



DECADE OF
ROMA
INCLUSION
2005 - 2015

Declaration of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, 2005–2015

Building on the momentum of the 2003 conference, *“Roma in an Expanding Europe: Challenges for the Future”*, we pledge that our governments will work toward eliminating discrimination and closing the unacceptable gaps between Roma and the rest of society, as identified in our Decade Action Plans.

We declare the years 2005 – 2015 to be the Decade of Roma Inclusion and we commit to support the full participation and involvement of national Roma communities in achieving the Decade’s objectives and to demonstrate progress by measuring outcomes and reviewing experiences in the implementation of the Decade’s Action Plans.

We invite other states to join our effort.

Deklaracia pala Rromane Integraciaqi Dekada, 2005–2015

Ame colaxaras pala momento e 2003 konferenciaqo, *‘Rroma ande Buhardi Evropa: e Avindimasqe Pharimata’*, ke amare rajimàta kerena buti karing e diskriminaciaqo per-avipe taj te phanden pe e na-akceptuime averimata maškar e rroma taj sa e aver džene, sarso mothodo ande amare Dekadake Akciake Planura.

Ame mothovasa, ke e berša 2005 – 2015 si e Rromane Integraciaqi Dekada taj ame das amari vorba te zuraras e nacionalone rromane khetanimatan te šaj arakhen pe e Dekadake resa taj te lačhàrel pe e agordinimatanqo molaripe taj e eksperiencanqo virdikhipe ande e Dekadake Akciaqe Planonqi implementacia.

Ame rodas avere theman te asteren pe amenca jekhetane.

Sofia, Bulgaria, February 2, 2005



What is the Decade?

The Decade of Roma Inclusion, 2005–2015, is an initiative adopted by eight countries in Central and Southeast Europe, and supported by the international community. It represents the first cooperative effort to change the lives of Roma in Europe. An action framework for governments, the Decade will monitor progress in accelerating social inclusion and improving the economic and social status of Roma across the region.

The idea of the Decade emerged from the first high level regional conference on Roma which was held in Budapest, Hungary in 2003. At that event, prime ministers and senior government officials from Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, FYR Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, and Slovakia announced their intention to launch the Decade. Their backing signals a sea change in Roma policy and the political will necessary for reform. Other countries are encouraged to join the Decade.

The Decade is a political commitment by countries to reduce disparities in key economic and human development outcomes for Roma through implementing policy reforms and programs designed to break the vicious cycle of poverty and exclusion. The Decade of Roma Inclusion is a major international effort to meet the common European challenge of Roma inclusion in a coordinated, open and transparent way.

In preparation for the Decade, each country has identified a limited number of measurable national goals for improvements. Planning for the Decade has been guided by an International Steering Committee, made up of representatives of governments, Roma, international donors, and other international organizations, which established four priority areas for the Decade—education, employment, health, and housing. The Steering Committee also determined three cross-cutting themes: income poverty, discrimination, and gender. Each country has developed an action plan that specifies the goals and indicators in these areas.

Roma participation is a core value of the Decade. Roma representatives and civil society organizations are involved in every stage. Roma shaped and defined the vision from the outset and have been involved in the Steering Committee and preparation of country action plans. Roma civil society groups and experts identified policy priorities and played a key role in defining Decade goals and targets. Roma participation will be central to regular oversight and monitoring of the process over the next ten years.

The international community is supporting the Decade. This includes the Open Society Institute, the World Bank, the European Commission, the United Nations Development Program, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Council of Europe, the Council of Europe Development Bank, among others, and

most importantly, Roma leadership, including international Roma organizations.

The Decade is not another new institution or bureaucracy, nor is it a new pot of money. It is owned by the governments that signed on to it. Funding the Decade will presume the reallocation of existing resources in national budgets

and aligning these plans with funding instruments of multinational, international, and bilateral donors.

An essential aspect of the Decade is improving the database for monitoring the status of Roma. In preparing its action plans, each country has identified

indicators which it will use to measure progress in reaching its Decade goals. Monitoring these outcomes will require a combination of designing and implementing new data collection instruments, and upgrading existing data sources to ensure that Roma are effectively included. UNDP has been supporting these efforts through implementing a cross-country baseline survey and convening a data expert's group for sharing information.

Why Launch the Decade?

With the enlargement of the European Union on May 1, 2004, Roma became the largest and one of the poorest and fastest growing minorities in Europe. The total Roma population in Europe is estimated at between 8 and 12 million. They represent roughly 2 percent of the 450 million people who live in the enlarged European Union. Approximately 10 million Roma live in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, of which nearly 5 million reside in new member states of the European Union and the countries which are scheduled to join the EU in 2007.

The challenge of economic and social development amongst Roma represents one of the most critical issues in Central and Eastern European countries—one they share with the other EU member states. The Roma issue is a core poverty issue, aggravated by pernicious discrimination. Roma poverty is multifaceted, stemming from low education levels, inadequate housing and poor health status—leading to a vicious cycle of poverty and exclusion.

Evidence on Roma poverty and exclusion is staggering. Roma poverty rates are sometimes as much as ten times higher than the rest of the population. In 2000, nearly 80 percent of Roma in Bulgaria and Romania were living on less than \$4.30 per day, in comparison with 37 percent of the total population of Bulgaria and 30 percent of Romania. In Hungary, 40 percent of Roma



were living under this line, in comparison with 7 percent of the total population.

Roma were often the first to be laid-off from jobs in the early 1990s, and have been among those most persistently blocked from re-entering the labor force. Labor market exclusion perpetuates the poverty cycle and lowers living standards. Many Roma have limited future opportunities to break out of poverty due to low human development status and long-standing discrimination—including lack of education, poor health and limited opportunities for participating in social and political life.

Disparities in living conditions are pervasive. In education, as much as 90 percent of Roma in some countries do not complete primary school. Of those children who are in school, between 50–85 percent of Roma children across countries attend schools intended for the mentally and physically disabled. In health, life expectancy for Roma is as much as 10–15 years lower than for others.

The Decade is a way to address these deep-rooted problems in a long-term way, coordinated among governments and international organizations in partnership with Roma civil society. The Decade is a unique attempt to break the cycle of poverty and improve opportunities for Roma to fully participate in the economic and social life of the region.

The Roma Education Fund

The 2003 conference reached consensus on the importance of education as the key starting point for breaking the poverty cycle of Roma. The international community is providing concrete support for achieving the education goals of the Decade through the establishment of a new Roma Education Fund. At a donors' conference held in Paris in December 2004, over US\$ 42 million was mobilized as start-up financing for the Fund. This represented an unprecedented partnership between bilateral and multilateral organizations, and private foundations. Individual private contributions were also announced.

The Roma Education Fund is currently being set up with offices in Budapest and Paris, where it will be housed on the premises of the Council of Europe Development Bank. The Fund will be a grant-making foundation that will put together and support programs and projects to improve Roma education outcomes. It will actively seek out good ideas and provide technical expertise and advice for developing and implementing proposals. It will evaluate the results of its grants, or grant programs, and become a knowledge center for Roma education.

The Fund will build on past initiatives to benefit from the lessons of experience in Roma education gained over the last fifteen years since transition began in Central and South-East Europe in

The Decade Action Plans

1990. In doing so, it will take into account the valuable experience of the many donors, NGOs, governments and other agencies that have been involved in Roma education.

The Decade and the Roma Education Fund were launched together at the 2003 conference in



Budapest. They are two separate, but related, initiatives. The Decade provides the policy and results framework that the Roma Education Fund will support in the participating countries. A major objective of the Fund will be to support systemic policy change in the area of education, by drawing on the les-

sons of local NGO projects to formulate lessons for policy.

For example, there have been a number of successful projects in the area of preschool education for Roma, including initiatives which involve parents in the classrooms, and introduce Roma teachers' assistants. The Fund will draw upon these success stories, and assist governments in identifying the policy changes necessary to extend these projects to other areas of the country and to integrate lessons into policy. The Decade defines the goals which each country aims to achieve in terms of outcomes for Roma.

During 2004, the country working groups, including Roma and other stakeholders, have been developing "Decade Action Plans" which summarize the goals, targets and indicators which each country plans to achieve during the Decade. The Decade Action Plans are intended to complement and reinforce—and not duplicate—national strategies for Roma that are in place in nearly all of the countries. The preparation of the action plans was overseen by an International Steering Committee, chaired by the Hungarian government, and supported by the Decade Secretariat, based in Budapest.

At its first meeting, the Steering Committee selected four priority areas for the Decade: education, employment, health, and housing, as well as three cross-cutting themes: discrimination, gender, and poverty. Workshops on all four sector policy areas were held to involve technical experts, Roma stakeholders, and other specialists in identifying goals in each area.

The nine draft Decade Action Plans reflect the considerable effort and planning that has gone into their preparation. The action plans include the goals, targets, and indicators which the countries propose to achieve. The **goals** are broad objectives linked to outcomes. For example, in the case of education, a goal would be to "improve Roma educational achievement." **Targets** are specific measures which contribute

to reaching the objectives. For education, possible targets would be: “all Roma boys and girls complete compulsory education.” **Indicators** are the quantitative measures which can track progress, such as primary school enrollment rates.

The Decade Action Plans reflect consensus on the priority issues, as well as the diversity of the issues and potential solutions in each country. Many of the actions included in the Decade Plans cut across policy areas, reflecting the multisectoral nature of Roma poverty. A summary of the main features of the plans in each of the policy areas follows with examples from each of the countries.



Education

Ensuring access to compulsory education.

All countries include increasing the education status of Roma boys and girls as a primary objective. Common approaches include: introducing Roma teachers' assistants into classrooms (Republic of Serbia; Republic of Montenegro); improving local implementation of education (Czech Republic); involving parents in education and initiatives to prevent dropouts and work with those who do dropout (Bulgaria, Croatia); free textbook provision (FYR Macedonia); and improving results for Roma students (Slovakia).

Improving the quality of education.

Goals include increasing the capacity of teachers to work in a multicultural environment (Czech Republic); curriculum reform, including introduction of Roma language teaching (Bulgaria); anti-bias and tolerance teaching (Bulgaria); and training of school mediators (Romania).

Implementing integration and desegregation.

Integration of Roma students from segregated schools and classrooms and from schools for the mentally disabled to general schools is a priority issue across countries. Measures include: reassessing the testing methodology for entrance into special schools (Republic of Serbia); desegregation of schools, including kindergartens; enforcing legal regulations for desegregation (Bulgaria); eliminating all segregated classes and schools (Hungary and Romania); and antidiscrimination

measures and media campaigns to support desegregation (FYR Macedonia).

Expanding access to preschool education.

All countries include expanding preschool for Roma in their action plans. Specifics include: information campaigns and work with parents to promote preschool attendance (Croatia; FYR Macedonia); improving the readiness of Roma children to start primary school (Slovakia); and support for low income families to send their children to preschool.

Increasing access to secondary, post-secondary and adult education.

At the secondary level, many countries have included extracurricular programs to keep students in school. Scholarships at the secondary and university levels are also common. Other measures include: volunteer mentor programs (Croatia); training and career services for school dropouts (Slovakia); adult literacy courses (Romania; Republic of Montenegro); and career advice for secondary school students (Republic of Montenegro).

Other targets included in the action plans include improving the database for Roma education, improving school management and monitoring, and communications activities to address discrimination.

Employment

Increasing opportunities through education and skills.

All countries refer to increasing Roma labor market opportunities through expanding the qualifications and skills of Roma workers. This includes improving education systems to reach Roma, as well as targeted training to provide literacy and skills training (Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia). Some countries specifically mention education and training for Roma women, youth, and disabled persons.

Expanding labor market participation through active measures.

Countries plan a variety of direct measures to increase Roma labor market participation. These include public works programs (Croatia, Hungary, Republic of Serbia, Slovakia); small business development through business incubators, training, and other support for Roma entrepreneurs (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, FYR Macedonia, Romania, Republic of Serbia); and incentives for potential employers to hire Roma, such as wage subsidies (Czech Republic). Specific incentives for employers to hire Roma women and youth are mentioned (Hungary, Romania).

Improving labor market information.

Several countries focus on increasing the quality and availability of labor market information to expand Roma employment. On the one hand, countries propose approaches to increase information for unemployed Roma about job

openings and training programs (Bulgaria, FYR Macedonia); while on the other, they plan information campaigns targeting employers to encourage hiring of Roma (Czech Republic, Republic of Montenegro, Romania).

Reforming employment services. A number of measures aim to improve the effectiveness of labor offices and employment agencies in working with Roma. This includes increasing coordination between local social services (e.g. employment, social assistance, housing) and creating opportunities for local authorities to support community development initiatives (Czech Republic, Slovakia). Hiring and training of Roma staff as career counselors is encouraged to increase outreach and access for Roma communities (Bulgaria, Croatia, FYR Macedonia). Involvement of Roma NGOs in service delivery is encouraged (Bulgaria, Republic of Montenegro, Romania). General and anti-discrimination training for staff in labor offices is also proposed (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Slovakia).

Health

Ensuring access to health care. Ensuring access to health care is of major importance across countries. Measures include facilitating inclusion of Roma into health insurance systems, public information campaigns for vulnerable groups (Croatia), and amendments to legislation (FYR Macedonia, Republic of Serbia). Further activities should facilitate the inclusion of Roma into health insurance (Romania), and pro-active outreach by health institutions (FYR Macedonia).

Increasing the information base on Roma health. Because of the severe shortage of information on the health status of Roma, many countries focus on improving the knowledge base on Roma health outcomes (Bulgaria, Republic of Montenegro, Republic of Serbia, Slovakia). In addition to surveys, which should help improving the general knowledge on the health status, other activities should improve the knowledge on access to health institutions and preventive health care among Roma communities (Slovakia, Republic of Montenegro), or to promote intercultural education among all categories of medical personnel (Romania).

Raising the inclusiveness of health systems. A common focus is expanding access to health care by breaking down barriers between Roma communities and health providers. Measures include affirmative approaches and increased opportunities for Roma to become health care providers



(FYR Macedonia), increasing the number of Roma nurses, district nurses, doctors, and social workers through scholarships (Hungary, Croatia; Romania), and the introduction of Roma health mediators to work with Roma communities and health providers (Republic of Serbia).

Improving health in vulnerable communities.

Several countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Republic of Montenegro, Republic of Serbia) focus, in addition, on more vulnerable groups among the Roma communities, in particular women and children and the health of Roma in informal settlements (Croatia, Republic of Serbia). Countries with Roma IDP populations such as Serbia and Montenegro also target these communities.



Housing

Tackling discrimination in housing. The Decade Action Plans mention adoption and implementation of anti-discrimination legislation to ensure fair treatment of Roma in housing (Czech Republic, FYR Macedonia, Republic of Serbia).

Improving living conditions in settlements: Many countries mention legalization of informal settlements where Roma live, in order to increase opportunities for ownership and upgrading infrastructure. This includes assessment of land and property ownership and registration (Bulgaria, Croatia). Measures to improve living conditions for Roma living in settlements include upgrading infrastructure and interventions to improve access to utilities such as water, sewage and electricity (Bulgaria, Hungary, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Republic of Montenegro, Romania, Republic of Serbia).

Expanding access to housing. Measures are included to increase the availability of quality housing for low income households outside of settlements including rental housing and other programs (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania). Support is included for local and regional initiatives to expand housing availability, and opportunities for community development projects to allow Roma to improve their own living conditions (Bulgaria, Hungary, Republic of Montenegro, Slovakia).

Implementing the Decade

The Decade will be a flexible coordination mechanism among countries, Roma civil society and the international community for:

- launching initiatives to strengthen Roma inclusion as a high priority on the regional and European political agendas;
- learning and exchanging experiences;
- involving Roma in policy making;

- bringing in international experience and expertise to make progress on challenging issues; and
- raising public awareness of the status of Roma.

Countries will report annually on progress in achieving the goals of the Decade. Reporting will allow for sharing of information regarding the progress of the Decade, assessing real impact, making course corrections and changes to the Decade Action Plans, and building and sharing experience across countries.





FOR MORE INFORMATION

Further information on the Decade of Roma Inclusion can be obtained on the websites: www.worldbank.org/roma and www.soros.org/initiatives/roma and from the Decade Secretariat located at:

Ministry of Youth, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
Akadémia u. 3.,
Budapest 1054
Hungary
Tel: (+ 36-1) 475-5725, 475-5726;
Fax: (+ 36-1) 312-32-36