

FIFTH NATIONAL PLATFORM ON ROMA INTEGRATION IN ALBANIA

11 May 2021

Tirana, Albania

::DRAFT BRIEF:

INTRODUCTION

The fifth National Platform on Roma Integration in Albania was organized jointly by the Regional Cooperation Council- Roma Integration Team 2020 and the Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MoHSP) on 11 May 2021.

The aim of this National Platform was to encourage the public dialogue between non-governmental and civil society organizations and relevant officials from all levels of governance in charge of Roma integration, to create joined active role in implementing the Strategy and the Action Plan. The main topic of discussion was the new National Roma Integration Strategy and the Action Plan for the years 2021-2025 for Albania and deliverables for the six main priority areas defined in the Poznan Declaration, such as: employment, housing, education, health, civil registration, and non-discrimination.

The opening remarks was given by Mr Orhan Usein, Roma Integration Head of Office, who expressed appreciation and acknowledgement for cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MoHSP). He also expressed enthusiasm and hope that life is slowly getting back to normal after the world faced the COVID-19 pandemic, by underlining that Roma must have institutional support and can not be left out in the post-COVID times. "The Roma Integration Action Team will continue to provide its support in achieving all goals set in the Poznan Declaration, but also with any other challenges", emphasized Mr. Usein.

The public dialogue was followed by Ms. Merita Xhafaj, Director of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MoHSP) and National Roma Contact Point, who presented the content of the new Strategy and Action Plan.

This Policy Brief will also reflect more details on the presented report on monitoring public policies to integrate Roma and Egyptians in Albania for the 2020 period and the main directions of the National Action Plan for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma and Egyptians for the period 2021-2025.

Civil Registration and Access to Justice achievements during 2020:

By the end of 2020, almost 100% of Roma and Egyptian minority members had full access to the civil status service. Trafficking cases belonging to Roma and Egyptian minorities were taken into protection and assisted with their reintegration services into society 100%.

There is a growing reporting of primary legal aid beneficiaries belonging to Roma and Egyptian minorities.

- 182 Roma and Egyptians were supported with assistance in obtaining documents for children born abroad (in the appropriate form and content);
- 650 Roma and Egyptian born children were identified as unregistered;
- 2,308 Roma and Egyptians were identified, whose residence, according to the civil registry, did not match the real one. During 2019, 730 Roma and Egyptians were reported;
- 19 new legal clinics and other providers of free legal aid services were established and are operating in Albania. 7 (seven) Primary Legal Aid Service Centers in Tirana; Durrës; Fier; Lezhë; Lushnje; Pogradec; Gjirokastra and 12 (twelve) authorized non-profit organizations operating in Tirana; Durrës; Elbasan; Berat; Shkoder;

Education and Promotion of Intercultural dialogue achievements during 2020:

By the end of 2020, 70% more Roma and Egyptian minority boys and girls manage to complete all levels of education, and 100% more have completed pre-school education compared to 2016.

In 2020, there are twice as many educational institutions, which are attended by Roma and Egyptian boys and girls and promote intercultural dialogue compared to 2016.

Very few or no Roma and Egyptian experts have been employed by cultural institutions during the 5 years of implementation of this plan.

Employment and vocational training and training achievements during 2020:

Roma and Egyptian women and men who have participated in active employment programs are integrated into the labor market by the end of 2020 compared to 2016 progress were made 130% . 738 young Roma and Egyptians were employed by regional employment offices, including individuals who participated in employment promotion programs and those who were employed through mediation by the Regional Employment Directorates. Of this total 357 are women and girls;

- 81 Roma and Egyptians have successfully completed a Vocational Training or Employment Promotion program, but of this total, no Roma or Egyptians have managed to be employed;
- 603 Roma and Egyptians are pursuing vocational education.
- 86 markets in 19 municipalities of the country were used by Roma and Egyptians to sell various products;
- 262 Roma or Egyptian-run businesses have benefited from local tax cuts;
- 933 Roma and Egyptians are employed in 25 Local Self-Government Units or their subordinate institutions;

Access to Health sector achievements during 2020:

Most members of the Roma and Egyptian minorities have received comprehensive information on issues affecting their health as well as available health care services. All community members 100% of the Roma and Egyptian minorities have had access to basic health services by the end of 2020.

The role of health mediators has not been promoted in 2020 and needs specific attention for improvement in the future.

- 66, 330 Roma and Egyptians have full access to primary health services;
- Health centers are present in Roma neighbourhoods or are easily accessible from them.
- 4,404 visits were made by doctors to informal Roma settlements;
- 10,211 Roma and Egyptian mothers have received childcare package & mother;
- 30,529 Roma and Egyptians received information (including issues of physical, mental, and reproductive health, SST, immunization of children 0-14, drug use, etc.)

Social protection achievements during 2020:

There is no complete data yet from the Emergency Transition Centre on the number of fully integrated families as they leave this Centre. More members of the Roma and Egyptian minority are included in social protection programs by the end of 2020 compared to 2016 4,569 Roma, and Egyptian families are included in the reintegration programs by the end of 2020 against 4,000 target families.

- 1,537 Roma and Egyptian families (7,685 individuals) who are included in the economic assistance scheme also benefited from other services referred by the social administrator;
- 151 cooperation agreements between local government units and NGOs were signed in order to provide community services;
- 986 Roma and Egyptians benefited from public and non-public residential centres;
- 196 Roma and Egyptian children regularly attended kindergarten;
- 13 municipalities reported having representatives from the Roma / Egyptian minority in their municipal council. These municipalities are Korçe, Librazhd, Gjirokaster, Belsh, Permet, Fier, Roskovec, Peqin, Pogradec, Rrogozhine, Elbasan, Vlora, and Berat;
- 62 community centers were established and continue to be operational, and 4,563 Roma and Egyptians benefited from them.

Housing and Urban Integration achievements during 2020:

During the last 5 years, "The Law "On Social Housing" was adopted in May 2018, and 20 decrees were adopted. Technical assistance was provided to Roma and Egyptian families to complete documentation on home legalization and to facilitate and expedite procedures. However, there is no data from the National Cadastre Agency regarding the number of Roma and Egyptian families who have initiated legalization procedures and completed them successfully by the end of 2020.

- 2,933 Roma and Egyptian families are included in direct and indirect housing programs by the end of 2020 versus 1500 targeted families.

Main directions of the National Action Plan for Equality, Inclusion, and Participation of Roma and Egyptians 2021-2025

The National Action Plan for Equality, Inclusion, and Participation of Roma and Egyptians is a new commitment of the Albanian Government with duration 2021-2025, which targets Roma and Egyptian minorities.

The draft Action Plan was drafted in close consultation with the responsible line ministries, representatives from the Roma and Egyptian communities, local government units, civil society organizations, and other actors, and it is based on the needs/problems currently faced by members of both communities. These needs are presented in a large number of key areas, including education and promotion of intercultural dialogue, health, housing, and urban integration, employment and vocational training, social protection and civil registration, and access to the system and justice.

The draft Action Plan acknowledges that Roma and Egyptian women are more likely to suffer gender exclusion and discrimination. This draft Action plan document is currently at the drafting stage, and it follows the Declaration of the Western Balkans partners on Roma integration in the European Union Enlargement process held in Poznan and based on the recommendations of the Fourth Policy Dialogue Seminar on Roma and Egyptian Inclusion as well as the new EU Strategy for Roma. This plan has a new additional priority area on the topic of Antigypsism.

Includes budget lines for each measure related to each line ministry and reflects an increase in the level of measures implemented by the previous plan.

The draft Action Plan is designed based on 3 pilot budgeting programs covering 3 areas:

- social protection,
- pre-university education in school and
- housing;

Lessons learned from the implementation and monitoring of the Roma strategy for the decade of Roma and Egyptian inclusion and the national action plan 2016-2020 as well as its unimplemented measures, are also taken into consideration and harmonized with the new processes related to the Reform and Decentralization of Social Services. Relevant responsible line ministries have identified relevant budgets for the implementation of each activity.

The measures of the draft Action Plan are in line with the new 10-year plan (2020-2030), including a proposal for a Council Recommendation of the European Union for the integration of the Roma community¹, provides measures in line with urgent needs created by Pandemic- COVID 19.

This meeting was particularly significant not only because it encouraged the public dialogue between government representatives and civil society organizations, but also because it was the first meeting held live, in an open space, respecting all COVID-19 measures, after more than a year of mainly online meetings.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/new-eu-roma-strategic-framework-equality-inclusion-and-participation-full-package_en