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**Government of Romania**  
The Presidency of the Decade of Roma Inclusion

**Romania's priorities for its 2005/2006 presidency**

**The context**

The Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015) is an unprecedented process to which nine governments from Central and South-East Europe - Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, FYR Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro and Slovakia - committed themselves, and is supported by several international institutions such as the World Bank, the European Commission, the Open Society Institute, the Council of Europe, the United Nations Development Program, the Council of Europe Development Bank etc. The Decade is a political commitment by Prime Ministers and senior government officials 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.

During the last International Steering Committee meetings, the participating Governments agreed on a rotating Presidency and Secretariat of the Decade. The participants' decision to have one year rotating presidency of each country for the next ten years is of utmost importance and must be thoroughly implemented.

As already agreed by all participant Governments and international institutions, Romania took over the Presidency and Secretariat of the Decade for one year, starting with 1 July 2005 and, as the first country to assume this role, it bears the responsibility of making this process most effective.

We consider that each presidency should be a vehicle for both:

- assessing the progress made in each of the Decade four areas and sharing information
- promoting each year a number of priorities representing subjects of interest for all participant countries and supporting international institutions.

Although agreement has not been yet reached on the Decade Terms of Reference, Romania considers being in the position of setting up a course of action that could be employed and developed afterwards by the other countries during their Presidency.

Romania considers that the process of adoption of the Terms of Reference should be speed up, based on the agreements from the previous International Steering Committee meetings, and we hope that the at the next International Steering Committee meeting to rich a final agreement on the Terms of Reference that were circulated flowing the International Steering Committee meeting held in Prague. We strongly believe that we should move from procedural discussions to the substantive discussions on the Decade. Therefore, as agreed previously, we support the creation of a Decade Trust Fund to which all participating Governments and international institutions should contribute with an amount of money to be agreed upon later in order to finance international activities of the Decade.

### **General assessment of the Decade progress**

During its Presidency Romania will organize at least two workshops on assessing the progress made by each country in each of the four areas of the Decade:

- **education - employment - housing - health**

and the three cross cutting issues:

- ***poverty - discrimination - gender.***

Because the major goal of the Decade is to give substance to the concept of Roma inclusion, Romania will put a special emphasis on assessing the progress made by each country on the increase of the number of Roma individuals hired in administration and in public institutions, including in decision making positions.

Romania is strongly encouraging yearly progress reports made by each participating Government on their achievements related to the topics and aspects mentioned above as a way to share information and best practices with other participants.

## **Priorities of the Romanian Presidency**

### **1. Mainstreaming and targeting: complementary aspects**

For quite sometime a debate has been going on related to the issue of mainstreaming and targeting. Unfortunately views have been expressed putting the two concepts on antagonistic positions: mainstreaming versus targeting. While Roma NGOs and many institutions emphasize the need of mainstreaming, some international donors have expressed a preference to consider the Roma just as a target group, thus allowing them to release funds for specific projects.

Romania considers that this is an artificial and counterproductive approach. The two concepts must not be seen as conflicting but as complementary, and this clarification needs to be made during the Decade by all participants.

- a) Romania's view is that we need to keep on with the original idea of inclusion: therefore, Roma mainstreaming means that in each and every public policy regarding a certain sector of each country, be it political, social, economic, educational, cultural, Roma dimension must be present. The opposite notion of Roma inclusion and mainstreaming is Roma isolation, a situation that we strongly fight against.
- b) At the same time, Romania considers that the role of promoting the inclusion belongs to all state authorities. We do not want to have only one institution dealing with Roma issues that would be kept responsible for the achievements or failures. The role of such an institution - be it a special agency, an office for Roma or any other structure - should be a coordinating one, making sure that in every public policy of the four areas of the Decade and other as well the Roma is taken into account.
- c) In this way the concept of targeting would simply imply that each time when in a public policy special attention needs to be paid to Roma, specific projects should be conceived and implemented.
- d) Romania will prepare a position document that will be shared with all participants to the Decade and will organize a special workshop addressing and clarifying these concepts and their best implementation.

## **2. Information and communication: the role of the media**

Views have been expressed on the need to involve media, particularly Roma media, on raising awareness on the need of Roma inclusion, on the goals of the Decade, the planned and carried out activities, as well as on the progress achieved by each Government.

Romania is fully convinced that without media assistance and support it will be very difficult to make the concept of inclusion something substantial and understood by Roma and non Roma alike in each country.

The role of media would be not only to participate in the information and communication process but also on holding Governments accountable on their accomplishments or failures.

A special emphasis will be put on the contribution of Roma NGOs which have to be regarded as genuine stakeholders of the entire process. As already agreed by all participating Governments, Roma participation can make or break the Decade.

A special workshop will be organized during Romania's presidency of the Decade with all participants and media representatives on identifying the best ways of media involvement.

## **3. Sharing best practices**

It is already common knowledge that each country is more advanced than others in some of the four areas dealt with by the Decade. Sharing concrete information on such achievements would be tremendously helpful for the other participant States.

- a) Romania will start by sharing with the others its experience on health mediators that, so far, proved to be a successful experience that has eased and improved access to healthcare for Roma people in those places where it has functioned.
- b) An interesting case study will be carried out by Romania and it will be relevant and maybe helpful for other countries as well on how to bring together within this process other international donors, thus making more funds available for the implementation of the National Action Plan and achieving the goals of the Decade.

- c) These issues will be discussed within the workshops that will be organized by Romania in the next year hoping they will continue to be addressed by other countries in the future.

#### **4. A Decade Troika**

With the agreement of all participating Governments the example of a Troika may be implemented as well during the Decade of Roma Inclusion, in order to prepare the next Presidency and also taking advantage from the lessons learned by the previous Presidency.

Such a procedure would give more coherence to the entire process, would allow a continuation of some priorities that will still need to be addressed and to the decision of other priorities to be focused on in the future.

#### **5. Reporting on the achievements of the Romanian Presidency**

By the end of its presidency, Romania will prepare two reports:

- a) One on the progress made related to the four areas of the Decade
- b) Another one on the achievements and lessons related to Romania's above listed priorities.

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### Timetable of international activities

In order to carry out its Presidency program, Romania proposes the following timetable of international activities. All dates are tentative dates and all participants in the Decade will be consulted well in advance for establishing the concrete dates of the events.

November 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• International Steering Committee meeting</li><li>• Thematic workshop "<b>Media and Roma</b>"</li></ul>
December 2005	The role of the community health mediators within the Roma settlements.
January 2006	Thematic workshop " <b>Mainstreaming and targeting complementary aspects</b> "
February 2006	Presidency Intermediary Report
March 2006	Establishment of the Decade Troika
April 2006	Thematic workshop " <b>Best practices – education - employment - housing – health within the Decade of Roma Inclusion Member States</b> "
May 2006	Report on the Presidency
June 2006	International Steering Committee meeting