

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE SHADOW REPORT ON SECTOR WORKING GROUP ON ROMA INTEGRATION

RELEVANT SECTOR POLICIES

In its 2020 Country Progress Report, the European Commission notes that Roma inclusion is receiving increased attention from national and local authorities, although there is still much that needs to be done. Implementation of Roma inclusion policies is slow and lacks sufficient capacity for implementation, coordination and monitoring. The government has increased funding for Roma integration policies, but poor absorption of funds remains a problem. Roma people have limited economic opportunities and many fail to earn a living. Only 3% of those benefiting from active labour market policies are Roma.

The housing situation is dramatic, with high portion of Roma living in illegal settlements and/or substandard and unhygienic environments. The Law on Persons without Regulated Civil Status, which enables access to mainstream services for 750 Roma identified to be without personal identification documents, was adopted but its implementation is hindered.

UN Convention on Reduction of Statelessness from 1961 has been ratified, creating conditions for a systemic solution for birth and civil registration of all undocumented people. The Declaration of Western Balkans Partners on Roma Integration within the EU Enlargement Process (the Poznan Declaration) was endorsed by the government, but no steps have been taken to implement it. 2019 Roma Seminar conclusions are yet to be implemented.

Despite the existence of legal frameworks protecting human rights, Roma are often victims of racism, discrimination and segregation. Systematic measures to address the issue of street children are lacking, and child beggars – including young mothers and babies – are recorded on the streets.

There is no comprehensive approach on Roma asylum seekers and returnees. The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education continue to support Roma mediators.

Effective actions for capacity building helped Roma NGOs to develop a strong core of well-trained activities ready to handle challenges in their communities.

The authorities, in cooperation with donors and the civil society, acted during the COVID-19 pandemic to support the most vulnerable, including Roma. Roma community is particularly vulnerable in the context of the COVID-19 crisis and it is essential to guarantee full access to healthcare services in order to control the spread of the virus.

In general, many Roma continue to live in poverty and face unemployment and substandard living conditions. Their access to education, housing and employment and justice remains a concern. Roma children are especially at risk, as poverty and discrimination act as further barriers to receiving education.



SWG PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM

- ◆ **FORMED:** 2019
- ◆ **NUMBER OF CSO MEMBERS in SWG:** 17
- ◆ **NUMBER OF MEETINGS HELD IN 2020:** one plenary session, 16.11.2020
- ◆ **SWG CHAIR:** Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
- ◆ **SWG CO-CHAIR:** EU Delegation to the Republic of North Macedonia

SWG FUNCTIONALITY

- ◆ The rules of procedure propose a **minimum of 4 meetings per year**. Only one meeting was held in 2020.
- ◆ SWG members are **regularly** invited to meetings.
- ◆ Invitations with location, agenda, time and supporting **materials are sent** electronically to all members.
- ◆ SWG **members are invited** to meetings on time.
- ◆ **Minutes** are not compiled in established form and content and they are not sent to participants.
- ◆ SWG does not **inform** the public about its work.

CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION

- ◆ **17 civil society organizations** participate in SWG, with membership status.
- ◆ SWG chairperson's attitude at meetings is **transparent and open** to all members.
- ◆ **Sufficient time** is allowed for civil society representatives to get involved by presenting opinions and recommendations at SWG meetings.
- ◆ Civil society representatives are **not encouraged** to suggest agenda items, i.e. there is no two-way communication on topics to be discussed at SWG meetings.

CSO CAPACITY

- ◆ Role of civil society representatives in SWG is more **formal**, instead of providing essential contribution to its work.
- ◆ Given the poor dynamics of SWG meetings, as well as minimum communication among SWG members beyond such meetings, one cannot talk about **effective civil society participation**.
- ◆ Civil society representatives **do not receive feedback** whether their suggestions and comments are taken into consideration.

EFFECTS FROM SWG WORK

- ◆ Topics discussed at SWG meetings in 2020 concerned action fiches and **strategic responses to IPA 3**, related to education, social policy and employment.
- ◆ One plenary meeting was held, contrary to the rules of procedure stipulation for four meetings per year.
- ◆ SWG Roma Integration did not hold independent plenary meeting, but a joint one with SWG Education, Employment and Social Policy.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE:

- ◆ **Amend the rules of procedure** in order to define the model for selection of civil society representatives, their role and mandate.
- ◆ **Increase the dynamics of SWG meetings** in order to be able to develop strategic and planning documents, and to monitor results achieved under existing strategies and plans.
- ◆ Involve civil society representatives in **all phases of creating documents** that fall within SWG's scope of work.
- ◆ Create an **annual plan** for SWG work in the first quarter of the year.
- ◆ Develop proposals for sector and cross-sector policy content, strategies and development programs relevant to **Roma Integration as horizontal issue**.
- ◆ Participate in the processes for identification, formulation and prioritization of development goals, measures and projects for implementation of **national policies and strategies**.