

## RomaIntegration2020

### 3<sup>RD</sup> TASK FORCE MEETING

4 December 2018, Skopje

#### :: REPORT ::

The third meeting of the Roma Integration 2020 Task Force took place on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2018 in Skopje. Its members include the designated National Roma Contact Points (NRCPs) from each participating economy, two Roma civil society representatives and one representative of the Regional Cooperation Council Secretariat, the European Commission and the Open Society Foundation. The functioning of the Task Force is regulated by its Rules of Procedure (see [Annex I](#)). An annex to the Rules of Procedure was adopted at the Third Task Force meeting (see [Annex II](#)).

This report is reflecting the content and conclusions of the Task Force meeting by agenda items:

1. Opening and Tour de Table
2. Roma Integration 2020 implementation
3. Regional Declaration on Roma Integration and EU Accession and 2019 High Level Event
4. II Annual reporting cycle experience - Where are we now?
5. Roma Integration Phase II

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#### 1. OPENING AND TOUR DE TABLE

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The Agenda of the meeting was adopted without changes (see [Annex III](#)).

The list of participants of the Task Force meeting is as per below:

##### ***National Roma Contact Points***

Ms Merita XHAFAJ, General Director, Ministry of Health and Social Protection of Albania

Ms Saliha DJUDERIJA, Assistant Minister, Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Ms Mersiha SALI USEIN (replacing Mr Aksel AHMEDOVSKI), Advisor in the Cabinet of the Minister without Portfolio in charge of implementing the Strategy for Roma 2014-2020, accompanied by Ms Zuriya MEMEDOVA, Advisor in the Cabinet of the Minister without Portfolio and Ms Maberka KAMBERI, Head of Department for Coordination and Technical assistance of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Ms Keriman SADIKAY (replacing Mr Habit HAJREDINI) Senior Officer, Office for Good Governance, Human Rights, Equal Opportunities and Anti-Discrimination/Office of the Prime Minister of Kosovo\*

Mr Leon GJOKAJ, General Director, Ministry for Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro

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\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Mr Zoran LAKICEVIC (replacing Mr Nenad IVANISEVIC), State Secretary, Ministry of Construction, Transport, and Infrastructure, accompanied by Ms Dragana JOVANOVIC ARIJAS, Social Inclusion Poverty Reduction Unit, Serbia

Ms Kubra IYIIS AKGUN, Third Secretary, Embassy of Turkey in Skopje

### ***Civil Society Representatives***

Mr Elvis SHAKJIRI

Ms Sanela BESIC

### ***European Commission***

Ms Marta GARCIA FIDALGO, Advisor for Coordination of Roma Policy, Directorate-General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations

### ***Open Society Foundations***

Ms Neda KORUNOVSKA, Team Manager, Roma Initiatives Office

### ***Regional Cooperation Council***

Ms Gordana DEMSER, Legal and Political Advisor/Head of Office of the Secretary General

Technical support to the Task Force was provided by the Regional Cooperation Council Roma Integration 2020 Action Team;

Mr Orhan USEIN, Team Leader

Ms Aleksandra BOJADJIEVA, Policy Expert

Mr Danilo SMOLOVIC, Policy Expert

Ms Rada KRSTANOVIC, Administrative Assistant

Ms GARCIA FIDALGO welcomed the meeting participants on behalf of the EU. She noted that the project is a success story and recognized the active contribution of the NRCPs and the civil society. She stressed that as the Phase I of the project ends and necessary mechanisms are developed, the next phase needs to contribute to turn around the developments noted in the Regional Roma Survey 2017. The Survey has shown lack of progress in thematic priorities of housing, health, education and primarily in employment (for more information see the Survey [results](#)). She further underlined that it will be important to achieve cohesion with the local level which implements largest portion of Roma integration policies.

Ms KORUNOVSKA thanked the Roma Integration Action Team and partners for the good cooperation and expressed satisfaction with the achievements of the Phase I of the project. She explained that the OSF remains committed to the integration of Roma by providing support to the civil society to offer their views and proposals to the participating governments. Although the progress in Roma integration is observed, the gap is increasing as the mainstream population is progressing much faster. She called for constructive proposals for solutions in employment to come from the project and its partners gathered in the meeting.

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## 2. ROMA INTEGRATION 2020 IMPLEMENTATION

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Mr USEIN recalled the developments in 2018. The presentation focused on the main achievements of the RI2020 project in 2018. Mr USEIN presentation is annexed to this report for more information ([Annex IV](#)). The report provides summary of the main points:

- **Strengthening capacities:** support in action plan preparation and monitoring was provided upon demand of the participant governments. Turkey is expected to adopt the new Action Plan. The NRCPs were invited to the EU level events organized to share experiences with their European colleagues.
- **National Platforms:** the 2018 cycle of National Platform events is successfully concluded. The Platforms increasingly contribute to collection of information from the local level to understand the situation in the field. The dialogue of the government and civil society counterparts is improving. Each National Platform was followed by a Policy Brief prepared by the RI2020. Policy Briefs provide summary of main discussions and recommendations for prioritization which can improve implementation in the following year.
- **Regional Conferences:** five regional conferences were organized since the previous Task Force meeting (one was in 2017). The conferences were organized on the topics: filling the budget gaps in Roma integration policies, addressing discrimination and anti-Gypsyism, holistic approach to housing - social housing and legalization, and economic independence of Romani women. The conference Innovative Approaches to Employment of Roma was to take place on 12 December. The conferences on housing and employment will support the Phase II implementation that will promote solutions in housing legalization and employment. Two publications, [Targeting Roma In Housing Policies of the Western Balkans - A Legal Overview](#) and [Recommendations on Improving Roma Targeting in The Housing Policies Of The Western Balkans](#) were published and shared in the enlargement region and the EU.
- **Project Synergies:** the cooperation with a number of projects and institutions, primarily ROMACTED, EC WB UNDP Regional Roma Survey 2017, FRA, EUROSTAT, EIGE, ESAP and REF was explained. The results of the Regional Roma Survey 2017 were used to establish baselines in the lack of official data. The NRCPs should seek to strengthen cooperation with the same partners.
- **Visibility:** the outreach of communication messages improved in 2018 with the engagement of the Communication Officer. The website was updated with the depository of documents of the [Roma Decade](#). Social media are continuously used to communicate project-related developments, with over 11000 followers. Two publications on housing were published. The project Monography and Roma Responsible Budgeting Guidelines will be published soon.
- **Balkan Barometer Survey:** the perception of the importance of Roma integration for regional cooperation and EU integration is improving, as well as the support for affirmative measures in education, employment and housing. The support, however, remains significantly lower than the support for disabled people. The question measuring social distance towards Roma will be introduced in the 2019 Survey.

- **Monitoring Reports 2017:** the deadline for submitting monitoring reports was respected and 2017 reports include much more information than the previous. Increased budgets are allocated for action plans implementation but these are not necessarily spent. The main challenges remain: provision of impact indicators, ethnically disaggregated information, and including Roma in mainstream policies. The RI2020 organized follow up meetings with state statistical offices to improve monitoring and to assess possibilities for including Roma in regular statistical exercises.
- **Regional Overview - Education:** the enrolment and completion of Roma in primary, secondary and tertiary education is increasing, but not sufficiently. The gap with mainstream population is increasing. The economies overly rely on project activities which need to be institutionalized. The National Platforms show that the affirmative action is sometimes abused by non-Roma, but this is not followed up. Stronger support is required in the transition from one level of education to another, and to dropouts and returnees who require specific support. It is important not to lose comparative educational advantages of returnee children that are often proficient in foreign languages. Segregation remains observed and should be recognized and targeted by institutions. It was understood that limited capacities of kindergartens hinder successful implementation of pre-school policies.
- **Regional Overview - Employment:** The outreach has improved as more Roma are included in employment measures. This did not lead to systematic and long-term employment of the population. Monitoring of what happens after the completion of employment programmes and after employment subsidies end needs to be strengthened. Economies need to establish real number of employed and unemployed Roma. Employment programmes should be longer and should adjust participation criteria so that Roma can participate. Roma employment in public sector remains very limited.
- **Regional Overview - Housing:** New housing is being constructed but primarily with donor support. The mapping of territory should continue to recognize locations of informal settlements and Roma housing needs. Holistic approach to social housing and legalization was promoted by the RI2020. The holistic approach needs to be followed up more strictly in the policies and implementation. The legalization criteria should be adjusted so that Roma can increasingly benefit from legalized housing. Prioritization of Roma in mainstream housing policies needs to be promoted via models that should be discussed by the RI2020 and participating governments. The local level should be better involved in the needs assessment, implementation and in finding solutions to include Roma settlements into urban plans.
- **Regional Overview - Health:** Outreach activities to provide health insurance, preventive services and raise health awareness were provided for Roma. Over-reliance on health mediators remains an issue. This has led to the formation of a 'parallel health system' while the ministries are reluctant to provide sufficient mainstream and targeted services. The discussions should continue how to improve responsibility of health ministries and to better mainstream Roma health mediators in the existing health system.
- **Regional Overview - Institutional Capacities:** The structure of inter-disciplinary bodies has remained unchanged in 2018. The inter-disciplinary bodies should meet more often as the Action Plans implementation requires participation of all stakeholders. The staffing of the NRCs offices is insufficient. The NRCs mostly do not deal with Roma integration only which prevents their full commitment. Feasible solutions will be bilaterally discussed by the RI2020 and the economies.
- **Roma Responsible Budgeting:** The initiative was launched as agreed in the previous Task Force. The working group was established which included the NRCs, economies' representatives of ministries of finance, four budget experts, and the RI2020 Action Team. The

draft Guidelines document is prepared. The Guidelines are applicable to the entire region. The document should be further adjusted to the different economy contexts in the following phase. This is necessary due to the fact that economies are in different stages of programme budgeting. Mr USEIN shortly presented the findings and the approach proposed in the Guidelines. The draft Guidelines were adopted by the Task Force. The document will be published by the RI2020 after it is prepared for printing. The Task Force agreed that the Roma responsible budgeting process should continue by piloting it in 2019 for the 2020 budget preparation. Two budget programs will be piloted in each economy. The economies' representatives proposed that piloting is connected with the Economic Reform Programme process. The connection will serve as a strong drive to connect Roma integration policies and public budgets drafting and implementation. The NRCs agreed to strive to ensure stronger involvement of their Ministries of Finance and to facilitate the process. After the piloting is finished - economy-specific Guidelines will be developed by the RI2020. The Task Force recognized the need for capacity building while introducing Roma responsible budgeting. Ms XHAF AJ explained that in Albania the initiative needs to be connected with the online reporting system ROMALB and the online system of the IPS (Integrated Planning System) Information System (IPSIS) which is currently developed. The IPSIS system will link policy and financial planning through connecting indicators of all strategies (including Roma Integration Strategy) with the public budget indicators.

#### ***FOLLOW UP:***

- The monitoring and reporting template used in 2019 monitoring cycle remains unchanged (see Annex V). Participating economies should submit their monitoring reports by 30 June 2019.
- Roma responsible budgeting will continue through piloting the Guidelines for Roma Responsible Budgeting during the 2020 budget preparations. Two budget programs will be piloted with on-the-spot expert and capacity building support of the RI2020. The initiative should be connected with the Economic Reform Programme (ERP) process. The RI2020 will develop economy-specific Guidelines after the piloting;
- The RI2020 will bilaterally discuss feasible institutional modifications with the economies;
- The RI2020 will continue to explore possibilities of cooperation and share of practices with the European Institute for Gender Equality. To consider possibilities to promote gender-sensitive Roma integration policies and to mainstream Roma integration in gender-sensitive policies.
- The NRCs and the RI2020 will continue to cooperate to address the challenges in thematic priorities (as recognized in the regional overview); and that economies adopt proposed solutions. The main focus will be on housing legalization and employment;
- The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia will pilot a specific Roma survey in 2019 with the EC and the RI2020 support. The RI2020 will seek EUROSTAT support to share methodology for improving and disaggregating data collection. The RI2020 and remaining economies will bilaterally discuss how the piloted Roma Survey can be adjusted to specific contexts and implemented in the rest of the region;
- The results of Roma Survey(s) will be combined with the results of social mapping. The social mapping is currently planned in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

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### **3. REGIONAL DECLARATION ON ROMA INTEGRATION AND EU ACCESSION AND 2019 HIGH LEVEL EVENT**

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Ms USEIN presented the Regional Declaration on Roma Integration and EU Accession. The Declaration stipulates concrete regionally achievable objectives in five prioritized policy areas, commitment to introduce appropriate monitoring system, and establish formal channels for local governments and communities' participation. It further calls the EU to support the Roma integration process and that the position of the NRCs is strengthened. The timeframe of the declaration is until each economy becomes a member of the EU. Ms SALI USEIN invited the economies to provide comments on the text before it is finalized. Each government will pass the document to their line ministries for comments and opinion.

Participants agreed that the Declaration needs to set quantified objectives in order to tackle the concerning developments to which Regional Roma Survey pointed. One is that the socio-economic indicators for surveyed non-Roma showed significantly larger increases than for Roma, compared to 2011. This increases the gap and will have long-term negative social effects unless Roma integration is promoted with more effort. The second is that the employment area remains of most concern. The survey has shown negative developments in employment that requires strong prioritization and reformed employment measures.

The Regional Declaration objectives can also serve as closing benchmarks for Chapter 23 on Judiciary and Fundamental Rights. This process will provide stronger commitment of all relevant institutions towards Roma integration and should be further explored.

The representatives of the Government of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia agreed to prepare a background material about the objectives stated in the Declaration and the envisaged process, which can be circulated to other economies.

#### ***FOLLOW UP:***

- Participating economies will provide comments on the text of the Regional Declaration to the Government of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia by 20 January 2019.
- Another consultation meeting will be organized in late January 2019 to finalize the text of the Declaration.
- The High Level Ministerial event where the Declaration is expected to be signed will be organized in cooperation with the RI2020 Action Team in spring 2019.
- The NRCs will assess the possibility to set the Regional Declaration objectives as closing benchmarks of Chapter 23 on Judiciary and Fundamental Rights.

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#### **4. II ANNUAL REPORTING CYCLE EXPERIENCE - WHERE ARE WE NOW?**

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The National Roma Contact Points presented the 2017 reports noting main developments and challenges observed in the process. The discussion focused on systemic and policy interventions that are required to improve implementation in 2019. Additionally, the panel discussed the monitoring process in the Phase II of the RI2020 project. The presentations are available at the Roma Integration 2020 [website](#) for more information.

##### **Albania:**

The presentation focused on the achievements brought about through the cooperation with the RI2020. Ms Xhafaj explained that Albania introduced the ROMALB reporting system with the UNDP support (ESERE project). The online system is linked with the Roma Integration Action Plan indicators and can

automatically produce reports. It is used by central and local level focal points. The 2017 monitoring report is much more comprehensive than the 2016 report.

The 2018 National Platform meant improved dialogue with the civil society which reflected on the monitoring report. The focus in the following period will be on employment and housing. A positive example of how private businesses can be part of an employment policy was presented. In Tirana, a private recycling business employed 50 Roma families in the cooperation with employment institutions. Besides the employment, families are provided with comprehensive social support.

The 2018 Roma Seminar is scheduled for 12 December 2018. A comprehensive presentation of 2017 and 2018 achievements and challenges will be given by Albanian institutions during the Roma Seminar.

### **Bosnia and Herzegovina:**

In 2017 the revised Action Plan on Employment, Housing and Health was adopted. This was followed with the adoption of a Framework Action Plan of the Educational Needs of Roma in 2018.

Ms DJUDERIJA presented the main achievements in the 2009-2018 period. Almost 48 million BAM was invested in employment, housing and health care. Out of this, 23.6 million were allocated from the central budget, 10 million from IPA I and II, and 12.6 million by municipalities and other donors.

More than 1000 housing units were built for Roma. Water supply network was provided in more than 20 municipalities. About 800 Roma were beneficiaries of employment and self-employment projects, with the total expenditure of around 6 million BAM. Health care support is implemented in cooperation with the health institutions of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Brcko District. Mainly implemented are awareness projects and projects to improve access to health care.

Bosnia and Herzegovina will to update the submitted 2017 Monitoring Report with new information by the end of the year. It will include additional information on activities implemented by civil society and international organizations. The report will include narrative information to clarify the activities as some of the civil society projects are not encompassed by the Action Plans.

Further, the 2017 budget disaggregation was presented. The monitoring and reporting template does not foresee space for presenting expenditure allocated in previous years nor unspent allocations. Such information is welcome in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina which experiences delays in the implementation of funds (funds from previous years are spent in subsequent years). The issue was raised by the civil society representative.

More details can be found in the presentation.

### **Kosovo\*:**

Inter-institutional cooperation is improving. One person in the Ministry of Finance is tasked to deal with Roma integration. The cooperation with the civil society is improving as sectorial meetings are organized bimonthly.

In education, 125 children enrolled in public pre-school education. The school dropout decreased. Students in primary education were supplied with textbooks and learning materials, Scholarships for secondary education students were given to 500 Roma. Supplementary lessons were provided to children returnees. Only 7 students received scholarships for tertiary education. In employment, the process of registering Roma jobseekers has continued. On-the-job training was provided on a project

basis. Roma also benefited from temporary employment in public works and from employment mediation. Returnees are offered transportation and some of them were offered temporary accommodation. Socially vulnerable families benefited from electricity debt write-off and the support scheme for extraordinary circumstances. In health, mammography screening, at home mobile teams' visits, educational sessions, and children immunization (12,000) were provided.

The Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning assesses that 771 Roma families do not live in adequate housing. At the moment 16 municipalities adopted three-year local housing programs, while Roma live in 24 municipalities. In 2017, 84 houses of Roma were reconstructed and renovated. The draft Law on Social Housing was not adopted.

More details can be found in the presentation.

### **The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia:**

The presentation concentrated on the main issues for resolving that were noted in the National Platform and the monitoring report. Institutions are not equally involved and do not feel responsible for the Action Plan implementation. The Strategy and the Action Plan are not compliant. The Action Plan contains indicators, targets and budgets that are inappropriate or irrelevant. Implementation is largely dependent on civil society institutions.

New Roma integration measures need to be devised in cooperation with the responsible government institutions. Roma need to be better included in mainstream policies. Roma integration should especially be promoted through the new Law on Social protection.

The 2017 reports established some of the baselines, but the gaps remain where data was not available. Impact assessment is lacking in the 2017 report. The first National Platform was organized in 2018. The report was discussed with the civil society. Budget allocations for 2018 have increased but more effort is required to promote Roma integration.

The civil society representative provided some of the suggestions to support policy implementation. Mr SHAKJIRI explained that reports reflect the past. Hence, important information becomes available with delays or when it is too late to intervene. He presented an example how employment of Roma was postponed because the responsible minister did not sign their contracts. The Government representative agreed that the report preparation process should be continuous. Quarterly or semester meetings should be organized to collect and share information among institutions and civil society. The quarterly/semester reports would then be aggregated in the end of the year to produce annual monitoring report for the RI2020.

The civil society and the Government representatives agreed that the local level reporting needs to be improved. Improvements can be pursued in cooperation with the ROMACTED project.

### **Montenegro**

In 2017 and 2018, 94 housing units were constructed in Berane, 51 in Konik settlement and 6 in Herceg Novi. Additional 50 units across the Montenegro territory were built for families who owned construction land and had construction permit. In education, the position of the Social Inclusion Associate in Education was standardized. One associate should be employed for each 70 Roma students by the end of 2018 in eight municipalities. The position Social Inclusion Associate in Health was also standardized. Three persons were employed in Podgorica from public funds. Two persons were engaged in Niksic and Berane on short-term contracts. Preventive examinations were organized to assess sugar



bloods level, blood pressure, perform lung and gynecological examinations for about 150 Roma (100 female). Roma were benefitting from various employment programmes. All Roma who completed tertiary education are currently employed. Educational activities to prevent family violence and early and forced marriages are continuously implemented.

The challenges which remain are: resolving housing issue for domicile Roma, lack of database about Roma population and its needs, lack of information about unemployed Roma not registered with the Employment Office.

## Serbia

The Government is preparing a new Roma Integration Action Plan that should be adopted by the end of the year. The new Action Plan will also focus on possibilities to improve its reporting. The information on expenditure is lacking and is hard to obtain. Serbian representatives expressed hope that Roma responsible budgeting will help to improve budget reporting.

Mr LAKICEVIC presented the main accomplishments in 2017. Serbia continued to implement a number of housing construction projects, technical assistance projects, and projects for inclusion of Roma settlements in urban plans. Besides the construction of housing, other works include infrastructure projects to prevent flooding, road rehabilitation, and water supply and wastewater systems. The local governments are co-financing projects with 15% to 20%. The most successful projects are those where the civil society is proactive and involved. New housing programmes are planned from IPA funds that will cover technical assistance for project preparation and construction of housing. The total worth of the projects should be above 20 million EUR. More details can be found in Mr LAKICEVIC presentation.

The representatives also presented the main challenges identified. Anti-discrimination action is lacking. In education, non-Roma parents transfer their children to other schools once Roma are enrolled which re-introduces school segregation. Although large successes are noted in housing, the cooperation of local governments remains essential. Serbian representatives noted how local governments influenced projects results by providing different construction location than planned (urban vs rural). In such case, the social integration component of a housing project was effectively excluded.

Ms JOVANOVIC ARIJAS addressed the monitoring issue. The reporting on Roma Integration 2020 is closely connected with reporting on Roma Seminar Operational Conclusions, reports for sub-committees and shadow reporting which are all EU accession and Roma Integration related. These processes should be better connected to facilitate reporting, reduce administrative workload for public employees, and allow stronger focus on implementation. Ms FIDALGO agreed and explained that the EC is considering how to resolve this issue. Ms KORUNOVSKA explained that continual monitoring can help to reduce the workload and confusion, and that inter-disciplinary bodies should meet quarterly to discuss the progress.

Mr USEIN clarified that the RI2020 Phase II will develop an online monitoring and reporting database. It will be possible to regularly upload data and produce RI2020 monitoring reports. The online tool can be programmed to be able to extract additional reports required from the economies, based on their specific requirements.

The RI2020 will try to use the existing online reporting tool of DG JUST. This way, the same tool can continue to be used after the EU accession. Some of the Roma integration reports currently required from the enlargement region governments will not exist once they join the EU. Hence, the online tool needs to be adapted that it can produce both pre-accession and post-accession required reports.

The Task Force adopted the existing monitoring and reporting template for the 2019 monitoring reports, which remains unchanged (see Annex V). The reporting deadline remains the same. Reports should be submitted by 30 June.

**FOLLOW UP:**

- All participating governments should incorporate the monitoring and reporting template as an official part of their strategies/action plans.
- The RI2020 will bilaterally discuss how to adapt the online reporting tool to economy-specific requirements.
- The NRCPs, in cooperation with the RI2020, will improve the monitoring mechanisms by having quarterly or at least semester meetings of inter-disciplinary bodies focused on data collection and populating the monitoring and reporting template.
- The Task Force will reassess the existing monitoring and reporting template in Phase II for its compatibility with other Roma integration related reporting processes and templates.

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## **5. ROMA INTEGRATION PHASE II**

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The Phase II of the project will be implemented from January 2019 until December 2021. The project will continue to cover the enlargement region - the Western Balkans and Turkey. The project Action Team will have seven members, including the Team Leader, three Policy Experts, Project Officer, Project Assistant, and Communication Officer. Mr USEIN presented the upcoming project, its objectives, and methodology. Complete presentation is annexed to this report ([Annex IV](#)).

The project objective remains unchanged - to reduce the socio-economic gap between the Roma and non-Roma population in the Western Balkans and Turkey.

The project will aim to improve policy documents and the instructional structure. Policy reforms will primarily focus on housing legalization and formalizing undeclared work. In legalization, actions should focus to map informal settlements, provide administrative, legal and other legalization support, and amend legislation so that more Roma can legalize their housing.

A novelty is that the project will define concrete actions based on the needs recognized in the reports and in the field. Cooperation with the NRCPs will continue, while the cooperation with inter-disciplinary bodies needs to be strengthened. Stronger involvement of line ministries will be promoted. Mainstreaming of Roma integration in wider sector strategies and budgets will be ensured. The ongoing social and economic reforms need to be used to integrate Roma. Considering the economy-specific contexts, the January-March 2019 period will be used to develop economy roadmaps defining three-year goals, how to achieve them, and the technical assistance required from the RI2020.

Regional component of the project will be implemented through regional conferences, regional analyses, and by targeting negative narratives about Roma integration. Regional standards will be developed on the topics of budgeting, monitoring, legalization of informal settlements and formalization of undeclared work, based on available evidence. Some of the specific Roma integration measures should be regionally discussed, endorsed and adopted by economies.

In the context of EU enlargement, the Roma integration reporting process will be increasingly connected with the overall EU agenda and relevant political documents and processes. The project will seek to become more involved in the IPA planning process. This way, sectoral IPA projects will better target Roma. The concrete approach will be further discussed with the EC. As future sectoral IPA

support will not specifically target Roma (nor any other group), except in rare cases. Hence, appropriate Roma integration indicators must be integrated in the sectoral support programmes. Otherwise, sector policies could exclude Roma.

The civil society representative explained that Roma are in risk of being excluded from sectoral support in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The current legislation is an obstacle to include Roma in mainstream policies. Many Roma do not fulfil the criteria to be beneficiaries of social assistance support as they are healthy individuals. Ms DJUDERIJA added that Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to develop formal models for mainstreaming Roma integration in sector policies. As noted by Mr USEIN, it will be possible to prepare regional analysis related to mainstreaming Roma integration in sectoral policies. The analysis will take stock of economy-specific situation and obstacles. It will be followed by a regional conference. Finally, economy-specific guidelines (such as for Bosnia and Herzegovina) can be developed upon receiving requests for technical assistance from the governments.

Ms XHAFAJ warned that the donor support for Roma integration might decrease in Albania. She argued that it will be necessary to provide proofs for the EC that Roma are the most vulnerable group in the economy. However, robust information is not available. Ms FIDALGO clarified that it is in fact necessary to persuade domestic authorities about the importance of Roma integration, such as NIPAC and relevant ministries. Although the EC provides the support, the receiving governments are the ones to include Roma indicators in future IPA programmes.

In continuation, each activity of the project was separately presented. The report takes stock of most important novelties of the project, discussions and conclusions:

***Mainstreaming of Roma integration in sector policies*** will be provided through capacity building and technical assistance. Capacity building and technical assistance support will also cover budgeting, monitoring, reporting, and formulation of strategies and action plans.

***National Platforms on Roma Integration*** will continue to be organized. The meetings will additionally discuss and assess implementation of the Operational Conclusions of Roma Seminars. The National Platforms will become whole day events (currently half-day events). Thematically, the RI2020 and the NRCs should propose the policy area that should be focus of each National Platform, instead of covering the whole report.

***The High Level event*** will be organized in Skopje in 2019 for the signature of the Regional Declaration on Roma Integration and EU Accession. The second High Level meeting should take place in the third quarter of 2021. The meeting will focus on the progress assessment related to the Regional Declaration objectives. It is possible to organize another meeting on Declaration day before the next Task Force meeting in 2020. The progress in achieving the objectives shall be measured based on the RI2020 monitoring reports, progress reports, or other relevant information available. The next Task Force meeting will discuss whether the High Level events can be organized annually. The Albanian representative proposed that one High Level event is organized in 2020 on the topic of integration of gender and Roma responsive budgeting.

***The Task Force*** will remain the main steering body of Phase II of the project. The composition stays the same. Ad hoc participation of relevant officials will be possible depending on the topics that need to be touched upon in the meetings. The Annex to the Rules of Procedure was proposed and adopted, and is annexed to this report (Annex II). The new project will be called Roma Integration. A new slogan to accompany the project will be composed.

Topics of three *regional analyses* were proposed, which are: effective way to include Roma in mainstream policies, negative narratives and anti-Gypsyism, and effective employment measures for Roma. The Task Force adopted the proposed topics.

*Regional conferences* will continue to be used to promote regional cooperation. Up to two conferences per year will be organized. The topics need to correspond to project objectives and regional analyses. Once prepared, the regional analyses will be put for discussion in the conferences. Potential topics of remaining conferences mentioned in the Task Force meeting are: reintegration of Roma returnees, persons without documents and no-hate speech.

*Media dissemination* will specifically target negative narratives about Roma in the region. The Communication Officer will gather a network of journalists. The journalist network will choose the most important topics and follow up on them periodically. Journalists will be put in contact with Roma integration experts. The communication strategy on the work of the journalist network will be prepared. Various media will be used to disseminate information about Roma integration. Ms FIDALGO proposed to assess the possibility that the 2021 Roma Award is given to journalists supporting Roma integration.

*Mainstreaming of Roma integration in the RCC Agenda* will be promoted through participation in the RCC board, SEE2020 related meetings, and by providing information on Roma in RCC publications. The project will aim to involve the NRCPs in the regional meetings of the RCC such as the Programming Committee meetings. This will give the NRCPs the possibility to better influence regional developments.

*Online Roma Integration Regional Reporting Tool* should be based on the DG JUST methodology and format. The project is currently investigating whether it can get access to the DG JUST system or a separate system needs to be developed. After the online platform is developed, the 2020 monitoring reports should be submitted online. Trainings will be provided to use the online system once developed. As agreed before, the system needs to be transparent and allow that information is easily extracted for the RI2020 and other reports.

*Input to the EU enlargement* will be ensured by allowing participation of the NRCPs at relevant EU Fora (EU Platform, Roma Week, etc.) up to two times per year, and through reporting of the Roma Integration Action Team to the EC. The NRCPs presence in Brussels should be used to have bilateral meetings with the geographic desk officers. It is important that meetings are demand driven based on the NRCPs requests.

The Task Force adopted the pending proposals for implementation in 2019 which are: to pursue mainstreaming of Roma integration in sectoral policies, tackle negative narratives and anti-Gypsyism by forming a journalist network, and to prepare regional analysis on employment of Roma.

Lastly, Mr USEIN presented the calendar of activities for 2019. The new project will start with economy-meetings to develop roadmaps. The meetings will be organized with the NRCPs, IDBs, but also other ministries. Strong support of the NRCPs will be required. Trainings on Roma responsible budgeting will be provided at the central level for piloting of a limited number of budget programs during the year. The National Platforms will be organized in the same period as previously as the reporting deadlines remain the same. The High Level meeting is planned for Spring 2019. The Task Force will be organized in November 2019. The Task Force endorsed the proposed calendar of activities. The calendar of activities is annexed to this report (Annex VI).

The last item on the agenda was requests for technical assistance. The requests are as follows:

- Albania: requested support in Roma responsible budgeting; training of focal points; preparation of the 2018 monitoring report; developing the online reporting system. The project was also invited to support the chapter 23 related processes and to link the chapter with Roma integration - by engaging a legal expert.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina: expressed the need for guidelines for mainstreaming Roma integration in sector policies. Furthermore, a model for monitoring implementation of the mainstreaming should be developed.
- The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: requested technical assistance for piloting of the Roma survey by the State Statistical office.
- Montenegro: requested that a conference on the topic of good practices of Roma integration in the EU (and wider) is organized, and additional conferences on employment and housing. Capacity building workshop for data collection and establishment of the Roma needs database for the inter-disciplinary body was further requested. Lastly, the economy required support in the standardization of Romani language.
- Serbia: required support in anti-discrimination activities by promoting positive image of Roma; and support in donor coordination.

#### ***FOLLOW UP:***

- Implement Roma Integration Phase II project activities according to the agreed calendar of activities;
- Roma Integration Phase II to provide technical and expert support based on the received requests for technical assistance. Additionally, to pursue mainstreaming of Roma integration in sectoral policies, establish the journalist network to tackle negative narratives and anti-Gypsyism, prepare regional employment analysis, and pilot Roma responsible budgeting;
- Roma Integration Phase II to devise three-year economy-specific roadmaps in close cooperation with the NRCPs;
- Roma Integration Phase II to investigate whether the DG JUST online reporting tool will be made available or it will be required to develop an independent system;
- Roma Integration Phase II to discuss with the EC how to contribute to IPA planning and including Roma integration indicators in the sectoral IPA support;
- Roma Integration Phase II will assess whether an annual meeting focused on the progress related to the Regional Declaration should be organized in 2020, a day before the Task Force meeting;
- Roma Integration Phase II will discuss the possibility to organize an event to share experiences and assess possibilities to integrate Roma responsible and gender responsible budgeting;
- When participating in EU fora, the NRCPs should to provide requests for bilateral meetings with DG NEAR based on their needs. The Phase II and the EC will strive to facilitate organization of bilateral meetings;
- NRCPs should to specify the dates for the 2019 National Platforms and share them with the Action Team;
- The next Task Force will discuss whether High Level events should become annual events.

The third Task Force meeting of the RI2020 project concluded on 4 January 2019 at 16:30.