



Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015

## BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA PRESIDENCY PLAN

June 2014 – June 2015



### Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Decade

Roma in Bosnia and Herzegovina are one of Bosnia and Herzegovina's largest national minority communities in a marginalized and vulnerable position similar to the position of the Roma in the other Decade countries. Before joining the Decade, Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted its Strategy for Roma in 2005. Recognizing the advantages of the Decade process it developed Action plans for Roma in employment, health and housing and signed the Declaration of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 on September 4, 2008.

The Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees coordinates the implementation of the Decade and the engagement of other relevant partners in this process, particularly Roma civil society. It closely cooperates with the Decade Focal Point for Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Roma Information Center 'Kali Sara', as well as a number of other Roma and pro-Roma partners including resident international organizations.

As a result of the implementation of the action plans and the strategy, Bosnia and Herzegovina achieved improvement of the situation of Roma. Bosnia and Herzegovina also managed to raise the profile of the issues concerning Roma on national and local level and to encourage dialogue and action on these levels.

Furthermore, Bosnia and Herzegovina has established itself as an active partner and contributor to the Decade of Roma Inclusion in its international activities. These factors have motivated Bosnia and Herzegovina to request assuming the presidency of the Decade in June 2014, and the 23<sup>rd</sup> International Steering Committee of the Decade held in Zagreb, Croatia adopted a decision supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina's request.

Being the last government to hold the presidency of the Decade within its current term, Bosnia and Herzegovina is honored, but also challenged to lead the process of assessment, transformation and start of the continuation of the Decade beyond 2015.

### Bosnia and Herzegovina Decade Presidency Plan introduction

Bosnia and Herzegovina's Decade Presidency Plan June 2014 – June 2015 has been prepared by the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees. After initial consultations with the Decade Secretariat regarding the process of developing the presidency plan, the Ministry, in close cooperation with the Bosnia and Herzegovina Decade Focal Point, conducted a series of consultation meetings with national, regional and local authorities, Roma and other civil society organizations and international organizations based in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These consultations helped the Ministry to shape the priorities of the presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina in accordance with the national issues of interest. The Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted the proposal on 89<sup>th</sup> session, on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2014. The draft presidency plan was elaborated to the Decade Secretariat and handed over for further consultations with relevant Decade partners. The Decade Secretariat considered the inputs from the relevant Decade partners and adjusted the plan accordingly for its presentation and adoption by the International Steering Committee of the Decade at its 26<sup>th</sup> meeting in Podgorica, Montenegro on June 18-19, 2014.

## Priority areas and activities during the presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Bosnia and Herzegovina presidency of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 will focus on three main issues: ensuring the transition of the Decade from its current term to its successor after 2015; ensuring coordinated policies on education of Roma that prepares them for the job market; and ensuring sustainable housing programs by including housing measures in integrated social inclusion programs. These priorities of the presidency from June 2014-September 2015 are elaborated below.

### 1. EDUCATION TO EMPLOYMENT

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In many countries, there is a disturbing trend that a number of Roma youth are neither in education nor in employment, emphasizing the need to intensify the wide range of policies intended for young people.<sup>1</sup> Inclusive education is the way to overcome the social exclusion of Roma in all facets of life. The low level of education among the Roma population is one of the key obstacles in the employment process in Bosnia and Herzegovina and other countries.

Education and training systems can encourage social mobility and help in breaking the cycle of poverty and inequality. Preschool education is probably the most crucial factor for exiting the vicious cycle of intergenerational poverty and it is the most cost-effective investment. Investing in high-quality education and care in early childhood can support a safe start in life for all members of society.

In addition to elimination of barriers for full-time education of children, there is also a need for retraining programs for Roma youth and adults to enable even those without good educational outcomes in full-time education to access employment. Targeted approaches are needed in order to establish the link between education and training on the one hand and labor on the other, and proposing measures for improvement of the employability of young people through education and training.

We need an agenda for new skills and jobs in order to define ways of employing a large number of people with a focus on a better functioning and less segmented labor market, better-trained labor force, better quality jobs and working conditions, and appropriate measures towards Roma communities in order to promote and awake interest of employers to create new jobs for this marginalized group, and increase the demands for the labor force. The active inclusion of people who are furthest from the labor market should be high on the agenda of the Decade. We need to search for good practices which are a combination of well-designed programs of support for employers and individuals and include adequate social services.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina (and we think elsewhere) the education to employment path requires adequate policies to fight against discrimination, since the roots of poverty are reflected in exclusion and discrimination. Roma often have limited access to opportunities and rights that are available to others. Fighting against discrimination and respecting of human rights is of great importance because the regulations pertaining to the fight against discrimination must be supported by relevant public policies and concrete measures. We need to fight against specific forms of discrimination and exclusion.

The International Conference that we intend to organize in Bosnia and Herzegovina will contain three principal themes, which will relate to the presentation of experiences and problems in the following areas:

1. *Antidiscrimination challenges and problems (with emphasis on gender, disability, status issues, personal documents and migration and the impact of these issues on education and employment),*
2. *Inclusion of Roma children and youth in inclusive education that considers increased employability as one of its important educational outcomes;*
3. *Vocational training, adult education and employment of Roma;*

The meeting on this topic will be organized in November 2014, and the government of Bosnia and Herzegovina intends to attract participation by relevant policy makers and practitioners from the Decade partners working in the areas of education and employment, and as far as possible on the specific topic of education as an incubator for future workers.

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<sup>1</sup> As agreed in an EU Strategy for Youth 2010-2018 COM(2009) 200.

## **2. INTEGRATED PROGRAMS FOR HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT**

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The second priority of the Bosnia and Herzegovina presidency is related to housing – an area where the country has made certain progress. In order to achieve sustainable housing solutions it is necessary to use an integrated approach to all other priority areas (education, employment and health care). In addition to the construction of housing units, in accordance with international standards, it is necessary to work on solving the problem of legalization, mapping needs and establishing a monitoring and evaluation system. Therefore one of the thematic meetings within the Decade presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina is dedicated to the integrated approach to programs for housing.

A growing need for social housing, at the same time as reduced funding from the state budget, has made social protection a critical issue in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Despite initial successes, the significant proportion of Roma has poor access to social safety nets. Public policy needs to respond on two key challenges: **prevention of poverty and homelessness**, which is the most effective and sustainable way to fight against poverty and social exclusion and **early intervention**, in order to avoid that people in situation of poverty remain trapped in increasingly difficult and problematic socio-economic situations. Our workshop on this topic will explore the establishment of a system of inclusive measures: social housing combined with programs to address other needs in health, employment and education, combined with the provision of social services.

Our intention is to bring together all relevant local institutions and non-governmental organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the relevant local representatives from the Decade countries with the aim of exchanging experiences on lessons learned that may help to develop sustainable models for better social inclusion of Roma through a combination of housing, employment and other social measures.

Our proposed workshop will contain four themes:

1. *Roma integration within social housing,*
2. *Programs that combine housing with employment and other social services.*
3. *Challenges in the evaluation and monitoring of integrated programs,*
4. *Development of models for better involvement of local communities and NGOs.*

The meeting on this topic will be organized in March 2015, and the government of Bosnia and Herzegovina intends to attract participation of relevant governmental and non-governmental experts on social inclusion, preferably with a specific background in housing. It will also attempt to attract relevant international Decade partners with experience in dealing with housing as part of an integrated approach.

## **3. ROMA WOMEN SECURITY AND HEALTH**

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The third priority of the Bosnia and Herzegovina presidency is the security and health of Roma women, and will be operationalized in cooperation with Care International, Balkans. The organization is implementing a long term program on active inclusion and rights of Roma women in the Western Balkans, cooperating with a number of relevant organizations from the region and covering the crucial issues of violence against women and reproductive health.

Besides providing continuation of the discussion initiated during the Anti-Gypsyism workshop under the Montenegrin presidency, where a local Roma civil society organization shared its experience in dealing with violence against women, this special thematic conference will provide for more extensive discussion on the topic and sharing of information and experiences beyond the Western Balkans.

Care International, Balkans will organize the meeting in October 2014 in close cooperation with the National Decade Coordinator for Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Decade Focal Point for Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Decade Secretariat.

#### **4. GOVERNANCE OF THE DECADE OF ROMA INCLUSION**

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The Bosnia and Herzegovina presidency comes last in the current Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 term. Therefore it is crucially important for this presidency to ensure the transition of the current Decade towards its successor after 2015. The Bosnia and Herzegovina presidency will put efforts into cooperating with international partners, including in particular the European Commission, as well as into bilateral and multilateral dialogue with the participating governments through its diplomatic channels. The objective of Bosnia and Herzegovina presidency will be to conclude with a high level International Steering Committee meeting in September 2015, at which the participating governments would confirm their official commitment to participation in a new Roma inclusion initiative that will result from the Decade after 2015.

The last International Steering Committee meeting, in addition to focusing on the follow-up of the Decade after 2015, will also focus on the assessment of the 10 years of Roma inclusion. Bosnia and Herzegovina presidency, in close cooperation and with the support of the Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation will prepare the content for this meeting. Decade partners are also expected to share information on their annual progress in implementing the Decade.

#### **5. SUMMARY AND CALENDAR**

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Bosnia and Herzegovina, in cooperation with the Decade partners, and in particular with the Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation and the Decade Focal Point for Bosnia and Herzegovina – Roma Information Centre 'Kali Sara', will organize the following activities based on the presidency priorities:

#	Title	Format	Duration	Calendar
1	27 <sup>th</sup> International Steering Committee Meeting	ISC meeting	1.5 days	September 2014
2	Roma women security and health	Thematic conference	1.5 days	October 2014
3	School for work	Thematic conference	2.5 days	November 2014
4	Integral programs for housing and employment	Thematic conference	2.5 days	March 2015
5	28 <sup>th</sup> International Steering Committee Meeting	ISC meeting	1.5 days	September 2015