

- **IMPROVING OF HOUSING
CONDITION FOR ROMA**

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Institutional framework

The Government of the Republic of Serbia, through the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights, Public Administration and Local Self-government and the Ministry for Environment, Mining and Spatial Planning, is investing continuous efforts in the improvement of the housing conditions for Roma community in Serbia. According to the preliminary results of the Census from 2011, there are around 780 Roma settlements in Serbia, with around 170 in Belgrade only.

- Since 2005 and the start of the Decade, Serbia achieved tangible results in the field of the improvement of the housing conditions for Roma community. Serbia has finalised the development of the legal and institution framework for this field, provided budgetary support from the national level for the process of legalisation and started the legalisation of the number of informal Roma settlements.

The National Strategy and Action plan

- The National Strategy for the Improvement of the Position of Roma in Serbia was drafted in 2003 and finally adopted by the Government in 2009. The Strategy, with its Action Plan, underlines the improvement of the housing conditions for Roma as one of the main priorities. The new Action Plan for the period 2012-2014 is drafted and about to be adopted by the Government.
- In 2007, as it was anticipated by the Action Plan, the Ministry for Capital Investments prepared and adopted the Guidelines for the Improvement and Legalization of Informal Roma Settlements.

Guide to Legalization of Informal Roma Settlements

- In 2010, the Guidelines were updated by the current Guide to Legalization of Informal Roma Settlements, which was adopted by the Ministry for Environment, Mining and Spatial Planning. The Guide reflects the changes in the recent Law on Planning and Construction from 2009; and is intended to local self governments, non-governmental organisations, the Roma community and other interested actors in the legalisation of informal Roma settlements. The Guide provides valuable detail information on the concrete steps in the process of improving and legalizing Roma settlements.

- In Serbia, the process of legalisation of informal Roma settlements lies in the competencies of the respective local self-governments, while the Ministry for Environment, Mining and Spatial Planning maintains a coordination, monitoring and advisory role. In practice the local self-governments face many obstacles in the legalisation process, including unreliable cadastre data, unclear land ownership, and the high cost of developing planning documents.
- The support of the Ministry for Environment, Mining and Spatial Planning proved to be crucial for the success of the process, and in particular through awareness raising, financial support for preparation of planning documents, and monitoring to ensure the effective and efficient use of national funding.

Legalisation efforts

- Since 2008, the Ministry for Environment, Mining and Spatial Planning has been providing financial and technical assistance to eight municipalities in development of urban planning documents for ten Roma settlements. The Ministry allocated and transferred to the municipalities about 230.000 Euro for this purpose. It is envisaged that the process of the legalisation will cover around 1.800 individual houses and 12.500 Roma. To this end, four of the eight municipalities completed the legalization of respective Roma settlements, which provides a good model for further improvement of housing conditions.

- Moreover, in addition to the legalisation efforts, eight municipalities in the Republic of Serbia have developed local housing strategies providing for measures and actions for resolution of housing problems of vulnerable population. Local housing agencies were established in these eight municipalities with a mandate to develop and implement local housing policies, as well as to develop and manage the municipal housing funds. The measures related to resolution of housing problems of certain vulnerable groups (Roma, refugees and internally displaced persons) have also been defined in local action plans for improvement of the situation of these groups. In addition, some local governments also subsidize electricity and housing costs to the poorest categories of population.

Social Housing

- In 2009, The Law on Social Housing was adopted and has introduced the Roma community as one of the priority beneficiary of the state social housing policy.
- In 2010, the conference “Access to Social and Affordable Housing – Exchange of Experiences on Housing Policies in Serbia and other Countries in Europe” was held in Belgrade. The draft Social Housing Strategy was discussed and attention was paid to the models of social housing, eligibility criteria for social housing and analysis of housing of the poor in Serbia, with great attention to the Roma community. As a successful follow up, recently adopted the National Strategy for Social Housing included the main recommendations regarding the Roma community.

Plans for the future

- By the end of 2012, the Ministry for Environment, Mining and Spatial Planning will provide to municipalities around 60.000 Euro as a support to the further process of legalisation of informal Roma settlements. In addition, the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights, Public Administration and Local Self-government and the Ministry for Environment, Mining and Spatial Planning will seek additional funding for legalisation of informal Roma settlements from donor's funds.
- For the next year, it is being prepared five Million Euro project from the EU IPA funds for Serbia. Important part of the project will focus on the improvement of the housing condition of the Roma community and the support for the legalisation of informal Roma settlements.

- The Government of Republic of Serbia remains committed to continuous improvement of the housing conditions, as well as general improvement of the position of the Roma community in Serbia.

- Thank you for your attention!

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