



DECADE OF
ROMA
INCLUSION
2005-2015

REPORT
CONFERENCE ON NATIONAL ROMA STRATEGIES: ENSURING
A COMPREHENSIVE EUROPEAN APPROACH TO ROMA
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
BRUSSELS, BELGIUM
NOVEMBER 8, 2011

Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation
Teréz krt. 46, 4th floor, H-1066 Budapest, Hungary

On behalf of the Open Society Foundations and the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005 - 2015, the Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation and Open Society Foundations Brussels Office organized a conference, “*National Roma Integration Strategies: Ensuring a Comprehensive and Effective European Approach*” in the European Parliament under the patronage of President Jerzy Buzek on November 8 2011.

The EU Framework for National Roma Strategies and subsequent Council endorsement in June 2011 were major steps forward for EU policies towards the Roma. However, without ambitious and detailed follow-up on those commitments there will be no improvements to the lives of Europe’s most discriminated citizens. Some member states are already signaling that they will not meet the end-of-year deadline they agreed for submission of their national Roma strategies.

The aim of the conference was to bring together key players to ensure continued political engagement by member states on their national Roma strategies. The conference *highlighted* best practice from the Decade of Roma Inclusion, a seven-year process led by thirteen EU member and accession countries; *explored* the mutually reinforcing work of the Decade and the EU Roma Platform; and *enhanced* the dialogue between EU institutions, member states and the Roma.

The conference was held on 8 November 2011 in the European Parliament, room ASP A1G3 from 9.00 to 16.00.

AGENDA

OPENING REMARKS

- Isabelle DURANT, Vice-President, European Parliament, on behalf of President Jerzy BUZEK
- Marian-Jean MARINESCU, Vice-President of the EPP group, European Parliament
- Rebecca HARMS, Chair of the Greens/EFA group, European Parliament
- Françoise LE BAI, Director General, DG Justice, European Commission
- George SOROS, Founder and Chairman of the Open Society Foundations
- Željko JOVANOVIĆ, Director of Roma Initiatives, OSF - Budapest

Moderator: Heather GRABBE, Director of the Open Society Foundations-Brussels Office

ARE ROMA BENEFITING FROM EUROPEAN POLICIES? WHAT WAS ACHIEVED AND WHAT ARE THE BASIC REQUIREMENTS FOR FUTURE SUCCESS ON ROMA INCLUSION IN EUROPE.

SPEAKERS:

- Livia JAROKA, Member of the European Parliament (video message)
- Lenia SAMUEL, Deputy-Director General of DG Employment and Social Affairs
- Aurel CIOBANU-DORDEA, Director, Equality Directorate, DG Justice, European Commission
- Kinga GÖNCZ, Member of the European Parliament
- Dolores RUIZ BAUTISTA, Deputy Director for Social Programs, Ministry of Education, Social Policy and Equality, Spain
- Valeriu NICOLAE, Roma and Minority Policy Center, Romania

Moderator: Bernard RORKE, International Research and Advocacy Director, OSF

DISCUSSION

BUILDING ON THE EXPERIENCES OF THE DECADE OF ROMA INCLUSION: HOW TO DEVELOP, IMPLEMENT AND IMPROVE EXISTING NATIONAL ROMA STRATEGIES

SPEAKERS:

- Neždet MUSTAFA, National Coordinator of the Decade of Roma Inclusion and Minister without Portfolio, Macedonia
- Gabriela HRABANOVA, European Roma Grassroots Organisation Network
- Jasenko SELIMOVIC, State Secretary at the Ministry for Employment, Sweden

- · Zoltan BALOG, State Secretary, Government of Hungary
 - · Katarina MATHERNOVA, Senior Adviser on Roma Inclusion, World Bank
 - · Ondrej LISKA, OSF Fellow/Former Minister of Education, Czech Republic
- Moderator: Kalman MIZSEI, Making the Most of EU funds, Open Society Foundations*

DISCUSSION

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT IN MONITORING OF THE EU FRAMEWORK AND ENSURING A ROLE FOR ROMA IN THE CREATION, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF NATIONAL ROMA STRATEGIES

SPEAKERS:

- · Hannes SWOBODA, Member of the European Parliament
- · Dezideriu GERGELY, Director of European Roma Rights Center
- · Raul ROMEVA, Member of the European Parliament
- · Magda MATAACHE, Romani CRISS, Romania
- · Lambert van NISTELROOIJ, Member of the European Parliament

Moderator: Željko JOVANOVIĆ, Director of Roma Initiatives, Open Society Foundations-Budapest

DISCUSSION

Closing remarks by Guy VERHOFSTADT, Member of the European Parliament - ALDE group

Moderator: Heather GRABBE, Director of the Open Society Foundations-Brussels

1. OPENING REMARKS

HEATHER GRABBE, OSF Brussels - chair

- Mrs Grabbe initially outlined the EU – OSF relations and reminded that there is seven weeks left to submit NRIS. The conference represents a signal to member states that there are high expectations in Brussels but also among civil society and Roma communities.
- Secondly, the conference aims to highlight the work of the Decade – where some significant progress has been made but there is a great deal still to be made in order to fulfil the promises.
- Finally, the conference participants should discuss how the Decade will be integrated constructively into the work of the EU, especially to the Platform.

ISABELLE DURRANT, MEP, Greens/European Free Alliance

- Mrs Durrant confirmed a consensus in the EP on patronage of Roma integration.
- She further evoked a difficult situation of Roma from Brussels's railway station where Roma are currently seeking shelters. She argued that they are asylum seekers within the EU.
- Mrs Durrant emphasised that there is a need for a road map for the EP and the EC – a joint strategy where everybody is involved.

MARIAN-JEAN MARINESCU, MEP, Vice-President of the EPP Group

- Mr Marinescu initially reflected that though main responsibilities belong to the public authorities in their country of origin, the Framework shows that we need an European approach in order to deal with challenges created with the specific needs of Roma.
- The EU must face up to the reality of the Roma community - Roma economic situation in general but especially aspects of their tradition, nomadic lifestyle and low education level.

- No matter the size of their Roma community, states must translate the recommendations.
- The main problem which Roma population is facing is the low level of education and the lack of professional qualification. Education is the mandatory condition for Roma integration; therefore, education is the main aspect NRIS must address.
- A national approach is not enough, educational programs must also have a cross-border approach in order to address Roma population which, according to Mr Marinescu, remain true to its nomadic tradition
- Mr Marinescu was also concerned that the potential of EU funds is still not fully used, he expressed the need for a change in approach – the project development must not be done exclusively by Roma organisations but also by specialized experienced entities which can objectively approach the issue
- Responsibility for integration does not lie entirely with authorities; Roma community needs to understand that they also have to do necessary effort in order to become integrated in the society.
- Mr Marinescu concluded that the priority of NRIS is to raise the level of civic education which means adapting the Roma population's culture to modern society.

FRANCOISE LE BAI, Director General of the DG Justice

- Mrs Le Bai emphasized why it is important to have a Strategy. According to her, there are 12 million of people, bigger than population of Belgium who are discriminated; who are not included in the development of their countries and this is impossible for the EU, unacceptable for fundamental rights point of view but also for economic development of the countries. If Roma are included in deeper economic development, this development would be much stronger in the future
- She expressed disappointment on the previous responses of member state to the EC encouragements to do something about Roma inclusion.
- Following, Mrs Le Bai shed light on why is this Communication different:
 - a) The EC has in mind targeted action. Previously, fighting in favour of Roma inclusion was part of much larger scheme and it was very difficult to identify which were the measures which were particularly destined to include Roma community
 - b) Specific targets for 4 areas in which member states have to do something for Roma community
 - c) The EC asked member states to make sure that funds are clearly identified at national level, funds which EU budget can supplement
 - d) The communication was endorsed by the European Council, this is something new as the head of states of government endorsed this orientation
- She also pointed out that the EC would not reach this without the strong support of Hungarian presidency; they were very instrumental in pushing the case.
- Mrs Le Bai further informed that the EC will assess the strategies in spring next year. The aim is to make a difference to what was achieved before. She expressed trust that the projects implemented by the EC, with the help of the facts and figures from the World Bank will make the situation on the ground different. Monitoring and collecting statistics will be conducted by FRA.
- Finally, Mrs Le Bai called for continuous support of the EP

GEORGE SOROS, Chairman of the Open Society Foundations

- Mr Soros initially glossed the negatives political implications of the economic crisis as the EU is now being divided and the interests of member states are now in conflict. This situation does not lead to a very happy marriage, and it provokes resentment, rise of xenophobia. Roma are usually those worst affected.
- At the same time, paradoxically, Roma problem can play a positive role in the future of the EU because, according to Mr Soros, to break this tendency we have to recapture the positive idea that the EU represented in the past. Dealing with the Roma issue, the EU can play an important positive role.

- In countries where Roma live or migrate to, they encounter a lot of hostility, negative stereotypes that prevails, national authorities often respond to this popular attitude and they are not very helpful in dealing with the Roma issue
- The EC and the EP become, according Mr Soros, a major positive force with the issue. Mr Soros considers the EU Framework has brought the major positive development
- Mr Soros also discussed the effectiveness of the EU structural funds play a main role and the difficulties which bureaucracy has to deal with the issue
- He also urged the EC, to use some conditionality in the next budget but at the same time to provide a positive support, to help both the Roma communities and local authorities to utilise the funds and to overcome obstacles that stand in the way
- Mr Soros also spoke on the Decade of Roma Inclusion which can stand for a platform that the EU can utilise. In the Decade, Roma community as well as the EU candidate countries are involved along with the EU member states. Mr Soros reflected on a bureaucratic problem of integrating the accession countries into the EU process but he was very pleased that all Decade countries, including EU candidate countries have been invited to the next Platform meeting.
- In last 20 years, we have succeeded to educate new Roma elite, people finished high school and the university and the break the hostile stereotypes that prevail – there are quite a few Roma who individually advances society but because of the hostility, it is understandable that they disappear as Roma, as they don't meet the stereotype.
- Finally, Mr Soros argued examples of what has to be done already exist but not in proper scale. He gave examples of the 'Roma Education Fund' which has techniques and mentoring, the individual attention, and 'Romaversitas' which brings together Roma who attend universities and provide a collage for them.

ZELJKO JOVANOVIC, Director of Roma Initiatives, OSF Budapest

- Mr Jovanovic initially argued that hardships that Roma experience erodes democratic institutions and produce economic loses. He made an appeal to all stakeholders to take responsibility in changing Roma exclusion. In the last few years, reality became harsher without difference, we are facing not only economic and political but also deep social crisis
- Mr Jovanovic emphasized that we cannot continue in factions of the Roma Decade and the Roma Platform. We can't expect others to do the job without saying what we shall do; we need to go beyond our differences. Today, we need to make a choice, one choice would mean to continue business as usual, this would mean that this meeting is yet another gathering of individual agendas and after all we go back to our homes and offices. The other choice is to learn from the past. Mr Jovanovic acknowledged that the Decade was a useful thing to do, after 6 years we exactly know what was good and what was not exactly good, what works and what does not. There is a new opportunity to use the financial resources from the EC.
- Following, Mr Jovanovic suggested a conditionality by which in the future the bad projects will stop to be funded, but he also stated that much more can be done. He proposed incentives for good projects.
- He further urged national governments not to see NRIS as a plan for Roma; they should consider Strategies as a part of the larger plan of macroeconomic recovery. We need set strategies to utilize demography and economic potential of Roma. It has been estimated that in Slovakia Roma inclusion can generate at least EUR 2,5 Billion annually, which is about 7% of SVK GDP.

REBECCA HARMS, MEP, Chair of the Greens/EFA Group

- Mrs Harms initially reflected on the question if in the good times we cannot guarantee human rights, what about in the bad times. According to her, it is a mistake that in economic tough times, human rights are only second priority.
- She spoke on realising human rights as freedom, security, decent life and standard of living as part of European values. The values however have not been realised to Roma yet.

- Furthermore, Mrs Harms pointed out that the Framework lacks objectives of discrimination for Roma. The EU civil rights doctrines guarantee equal rights for Roma, thus Mrs Harms made an appeal to end discrimination and irresponsible deportation.
- According to her, Commissioner Reding and the whole EC should have taken a firmer stance in the cases as expulsion of Roma in France.

2. ARE THE ROMA BENEFITING FROM EUROPEAN POLICIES? WHAT WAS ACHIEVED AND WHAT ARE THE BASIC REQUIREMENTS FOR FUTURE SUCCESS ON ROMA INCLUSION IN EUROPE

LIVIA JAROKA, MEP – (video message)

- Mrs Jaroka initially reflected on the Decade of Roma Inclusion: It was 8 years ago that 8 countries committed themselves under the guidance of the first most experienced and financially robust IOs to bridge the gap between Roma and majority population, later on joined Albania, BiH and Spain, 12 countries together with the WB, OSI, UNDP, CoE, UNICEF, etc. (prestigious stakeholders). decided to dedicate 10 years (2005-2015) to these noble goals. Having said, more than half of the proposed duration keys harder, we cannot but conclude that the projects related to **the Decade** have not yield the expected results. Despite significant institutional and financial input and effort, the situation of the European Roma in the priority fields of the Decade – namely that extreme high unemployment, the lack of access to quality education, the sub-standard housing and troubling health indicators have not improved in the past years but rather deteriorated and therefore continue to weaken Europe social cohesion and economy as a whole.
- She shared with what she considers two most important shortcomings: the evaluation of projects on the one hand and how the recent “EU Framework Strategy on Roma Inclusion” might remedy the problems with policy coordination and supervision on the other hand.
- Mrs Jaroka urged to make a clear and strict distinction between good practices and those projects that have obviously failed. It is expensive and time-consuming lessons, a very painful one from the point of Roma, whose non-involvement or weak leadership also contributed to the fact that supposedly only few per cent of the EU governments’ or the private funding has actually reached Roma in the past 20 years.
- It is equally important therefore to have a catalogue of worse practices
- She further proposed to develop a mechanism of early warning, so that any specific project or action in difficulties could be addressed with the view of resolving the problems as rapidly as possible.
- Furthermore, even those projects which are accepted as good practices and are proposed to be scaled up to the higher level, must be independently and impartially analysed in order to avoid either the contractors that self-evaluating their projects or falling for a hurray-optimistic reports of the government financed and politically involved NGOs (!)
- According to Mrs Jaroka, despite its doubtful results in the field, the Decade has introduced some very-very good proposals and ideas. it was the first ever “figure?” to bring together the candidate countries and EU member-states to cooperate in fostering the Roma inclusion.
- Mrs Jaroka additionally referred to the report of the EP, where is stated that Roma strategy rejects a creation of the new body at the EU level, it would be unnecessary, it would create an overlap and introduction of the new institutional player would only increase the institutional opacity in the situation, as seeing the Decade structure, improving the cooperation among bodies and policy networks, eliminating parallel overlapping or conflicting efforts and creating synergies would be the upmost necessary.
- Finally, according to Mrs Jaroka, it seems that the EC is ready to undertake the leading role in Strategy coordination stages. However, It takes at least 6 years until we feel the change in the settlements and even longer to produce substantive progress.

BERNARD RORKE, Roma Initiatives, OSF Budapest - chair

- Mr Rorke introduced the panel with the statement that the EP in its almost unanimous resolution calls for explicit linkage social inclusion and fundamental rights guaranteeing safety and security of Roma citizens and zero tolerance when it comes to anti-gypsyism and call for EC as a guardian of the treaties to get robust about it.
- His questions that were to frame the discussion were as follows: let's be clear about whose competences, where the division lies, who is responsible to do what and what does it make to make a difference by 2020, how we define success and between now and 2020, how do we monitor it and how do we measure it in the robustness fashion as the Roma citizens deserve.

LENIA SAMUEL, Deputy-Director General of DG Employment

- Mrs Samuel initially pointed out that Roma inclusion has been very high on the European policy agenda for some years but particularly 2011, we have seen all European institutions mobilized around the issue of Roma, but still the situation has not changed on the ground, we still see Roma suffering from poor education, poor qualification, poor employment records, discrimination, racism, etc.
- According to her, designing and implementing policies to combat economic exclusion of Roma is responsibility of member states, it is their responsibility to modernize their labour market systems and modernize their social policy systems. At the same time however, the EU has a very important role to play, the EU guides, supports, coordinates, supplements and adds value to the action of member states by acting as a catalyst in order to promote and facilitate change by providing funding and by empowering the social progress and civil society organisations and other stakeholders who have a role in delivery system. The Framework has underlined this importance of added value of coordinated EU level actions
- Mrs Samuel also stated that ERDF, ESF have budget of EUR 350 Billion and as Roma Task Force has revealed its findings, there are still several bottom lacks which prevent adequate use of the funds
- Framework makes some very good suggestions to member states (1.) how to speed up the use of money and even (2.) to ask for technical assistance or (3.) to pass a part of their operational programs to organisation which have proven track of records in Roma integration
- Mrs Samuel further draw the attention to some novel requirements from the NEW COHESION PACKAGE which was adopted in October by EC:
 - a) The EC proposes to channel a large share of the EU funds to the areas which are related to Europe 2020. ESF supports three of the headline targets, and this is exactly why EC has proposed to increase the budget of the fund by at least 7,5% which will bring the budget to EUR 84 Billion. Mrs Samuel shared that they want to put the money where it will make a difference and Roma integration is one of the areas where we can make a difference. According to her, Member states, especially those with large populations, cannot reach their targets in the areas of employment, education and social inclusion unless they do something to improve the situation of Roma in their country.
 - b) The EC proposes to enforce the social dimension of ESF, the new regulation now has an expressed provision which says that all member states have to use at least 20% of their ESF allocation to social exclusion and in addition, the new regulation has established an explicit investment priority focusing on integration of marginalised communities such as Roma
 - c) The EC proposes a number of elements which aim at increasing the effectiveness of the cohesion policy. Mrs Samuel pointed out that they are proposing to introduce the so-called comprehensive system of conditionality by which they aim to make sure that member states will have in place the right framework conditions which are essential to achieve better results in given policy area. And this will have a good implication for Roma because it will be necessary to have in place an appropriate NRIS before any funds can be channelled promoting Roma integration.
 - d) Member states will be required to state explicitly how they want to have those most in need, they would have to put a coherent strategy which focuses on the specific needs of the most vulnerable in the society and to allocate funding from the various EU funds

- Finally, Mrs Samuel stressed that there are more things in these Regulation supporting Roma inclusion.

AUREL CIOBANU-DORDEA, Director, Equality Directorate, EC

- According to Mr Ciobanu-Dordea, with the Framework, the EC launched a discussion on competences which are fairly national; the Framework is meant to stir the discussion.
- The EC will report on the quality of national commitment and efforts in reaching targets – this will open floor for more decisive changes
- The Framework sets realistic as well as ambitious targets, however, the EC does not ask national governments to do disproportional allocations in the time of crisis.
- Member states are invited to do strategic planning – in doing so, they should involve local and regional authorities – the EC supports planning closer to citizens and Roma in particular. Besides, involving local and regional authorities represents a message passed from political and technical level to the society.

KINGA GONCZ, MEP

- According to Mrs Goncz, the current task is twofold: to continue developing the new Roma elites but the real question in the longer term will be to reach out to those very poor communities which are often segregated, not having an absorption capacity, not having administrative capacity managing the funds, not having a vision of future. Mrs Goncz pointed out that if we can reach out these communities, we can see the difference, otherwise, the policies will have an effect only on those who are not in a desperate position.
- There should be a change in funding policy and the methodology; some of the changes are already reflected in the Framework.
- We cannot expect quick changes; a long preparatory work is needed when mediators will be working with Roma communities but also with majority community, local decision makers, in order to change attitudes. According to Mrs Goncz, attitudes are often the real problem in the local communities
- The urgent question is also how can we fund someone who cannot be funded? Poor local communities cannot sponsor mediators (outsiders) but outsiders are needed to work with everybody in the community, they also cannot wait during the gap between applying and implementing of the funds.
- We need a flexible and longer-termed funding not more money
- The EU funds are rather slow and shorter funding, often leaving the frustration after the funding period expires because there is an abrupt end of funding and the hopes which were growing have fallen after the funding.
- Mrs Goncz further put the mechanism of good practice into question. According to her, projects often cannot be replicated, communities are different. The projects need to adjust to local needs and capacities.
- Additionally, the broader question was raised whether national operational programs can include ‘the philosophy’ of the EU funding program
- Mrs Goncz also claimed that macro-economic conditionality is not acceptable, because it brings more difficulties for those who are already in a very difficult situation. Instead, she advocated for conditionality in terms of fighting against segregation, school segregation and segregation in housing.
- Finally, Mrs Goncz made an appeal to member states to use global grants which are more flexible than other grants.

DOLORES LUIS-BAPTISTA, Deputy Director for Social Programs, Ministry of Education, Social Policy and Equality, Spain

- Mrs Luis Baptista started her contribution with coming back to 1979 when Roma programs started simultaneously with democracy coming back to Spain.
- Only about 12-18% of the communities are not integrated nowadays. There is a certain ‘problem with lifestyle’ prevailing.

- According to Mrs Luis Baptista, the issue of Roma inclusion requires three-fold perspective of human rights and antidiscrimination measures, equality as well as official recognition
- Roma in Spain are taking part in the State Council – more positive image
- It has been shown in a study that Roma in Spain have greater capacity for work than general population, they also retire later

VALERIU NICOLAE, Roma and Minority Policy Centre, Romania

- Mr Nicolae screens a short document movie on Roma children in Romania.
- Following, he commented on lacking institutional mechanism. According to Mr Nicolae, coordinated Roma unit is needed. Both the EC and member states need to have teams of people working on Roma strategies which until this moment were merely wishful documents – no budgets, timeframes, indicators, cycles of evaluation, no mechanism to implement or monitoring.
- Mrs Nicolae emphasized that it is not a job of NGOs to implement policies of social inclusion; he believes the job of civil society is to monitor, to be watchdogs and pilot initiatives, and activities of civil society should be mainly about awareness raising.
- As a concluding remark, Mr Nicolae said that we need to tackle issues which have never been previously tackled. Antigypsyism needs to be seriously tackled in the long term.

Discussion:

DEAN KOLEV – Roma inclusion should be a part of the EU conditionality, so far however, the conditionality was drawn in economic terms exclusively, there is a need for conditionality in social inclusion

MAGDA MATAACHE – more complex and more sustainable local solutions, the elements of what we have to do are developmental.

DAVID MARK – problem that local communities do not even know about programs

LENIA SAMUEL – earmarking in the EU funds is a very difficult issue, we are happy that there is 20% earmarking for social inclusion, it has been only 5-10% in the previous cycle; conditionality – member states have to show to the DG Empl their Roma focused projects in order the EU money could be released; seeking for partnership

KINGA GONCZ – the EC should make a difference between autonomous communities with absorption capacity and those which would need assistance – differentiated levels of involvement

**3. BUILDING ON THE EXPERIENCE FROM THE DECADE OF ROMA INCLUSIONS:
HOW TO DEVELOP, IMPLEMENT AND IMPROVE EXISTING NATIONAL ROMA
STRATEGIES**

NEZDET MUSTAFA, Presidency of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015

- Mr Mustafa initially went to describing the organisation of the Decade of Roma Inclusion. According to him, the Decade is a functional and pragmatic mechanism which currently gathers six EU and six non-EU governments, civil society representatives, and all relevant international and intra-governmental organizations. These stakeholders meet at least twice a year for sharing experiences, measuring the progress and planning the way forward. Thematic

workshops organized by the Presidency country are professionally advancing the knowledge and experience of the Decade partners in each of four priorities with the contribution of experts and relevant stakeholders.

- Following, Mr Mustafa identified the Decade achievements of the last seven years on which the EU Framework can build upon:
 - a) Institutional framework for implementation of the National Action Plans of Roma Inclusion is established and functioning in each of the Decade member states.
 - b) National Coordinators are often the highest-rank governmental representatives as the Prime Minister in Croatia or the Deputy Prime Minister in Serbia, Bulgaria or Slovakia. In each of the Decade member states, particular governmental offices are set-up for implementation, coordination and monitoring of the Action Plans.
 - c) What has been significantly improved in the last couple of years is the intra-ministerial and inter-ministerial cooperation in the implementation of the Decade Action Plans. National Roma Councils in Serbia, Spain, and Macedonia – are some of the examples where the ministry representatives evaluate and plan the activities jointly with the civil society in a transparent and coordinated dialog.
 - d) The legislative and policy frameworks in many Decade countries have been improved in favour of Roma inclusion.
 - e) Roma Education Fund (REF) is a key contributor in the field of education – both from financial and expertise perspective. Macedonian government has meanwhile taken over the responsibility to disburse scholarship for the secondary school Roma students; Roma health mediators programme started in Romania, presented successful approach in Bulgaria and Serbia, and in due time it will be integrated within the Macedonian Ministry of Health. Besides employment of teacher assistants and health mediators, the Decade member states are working on integration of Roma in the mainstream employment programmes.

GABRIELA HRABANOVA, European Roma Grassroots Organisation Network

- As being one of the young educated Roma, Mrs Hrabanova expressed conviction that they can actively contribute to Roma inclusion that is being shifted from national or the Decade member states to the EU.
- She further spoke on the situation in the Czech Republic, where the Czech Senate stepped back and said that they don't want a new strategy to the place. But she also assured the audience that there is a huge work behind the governmental office to the strategy which is going to be presented to the EC. The Czech Republic will present its strategy to the EC, which will be very closely connected also to using of the E funds.
- According to Mrs Hrabanova, the Framework is the clearest declaration from the EC, it however needs to move beyond rhetoric to the substance, it needs to secure political support at the national level and only the implementation on the local level will make a change. Results could be achieved only through the participatory approach and remaining efforts with the special attention to the coalition of the member states.
- Mrs Hrabanova considers which I find as one of the most positive aspects at the Framework itself, that it actually bringing together the national strategies with the use of European funds one of the most positive aspects of the Framework.
- On the other hand, she also sees a negative aspect of the proposal of Roma inclusion within the Framework which relies only on the four priority areas. Framework is also missing the strong coordination from the EC side. Besides, another problem with Framework is its highly bureaucratic jargon.
- Mrs Hrabanova further urged that unless we want to remain with policies with no impact, member states need to strengthen it by addressing the so-called cross-cutting issues covering

at minimum discrimination and gender equality. The Framework falls far short of tackling a wide-spread hostility and discrimination against Roma

- Additionally, by focusing on economic integration, it fails to find policies and action directed to discrimination, stereotypes, violence and hate-speech.
- The Framework also fails to address the multiple discrimination experienced by many Roma women. Although it should be one of the most crucial issues in NRIS since the active engagement of Roma women is a prerequisite in the areas of child protection, education and healthcare, gender needs to be fully mainstreamed in each of the priority areas. Mrs Hrabanova reminded that we know from the Decade that if the gender equality is not explicit requirement, many states do not address the issue separately and neither in other policy areas. Gender equality has to be affirmed and re-affirmed until it becomes the common sense, and it needs to be done if we want to have the Framework make real difference
- The principle of anti-gypsyism needs to be addressed, as Mrs Hrabanova stated, it is a prerequisite for all other measures.
- Finally, Mrs Hrabanova emphasised the Roma participation

Jasenko SELIMOVIC, State Secretary at the Ministry of Employment, Sweden

- At the beginning of his speech, Mrs Selimovic provided with a historical outline of the situation of Roma in Sweden. The earliest records of Roma in Sweden are from 1512, almost from the same date you can find documents on persecution and discrimination. In 17th century, there was an order to execute all Roma men and expel all women and children. Swedish Roma were victims of forced sterilization as late as mid-20th century. As a consequence of this, many Roma have turned away from the society. However, despite the past, there are nowadays many Roma with jobs well integrated to the Swedish society
- The Framework is, according to Mrs Selimovic, an important step forward, the EP should not stop reminding governments their responsibilities.
- Swedish government will present the Strategy to the Parliament
- There are four main elements of Strategy: 1. Based on human rights such as right to education and right for work; 2. There will be financial support from the government for measures focusing on increasing the number of Roma who are educated and employed; 3. To begin with, we concentrate action to few municipalities, after few years other municipalities will follow; 4. There will be continuous follow up on the progress made
- As a parallel process, the government will elaborate a 'White paper' on abuses and violations in Sweden during the last century, to pay tribute to victims and their families. We believe that a white paper is important for Roma inclusion in Sweden.
- Finally, Mrs Selimovic emphasized that also Roma need to find a way to manage their culture within society, it must be obvious to Roma and others that children should go to school, girls have the same rights and opportunities as boys, etc.

ZOLTAN BALOG, State Secretary, Government of Hungary

- Mr Balog while outlining the connections between the Decade of Roma Inclusion and the EU Framework, returned back to 1995 when Hungary initially acknowledged Roma on the policy level and developed short-term strategy plans.
- In the period 2003-2005, after launching the Decade of Roma inclusion, the first long-term strategy was shaped and finally adopted in the Hungarian Parliament in 2007.
- The Hungarian NRIS establishes the Roma Coordination Council – coordinating body which has 27 members including representatives of NGOs, national Roma self-governments, the Parliamentary commissioner for national and ethnic minorities, churches, Hungarian Academy of Science and national association of local governments.
- Mr Balog shared his believe that experiences of the Decade should not be neglected as they is an important part of our work and our knowledge, Hungarian government took this experiences during the preparation of Council Conclusions and under the EU framework adopted by social ministers.

- Mrs Balog also reminded that the Decade is an important meeting point between the EU members and countries that are in preparation.
- Finally, Mrs Balog stressed that Roma inclusion is not a problem of some countries and regions of Europe, but it requires cross-border cooperation within Europe. Pan-European cooperation is needed in order to be successful.

KATARINA MATERNOVA, Senior advisor on Roma Inclusion, World Bank

- Mrs Maternova informed on the joint WB and UNDP survey which was initially conducted in 4 countries, nowadays, the results for Slovakia as the 5th country are ready to be disseminated. Next country will be Bulgaria.
- She shared with the conference audience that it is the first time after 7 years being involved in Roma integration, that she is positive about the policies being implemented.

ONDREJ LISKA, OSF Fellow/Former Minister of Education, Czech Republic

- Mr Liska initially expressed dissatisfaction with existing situation which he called 'pogromistic situation'.
- He warned that the current economic crisis can soon turn to a social crisis and this could have decisive effects on the middle class.
- According to Mr Liska, we need Roma strategies consistent with structural funds, evaluation of what have been done with the EU fund spending, participatory policies to be re-introduced, more targeted data and modelling, We also need to know what is going on in ministries.
- He advised the stakeholders that the work should be done on mechanisms for the national governments to report back to the EC.
- Ultimately, he emphasised that we should not forget the monitoring capacity of NGOs.

4. ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT IN MONITORING OF THE EU FRAMEWORK AND ENSURING A ROLE FOR ROMA IN THE CREATION, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF NATIONAL ROMA STRATEGIES

HANNES SWOBODA, MEP, Social Democrats

- We have more Roma people than many of the European countries inhabitants and it is strange that small countries have their commissioners but the Roma population is not represented. It is absolutely important, according to Mr Swoboda, that the EU engages itself here.
- The EC did a lot of work but it's much too timid, not courageous enough to ask member-countries to do their job.
- The EP does not consider Roma inclusion as a solely problem of the Eastern European countries, according to Mr Swoboda, countries like Italy and France are very prominent western countries with problems.
- The variety and the 'multiculturality' of the nations in Europe is an asset. We are not similar, we are not the same, we have a variety of cultures, variety of expressions but it does not mean that we should not work together on reforms, on organisation, on education, etc. But the issue is not to make everybody equal and to make to disappear the variety inside Europe.
- Mr Swoboda called to make a careful distinction between Roma as a problem, and the problem of how they are treated by population and also by politicians.
- He finally promised that if the EC and Council will get lazy on this issue, the EP will do the best to wake them up.

DEZIDERIU GERGELY, Director, ERRC

- Mr Gergely reminded that in its 2011 Resolution, the EP called the EC to “define the objectives of the Framework linked to priority areas in order protect and promote equality and non-discrimination, combat anti-gypsyism, prejudices, stereotypes, racism, xenophobia, stigmatization and hate speech against Roma, notably by ensuring full implementation of relevant legislation and imposing proper punishment for racially motivated crimes, ensure that media do not disseminate prejudices against Roma community, set up dialogue between Roma and authorities, judiciary bodies, police in order to abolish discrimination in judicial sphere, improve confidence and combat ethnic profiling.
- There is absolutely no coincidence that the Parliament urged to tackle above all the discrimination against Roma and antigypsyism, because Roma NGOs are highlighting that we are still witnessing wide attacks against Roma.
- Mr Gergely pointed out that only low numbers of reported cases are ending with convincing somebody and only few racially motivated cases are investigated by authorities.
- If we are looking into the political sphere, it is more than obvious that extremist political parties have sharpened their anti-Roma rhetoric, now unfortunately even mainstream politicians engage in antigypsyism in the political discourse and there are no consequences. Discrimination is sometimes connected to deliberate governmental policies.
- According to Mr Gergely, the Framework represents a significant shift in the EU approach to Roma. However, while the Framework recognises the need to fight discrimination and to ensure the equal access of Roma to fundamental rights, it fails to specifically address measures to combat discrimination, intimidation, antigypsyism and hate speech by the member states. Therefore, Mr Gergely concludes that the Framework is far from fulfilling the recommendations from the EP Resolution. It is extremely crucial that the EP will urge the EC to do everything within their competences.
- Legislative norm is not enough, we do have Racial Directive in place and the EC is up to monitor this implementation of the Directive in the member states but even though local authorities are trying to de-segregate or to put together Roma and non-Roma, they are facing obstacles from the non-Roma which don't want to have Roma together with their non-Roma children. It is not enough to address this by legislation. We need policies; we need measures from the member states to address this kind a situation.
- It is extremely important that the member states are urged to adapt their strategies. First of all, to exceed the thematic areas which are outlined in the Framework and to include actions to tackle and prevent discrimination and in particular anti-Romani sentiments, they must articulate the strong commitment of anti-discrimination, awareness raising measures to address prejudices and antigypsyism as a precondition for inclusion and this should target Roma and Non-Roma as well because the focus should be on active citizenship and shared responsibilities.
- The EC has also a vital role to play in order to promote participation of Roma and to urge the member states that participation of Roma is a bottom-up effective.
- One of the most valuable proposals from the EC Communication is to introduce a robust monitoring mechanism which will measure individual progress of the member states; however, this mechanism needs to be further developed. It is not very clear from the Communication, what would be the substance of this robust mechanism. In this regard, the EP should further call on the EC to take a leading role in reviewing, progress reports and also shadow reports from civil society
- Finally, Mr Gergely pointed out that there is a plenty of good practices already in place in the Decade of Roma Inclusion and we should take into account all this experiences and we should not start the Framework from the zero moment because we are not at the zero moment.

RAUL ROMEVA, MEP, Greens

- Mr Romeva has participated in two related debates in the EP: 1. On Resolution on Roma Strategies, 2. Establishing 7 priorities and 30 objectives for these strategies. According to him, the role of the EP is divided in two areas: 1. to scrutinize the EC – being sure that it does

not side line the major important decision that have to be taken in order to avoid both discrimination and bad treatment of the Roma population; 2. to ask for some type of centre.

- Mr Romeva further pointed out that there is a situation of impunity of some politicians when they are creating stereotypes, even racism. He urges to develop a good judicial system that will prosecute those who are vulnerating the principles, not only the law itself.
- Roma can be seen as an opportunity to re-think what the EU was created for; an opportunity to remind ourselves the origin of the EU which was to create a community of values.
- According to Mr Romeva, the question of Roma inclusion has to be tackled within discrimination issue related to the Equality directive. There is also another horizontal Directive, on the multiple discrimination outside the employment sphere, that the EP is recently trying to develop. However, we have enough framework to deal with those issues.
- The EP can do 3 things: 1. Supervise national strategies – need to have common approach from different groups on how national strategies are being draft and being implemented 2. To acknowledge that in this process Roma input is part of it – within the Parliament and within the institutions themselves – there is a lot of expertise and we cannot ignore this knowledge and savoir-faire; 3. To fight against all those member states that sometimes even in legitimate way but other times in simple political speech are creating the frame, mood and attitude that is dealing with impunity of racism against the Roma population
- Mr Romeva reflected that sometimes the EC is not taken responsibility, like in the case of fighting the ‘artificial helmet’ of a national matter, according to him, it is a moral excuse to avoid some controversial debate than to take an issue.
- Conclusions of the debate: a) if not all, the big part of the problem has to do with money – to invest into the right thing and not to use the crisis as an excuse, b) how do we deal with discrimination issues as a general concept? When you read the Treaties of the EU, there is a set of questions on types of discrimination: why some are more important than others? Discrimination is discrimination. c) There is this gap generated for the Directive of free movement that has created a lot of confusion in the member states. If some countries were good enough to join the market of the EU, they should be considered good enough to commons of free movement for people.

MAGDA MATACHE, Romani CRISS, Romania

- Mrs Matache focused her intervention on two main issues: 1. Role of civil society in creating NRIS; 2. Monitoring process, both on the level of the EU but also on the level of Roma civil society.
- Following, she shared with the process of creating NRIS in Romania and the way how Romanian government understood one of the common basic principles - the active participation of Roma.
- In creating NRIS, Romania opted out for superficial consultations – in March 2011, Romanian government approved the Memorandum for guidelines of NRIS, which basically came one month before the Communication of the EC.
- The consultation process did not exist at that time; it started in August 2011 due to the complaining of the civil society in Budapest. In August 2011, the Romanian NGOs submitted 50 pages of different amendments to the new Strategy which was proposed by Romanian government and they are waiting whether these amendments will be taken into consideration.
- Mrs Matache discussed that if we look to the text of NRIS now, there are several basic things which are missing: we lack budgets, we lack specific responsibilities of the sectors of governments but also how this responsibilities will be given to the local authorities and at the end of the day, we have no indicators and targets.
- Mrs Matache concluded that the EU is preparing for the next big failure to the Roma integration unless in the process of creating NRIS, the EC is well equipped with the instruments to be able to reject NRIS which don't fulfil the criteria.
- The EC has to urge governments to follow all necessary steps in order to adopt these strategies and to be result-oriented which in Romania at this stage is not. NRISs which are not complying with EC approaches and guidelines have to be revised.

- According to Mrs Matache, the role of the EP is through relevant committees to conduct their own assessments of the NRIS.
- **B. Monitoring and evaluation:** the approach of Romanian government during the 10 years of the implementation of the previous strategy was that the level of monitoring, the level of evaluation, and the way how government perceives its role is that they very often reported to the EC, the UN bodies, to the Decade the projects of the Roma NGOs.
- Mrs Matache expressed a need for a permanent and transparent platform at the national level of Roma civic society in order to revise the mechanism, to look into empowering Roma and also to combat an anti-Roma action at local level but also at central level.
- The implementation of the Racial Directive shall be one of the major instruments of implementation NRIS.
- The EP has to continue previous initiatives that have been done related to Roma inclusion and anti-Roma actions taken by different member states.
- **C. role of the civil society:** even on the level of Roma civil society we face a lot of problems in a sense that many of the NGOs disappeared.
- Instead of having transparent consultations in the country, very often we have consultation on the limits of influence in advocacy.
- The role of EU institutions is to contribute to a transparent dialogue with Roma civil society.

LAMBERT VAN NISTELROOIJ, MEP

- Mr Van Nistelrooij served as the reporter in the EP on the adjustment of the regional development funds (ERDF) for vulnerable groups. According to him, the ERDF is underspent, is not taken up.
- There is EUR 400 million available for housing of vulnerable groups. The member states get 80% of the money for these specific groups.
- Mr Van Nistelrooij will be one of the reporters for the new legislation 2014-2020. He introduced new instruments:
 - a) The EC has proposed a 'partnership contract' for spending ERDF Funds, that means to instruct beforehand the partners within the member states locally – the cities, regions and nation states – how to spend the money.
 - b) ERDF mostly about physical aspect, the focus will be on housing
- Finally, Mr Van Nistelrooij emphasised that the EU should be more confronting, if we don't confront, the money go back to the member states.

Discussion:

VALERIU NICOLAE – the level of Roma and Roma experts in the EU institutions equate with structural racism, you don't have experts in the Parliament to do that and EP did not make a single step to bring that expertise in. At the moment, the EU institutions have proven that they are structurally racist against Roma.

The EU has spent about EUR 15 million on the very strong campaign – equal pay campaign. We could not find any numbers from the antidiscrimination unit on antigypsyism. Would the EP be ready together with some NGOs to monitor the activity of antidiscrimination unit?

HANNES SWOBODA – education and the 2020, I fully agree that is a very important issue. Concerning the supervision, the EP can set up from different political groups an **Ad hoc committee of different committees, especially the civil liberties and social affairs committee. Either of a formal committee or a working group out of three/four committees** who would go into details also into the question of NRIS. This seminar is very important but finally we have to do it officially from the EP side. **LAMBERT VAN NISTELROOIJ totally agreed, he added that this should be done together with the EC.** But he advised to work firstly on the legal instruments, the criteria how the money is spent.

ORHAN TAHIR, Civil Society in Action, Bulgaria – Do you think you can require Roma inclusion in member states if you are not ready to show Roma inclusion in Brussels? There were no Roma in the Roma Task Force. Important what kind of examples the EC and EP give to member states. Are we aware that national governments used the ESF to silence the voice of the Roma civil society? What kind a partnership do you expect between the government and NGOs on spending the EU money?

RAUL ROMEVA – The EP has an instrument, due to the Lisbon Treaty still more and more, instrument of supervising the EC when they have to play a role of the implementation of Treaties. **HANNES SWOBODA**, of course, it is difficult to be convincing if one does not promote the issue in its own administration, but many people are sent to the EU institutions from national governments. If national govts. don't send people from the Roma community, it is difficult to get them. We in the EP in different group have to have a competition on the language basis. We in our group have a program inviting Roma to spend some month with us and to be trained and to give us input from the Roma perspective. We should go beyond internship, we should do more, we need more candidates for European elections.

Mr DINCA, Romanian Gov. the NGOs have assisted in creating NRIS in Romania. Mrs **MATACHE**, the consultation: three meetings organised has been asked by the Coalition coordinated by the OSF and Roma Civil Alliance. It was not organised by the Romanian government.

IVAN IVANOV, Executive Director, ERIO – We do have political commitment but no legal commitment.

DEAN KOLEV – NRIS should be approved by the National Parliament not National government, this way it would involve much more institutions. The EP should make appeal on national parliament to approve the NRIS.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

GUY VERHOFSTADT, MEP

- Mr Verhofstadt expressed his worries that all the documents have not changed the situation on the ground, the reality is extremely different than the fantastic strategies we have and fantastic monitoring system we should apply on these national plans. In reality the opposing is happening of what has been said and written, complete contradiction. He provided with examples of recent happenings in Hungary, Czech Republic, Bulgaria and evictions in Rome and Paris.
- The EP is currently debating the contradiction of theoretical framework and national plans and the behaviour on the ground.
- According to Mr Verhofstadt, the EP has to continue putting pressure on other EU institutions, especially on the EC as the guardian of EU treaties, to do what is necessary, to invite Mrs Reding to accompany her declarations with adequate actions. The role of the EP is to monitor the whole process, the EU Framework, the national plans and the concrete events on the ground.