

**Public policies for Roma in Romania, 2000-2005: legislative framework,
institutions, programmes, achievements and expectations**

Contents

A brief introduction

Legislative and institutional framework, achievements

The Strategy for the Improving the Condition of the Roma

The National Agency for Roma...

The implementation of the "Strategy for Improving the Condition of the Roma"

Improving the institutional framework

Achievements in the field of education

Achievements in the labour field

*Improving the dialogue and strengthening the relationships between
public institutions and Roma NGOs*

Programmes and projects for Roma

Programmes and projects already developed

Programmes and projects in progress

Conclusions

A brief introduction

Officially, the Roma minority living in Romania totals 535.250 people, according to the 2002 census, of which more than 325.000 (60%) in the rural areas. However, independent estimates point to numbers varying from 1 million to 2.5 million. The European Commission's Regular Report on Romania underscores the surveys placing Roma between 1.8 to 2.5 million. Overall, the Roma are the second largest ethnic minority in Romania.

The socio-economic situation of Roma ethnics is still quite difficult and the level of poverty still remains at a high level, the poverty risk level being three times bigger comparatively with other ethnic groups. Roma communities are plagued by high levels of unemployment (28% according the 2002 census), low incomes, lack of professional skills, poor education (which is the consequence of low participation and performance), dire living conditions and difficult access to public services. The situation in rural areas is complemented by lack of farming land and property rights over the houses dwelled by the Roma. Thus, the vast majority of the Roma are day-workers without any stable source of income. A large number of Roma (about 50.000 people) do not own identity documents being excluded from all social benefits. In addition, the Roma continue to be the subject of de facto discrimination in accessing public services, the labour market and in media reporting. These attitudes are fomented by negative stereotyping and prejudices rooted in the public mentality.*

The Romanian government has addressed the situation of the Roma minority by developing a fully-fledged policy aimed at facilitating its socio-economic integration, the elimination of discriminatory practices, while ensuring the preservation of cultural specificity.

These policies, concentrated under the umbrella of the legislative framework given by the National Strategy for Improving the Condition of the Roma, applied by all governmental ministries and structures, under the coordination of the specialized

* See the table enclosed in the annex

body- the National Agency for Roma-and implemented at the local level by a large network composed of local and county Roma Experts, health mediators, school mediators and regional offices (which will be soon created) so on aiming at improving the living condition of Roma.

Legislative and institutional framework, achievements

**STRATEGY OF THE GOVERNMENT OF ROMANIA FOR IMPROVING
THE CONDITION OF THE ROMA**

I. General Considerations

The Government of Romania,

Taking into consideration the Romanian government's will to improve the national minorities' condition, proved by the voluntary adhesion to the international instruments of the Council of Europe, such as the Framework Convention for National Minorities' Care, Resolution ECRI no.3, Recommendation 1203 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the UN Convention regarding the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, as well as other international documents;

Considering the provisions of the 2001-2004 governmental program, regarding the prevention of discrimination and the elaboration of a strategy for considerably improving the condition of the Roma;

Reaffirming the right of any minority, implicitly the Roma, to actively participate in the elaboration, implementation and evaluation of public policies on this minority, and the fact that the minorities' problem has to be taken into consideration as a national problem;

Considering the fact that, in the course of history, Roma were an object of slavery and discrimination, phenomena that have left deep marks on the collective memory and which have led to the social limitation of the Roma;

Considering the difficulties which the Romanian citizens that are Roma ethnics have to cope with, as well as the wish to identify optimal solutions for their resolution, Adopts this **Strategy for improving the condition of the Roma.**

II. Guiding Principles

The Romanian Government,

Adopts the following guiding principles to apply the Strategy for improving the condition of the Roma.

1. **The consensus principle** - The Strategy for improving the condition of Roma is the result of a joint effort of the Government and the representative organizations of the Roma community. The application of the programs and projects laid down in the plan for the implementation of the strategy will be achieved in consultation with the Roma organizations' representatives.
2. **The social utility principle** - The strategy corresponds to the specific needs, which the Roma ethnic group is confronted with and achieves the social framework in which the Roma can functionally integrate in the community and society.
3. **The principle of sectorial distribution** - The strategy is conceived and applicable by areas of sectorial responsibility.
4. **The decentralization principle** - The application of the strategy will be achieved based on specific responsibilities of the institutions and public authorities through the involvement of the NGOs in the implementation of local programs deriving from the Plan of measures to apply the strategy.
5. **The legal compatibility principle** - The stipulations of the strategy are in consonance with the Constitution and the Romanian laws and also with relevant international law and practice.
6. **The identity differentiation principle** - the strategy is aimed to help create an institutional system of community development, fight against discriminations

towards the Roma, promote intercultural education, raise elite from among the Roma, achieve social solidarity and reconstruct the identity of the Roma community.

7. **The equality principle** - The protection of Romanian citizen that are Roma ethnics should not affect the rights and freedom of the other Romanian citizens.

III. The goal and general objectives of the strategy

THE GOAL: Improving the condition of the Roma people in Romania

OBJECTIVES:

1. Institutionalizing the political objectives assumed by the government, concerning the Roma issue and the transfer of the responsibilities to the central and local public authorities in the application of concrete measures to improve the condition of the Romanian citizens who are Roma ethnics.
2. Supporting the formation and promotion of an intellectual and economic elite, within the Roma communities, that should facilitate application of the social integration and modernization policies.
3. Removing the stereotypes, prejudices and practices of certain civil servants of the central and local public institutions who are encouraging the discrimination of the Romanian citizens of Roma ethnic origin compared with other citizens.
4. Determining a positive change in public opinion concerning the Roma ethnics, on the basis of tolerance and social solidarity principles.
5. Stimulating Roma participation in the economic, social, educational, cultural and political life of the society, based on involvement in sectorial assistance and community development projects.
6. Preventing institutional and social discrimination of Romanian citizen of Roma ethnic origin in their access to the services provided by society.
7. Ensuring conditions for the Roma to have equal opportunities to attain a decent standard of life.

IV. Target groups

1. Romanian citizens of Roma ethnic origin
2. Political leaders
3. The managers of central and local public authorities
4. Civil servants
5. Mass media
6. Public opinion

V. Time: 10 years (2001- 2010), with a 4-year medium term plan of action (2001 - 2004)

VI. Sectorial Fields

- A. Community development and administration
- B. Housing
- C. Social security
- D. Health care
- E. Economic
- F. Justice and public order
- G. Child welfare
- H. Education
- I. Culture and denominations
- J. Communication and civic involvement

VII. Lines of action

A. Community development and administration

1. Organizing, at local/county levels, mixed working groups, made up of elected representatives of that community, of decentralized structures of the central administration, of NGOs of the Roma and the Roma minority, in order to evaluate the main needs of the Roma community and to apply the programs for their support.
2. Creating the legal frame by which the ministries and central/local agencies, their decentralized structures are able to finance projects and sectorial programs to improve the situation of the Roma.
3. Setting up the National Council Against Discrimination and including Roma representatives in this structure.
4. Setting up structures for implementing the strategy at the level of ministries, prefectures and town halls.
5. Initiating and developing some educational actions regarding the fight against discrimination targeted at civil servants in the central and local public administration.
6. Monitoring the application of Emergency Ordinance No. 137/2000 and punishing the civil servants who have committed discriminative actions against citizens.
7. Conditioning the civil servants recruitment and promotion of civil servants on the “non-discrimination” criterion in dealing with other people.
8. Developing collaboration between public administration structures and Roma NGOs on a partnership basis; including the Roma community leaders in the local administrative decision-making which affects the Roma.
9. Implementing positive discrimination programs for Roma regarding employment in the structures of central/local public administration.

B. Housing

1. Solving the issues relating to the right of ownership on the Roma dwellings and lands, the issues related to application of laws and regulations concerning the constitution and reconstitution of the land ownership right, including promotion of legislative initiative in this area.
2. Conceiving and implementing programs to rehabilitate housing and the environment in inhabited by Roma.
3. Developing certain financing programs, ensured by the government or in partnership, in order to ensure the minimum conditions of housing in the areas inhabited by Roma (power, drinking water, sewerage, gas and sanitation services).
4. Developing the welfare housing program for the families with many members and without any living support.
5. The direct involvement of the Roma in the government programs for building and restoration of dwellings.

C. Social security

1. Improving Roma access to public services.
2. Conceiving and implementing specific programs for the professional training and reorientation of the Roma.
3. Training the personnel of professional formation and occupation services regarding the employment in the labour market for the Roma minority.
4. Supporting the young Roma graduates in order to get jobs and monitoring the professional evolution of the university-educated young Roma, according to the legislation in force.
5. Providing subsidies to the non-governmental organizations of the Roma that function and manage certain units of social assistance.
6. Increasing the fiscal incentives for enterprises that hire persons from the families with many children and without any living support.
7. Increasing the welfare allowances for families with many members and without any living support.

D. Healthcare

1. Improving Roma access to the public medical services, preventive and curative, by creating a system of health visitors, conceiving and implementing specific prophylactic and treatment programs.
2. Training Roma health visitors, nurses and physicians, within the Roma communities.
3. Identifying solutions for including the Roma in the Health Insurance system, registering with the family doctor, compensation for prescription charges etc.
4. Conceiving and implementing health care information programs, medical consulting and family planning for Roma women, emphasizing the protection of mother and child.
5. Organizing vaccination campaigns in the communities of Roma through some joint commissions formed of the local and DSP (Epidemiological and Communicable Diseases Department) medical staff and the Roma representatives.
6. Organizing campaigns in order to trace the TB, HIV/AIDS, dermatological affections, sexually communicable diseases etc.
7. Accomplishing certain epidemiological studies regarding the general state of health.
8. Increasing the number of medical staff originating in the Roma community by setting aside special openings for the Roma students in the state medical universities.

E. Economic steps

1. Starting and carrying out projects of training and professional reorientation for the Roma.
2. Ensuring incentives for the practice and revival of traditional handicrafts with demand in the market.

3. Devising and implementing specific financing programs for lucrative activities and small businesses for the Roma families and communities, including Roma women.
4. Curbing the unemployment rate of the Roma by creating certain incentives for the entrepreneurs that hire persons from the Roma minority and fighting against any forms of discrimination in hiring the Roma.
5. Drafting programs for getting land ownership and stimulating the agricultural activities for the Roma communities.
6. Supporting under the legislation in force the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) owned by persons from the Roma community through the soft credit system.
7. Including the disadvantaged Rom communities in the selection criteria for the disadvantaged regions; devising and implementing programs for their rehabilitation.
8. Encouraging projects for creating jobs for the women of Roma origin.

F. Justice and public order

1. Analyzing and estimating the discriminating effects of the regulations in force and improving the current legal system.
2. Observing the basic human rights, the political and social civil rights and also the ethnic minorities' rights according to the international norms and obligations assumed by Romania.
3. Solving the cases of the stateless Roma in Romania.
4. Developing local programs with the help of the Roma organizations in order to get identification cards for the Roma with no living support.
5. Developing information programs for the Roma leaders, the executive board of the public institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in order to trace and correctly solve the discrimination cases.
6. Identifying, preventing and operative solving of conflicts likely to generate family, community or interethnic violence.
7. Initiating programs of legal education and delinquency prevention together with the members of the Roma communities.

8. Hiring citizens of Roma origin in the public order services and the police force.

G. Child Welfare

1. Securing a non-discriminative participation of the Roma women in programs of child care and education.
2. Starting programs meant to prevent and fight discrimination of the institutionalized Roma children and the other groups of children in need.
3. Achieving a partnership between the Roma NGOs and the local public institutions for child care.
4. Hiring personnel of Roma origin at the institutions for minors' care where the majority of the institutionalized children are of Roma origin.
5. Rising the living standards of the children from families on low incomes and ensuring observance of their rights.
6. Devising and implementing programs for the training of young Roma as social mediators and trainers for the Roma communities.
7. Increasing the quality of child care in residential institutions, including in those for the children with deficiencies or disabilities, by imposing some minimal standards in organizing and running these institutions.
8. Promoting the alternatives of a family type for institutionalized children.
9. Preventing the abandon, abuse or negligence of the child as well as all phenomena that may put a child in difficult situations.
10. Analyzing the "homeless children" phenomenon and the national and local projects for social action.
11. Rendering public opinion sensitive about the child's rights, the problem of the child and of the family being in a risky or difficult situation.

H. Education

1. Drafting a program for encouraging school attendance and cutting down dropping out, particularly with the poor segments of the Roma population.

2. Analyzing the possibility of organizing secondary and vocational school institution for the Roma (arts and trades, vocational education, formation and professional reorientation).
3. Drafting and implementing programs for school mediators' training, as well as improvement programs for teachers within the intercultural educational system.
4. Introducing the themes for preventing and fighting discrimination within the general school programs.
5. Introducing teaching modules for the Roma social and economical problems into the training programs of the specialists in public administration, social assistance, health, police and education.
6. Drafting and implementing programs for encouraging Roma parents to participate in school and extra curricular educational process.
7. Adopting legislative measures for Roma support, in order to provide them with incentives as far as education is concerned and in order to promote the Roma for jobs within schools administration (principals and school inspectors).
8. Further granting incentives and subsidized places especially for young Roma who wish to attend universities or colleges.
9. Obligation of the school units and county school-inspectorates to organize permanent catch-up courses for Roma, throughout all the approved forms of education, upon individual or Roma organizations' request.
10. Drawing the attention of the young Roma towards institutions that form civil servants and the staff for public institutions (faculties of social assistance, public administration, medicine, military academies and schools for officers and non-commissioned officers for Police Departments, Ministry of National Defence, RSS etc.).
11. Stimulating the access to education by offering a free lunch to all the pupils in primary and secondary schools.

I. Culture and denominations

1. Organizing and developing networks for capitalization of the Roma cultural heritage, by readapting the traditional jobs to the modern market and developing retail networks markets.

2. Devising cultural programs for Roma identity assertion and for increasing their self-respect.
3. Drafting and implementing support programs for the political, cultural and artistic Roma elite, in order to strengthen and assert the Roma ethnic identity.
4. Supporting cultural events inspired from the Roma folklore and traditional culture.
5. Supporting the development of cultural and information channels for Roma at a national level (TV shows, broadcasts, publications).
6. Founding a musical artistic assembly and a theatre for Roma with performances of translated plays from the world culture, as well as performances of the Roma plays.
7. Establishing a museum for Roma culture and civilization.
8. Financing the projects for multicultural research.
9. Drafting and implementing intercultural educational programs for children and young people.
10. Financing annual awards for artistic creation within the Roma culture.

J. Communication and civic involvement

1. Drawing up a national program for public information and fighting interethnic prejudices in public institutions.
2. Starting a program for fighting discrimination in mass media.
3. Drafting informative programs regarding the fight against discrimination in affording jobs.
4. Starting national programs for informing and educating the Roma, in point of health, education, family, child care, access to the labour market, civil rights, social care etc.
5. Developing programs for civic education and information of the Roma.
6. Bringing into the public attention through mass media of the Roma discrimination cases made by juristic or natural persons, of public or private right.
7. Encouraging mass media to present the situation and the needs of the Roma in the following fields: education, medical-health care, legal status, culture, dwelling in a realistic and unprejudiced manner.

8. Developing and implementing programs for supporting the Roma civic society development, in order to prevent and fight discrimination of the Roma.
9. Organizing and developing programs for inter-cultural education and information of the majority, with the participation of the Roma.
10. Participation of the Roma leaders in the political decision-making process, with impact on the economic and social life of the Roma communities.
11. Disseminating the successful examples in solving the problems within the Roma communities.
12. Periodical evaluation and media presentation of the social status of the Roma communities in Romania.

VIII. Structures:

The following structures are established for the purpose of a proper organization and coordination of the Master Plan of measures for the application of the Strategy of improvement of the Roma condition:

1. The Joint Committee of Implementation and Monitoring
2. Inter-ministerial commissions on Roma
3. County offices on Roma
4. Local experts on Roma affairs

1. The Joint Committee of Implementation and Monitoring

The Joint Committee of Implementation and Monitoring is in charge of the organization, planning, coordination and control of the carrying out of the activities stipulated in the master plan of measures for the application of the strategy of improvement of the Roma condition and it will include the state secretaries in the ministries responsible for the application of the strategy, as well as representatives of different Roma organizations.

The Joint Committee of Implementation and Monitoring will meet once at every three months in order to analyze the progress of the activities.

The Joint Committee of Implementation and Monitoring will be made up of:

- President, the State Secretary for Inter-ethnic Relations (at the present moment this position is held by the president of the National Agency for Roma)
- Members: state secretaries, Roma representatives;
- Executive Secretary, the State Undersecretary for Roma (abolished position)

The executive body of the Joint Committee of Implementation and Monitoring is the National Office on Roma under the Inter-Ethnic Relations Department of the Ministry of Public Information. The ORI role and the functions were transferred to the National Agency for Roma (see below).

2. The Ministerial Commissions on Roma

The Ministerial Commissions on Roma are subordinated to the Joint Committee of Implementation and Monitoring and are in charge of the organization, coordination, planning and control of implementation of the activities in the Plan for the application of the Strategy of improvement of the Roma condition related to the relevant ministry's field of responsibility.

The President of the Ministerial Commission will be represented by the state secretary in the ministry, who is also a member of the Joint Committee of Implementation and Monitoring.

The Commission will also include 4-5 members (who will be heads of departments and experts), whose responsibility is the fulfilment of the tasks devolving upon them from the implementation of the Plan for the application of the Strategy in the ministry's field of activity. One of these experts will be of Roma origin.

3. County Offices on Roma

The county offices on Roma are structures organized at a county level, within the prefect's offices and they are subordinated to the Ministerial Commission on Roma under the Ministry of Local Public Administration (and, more recently, to the National Agency for Roma).

The offices' main responsibilities are the organization, planning and coordination of the activities conducted at a county level for the implementation of the targets and tasks in the Master Plan of measures for the implementation of the Strategy.

The county offices on Roma are subordinated to the Joint Committee of Implementation and Monitoring of the Strategy of improvement of the Roma condition. The county offices on Roma will include 3-4 experts, one of whom must be a member of the Roma community.

4. Local experts on Roma affairs

The local experts on Roma affairs operate under the mayoralties and are responsible for the taking, at a local level, actions for the improvement of the Roma condition. They are both subordinated to the county offices on Roma and to the mayor. The local experts are the chief mediators between the public authorities and the Roma communities.

In those municipalities in which the number of Roma people is at a low level, the office of expert on Roma affairs is performed by a mayoralty official, as a cumulated function.

To the end of concerting the efforts toward the implementation of the targets of the Strategy of improvement of the Roma condition, under the partnership between

the public administration and the civil society, a foundation of public interest on Roma affairs will be established.

Its purpose will be to attract and administrate extra-budgetary funds from the country and abroad, in view of financing programs and projects seeking the implementation of the targets of the Strategy of improvement of the Roma condition.

With a view to evaluating and selecting the projects of implementation of the Strategy, a Commission of Project Evaluation will be set up, consisting of representatives of the public administration, leaders of the Roma community and representatives of the foundation of public interest on Roma affairs.

The setting up of the structures for the implementation and monitoring of the strategy of improvement of the Roma condition will proceed in accordance with the schedule of activities included in the Master Plan of measures for the application of the Strategy of improvement of the Roma condition.

The National Agency for Roma

-a brief presentation -

Following a series of discussions which took place in September 2004 between representatives of the Government and Roma civil society, the Government meeting of October 7 2004 debated and endorsed the Emergency Ordinance No. 78/2004 on the establishment of the National Agency for Roma (NAR) approved by the intermediate of the Law No. 7/2005. Furthermore, the Government Decision No. 1703/2004 approved the organisation, functioning, attributions and responsibilities of this new structure. The Agency is coordinated by the minister for the General Secretariat of the Government and led by a President appointed by the Prime-Minister. The Agency takes over the attributions, staff and budget of the Office for Roma Issues and its Project Implementing Unit.

The Objectives of the National Agency for Roma

The Romanian Government approved the “Strategy for Improving the Condition of the Roma” in April 2001. The “Strategy” aims to facilitate the socio-economic inclusion of the Roma, their participation to cultural and political life and the elimination of discriminating practices and attitudes. Furthermore, the "Strategy" is based on principles of consensus, social utility, decentralization in execution, compatibility of legislation, identity differentiation and equality. The decentralization of responsibility for the implementation of the "Strategy" requires local administration authorities and NGOs/initiative groups to work alongside the central government for its delivery. The Strategy laid down objectives for 10 specific sectors of activity.

The National Agency for Roma is the principal structure - at central level - responsible for the implementation of the "Strategy for Improving the Condition of the Roma". Its main objective is to develop governmental policies and strategies in the sphere of Roma minority protection. To this end, it fulfils four specific functions, as follows:

- **Strategy** - elaboration of policies, strategies and programmes for Roma;
- **Management** of national funded programmes targeting Roma communities;
- **Internal and External representation** on behalf of the Romanian Government;
- **Public Authority** - monitoring and control of measures implemented with regard to Roma minority.

The National Agency for Roma coordinates the financial support for the implementation of the "Strategy for Improving the Condition of the Roma"

The Structure of the National Agency for Roma

The NAR's structure was conceived to be simple and efficient with a view to successfully tackling the complexities of the Roma situation. The Agency is coordinated by the minister for the General Secretariat of the Government and led by a President appointed by the Prime-Minister. The NAR President also chairs the Joint Committee for Implementing and Monitoring the "Strategy for Improving the Condition of the Roma", which includes representatives of all stakeholders. The president is assisted in fulfilling his tasks by a General Director and a Secretary General.

The National Agency for Roma took over the attributions, staff and budget of the former Office for Roma Issues and its Project Implementing Unit.

The central structure of the agency will include a staff of twenty specialists divided in four compartments: International Relations and Civil Society Department, Domestic Relations & Communications Department, Project and Programmes Elaboration Department and the Economic, Administrative, Human Resources and Juridical Department. The PHARE Project Implementing Unit completes the central unit structure of the Agency. In addition, within the NAR also work three European Integration advisers appointed by the General Secretariat of the Government.

In order to ensure efficient implementation of its actions at local level, the NAR will have eight regional offices, one for each development region, as follows: North-East, South-East, South-Muntenia, South-West Oltenia, West, North-West, Centre, and Bucharest-Ilfov.

The National Agency for Roma was designed with the stated goal of increasing the efficiency of development, implementation and monitoring of public policies for improving the condition of the Roma. Its establishment was undertaken with due regard to the opinions and participation of Roma minority representatives, as well as Romania's domestic and international commitments.

The implementation of the "Strategy for Improving the Condition of the Roma"

The Romanian Government approved the "Strategy for Improving the Condition of the Roma" and its 2001-2004 plan of measures in April 2001. Its development and initial implementation received support from the European Union as part of the PHARE 1998 programme (RO9803.01). In 2005 will be approved the 2005-2007 General Plan of Measures.

Improving the institutional framework

The implementation structure of the "Strategy for Improving the Condition of the Roma" is two-prong. At central level, the National Agency for Roma performs functions related to strategy; regulation; management of national and international funds for public policies on the Roma; representation; state authority; monitoring and evaluation of Roma-related activities of all central and local government bodies. The Joint Committee for Monitoring and Implementation of the "Strategy" (JCIM), which includes representatives of all stakeholders, ensures that all sector strategies are coherent and provides support for their implementation. The Ministerial Commissions for Roma, established within each line-ministry, are responsible for the implementation of sector strategies.

At local level, the "Strategy" is being implemented by decentralised services of line-ministries (e.g. County Public Health Departments, County School Inspectorates, County Workforce Employment Agencies etc) and purpose-built structures, the County Offices for Roma and local Roma experts working in city/town halls. They are responsible for identifying the problems confronting Roma communities at local and county level and developing and implementing specific action plans.

In addition to the institutional structures, the "Strategy for Improving the Condition of the Roma" provisioned the establishment of health mediators and school mediators, as interfaces between Roma communities, including those in rural areas, and health and education systems, respectively. Progress has been swift in establishing the health mediator network and, by the end of 2004, thirty-seven County Public Health Departments were employing a total number of 200 mediators. Further consolidation of the network is required through both achieving nationwide coverage and increasing the number of employed mediators. Based upon experience so far, it is estimated that in the medium term the total number of mediators will need to be increased to 300, with a longer term target of over 600 in order to provide an adequate level of coverage. The establishment of school mediator network has been slower due to financial obstacles. Nonetheless, the PHARE 2001 programme, "Access to education for disadvantaged groups, with a special focus on Roma", supported the functioning of a 64 school- mediators network in schools from the 10 participating counties. The process will be extended in the on-going PHARE 2003 programme, "Access to education for disadvantaged groups", which will be implemented until 2006.

Achievements in the field of education

Due to the increasing degradation of the living conditions within the transition period, a worsening of the level of education inside Roma communities can be registered. According to a Research Institute for Quality of Life study (from 2002), 16,9% of Roma children with the age between 7 and 18 have never been to school, and 12 % left the educational system before completing the compulsory educational system. More than a third of Roma (38, 6%) are functionally illiterate.

In contrast with Hungarians who chose to learn in separate schools, the Roma refused categorically this kind of educational arrangement. The problem is that Roma, usually, are living in suburbs and/or in a disreputable neighbourhood, and the schools from these regions, where are also Roma children, are marked by a much lower quality of the learning environment. In schools attended predominantly by Roma children, non-promotion rates reach in 2002 11, 3%, almost three times higher than in the education system overall. Due to the poor level of the educational system, almost 20% of the Roma pupils from the fourth form are functionally illiterate.

A series of policies that aimed to improve the school enrolment at general level were accompanied by a series of specific measures designed for Roma:

- ❖ providing special places for Roma applicants at the entry exam for high school and vocational education system (in the 2003/2004 the number of places provided for Roma in high schools and vocational schools was 1918 and in the 2004/2005 this number rose to approximately 2500 – the counting is in progress, see www.edu.ro)

- ❖ promoting young Roma in faculties and colleges with a goal to form an young Roma intellectual elite:

- providing many subsidized places especially for Roma in faculties and colleges (in the 2003/2004 academic year there were provided 422 places especially for Roma in the faculties and colleges and the level of occupancy of this places was 67%; in the 2004/2005 academic year there were provided 399 places especially for Roma in the faculties and colleges and in the 2005/2006 academic year there will be provided 398 places especially for Roma in the faculties and colleges);
- stimulating the training of school staff that knows Romany;
- establishing classes/ groups within regular schools or pedagogical colleges with the goal to train future Roma school teachers;
- developing courses of initiation/ improvement of the knowledge regarding Romany designed for the Roma or non Roma teachers, qualified and unqualified;

- establishing a Romany language and literature department within the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures, starting with the 1998/1999 academic year;
- organizing courses of open distance learning for school teachers of Romany language.
- ❖ Stimulating studying Romany through special measures:
 - organizing the study of Romany as the mother tongue;
 - encouraging schools to hire qualified teachers to teach Romany or, without those, Roma high school graduates or 10 classes graduates;
 - organizing the first school where the pupils learn Romany;
- ❖ Elaborating programs, school books and auxiliary materials for teaching Romany and Roma history and traditions;
- ❖ Ensuring, in every county school inspectorate, a position of inspector for Roma, that has to monitor the participation of Roma in the educational system. The programme “Access to education for disadvantages groups, with focus on Roma” (Phare 2001, developed within September 2002/ October 2004, with a budget of 8,33 MEURO) developed by the Ministry of Education and Research, was designed to improve the access to education of disadvantages groups, especially Roma, aiming to eliminate the social exclusion and marginalization and to promote the human rights and the equality of chances.

The objectives of the programmes were the following:

- The increase of the accessibility and the improvement of the conditions of the preschool education, with the goal to stimulate the early enrolment within the educational system of the children from disadvantages regions, including Roma, as a essential condition for their social and educational development; stimulating the children to complete the compulsory education (preventing school abandonment);
- Providing the “Second Chance” education for the persons that have not completed the compulsory education (the correction of the abandonment).

The programme had the following institutional results:

- 113 persons were trained on different themes related to the goal of the programme (inclusive education, retouch education, active methods of learning, community development, Roma culture and history);

- 55 Roma persons were registered in the distance learning programme to become Romany educators, schoolteachers and teachers within Roma communities;
- 74 persons from the Roma communities of the project were selected to be trained and to work as school mediator;
- 1732 teachers from the schools within the project were trained on the specific issues of the programme.

In the 10 counties of the programme, in the 2003/ 2004 school year, there was registered an increase of the school attendance, especially Roma (an increase of the school attendance of the Roma pupils from the 74 participant schools- including those from the “Second Chance” programme- with 11, 6 % compared to the previous year, related to an increase of, only, 0, 2 % registered on all pupils from all these schools). The improvement of the school attendance is obvious in the preschool educational system, where to the increase with 12, 3 % registered amongst all the pupils from this educational system within the school units of the project corresponds an increase with 28,2% registered amongst Roma preschool pupils from the same school units.

Achievements in the labour field

In the 2004, through the National plan for employment, 9079 Roma persons were hired and in the first two months of the 2005 other 1530 Roma persons were hired through the same programme and, for the entire year 2005, is foreseen the hiring of 6845 Roma persons.

The main measures that led to the hiring of Roma in the 2004 were:

- hiring through mediation services- 4286 persons;
- hiring through temporary hiring of the workforce in public works of commentary interest- 3819 persons
- hiring by offering allocations to the unemployed persons that are hired before the expiration of the official period of unemployment – 681 persons.

In the 2004, 282 Roma persons were included in professional training courses, 98 of these being hired. The training programmes where most of the Roma had been included were: stonemason dauber, worker in the animal breeding domain, assembler textiles articles, operator industrial confectioner clothes, worker in the plant culture

domain. In the first two months of 2005, 99 Roma persons were included in the professional training courses.

Starting with 2003, the NAE are organizing job exchanges for Roma. In 2004 within this job exchange, 11304 jobs were offered for Roma and 268 jobs for the persons subject of the social marginalization risk. At this job exchange, 9845 Roma persons participated and 2257 were hired. For the 2005 the job exchange for Roma is envisaged to take place in 13 of May.

The main problems that the county agencies for employment are facing regarding the active measures for Roma are:

- Roma are not recognising themselves as belonging to this ethnic group
- Roma persons are harder to mobilize to participate at the professional training programmes;
- Even within those that register themselves at this training programmes the level of abandonment is high;
- The lack of initial education (4 or 8 grades) blocks the access of Roma to the professional qualification programmes.

Improving the dialogue and strengthening the relationships between public institutions and Roma NGOs

The governmental institutions are constantly preoccupied to increase cooperation and trust between the Government and Roma civil society representatives**.

The Department for Interethnic Relations / National for Roma Issues, now National Agency for Roma organized, in April 2004, the reunion titled 'Roma Inclusion: a Common Goal for a Common Benefit', which was attended by representatives of Roma NGOs and public bodies: Romanian Parliament, Romanian Government, the Presidential Administration, the National Council for Combating Discrimination, European Commission Delegation, Embassies, OSCE/ODHIR.

The objectives of the reunion included the involvement of Roma organizations in a strategic and effective partnership with international bodies with a view to

** A list of the most important and active Romanian Roma NGOs is enclosed in the annex

cooperating for the socio-economic development of the Roma and the consolidation of Roma organizations' partnership with the Government.

From 5 until 7 November 2004, DIR/ORI, in partnership with Roma NGO 'Agency for Community Development «Impreuna» (Together), organized a work-meeting of Roma organizations: "Roma Civil Society Involvement in Public Policies at National and International Level".

This meeting's objectives listed the informing of participants on the status of the national and European initiatives concerning the Roma, the opening of a first phase of consultation regarding the activities for 2005-2007, the analysis of the DIR/ORI's Plan of Measures for the "Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015", the setting up of the Council for Roma Organizations in Romania - a network of NGOs with the common mission of promoting Roma communities' interests, the nomination of Roma representatives to the JCIM of the 'Strategy for Improving the Condition of the Roma' and its related Ministerial Committees.

In the 10 of December 2004, the National Agency for Roma together with the United Nations Development Programme organized, at the Palace of the Parliament, the work meeting of the Romanian Roma NGO-s "the Involvement of Roma civil society in the public policies regarding the social inclusion and the respect of the human rights".

At this meeting the main goal was the consultation of the Roma NGO-s regarding the elaboration of the Romanian documents for the "Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015", and also the presentation of the Strategy of the National Agency for Roma regarding the observance of human rights, making more efficient the communication and collaboration between the Roma civil society and the National Agency for Roma. At this meeting were invited representatives of active Roma NGO-s within the social domain, a series of observers, representatives of international bodies that are present in Romania (the European Commission Delegation, the World Bank- Romania, UNICEF and OSI Bucharest), but also from relevant public institutions(MLSSF, NCCD, APSIC, the Romanian Presidency).

Roma representative NGOs and initiative groups play a fundamental role in improving the situation of the Roma. They are being represented in the JCIM and constantly consulted by government authorities in drafting new approaches and policies. In 2004, three special work-meetings were organized and attended by Roma civil society representatives and government authorities.

Public programmes and projects for Roma in Romania

Programmes and projects already developed

- A brief presentation -

Between 2000-2004, a series of programmes have been financed and implemented, at a national level, aiming at a general improvement of the situation of the Roma communities. Briefly, the most important programmes co-financed on the one hand by the Romanian Government and, on the other hand by EU, World Bank and UNDP funds are:

- **The 1998 PHARE Programme**, RO9801.01 by the intermediate of which it was supported the elaboration of the National Strategy for Improving the Condition of the Roma but also, a number of 40 NGOs' pilot-projects (selected from a total number of 334 applications) were financed: 11 came from the Roma NGOs, 12 from other NGOs, 13 from the part of the local municipalities and 5 from the other public institutions;
- **The 2000 PHARE Programme**, RO0004.02.02 "The Civil Society Development 2000" through which an amount of 36 projects were financed (from a total amount of 300 initial applications) covering the following fields of intervention: public administration and local development, health, social assistance, communication and civic participation;
- **The 2001 PHARE Programme**, RO0104.02, financed by the EU (7 MEURO) and the Romanian Government with (a contribution of 1.3 MEURO co-finance support) "Access to education for Disadvantaged Groups with focus on Roma" was already implemented in 10 counties by the Ministry of Education and Research and now it is developing its set of activities in other 15 counties by the intermediate of **the 2003 PHARE programme**, RO03005 551.01.02, „Acces to Education for disadvantaged groups" (its total amount covers 11.33 MEURO);
- **The 2004 PHARE 2002 RO 2002/000-586.01.02** called „Support for National Strategy for Improving the Condition of the Roma" had an amount

of 56.65 BN. ROL (1,6 MEURO) and it was provided and managed within a governmental programme entitled „Partnership for Roma Support 2003”. The programme targeted the local public authorities working on the improvement of Roma condition and used a project-based approach. By the intermediate of this programme were financed

- 27 projects in the fields of housing and small infrastructure, income generating activities and field acquisition for developing agricultural activities;
- On 6 September 2004, **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Romania launched the first pilot Social Support Center for Roma Communities in Marasesti, Vrancea County**. The project is supported by the Swedish Government and implemented in partnership with the Government of Romania, through the Department for Inter-Ethnic Relations/Office for Roma Issues (the current National Agency for Roma), the Prefect’s Office of Vrancea County, the Mayor’s Office in Mărășești, and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The project supports the implementation of the Government Strategy for Improving the Situation of the Roma. The project aims at stimulating and involving the Roma in identifying and solving the problems they are facing so that they can become an active part of their own social integration process. This project also takes actions to eliminate the prejudices and negative stereotypes aiming to increase the access of the Roma to the public services.

Programmes and projects in progress

- 1. The Project Implementation Unit (PIU) within the National Agency for Roma is currently implementing the PHARE Programme 2002/000-586.01.02, “Support to the Strategy for improving the Roma condition”,** totalling 7.6 MEURO (including the 1.6 MEURO Romanian Government contribution). The programme has two major components: the first one, totalling 1.2 MEURO, aims at strengthening the institutional capacity of the structures implementing the "Strategy for Improving the Condition of the Roma" and to build active partnerships between Roma representatives and public institutions in order to be able to jointly design and implement projects in the following fields: housing and small infrastructure, vocational training, income generating activities and access to health services; the second component, totalling 4.8 MEURO, was set to offer financial support for the projects proposed by the previously trained local authorities and Roma organizations and other stakeholders in order to sustain their calls for proposals in the fields of action above-mentioned. Thus, there were selected and financed a number of 65 applications from a total amount of 531 proposed projects as follows: 17 projects in the health field (647.196 Euros), 34 projects in the field of vocational training and income-generating activities (1.482.908 Euros) and 14 projects in the field of housing and infrastructure (2.189.834 Euros).

In addition, the Phare Implementing Units within the National Agency for Roma and the Ministry of Education and research has successfully developed a new programme to be co-financed within the PHARE Multiannual Programme 2004-2006, minorities sector that will promote actions in the following fields of action (stipulated in Strategy): community development, housing, education, healthcare, communication and civil involvement. The Multiannual Phare programme 2004-2006 has two priorities: “Strengthening the institutional capacity and partnership building in order to improve the Roma living Condition and their image” and “Improving the access to education for the disadvantaged groups”

2. “Activities of monitoring and implementation the strategy for improving the Roma situation 2004” programme.

According to Government Decision no. 1514/07.10.2004, the UNDP is responsible for the implementation of the “*Activities of monitoring and implementation the strategy for improving the Roma situation 2004*” programme.

Within this programme, the local authorities in partnership with the Roma NGOs and/or the initiative groups from the Roma communities have submitted 220 applications out of which 83 were eligible. The committee composed of representatives of GSG, NAR and UNDP, in charge with the evaluation and selection of the projects selected 17 applications, according to the evaluation grid. These projects were financed and are currently being implemented rigorously by UNDP project. Following is a brief description of each of them:

1.”Rehabilitation of access road to the Roma community in the Sadu village”

Project submitted by the Sadu Town Hall, Sibiu County

Main activity of the project: infrastructure, road rehabilitation

UNDP/SGG financing: 3.698.000.000 Lei

Beneficiaries: 68 Roma families

2.”Together we shall succeed – strengthening the partnership between the local administration of Jimbolia and the Roma community. Methane gas supplying and rehabilitation of water supply system for 40 families”

Project submitted by the Jimbolia Town Hall, Timis County

Main activity of the project: infrastructure, gas and drinking water

UNDP/SGG financing: 3.980.072.143 Lei

Beneficiaries: 40 Roma families

3."Rehabilitation of Elementary School no.13 Craiova"

Project submitted by the Craiova Town Hall, Dolj County

Main activity of the project: infrastructure, school rehabilitation

UNDP/SGG financing: 3.595.312.800 Lei

Beneficiaries: 560 Roma children

4."Street paving in the Modruzeni area, Marasesti"

Project submitted by Marasesti Town Hall, Vrancea County

Main activity of the project: infrastructure, road paving

UNDP/SGG financing: 3.605.000.000 Lei

Beneficiaries: 1 800 Roma ethnics

5."Closer to school"

Project submitted by the Frumusita Town Hall, Galati County

Main activity of the project: infrastructure, rehabilitation of a 100 year-old school

UNDP/SGG financing: 2.982.288.816 Lei

Beneficiaries: 116 Roma pupils

6." They also deserve better living conditions"

Project submitted by Panciu Town Hall, Vrancea County

Main activity of the project: infrastructure, sewerage and drinking water supply

UNDP/SGG financing: 2.900.000.000 Lei

Beneficiaries: 500 Roma ethnics

7.”The chance”

Project submitted by Sânpetru de Câmpie Town hall, Mures County

Main activity of the project: infrastructure, road paving and refurbishment of the socio-cultural centre

UNDP/SGG financing: 3.700.000.000 Lei

Beneficiaries: 500 Roma ethnics

8.”Paving works for communal road DC 163A, Teisoru, Puscasi”

Project submitted by Puscasi Town Hall, Vaslui County

Main activity of the project: infrastructure, road paving

UNDP/SGG financing: 3.791.884.400 Lei

Beneficiaries: 592 Roma ethnics

9.”ZooFarm – cattle farm”

Project submitted by Satulung Town Hall, Baia Mare County;

Main activity of the project: income-generating activity

UNDP/SGG financing: 2.784.946.250 Lei

Beneficiaries: 50 Roma ethnics

10. ”Creating civilized living conditions for the Roma community of Dorohoi by developing the infrastructure and access to public utilities”

Project submitted by Dorohoi Town Hall, Botosani County

Main activity of the project: infrastructure, connecting the social housing to public utilities

UNDP/SGG financing: 3.982.554.000 Lei

Beneficiaries: 36 Roma families

11.”Production unit – osier basket manufacturing”

Project submitted by Vatra Dornei Town Hall, Suceava County

Main activity of the project: income- generating activity

UNDP/SGG financing: 2.259.908.784 Lei

Beneficiaries: 32 Roma ethnics

12.”Blacksmith-tinsmithing section –Speranta Viitor”

Project submitted by Bârlad Town Hall, Vaslui County

Main activity of the project: income-generating activity

UNDP/SGG financing: 2.382.000.000 Lei

Beneficiaries: 24 qualified persons, 10 employees

13.”Medical unit and nursery school - the Bora Roma community, Slobozia, Ialomita County ”

Project submitted by Slobozia, Ialomita County

Main activity of the project: infrastructure

UNDP/SGG financing: 3.977.000.000 Lei

Beneficiaries: 1512 Roma ethnics

14. "Equipment for the agricultural association of the Roma from Cuza Voda" County

Project submitted by the Cuza Voda Town Hall, Constanta

Main activity of the project: income-generating activity

UNDP/SGG financing: 2.772.926.150 Lei

Beneficiaries: 40 Roma ethnics

15. "Electricity-an aspiration in the 21 st century"

Project submitted by the Jilava Town Hall, Ilfov County

Main activity of the project: infrastructure, electricity connection

UNDP/SGG financing: 3.600.000.000 Lei

Beneficiaries: 170 Roma families

16. "Paving works on communal Roma road, Bosanci, Suceava County"

Project submitted by Bosanci Town Hall, Suceava County

Main activity of the project: infrastructure, road paving

UNDP/SGG financing: 3.800.000.000 Lei

Beneficiaries: 240 Roma ethnics

17. "School refurbishment for Roma community"

Project submitted by the 2 nd District Bucharest City Hall

Main activity of the project: infrastructure, social rehabilitation

UNDP/SGG financing: 2.907.343.012 Lei

Beneficiaries: 320 Roma pupils

Project expected outcomes:

- Implementing the Measures Plan of the strategy through supporting the initiatives developed by the local authorities and local public institutions together with Roma representatives.
- Encouraging active participation of Roma in the economic, social, educational, cultural and political life of Romanian society.
- Identifying and supporting the community intervention projects in partnership with local authorities and Roma organizations.

The project ensures that equal opportunities are provided to women both in the management of the project and in its employment promotion activities.

With regard to sustainability of project results, it is expected that community level assistance and support mechanisms for the Roma will be established. The capacity developed through efforts in the project should contribute to the Government's ability to address key developmental priorities with regard to the Roma population, and to implement national strategies and initiatives regarding poverty reduction and social inclusion.

3. The Decade for Roma Inclusion

At the 2003 Budapest conference, "Roma in an Expanding Europe: Challenges for the Future", the heads of nine governments from eight countries from Central and Eastern Europe agreed on the programme "Decade for Roma Inclusion 2005-2015", initiated by the World Bank and the Open Society Institute. The programme seeks to reduce the opportunity and living standard gap between the Roma and the majority population and has been in the planning phase throughout 2004. The Decade was officially launched in Romania on the 9th of February 2005 just a week after its international official launch in Sofia, Bulgaria. Its actions target four priority domains: education, health, employment and housing. Romania is one of the participant countries and has already developed specific action plans in the priority domains which will need to be carried out successfully. The total value of the entire

program carried out in Romania is estimated at 50 Million USD (a loan offered to the Romanian Government by World Bank, subject to subsequent negotiations).

In parallel with the activities of the 'Decade for Roma Inclusion 2005-2015', the Open Society Institute and World Bank set up a "Roma Education Fund" from donations of both public and private donors. The Fund will award grants for governmental and NGO education programmes, including specific action under the 'Decade for Roma Inclusion 2005-2015'. In the case of Romania, an initial evaluation of Roma education needs revealed an estimated 150 million USD required over the next 10 years (15 million per year).

The International Steering Committee for the Roma Decade held, on 15 of April this year, its fifth session. Accordingly with these sessions' decisions, Romania was appointed to assure, starting with the 1st of July 2005 and for a year time-period, the Presidency and the International Secretariat of the Roma Decade. Thus, for the Romanian Government and for the Roma Living in Romania, there are new opportunities opened and new challenges launched to be faced for the future...

Conclusions

The successful implementation of the “Strategy for Improving the Condition of the Roma” requires further commitment from all stakeholders and the development of absorption capacity for future EU and international financing in this field of action but also requires strong engagements from the part of public (central and local) public institutions and NGOs in the process of elaborating and implementing reliable policies in this sector. The National Agency for Roma is placing a great emphasis on empowering Roma communities by facilitating their access to know-how and financial resources to implement integrated projects. These projects should address the multiple problems that local communities are facing and enable them to contribute directly and decisively to the improvement of their living standards.

The programmes and projects addressed and implemented to improve the Roma condition people also strengthen the partnerships between local authorities, Roma NGOs and the local communities, raising the level of the sensitivity of all the actors involved.

The National Agency for Roma makes strong and visible efforts to create a functional institutional and legislative framework for the development of partnerships between the representatives of public institutions, NGOs, local communities in accordance with the local development principles applied within the EU space, and in a favourable, tolerant, and opened social environment for all the members of the Romanian society, irrespective of their ethnic origin.