

2018 NATIONAL PLATFORM ON ROMA INTEGRATION

03 October 2018, Skopje

:: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ::

INTRODUCTION

The second [National Platform on Roma Integration](#), jointly organized by the Regional Cooperation Council Roma Integration 2020 Action Team and the Cabinet of the Minister without Portfolio responsible for the implementation of Strategy for Roma 2014-2020 offered opportunity to present the 2017 Monitoring Report, discuss the challenges, implementation priorities and the situation in the field with the civil society. The civil society presented the [2016-2017 Shadow Report](#).

This paper summarizes the main discussion points and aims to assist the Government to improve implementation of their Roma Integration policies.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The 2017 Monitoring Report was prepared in line with the regional monitoring standards adopted by the Roma Integration 2020 participating economies. The report was prepared with the support of the Roma Integration 2020 Action Team.

The monitoring and reporting process needs significant improvements. One of the reasons relates to the quality of Roma Integration Action Plan (AP), which often contains baselines that are not robust, non-measurable or only partially relevant indicators. In addition, the connections between indicators and targets are unclear, while the activities underestimate the required funding. This negatively affects the monitoring process and is further combined with unclear responsibilities and insufficient data collection. The reported achievements per policy measures are often unclear, as indicators are different from what is reported or it is unclear whether results refer to only 2017 or previous years combined. Impact assessment was not provided in the monitoring report except for part of the impact indicators in education. The State Statistical Office should be involved more to provide impact assessment and baseline data.

The lack of funding and monitoring of expenditure combined with poor realization of existing funds remains a problem. The annual expenditure stands at about 670.000,00 EUR since 2009, which is insufficient. Roma integration cannot be achieved only through ad hoc projects out of mainstream measures. Overly donor dependence, must be countered by increased Government spending and inclusion of Roma into existing mainstream policies. The Government committed to continuously increase funds for implementation of Roma integration policies. The EU will also continue supporting Roma integration through IPA and other instruments, especially for capacity building, employment, and targeting of Roma women.

Institutional tardiness and procedural deadlocks remain a significant problem for implementation of policies. The issues are starting to be resolved as the Government adopted decisions clarifying responsibilities and modes of cooperation between the Minister without Portfolio and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

- The Ministry of Transport and Communications is invited to participate in National Platform, present data on housing and involve in discussions.
- The civil society organizations are invited to participate in the National Platform in larger numbers, present situation in the field and involve in discussion.
- The cases of shifting institutional responsibility should cease and be followed with stronger institutional involvement in policy implementation. Institutional ownership and responsibility over Action Plan implementation should improve.
- The Roma Integration Action Plan should be improved to be better compliant with the Strategy for Roma 2014-2020 as well as to include appropriate baselines, indicators, targets,

means of verification, sufficient funding, and provide for measuring of effects. Some of existing mainstream policy measures not included in the AP should become part of it.

- The cooperation and coordination among central and local level should improve. Both levels should be supported with capacity building to implement and report on policies.
- In order to improve the reporting process, quarterly Government reports on policy implementation should be used. A system for regular and continuous data collection needs to be introduced.
- Continue cooperation with the Roma Integration 2020 in improving the monitoring and reporting process. The Roma Integration 2020 is planning to cooperate with the State Statistical Office to improve baseline data and impact assessments.
- Follow up on Roma Integration 2020 initiative on Roma responsible budgeting which will provide instructions on how to improve budgeting and costing of Roma integration policy measures.
- Tackle underspending by continuously increasing spending for the Action Plan implementation.
- Tackle under-utilization of allocated funds by some of the institutions due to insufficient capacities, lack of information, or lack of interest.
- Seriously commit to promoting anti-discrimination and targeting mainstream population attitudes. Observed and reported cases of discrimination need to be processed.
- The economy is invited to implement and report on activities related to strengthening of position of Roma women in the society. The 2017 report did not report on the issue. Similarly, gender related targets in other thematic priorities are inappropriate.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON EDUCATION

In 2017, the most significant results were achieved in education. About 63% of planned funds were realized.

During 2017, 521 Roma enrolled in pre-school education, out of which 259 were girls. Roma children are predominantly enrolled through the project *Inclusion of Roma children in preschool education* funded by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Roma Education Fund, and the local level governments. Raising parents' awareness on importance of pre-school continues through the same project. However, only one Roma parent is included in the kindergartens' governing bodies. The project engages local mediators to support children enrolment. At the moment 20 mediators are engaged in 16 municipalities.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy plans to follow up on the existing actions in preschool education by introducing free preschool education for Roma as a regular activity of municipalities to be funded through block grants allocated to them.

The reconstruction of the kindergarten in Shuto Orizari was initiated in 2017 when technical documentation and elaboration were prepared. Construction of the object started in 2018. The project is implemented with donor and national funds.

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. Adult education was implemented with support from the NGO sector.

It is required to support dropouts to return to mainstream education and identify children who were never included in the educational system. No programmes exist to include older children in the education while the legislation provides that all children aged 6-14 must attend schools. In case of returnees, it is unlikely that they can enrol into schools due to the fact that there is no appropriate nostrification policy accounting for their educational situation.

Segregation of Roma from regular school systems remains a significant problem. While the Government reported decreased participation of Roma in special education due to implemented re-categorization of students in special education, the shadow report referred to 15% more children in special education. Roma parents are more willing to put children to special education due to lower educational costs and free transport of children offered.

Segregation of Roma children further relates to inappropriate reonization and regionalization process and procedures. As an example, school directors have significant discretionary powers



during children enrolment into schools. Directors can decide not to allow enrolment in a class if it already has 30 students. Another problem raised by the NGOs related to school directors refusing to enrol children without birth certificates, although the legislation provides that those children are to be enrolled.

- Fund free pre-school education of Roma as an ongoing activity of municipality through block grants allocated from the central level.
- Identify school dropouts and promote their re-integration into schools.
- Identify children who never entered the school system and develop programmes for their inclusion into school system.
- In case of returnees, additional support and facilitated and free nostrification policy should exist. The Ministry of Education and Science is looking for ways to implement free nostrification policy.
- Programmes for catching up in education for children above enrolment age should be developed.
- Increase the number of local mediators as planned and consider institutionalizing their positions into the public employment system.
- Improve the reonization process and tackle misuse of discretionary powers by school directors.
- Implement the Government recommendation on enrolment of children without birth certificates. When enrolment is rejected, the injured party should refer to State Inspectorate for Education and the local inspector.
- The Government recommendation on re-categorization of children from special to regular education should be implemented continuously so that each year children have the chance to involve in regular education.
- Provide for systematically collecting ethnically disaggregated data on Roma pupils. Currently the information received from different institutions tends to differ. While the Ministry does not have complete information due to pupils right to not declare ethnicity, schools offer assessments without any kind of uniform methodology.
- The existing budget is not being realized to the extent possible. Increase budget realization. Block grants should be received timely and be sufficient to the educational needs of the municipalities.
- Tackle cases of misuse of positive discrimination in education which was noted by local level representatives.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOUSING

The Ministry of Transport and Communications did not participate in the National Platform. The results and further plans for implementation were presented by the Cabined of the Minister without portfolio.

As assessed, Roma currently benefit from about 17.6% of all allocated social housing. The number of beneficiaries is reported as 118 but this refers to all those who benefitted since the AP implementation started. No separate information for 2017 was available. Ethnically disaggregated data related to legalization procedures is not available.

The Government connected funding to municipalities with adoption of local Action Plans and them having settlements with a significant part or Roma population. The implementation of housing projects was challenged by change of mayors, blocked bank accounts of some municipalities, or simply not having sufficient capacities to prepare and implement projects.

Only about 1/5 of planned funds were implemented in 2017 - 8.000.000,00 MKD (approximately 130.000,00 EUR) was spent in Suto Orizari, Kocani and Bitola. These three municipalities were prioritized as they have a large Roma population. For 2018 about 20.000.000,00 MKD (approximately 325.000,00) are planned for reconstruction projects.

Furthermore, the Government is in the process of negotiations for funding from IPA II for approximately 4.000.000 EUR for housing of Roma. The funds are not agreed yet.

The Government is also negotiating to develop standard temporary housing for homeless people and other socially vulnerable categories. Such housing will be offered to socially deprived groups together with educational and employment services. Three municipalities are planned to be piloted:



Shuto Orizari, Prilep and Kocani. After the Government concludes the assessments of required funding and implementing potential, it will consider piloting additional municipalities.

Many Roma settlements are not included in the existing urban plans. The issue which prevents some municipalities from improving and formalizing informal settlements is that they do not have capacities nor the mandate to adopt urban plans which will include those settlements. Consequently, any ameliorative action is not possible. Some municipalities have allocated funding for the preparation of plans but need green light and support from the central level. The municipalities were also not aware of existing budget programmes for preparation of local urban plans and did not apply for funds insofar.

The meeting noted two important developments related to urban planning. The first is that the overly complex procedure of developing urban plans can be shortened to up to 6 months for prioritized plans (in accordance to the Government decision). The second is that 1.300.000,00 EUR are planned under IPA II for preparation of urban plans for informal Roma settlements. The Government representatives agreed to have a meeting with municipal mayors to discuss application requirements and municipal needs.

- Improve urban planning policy to allow for timely preparation and adoption of urban plans. In case of informal Roma settlements it is necessary to understand the factual situation and prepare plans accounting for it - which avoid demolition and evictions to the extent possible.
- Use of prioritized urban plan adoption (under 6 months) must not result in lower quality of the plans.
- Organize a meeting between relevant institutions and municipalities to explain and discuss requirements and needs in relation to IPA II funds allocated for urban plans development.
- Municipalities should apply for funding under the existing budget line for the preparation of local Action Plans.
- Consider legalization of housing before other housing solutions as this is the least expensive and the easiest solution to implement. More flexible legalization procedures would be of assistance in pursuing legalization.
- Consider *Lex specialis* which would introduce special conditions for legalization and urbanization of traditional Roma settlements due to their cultural importance.
- Collect ethnically disaggregated data on Roma applying for legalization and the success ratio of their applications.
- The new Law on Housing should be adopted by December 2018. In the part on social housing it would be important to adopt eviction procedures (in accordance with the international standards) and provide for alternative housing and relocation procedures for evicted families.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON HEALTH

The strategic goal of the health policy is to extend expected life expectancy of Roma. No information on progress in extending life expectancy was observed. The specific outcomes per the AP are:

- improved access of Roma to integrated, high quality, preventive and curative services;
- lowering the risks and preventing diseases connected with higher mortality of Roma children (0-6 years);
- preventing discrimination of Roma when benefiting from health services.

In relation to access to services 1.445 Roma (785 female) received right to health insurance in 2017. This was achieved with the support of Roma health mediators who detected 2.193 persons without health insurance and refereed them on how to receive it.

To prevent children mortality, immunization of children was performed. The activity was implemented in cooperation with Roma health mediators. In 2017, 1.447 children not regularly vaccinated were encountered. Out of this number, 961 were immunized. One gynaecologist was employed in Shuto Orizari to work with Roma community. Lastly, Roma women without health insurance (without documentation but with regulated residence) received free antenatal examination and child delivery in 2017. No data on the number of women beneficiaries was reported.



In 2018, the health insurance coverage is widened to include free health treatment of children up to 18 year from families receiving social benefits.

No activities were performed to tackle discrimination in health sector. Roma submitted 23 complaints on violation of rights in the health sector, but none was processed further.

Looking at the report, Roma primarily benefitted from support by Roma health mediators who also provided information on the number of beneficiaries. One of the ways to promote health support for Roma is to increase the number of medical staff working with them. This implies increasing the number of health mediators as planned under the AP. However, the number of Roma health mediators decreased to 10 in 2017 (from 21 in the previous period). The 2020 target is 30 health mediators and it will be difficult to reach.

The reason behind lower number of health mediators is that their work positions are not systematized in the public employment and the fact that trainings for health mediators can be organized only once a year (during summer breaks) in Secondary Medical School in Skopje. The stakeholders agreed to have a joint meeting to discuss possibilities to resolve problems related to health mediators engagement.

The Ministry of Health does not consider itself as responsible for the AP implementation. The rationale behind is that the AP does not correspond to the work methodology of the Ministry of Health. While the Ministry of Health implements preventive health services which benefit the whole population, no information exists on Roma beneficiaries. Consequently, no information on Roma benefitting from mainstream measures was available.

- Systematize positions of Roma health mediators and increase their number in order to reach the 2020 target of 30. Roma health mediators are recognized as a main link between Roma communities and health institutions.
- Consider possibilities for existing medical staff to be trained to work as Roma health mediators.
- Remove administrative and procedural deadlocks hampering training and engagement of health mediators. Opportunities to train health mediators throughout the year or in medical high schools outside Skopje should be considered.
- Organize a joint meeting of all relevant stakeholders do discuss possibilities for facilitated training and engagement of Roma health mediators.
- Provide impact assessment for health policies. Registers of health beneficiaries and insured people need to account for their ethnic affiliation. It is not sufficient to only rely on data provided by health mediators.
- Improve outreach to Roma community to increase benefits from mainstream health services.
- The discrimination in health needs to be addressed seriously.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON EMPLOYMENT

No significant effects were achieved in the field of employment. The planned budget realization was approximately 66%. The Action Plans do not provide realistic opportunity to follow the most important effect of measures - number of people actually employed. Follow up information are collected by the institutions but are not required per the Action Plan.

According to the Shadow Report, the ratio of unemployed Roma out of total number of unemployed people increased compared to the baseline of 5%. Roma now constitute 5.2% of all unemployed persons. It is unlikely to reach the 2020 target of 4.5% if this trend continues.

The discrimination in employment is not tackled yet. The situation is complex as the Employment Service Agency does not have any responsibility over cases of discrimination in employment. The legislation should be amended so that the Agency can be meaningfully involved to support Roma and process discrimination cases.

An increased number of Roma participating in Active Labour Employment Measures (ALMM) in 2017 (170 Roma, 50 women) compared to 2016 (115 Roma, 49 women) was reported.

Only 28 Roma benefited from self-employment measures, out of which 7 were female. It is unclear how many Roma were subsequently employed. Low participation is ascribed to the complexity of



the process and the fact that Roma cannot collect the complete documentation (which is very complex), and are in risk of worsening their overall position through increased debts in case the self-employment process fails. The latter is also related to the fact that beneficiaries receive material but not sufficient financial support. The financial support is required for successful self-employment.

The Government representatives noted that there are other employment measures that Roma benefit or can benefit from but are not included in the AP. Sometimes Roma do not apply for these measures or do not fulfil the minimum criteria for participation.

With regards to waste collection, the discussions focused on possibilities to formalize the work of waste and scrap material collectors. The government informed that here is a working group discussing the issue but that the situation calls for amending several laws including those on rules of public procurement. Currently, every person is free to collect scrap materials. Even if Roma form an enterprise there is no possibility for public companies to favour them when buying scrap materials.

The AP sets target to employ 50 Roma at the local level. The 2017 report did not report on this, while the 2016 Report referred to 32 persons employed. It is unlikely that the target can be reached by 2020. This issue is related to the methodology of allocating work places in accordance to ethnic affiliation and the impossibility of local level governments to meaningfully implement the Ohrid Framework Agreement requirements.

- Identify the number of unemployed Roma in order to be able to devise appropriate and sufficient employment support.
- Include in the Action Plan existing mainstream measures that Roma could benefit from and revise participation requirements where necessary to allow for Roma participation.
- Amend legislation and devise mechanisms allowing for the Employment Service Agency to participate in the processing of cases of discrimination in employment.
- Adjust self-employment measures to increase their effectiveness for Roma. One of the adjustments needs to be offering not only material but also financial support.
- Counter the observed situation of increasingly excluding Roma from Municipal Work Programmes.
- Consider possibilities for Roma waste and scrap material collectors to organize and formalize their work.
- Promote employment of Roma at the local level by appropriately implementing the Ohrid Framework Agreement. This requires that municipalities are able to balance employment according to ethnic affiliation and requires human capacities and appropriate IT systems. The Government is considering legal amendments on dispenser procedures but these are only in the initial phase of development.

