to assign government officials that will be included in the training and mentorship support.

The calendar of activities will be discussed and agreed based on the budget cycle of each of the economies. The Action Concept Note can be fine-tuned if necessary to be adjusted to the economy-specific situation.

Expected results:

- Government officials from line ministries and ministries of finance assigned to participate in the training and mentorship support;
- Calendar of activities agreed;
- The Concept Note fine-tuned (if necessary).

#### **2. Engagement of consultants (March 2019)**

The Roma Integration Action Team published the [Call](#) for engaging consultants to provide two-day trainings, mentorship support in preparation of budget submissions, and to assist the responsible government officials to prepare Roma responsive budget briefs. The consultants should be engaged by the end of March 2019 and will be included in discussions about the calendar of activities.

Expected results:

- Consultants engaged.

#### **3. One day-training on the application of the Guidelines for Roma Responsive Budgeting (April 2019)**

The consultant will closely familiarise with the Guidelines and possibilities of their practical application given the specific budgetary context in each of the economies. Based on this, the consultant will design a one-day interactive, knowledge and skills gaining training. The training will be organised jointly with the Roma Integration Action Team (overall coordination and logistics), the National Roma Contact Point (ensuring participation of selected government officials) and the consultant (content and training delivery). The other objective of the training is to decide on a proposal of the two budget programmes for piloting.

Expected results:

- Training design developed;
- Training delivered to up to 15 public officials;
- Proposal for two budget programmes for piloting agreed on.

#### **4. Selection of two budget programmes for piloting (by end of April 2019)**

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<sup>2</sup> The timing is tentative and will also depend on the timetable of the budget cycle in each of the Western Balkans economies.

The consultant will work with the government to reach a final decision on the two budget programmes to be piloted, based on the proposal from the training. The process will be supported by the Roma Integration Action Team and the National Roma Contact Point. One programme should belong to Category 1 (directly linked) and one to Category 2 (indirectly linked) budget programmes (as defined in the Guidelines).

Expected results:

- Selection of one Category 1 and one Category 2 budget programmes for piloting.

**5. Mentoring the responsible public officials to apply Guidelines to the two selected budget programmes (May - end-of-June)**

The selected consultant shall work with the relevant public servants to fully apply the Guidelines in the budget programmes preparation process. The consultant will not complete the work on behalf of the public servants, but will guide them to properly complete the work. In this manner, the public servants will gain practical knowledge and capacity to independently implement the Guidelines.

This task should commence beginning or mid-May, after the selection of the two pilot budget programmes. The task should be completed about two weeks before the first (draft) budget submissions for the next year budget are expected from line ministries to the Ministry of Finance, normally in June.

Expected results:

- Two Roma responsive budget submissions for the two selected programmes (as a deliverable by public officials guided by the consultant);
- Public officials enabled to independently apply Guidelines for Roma Responsive Budgeting.

**6. Drafting Roma responsive briefs for the two selected budget programmes (two weeks before budget submissions in June 2019) & assisting relevant institutions to incorporate the budget briefs findings in line ministries sector budget proposals (before submission of initial sector budget proposals in June 2019)**

Based on the process of applying the Guidelines to the two selected budget programmes, the consultant will draft two corresponding Roma responsive budget briefs. The budget briefs will contain concrete recommendations for increasing the responsiveness of the sector budgets to the needs of Roma (and Roma integration policies).

The consultant will assist the public officials from relevant institutions incorporate the recommendations from the Roma responsive budgeting brief into the actual sector budget proposals for 2020 to the extent possible. In performing the task, the consultant will be supported by the National Roma Contact Point and the Action Team to promote the findings and advocate for their incorporation in the sector budget proposals.

Expected results:

- Two draft Roma responsive budget briefs;
- Findings from the Roma responsive budget briefs reflected in the sector budget proposals.

**7. Finalising Roma responsive budget briefs on the process of piloting the Roma responsive budgeting (by 31 November 2019)**

After the draft sector budget submissions are submitted to the Ministry of Finance, the consultant will continue to follow the budget preparation process and will inform on any changes to the initial proposals that are made during budget negotiations. The information will serve to update initially drafted budget briefs so that they reflect the negotiations and the adopted/rejected recommendations. The finalised budget briefs should be submitted to the Parliament along with the public budget proposal for the next year, in case that line ministries and ministries of finance find it feasible.

Expected results:

- Two final Roma responsive budget briefs;
- Budget briefs submitted to the Parliament with the public budget proposal for 2020.

## **8. Follow up (February 2020)**

*After budgets for 2020 are adopted, the Action Team and the NRCPs will follow up on the success and challenges of the Roma responsive budgeting pilot initiative. The experiences from 2019 will be incorporated in the related action planned for 2020 that will seek to expand scope of Guidelines' application to four budget programmes.*

### **The Action roles/methodology**

**Consultants** will prepare and deliver two-day trainings, provide mentorship support during budget submissions preparation, prepare budget briefs and assist in translating the recommendations in the sector budget proposals.

**The Roma Integration Action Team** shall provide the consultants with all the relevant documents and information required to implement the consultancy tasks, and shall engage in the implementation of the above described tasks with the National Roma Contact Points. It also provides additional information and/or consultation to the consultants as necessary, particularly on the content of the Guidelines and their application. It approves the deliverables of the consultants.

**The National Roma Contact Points** will facilitate the overall process, advocate for political support of the Action, ensure proper lines of communication, and will coordinate selection of public servants to be included in trainings and mentorship support - together with line ministries and ministries of finance. They will also engage in negotiations with the relevant public officials from the line ministries and other institutions in order to promote the piloting and the application of the Guidelines for Roma responsive budgeting.

**The selected public officials** will participate in the two-day-trainings and will contribute to the decision on the two budget programmes for piloting. The public officials included in mentorship support will prepare two Roma responsive budget submissions while guided by selected consultants.

**The line ministries and ministries of finance** will decide on the two programmes for piloting together with the National Roma Contact Point and the Roma Integration Action Team. The institutions will assign their representatives to participate in the training and mentorship support. Furthermore, they will ensure the consultants have access to relevant documents during budget submissions' preparation and provide with an observing status during budget negotiations. Line ministries and ministries of finance are also expected to support incorporation of findings from the budget briefs in the sector budgets. Lastly, based on their decision, the institutions should consider present the budget briefs before the Parliament,.