

2018 NATIONAL PLATFORM ON ROMA INTEGRATION

MONTENEGRO

30 May 2018, Podgorica

:: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ::

INTRODUCTION

The third National Platform on Roma Integration in Montenegro was held on 30 May 2018, jointly organized by the Regional Cooperation Council's Roma Integration 2020 Action Team and the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro. The policy recommendation paper reflects the discussions at the National Platform and is aimed to assist the Government of Montenegro in formulating more effective Roma integration policies and to serve as an entry point for defining the Operational Conclusions of the Roma Seminar for Montenegro on integration of Roma within the European Union (EU) accession process.

The Government of Montenegro recognizes the integration of Roma as an important, primarily internal issue, but also an issue relevant for EU accession. It also recognizes Roma integration as long and complex process aiming at advancing the situation of Roma comparably to the situation of the society at large. The Government prepared the 2017 progress report on Roma integration for Montenegro, which was presented at the third National Platform meeting.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

National Platforms have been organized in 2016, 2017 and 2018 with the aim to bring together relevant central and local government representatives, civil society, international organizations and other relevant actors in Roma integration. The institutions are taking into account the recommendations of the National Platforms in their priority settings and draft budgets for the upcoming year.

The Government of Montenegro prepared the 2017 progress report according to the regionally adopted monitoring standards. Data are provided on the level of activities implemented, but data on beneficiaries and budget spent are largely missing. The report is unclear on the use of public resources for the implementation of the Roma integration policies. Statistical data showing the influence of implemented measures and achievements of Roma integration policies are lacking. Some administrative data that may serve this purpose are not used. Mainstream measures should disaggregate data and provide number of Roma beneficiaries and budget spent for targeting Roma.

The Ministry of Human and Minority Rights is playing an active role in the implementation of the Roma Integration Strategy and Action Plan. On the other hand a stronger and active role should be taken by the Ministry of Labour and Social Care, which has not provided the required data for the 2017 report and has not participated in the National Platform meeting.

Roma are still recognized as the most vulnerable and discriminated against community in Montenegro in the 2018 progress report on Montenegro by the European Commission. Progress is noted in civil registration, education, and coverage with health insurance. Employment and housing of Roma are not yielding the expected sustainable results. Extreme poverty and exposure to discrimination persist. The 2017 Regional Roma Survey¹ data should be used to formulate policies further.

¹ 2017 Regional Roma Survey implemented by the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme, funded by the European Commission. Full dataset and methodology is shared with the Government of Montenegro and MONSTAT. More information is available at: <http://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/roma/regional-roma-survey-2017-country-fact-sheets.html>.



The civil society in Montenegro engaged on the integration of Roma is increasingly building its capacities. The participation of civil society and the Roma community in the policy process should be improved.

Roma integration policies are implemented at the local level, but local budget is limited, there is lack of support and coordination from the central level, and a need to empower Roma to engage with the local government. The Romacted² project may contribute to tackle these issues.

- The National Roma Contact Point should maintain the National Platform on Roma Integration as a dialogue among all the relevant stakeholders.
- Responsible institutions for integration of Roma should continue to take into account and follow up on the recommendations of the National Platforms, including for the Operational Conclusions from the Roma Seminars.
- The practice of annual reporting according to the regional monitoring standards should continue. The monitoring and reporting on Roma integration should be substantially improved. Reporting of the Ministry of Human Rights and Minorities towards the Government of Montenegro should apply the regionally adopted monitoring standards in order to ensure readable, concise and relevant information.
- More relevant, ethnically and gender disaggregated data should be provided on the implemented measures within the monitoring and reporting.
- Impact, or results oriented statistics, using administrative and statistical data and thorough engagement of the Montenegrin Statistical Office MONSTAT should be provided from next year on. The regional standards on monitoring and reporting should be respected. Available administrative sources should be used and missing channels for data collection and processing for the purpose of provision of statistical data on the influence of the policy should be established.
- Donor dependency for the implementation of the policy should be reduced. Sufficient budget should be allocated by the central and local governments. Donor funded projects should gain sustainability through introduction of positive initiatives.
- Data on implementation, impact and budget should be used to inform the policy formulation, including data from the 2017 Progress Report submitted to the Regional Cooperation Council, data from the 2017 Regional Roma Survey, and data provided by civil society.
- The Ministry of Labour and Social Care is one of the crucial institutions within the Roma integration process responsible for a number of measures including social housing, social care, child begging and early childhood marriages. It should assume its role in formulating, budgeting, implementing, monitoring and reporting.
- The Commission for monitoring the implementation of the Roma Integration strategy should continue to meet frequently. Dedicated deeper dialogue with the relevant actors, including Roma, is needed on specific issues related to the formulation and the implementation of the Roma integration policy.
- Effective measures should be taken to improve the situation of Roma regarding employment, housing, poverty and discrimination, to achieve the goals set within the strategy and action plan on Roma integration and the Operational Conclusions. Particular attention should be paid to children and women.
- Effective and meaningful participation of Roma in the policy process should be ensured, including by formal engagement of Roma in the government.
- The coordination and support to the local government to formulate, implement, monitor and report on Roma integration policies should be increased strengthened.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON EDUCATION

The goal of Roma integration in education is to increase the number of Roma in education, enhance the inclusiveness of the education system, improve the academic and social achievements of Roma, and preserve and promote the identity of Roma.

² The Romacted project is implemented by the Council of Europe in partnership with local civil society. The project promotes good governance and empowers Roma at local level. Teams within the Roma community and within the local governments are established to identify the needs and formulate local policies. It is implemented in Podgorica, Niksic, Berane, Bijelo Polje, Herceg Novi, Tivat, Bar and Ulcinj.





In preschool education 190 Roma have been included in 2017 free of charge, compared to the 103 in 2016. 111 Roma children are involved in the preschool preparatory programme that has increased its duration from 15 to 30 days and is implemented in Podgorica, Niksic, Berane, Bijelo Polje, Tivat, Bar, Ulcinj, Kotor and Pljevlje. Roma are also included in regular or interactive preschool groups organized within the settlements. 22 teachers are trained to work with Roma.

1.860 Roma are enrolled into primary school in the current academic year, compared to 1.622 in the previous year. All children are supplied with necessary school books (from the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and from the Ministry of Education), transport is secured to and from school for 370 pupils, and summer and winter camps are organized for those with the best academic achievements. The segregated school in the camp "Konik" has been closed, and children have been distributed to mainstream schools in Podgorica.

Associates for social inclusion of Roma in education are engaged to observe the progress of children in education and link the community with the schools. The position is standardized throughout the country but needs to be systematized. Budget is allocated for 20 associates to begin from the next school year. Training for potential associates has been implemented. Enrolment campaigns are organized for Roma parents in Podgorica, Niksic, Berane and Herceg Novi.

The Montenegrin Education Information System (MEIS) is improved with the cooperation of UNICEF to identify risks of early drop-out. The Protocol for action upon and prevention of early school drop-out has been finalized, adopted and distributed to the schools for its implementation and further improvement. The job standardization for associates for social inclusion of Roma in education has been finalized.

In secondary school 142 Roma are enrolled in the current academic year, compared to 112 in the previous year. Roma are exempt from fees for taking final and professional exams. For all Roma secondary school students, a scholarship of 60 Euro per month is provided.

The number of Roma at university education increased to 27 this academic year, compared to 20 last year. For all Roma university students, a scholarship of 150 Euro per month is provided.

292 Roma have been included in adult education.

- Activities increasing the inclusion of Roma in education should continue and scale up.
- The budget for measures in education should be managed by the Ministry of Education, including distribution of books and scholarships (which is currently partially implemented by the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights). Scholarships and books should be provided in due time, which is currently not the case.
- Associates for social inclusion of Roma in education should be systemized and regularly engaged. The criterion for the associates to have completed secondary school may need to be lowered, which is acceptable for the Ministry of Education in case not enough candidates comply with this criterion. Associates must speak Romanes or Albanian language. They should be engaged throughout the country where needed. The civil society should be consulted on the selection of associates. The associates should continue their good practice in monitoring Roma girls and prevention of early childhood marriages.
- Transportation of Roma children to and from school should be provided in other municipalities where needed, besides Podgorica.
- Data on Roma children dropping out from school and data on children not enrolled at all should be provided, the later in cooperation with MONSTAT. Measures for identifying and enrolling children outside of education should be devised and implemented.
- Roma children returning from foreign countries and speaking only foreign languages should be integrated and proper support should be ensured for them.
- Measure from the action plan stipulating quota for Roma in secondary schools should be implemented in order to allow, not only for all interested Roma to be enrolled, but also to get enrolled in the desired secondary schools and subjects.
- The standardization of Romani language and the introduction of the subject Romani language, at least as an optional subject, are stipulated in the action plan and should be implemented.
- Free enrolment at university is provided for all students, not only for Roma, and should be reported as such.
- Local governments should engage and fund educational activities for Roma, including activities implemented by the civil society.





- Measures targeting discrimination in education and increasing tolerance and understanding should be introduced and target the non-Roma population. The available 25% of the curriculum is available for this purpose, and the Ministry of Education should ensure it is used and monitor the achievements.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON EMPLOYMENT

In 2017, 177 Roma (of which 80 women) were newly registered as unemployed. 162 of them (of which 75 women) are without vocational training. In total 928 Roma (of which 508 women) are registered as unemployed in 2017, comprising 1.78% of the total unemployed population. There are no unemployed Roma with university education, 1.4% has vocational education, and 95.36% are without vocational education or with incomplete vocational education.

The first objective of the action plan in employment is to motivate Roma to register as unemployed. Individual and group informing is provided to Roma as for all other unemployed. Six associates for social inclusion of Roma in employment are engaged in Podgorica, Berane and Niksic, through project activities. The position of associate is standardized and those engaged through the project cooperate with the public employment service. Additional associates are planned through a project of the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights. There is no information when the associates shall be systematized. Employers are informed on opportunities and support for Roma employment through visits. Motivation and information workshops for Roma are implemented within the IPA funded project "One Step Closer to the Labour Market".

2.5 million Euro were allocated in 2017 for employment measures, of which around 50.000 Euro were specifically for Roma. Approximately 37.000 Euro was spent. In the budget planning for 2018, the amount for active employment measures was increased to 4.5 million Euro, but remains the same for Roma. There is budget available for additional planning and participation in projects.

The second objective is to increase the professional capacities through adult education and vocational training. 66 Roma were involved in such measures - 9 into public services and 57 through the IPA project. After the training, 10 of the beneficiaries of the IPA project had the opportunity to gain employment and 8 concluded employment agreements.

The third objective is to involve Roma in direct measures for employment. 45 Roma (of which 5 women) participated in public works. The duration of engagement in public works has been extended from 2 to 3 months. 49 Roma (of which 26 women) were included in seasonal works. 1 Roma was included in the measures to support first employment. No Roma participated in the self-employment measure as the criteria for participation exclude them.

The fourth objective is to increase the capacities of public employment services to deliver on Roma integration in employment. Besides the engaged 6 associates, a project on cooperation with the social centres was implemented and shall ensure digital data exchange.

- Measures leading to sustainable and decent employment of Roma need to be devised and implemented.
- Discrimination, prejudice and stereotypes towards Roma, particularly women, in employment should be addressed.
- As Roma are largely engaged in the most labour intensive and risky, at the same time least paid jobs, it is recommended that trade unions for those professions (such as collectors of secondary goods) are established to protect and support the workers. The trade unions should be supported by the government.
- Specialized fund for employment of those difficult to employ, including in particular Roma, should be established and filled with taxes from employers that are not employing persons from these groups. Innovative measures leading to actual employment should be funded through this fund.
- Programmes ensuring secured and organized employment abroad with conditions to return may be considered.
- The legal framework and the criteria for self-employment support should be improved to allow Roma to establish own businesses. In particular, handcrafts should be supported.
- Subsidies and tax relief for employment of Roma should last longer than one year.





CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOUSING

Within the Regional Housing Programme, 120 housing units have been built nearby the refugee camp "Konik". From the savings in the project 51 additional housing units are expected to be built by March 2019. In Berane 94 housing units are being built, while in Herceg Novi 36 housing units are going to be purchased for socially vulnerable families. 50 houses are also being built for this purpose throughout Montenegro for persons that own land and building permits.

The first measure for improving the housing conditions of Roma is establishing a database on social housing and revision of the legal framework for the use of social housing. No specific budget has been planned for the measure, except the use of regular resources. The Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism has developed a Social Housing Programme 2017-2020³ and data on current beneficiaries of social housing are collected, including for Roma. The Association of Municipalities of Montenegro has developed a Model Decision on Securing Alternative Accommodation.

The second measure for improving the housing conditions of Roma is building social housing units for displaced and internally displaced persons. The plan was to build housing units in Podgorica, Niksic and Berane, with a planned budget of 11.782.000 Euro from the Regional Housing Programme and the national contributions. The total number of housing decisions so far is 481 with total number of final beneficiaries of 1.510. There is no information on how many Roma benefited. 6 grants for building social housing units were approved in the total amount of 16 million Euro, out of which 2.3 million Euro are from the Montenegrin budget. In 2017 one project has been finalized in Niksic with 62 housing units, while for 2018 finalization of housing units in Konik and Elderly House in Pljevlja are expected. According to the civil society, 15 Roma families benefited from the 62 housing units in Niksic.

The second objective on creating conditions to close down the collective housing centres through building sustainable and decent housing units has one measure, which is presenting information on the needs to donors. Round tables have been organized for this purpose, but the number of such presentations, that is the indicator for this activity, remains unknown, as well as the results.

Montenegro has recently started implementing the law on legalization of illegal buildings. The deadlines to apply for legalization are short. Without measures to support Roma to legalize their housing units, the risk is that the situation of Roma in housing will most probably deteriorate with no further opportunities to legalize, an increased risk of forced evictions and penalties for occupying land with illegal buildings.

- Roma should be provided administrative, technical and financial assistance to apply for legalization of their dwellings. The deadline for application has to be prolonged.
- Domicile Roma should also benefit from measures in housing.
- The report on the implementation of the strategy and action plan on Roma integration in housing should contain information on the number of Roma beneficiaries.
- Roma should be prioritized for social housing, particularly those living in poor conditions.
- Roma have to be involved in the decision making processes on housing measures, including those implemented with foreign funding, such as the Regional Housing Programme.
- Discrimination against Roma in housing should be addressed.
- The measure to relocate Roma settlements, respecting the needs and wishes of Roma, should be implemented.
- The risk of forced evictions of Roma should be eliminated.
- Social housing should outreach to the poorest and ensure support for maintaining the housing.
- Roma should be exempt from paying penalties for occupying land with illegal buildings used for living.
- Communal and public infrastructure of Roma settlements have to be ensured.
- Alternative accommodation may be used as temporary solution, but only if permanent decent housing is provided in reasonable time.

³ Available at: <http://www.mrt.gov.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?rId=291107&rType=2>





CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON HEALTH

The position of associate for social inclusion of Roma in health is standardized and 3 associates are employed in the Public Health Facility in Podgorica as permanent staff. Additionally 15 associates were trained and engaged in Niksic for 9 months through a project (receiving a fee of 250 EUR per month). Through another project one associate is engaged in Niksic and another in Berane. The project is ending and the Ministry of Health is trying to engage them permanently on the positions of associate that are already systematized. The Ministry of Health is proposing additional 2 associates for Podgorica, 2 for Niksic and 2 for Berane. Other municipalities may temporary be covered through traveling of the engaged associates, until permanent engagement of associates is arranged.

32 workshops on health-related topics have been delivered for Romani women, including on early marriages and personal hygiene. 80 Romani women were examined free of charge in Danilovgrad, Bjelo Polje, Niksic, and Berane. Preventive health exams are planned to cover men related issues from 2018.

Data disaggregated by ethnicity are generally lacking in health. The Ministry of Health is mostly cooperating with the Red Cross in implementing Roma integration activities.

The issue of Roma women being detained at hospitals after birth giving because of inability to cover hospitalization expenses has been solved through a decree to health facilities. Isolated cases may still be possible and should be reported to the Ministry of Health in order to be solved.

- Trained associates for social inclusion of Roma in health should be permanently employed. Additional associates are needed in the municipalities, including those with significant number of Roma. The engaged associates should continue to work on issues of reproductive health and child protection.
- Associates serve and should continue to serve.
- Roma should be supported in obtaining prescribed therapy, including medications, since it is usually not affordable.
- Data disaggregated by ethnicity in health have to be collected.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON CIVIL REGISTRATION

1.143 persons received support to obtain documents on births, marriages and deaths from Kosovo* through 15 mobile team visits. Only 158 complex cases are remaining unresolved. Responsible institutions are working on the remaining cases. 124 cases of confirming date and place of birth were submitted to the Montenegrin courts from 2015, and 95 are positively solved. Legal assistance is provided by civil society and international organizations.

According to the civil society, 265 persons did not apply for solving their legal status. Persons not managing to obtain legal status in Montenegro will have to leave Montenegro, and if they return, their status will be regulated as foreign citizens.

The legislation framework for registering children born in and outside of health facilities is in place, thus the Ministry considers this issue resolved. In the cases of children born outside of health facilities the cases are solved by legal courts in a short procedure.

- Activities for resolving the civil status, implemented by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in cooperation with the civil society and the international organizations should continue until the issue is completely resolved.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL LEVEL IMPLEMENTATION

The Association of Municipalities developed a Model of Draft Local Action Plan and distributed it to all municipalities. Most of the municipalities have completed the adoption of local action plans, while the remaining are expected to adopt their plans soon.

The National Programme on Social Housing has been adopted at national level, containing data provided by the municipalities on the beneficiaries of the existing social housing. Municipalities are obliged to adopt Local Programmes on Social Housing in line with the national. At the moment Niksic has adopted and Tivat is about to adopt the local programme. The plan in Tivat includes





building an apartment building for Roma and elderly. The procedure is simple and data are available from the national programme. Roma, along with disabled, elderly and young married couples, are given priority for social housing according to a decision of the Government. The main challenge for the municipalities is that there is no database on publically owned estate.

- Municipalities with relatively low number of Roma may consider mainstreaming relevant Roma integration measures into mainstream policies, instead of adoption a specific one, in order to avoid delays in adoption and implementation.
- Information from central level should be communicated promptly to local governments to facilitate planning and adoption of local action plans.
- The local action plans should be published on websites and made available to the civil society.
- Prejudice and stereotypes, as well as discrimination towards Roma should be tackled by various measures at local level targeting the mainstream population.
- Local capacities to design and implement IPA funded projects for Roma integration should be increased.

