



ROMA INTEGRATION 2020
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Regional Cooperation Council
Roma Integration 2020 Action Team Ruzveltova 61, 11 000 Belgrade, Serbia
Tel: +381 (11) 4046 891
Fax: +381 (11) 4046 894
E-mail: romaintegration2020@rcc.int
Website: rcc.int/romaintegration2020/

Author: Bernard Rorke

Editors: Orhan Usein and Milica Grahovac

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite more than a decade of Roma inclusion strategies with their attendant action plans and policy interventions, there has been little tangible improvement in the living conditions of an estimated one million Roma across the Western Balkans. The 2017 Regional Roma Survey revealed that across a number of indicators, the situation of marginalized Roma has actually worsened since 2011, with a widening gap between Roma and non-Roma in health, employment and housing.¹

It is against this background that at regional level, and simultaneously with each of the economies in the region, the Regional Cooperation Council's (RCC) Roma Integration 2020 (RI2020) has actively set about creating the structural preconditions for sustainable change, social inclusion, and the promise of substantive equality for Roma communities across the Western Balkans. RI2020, by virtue of its mission to facilitate effective implementation, build capacities and establish robust monitoring mechanisms effectively mirrors the EU Framework for the region.

Towards these ends, RI2020 provided technical assistance to governments to integrate Roma-specific issues into mainstream policy and budgeting; established a Task Force comprised of National Roma Contact Points and civil society representatives; adopted regional standards for Roma integration policies; developed Roma integration monitoring and reporting standards and template that have been

¹ UNDP and the World Bank, The Regional Roma Survey. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2P29tEG>

adopted by all the participating economies across the region.

RI2020 has also delivered vital trainings for public officials from the priority policy areas and the offices of finance and statistics on monitoring and reporting on Roma integration; provided technical and expert assistance to assist governments to formulate and budget for action plans to implement integration policies; and organized high-level public discussions in each participating economy, and regional events to address the most pressing obstacles to effective policy making on Roma inclusion.

The RI2020 Action Team acts as a key interlocutor for the EU, as regards the enlargement component of the EU Roma Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020². It actively collaborates with the Commission in coordinating Roma-related policies on a range of issues including the accession reporting process, the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance planning; as well as participating in international platform meetings and roundtable events concerning inclusion policies and strategies under the aegis of the EU Roma Framework.

In pursuit of its policy mainstreaming and implementation goals, RI2020's activities are key to the success of the European Commission's stated ambitions for Roma in the region: to close the socio-economic

² European Commission, An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020. Brussels, September 7, 2010. pp. 11,12. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2KzlaSu>



gap between Roma and non-Roma, to end segregation and discrimination, and to have pragmatic and effective policies in place with funding mechanisms aligned to achieve these ends within a fixed time-frame. RI2020 actively promotes policies targeting Roma women and youth; cultivates a participatory approach to policy design, implementation and monitoring; and advocates for effective action to combat anti-Gypsyism.

RI2020 has addressed the most pressing obstacles to effective policy making in its workshops, meetings, capacity-building and training, and among its first priorities was to introduce a Monitoring and Reporting Template that improves the quality of monitoring and data collection, allows for analysis of budgeting and impact, and allows for region-wide comparison. RI2020 has worked with public officials from each of the economies to identify practical ways to improve budget analysis and to develop evidence-based decision-making and budget preparation processes. Mindful of the fact that economies in the region remain dependent upon foreign donors to meet much their commitment on Roma inclusion, RI2020 initiated dialogue between donors and governments to optimize coordination and identify concrete opportunities for cooperation, especially in the priority areas of housing and employment.

The fact that economies in the region still remain dependent upon foreign donors to the tune of between 35-60% to meet commitments on Roma inclusion calls for a more optimal model of coordination. RI2020 hosted this event to initiate dialogue and to identify concrete opportunities for cooperation between donors and governments, especially in the priority areas of employment and housing.

To break the cycles of exclusion and disadvantage, it is clear that governments need not just to increase their investments in social inclusion, but make more

intelligent use of all available resources to ensure that Roma integration become sustainable components of mainstream policy making. Roma responsible budgeting standards will become more crucial for governments to provide evidence to convince donors to support Roma inclusion policies that have a clear prospect of success. Towards this end, the Intergovernmental Working Group on Roma Responsible Budgeting (RRB) supported by RI2020, developed guidelines to assist the economies to incorporate and deliver specific Roma integration goals in their mainstream policy developments by means of establishing links between the Roma integration goals and national budgets.

In line with the explicit calls by the EU on governments to step up the fight against anti-Gypsyism, RI2020 has striven to increase regional officials' understanding of the impact of discrimination. The enlargement region was deemed to be lagging somewhat in fully recognizing and addressing this particular form of racism, and RI2020 organized an international meeting to expose officials from the Western Balkans to the historical context and contemporary ramifications of anti-Gypsyism, which differs from other forms of contemporary racism by virtue of its high level of social acceptance across all levels of society.

Perhaps the most complex and intractable of policy priorities has been housing, where little progress has been made over the last decade, and where the gravity of the situation can be measured by the extent of 'severe material deprivation', which ranges from 83% to 94% for vulnerable Roma in the region. Decent living conditions are a prerequisite for improved health, educational attainments, and meaningful integration, and RI2020 produced a detailed report *Targeting Roma in Housing Policies of the Western Balkans*, which presents a concise overview with common and economy-specific solutions to the legalization of housing, social housing and issues around evictions. The report also spells out

how economies can move forward to adopt a holistic approach, which means providing a full social integration package alongside housing that would allow for more efficient responses to pressing issues of increased homelessness and insecurity of tenure, acute poverty and the lack of infrastructure which adversely affects the sustainability of housing units.

Access to the labor market, having worthwhile and gainful employment is one of the key drivers of societal integration, and one of the policy priority areas where progress remains elusive. Worryingly, regional trends in labor market participation of Roma are negative, and levels of unemployment and participation in the informal economy suggest that Roma are being “further pushed outside of the labor market, and thus further into poverty”. In terms of marginalization, the situation of Romani women and girls is especially acute: a combination of factors hinders women’s economic independence, including low educational attainment, the intersection of ethnic and gender discrimination in the wider society, patterns of early marriages and pregnancies, residential segregation and deep poverty. RI2020 has produced reports and detailed sets of innovative recommendations to reverse the trends of exclusion from the labor markets across the region. This will remain a priority for RI2020, not least because exiting poverty by way of gainful employment brings huge gains in the health and wellbeing for family life, and paves the way for meaningful social inclusion.

Looking to the future, governments of the EU Enlargement region agreed in December 2018 to work on a Regional Declaration to affirm their commitment to full equality and integration of Roma. The work of RI2020 continues with the January 2019 launch of Phase II. RI2020 will promote effective employment measures, challenge negative narratives and stereotypes of Roma in the public sphere, and further develop regional standards for mainstreaming Roma integration.

According to Orhan Usein, RCC’s RI2020 Action Team Leader, this phase will strive “*to ensure Roma integration policies produce the desired results for Roma communities by developing concrete actions, especially in relation to housing legalization and formalization of undeclared work.*”





A REGIONAL APPROACH TO TRANSFORM ROMA INTEGRATION POLICIES

Across the Western Balkans, the situation of an estimated one million Roma remains dire, with an estimated 83-94% of vulnerable Roma families experiencing severe material deprivation according to the 2017 Regional Roma Survey.³ The survey revealed that while the numbers of Roma pupils attending school have increased since 2011, there is a widening gap between Roma and non-Roma in health, employment and housing.

Despite the efforts of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015⁴ and the focus on improving the situation of minorities under the aegis of the European Union enlargement process, declarations of intent, inclusion strategies and action plans have yet to translate into coherent and comprehensive inclusion policies to make a tangible difference to the lives of Roma across the Western Balkans.

Among the reasons for the limited impact to date have been the failures to mainstream Roma-related interventions in the policy process; to marshal adequate

³ UNDP and the World Bank, *The Regional Roma Survey*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2P29tEG>

⁴ *About the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2Bvhq1A>

resources from the public budget; and to set in place robust monitoring mechanisms to assess the impact of such interventions.

The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)'s Roma Integration 2020 (RI2020) project was designed to tackle these challenges, and assist efforts to make headway in those policy priority areas of housing, employment, education and health, which have proven to be the most intractable.

Crafting the conditions to mainstream effective integration policies

RI2020 is an initiative of the RCC whose mission is “to serve regional cooperation and European and Euro-Atlantic integration of South East Europe in order to spark development in the region to the benefit of its people.” The RCC aims to make the region more connected and competitive, more secure and better integrated regionally and with the EU. Within this broad remit, issues of the rule of law, good governance and social inclusion are of paramount importance, and as the



European Commission has emphasized over the years, concrete progress on Roma inclusion and minority rights remains an abiding concern.

The RI2020 Action Team is ideally positioned to speed up implementation, improve cross-sector coordination and help build institutional capacity so that governments can deliver on their Roma inclusion commitments. The RI2020 team members garnered much expertise and knowledge through their direct involvement in the coordination, monitoring and assessment of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015. In addition, the team has extensive experience in the field among Roma communities where they have witnessed first-hand the consequences of policy failures, and confronted the sobering reality that despite frameworks and action plans, there has been no significant improvement in living conditions or life opportunities for marginalized Roma across the region.

Since its inception, and with an acute sense of urgency, RI2020 set about creating the structural preconditions needed for governments to implement their Roma integration policies. RI2020 established a Task Force comprised of National Roma Contact Points and civil society representatives; established regional standards for Roma integration policies; developed Roma integration monitoring and reporting standards and template that have been adopted by all the participating economies across the region; delivered vital trainings for public officials from the priority policy areas and the offices of finance and statistics on monitoring and reporting on Roma integration; provided technical and expert assistance to the governments in the region to formulate action plans that include adequate budgets to implement Roma integration policies. In addition RI2020 has organized high-level public debate platforms on Roma integration in each participating economy, as well as the regional events, which gather relevant stakeholders to discuss the burning issues of Roma integration.

Lessons learned from the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015

The RI2020 priorities also derived from a close-up analytical understanding of the shortcomings of the Roma Decade, many of which subsequently surfaced in the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) up to 2020. The shortcomings of the Decade National Action Plans (NAPs) included the failure by governments to set quantifiable targets, and the lack of disaggregated data against which to measure progress, which made for weak reporting and monitoring; and the absence of coordination across line ministries and regional and local authorities. Other significant shortcomings were the failure to make efficient use of EU funding instruments for Roma inclusion, and the lack of mechanisms for substantive and structured Roma participation.⁵

The NRIS were found to be replete with the weaknesses that characterized the Decade NAPs concerning targets and timelines, budgets and disaggregated data. These sobering findings would be followed some years later by official recognition at the highest level that integration strategies cannot succeed without resolute and unequivocal action to combat anti-Gypsyism.⁶ Common to both the Decade and the Framework was that a lack of know-how and capacity to absorb EU funds was compounded by weak inclusion

⁵Bernard Rorke, *Review of EU Framework National Roma Integration Strategies*, February 2012. Roma Initiatives Office, Open Society Foundations. Available at: <https://osf.to/2KxkA7Y>

⁶Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (2017), *Fundamental rights aspects in Roma integration in the EU: fighting anti-Gypsyism*. European Parliament resolution of 25 October 2017 on fundamental rights aspects in Roma integration in the EU: fighting anti-Gypsyism (2017/2038(INI)), P8_TA-PROV(2017)0413.



strategies and bottlenecks at national regional and local levels in the countries surveyed.⁷

On the positive side, perhaps the most profound and durable legacy of the Decade is the EU Roma Framework itself. All of the key components of the Decade, conceived between 2003 and 2005, were repackaged in the EU Roma Framework which signaled a profound shift from the Commission's previous hands-off 'color-blind' approach to social inclusion, towards an unprecedented commitment to a comprehensive and coordinated Europe-wide framework for Roma integration.

The European Commission described the Decade as being 'a strong inspiration' for the EU Framework, and praised its positive role in ensuring "the smooth transition of enlargement countries into the EU Framework", and noted the strong added value of civil coalitions coordinated and supported by the Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat.⁸ Until its demise in 2015, the Decade functioned to maintain operational links between key member states and candidate countries with regards to Roma inclusion. The brief hiatus between the end of the Decade and RI2020 becoming operational witnessed a sudden decline and the swift emergence of a region-wide vacuum in terms of coordination and delivery on Roma inclusion policies. This region-wide hiccup attested to the importance of RI2020 as the vital link in keeping Roma integration on track and on the policy agenda across the WB.

Mirroring the EU Roma Framework

RI2020 took its cue from the enlargement component of the EU Roma Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020⁹. In its launch communication in 2011, the Commission noted that Roma in the enlargement region face similar or even more serious problems than in Member States: social exclusion, segregation and marginalization leading to lack of education, chronic unemployment, limited access to healthcare, housing and essential services as well as widespread poverty, with the added factor of post-conflict displacement. The EU called for enhanced political commitment to Roma inclusion, "the allocation of appropriate resources under the national budgets, better coordination with all relevant donors and a systematic evaluation and reinforced monitoring", and promised to assist efforts by improving delivery and support under the Instrument on Pre-Accession Assistance programming; strengthening the involvement of civil society; and close monitoring of progress made on Roma inclusion.¹⁰

RI2020 in its mission to facilitate effective implementation, build capacities and establish robust monitoring mechanisms effectively mirrors the EU Framework for the region. The RI2020 Action Team acts as a key interlocutor for the EU, and actively collaborates with the Commission in coordinating Roma-related policies on a range of issues including the accession reporting process, the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance planning; as well as participating in international platform meetings and roundtable events

⁷ Ibid, p. 2

⁸ European Commission DG Justice, EU and Roma, 2014 report http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma/index_en.htm

⁹ European Commission, An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020. Brussels, September 7, 2010. pp. 11,12. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2KzlaSu>

¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 11, 12



concerning inclusion policies and strategies under the aegis of the EU Roma Framework.

EU Mid-term assessment and Roma inclusion in the enlargement process

In 2017, the European Commission published its mid-term assessment of the Framework that looked at how Member States were implementing their national Roma integration strategies. Commissioner Jourová was clear about the challenges: “Supported by the Commission, EU governments have put in place strategies to integrate Roma – this is important, but a first step. Now is the time for Member States to implement them and make a real difference to people’s lives.”¹¹

In its annual reports, the Commission has identified the priorities to be addressed by Member States in order to secure effective implementation. These include setting quantifiable targets, indicators and budget allocations, monitoring the impact of mainstream measures on Roma, cooperation with local authorities and civil society, and the involvement of Roma in all phases of the policy process.

The Commission called for further and more coordinated efforts between the European, national, and local levels, including the creation of national Roma platforms to streamline the work with Roma communities. Member States were told they must prioritize the fight against discrimination and anti-Gypsyism, and focus on the integration of Roma youth, women and children. While Member States had begun

¹¹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: Midterm review of the EU framework for national Roma integration strategies. Brussels, 30.8.2017. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2iKxx3l>

to put in place the structural pre-conditions for the successful implementation of their strategies, the Commission noted that “important obstacles persist, such as a lack of capacity and sustainable funding, insufficiently transparent and inclusive involvement of civil society, and local authorities’ limited administrative capacity to implement sustainable integrated measures.”¹²

The stakeholder survey conducted as part of the assessment found that annual monitoring and reporting from the Commission, targeted policy guidance for Member States, data collection and the reporting obligations of Member States “are all crucial to keeping the issue on the policy agenda and improving knowledge and evidence-based policy-making.”¹³ In addition, the survey highlighted the importance of the Commission’s mobilization of mainstream European legal, policy and funding instruments; its commitment to enforcing the prohibition of discrimination; its drive for inclusive reform of mainstream policies; and the alignment of EU funding with policy priorities in 2014-2020.

On Roma inclusion in the candidate countries, the Commission noted, “there has been limited progress on the ground. Most Roma still suffer from multi-dimensional social exclusion, notably in education, employment, health and housing.” The Commission restated its commitment to provide logistical and financial support for the region’s economies to promote Roma integration, and restated its ambition “to enhance and better target Roma inclusion funding, with improved cooperation with international organizations.”

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.



“A credible accession perspective”

In its 2018 Communication on enlargement, the Commission described a “firm, merit-based prospect of EU membership for the Western Balkans” as being in the Union’s very own political, security and economic interest.¹⁴ It declared that the Western Balkan economies “now have a historic window of opportunity to firmly and unequivocally bind their future to the European Union.” A credible accession perspective was described as “the key driver of transformation in the region” and a powerful tool to promote democracy. As President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker put it, “If we want more stability in our neighbourhood, then we must also maintain a credible enlargement perspective for the Western Balkans.”¹⁵

Nonetheless, a 2025 perspective is described as extremely ambitious, and the Commission called on the accession countries to “urgently redouble their efforts, address vital reforms and complete their political, economic and social transformation, bringing all stakeholders on board from across the political spectrum and from civil society”; and in negotiations, accession candidates “must give the rule of law, justice and fundamental rights utmost priority.” The Commission also made specific mention that the “precarious situation’ of the Roma needs to be prioritized “as they continue to face social exclusion, marginalization and discrimination.”

¹⁴ EU Enlargement, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Strasbourg, 6.2.2018. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2ej82y0>

¹⁵ European Commission Press Release, Strategy for the Western Balkans: EU sets out new flagship initiatives and support for the reform-driven region, Strasbourg, 6 February 2018. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2EpFF>

Within this context of a ‘2025 credible accession process’ across the region, and the EU’s commitment to the ‘fundamentals first principle’, RI2020’s position will become even more crucial in ensuring that Roma inclusion remains firmly on the policy agendas of all the region’s economies, as the EU forges its strategy for the Western Balkans, described by Brussels as a “geo-strategic investment in a stable, strong and united Europe based on common values.”

The European Commission’s sobering assessment of the EU Framework’s shortcomings and its recommendations to the Member States fully concur with RI2020’s analysis of what causes the implementation gaps in inclusion strategies in the enlargement region, and informs its mission, priorities and activities. RI2020 activities also align with the recommendations concerning work with Roma, and it promotes policies targeting Roma women; cultivates a participatory approach to policy making in the western Balkans; and advocates for effective action to combat racism and discrimination against Roma.

The importance and impact of the work of RI2020 to date is evident in the Commission’s note that since 2017, all the economies “have National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) and action plans, and put in place National Roma Contact Points (NRCs) and national Roma Platform structures.” Looking beyond 2020, the Commission remains “fully committed to maintaining support for Roma inclusion stakeholders, with a particular emphasis on the involvement of civil society, cooperation with other donors and improved monitoring tools.”¹⁶

¹⁶ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: Midterm review of the EU framework for national Roma integration strategies. Brussels, 30.8.2017. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2iKxx3I>



There were concerns from the outset that the enlargement component of the EU Framework was the weak link, in that none of the consultation structures, or binding commitments on annual reporting effectively applied to candidate economies. However, in close cooperation with the Commission, the RI2020 Action Team has ensured that the ‘enlargement component’ of the EU Roma Framework will not be sidelined. In pursuit of its policy mainstreaming and implementation goals, RI2020’s activities remain key to realizing the Commission’s ambitions for Roma in the region now and post-2020: to close the socio-economic gap between Roma and non-Roma, to end segregation and discrimination, and to have pragmatic and effective policies in place with funding mechanisms aligned to achieve these ends within a fixed time-frame.

The following chapter will provide detail of RI2020’s activities over the past two years, followed by an overview of the situation of the Roma populations in each of the candidate economies, which provides a chastening reminder of the extent of the challenges ahead.





CREATING THE CLIMATE AND CONDITIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE INTEGRATION

“These are tough times for everyone in South East Europe, times of high unemployment, impoverishment and an uncertain and long EU accession journey. These difficult times affect everyone, but even more so the disadvantaged – the Roma. The region needs to walk the path to EU with its entire people, and Roma cannot be left behind again. Roma Integration 2020 is an initiative aiming to lead towards inclusiveness. On behalf of the RCC I pledge that we will do all we can to reduce the socio-economic gap between the Roma and the non-Roma population in the Western Balkans and Turkey.”
(RCC Secretary General, Goran Svilanovic)

At the RI2020 launch event in Brussels in June 2016, George Soros called for Roma inclusion to remain a top priority in EU and non-EU states alike, and expressed his hope that the new initiative “will lead to commitment from high level political leaders and civil servants to deliver tangible results for Romani citizens.” Echoing these sentiments, EU Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn said,

“Roma integration is an important element of the enlargement process. Before accession, countries will need to prove tangible progress in the fields of education, employment, health, housing and civil documentation. The Decade of Roma Inclusion has put integration of Roma on the political agenda: the ‘Roma Integration 2020’ programme is a confirmation of the Decade in the enlargement countries, where it aims to achieve sustainable results on the ground.”¹⁷

As part of this mission, RI2020 provided technical assistance to governments to integrate Roma-specific issues into mainstream policy and budgeting, with three levels of activities:

- (i) Institutional support, designed to accelerate implementation, improve cross-sector coordination, build capacities and exchange practices on Roma integration;
- (i) Regional cooperation to mainstream Roma inclusion priorities within the enlargement

¹⁷ Roma Integration 2020, 'High Level Launch Event: Before accession, countries will need to prove tangible progress on Roma inclusion.' 9 June 2016. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2BYpCik>



- process, to set regional standards and norms, and to promote deeper collaboration across borders; and
- (i) International cooperation to effectively mirror the EU Framework in the candidate countries, establish robust monitoring of integration policy and annual evaluation and reporting on progress.

All of the participating economies have a NRCP, and RI2020 helps each of the NRCPs to maintain a multi-sectorial body comprised of public officials responsible for the priority policy areas and budgeting, as well as members of the Roma communities. These bodies hold regular meetings, attended by the RI2020 Action Team and sometimes EU Delegation representatives, to coordinate, monitor and steer Roma integration policies.

The RI 2020 Action Team also works with the NRCPs to facilitate economy-specific consultations and capacity building trainings, and provides expert policy input and recommendations in the form of briefing papers and monitoring reports, or as an outcome of public dialogue forums and regional workshops. In addition the RI2020 team helps to organize annual national platforms, to review progress and monitoring reports by governments and civil society, provide input to policy planning, assist with budgeting and agree on priority actions for each coming year.

Roma Responsive Budgeting: the stepping-stone to integration

One common challenge to making progress in all of the policy priority areas is the effective use of resources and how best to budget for social inclusion. Deficits in funding and financing effective Roma inclusion policies make it abundantly clear that governments will have

to up their game, increase their investments, and make smarter use of all available resources to ensure that Roma integration interventions have impact and become sustainable components of mainstream policy making. For this reason, Roma responsive budgeting is a horizontal priority along with

The Intergovernmental Working Group on Roma Responsive Budgeting (RRB) supported by the RCC's Roma Integration 2020 Action Team, developed guidelines to assist the economies of the Western Balkans to incorporate and deliver specific Roma integration goals in their mainstream policy developments by means of establishing link between the Roma integration goals and national budgets.¹⁸

The Guidelines propose five main steps for economies to follow:

1. Analyze budgets by their sensitivity and responsiveness to Roma integration issues (Roma responsibility);
2. Analyze general policy and institutional objectives from the perspective of Roma responsibility, and analyze connection of budget programs and/or budget items with the goals of Roma integration.
3. Analyze the current impact of budgets on Roma integration (effect of distributed allocations for Roma integration);
4. Monitor and control resource allocation and how it impacts Roma integration;
5. Provide assessment and recommendations for the next budget cycle (for gradually improving the process of Roma responsible budgeting).

¹⁸ Working Group on Roma Responsive budgeting (RRB) and Roma Integration 2020 Action Team, Guidelines for Roma responsible budgeting. October 2018. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2t2euV9>



By implementing the main steps presented, together with raised awareness and increased commitment and involvement of relevant interest groups - the economies will be able to better recognize benefits for Roma integration that can be achieved by appropriately mainstreaming Roma integration into existing policies or proposing more tailor-made measures and projects.

This is a critical moment to introduce Roma responsive budgeting standards as it is possible to lean against ongoing budgetary reforms in the Western Balkans economies aimed at introducing program and performance budgeting. National investments in Roma integration will be increasingly matched with the EU funding in the pre-accession and post-accession period, but only if the participating economies can negotiate for increased support based on evidence.¹⁹ Donor funding will likewise increasingly conditional on the Western Balkans economies being able to convince donors to invest in Roma inclusion policies that have a clear prospect of success that is supported by evidence. Roma responsive budgeting analysis can help in providing that evidence.

Such developments require in-depth analysis of the existing budgets and policy processes – to reveal gaps between the planned and implemented measures; to be able to assess the links between policy goals and indicators set in the budgets; and to provide data on

¹⁹ After accessing the EU, structural funds will become an important financing source for programs and projects that foster Roma integration. In line with Common Basic Principle Two, “explicit but not exclusive” targeting, the European Commission works to mainstream Roma integration into all EU policies. This mainstreaming approach allows the Commission to support activities through a variety of EU funding mechanisms. Particularly relevant are the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) which together fall under the EU Structural Funds umbrella, and make available billions of EUR to Member states which can be utilized to promote Roma integration.

the cost-effectiveness of such measures. Such analysis would facilitate evidence-based investments, allow for more nuanced prioritization, and greater efficiency in the deployment of available resources.

Roma responsive budgeting renders the prospect of putting Roma integration goals into practice a more viable and robust option. The Guidelines document outlines some of its advantages:

- * It contributes to greater budget transparency linked to budget-related political decisions;
- * and allows for greater accuracy and sustainability in the use of public funds, which can be more precisely tailored to the real and diverse range of needs within Roma communities including those, for example, of the elderly, children, women and people with disabilities;
- * Roma responsive budgeting also serves to identify discriminatory implications of funding decisions and enables fair restructuring of resource allocation decisions.

Roma responsive budgeting requires an enabling environment to be operational and yield the desired results, and key prerequisites include:

- * An understanding of how Roma integration issues can be integrated in different policies and an ability to address the issues with specific (new or existing) measures and projects. This becomes possible with a gradual approach, trainings of budget users, raising awareness and capacity building of all interested actors.
- * Political commitment – the executive and legislative powers need to acknowledge the need for immediate and ongoing actions for Roma integration and communicate this throughout the administration and the Parliament.



- * Financial commitment – Roma integration cannot advance only by setting up national policies and strategies. Core financial commitments proportionate to the tasks at hand need to come from budgeting officials across the responsible central institutions and ministries.
- * Establishing disaggregated data systems is, as has been mentioned umpteen times, vital to ensure effective and efficient allocation, spending and monitoring of funds.

Introducing Roma responsive budgeting and ensuring that it is adequate for the implementation of the Roma integration policy by taking the recommendations from this process into account when creating the public budget would most probably take a number of years. The introduction of Roma responsive budgeting as an official part of the public budgeting process needs to be done in a controlled manner, with the gradual inclusion of more budget programs into the analysis, and steady improvement of the process itself and the budget brief as its output. It should increasingly contain better informed, more relevant and feasible arguments and recommendations for the public budget. Within the process of the gradual introduction of Roma responsive budgeting, the line ministries that are able to properly plan Roma integration policies within the corresponding budget (based on evidence that includes adequate indicators, the collection of relevant expenditure and results data, and reporting on the results) should have sufficient funding for Roma integration policies approved by the Ministry of Finance for the subsequent budget year. RI2020 will pursue this agenda and work closely with all the economies of the region to fully operationalize Roma responsive budgeting. Because a ‘fundamentals first’ approach to Roma inclusion must become part of the commonsense of mainstream social policy across the Western Balkans if the promise of equity and socio-economic integration for Roma is to be realized beyond 2020.

Regional workshops

The regional workshops bring together the National Roma Contact Points along with the primary responsible officials dealing with the priority areas of education, employment, housing, health and civil registration; as well as representatives from relevant institutions. To give some idea of the substance and key themes, the following is a summary of these regional events facilitated and hosted by the RI2020 Action Team.

The workshops sought to tackle the most pressing and most difficult of challenges and to create an environment where government officials, civil society actors, and experts from international organizations could grapple with these themes in all their complexity and initiate common agendas for change.

The series began with a concrete drive to set regional standards by introducing a Monitoring and Reporting Template, that would surpass the old habits of submitting lists of activities undertaken with no allusion to the impact, the worth or the sustainability of such interventions. A user-friendly template not only raises the quality of the reporting, monitoring and data collection, and incorporates questions of costing, scale and impact, but it also allows for region-wide comparison to identify both commonalities and particularities for more nuanced policy interventions, and more concise analysis of their impact upon Roma communities.

From then RI2020 moved to the finances, and how to deal with the perennial problem of integration strategies and action plans without dedicated budgets to cover the costs of the proposed integration measures. The reasons for such critical deficits were manifold, ranging from capacity issues, and failures to budget for mainstream and targeted Roma inclusion



measures, to a lack of political will and diffusions of responsibility when it came to Roma integration. In identifying common challenges, RI2020 and public officials sought practical ways to improve budget analysis and to develop evidence-based decision-making and budget preparation processes.

The fact that economies in the region still remain dependent upon foreign donors to the tune of between 35-60% to meet commitments on Roma inclusion calls for a more optimal model of coordination. RI2020 hosted this event to initiate dialogue and to identify concrete opportunities for cooperation between donors and governments, especially in the priority areas of employment and housing.

In line with RI2020's commitment to broach issues deemed to be difficult, and following the EU call for decisive efforts to fight discrimination, a regional workshop was organized to initiate in-depth discussion on anti-Gypsyism, and heighten awareness among regional officials of the impact of discrimination, and to explore how best to mainstream combating anti-Gypsyism across all priority policy areas to promote Roma integration.

No less difficult has been the issue of housing, where little progress has been made over the last decade, and where the gravity of the situation can be measured by the extent of 'severe material deprivation', which ranges from 83% to 94% for vulnerable Roma in the region. Decent living conditions are a prerequisite for improved health, educational attainments, and meaningful integration. The conference explored in detail how to adopt a comprehensive, holistic approach for future housing interventions, and how such approaches could be integrated into the cycles of public budgeting and IPA programming.

Access to the labor market, having worthwhile and gainful employment is one of the key drivers of societal integration, and one of the policy priority areas where progress remains elusive. RI2020 considered it important to focus on how to remedy the situation for Romani women and girls and also organized a regional workshop on the topic. In terms of marginalization, the situation of Romani women and girls is especially acute: a combination of factors hinders women's economic independence, including low educational attainment, the intersection of ethnic and gender discrimination in the wider society, patterns of early marriages and pregnancies, residential segregation and deep poverty.

Vienna, 12 December 2016: Monitoring and Reporting on Roma Integration

“The European institutions, the EU Member States as well as all the countries with aspirations to join the EU have a joint responsibility to improve the lives of its Roma citizens. In order to track the changes and the progress towards the Roma Integration 2020 targets and overall Roma inclusion process we need accurate and up-to-date information, where monitoring and reporting have a crucial role.”

(Goran Svilanovic, RCC Secretary General)

The RI2020 Action Team developed a Monitoring and Reporting Template and presented it at this regional workshop, which aimed to deepen understandings and build capacities of public servants to deliver annual monitoring and reporting on progress made with the NRIS. This unified template was developed in cooperation with other regional stakeholders and based on the experience of prior mapping, monitoring and data collection carried out by FRA and the UNDP under the auspices of the EU Framework and the Decade of Roma Inclusion.



There was much discussion about the differences between economies across the region, the level of implementation of NRIS and Action Plans, and three main issues were identified:

- ✳ Instructions have to be prepared on how to complete the template so that further instructions by the National Roma Contact Points (NRCPs) to all relevant bodies are clear and understandable;
- ✳ In-house on-going support of NRCPs will be needed to prepare the annual report on the implementation in each participating economy, to strengthen the cooperation between institutions.
- ✳ Regular regional exchanges of good practices will be necessary and valuable learning opportunities for those countries less advanced with their NRIS.

The more specific conclusions and recommendations can be summarized as follows:

- ✳ In line with the definition used by the European Commission and other international bodies, within the context of Roma Integration 2020, the term 'Roma' is used to refer to a wide diversity of groups, and this includes Ashkali and Egyptians.
- ✳ It is generally recommended that only those who freely declare themselves as Roma, should be considered as Roma. Because many Roma are unwilling to self-declare, this approach may lead to generating misleading official data about the number and structure of Roma population in certain countries.²⁰ It is recommended that responsible government institutions, including NRCPs, as well as civil society organizations,

²⁰ For more detail on population data and the gaps between official estimates and average estimates from other sources see: <https://bit.ly/2MnQFOQ>

initiate awareness raising campaigns to dispel fears about self-declaring and explaining the practical benefits.

- ✳ When assessing the impact of measures which target specific multiply disadvantaged areas, or vulnerable groups defined in socio-economic terms, it is recommended that for the purposes of monitoring, specific methods be adopted to assess the impact on Roma beneficiaries. For mainstream social policies, the NRIS or Action Plan should include specific measures in terms of outreach to ensure that Roma are involved and informed, and also to better assess the number of Roma beneficiaries.
- ✳ The gender dimension is mainstreamed throughout the template, as each indicator mentioned requires gender disaggregation. Information on the gender dimension needs to be included in statements of goals and objectives, description of measures, calculation of impact assessment indicators.
- ✳ It was emphasized that while monitoring and reporting may be used to identify regional trends, it is primarily intended as a policy tool for governments to assess progress and identify needs for adjustments within each respective economy. Therefore, there is flexibility to use somewhat modified definitions of indicators or definitions adapted to the specific context and practices of data collection, which might differ from those proposed with the Roma Inclusion Index.
- ✳ Regarding the various difficulties around availability and reliability of information and data, it was advised that all data relating to policy implementation should be the best possible, as accurate as possible, and officially recognized (including in the cases when the source of information and statistical data is not official). Those data that cannot be provided



by official institutions should be sought from other (unofficial) sources, such as civil society organizations or universities, and the most accurate data should be officially recognized and included in the report.

- * Economies should strive to improve their monitoring and data collection systems with a view to officially provide all the necessary data they need to monitor their Roma integration strategies/action plans in the upcoming years. The NRCP has the primary responsibility to coordinate the process of information and data gathering; the NRCP leads the process, coordinates the efforts of all institutions and organizations in the economy and closely cooperates with them in preparing the report.
- * It was highly recommended that Roma actively participate in the process of monitoring of the NRIS. Besides the independent civil society reporting, the NRCPs in each economy should meaningfully involve Roma in the monitoring process, either through their participation in the inter-disciplinary body, by means of public consultations during the monitoring report, or through direct involvement as partners with clearly specified roles in the implementation and monitoring processes.
- * While many representatives spoke of their needs for financial and technical assistance from international organizations, it was recommended that such assistance be viewed solely as pilot actions. The responsibility for building sustainable and effective monitoring mechanisms lies with the responsible institutions within each of the participating countries.²¹

Skopje, 20 March 2017: Public Budgeting for Roma Integration Policies

“Policies and budgets are where the governments begin to translate their commitments to Roma into practical steps towards integration and equality. Too often, however, they fail to ensure that public services respond to Roma needs and priorities.”
(Orhan Usein, RI2020 Action Team Leader)

The event gathered more than 60 governmental officials from the Western Balkans working in the respective line ministries in charge of the five policy priorities (employment, education, housing, health, etc.) and budget, including the ministry of finance and the National Roma Contact Points, European Union Delegations, and civil society representatives. The workshop aimed to assist governments to integrate measures from the NRIS into the domestic budgets, to explore the link between planning and budgeting.

Problems with budgeting included the failure to develop quality NRIS in a timely manner. In practice, strategic documents are often produced with delay, activities or measures are inadequately defined, and the financial framework for implementation is often missing or poorly defined. The failure to submit proposals in a timely fashion that align with mainstream policies and are based on budgeting methodologies required by the Ministry of Finance, leads to them being rejected. Key challenges include a lack of political will to support Roma inclusion; poor capacity and a lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities between institutions; as well as a general poor quality of budget management systems.

In summary challenges common to the region were identified as:

²¹ An in-depth summary of the workshop and all related documents are available here: <https://bit.ly/2Rx9ldf>



- * A need for more careful costing of mainstream and targeted measures with regards to implementation of NRIS. It is necessary to understand and define Roma integration targets and objectively verifiable indicators (OVIs) within existing documents (including strategies/ action plans);
- * The collection of statistics and data disaggregated by ethnicity needs to be improved in order to support evidence-based decision-making and budget preparation processes;
- * There is a lack of constructive communication between key institutions in budgeting process – including Ministry of Finance, Budget Users/ Line ministries responsible for implementation of Roma integration goals, MPs and CSOs. The same applies for communication between the organizational units in charge of Roma integration policies and budget/finance units within the responsible institutions;
- * Poor horizontal coordination and structured information sharing among institutions responsible for Roma integration policies (including executive government, development organizations and CSOs);
- * Lack of resource allocation for financing Roma integration policies from existing national governments' budgets;
- * Inadequate capacities related to evidence-based prioritization, and lack of established prioritization mechanisms at government level to ensure Roma integration policy priorities are recognized and budget secured;
- * Program or results-based budgeting as a process that allocates resources to specified objectives and/or results is still in the process of implementation in some of the participating economies.

The key recommendations that came from the workshop were:

- * There is a need to build the capacities to deliver better budget analysis to ensure adequate resource allocations and sound planning for effective implementation of Roma inclusion policies. Capacity-building needs to involve all stakeholders in the budget preparation process, including line ministries, Ministries of Finance, CSOs, and Members of Parliament;
- * Governments need to improve knowledge of how to define and apply costing methodologies in order to measure strategy costs and 'value for money'; they need to be better able to identify qualitative/quantitative Roma integration objectively verifiable indicators. A key requirement for prioritization and effective budgeting for Roma integration policies is that all budget process stakeholders must improve their understanding of how to implement program budgeting;
- * National and regional cooperation between public institutions dealing with Roma integration policies and CSOs that work on Roma integration initiatives should be improved.²²

²² An in-depth summary of the workshop and all related documents are available here: <https://bit.ly/2CINN8E>



Tirana, 10 November 2017: Filling in the Budget Gaps in Roma Integration Policies

“The region needs coordinated and cooperative investments to cut down its social expenses. This is especially important as 30 to 50% of the approved Roma Action Plans throughout the region rely on external donor funds. Kicking off a process of much better donor coordination and making sure money is spent effectively to produce tangible change on the ground is of extreme importance.”
(Goran Svilanovic, RCC Secretary General)

The conference brought together prominent politicians, government representatives, EU officials, active donor organizations, financial institutions, and regional initiatives to identify and match adequate funding opportunities either on a bilateral or regional basis for measures and programs that cannot be fully funded from national budgets. The conference focused on the policy priorities of housing and employment as prerequisites for a decent standard of living and sought to define common objectives, measures and activities, to initiate dialogue and better align the priorities of governments and donors, and to identify concrete opportunities for cooperation between donors and governments to promote Roma integration across the region.²³

Expressions of good will to improve coordination and establish regular opportunities for in-depth dialogue were backed up with general recommendations to initiate joint forums of governments and civil society; to

²³ Prior to the conference, the RI2020 Action Team conducted a detailed Donor Mapping Analysis and “Analysis of the priorities and budget of the official Roma integration policies in the areas of employment and housing in the Western Balkans and Turkey”. The report and all related documents are available at: <https://bit.ly/2y7QN0p>

strengthen stakeholder dialogue, improve coordination and monitoring mechanisms; prepare priority regional programs to present to donors. Governments were urged to familiarize themselves with donors’ strategic plans for the region to better position themselves to bid for future support to hasten implementation of specific policy measures that require donor assistance. Towards this end, governments were urged to engage donors in consultation meetings with civil society, employers and local authorities.

Specific recommendations to address the two-fold challenge around Roma employment: chronic skills shortages among Roma on the one hand, and deep-rooted discrimination against Roma regardless of their qualifications on the other included:

- ✱ A range of affirmative measures and incentive schemes prioritizing Roma with educational qualifications, training and professional development;
- ✱ Setting aside quotas for qualified Roma to work in public administration, as already exists for other national minorities;
- ✱ Targeting motivated Roma with a range of vocational programs and work placement training to (re-)integrate them into the labour market;
- ✱ Governments should explore cooperation and co-funding opportunities for such incentive schemes with larger companies that have embedded corporate social responsibilities into their core business principles and marketing strategies.
- ✱ Awareness campaigns and promotions to challenge negative stereotypes about Roma among the majority with regards to employment, and to provide information about opportunities for employment and incentives for training to Roma communities.



As regards the crisis in housing and accommodation, and challenges around legalization and sustainability for people with no income to maintain the upkeep of the dwellings, the following recommendations were made:

- ✳ Central and local governments should be tasked to monitor and report on the living conditions of Roma where housing projects are implemented. Regular reporting should be complemented by scheduled visits by civil society and social welfare employees to ascertain the needs and situation of every Roma family needing assistance, to enable more effective allocation of funding;
- ✳ Responsible ministries must cooperate more closely with those local governments that have significant Roma populations to devise joint projects and solutions that address housing needs and promote social integration;
- ✳ The authorities should expedite legalization and formalization of Roma housing units and properties wherever possible, along with improvement of the infrastructure and housing in the settlements;
- ✳ Local authorities should use the reporting template and seek the assistance of Roma civil society organizations to collect information on housing needs to provide national governments with more precise and comprehensive information. This will enable more efficient budgeting and planning, and to determine whether and to what extent donor support is required.
- ✳ Participating economies were encouraged to design integrated pilot projects that combine creating employment opportunities and simultaneously addressing the housing needs of targeted Roma communities

Berlin, 13 Feb 2018: Addressing Discrimination and Anti-Gypsyism in the Enlargement Region²⁴

“The Roma have been treated unthinkable and unacceptably for centuries. They have been deprived of their human rights. They have been enslaved, disowned, persecuted, exterminated, and not even the emancipation of our societies resulted in putting an end to societal anti-Gypsyism. Anti-Gypsyism is the belief that Roma are inferior, capable of less, having no prospect or will to catch up with the non-Roma, unfit to be good citizens of the countries they have been living for centuries; and anti-Gypsyism is also the actions built on this belief.”

(Soraya Post, Member of the European Parliament)²⁵

This event followed the EU Communication on Enlargement, which called for decisive efforts to protect minorities and fight discrimination, and formed part of RI2020 ongoing efforts to increase regional officials’ understanding of the impact of discrimination and their knowledge of the historical context and contemporary ramifications of anti-Gypsyism. The organizers deemed that the enlargement region was “lagging behind” in fully recognizing and effectively addressing the phenomenon of anti-Gypsyism. The conference offered participants a learning exchange with peers from Germany and other EU Member

²⁴ RI2020 uses the form ‘anti-Gypsyism’ in line with the European Commission, the Fundamental Rights Agency and the Council of Europe. The only exceptions in the text are in direct quotations that use ‘antigypsyism’, and references to the Alliance against Antigypsyism.

²⁵ Motion for a European Parliament Resolution: on fundamental rights aspects in Roma integration in the EU: fighting anti-Gypsyism. 11 October 2017. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2iwIKGM>



States, to explore how best to align regional approaches to combat anti-Gypsyism.

Romani Rose, chair of the Central Council of German Roma and Sinti, in his opening remarks described anti-Gypsyism as a societal problem that poses a fundamental challenge to European principles of democracy and the rule of law. Discriminatory practices against Roma originate in racism, and anti-Gypsyism, just like anti-Semitism is “deeply ingrained in European history” and must be condemned just as forcefully.

Definitions

In 2011, the European Committee to Combat Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) produced a working definition of anti-Gypsyism as

“an especially persistent, violent, recurrent and commonplace form of racism, an ideology founded on racial superiority, a form of dehumanisation and institutional racism nurtured by historical discrimination, which is expressed, among others, by violence, hate speech, exploitation, stigmatisation and the most blatant kind of discrimination.”²⁶²⁷

The *Alliance against Antigypsyism*, presented its Reference Paper, which aimed to elaborate a common understanding of the nature and implications of anti-Gypsyism, and reflect a “broad but systematic understanding of the phenomenon”. In its working definition anti-Gypsyism is described as:

²⁶ ECRI General Policy Recommendation N°13 on combating anti-Gypsyism and discrimination against Roma. Adopted on 24 June 2011 ECRI General Policy Recommendation Nos. 3 & 13: Key Topics. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/ecri-general-policy-recommendation-nos-3-13-key-topics-fighting-racism/16808b763c>

²⁷ ECRI's working definition was part of General Policy Recommendation No.13 on combating anti-Gypsyism which called on member States to adopt 90 measures: on the one hand, to ensure the access of Roma to education, employment and other goods and services; and, on the other hand, to combat hate speech, racist crimes and violence against Roma, through both the application of criminal law provisions and preventive and awareness-raising measures. Finally, it emphasized that only a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach to Roma issues, involving Roma representatives at all levels of policy-making (conception, development, implementation and evaluation) can enhance mutual trust and contribute to the fight against anti-Gypsyism.



“a historically constructed, persistent complex of customary racism against social groups identified under the stigma ‘gypsy’ or other related terms, and incorporates: (a) a homogenizing and essentializing perception and description of these groups; (b) the attribution of specific characteristics to them; and (c) discriminating social structures and violent practices that emerge against that background, which have a degrading and ostracizing effect and which reproduce structural disadvantages.”²⁸

A key feature that distinguishes anti-Gypsyism from other forms of contemporary racism is its high level of social acceptance, and the lack of censure for discriminatory practices and pejorative statements against Roma. The ambivalence and acquiescence towards anti-Roma racism has facilitated the emergence of what the authors call ‘reasonable anti-Gypsyism, which they claim is the norm rather than the exception in public discourse.

The reference paper itself was a timely and important intervention to ‘complicate’ current understandings of anti-Gypsyism, stimulated thoughtful and wide-ranging debate and responses from civil society and European institutions; and provided a necessary corrective to the more narrow usage of the term to refer solely to direct instances or expressions of anti-Roma hostility and prejudice in the public sphere, such as hate crime and hate speech.

²⁸ Alliance against Antigypsyism, Antigypsyism - A Reference Paper, Version June 2017. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2OCogSn>

Recognition, resolutions and reports on ‘the scourge’ of anti-Gypsyism

Official recognition gathered pace in recent years. In April 2015, the European Parliament passed a resolution on anti-Gypsyism in Europe, followed in June by statements from Commission Vice-President Timmermans and Commissioner Jourová on the EU Framework, which explicitly called on Member States to step up the fight against anti-Gypsyism, segregation, and all forms of discrimination against Roma to promote full inclusion.²⁹ Under the aegis of the EU Framework, this marked a definite milestone in terms of visible and official recognition of anti-Gypsyism as a specific form of racism.

On 25 October 2017, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on fundamental rights aspects in Roma integration, which called on the European Union and the Member States to take bold action against anti-Gypsyism, as well as on the FRA to prepare a study on anti-Gypsyism and focus on anti-Gypsyism in its work on Roma.³⁰ Acting on a direct recommendation in the resolution, the FRA produced the 2018 report, *A persisting concern*, which examined the impact of anti-Gypsyism in hindering Roma inclusion efforts.³¹

The report revealed how Member States are failing on most of their integration targets, with no

²⁹ European Commission – Press release, ‘Commission dedicates more funding to Roma integration’, Brussels 18 June 2015. Available at: <https://bit.ly/1GRyYkD>

³⁰ Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (2017), Fundamental rights aspects in Roma integration in the EU: fighting anti-Gypsyism. European Parliament resolution of 25 October 2017 on fundamental rights aspects in Roma integration in the EU: fighting anti-Gypsyism (2017/2038(INI)), P8_TA-PROV(2017)0413.

³¹ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *A persisting concern: anti-Gypsyism as a barrier to Roma inclusion*, p.3, 2018. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2JpgbD8>



discernible change in living conditions or employment opportunities. Concerning anti-Gypsyism, the FRA study found that for almost three quarters of the Roma respondents across the surveyed countries, harassment due to their ethnicity is a recurring experience – 76% experienced such incidents more than once in the 12 months before the survey.³² The report provides compelling evidence of the adverse impact anti-Gypsyism has on all aspects of Roma lives, how it reinforces segregation and ‘normalizes’ extreme deprivation as socially acceptable.

The report called for critical assessment and remedial measures to address the fact that “the Racial Equality Directive (2000/43/EU) is not effective”. In addition to concrete measures to tackle hate crime and hate speech motivated by anti-Gypsyism, the report recommended that “EU Member States should complement law enforcement with deliberate efforts to dismantle the social construct of the “Gypsy” and the association of Roma with marginalization.”

The Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) measures

At the RI2020 conference in Berlin, many of the participants highlighted the need to strengthen civil society alliance building and capacities to respond to anti-Gypsyism; emphasized the urgency of the need to build trust between Roma and non-Roma, and for institutions to earn the trust of Roma communities that they will fulfill their obligations without prejudice. As MEP Cornelia Ernst reminded the participants, this involves addressing aspects of institutional anti-Gypsyism, such as the police practices of ethnic profiling, excessive stop and search, police brutality and violent raids in Roma settlements.

³² Ibid, p. 20

She recalled the European Parliament demand for more effective spending on targeted policies which address institutional anti-Gypsyism and racist barriers in education, employment and urban planning, and called on governments to amend their action plans and inclusion strategies to include comprehensive measures in all policy areas to combat anti-Gypsyism.

The concrete measures proposed in the LIBE Committee report of the European Parliament were presented as equally relevant for Member States and the WB region. Among the key recommendations were:

Belonging and participating: States must take full responsibility to educate mainstream societies about Roma history and culture in all its diversity, and launch long-term awareness raising and intersectional sensitization campaigns to alert citizens to the extent and the damage caused by anti-Gypsyism. Towards this end, active and meaningful Roma participation is key to building much-needed mutual trust, and Member States should support independent Roma civil organizations and the empowerment of a young progressive Roma leadership in public life.

Reconciling and building trust: The Committee report called for the setting up of truth and reconciliation commissions to acknowledge the persecution and exclusion of Roma throughout the centuries, and to document these in an official white paper. States were encouraged to make the history of Roma part of the curricula in schools; to mark 2 August as Roma Holocaust Memorial Day, and to include commemoration of Roma victims in Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremonies.

Prioritizing anti-Gypsyism post-2020: The report called for anti-Gypsyism to feature as a priority horizontal issue in the post-2020 EU Framework, and that the Commission should develop – in partnership with Member States,



the FRA and NGOs – an inventory of practical steps for Member States to combat anti-Gypsyism. In the context of external relations, EU institutions were urged to mainstream Roma rights and to insist strongly on the need to fight anti-Gypsyism “in the candidate countries and potential candidate countries”.

For the millions of Roma living in deep poverty and exclusion, a focus on combating anti-Gypsyism puts the responsibility back where it belongs – with the state structures and institutions. As Romani Rose said at the Berlin conference, *“the precarious position of Roma and inhumane living conditions they face cannot be taken for granted. Awareness must be raised that the Roma minority is not responsible for its social disadvantage and exclusion.”* A focus on anti-Gypsyism holds the promise that fundamental rights, equality and justice might prevail in the post-2020 Roma inclusion agenda.

Recommendations moving forward

The recommendations from participants included the following:

- * Necessity to recognize the existence of anti-Gypsyism was deemed to be a priority given that participants judged the enlargement region to be largely unaware of the existence of anti-Gypsyism, or at best only understanding the term in a narrow sense as discriminatory behavior against Roma. Roma should stop being perceived as ‘others’ and the ‘outer group’, but as citizens, both by institutions and the wider society.
- * A precise definition is needed to be better able to combat anti-Gypsyism; to better understand all of its dimensions and manifestations; to be able to recognize its full impact on the target population; and to understand the relation between the discourse and practice.
- * Civil society should pilot qualitative research

measuring social distance and mistrust between Roma and non-Roma, as well as anti-Roma attitudes in the mainstream population to provide a sense of the extent and the content of anti-Gypsyism. Governments should re-examine their historical archives on state repression of Roma and make these findings public.

- * The concept of anti-Gypsyism together with measures to combat it should be included in Roma integration strategies and Action Plans, as well as other anti-discrimination policies. A guide with concrete indicators should be developed for authorities, institutions and civil society on how to recognize and combat anti-Gypsyism.
- * Public service providers, hospital personnel, educators and law enforcement officers need to be made aware of what constitutes direct and indirect discrimination against Roma, provided with training where necessary and sanctions need to be applied to prohibit anti-Gypsyism in all public bodies.
- * The economies should consider following the example of Sweden and Spain and form commissions on anti-Gypsyism as well as specialized units to combat hate crime.
- * Anti-Gypsyism is not about Roma but about mainstream population and its projections and attitudes. This is why attention needs to shift to the mainstream society, and the emphasis should be on the prevention of racism, prejudice and hate crime. Towards that end there is a need to shift the narrative and combat toxic stereotypes through education and media campaigning.³³

³³ An in-depth summary of the workshop and all related documents are available here: <https://bit.ly/2t303A5>



Bar, 31 May 2018: Holistic Approach to Housing of Roma in the Enlargement Region

“In order to address the housing issue of Roma in the most adequate way, all regional economies should seek ways to ensure sustainable funding and housing stock, not only through new funding schemes, but also through making use of empty housing stock and decreasing long-term costs of providing housing. In addition, it is necessary to explicitly prioritize Roma as a minority group in housing legislation and to provide affirmative and specifically designed measures according to their needs.”

(Orhan Usein, RI2020 Action Team Leader)

For the workshop participants, who included more than 80 public officials from Western Balkans and Turkey, the UNDP Regional Roma Survey provided a salutary reminder of the gravity of the housing situation: ‘severe material deprivation’ ranges from 83% to 94% for vulnerable Roma in the region. Many households still do not have access to piped water, public sewerage system, or their waste is not collected. A striking number of households of vulnerable Roma are without access to toilets inside their dwellings.³⁴ The conference provided a platform to discuss how best to apply a comprehensive, holistic approach for future housing interventions and how such approaches can be integrated into the upcoming cycles of public budgeting and IPA programming.

A holistic approach, vital during the planning and implementation of housing initiatives, should be

- * Integral: combine activities in area of housing with activities in other areas such as employment, education, health, etc., ensuring sustainability and decency of living;
- * Participative: including Roma into the whole process - from planning to implementation;
- * Individually tailored: taking into account the specific situation of each individual and/or family.

Holistic approach – a necessity: a complete understanding of the context is needed to successfully decide on and pursue the holistic approach. Context understanding needs to include the present as well as the historical perspective (what brought about the current situation). Understanding the context encompasses consultations with Roma as well as all other relevant stakeholders and dialogue promotion.

The need for Roma participation can never be exaggerated, as Roma must have a say in the decision-making. Some of the holistic methodologies presented during the conference confirmed this. Notably, the approach also needs to include consultations with the “receiving” communities and ensure municipal cooperation.

Accelerated, Appropriate and Dedicated Implementation: To successfully resolve the Roma housing situation, the pace of implementation will have to be accelerated. Again, the point was made that without ethnically disaggregated data, policy monitoring and evaluation will lag, and authorities will not have the information they need to efficiently allocate resources, readjust policies, or assess the needs of deprived communities. Municipal level collaboration is crucial for any prospect of success. For this reason, capacity-building, clarification of roles and responsibilities between central and local government, and support and co-funding arrangements should all be in place before implementation, as should plans for infrastructure

³⁴ UNDP Regional Roma Survey 2017: Country fact sheets. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2ycrYAq>



works to closely follow the construction of housing units.

More flexible legislation: Conference highlighted the need for more flexible legislation to take account of human rights obligations and emergency situations. The following suggestions were made:

Introducing a phased approach to housing in case of emergency situations would mean that the legislation is flexible enough to provide for housing services to Roma even when they live in illegal units and illegal settlements, due to necessity and human rights considerations.

Adopting a long-term and sustainable approach to include legalization of settlements. While this solution might require necessary demolitions in order to reconfigure settlements, it has the benefit of being cheaper and of minimizing evictions. Each such initiative should follow a holistic approach and promote settlement desegregation. Technical, administrative, legal and financial support should be provided for Roma in the process of legalization. In the area of social housing, economies need to consider increasing the social housing fund and providing sufficient services, while also aiming to lower the number of beneficiaries over time.

Increasing legal guarantees: Whether in case of evictions, legalization, or social housing, beneficiaries should have clear understanding of their rights. In case of evictions, it is necessary to comprehensively regulate the field. There needs to be a consistent, law-based approach that covers permissible reasons for evictions; procedures and consultations concerning evictees; description of circumstances when evictions may or may not be carried out. This would rule out the arbitrariness and legal ambiguity that is so pervasive, and leave Roma better protected as municipalities are more inclined to implement their obligations and protect rights of

Roma when legal provisions are detailed. In the area of social housing, the legislation needs to clearly define the minimum adequate housing standard, eligibility conditions for social housing, content of housing support measures, and methodology for choosing the beneficiaries, and allow for assistance to all Roma at risk of statelessness.

Prioritization and Targeted Approach: Due to the multidimensional vulnerability and discrimination faced by Roma, a targeted approach should encompass free legal aid, lowering administrative and financial barriers, and supporting Roma in legalization and social housing.

Land and Property Ownership: The need to clarify and resolve land and property ownership, as well as the inclusion of land in urban plans are the necessary preconditions for success of any housing initiative. The situation is such that Roma often remain unable to resolve or demonstrate ownership making it impossible to benefit from housing support and legalization. While some administrative barriers have been overcome and various documents are now accepted as a proof of rights over property, issues around land ownership have yet to be resolved. States were urged to seek additional ways to provide land plots for Roma, either through leasing, installment purchase, or simply granting the plots of land to Roma. Such solutions require political will, and a degree of flexibility from urban planning institutions.

Increasing Funding, Institutional, and Human Capacities: Considering the housing needs of Roma, much more investments in legalization campaigns and social housing will be needed in the future. The participating economies currently predominantly depend on donor support. Sustainability is also needed and some of the ways to achieve this are various public and private funding schemes, promoting social responsibility, as well as guaranteeing long-term funding as a portion



of annual public budget allocated for social housing. Considering the economic situation in the enlargement region, sufficient funding will surely remain the most problematic issue for the future. In the meantime, IPA funds will remain the most significant financial contribution to Roma housing. Besides increased funding, economies will have to strengthen institutional and human capacities to be able to approach the complex situation in the field and successfully implement the holistic approach. The economies are invited to continue training central and local level officials and increase implementing and donor funding absorption capacities.³⁵

Belgrade, 1 November 2018: Economic (In)dependence of Romani women: challenges and early causes

“Romani women are the most vulnerable group of all and the region desperately needs ideas on how to ensure their economic independence, how to engage them in education from early age and in employment later, and how to make sure they make their own decisions.”

(Goran Svilanovic, RCC Secretary General)

In cooperation with the Government of Serbia and CARE International Balkans, RI2020 brought together more than 130 participants drawn from governments, civil society and international organizations to discuss how to improve the situation of Romani women in employment, explore the causes of economic dependency, the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination which exclude them, and models of employment, training and empowerment to counter such exclusion and promote economic independence.

³⁵ An in-depth summary of the workshop and all related documents are available here: <https://bit.ly/2Qxno6K>

UNDP data reveals that Romani women are highly disadvantaged within the labor market, both in terms of employment rates and wages that they receive, and their labor market marginalization is due to ethnicity and gender. The shocking disparities were laid bare in the regional Roma survey, which revealed that in a region where one third of the women surveyed were married before the age of 18, nine in ten Romani women are not in education, employment or training; two in three women do not have money of their own; and half of the women surveyed did not have health care or pension coverage. This is clearly a situation where there is a huge need for increased investment in Romani women and girls’ education, employment, economic independence and empowerment.

The conference explored the causes and consequences of the economic (in)dependence of Romani women in early childhood and youth, as well as the multi-dimensional discrimination based on sex and ethnicity against them, and proposed ways forward for effective employment policies of Romani women in the private and public sector. Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia, Zorana Mihajlovic, said that the task of every society “is to create equal opportunities, including economic independence for women, and specifically Roma women.” While the data confirmed the enormity of what is to be done to fulfill this task, Mihajlovic said that important first steps have been taken through the adoption of key documents and the implementation of IPA projects. She emphasized the importance of regional approaches to overcoming the marginalization faced by Roma communities and advancing the empowerment of Romani women.

Beyond these first steps there is a need for more detailed elaboration of the situation of Romani women in the strategies, towards this end, data need to be disaggregated by ethnicity and gender; specific measures targeting Romani women and girls need to be cognizant



of gender dynamics within the community as well as the multiple forms of discrimination Romani women face in the wider society. Romani women and girls should have access to education on reproductive and sexual rights and health; and heightened awareness on issues such as preventing domestic violence and underage marriages. There were also calls to adopt measures to reduce exploitation in informal work and the expansion of opportunities for economic empowerment of Romani women who are family caregivers within the home.³⁶

Recommendations

- * Currently neither legislation nor integration strategies address intersectional disadvantages faced by Roma women. Inclusion strategies, mainstream policies and domestic legislation need to be amended to tackle the ways in which multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination impede Romani women's access to the labor market
- * There is a need for monitoring and assessment across the region to understand the ramifications and costs to society of gendered and racial discrimination to devise gender-responsive policies that will ensure measures designed to improve access to the labor market will be fully inclusive and address the particular needs of Romani women.
- * Particular attention must be paid to the situation of Romani girls in policies and interventions to prevent early school leaving, school dropouts, and affirmative measures to increase access to higher education and training.
- * All actions designed to address labor market inclusion, for example social entrepreneurship and self-employment; subsidized employment

in the private sector; affirmative measures to increase Roma employment in the public sector must ensure equal participation for Romani women, and be gender-responsive in design and implementation to ensure equitable outcomes for both men and women.

Budapest, 10 December 2018: Innovative approaches to employment of Roma

“National Roma Integration Strategies are in place in all pre-accession economies, ensuring equal access to education, employment, health and housing is part of the enlargement process. However, much remains to be done. No improvement has been observed in access to employment, and the share of young Roma not in employment, education or training (NEET) has even increased. Thus, there is a need to increase ambition on progress during the pre-accession phase”.

(Dominique Be, European Commission)

The regional conference on innovative approaches to employment jointly organized by RI2020, the Employment and Social Affairs Platform (EASP), and the Roma Education Fund (REF) sought to examine and propose employment measures for Roma that may contribute to the reduction of the gap between the employment rate of Roma and the general employment rate in the enlargement region.

This regional event brought together around 50 government officials, including National Roma Contact Points, representatives from the public employment agencies and the ministries from the EU enlargement region dealing with the area of employment/social welfare, education and local self-government, representatives of civil society organizations, and international organizations including UNDP.

³⁶An in-depth summary of the workshop and all related documents are available here: <https://bit.ly/2jtdWIV>



Participants examined the current approaches of the region's economies to employment of Roma and identified the urgent need for modified or new measures. The conference explored mainstream policies and a range of initiatives from regional, international and civil society organizations, to identify possible synergies between sectors to increase the employment rates of Roma across the region.

In his opening remarks, Orhan Usein, RI2020 Action Team Leader said, "The statistical data show the urgent need to create opportunities for actual employment of Roma, while the economies' progress reports point out the need to change the approach in this area". The UNDP regional survey revealed that the situation had worsened since 2011, and that in 2017 the percentage of Roma (ages 18-24) not in training, education and employment, (NEET) ranges from 73% to 86% in the Western Balkans. Unemployment levels and participation in the informal economy suggest that Roma are being "further pushed outside of the labor market, and thus further into poverty."

Senior RCC Expert on Skills and Mobility, Vanja Ivosevic noted the first signs of economic recovery in the Western Balkans, with 600,000 new jobs created since 2016. However the benefits of this progress favoured some citizens more than others, specifically better-educated, highly-skilled males: "In this context we want to assist the governments to better design active labour policies and measures for the benefit of all citizens, including Roma."

RI2020 is working with the governments in the region to set a clear target for the employment of Roma on 25% by the time of accession to EU of each economy in the region. While this target may seem modest against the ambition to "close the gap between Roma and non-Roma", within the given timeframe and current context it is in fact an ambitious target. A discernible

reversal of the negative trends, with a narrowing gap and a rise in Roma labor market participation would be deemed a success. Following this regional event RI2020 will continue to provide technical assistance and a knowledge exchange platform to help governments modify existing approaches, and to adopt innovative interventions that would have a positive impact on Roma labor market participation to meet the set target.

Recommendations

Recommendations combined economy specific and regional steps to modify existing policies and adopt innovative approaches to raise the participation of Roma in the labor market and included the following:

- ✳ Public institutions should take the lead in combating discrimination by increasing the number of Roma employed; setting quota systems where possible; and implementing existing plans for proportionate representation of Roma in public administration and companies, putting in place clear targets and legal enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance.
- ✳ To overcome the low participation of Roma in the Active Labor Market Policies (ALMP), quotas should be introduced to ensure that Roma access vocational and employment training schemes and active employment programs. Suitably qualified Roma mediators should be employed as full-time public servants to oversee such programs, and ALMP should be localized as much as possible and implemented in cooperation with municipalities, with resources should be channeled from client services to direct job creation and employment opportunities.
- ✳ Self-employment programs should be more carefully designed and include training, longer start-up support to be delivered in phases,



and mentoring for at least a two-year period. Legislative and tax reforms should be introduced to make it easier for Roma to set up and run small to medium enterprises.

- ✳ New educational and skills development programs including long-term scholarships could be offered to Roma to qualify for employment where there is growing demand, for example in the IT, engineering, medical and service sectors.
- ✳ Individual employment plans should be created by Employment Institutes (EI) for each unemployed Roma that would identify the participant's employment goals and define the combination of services needed for the participant to reach employment goals. EI mobile teams and branch community services could be set up to provide services directly in marginalized areas to overcome current failures to provide support to long-term unemployed Roma living in such settings.
- ✳ Provision of long-term government support to cover some operational and development costs for social entrepreneurship and sheltered work centers for Roma and to forge partnerships with development organizations, foundations, municipalities and education and training institutes. Roma should also be given opportunities and encouraged to formalize their informal businesses. There is also a need for employers to be encouraged, and where necessary legally compelled to 'declare' their workers.
- ✳ Establish a Regional Fund for Roma Employment to fight discrimination against Roma and promote employment of Roma in public institutions and services; supporting education and training programs matched to labor market demands; and to foster the development of social enterprises and entrepreneurial skills of Roma.







ROMA INTEGRATION ECONOMY PROFILES

This section provides an updated snapshot of the situation in each of the region's economies with information gleaned from the UNDP *Regional Roma Survey*³⁷, combined with summary points from the latest governments' reports on progress with the national Roma strategies which bear the clear imprint of RI2020 coordination and capacity-building, matched with recommendations compiled by RI2020 following national platform meetings, in the course of regular consultations and in the production of economy-specific policy briefings.

Overall, the UNDP survey revealed increased school attendance but a growing gap between Roma and non-Roma in health, employment and housing. The shares of youth (ages 18-24), not in employment, education or training (NEET) ranges from 73% in Serbia to 86% in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Among young women, it varies between 81% in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and 93% in Montenegro.³⁸

Across a number of indicators, the situation of Roma has actually worsened since 2011, with more than one-third living in households where at least one person will go to bed hungry. Against this background, the most

pressing moral imperative is to transcend stagnation and regress in the living conditions and social standing of Roma across the Western Balkans. In pursuit of this objective, at regional level, and simultaneously with each of the economies in the region, RI2020 has actively set about creating the structural preconditions for sustainable change, social inclusion, and the promise of substantive equality for Roma communities.

ALBANIA

Developments between 2011 and 2017

Despite inclusion strategies, according to the UNDP Roma Survey, the situation of marginalized Roma in Albania actually worsened between 2011 and 2017, with Roma facing "limited access to opportunities in virtually every aspect of human development, such as basic rights, health, education, housing, employment and standard of living."³⁹

The NEET rate among marginalized Roma aged 18-24 increased from 69% in 2011 to 78% in 2017. The NEET rate among Roma females hit 90% which is especially

³⁹ UNDP Roma at a Glance Factsheet on Albania. April 2018. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2ycrYAq>

³⁷ UNDP and the World Bank, *The Regional Roma Survey*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2P29tEG>

³⁸ UNDP, "Despite some progress, Marginalized Roma community still most excluded in Western Balkans." April 9, 2018. Available at:



alarming in terms of future opportunities, and access to the labour market. Some 93% of marginalized Roma continue to face high levels of severe material deprivation. The incidence of early marriage remains the highest in the Western Balkans with an estimated 50% of marginalized Roma women aged 20-49 years in Albania married before they were 18 years old.

Education: Pre-primary school enrolment rates of marginalized Roma remain the highest in the Western Balkans at 35% in 2017. The gap between Roma and non-Roma in compulsory education decreased from 42 percentage points in 2011 to 30 percentage points in 2017; compulsory education completion rates doubled, but still most Roma aged 18-21 have still not completed a basic level of education.

Employment: In 2017, employment rates further declined for both males and females. Albania was the only economy in the Western Balkans with rising unemployment and exhibited the highest unemployment rates in the region.

Health: Less than one-third of marginalized Roma had access to health insurance in 2017, the lowest health insurance coverage in the Western Balkans, apart from Kosovo^{*40}. Self-reported unmet need for medical care among marginalized Roma decreased in the period from 2011 to 2017 from just over one-half to one-third. Despite this decrease, Albania has the highest rate in the Western Balkans of marginalized Roma who could not see a doctor when needed.

Housing: Marginalized Roma continue to live in more overcrowded households. Access to electricity actually decreased between 2011 and 2017; and while an increase in access to piped water was registered since 2011, on both counts, coverage for Roma is the lowest

⁴⁰ *This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

in the region. Access among the marginalized Roma population in Albania to the public sewerage system deteriorated between 2011 and 2017, and the gap vis-à-vis non-Roma living in the vicinity increased.

2017 Progress reports and RI2020 Policy Briefings

In its report covering the year that the Albanian Parliament officially recognized Roma as a national minority, the government claimed that its 2017 Action Plan reflected a “scaling up of measures already being implemented and also initiates new activities for promoting the integration of Roma and Egyptians, with committed funding from the central budget and as well as funding from donors.”⁴¹ The government reported that in 2017, 13,683 Roma and Egyptian children were enrolled and attended pre-school and compulsory education, up from 4,437 which marked a three-fold increase over two years.

As regards health, the government provided details of increased services, outreach and the work of mobile medical work teams including screening and awareness campaigns targeting women in urban and rural areas. There was a reported increase in Roma and Egyptians included in housing programs, with additional technical assistance to municipalities, and support provided to some 200 Roma and Egyptian families in 2017. In addition, the central authorities completed the mapping of Roma settlements, together with the assessment of costs involved in urbanization and prioritizing investments into Roma housing and settlements.

The RI2020 briefing called for additional funding as well as technical assistance, and improved coordination between central and local levels for a holistic approach to address housing, and for stronger enforcement of

⁴¹ Roma Integration 2020, Regional Cooperation Council, Policy Brief From The Second National Platform on Roma Integration in Albania, 15 Jun 2018. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2uCP6Wt>



anti-discrimination in the public and rental sectors. Municipalities were urged to resolve long-standing issues of informal and remote settlements that are not connected to public utilities.

The policy brief recommendations called on the government to develop targeted employment programs to address the chronically high numbers of Roma who are NEET; to tackle anti-Roma job discrimination; to promote employment of Roma in the public sector; and to provide additional support for Roma and Egyptian farmers through the Rural Agricultural Development Agency.

The recommendations compiled by RI2020 also called on the government to address reports of discrimination in university admissions and quotas, and to resolve issues around school segregation, transportation, and school meals. It was further recommended that school curricula and textbooks be revised to reflect values of intercultural tolerance, and to include material about the past and present of Roma and Egyptian identities in Albanian society.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Developments between 2011 and 2017

The UNDP *Roma at a glance* factsheet for Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) confirms that the gaps in conditions and opportunities between Roma and non-Roma remain wide: for young people especially so – only 14% of Roma in BiH aged 18-24 are in employment, education or training, compared to 41% of non-Roma.⁴² An estimated 85% of marginalized Roma face severe material

deprivation compared to 48% of non-Roma living in the vicinity. Approximately 27% of Roma women aged 20-49 years were married before they were 18 years old compared to 11% of neighboring non-Roma women.

Education: Pre-primary education enrolment rates have actually decreased since 2011 and in 2017 remain the lowest in the Western Balkans at 2%. The increase in compulsory education enrolment rates from 61% to 70% between 2011 and 2017 did not translate into improved completion rates, which remain unchanged at 43%. The completion rate in upper secondary education for marginalized Roma increased between 2011 and 2017, but no progress has been made in the completion of tertiary education.

Employment: Only 11% of marginalized Roma aged 15-64 are employed compared to 27% of non-Roma. The gender gap is stark regarding employment for marginalized Roma: only 4% of Roma women were employed compared to 19% of men.

Health: Access to health insurance among marginalized Roma remains relatively low: 28% did not have health insurance in 2017, which contrasts with near-universal coverage for neighboring non-Roma. Self-reported unmet need for medical care fell between 2011 and 2017. One-half of marginalized Roma used preventive health care services in 2017 compared to 46% in 2011.

Housing: Marginalized Roma are significantly more likely to live in overcrowded dwellings; overcrowding fell between 2011 and 2017, and the gap with respect to non-Roma also decreased. A reduction in household size and an increase in the number of rooms have led to the observed reduction in overcrowding. Access to piped water at 87% for Roma is one of the highest in the region.

⁴² UNDP *Roma at a Glance* Factsheet on Bosnia and Herzegovina. April 2018. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2ycrYAq>



2017 Progress reports and RI2020 Policy Briefings

In its March 2018 strategic update, the Revised Action Plan 2017-2020, the government maintained that the situation of the Roma had seen significant improvement due to successful “implementation of the Strategy and the supporting action plans.”⁴³ The RI2020 briefing paper reported that the opinion of civil society in BiH differed somewhat, calling for government reporting on progress to more closely reflect reality, to address recommendations that have not been followed up, and “to improve the system of monitoring to reflect the facts on the ground.”⁴⁴

The government was urged to continue its close cooperation with RI2020 to improve its monitoring and budgeting of Roma integration policies; increase its institutional capacities vis-à-vis policy coordination and implementation; and establish mechanisms to generate reliable, disaggregated data to establish results-oriented monitoring and impact assessment. The needs of Romani women and girls should be considered in the action plan and the active promotion of gender equity should be mainstreamed through all thematic areas. While some improvement was noted concerning data collection compared to the previous year, the lack of information remains an issue. RI2020 is working with the Agency for Statistics to develop a methodology to improve data collection on the number of Roma beneficiaries and the collection of impact indicators; and the government will carry out

⁴³ Action Plan For Addressing Roma Issues In The Fields Of Employment, Housing And Health Care 2017 - 2020 – Bosnia And Herzegovina Strategies And Action Plans. 6 Mar 2018. Available at:

⁴⁴ RI2020 Briefing Policy Paper from the Second National Platform on Roma Integration in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sarajevo, 2017). Policy Briefs. 25 September 2017. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2pSLEoF>

an IPA-funded mapping of Roma needs across the territory.⁴⁵

One of the key challenges identified in the policy briefing is that the body responsible for Roma inclusion, the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees (MHRR), has no mechanism and no budget to deal with education. In 2018, efforts were made to overcome the issue, as the Framework Action Plan on Educational Needs of Roma 2018-2022 was adopted by the Council of Ministers. Policy implementation and monitoring is expected to improve as the new Framework Action Plan on Educational Needs of Roma 2018-2022 was adopted.

One issue that requires prompt resolution, because of the potentially fatal consequences, is the situation where many Roma still fall out of the categories of persons covered by compulsory health insurance, and vulnerable Roma do not have financial means to participate in the measure for retroactive payment of health insurance.

On employment, there was a frank admission that current approaches are ineffective, and the MHRR and the Board on Roma are in the process of defining a new approach to employment of Roma.

Among the housing related recommendations compiled by RI2020, were calls on the MHRR to investigate quality and standards of housing units built with funds it allocated to municipalities. National Platform participants called on the MHRR to initiate legal proceedings in cases of unjustified delays, misuse or misappropriation of funds; and to conduct inspections to ensure quality and timely construction of housing units, including the connection to communal utilities.

⁴⁵ RI2020, Policy Recommendations, 2018 National Platform on Roma Integration Bosnia And Herzegovina, 28 September 2018, Sarajevo. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2AAAUQv>



KOSOVO*

Developments up to 2017

The UNDP Kosovo* factsheet found that 84% of marginalized Roma in Kosovo face severe material deprivation compared to 54% of non-Roma living in the vicinity. Early marriage incidence for marginalized Roma women remains high with 30% of marginalized Roma women aged 20-49 years married before they were 18 years old compared to 9% of neighboring non-Roma women.⁴⁶

Education: The pre-primary education enrolment rate of marginalized Roma children aged 3-6 was among the highest in the region at 24%, with no statistically significant gaps vis-à-vis neighboring non-Roma. Some 72% of marginalized Roma children aged 7-15 are enrolled in compulsory education, which is high relative to other countries in the Western Balkans, and there are no significant gender gaps in compulsory education enrolment rates.

About 60% of young adult Roma aged 18-21 have completed compulsory education – completion rates that are higher than in most Western Balkans countries. Gender disparities are observable, as only about half of Roma young women had completed school. For older cohorts, upper secondary and tertiary completion rates are low, and the gaps with respect to non-Roma are wide and similar in size to other Western Balkans countries.

Employment: For both marginalized Roma and non-Roma living in their vicinity, the employment rates were among the lowest in the Western Balkans in 2017, at 13% and 21% respectively. Employment rates of both

Roma and non-Roma women were extremely low: 4% and 6% respectively. The proportion of marginalized Roma ages 18 to 24 who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) is at 78%, compared to 47% of their non-Roma peers. The share of NEETs among young Roma women was even higher at 88%.

Health: In contrast to all other Western Balkan countries, except Albania, which are approaching near-universal health insurance coverage among non-Roma and have covered the great majority of marginalized Roma, in Kosovo, only 10% of marginalized Roma over 16 had access to health insurance.

Housing: Marginalized Roma are more likely to live in overcrowded dwellings, but the gap with respect to non-Roma neighbors is the smallest among Western Balkan countries: 72% of marginalized Roma suffered from overcrowding in 2017, compared to 49% of their non-Roma neighbors. Marginalized Roma in Kosovo are less likely to have access to piped water and electricity than their non-Roma neighbors, and the gaps are in line with those observed in other Western Balkan countries. In 2017, 75% of Roma had access to public sewerage system compared to 90% of their non-Roma neighbors.

2017 Progress Report and RI2020 Policy Briefing

As with many economies, the quality of reporting was an issue, and recommendations from the briefing included a call on the authorities to develop a fully comprehensive monitoring system; to engage the Kosovo* Agency of Statistics in systematized data collection; and to consolidate reporting mechanisms. The administration was urged to institutionalize the National Platform on Roma Integration as an official consultation mechanism in Kosovo*; to strengthen the capacity and role of the National Roma Contact Point to lead, coordinate

⁴⁶ UNDP, Regional Roma Survey 2017: Roma at a Glance Factsheet on Kosovo*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2ycrYAq>



and guide the implementation of Roma integration policies; and ensure greater civil society participation in the process.⁴⁷

Recommendations compiled by RI2020 from participants in the Kosovo* National Platform included a call on the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to develop and implement a program for teaching the “Roma language, history and culture” in cooperation with the relevant municipalities. The Ministry was urged to provide support stipends (rather than awarding merit based scholarships) to Roma students in upper secondary and university education to ensure minimum conditions to enable socially deprived Roma to continue their education. The Ministry was urged to investigate, revise and regularly supervise how affirmative measures for non-majority students operate in universities to ensure that Roma benefit and receive all necessary supports. The existing mechanisms for re-integration in education and adult education should be activated for Roma that have either dropped out from schooling, or for those returnees unable to provide certificates for education obtained abroad.

The responsible institutions for employment and welfare should ensure full implementation of the Roma integration policy plans in this area, including fair representation of Roma in the public sector and increased inclusion of Roma in the active labor market measures. The legal requirements for social assistance, which include the stipulation that family members aged between 15-18 attend secondary education, and that parents to be adults, effectively excluding families in need from social assistance, should be removed. Other, non-repressive mechanisms should be sought to promote attendance of secondary education and prevent early marriages.

⁴⁷ Policy Brief from the Third National Platform on Roma Integration in Kosovo*, 1 November 2018. Available at: <https://Bit.Ly/2blo583>

Returning Roma benefit from mainstream services which include rebuilding or renovating and furnishing houses, but these apply only to repatriated persons, but not Kosovo* residents. Municipalities lack funding to build or renovate housing, or to invest in social housing, and there is an urgent need for central funding to provide social housing for the most vulnerable, and invest in sustainable programs to tackle the housing needs of Roma, including urban planning, infrastructure, upgrading of dwellings, maintenance, and legalization.

In the sphere of health, there were calls to investigate allegations of misuse of medicine distributed to public health centers and intended for Roma patients; and to examine claims of discrimination and ill treatment towards Roma by the medical staff at these health centers. It was also recommended to hire health mediators at the health centers to tackle issues around discrimination, and mediate between the health centers and the Roma community.

The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Developments between 2011 and 2017

Only 26% of marginalized Roma aged 18-24 are in employment, education or training (NEET), compared to 67% of non-Roma; 87% of marginalized Roma face severe material deprivation, rates of early marriage remain persistently high: 33% of marginalized Roma women aged 20-49 years were married before they were 18 years old.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ UNDP Roma at a Glance Factsheet on Macedonia. April 2018. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2ycrYAq>



Education: Enrolment rates in pre-primary education remain low compared to other countries in the Western Balkans: in 2017 the rate for ages 3-6 was just 14%. Primary and lower secondary enrolment rates have improved, and there has been significant progress made in lower secondary completion rates. In 2017, 31% of marginalized Roma aged 22-25 had completed upper secondary education compared to 16% in 2011.

School segregation is the highest in the Western Balkans with 40% of marginalized Roma students aged 7-15 attending segregated schools in 2017, compared to 25% in 2011. Previous studies indicate a high correlation between ethnic segregation and low quality of education, mostly due to the segregated schools' poor infrastructure and learning resources, and teachers' lower qualifications and high turnover.

Employment: Only 22% of marginalized Roma aged 15-64 were employed in 2017 (a rate similar to that in 2011), versus almost 40% of their neighboring non-Roma counterparts. There are considerable gaps in employment by gender: just 13% of marginalized Roma women aged 15-64 were employed in 2017; for men the employment rate is over two times as high. 81% of young marginalized Roma females were NEET in 2017 versus 57% of young Roma males. In comparison to males, female NEETs are more likely to be inactive, or out of the labor force, often engaged in domestic and caretaking activities, while male NEETs are more likely to be unemployed.

Health: Although 6% are still uncovered, health insurance coverage is approaching universality among marginalized Roma. The share of marginalized Roma who report unmet need for medical care fell significantly between 2011 and 2017.

Housing: Overcrowding is high for marginalized Roma, but the rate fell from 67% in 2011 to 61% in 2017. Access

to electricity for marginalized Roma decreased by four percentage points from 97% in 2011, to 93% in 2017.

2017 Progress report and RI2020 Policy Briefing

Although the 2017 Monitoring Report was prepared in line with regional monitoring standards and with the support of the RI2020 Action Team, the monitoring and reporting process needed significant improvements.⁴⁹ The lack of funding and poor monitoring of expenditure combined with an over-dependence on foreign donors, and the failure to make best use of existing funds has served notice that an ad-hoc approach to Roma integration will not suffice. The government committed to increase funding to support Roma integration, and address the issues around institutional delays, cross-sectorial coordination, and shifting lines of responsibility.

Recommendations included calls to tackle under-spending and under-utilization of allocated funds, and to seriously commit to promoting anti-discrimination and targeting mainstream population attitudes. The need to remedy the failure to include a gender component in the reporting was noted, in addition to the inclusion appropriate baselines, indicators, targets, means of verification, sufficient funding, and impact assessment.

In 2017, the most significant results were achieved in education, with government plans to introduce free preschool education for Roma to be funded through block grants allocated to municipalities. In primary education, 93% of enrolled Roma transferred from one school year to the next. In secondary education, 96% of Roma pupils did the same. In tertiary education, 90 Roma students were enrolled and received scholarship support.

⁴⁹ Policy Brief from the Second National Platform on Roma Integration in Skopje (2018) Policy Briefs, 15 Oct 2018. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2pSVK91>



Recommendations included calls to identify children who have dropped out or never entered the school system and to develop programs for their inclusion or reintegration into education; as well as additional support to include child returnees into the school system. Authorities were urged to combat segregation by implementing the government recommendation on re-categorization of children from special to regular education, develop catch-up programs for children over enrollment age, and to provide for the systematic collection of ethnically disaggregated data on Roma pupils. As with other economics no significant effects were achieved in the field of employment.

The government announced that it seeks to secure 4 million Euro of IPA II funding for Roma housing with educational and employment services in the three municipalities of Shuto Orizari, Prilep and Kocani. The RI2020 policy briefing encouraged central authorities to give a green light for municipalities to include many Roma settlements in their urban plans. The government was also urged to meet relevant institutions and municipalities to discuss requirements and needs in relation to IPA II funds allocated for urban development; to be more flexible concerning legalization procedures and to fully abide by international standards over forced evictions, including the provision of alternative accommodation for evicted families.

MONTENEGRO

Developments between 2011 and 2017

In terms of human capabilities and material wellbeing, the gap between Roma and non-Roma is especially large for young people—only 18% of marginalized Roma aged 18-24 are in employment, education or training,

compared to 63% of non-Roma neighbors. As the UNDP factsheets note, this has life-long implications, blocking further opportunities for decent employment.⁵⁰ Almost 94% of marginalized Roma in Montenegro face severe material deprivation, and 41% of Romani women aged 20-49 years in Montenegro were married before they were 18 years old. 16% of marginalized Roma still lack civil registration, which constrains eligibility to access social services, and 32% of the marginalized Roma population are not citizens of Montenegro and are lacking permanent residence.

Education: Pre-primary enrolment rates among marginalized Roma increased significantly from 12% in 2011 to 28% in 2017. While the proportion of children enrolled in school is steadily increasing (up from 55% in 2011 to 63% in 2017), it is still the lowest in the Western Balkans. Only about one-third of marginalized Roma aged 18-21 have completed compulsory education; this percentage is the lowest in the Western Balkans.

Employment: The employment rate among marginalized Roma was at only 14% in 2017, versus 37% among non-Roma living in their vicinity. Labor force participation among marginalized Roma fell between 2011 and 2017 and is now the lowest in the Western Balkans. Gender differences in labor force participation are also striking among the marginalized Roma: in 2017, just 5% of marginalized Roma women aged 15-64 participated in the labor market, versus 32 percent of Roma males; 82% of marginalized Roma youth (ages 18-24) in Montenegro were not in employment, education or training (NEET) in 2017; up from 73% in 2011.

Health: The great majority of marginalized Roma (81%) in Montenegro have health insurance coverage, but this marks a drop from 89% of Roma in 2011. About one-fifth of marginalized Roma aged 16 and over reported unmet

⁵⁰ UNDP, Regional Roma Survey 2017: Roma at a Glance Fact-sheet on Montenegro. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2ycrYAq>



need for medical care, a deterioration with respect to 2011. Even though the use of preventive health care services is on the rise among marginalized Roma, the gap vis-à-vis non-Roma neighbors is still the largest in the Western Balkans.

Housing: Overcrowding among marginalized Roma has been rising in recent years and is now the highest in the Western Balkans; and Roma in Montenegro are also less likely to have access to electricity and to piped water than elsewhere in the Western Balkans. Montenegro is the only economy where water access worsened since 2011.

2017 Progress Report and RI2020 Policy Briefing

The preparation of the 2017 progress report according to the regionally adopted monitoring standards revealed that data on beneficiaries and budget spent were largely missing, as was data on the impact of measures implemented. Progress was noted in civil registration, education, and coverage with health insurance. However, extreme poverty and discrimination persist, and there has been little by way of sustainable progress in employment and housing. Civil society capacities for engagement continue to improve and require further support.⁵¹

The policy brief called for the authorities to gather data disaggregated by ethnicity and gender, and to use result-oriented statistics in the monitoring and reporting; it also called for reduced donor dependency, greater dialogue and meaningful Roma participation, as well as improved coordination with local authorities to formulate, implement, monitor and report on Roma integration policies.

⁵¹ Policy Brief from the Third National Platform on Roma Integration in Montenegro (Podgorica, 2018), Policy Briefs, 30 May 2018. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2CMMuM8>

The government reported increases in preschool and primary school enrollments, the provision of transport and free books, and in 2017 finalized its protocol for actions to prevent early dropouts. The segregated school at 'Konik' camp has been closed and the children are all attending mainstream schools in Podgorica. The RI2020 policy brief called for a scale-up in activities including school transportation, and measures to identify and enroll children outside of the school system, and to ensure that all children returning from abroad are provided with all the necessary supports to integrate.

The RI2020 policy paper recommended that effective measures be devised and implemented to provide sustainable and decent employment of Roma; to combat anti-Roma discrimination, prejudice and stereotypes in the employment sector; dedicated public funding for active employment measures; an improved legal framework to encourage self-employment and entrepreneurship among Roma; and an extension beyond one year of subsidies and tax relief for employment of Roma.

The recommendations called on the authorities to provide necessary assistance to help Roma apply for legalization of their dwellings; that Roma living in conditions of acute deprivation be prioritized for social housing; and that Roma be actively involved in the decision-making processes on housing measures, including those implemented with foreign funding. The RI2020 policy paper also called on the government to eliminate the risk of forced evictions, and to ensure that Roma settlements are connected to infrastructure and public utilities.



SERBIA

Developments between 2011 and 2017

According to the UNDP Roma factsheet there remains a wide gap in Serbia between marginalized Roma and non-Roma in terms of human capabilities and material wellbeing.⁵² Only 27% of Roma aged 18-24 are in employment, education or training. Marginalized Roma aged 15-64 are half as likely to be employed as neighboring non-Roma; gender disparities are striking – 88% of Romani women aged 18-24 were NEET, compared to 59% of their male counterparts. An estimated 83% of marginalized Roma in Serbia face severe material deprivation. Early marriage rates remain high with 44% of marginalized Roma women aged 20-49 married before they were 18 years old.

Education: In 2017, only 17% of marginalized Roma children aged 3-6 were enrolled in pre-primary education, and though enrollment rates in compulsory education are increasing, one in six Roma children of compulsory attendance age are still out of the education system. Despite significant improvements, over one-third of marginalized Roma aged 18-21 lack a primary education. Among marginalized Roma, completion rates of upper secondary and tertiary education continue to be very low; the gap vis-à-vis neighboring non-Roma in upper secondary completion is the largest in the Western Balkans.

Employment: Just over one-fifth of marginalized Roma aged 15-64 were employed in 2017, and there is a considerable gender disparity: in 2017 the employment rate of marginalized female Roma was just 9%. Just one-third of marginalized Roma ages 15-64 participated

in the labor market in 2017, down from 52% in 2011. Informal employment continues to be high, but rates fell from 75% in 2011 to 71% in 2017. NEET rates for young (18-24) marginalized Roma declined slightly from 78% in 2011 to 73% in 2017. Gender disparities are striking – 88% of Romani women aged 18-24 were NEET, compared to 59 percent of their male counterparts.

Health: The great majority of marginalized Roma (93%) have health insurance coverage; slightly more than a quarter of Roma aged 16 or over report having not accessed health services when needed, an improvement with respect to 2011; and the use of preventive health care services remains high among marginalized Roma.

Housing: Even though overcrowding among marginalized Roma has been falling in recent years, the gap with respect to non-Roma neighbors is still the largest among Western Balkan countries. The overcrowding rate among marginalized Roma fell from 74% in 2011 to 65% in 2017. Access to electricity rose from 84% in 2011 to 88% in 2017; and access to indoor piped water rose from 70% to 79% in 2017. Waste collection remains an issue as does access to public sewerage or waste-water tanks.

2017 Progress report and RI2020 Policy Briefing

While the process of monitoring and reporting for 2017 marked an improvement, data on budget planning and actual spending, and gender disaggregated data on Roma beneficiaries were missing. Impact assessment (statistical) data on Roma are provided only in education, rendering it difficult to assess properly the successes or otherwise of integration policies and their implementation. The proposal to establish a specialized government agency to manage the strategy more effectively and efficiently would be a positive develop-

⁵² UNDP, Regional Roma Survey 2017: Roma at a Glance Factsheet on Serbia. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2ycrYAq>



ment. Implementation of local level action plans needs to be stepped up and adequately resourced, as do the measures to combat anti-Roma discrimination.⁵³

The tangible progress made on housing in 2017 was recognized by the EU progress report on Serbia. Following the adoption of laws on housing and legalization, the Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure is preparing instructions for the municipalities to embed the principle of consultation with affected persons in the case of mass evictions or relocations to ensure that the alternative housing is acceptable, affordable and decent. Substantial amounts of IPA funding have been used, and more is planned for the upcoming funding round to prepare urban plans, build communal infrastructure and housing units for Roma in 13 municipalities in projects that combine education and employment opportunities for Roma. The holistic approach to housing needs to be strengthened and incorporated into all future projects. Recommendations included calls for more resolute action on legalization and on combating discrimination in the housing sector, and greater efforts to prevent unnecessary forced evictions.

The number of Roma enrolled in all levels of education increased in 2017, compared to the previous year. Concerning preschool, it was recommended that the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development monitor any new diversified preschool programs in the wake of the new 2017 education law to prevent any 'diversification' that might exclude Roma from mainstream preschool education. It was strongly recommended to pay special attention to include Roma children in the economy wide "Inclusive Preschool Education and Upbringing" for vulnerable groups which includes building facilities for 17,000 new

⁵³ Policy Brief from the Third National Platform on Roma Integration in Serbia (Belgrade, 2018) Policy Briefs, 26 Jun 2018. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2MWkA50>

places for preschoolers, curriculum reform, and trainings and sub-grants to 30 municipalities.

The new education law defines and bans discrimination in education, and a working group is developing a rulebook against discrimination. However, segregation persists and the municipalities with segregated schools have been identified, so further steps need to be taken to prevent segregation and facilitate desegregation.

Ten years on, the network of Roma health mediators is still not systematized within the public health system, salaries are low and mediators are on temporary renewable service contracts. The government should commit the necessary resources to run a properly managed scheme, that provides for accredited training and standardized procedures and efficient management and collection of health data. In addition it is crucial to employ Roma who have completed medical secondary or higher education as regular staff within the public health system, which has not been the case.

TURKEY

Roma population profile and recent policy developments

Roma in Turkey have long been among the most marginalized and the limited available data on the disparities and discrimination they face has contributed to their continued invisibility in public life. Various-ly estimated at between two and five million, Roma communities experience great difficulties in accessing public services. Roma children suffer from low school enrolment rates, absenteeism, early drop out and school segregation.



Roma encounter enormous difficulties in the labor market due to discrimination and social exclusion. As a result, unemployment is high and they mostly work in unqualified, unstable and insecure jobs. The adverse living conditions and extreme poverty mean that many Roma face health problems, including under-nourishment. A considerable number of children are not registered at birth and some Roma lack ID documents.⁵⁴

Roma communities suffer some of the worst housing conditions in the country, characterized by inadequate basic services, insecure land rights and physical segregation. These settlements are also especially vulnerable to destruction and relocation to accommodate urban development – a reality that can leave communities in a protracted state of displacement.⁵⁵

Discussion in the public forum held in Ankara focused on the implementation of the National Strategy for Roma Citizens (2016-2021) and its Action Plan (2016-2018) in 2016 as relevant to the main priorities: education, employment, health, social protection and assistance, and housing as well as on the related achievements and challenges. The discussion also provided for setting priorities for 2018.⁵⁶ Recommendations related to the strategy called for the Action Plan (2019-2021) to be “more concrete” by including indicators and a proper budget; establishing working groups and focal points for each priority area; and mainstreaming gender equity across all Roma-related policy interventions.

⁵⁴ Ulaş Karan, Ignored and Unequal: Roma Access to the Right to Housing and Education in Turkey Minority Rights Group International (MRG), The Zero Discrimination Association, June 2017. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2SsoIND>

⁵⁵ ECRI REPORT ON TURKEY (fifth monitoring cycle). Adopted on 29 June 2016 Published on 4 October 2016. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2SwJDPG>

⁵⁶ RI2020, First Public Dialogue Forum In Turkey 13 September 2017, Ankara. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2WWQNuZ>

2017 First public dialogue forum in Turkey: conclusions and recommendations

Education: As mentioned, education levels among Roma are low, and a combination of factors ranging from poverty, seasonal migration, and gender discrimination means that many Roma do not complete their education. Recommendations that emerged from the discussion with government representatives included the following:

- * The Action Plan should be more concrete, to including a proper budget. The RI2020 project could assist in drafting the Action Plan beyond 2018.
- * Teachers trained under SIROMA should not be removed from their positions or reassigned as the knowledge will be lost.
- * The government should work closely with the civil society sector on determining the number of Roma.
- * Segregation of students and pupils should not be allowed and condemned.

Employment: Despite the lack of data about the status of Roma in the labor market, it is clear that unemployment levels are high and Roma are mainly engaged in the informal sector in unsecured, unqualified and low-status jobs. The employment section of the Action Plan continues has four policy goals: strengthening the relationship between education and employment; providing assurance and flexibility in the labor market; increasing employment of special groups; and strengthening the relationship between education and social protection. The government confirmed that five million Euro has been allocated for projects targeting disadvantaged groups. Recommendations from the discussion included:

- * Roma should be addressed separately from the rest of the disadvantaged population, as the ge-



neric policies do not always reach all categories of disadvantaged groups.

- * Programs supporting Roma to start-up businesses should be implemented.
- * Vocational training for Roma should be designed to combine the needs of the labor market and the demands for skills and knowledge of Roma.
- * There is a need to provide equal opportunities for Roma women in the area of employment, but also in a broader context.
- * Working groups focusing on specific priority areas should be established under the Committee for Monitoring and Evaluating the National Strategy for Roma Citizens (2016-2021) and its Action Plan (2016-2018).

Housing: Despite the gravity of the housing situation, lack of basic services, overcrowding and segregation, and the deleterious impact of urban renewal schemes in terms of demolitions and displacement, there is no budget for targeted housing interventions to alleviate the situation of Roma. The state does provide accommodation for disadvantaged families in areas with full infrastructure that includes schools and health centers on the basis of needs for social housing identified by the provinces. But the lack of targeted, affirmative measures for Roma means that they often fail to access housing benefits intended for low-income families. Recommendations from the discussion included:

- * Housing programs must be sustainable with provisions to ensure that beneficiaries can cover charges for rent and communal services; that the programs include access to an integrated set of social supports.
- * Such programs should promote desegregation and prevent the creation of new ghettos. Such interventions must be properly monitored with ethnically disaggregated data to assess the impact and to allow for modifications and revisions.

- * A Focal Point for Roma Integration should be appointed in each of the relevant ministries.

Health: Since 2010, the Ministry of Health has been delivering “geographically balanced” first-step health services. However, the level of awareness among Roma about health services and related benefits varies greatly across regions, and is everywhere lower for Roma than non-Roma. The government reported that the majority of Roma are covered by public health insurance, but some face financial challenges to cover the costs of specific treatments. Awareness raising and information activities and needs assessment surveys have been carried out in several provinces. The lack of disaggregated data has made it difficult to assess the impact of such activities. Recommendations from the discussion:

- * Plans to improve the health of Roma must be part of an integrated approach that addresses the poor housing conditions, which have a direct and adverse impact on health status especially among the most vulnerable.
- * Complaints about lack of access to health insurance and health services need to be carefully analyzed to ascertain whether these are isolated incidents that should be resolved on a case-by-case basis, or whether such complaints are symptomatic of deeper trends of more systematic Roma exclusion from health services that would require a strategic approach.





LOOKING FORWARD: HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT

Making decent housing and an adequate standard of living a reality for Roma

It is undisputed that the housing situation for Roma across the Western Balkans remains dire. The 2017 Regional Roma Survey offered further confirmation of the extent of material deprivation: in essence, huge numbers of Roma in the region lack the very basic necessities and living conditions for a life with dignity.

It is also beyond dispute that efforts to resolve this disastrous situation are not fit for purpose. The 2016 and 2017 annual reports of the governments in the region confirm that housing interventions have been limited and inadequate with little thought given to sustainability; efforts to resolve the housing situation of Roma have been overly dependent on foreign donors, and disconnected from mainstream housing policies.

RI2020 considers the right to housing an absolute prerequisite for Roma integration and intrinsic to the internationally recognized human right to an adequate standard of living. Because of the seeming intractability

and undeniable complexity of the issue, RI2020 has prioritized a holistic approach to create sustainable living conditions for Roma across the region up to 2020 and beyond. Towards this end, as previously mentioned, RI2020 organized a conference in May 2018, focusing on legalization and social housing. RI2020 advocated for policy approaches that fully accord with international commitments and obligations, and take the whole reality of the situation of Roma into account when designing housing initiatives that should aim to be proportionate and sustainable.

Subsequent to the conference, RI2020 produced a detailed report *Targeting Roma in Housing Policies of the Western Balkans*, which presents a concise overview with common and economy-specific solutions to the legalization of housing, social housing and issues around evictions.⁵⁷ The report also spells out how economies can move forward to adopt a holistic approach, which means providing a full social integration package alongside housing that would allow for more efficient responses to pressing issues of increased homelessness and insecurity of tenure, acute poverty and the lack of

⁵⁷ Orhan Usein (ed.) *Targeting Roma in Housing Policies of the Western Balkans: A Legal Overview*. Regional Cooperation Council Roma Integration 2020 Action Team. Belgrade, 2018. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2A0Se27>



infrastructure which adversely affects the sustainability of housing units.

One very profound conclusion from the housing conference was that housing initiatives disconnected from wider socio-economic integration efforts may serve to exacerbate already critical situations: “Providing only a housing unit, without urban and social infrastructure, access to employment and other public services, cultural and identity considerations, put Roma at the risk of losing the obtained housing and may further contribute to exclusion and segregation.”

Legalization

Legalization should be considered as a first-option solution, as it is the most feasible, least expensive, and in keeping with the principle of minimizing evictions. For a comprehensive long-term strategy, municipalities need to address the lack of information on the situations of families applying for legalization, the number and type of illegal units, and the sizes and locations of informal settlements. Approximations will no longer suffice, and municipalities need to perform detailed mapping and gather precise ethnically disaggregated data that will allow them to accurately cost and plan in advance, and enable them to assess the success and impact of targeted interventions.

While legalization may be the least expensive option, for marginalized Roma the process is costly, complicated and requires considerable technical documentation. Consequently many vulnerable Roma are unable to legalize their housing. There is a clear need for a targeted approach: legislative amendments to allow for exemptions from burdensome requirements for vulnerable categories of persons; exempting or lowering the fees and subsidizing the cost for preparing documentation; provision of technical, financial and legal aid, and information outreach are

required throughout the legalization process; assistance in resolving land ownership rights is also crucial as this the main deciding factor on the success of each application for legalization.

Complicating factors include the lack of certainty on the transfer and use of the land on which the dwelling is built, as well as the considerable cost of purchasing the land. The range of purchasing scenarios needs to be extended to include reduction or subsidy of the costs. Arrangements need to be introduced to allow for use or ownership of the land by vulnerable families. As legalization usually requires the dwelling to be fully constructed many vulnerable families cannot legalize their housing units. This obstacle could be overcome with legislation to allow poor families with incomplete housing units to legalize them and access construction support to ensure the dwellings are connected to utilities and meet adequate housing standards.

Another related issue is that legislation in the region does not regulate legalization of entire settlements or Roma ‘mahalas’, despite that fact that this is a stated objective in many of the Roma integration strategies across the region. The review recommends that where traditional informal settlements, which are part of a city’s urban culture, they should be considered as culturally significant sites to be preserved, legalized and upgraded, with specific targeted legislation enacted to facilitate this. Some of the economies have included Roma settlements in their local urban plans, which is a promising first step that needs to be followed up by actual reconstruction, reconfiguration and legislation.

One crucial factor is to ensure that the process does not result in the living conditions of vulnerable families being further aggravated and their housing rights abused. Closing the legalization process always implies demolition of non-legalized housing units and settlements, sometimes even burdening the affected



families with the costs for such demolition. Applying these provisions effectively leaves socially deprived families homeless. The legislation directly or indirectly stipulates evictions, disconnection from public utilities, and demolishing of the objects. Families living in sub-standard conditions are thus further aggravated and their housing rights are effectively further disrespected. Special attention must be paid to the housing rights of those affected, and decent living conditions provided until the situation is resolved either by legalization or provision of adequate alternative accommodation.

Evictions

Related to the above section is the fact that unsuccessful legalization applications tend to be followed by evictions, and many Roma families live under constant threat of forced eviction, either because the dwellings are poorly constructed units, or built on land that is not owned by the household, is unsuitable or falls outside the urban plan. In other situations, evictions are carried out in 'the public interest', which is usually understood as large-scale public or private infrastructure projects; or where construction projects that are not considered in the public interest, but permits are issued for land on which Roma live.

Evictions are deeply traumatic and disruptive for family life. They exact an especially harsh toll on the very young, the very old, and those who are sick or disabled. The option of evicting a family should be avoided and only considered as a last option. Such actions cannot be left to the discretion of local municipalities to define procedures and standards. The procedures, grounds for eviction, and conditions under which an eviction can take place must conform with international standards and treaty commitments, and these standards and criteria should be stipulated clearly in housing legislation. Special attention should be paid to 'public and private interest' infrastructure projects to ensure

compliance with regulations and consultation with affected parties to ensure alternative housing solutions are provided before the bulldozers are sent in.

The legislation regulating evictions should include a targeted approach to providing appropriate alternative accommodation and integrated social services to vulnerable evictees, with the objective of providing permanent adequate and affordable housing. Evicted persons should be relocated as closely as possible to their previous place of residence, and alternative housing should take full account of the proximity of public services, employment opportunities, and desegregation.

Social housing

While a holistic approach to social housing provision might incur increased costs in the short term, it will yield both social and economic benefits in the longer term by strengthening the position of beneficiaries. For many Roma families social housing offers the only opportunity prospect of decent living conditions. Across the region there is a pressing need to extend this provision to far greater numbers of people, together with a wider range of support services.

Authorities should take into account that many Roma remain invisible to the system of social services, so targeted outreach is necessary firstly to identify those in need of social housing, and secondly to understand their needs, and assess the range and coordinate the delivery of social supports for such families. An impactful holistic approach to social housing provision calls for sustainable planning and an increase in public housing stock bolstered by efficient and effective budgetary planning.

While social housing legislation refers to anti-discrimination, Roma are not generally prioritized as a



beneficiary group. Legislation across the region should set clearer rules and guidelines on the prioritization of specific vulnerable groups for social housing. Central and local affirmative quotas could be defined for Roma, proportionate to the percentage of Roma in the overall population, or additional points awarded to take ethnicity into account in the eligibility scoring systems.

Additional support is needed to help vulnerable families negotiate the complexities of procedures for proving eligibility; contracts need to protect beneficiaries from evictions or homelessness in situations where loss of employment, debilitating health or outstanding debts cause a family to fall into rent arrears and breach their tenancy contract.

There is also a need to set regional and central minimum standards to define what constitutes adequate housing in terms of size and quality, affordability as well as proximity to services and employment opportunities. The obvious risks in leaving standard-setting to local municipalities is not only that this would allow huge discretion in what constitutes 'adequate', but that wide variances could prompt internal migrations, and exacerbate segregation.

More funding is required to increase the social housing stock, and central authorities should avoid financially overburdening local municipalities already straining to provide housing and social services to those in need. Municipalities need funding guarantees for long-term investment to deliver sustainable social housing programs from governments, as well as support for local authorities to manage and implement such initiatives.

At present, across the region there is a deeply problematic disconnect between Roma integration strategies and housing policies, with an absence of any meaningful coordination in terms of duration, planning and implementing measures, and crucially budgeting.

A holistic approach to housing urgently requires an alignment of Roma integration policies with mainstream housing and social support policies.

Towards gainful and worthwhile employment for Roma

The majority of working age Roma in the enlargement region is unemployed, with large numbers of unemployed Roma engaged in the informal sector. As Rasim Tulumovic observes, the mass unemployment of working age Roma is most often perceived as a labor market supply-side issue characterized by low levels of education, out-of-date work skills, and detachment from the labor market. However, as Tulumovic maintains, the issue is much more complex, and "includes obstacles on the demand-side (prejudice and distrust, for example) and in relation to the design of the active labor market measures and other policies offered by the governments."⁵⁸

While the challenges facing Roma in obtaining employment are clearly identified in the strategies and action plans of all the seven economies, the shortfall, in terms of paltry outcomes and minimal impacts are very visible in the annual reports from the economies and the RI2020 Policy Briefings. Some of the common challenges identified across the region include:

- ✿ lack of education and educational opportunities;
- ✿ discrimination against Roma in the labor market and a lack of acceptance by non-Roma employers in the public and private sectors to hire or engage Roma because of negative attitudes and prejudice towards them;

⁵⁸ Rasim Tulumovic, *Potentials for Roma Employment in the Enlargement Region*, published by the Regional Cooperation Council Roma Integration 2020 Action Team, 2018, p.6. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2UCswlN>



- * lack of requisite skills for employment in an already economically challenging environment where the labor market is highly competitive.

Other obstacles include:

- * difficult economic and social situations;
- * lack of personal documents (which is a prerequisite for obtaining services in the field of employment);
- * social isolation for those living in unregistered and non-standardized settlements;
- * occupied with low-income existential strategies which doesn't allow not time for longer engagement in training or labor activation programs,

Structural and institutional factors inhibiting progress on Roma employment across the region include:

- * lack of coordination between institutions at central and local levels in the development and implementation of employment policies;
- * insufficient involvement by local government in identifying the problems and needs and recommending measures to overcome them;
- * deficit of trust in the institutions often derived from the lack of information and access to employment and training services, and a shortage of public servants trained to work with Roma on employment.⁵⁹

It is further cause for concern that the regional trends in labor market participation of Roma are negative and according to the 2017 Regional Roma Survey, unemployment levels and participation in the informal economy suggest that Roma are being “further pushed outside of the labor market, and thus further into

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 40,41.

poverty”.⁶⁰ The evidence clearly suggests that current measures are inadequate and ineffective in tackling long-term unemployment of disadvantaged Roma in a sustainable fashion.

Recommendations

The economy-specific recommendations concerning what is to be done vary little, and the cluster of suggestions revolve around the following themes: authorities should remain open to mechanisms such as: social entrepreneurship promotion and support; subsidized employment in the private sector; employment in the public sector through affirmative measures; analyze the conditions for registration of unemployed persons to identify and remove any obstacles for Roma; and enact measures to prevent and protect Roma from discrimination in employment.⁶¹

More detailed sets of recommendations that emerged from the Regional Conference “Innovative Approaches to Employment of Roma”⁶² were included in the report *Potentials for Roma Employment in the Enlargement Region*. The first cluster focused on improving existing approaches:

- * Decisive measures and demonstration of a clear political will to combat anti-Roma discrimination in public institutions should take the form of measures and increase investment by public bodies to employ Roma in greater numbers. Such measures should include the introduction

⁶⁰ Ibid, p.42.

⁶¹ Meliha Kozaric Fanning, *Analysis of Priorities and Budgets of the official Roma Integration Policies (2017)*, Policy Briefs, 10 Nov 2017. Roma Integration 2020, 2017. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2MK3qFf>

⁶² The conference was held in Budapest on 10-11 December 2018. For more information see: <https://bit.ly/2Ut8scl>



of quotas on hiring Roma wherever possible in public companies and offices. Where it proves difficult to introduce quota systems, central and local public entities should be encouraged and incentivized to provide permanent employment for Roma. Proportional representation of Roma in public administration is planned in several economies across the region, but is not implemented. Clear targets need to be set and legal enforcement mechanisms introduced to ensure compliance.

- * The need for increased participation of Roma in the Active Labor Market Policies (ALMP) was also identified as a priority. Employment institutes need to become more than administrative offices where unemployed people register regularly in order to maintain their unemployed status and entitlements to benefits. These offices are required to provide a variety of services beyond administration related to the unemployed, such as job-matching and counseling services to provide support when people apply for vacancies, and it is clear that very few Roma avail of such services. Quotas for Roma should be introduced to ensure that Roma access vocational and employment training schemes and active employment programs. Suitably qualified Roma mediators should be employed as full-time public servants to oversee such programs.
- * The ALMP should be adjusted to the actual situation of Roma. For such policies to be properly targeted and effective, it is essential to regularly collect information, monitor outcomes, effects and impact, and base the ALMP on the findings. Roma prefer forms of engagement closer to or providing actual employment. So, the governments should consider transferring resources from incentives and client services to employment (e.g. subsidies to employers that are

targeted at the most disadvantaged groups for whom other measures have proved ineffective) and direct job creation. ALMP should be localized as much as possible and implemented in cooperation with municipalities having an opportunity to design and access funding for ALMP for Roma, especially in those economies where measures implemented through national employment institutes are not yielding sustainable impact.

- * Self-employment is especially challenging for members of disadvantaged communities in an already difficult regional business environment. Self-employment programs should be more carefully designed and include training, longer start-up support to be delivered in phases, and mentoring for at least a two-year period. Legislative and tax reforms should be introduced to make it easier for Roma to set up and run small to medium enterprises.

The second cluster of recommendations focused on innovative approaches that include linking Roma education with employment and ensuring that there is a match between the type of education and skills development programs offered to Roma and the market demand:

- * For example, the IT sector is one of the fastest growing in the region and there are IT programs designed for women and rural areas. New educational and skills development programs could be offered to Roma for such sectors. In addition special long-term scholarships should also be offered to young Roma capable and willing to study and acquire the qualifications for in-demand professions and occupations in sectors such as engineering, medical and service.
- * Individual employment plans should be created by Employment Institutes (EI) for each



unemployed Roma, and jointly developed by the participant and the career planner. Such plans would identify the participant's employment goals and define the combination of services needed for the participant to reach employment goals. Individualized career services could be greatly enhanced by setting up EI mobile (task force) teams or creating branch community services to cover Roma settlements and work directly with Roma. EI mobile teams or community-based services would provide services directly in marginalized areas to overcome the current situation where EI fail to provide support to long-term unemployed Roma living in such settings.

- * Provision of long-terms government support to cover some operational and development costs for social entrepreneurship and sheltered work centers for Roma and to forge partnerships with development organizations, foundations, municipalities and education and training institutes.
- * None of the labor market activation programs currently address the high level of Roma participation in the informal labor market. The sectors that Roma appear as undeclared workers are waste management, construction, agriculture, fruit picking, trade (street and open market mostly), and services (often cleaning). Rather than opt for repressive measures, Roma should be given opportunities and encouraged to formalize their informal businesses. There is also a need for employers to be encouraged, and where necessary legally compelled to 'declare' their workers.
- * The establishment of a Regional Fund for Roma Employment to focus on three main issues: to fight discrimination against Roma and promote employment of Roma in public institutions and services; supporting education and training

programs matched to labor market demands; and to support the development of social enterprises and entrepreneurial skills of Roma, and function as a business incubator for Roma.

The importance of resolving issues around access to employment cannot be overstated when it comes to social inclusion, and the negative regional trends identified earlier attest to the urgency of the need for consistent, proportionate and effective interventions to reverse such trends. Families' access to health and education and links with the wider society are greatly enhanced by gainful employment in worthwhile jobs.

When it comes to the long-term effect of increased Roma productivity, it should be noted that Roma are the youngest and fastest growing demographic segment in a region characterized by falling birth-rates and seeping depopulation. The share of Roma in the working age population will continue to grow, and educated and skilled Roma will become vital to rejuvenate the labor force to sustain and advance current productivity levels.

As World Bank studies have demonstrated, the necessary increased investments in education to increase employability are far outweighed by the rate of return from increased employment levels and employment in higher-paid jobs.⁶³ Fiscal savings resulting from reduced dependency on welfare provision, combined with increased revenue from income taxes also amount to an asset, and exiting poverty by way of gainful employment brings huge gains in the health and wellbeing for family life, and paves the way for meaningful social inclusion.

⁶³ UNDP, Policy Note - Roma Integration: An Economic Opportunity for Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Romania and Serbia. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2Q6VW47>





CONCLUSION

In Skopje on 4 December 2018, participating governments pledged to continue and enhance efforts for full equality and integration of Roma in the enlargement region, and agreed to launch a Regional Declaration, which will be endorsed by the Ministers responsible for Roma integration in the enlargement region at a high level event scheduled for early March 2019, to be hosted by the Prime Minister of The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the European Commission.

According to Orhan Usein, RCC's RI2020 Action Team Leader: *"The Declaration will proudly proclaim the will of the region's governments to secure equal opportunities, development and non-discrimination for the Roma community in the region"*.

The RI2020 Task Force unanimously agreed that the governments would continue to report annually on the implementation of Roma integration policies. RCC's support for governments to improve monitoring and reporting procedures to adhere to regional standards remains important, especially in providing assistance to establish a coherent monitoring system for regular collection of output and impact data; and building capacities to analyze and produce relevant reports and to utilize the data for the different reporting requirements.

RI2020 is committed to prioritizing housing and employment for the reason that these are the two priority policy areas that have proven to be the most complex and the most intractable; it is in these two

areas that many economies have regressed over the last decade, and the gap between Roma and the rest of society has in some cases actually widened. Increased coordination, better governance and heightened political resolve, need to be matched with a determination to close the financial gap between the total budgets needed and the amounts actually committed. How to close that gap in the coming years will be a vexing but vital challenge, and towards that end RI2020 will continue its work with each of the economies to promote a viable model of Roma Responsible Budgeting.

For Phase II of the Roma Integration 2020 project, expected to begin in January 2019, the focus will be to ensure that beyond the institutions, Roma integration policies produce tangible results on the ground in Roma communities; the sort of sustainable change that can have an impact on everyday lives, banish discrimination, create opportunities, and instill hope among Roma for an inclusive and secure future.



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ROMA INTEGRATION 2020
Regional Cooperation Council