



Government of the Republic of Croatia

**Decade of Roma inclusion 2005-2015
Croatian Decade Presidency Work Plan
July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013**

Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015

The idea of the Decade emerged from "Roma in an Expanding Europe: Challenges for the Future," a high-level regional conference on Roma held in Budapest, Hungary, in 2003. Following this event, Prime Ministers of the nine participating governments signed the Declaration of the Decade of Roma Inclusion in Sofia, Bulgaria, on February 2, 2005.

Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Montenegro, and Slovakia are the nine founding members of the Decade, while Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Spain joined the initiative in 2008. Slovenia and USA participate in the Decade as an observer.

Several international partners are part of the initiative, too: the World Bank, the Open Society Foundations, the United Nations Development Program, UNICEF, UNHCR, WHO, the European Commission, the Council of Europe, Council of Europe Development Bank, the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the European Network Against Racism, the European Roma Information Office, the European Roma and Travellers Forum, the European Roma Rights Centre, and the Roma Education Fund.

The Decade is an open process; other countries as well as international organizations are welcome to join the initiative. Full Roma participation is the core value of the Decade.

To accelerate social inclusion and improve the economic status of Roma within states, each participating country prepared a Decade National Action Plan including a limited number of measurable national goals for improvements in common priority areas - education, employment, health, and housing - and three cross-cutting themes - poverty, discrimination, and gender.

The Decade has launched a process towards making a difference, but it has not yet had the impact that Roma in Europe need – tangible and real integration into mainstream societies. The challenge over the coming years is to design more systematic solutions and to look at positive examples across Decade countries and the EU as a whole. Good examples of systematic policy approaches exist in most countries; the Decade is being used as an effective

forum for exchanging this experience, in order to maximize the effect of any governmental measure regarding Roma inclusion.

As a central pillar of the Decade initiative, to expand educational opportunities for Roma communities in Central and the South – East Europe, an international Roma Education Fund was established in 2005. The goal of the Roma Education Fund is to contribute to closing the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma, through policies and programs including desegregation of educational systems.

Decade Trust Fund (DTF) is financed out of contributions from all Decade countries as well as interested international partner organizations and administered by the World Bank. The DTF is a flexible tool to finance joint activities of the Decade countries like cross-country technical support, trainings and workshops in the context of refining and implementing the Decade National Action Plans and monitor Decade implementation across the Decade countries.

Croatian Decade Presidency Work Plan - Introduction

The Republic of Croatia takes over the Presidency of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 on 1st July 2012 from Republic of Macedonia, and hands it over to Republic of Montenegro on 30th June 2013. In the course of the Presidency mandate Republic of Croatia has the responsibility to: implement the Work Plan of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 consisting of meetings of the Decade partners on relevant priority areas; represent the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 on international level; ensure regular flow of information; ensure effective participation and cooperation of and among Decade partners and other relevant actors; and encourage and administer active membership and potential enlargement of the Decade initiative.

The Work Plan of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 for the period of Republic of Croatia's Presidency is proposed at the 22nd International Steering Committee meeting by Republic of Croatia. It is discussed and adopted during the International Steering Committee meeting. The Work Plan takes into consideration actual developments and issues relevant for the Roma communities and the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 both on international and national level, as well as the previous developments within the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 since the beginning of the initiative, thus ensuring relevance and continuity.

Roma Community Participation in the Planning Process

In the spirit of the Decade Declaration, Republic of Croatia involved the Roma national minority representatives in the drafting of the Decade Presidency Work Plan through their civil society organizations, elected representative bodies and political organizations within a series of consultative meetings and review of written requests. Results of these consultations included the following topics which can be covered during Croatian presidency:

- ***Roma participation*** in all the relevant developments, including policy making, implementation and monitoring on all levels – international to local; use of the Roma potentials on one hand and empowerment and community development on the other hand; effective involvement of legitimately elected Roma representatives, as well as improvement of the mechanisms for political representation; employment of Roma in public administration and relevant organizations implementing policies; participation of Roma youth and women in all the aforementioned aspects.

- Bring *EU and other international initiatives* closer to the Roma community and ensure implementation resulting in real positive change in the lives of Roma; connect and unite Roma on national, regional and EU level; use the Decade experience and practices within EU and other initiatives relevant to Roma; make much more effective use of the EU funds for the improvement of the situation of Roma; partnering and networking on EU level for Roma issues among all relevant stakeholders, similar to the Decade experience.
- Advance the efforts and results in the area of *education*, particularly in terms of lifelong learning, preschool including compulsory preschool and preparing Roma for equal start in education; putting in place mechanism to ensure achievement of the EU Framework objective in education: all Roma children complete quality primary school; provide adequate education to ensure employability and competitiveness of Roma; pay special attention to Roma women and girls. Use of Romani language in institutions is particularly important issue, especially in education.
- Promotion of **tolerance and non-discrimination of Roma**, including fight against xenophobia and racism that are on the rise in Europe, as well as promotion of positive image of Roma. Research of Roma history with particular focus on research of the Roma pogrom during the World War II and the importance of learning from historical experiences with an aim of preventing recurrence and development of effective mechanisms for protection of Roma from racial discrimination.
- Encourage and motivate *youth activism and participation*, including as pre-employment encouragement, as well as political participation; mainstream Roma youth issues in Roma targeting policies and use youth potential, particularly on local level, for change both in the situation of Roma and the attitudes of non-Roma towards Roma; combat existing apathy (due to poverty and exclusion) among young Roma.
- **Implementation** of policies for Roma integration: acceleration, quality, efficiency of implementation; need for practical measures and measures producing sustainable change; allocation of adequate resources for implementation; implementation on local/grassroots level; data collection and use for policy planning, monitoring and reporting, outreach and flow of information; mainstreaming poverty and Roma issues, particularly in emerging legislation and policies.

Several other issues have been brought up as important during consultation process: housing (particularly legalization of illegal settlements and property rights); status/citizenship and registration (elimination of statelessness, encouraging self-identification, establishing effective registration procedures); employment (community cooperatives, self-employment, employability, women and youth employment, reduction of social welfare dependency).

International Context of the Croatian Decade Presidency

At the same time there are numerous international, in particular European developments relevant to the Roma issues, and thus relevant to the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 and to the Presidency of Republic of Croatia. While the situation of Roma all over Europe is posing an increasing challenge in many respects, particularly from the aspect of the attitudes of the mainstream society towards Roma, international and intergovernmental organizations and national governments are taking increased interest and commitment to the Roma issues and starting or continuing a number of relevant initiatives.

European Union's Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 (EU Framework) is admittedly the most prominent one. Politically it represents a commitment of the European Union as a whole and its member states individually to solve the issues Roma face all over Europe. It requires from the EU member states to develop and implement National Roma Integration Strategies (NRISs), while providing common policy guidelines and coordination, platform for exchange of experiences, as well as financial and technical resources. EU enlargement countries are also invited to participate in the initiative.

Open Society Foundations and the World Bank, as well as the United Nations Development Program remain committed and active through wide range of activities, including supporting the Roma civil society and Roma communities to participate as active players in the developments of their interest, advocating for the rights of Roma, as well as providing various resources and support to the actors dealing with Roma issues, including Governments. Roma Education Fund still plays crucial role for the education of Roma, establishing practices and promoting initiatives that improve the overall education status of Roma. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees deals with specific issues of relevance for the Roma, solving the status issues of Roma, as most difficult factor hindering the access of Roma to human rights. UNICEF, UN HABITAT, and WHO are also contributing both through direct activities in most of Decade countries, and through sharing their knowledge base through participation in Decade activities.

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe implements the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti through the participating Governments, and particularly relevant is the recently commenced Best Practices of Roma Integration project. The Council of Europe continues its longstanding work on Roma issues, particularly through the recent initiatives for promotion of Roma integration on local level, Roma mediators and exchange of good practices, as well as through the increased focus on Roma issues of its treaty bodies, including the European Court of Human Rights. The Council of Europe also plays vital role in the fight against discrimination and in the commemoration of Roma victims of the World War II.

Croatian Decade Presidency Objectives

Taking in consideration the proposals made through the public consultations with the Roma community, developments on international level, the fact that the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 is approaching the end of its timeframe and the accession to the European Union of the Republic of Croatia, the overall objective of the Decade Presidency of Republic of Croatia is set to the promotion of the Decade and bringing it closer to the international initiatives, in particular the EU Framework on NRIS. The purpose of setting this objective for the Presidency is twofold: to ensure utilization and continuity of established practices with the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 that have made positive changes in the overall situation of Roma, and through the experience of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 to support other international initiatives relevant for the inclusion of Roma.

In this respect, Croatian Decade Presidency envisages activities that shall bring most relevant actors together to discuss both the existing practices of the Decade and available opportunities provided by other international initiatives, particularly the EU Framework on NRISs, to

continue and strengthen the efforts in a number of priority areas, as well as activities that shall trigger new momentum for the existing international initiatives for inclusion of Roma.

The specific aims of the Croatian Decade Presidency priority areas through which it intends to achieve its overall objective are:

1. ***Linking the Decade of Roma Inclusion and the EU Framework:*** To enhance the commitments of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 by adequate usage of the opportunities provided by the EU Framework for NRISs, particularly in terms of policy making, establishing structures and mechanisms for effective allocation and use of funds, effective involvement of Roma, monitoring and evaluation of the progress in the Roma integration;
2. ***Linking Decade Success in Education with EU Education Policy and the status of the Romani language:*** To utilize existing experiences of the most advanced area of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015, namely education, for linking Roma education with the education policy of the EU and the role of the Romani language for the purpose of making the Roma education efforts wider and more sustainable at the same time preserving the identity of Roma;
3. Linking ***historical experiences of Roma in Europe with the advancement of the tolerance and non-discrimination of Roma***, including fight against xenophobia and racism which are on the raise in Europe, as well as increase of the positive image of Roma. Encouraging scientific researches on the history of Roma with particular focus on the pogrom against Roma during the World War II and public debates on the contemporary forms of discrimination are to be encouraged; and
4. ***Roma Youth in Action for Tolerance and Recognition:*** To initiate attention to the issues of young Roma within the existing initiatives, including the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015, by learning from EU youth initiatives and using youth action to promote tolerance and respect for Roma and preservation and development of the identity of Roma, with the emphasis on local level.

In addition to the discussion at the International Steering Committee meetings, the Croatian Decade Presidency shall dedicate specific events to these goals, in the course of the Presidency. Moreover, during two regular International Steering Committee meetings of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 the Presidency shall initiate discussions on the future of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 and its possible expansion in time, scope and area, since the Croatian Presidency is taking place in the crucial moment for the Decade of Roma Inclusion for planning its follow up and building its relations with other international initiatives. For this end a support will be sought from the highest levels.

Taking into account the demands voiced by the Roma community and the existing opportunities provided with the initiatives of all the active international actors, the Presidency shall support and provide additional opportunities for the international actors to implement their initiatives using the platform provided by the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015. In particular, the Presidency shall support ODIHR-BPRI in its efforts in the area of housing and specifically legalization of illegal settlements, and the UNHCR in its efforts to solve the statelessness among Roma in the region, as two issues voiced by the Roma community among the priority issues. Decade Presidency will also provide support and use of the Decade

platform for the two initiatives promoting Roma inclusion on local level, namely the Council of Europe's Summit of Mayors on Roma Issues and the OSI-MtM's Mayors Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma Integration (MERI) initiatives, since the implementation of the policies for Roma integration on local level is deemed to be of crucial importance..

The Presidency shall encourage and support an initiative of the Roma community to organize a specific activity for the Roma political and civil society activists and other relevant stakeholders on the issue of Roma participation. Elected Roma representatives at the European Parliament, as well as at the national parliaments and regional representative bodies will have a special role in this initiative, and support is expected from the relevant international actors, such as the Open Society Roma Initiatives.

Elaboration of the Croatian Decade Presidency Activities

The Croatian Decade Presidency shall start with 23rd International Steering Committee meeting, in September 2012 in Zagreb, Croatia. It will bring together the Decade partners to discuss the regular organizational issues of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 and the implementation of the Presidency Work Plan, but also to initiate discussion on the possibilities for the follow up of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 and its possible expansion in time, scope and area.

1. Linking the Decade of Roma Inclusion and the EU Framework

The accession of Republic of Croatia to the European Union shall also be looked at through the Roma integration perspective. The efforts to improve the situation of Roma both within the Decade and the EU Framework shall be used as a bridge to bring closer the two initiatives and serve as a role model both for the EU member states and EU enlargement countries participating in the Decade, to advance their efforts for integration of Roma employing both the initiatives. In this respect the Presidency shall: i) deal with the transition of the policy tools from Action Plans towards National Roma Integration Strategies; ii) increase in the use of the resources provided by the EU for inclusion of Roma, including appropriate funds and programs; iii) advancement of the participation of Roma in the relevant policies, as well as iv) involvement in the establishing of the monitoring and reporting mechanisms of the EU Framework, and building on the lessons learnt with the reporting and data collecting processes within the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015.

For this purpose a two-day conference shall be organized in February 2013, covering main areas for discussions, identified during the consultation process. A panel on the transition of the policy tools for integration of Roma from Decade Action Plans towards National Roma Integration Strategies is envisaged to share experiences and information on the requirements set up by the EU Framework by relevant EU officials, the experiences of the Decade participating governments in the development of the NRIS and utilization of the Decade experience in this process, and the developments in this respects in Decade participating countries currently in the process of adopting or reviewing their NRISs. The second panel shall present the opportunities for funding Roma Integration through the available EU funds, and the experiences and challenges in planning and implementing financial perspectives of the Roma related policies. Both relevant EU officials and experienced Decade partners, including the Making the Most of the EU Funds for Roma initiative of the Open Society Institute are expected to contribute. The third panel is looking at the principle contained both

in the Decade Declaration and the EU Framework – the participation of Roma. Different structures and mechanisms for participation will be discussed, but special attention shall be paid to the level of Roma participation in the Decade participating and other EU countries, since the Decade has accumulated extensive experience in this respect. Empowerment of the Roma community for participation shall be another focus for discussion. The panel shall be comprised of Governments and EU officials dealing with the issues of public participation and relations with the public, elected Roma representatives, as well as prominent representatives of the Roma civil society and relevant international organizations. The requirement of the EU Framework for robust monitoring and reporting mechanism on the integration of Roma shall be discussed in order to promote ideas and experiences in this regard, particularly in the light of the weaknesses of this aspect within the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion. Positive experiences of international actors, primarily the UNDP, World Bank and EU Fundamental Rights Agency shall be shared for learning purposes, but also past Roma civil society initiatives such as the Decade Watch, as well as new proposals for the role of the Roma in the monitoring process shall be analysed.

2. Linking Decade Success in Education with EU Education Policy and status of the Romani language

The experiences of the most advanced area of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015, namely the area of education, shall be discussed in connection with the mainstream opportunities for education provided by the EU. Besides participating Governments, the Roma Education Fund shall play an important role to present and discuss both the efforts that had made the education priority in the Decade most advanced area and the challenges to make these efforts wider and more sustainable. The range of EU initiatives in education, including lifelong learning, students' mobility and vocational training, shall be explored to identify opportunities to meet the existing challenges.

The main purpose of the international conference is to exchange experiences of different stakeholders and identify barriers and risks, but also key factors which contribute to the transformation of a successful educational initiative to a realistic, sustainable and effective policy. Special attention will be given to the relation of Strategy Europe 2020 goals in relation to education goals of NRIS, particularly on the primary school level. The conference will be organized in connection with the scientific symposium on the status of the Romani language in institutions, which will bring together prominent romologists, linguists and writers. Special panel will be dedicated to the status of the Romani language in the education, as a precondition for preservation of the cultural heritage and identity of Roma, enabling full integration of Roma in the society.

The conference shall also be attended by other prominent practitioners and experts of the Decade that have been involved in the implementation of educational projects for Roma and in policy development in education of Roma to present the experiences of the Decade from planning to impact, including the involvement of Roma and the mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues in the education initiatives, such as poverty, tolerance and non-discrimination and gender. Participants shall also note the missing elements that are necessary to expand the positive results and changes in scope and area and make them sustainable, including the need for institutional and systemic take-over of the initiatives, as well their mainstreaming and relevance for the general education policies. Relevant EU officials, and possibly practitioners and experts from EU member states not participating in the Decade, shall also make

contribution presenting the different parts of the EU education policy and hitherto EU and EU member states efforts in the area of Roma education. Also, possibilities shall be explored for concrete synergies between the existing national policies in Decade countries and EU policies in education to tackle the most challenging limitations to the successful achievement of the EU Framework and Decade goals in the area of education, with particular focus on the Romani language.

3. Linkage of the historical experience of Roma in Europe with the promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination of Roma

Historical experience of Roma in Europe, particularly the sufferings of Roma during the World War II and as a consequence of the genocide on Roma, is permanent warning on the consequences racism is able to bring. Those sufferings are not researched sufficiently, neither have places of sufferings of Roma been properly marked. Attacks on Roma are continuing even today in a number of regions of Europe. Linking such historical experiences, as well as other historical experiences of Roma in Europe with the need for promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination of Roma is one of the key priorities of the Decade Presidency. It is particularly important in the world of challenging development of the European society in the 21st century and the integration of Roma within.

Therefore, the Decade Presidency, encouraged by the European Parliament resolution on the situation of Roma in the European Union adopted on April 28, 2005 and the Recommendation (Rec (2008) 5) of the European Council on the policies regarding Roma and/or travellers in Europe adopted by the Council of Ministers on November 20, 2008, as well as other relevant documents of the European Union and the Council of Europe, shall organize international conference on linking the historical experience of Roma in Europe with the advancement of the tolerance and non-discrimination of Roma. As part of the conference a round-table will be organized on the topic of the sufferings of Roma in the World War II that will bring together prominent historians and other experts dealing with this topic. The meeting will be directed towards presentation and exchange of information on the circumstances of the sufferings of the Roma community in particular countries. Attention will be paid to the quality and scope of information on the historical suffering of Roma in the education curricula and textbooks, as well as to the role of the public media in informing the public on this issue.

The two day conference will begin March 21, 2013 – the International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and by this additional attention shall be paid to the importance of the fight against racial and any other form of discrimination, and on the affirmation of the values of principles of tolerance, respect for diversity and respect for the identity of each people. The work of the conference will be organized in panels at which representatives of the Decade participating countries will participate, as well as representatives of Roma organizations of the Decade participating countries, representatives of the Council of Europe and other relevant international and scientific organizations and institutions.

One of the panels will discuss the legal framework, particularly the part regarding the European legal heritage, as well as the documents of the United Nations and other international documents adopted with the purpose of elimination of racial discrimination, with particular focus on the protection of Roma and the alignment of the national legislation with the aforementioned documents. The situation in regards to the discrimination of Roma in the

last four years, namely the period from the previous anti-discrimination workshop during the Hungarian Presidency of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 will be analysed.

4. Roma Youth in Action for Tolerance and Recognition

Unlike the area of education where the Decade initiative is most advanced, the participation of young Roma and mainstreaming of their issues in the current policies is to a large extent improperly or sporadically tackled. Therefore, inspired by the EU Youth Strategy objectives, the Presidency shall promote the youth component as a cross-cutting issue in initiatives addressing Roma issues, including the Decade. This effort will be combined with the increasing need to fight against the racism, intolerance and discrimination faced by Roma, particularly through the use of youth action to promote positive image of Roma through their culture and identity, at the same time boosting the self-confidence and self-respect of young and Roma in general as necessary precondition to face the challenges of the contemporary life, mainstreaming also gender equality.

An international conference shall be organized, bringing together young Roma, as well as representatives of the participating and observing countries of the Decade, European Union, as well as international organizations in order to ensure that participating young Roma have the opportunity to meet, get informed and discuss important developments for the Roma community and the young Roma issues within those developments. Proposed topics include a look at the Decade initiatives, in particular the Action Plans and National Roma Integration Strategies in order to find out to which extent issues relevant for young Roma have been included, and what and how can be improved in this respect. The second panel shall explore the various channels and mechanisms for participation of Roma in relevant policy making and the adequacy and opportunity for young Roma to make use of the existing channels and mechanisms, as well as proposals for improvement of existing and creating new mechanisms for Roma youth participation. The third panel shall discuss the wide range of EU funded and other initiatives for young people and improving their accessibility for young Roma men and women. This priority should also promote as much as possible activism on local level.

Depending on the support of the relevant international actors and extensive involvement and activity of youth Roma organizations, in particular those active in the field of culture and active citizenship, the Croatian Presidency will support other events and policy discussions, and in regard to Roma youth, these activities might take a form of a festival promoting primarily involvement on local level and participation of young Roma people in policy developments of relevance to Roma, but also new initiatives to preserve and promote Roma identity and tolerance towards Roma, youth mobility and activism and inclusion of Roma in the existing mainstream youth initiatives, primarily provided by the EU policy on youth.

At the same time the Decade Presidency intends to both advance the profile of the Roma related commitments, particularly the Decade of Roma Inclusion, as well as to symbolically initiate the discussion on the future of such commitments by involving young Roma men and women who are expected to take the lead in such commitments in the near future.

The handover of the Presidency

Croatian Decade Presidency shall be completed with the June 2013 ***24th International Steering Committee meeting***, when along with the achievements of the Decade, participating

Governments shall discuss national achievements in the Roma integration made during the previous year. At this meeting Republic of Croatia shall hand-over the Presidency to the Republic of Montenegro. Republic of Croatia is expected to join the EU as a member state the day after the end of the Decade Presidency, bringing the experience of facilitating linking of the Roma integration efforts of both EU and the Decade for Roma Inclusion 2005-2015.

Croatian Decade Presidency Work Plan Overview

Activity title	Format	Time
23 rd International Steering Committee Meeting	Meeting	24-25 September 2012
Linking Decade Success in Education with the EU Education Policy and status of the Romani language	International Conference	5-6 November 2012
Decade of Roma Inclusion and EU Framework Bridge	Conference	February 2013
Linking historical experience of Roma in Europe with the advancement of the tolerance and non-discrimination of Roma	International Conference	21-22 March 2013
Roma Youth in Action for Tolerance and Recognition	International Conference and series of cultural and action events	April - May 2013
24 th International Steering Committee Meeting	Meeting	June 2013