

4TH TASK FORCE MEETING

ROMA INTEGRATION 2020

12-13 December 2019, Belgrade

:: REPORT ::

The 4th meeting of the Roma Integration 2020 Task Force took place on 12-13 December 2019 in Belgrade. The Task Force members include the National Roma Contact Points (NRCPs) from participating economies, two Roma civil society representatives and one representative each of the Regional Cooperation Council Secretariat, the European Commission, and the Open Society Foundation. The composition was extended with additional two persons, UNHCR and an independent consultant with expertise in responsive budgeting with whom the Roma Integration 2020 (RI2020) cooperated previously. The functioning of the Task Force is regulated by its Rules of Procedure and the Annex to the Rules of Procedure (Annexes I and II).

The report reflects the content and conclusions of the Task Force meeting by agenda items:

1. Opening and Tour de Table
2. Roma Integration 2020 implementation
3. Civil registration of Roma
4. Data collection on Roma in the Republic of North Macedonia
5. 2019 Roma responsive budgeting pilot initiative and how to proceed
6. Regional methodology on mapping of Roma Housing
7. Roma Integration 2019-2021 Roadmaps & technical assistance requests

1. OPENING AND TOUR DE TABLE

The Agenda of the meeting was adopted without changes (Annex III).

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

National Roma Contact Points

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

Ms Mersiha USEIN, Chief of Cabinet, Ministry without Portfolio in charge of implementing the Strategy for advancing the position of Roma of the Republic of North Macedonia (replacing Mr Muzafer BAJRAM), accompanied by *Ms Elena GINOVSKA*, State Statistical Office of the Republic of North Macedonia



Mr Nenad IVANISEVIC, Adviser to the Vice Prime Minister, Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure of Serbia, accompanied by Ms Sofija OSMANOVIC, Adviser, Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure of Serbia

Ms Keriman SADIKAY, Senior Officer for Equal Opportunities and Minorities, Office for Good Governance, Human Rights, Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities of Kosovo* (replacing Mr Habit HAJREDINI)

Mr Omer TURAN MAZGAL, Family and Social Policy Assistance Expert, General Directorate of Family and Community Services, Ministry of Family and Social Policies

Civil Society Representatives

Mr Albert MEMETI

Ms Sanela BESIC

European Commission

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

Ms Mirjana MAKSIMOVIC, Programme Manager for EU Policies - Human Resources' Development, Social inclusion and Minorities, Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia

Open Society Foundations

Ms Neda KORUNOVSKA, Advocacy Manager, Roma Initiatives Office

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Mr Mario Pavlovic, Regional Liaison Officer

Independent budgeting consultant

Mr Rezart XHELO

Regional Cooperation Council

Ms Elda Kalaja, Head of Office of the Secretary General

Technical Support to the Task Force was provided by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Roma Integration 2020 Action Team:

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





Mr Orhan USEIN, Head of Office of the Roma Integration Team

Ms Aleksandra BOJADJIEVA, Policy Expert

Ms Shejla FIDANI, Policy Expert

Mr Danilo SMOLOVIC, Policy Expert

Ms Rada KRSTANOVIC, Project Officer

Mr Danilo VUKMIROVIC, Project Assistant

Ms Aida PRLJACA, Communication Officer

Ms KALAJA stressed the importance of 2019 for Roma integration, becoming mainstreamed within the Berlin Process through the adoption of Poznan Declaration that will enable to monitor achievements and commitments in each of the signing economies. She further called the Task Force to discuss how to implement the Declaration and demonstrate initial results in the Sofia Western Balkans Summit. Furthermore, the new Multiannual Action Plan for the Regional Economic Area is planned to cover human development including vulnerable Roma and will strengthen the process further.

Ms GARCIA FIDALGO expressed pleasure with the action successes and its ability to evolve and answer to changing needs. Having the Poznan Declaration means introduction of human dimension in the Berlin Process, and it will be the key aspect and the cornerstone of future European Union - enlargement region cooperation on Roma Integration. She further notified the meeting that the previous EU Roma Integration Strategy will be assessed beginning of the year and encouraged all participants to participate in the 4 week assessment and provide information about requirements of the new strategy. The post-2020 Roma Integration strategy will most likely be adopted towards the end of 2020.

Ms KORUNOVSKA reflected on the opposing processes in the region. The Declaration adoption was coupled with budget cuts in some of the economies. Postponing the accession negotiations with Albania and the Republic of North Macedonia on the other hand inspired positive developments around mini-Schengen discussions. It will be of importance to work with progressive officials who will be willing to apply methodologies that RI2020 develops and demonstrate that change is possible.

2. ROMA INTEGRATION 2020 IMPLEMENTATION

Mr USEIN presented the key developments under RI2020. The presentation is annexed to this report for more information ([Annex IV](#)). The main achievements include:

- **Adoption of the Western Balkans Partners Declaration on Roma Integration within the EU Enlargement Process in Poznan Summit:** the Declaration states goals which are ambitious yet realistic, and guaranteed by the governments' constitution and legislation. Strong coordination by all line ministries, efficient implementation and monitoring of public budgets will make it possible to meet the targets before EU accession. The progress on the Declaration will be monitored in the Western Balkans Leaders Summits. An inter-ministerial meeting in Tirana will be organised by the Roma Integration 2020 as a preparatory meeting for the Sofia Summit. It will discuss and prepare deliverables for the Sofia Summit:





- Methodology on data collection on Roma (piloted in the Republic of North Macedonia), to be mirroring in the entire region (covered in separate chapter below);
- Guidelines for Roma Responsive budgeting, to be endorsed to ensure political commitment for the process (covered in separate chapter below);
- achieving significant process on civil registration (covered in separate chapter below);
- endorse best model for legalization of informal settlements that will be based on the pilot methodology for mapping Roma houses (covered in separate chapter below);
- **Adoption of Roma Integration Roadmaps 2019-2021:** The roadmaps' targets were guided by the UNDP Regional Roma Survey 2017 results and noted regress in housing and employment. The Roadmaps mainly focus on undeclared work, as most of the Roma are engaged in this zone. The other focus is on legalization of informal settlements where Roma live. The concrete commitments and expected results vary per each economy depending on the observed situation (covered in separate chapter below).
- **Piloting Roma responsive Budgeting and preparation of budget briefs:** the results were less than expected as the process was very challenging, there is a lot of work waiting ahead (covered in separate chapter below).
- **Regional methodology on mapping of Roma Housing (Annex VII):** the methodology was developed and presented at a regional conference organized by the RI2020 team in Sarajevo. The conference included officials from cadastre offices and local self-governments dealing with housing (covered in separate chapter below).
- **Mainstreaming Roma integration in sectoral policies:** the work on completing analysis is ongoing. The analysis will show how Roma integration can be mainstreamed in sector policies and ongoing sectoral reforms. This will also facilitate the work of the NRCPs as there are other institutions that should bear responsibility to implement Roma integration policies;
- **Input to EU enlargement:** the action continuously contributed to IPA programming ensuring that the social inclusion sectors include targets related to Roma integration; post-2020 Roma Strategy; provided ad hoc information to the European Commission; and enabled participation of the NRCPs at EU fora on Roma integration. The action provided continuous updates on the implementation of Roma Seminars' conclusions and Roma integration action plans.
Ms FIDALGO intervened to notify the meeting that the IPA III will not be based on financial but performance envelopes. This implies that good planning will increase allocations for the economies able to demonstrate it and candidate high quality projects. Having Roma Integration as part of the Berlin process is an opportunity to obtain increased funding. It will also be necessary to recognize Roma integration as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals. The governments were invited to improve quality reviews of projects, whereas the RI2020 offered support on the issue of IPA planning and coordination of donor funding.
- **Mainstreaming in RCC:** Roma integration is now recognised within the human capital component of RCCs work. The cooperation with RCC's project Employment and Social Affairs Platform II (ESAP II) will be strengthened on the issue of undeclared work. The RI2020 provided input to the 2019 Balkan Barometer Survey, adding new questions to measure ethnic distance from Roma.





- **Project Synergies:** Very strong coordination and information sharing continued with Romacted, UNDP, REF, CAHROM, and the civil society. New synergies are being established with UNHRCP and the European Statelessness Network on civil registration.
- **Anti-Gypsyism:** the concept is being introduced in a soft way by supporting Roma artists and Roma culture. The action supported three events organized in cooperation with Roma artists in order to combat narratives and stereotypes about Roma.

FOLLOW UP:

- The Roma Integration participants will continue work to successfully prepare deliverables for the Tirana inter-ministerial meeting and the next Western Balkans Summit in Sofia.
- The RI2020 will prepare mainstreaming analysis beginning of 2020, followed by a conference to present the results and agree on next steps.

3. CIVIL REGISTRATION OF ROMA

The meeting discussed the possibility to demonstrate significant progress on the issue of civil registration by the end of 2020. The RI2020 Action Team previously met with responsible institutions that led to the understanding that the stakeholders are aware of the number of people without civil registration.

The UNHCR representative provided further clarifications about the situation on the ground, the potential that the RCC joins the process to sustainably resolve the issue, and whether it is realistic to achieve significant results by the Sofia Summit. In this respect, a specific reference was made to the concrete, country-specific pledges submitted at the High-Level Segment on Statelessness, held in October 2019, by Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and North Macedonia. The list of pledges was shared with the RI2020 respectively.

It is estimated that some 4,500 people in the Western Balkans are at risk of statelessness, and most of them are Roma. The number includes both displaced and domicile population. In particular, the situation is as follows:

Albania: 1,031 Roma are at risk of statelessness, with 90% being children born abroad by Albanian parents. This complicates their post-facto registration. Albania performed a successful economy-wide mapping to establish this number in cooperation with UNHCR and the Tirana Legal Aid Society. At the time of mapping, people were also provided with free legal aid.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Between 65 and 75 Roma are at risk of statelessness. The UNHCR cooperates with the legal network Your Rights (Vasa Prava). Bosnia and Herzegovina pledged to improve birth registration of all children regardless of their parents' status, which should help to prevent the issue in the future. The economy further plans to introduce statelessness determination procedure.

Montenegro: 145 Roma are at risk of statelessness. The verification procedure in 2017 led to finding each beneficiary in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the NGO Legal Centre. UNHCR is now aware of who of these people want to remain in Montenegro. In 2018, the economy introduced the Statelessness





Determination Procedure (SDP) as a part of the newly adopted Law on Foreigners. The SDP shall be applied only as a last resort to the *in situ* population (most of them are displaced Roma from Kosovo*) who originate from former Yugoslavia as this would imply the ordinary naturalization process.

Kosovo*: Approximately 600 Roma are at risk of statelessness. Kosovo* has a Statelessness Determination Procedure put in place and the same application principle as described in the case of Montenegro should be advocated for.

The Republic of North Macedonia: Around 600 Roma persons, predominantly originating from Kosovo* are at risk of statelessness. It seems that voluntary return potential was exhausted. It will be necessary to establish a system to make those that will remain in the economy legally visible, i.e. to legalize their status.

The civil society representative raised the issue of Roma that cannot provide proof of residence for the purpose of civil registration without having an address due to living in non-legalized housing, and that in any case they need at least 5 years of residence to obtain citizenship.

Mr PAVLOVIC suggested that replicating a pragmatic solution from Serbia could resolve the issue. In Serbia, people can register their address at social welfare centres. Serbian representative offered to share this good practice example.

Serbia: Some 2,000 persons are at risk of statelessness. Serbia has a law that covers temporary and permanent residency and legislation on non-contentious proceedings that allow post-facto registration that is accessible, affordable and had significant positive results. While Serbia recently adopted legislation on free legal aid, it does not automatically and timely qualify for services all those in need, such as vulnerable Roma. The UNHCR continues to fund civil sector as legal aid providers to ensure timely services. Mr PAVLOVIC proposed to work together to amend this part of administrative framework and adopt a systemic solution that is embedded in legal and administrative framework to address the remaining cases. Such solutions should also prevent new cases from emerging.

UNHCR plans to eradicate statelessness in the Western Balkans by 2024, the date is considered realistic by the UNHCR for all economies irrespective of their differences on the EU accession path. The issue is tackled within the #BELONG campaign and the above mentioned High Level Segment on Statelessness which marked the mid-point of the campaign, i.e. 10 Actions proposed in UNHCR's *Global Action Plan to End Statelessness: 2014 - 2024*.

Mr PAVLOVIC proposed forming operational thematic working groups of different responsible actors that can make decisions on the spot. The working groups should not be protocol driven but able to convey within a week and provide solutions. It would be beneficial if relevant information management systems could be set up to facilitate operations. Similar system is being set up in Serbia in relation to the residual refugee issues - to establish a moment of the achieved solution (be it local integration or return) aimed at improving cooperation and coordination of the central and local level authorities.

He further stressed the importance of the civil society as licenced legal aid providers in the civil registration process. The government-run legal aid remains either non-effective or non-existent in all the economies in the region.



**FOLLOW UP:**

- The RI2020 will organize regional meeting early next year to decide how to take the issue further and whether it is possible to make it a Sofia Summit deliverable.

4. DATA COLLECTION ON ROMA IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

The Republic of North Macedonia will pilot a specific Roma survey in 2020. The results are expected by the Sofia Summit. The goal is that all statistical offices in the region commit to apply the methodology (adjusted to their specific circumstances) in order to collect official data that can be endorsed by institutions and used for policy making and following the progress on achieving the Poznan Declaration targets. The data collection should be replicated periodically by the time of EU accession. The Task Force agreed that without data there cannot be measurement of progress, and that such methodology is welcome. The Concept of Data Collection to Monitor the Declaration of the Western Balkans Partners on Roma Integration and EU Enlargement proposed by the Roma Integration 2020 is annexed to the Report ([Annex V](#)).

Ms USEIN and Ms GINOVSKA, provided more information about the methodology itself. The methodology will provide impact assessment information to establish baselines for the Roma integration policy and activities' planning. The methodology envisages field survey on the social status of Roma community to be performed biannually. The survey will be financed through national IPA 2017¹, but should become part of a 5-year programme of statistical surveys. Meetings were organized with relevant ministries and agencies to see what data are already available. Sometimes data can be extracted from existing databases but with additional calculations. The meetings are ongoing and the final decision is expected by the end of December, including the sampling methodology and sampling size (individual vs household, or both depending on the information needs). Ms GINOVSKA called the RI2020 to provide the national experts on methodology and questionnaire on the information that the survey will need to provide to serve the purpose of monitoring the Poznan Declaration.

The Task Force agreed that it will be necessary to assess availability of data in all economies, as available information might differ. This will lead to adjustments to the methodology, for example related to the: questions included in the questionnaire, comparability of registers, definition of statistical units to include Roma and Roma settlements, use of census information. The end result has to be that impact information is comparable across the region. The survey, methodology, sampling and all other techniques further need to be in accordance with the EU standards. As such, EUROSTAT should be on board for implementing the survey. EUROSTAT is now aware that collecting ethnically disaggregated information is constitutionally possible in the Western Balkans economies and that it can be useful.

The discussions followed about the technical aspects of the methodology. As Ms GINOVSKA explained, the methodology will combine administrative data and data collection in the field for the information that does not exist. The administrative registers have to fit the necessary standards to be useful for statistical purposes, and the process of their adjustments is ongoing and challenging. The administrative registers are planned to be

¹ The Republic of Norths Macedonia implements a project to establish performance assessment framework (PAF). It will include indicators for various policy areas, making it possible for the government to plan and measure progress on its policies. Roma integration indicators will become part of the PAF. Information will be public and transparent. The PAF information will additionally be used as part of IPA III programming.





used for the 2021 census. Biannually, an analytical report with information about progress on meeting the declaration targets will be produced. Data related to health are assessed as the most challenging to collect. Sample level can be both household and individual depending on the required information.

Bosnia and Herzegovina will perform social mapping of Roma needs. It will compare whether the mapping gives some information relevant for the survey. Both methodologies will be shared with the remaining participants once developed.

FOLLOW UP:

- The survey should be replicated in the remaining economies in 2021.
- The methodology (together with initial data collection results) should be complete by the Sofia Summit to be endorsed as a deliverable.
- The NRCs will engage in discussions with their statistical offices to agree to implement the survey in their economies, and to notify them that the RI2020 can provide support. Statistical offices should be notified that the EUROSTAT is not against the survey.
- The NRCs should discuss with their respective EUDs whether they are willing to offer training support and expertise on data collections, such as in Kosovo*.
- The RI2020 will engage to ensure political commitment for the data collection on Roma.

5. 2019 ROMA RESPONSIVE BUDGETING PILOT INITIATIVE AND HOW TO PROCEED

The Guidelines for Roma Responsive budgeting adopted in 2018 were piloted in 2019. The piloting success varied from economy to economy. The Task Force discussed the possibility to continue the budgeting initiative and in which way it should be adjusted to increase the impact. General interest of institutions and the ministries of finance was not sufficient. In order to build up political commitment for the initiative, the Guidelines are proposed as a deliverable for the upcoming Sofia Summit.

Mr XHELO, independent consultant that supported the piloting process in Albania and Kosovo* presented the Albanian experiences. The presentation ([Annex VI](#)) covered achievements but also challenges in the process.

Piloting commenced with workshops to familiarize specialists in line ministries how to take advantage of the Guidelines to identify key budget programmes in key sectors that have the most impact on Roma. In Albania it was possible to earmark budgets for Roma integration by identifying relevant budget programmes and by introducing Roma integration performance indicators.

The soft pressure to include Roma perspective in the budgeting process had several positive results. Besides the institutions increased awareness of the Roma responsive budgeting initiative and willingness to discuss it, the specialists from targeted line ministries met with budget experts to work on the issue. Such developments should continue and be strengthened.

Albania adopts triannual Medium Term Budget Programme (MTBP) which is at a developed stage. This increased opportunities to promote Roma responsive budgeting. A specific product of economic aid totalling 1.63 million EUR for Roma families was introduced in the draft budget. Additional commitments were extracted from the budgets, such as for pre-school education, basic education, and free textbooks, totalling approximately 8 million EUR (see [Annex VI](#)). Besides budgetary commitments, normative commitments included in





the detailed cover indicators and targets for the next three years which relate to Roma integration, as presented in more detail in the 2019 Roma Responsive Budgeting Brief for Albania. The budget briefs were prepared within the piloting process as deliverables summing up results of the annual process.

Mr XHELO suggested continuing monitoring initial results to make them best practice for the next year, to continuously train line ministries and to promote participatory approach. The next year process should commence as early as possible, as the next budgeting cycle starts as early as February. The opportunity lies with current budget reforms and the Declaration targets that should become concrete policy obligations transposed in the budget. It would be important to promote participatory approach as the civil society could provide information where to focus expenditure. The RI2020 and the NRCPs should further argue that at least one single specific objective on Roma integration is introduced in relevant line ministries' budgets - where the objective would be matched with appropriately costed budget allocations.

The NRCPs then discussed challenges in their respective economies.

Bosnia and Herzegovina wants to appropriately cost its new Action Plan when adopted. The NRCP noted the lack of experts as the obstacle in the process, as did the NRCP of Serbia. Bosnia and Herzegovina had an offer to establish comprehensive data management system through the EUD support. The data management system would include Roma integration and would assist in the programme and Roma responsive budgeting.

The Republic of North Macedonia is pleased with the piloting results as it was able to identify expenditure for Roma integration in two pilot programmes and establish where to increase expenditure or change normative framework to increase effectiveness. More details are provided in the 2019 Roma Responsive Budgets Briefs for the Republic of North Macedonia.

The Roma Integration 2020 representatives then explained that the Roma responsive budgeting represents an analysis that shows where to invest. It does not simply show whether expenditure is high or low nor it simply argues for more expenditure for Roma. It analyses whether budget planning, monitoring and implementation takes Roma needs into account. It can reveal that the budget and policy framework do not comply, or that conditions to benefit from appropriated expenditure do not fit Roma population making certain services less accessible to them. Understanding the process and its flaws provides arguments for improvements that will benefit the Roma population. The ultimate aim is to ensure that line ministries and the ministries of finance use the Guidelines during the preparation and costing of policies, strategies, action plans, mainstream measures and annual and medium-term budgets. This will effect in mainstreaming Roma integration in the overall policy and budget framework of each economy where relevant.

The Task Force agreed to continue with the Roma responsive budgeting process in 2020.

FOLLOW UP:

- The Roma Integration 2020 will propose next piloting steps early next year.
- The Roma Integration 2020 will engage with DG NEAR to assess whether use of the Guidelines for Roma Responsive Budgeting can become part of wider EU supported public administration reform.
- The Guidelines for Roma Responsive Budgeting will be proposed as deliverable in the next Western Balkans Leaders Summit in Sofia.





7. REGIONAL METHODOLOGY ON MAPPING OF ROMA HOUSING

The regional methodology for mapping Roma housing ([Annex VII](#)) is developed will be tested starting in January 2020 in two municipalities per economy. The results will be translated into model for legalization of informal settlements. The model is to be developed by September 2020 and proposed as a deliverable in the Sofia summit.

It is necessary to locate housing units of Roma in the region. Currently this data are lacking. After identifying Roma housing and settlements, the next step is to prepare urban plans envisaging legalization. This will be followed by legalization support leading to housing legalization. It is assessed that Roma informal settlements are generally not covered by urban plans that envisage housing. Considering that legalization deadlines expired, the legalization procedures will need to be restarted.

The methodology is based on the Geographic Information System (GIS) developed in Serbia. The methodology does not focus on data collection in the field, but using and overlapping already existing information. The orthophoto and cadastral information is compared and overlapped for this purpose. This shows how the cadastre is treating the space, whether there are parcel numbers, and similar. The methodology proposes 5 steps:

1. Identify Roma settlements - discussions with the central and local levels of government, civil society, and Roma communities. The discussions will result in a list of all settlements to be mapped;
2. Obtain orthophoto from the cadastral offices;
3. Draw borders of each settlements in cooperation with local government offices
4. Provide information about each settlement
5. Combine data for each settlement with a) census data and b) cadastre data. The step shows land ownership, coverage with urban planning, etc.

Important issues related to the mapping methodology include:

- Definition of substandard Roma settlement. It was necessary to devise a definition applicable to the whole region;
- Engaging local actors - municipalities, Roma civil society, utility companies, local statistical offices and all other institutions that can provide data.
- Establishing, maintaining, updating, analysing and using the data. Some information will have to be estimates, such as on the settlement's age. The data should become official in agreement with the local level.
- Using the new census cycle for full mapping after the two municipalities are piloted.

After the presentation, the Task Force discussed appropriate municipalities for piloting. The selected municipalities need to be open for cooperation and aware that the methodology ultimate aim is to promote legalization. Additionally, the municipalities' size needs to be appropriate to complete the mapping in the first half of 2020.

Ms KORUNOVSKA suggested considering insecurity of tenure as a criteria in selecting the municipalities. She further suggested establishing history of land ownership through the questionnaire. This would show when the land is privatized, or which Roma settlements are eligible for legalization due to length of land use (old traditional settlements) so to protect mahalas.





There was no final decision on municipalities communicated by the NRCs. The NRCs will inform the Task Force in writing about their final decision.

Serbia will have updated information for the whole of territory, but the process needs to be harmonized with the RI2020 regional methodology.

FOLLOW UP:

- The NRCs will inform the Roma Integration 2020 which municipalities are selected for piloting by the end of January 2020. The decision should be put in the government meeting and communicated to the municipalities.
- The Roma Integration 2020 will translate the methodology in local languages.
- The piloting process should commence January 2020 and be completed by April 2020.
- Based on the piloting results, the methodology for legalization of informal settlements will be prepared and put as deliverable in the next Western Balkans Leaders Summit in Sofia.

8. ROMA INTEGRATION 2019-2021 ROADMAPS & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE REQUESTS

The session was devoted to the Roma Integration Roadmaps 2019-2021 on employment and housing. Discussions evolved around implemented and upcoming activities and how the roadmaps will need to be adjusted.

Ms MAKSIMOVIC, the EUD Serbia representative presented the Serbian experiences in supporting housing of Roma in legalization and social housing. The Task Force members later discussed the possibilities to replicate these experiences.

Serbia is in the 6th year of implementing programmes dedicated to Roma housing. The economy identified more than 500 Roma settlements. The EC assists in resolving the issue through work on policy adjustments and funding housing programmes. The work started when resettling the Belvile and Gazella informal settlements. Social and village housing was allocated to more than 400 families. Social housing programmes embed the holistic approach principles. The network of Roma mediators is supporting vulnerable families to pay utilities, find employment, keep track of children school attendance, and similar. The success of the holistic approach in practice largely depends on the local level and the contact points' commitment to human rights.

The first experiences revealed the necessity to appropriately schedule IPA programming in housing to sustainably tackle the issue. In that sense, programming of one activity does not imply that the previous has been fully completed. For example IPA 2012 covered housing mapping and IPA 2013 - producing urban plans and technical assistance for legalization of informal settlements. The programmed actions were implemented 2-3 years later.

Current projects are implemented in 24 municipalities that each includes more than one Roma settlement. Activities focus on production of urban plans for legalization. While this is the 6th year in the process, no legalization of Roma settlement occurred thus far as complex procedures postpone the legalization decisions. It is expected that in the next 6 months at least 2 settlements will manage to legalize their settlements.

On another note, in order to prioritize legalization of Roma housing, the EUD is supporting Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities and the civil society on the policy level. The *lex specialis* that would prioritize legalization of Roma settlements has previously been submitted to the Government. The Government issued an opinion that Roma





settlements do not differ from other settlements, hence the legislation was not considered for adoption. It is assessed that Roma benefit the last from mainstream legalization processes and that this calls for prioritization of legalization of Roma settlements.

The Task Force concluded that legalization process needs to be speed up for vulnerable Roma, and noted the need for strategic approach in IPA and activities' programming. Social housing should be the last step after all legalization possibilities are exhausted.

The Poznan Declaration and the Berlin process should help to inform the Western Balkans ministers and prime ministers about the necessary steps in housing legalization and the related costs. Considering that IPA is demand driven, the governments will be those that propose priorities. All stakeholders should engage to promote prioritization of Roma housing legalization with their respective governments.

On the second day, the roadmaps' related discussions continued. Presentations of all Roma Integration 2020 roadmaps are provided within the Roma Integration 2020 presentation ([Annex IV](#)). The roadmaps targets are mostly based on the UNDP 2017 Regional Roma Survey, but also on economy-specific available information. With this in mind, the Roadmaps will need to be updated when information is available, such as after obtaining the results of the data collection on Roma and the housing mapping exercise.

Based on the proposal of the OSF representative Ms KORUNOVSKA, the roadmaps will further be updated to define necessary steps in reaching the targets and their timeline.

The report takes stock of main conclusions per each of the economies and the technical assistance requests were provided:

Albania:

The Roadmap focuses on housing legalization and formalizing undeclared work. The Roadmap is based on relevant measures from the Action Plan and Operational Conclusions, as well as Albanian existing experiences related to undeclared work (EKO Tirana project). The technical assistance was discussed with the Government but no technical assistance requests were submitted at this point.

Considering the post-earthquake emergency situation, the Task Force discussed emerging housing needs. At the moment it is expected that more than 400 Roma families are in need of housing support due to the earthquakes.

The stakeholders expect the Government report with initial needs-assessment, after which it will be possible to provide required support. REDI already initiated a call for donations. The report will be shared with the EUD and the EC that need information about concrete demands in order to be able to provide and coordinate assistance.

The temporary solution is to provide all in need with winter tents as an initial solution as construction will not be possible throughout the winter. The Albanian Government set the target to move all those affected from tents to temporary housing. Within the MTBP the budget it will be necessary to allocate additional budget for temporary housing and to buy low-cost housing.

Bosnia and Herzegovina:

The civil society has shown scepticism about the Roadmap targets. Plan is to focus on promoting employment by transforming undeclared work. The Roadmap will be modified to include steps on how to ensure this.





The exact number of informal settlements is now known, but it is assessed that 2,500 families remain in need of housing.

Ms DJUDERIJA who is the NRCP argued that there is money in employment programmes that remains unspent and that it is necessary to devise new employment programmes. The economy will seek expert support to devise innovative employment programmes.

The civil society representative noted that some of the housing provided for Roma is not up to adequate housing standards. There are examples of municipalities that still did not provide utility connections for housing provided to Roma. This is a lingering issue in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Kosovo*:

It is assessed that 80% of Roma families face evictions. The Government is to an extent sceptical about meeting the Roadmap's targets. The Roma Integration is attempting to support the preparation of the Social Housing Law to include quotas for Roma. The Ministry of Environment and Social Planning adopted a decision to develop a database in relation to housing needs but there is currently no trained staff to use and update the system. Hence, the municipalities are not providing information but some data on Roma are available

The unemployment is generally a salient issue in Kosovo* where both Roma and non-Roma are included in undeclared work.

The RI2020 is also discussing with the Government to support it in donor coordination, but the technical assistance requesting process needs speeding up. The NRCP representative agreed, further stating that there are instances of donors constructing housing at the local level without central level awareness.

In relation to IPA programming, the RCC provided space for the NRCP and the EUD to meet and discuss funding proposals for Roma integration. The raised issues need to also be communicated with the NIPAC office.

Montenegro:

The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare needs to commit more to the employment issue. It will be necessary to start with data collection about possibilities to formalize undeclared work and fields of employment tackled, and then revise the Roadmap if necessary. No technical assistance requests on employment and housing were submitted to the RI2020, while the central level assesses it can engage more on social housing than on legalization. The NRCP of Montenegro was not present in the meeting to provide further technical assistance requests.

The Republic of North Macedonia:

The Republic of North Macedonia planned comprehensive framework for regulating undeclared work in the Roma Integration Action Plan and Strategy, but none of the measures were implemented. The RI2020 was invited to formulate a programme for formalization of undeclared work and propose it with the Government for future IPA programming. The plan is to establish a working group of relevant institutions and the civil society early next year towards the programme formulation. The programme will account for the Roma needs, but also other issues raised by the Task Force.





An outstanding issue is that most Roma have outstanding debts with pending executive decisions. According to current regulations, once not on social welfare the families will have to pay the debts and give up their ownership. The aim is to reactivate the previous law on outstanding debts for Roma to benefit.

In addition, the civil society applied for IPA project to establish voucher system that will help formalization of employment. The civil society representative assessed that increasing minimum wage can backfire when trying to regularize undeclared work, as increased wages might push more people into informality.

Information in the area of housing varies, from 70% of illegal houses according to the Strategy to 50% according to a recent social mapping exercise. IPA programmes for urban planning and reconstruction of settlements are implemented, with around 5 million EUR allocated.

The Roma Integration 2020 plans to cooperate with the civil society and Romacted to identify objects suitable for social housing and adjust them to fit the adequate housing standards. People that cannot legalize their existing housing should benefit from the measure.

Serbia:

The participation of Roma in the employment sector is worrying, as 71% engage in undeclared work such as waste collection, seasonal work, cleaning service, as street market vendors etc. The Government planned measures on undeclared work, but it is not reported that anything was implemented.

In the National Platform and the meetings with the Government appropriate approach to formalization of undeclared work was discussed. It is necessary to prevent stripping of social welfare and not adding taxation to newly created businesses. The Roma Integration will devise a comprehensive proposal on this together with the National Roma Council.

In relation to housing, the Serbia GIS shows 594 substandard Roma settlements with 20,477 object, but without information about which are illegal. GIS update will provide more precise information after which the Roadmap will be updated with new targets. The legalization of settlements where urban plans exist will be prioritized. While IPA funding is available, the Roma Integration 2020 will assist to ensure their successful implementation - such as mapping and developing new IPA projects in order to perform evidence based interventions in Serbia.

FOLLOW UP:

- The housing mapping should be completed by June 2021 for the whole territory of Western Balkans.
- The NRCs, the Roma Integration 2020, and the civil society should engage with the governments to introduce Roma housing issue and the legalization of Roma informal settlements in future IPA programming.
- The Roadmaps will be updated with the sequence of activities and their timeframe to reach the Roadmaps' milestones and targets. The Roma Integration 2019-2021 Roadmaps will be updated with new information when available.
- The Roma Integration 2020 will continue discussions on appropriate formalization of work of vulnerable Roma in the ESAP platform.
- The Roma Integration 2020 will organise regional conference with employment and tax authorities to raise the issue of Roma unemployment.





9. ROMA INTEGRATION 2020 UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

The last session of the day presented Roma Integration 2020 upcoming activities (Annex VIII). The activities specific for 2020 include:

- Analysis - Countering negative narrative and anti-Gypsyism in the region; the analysis will take stock of the existing analysis of negative narratives produced by the civil society and will focus on messages to counter negative narratives, how to structure the messages, and how to convey them;
- Mainstreaming analysis, expected by February 2020;
- Three regional conferences, focused on: civil registration; mainstreaming, ensuring that mainstream analysis leads to concrete follow up; and on housing, follow up on piloting and presenting the best-legalization model;
- Inter-Ministerial meeting in Tirana in advance of the Sofia Summit; After receiving information from Bulgaria about the Sofia event, the RI2020 will provide more information to the NRCPs on their role.

The NRCPs should participate in the EU events as follows: EU Roma Week and Croatian Presidency event (Brussels, 23-27 March 2020), EU Roma Platform (Autumn 2020), German Presidency Event.

The Republic of North Macedonia representative provided information that the economy will suggest institutionalization of pre-school education as a deliverable in the Sofia summit, based on its example. This proposal will be discussed and potentially submitted by the Prime Ministers Cabinet.

The fourth Task Force meeting of the Roma Integration 2020 action concluded on 13 December at 11:30.

