

**REPORT**  
**from the visit of Local Authorities and Roma Local Experts from Albania**  
**to cities and municipalities in Serbia**  
**15-19 April 2013, Serbia**

Thirteen representatives of local governments, Roma experts and Young Roma Professionals from Albania participated in a study visit to Serbia on 15-19 April 2013 to learn more about good practices for Roma integration being introduced in several Serbian municipalities. Specifically, BPRI wanted to show the role of Roma Co-ordinators in different municipalities - depending on the local context, they may be working on issues of civil registration, housing, education and other issues.

During the visit, participants met with municipal officials from Kragujevac, Pančevo, Stara Pazova and Novi Sad to share experiences and insights. The study visit enabled participants from Albania to visit different types of Roma settlements and think critically on the implementation of programmes that can be introduced by local authorities.

Participants also learned more about local action plans that have been created by Serbian municipalities in co-operation with Roma communities and how they are being implemented. Six local authorities and Roma experts from Albania are currently being supported by BPRI in preparing their own local action plans for promoting Roma integration. The study visit provided an opportunity to learn about the different methodologies and mechanisms involved in the planning and implementation of these plans. While much still remains to be done in Serbia, some innovative solutions, such as the introduction of Roma Co-ordinators at the local government level, are helping to improve Roma access to services and living conditions.

**Tuesday, 16 April 2013**

**City of Novi Sad:**

The Roma population in Novi Sad composes quite a considerable percentage of the whole population of the city (3,636 Roma according to the 2011 census, though unofficial estimates are around 10,000 persons). The city itself pays special attention to the design

and implementation of policies targeting the Roma community's needs. They designed a special programme of assistance to children at risk. A shelter is being run by the City for children and women at risk and victims of domestic violence. The City is also managing a station for homeless people. Emergency services offered by the municipality include meals for poor people and an annual allotment of wood for heating. There are subsidies for electricity and water bills for those receiving social welfare. Pre-school education is provided for free to all children. Special health examinations were organized for people living in a particularly unsanitary Roma settlement and a high number of illnesses were identified.

There is an increasing number of Roma who need assistance for improving their housing situation. Currently 60 Roma families are on the waiting list for social housing in Novi Sad. Before 1997 social housing was delivered without any fee to Roma families, but from that year on, the Law on Social Housing changed and apartments are no longer awarded on a permanent basis.



The public works programme is also applied by the City and Roma are participating. According to the local authorities, all Roma in the city of Novi Sad have health insurance and they receive health services.

### **Visit to the Roma settlement “Bangladesh” in Novi Sad:**

The meeting was followed by a visit to the Roma settlement “Bangladesh”, where the delegation had the opportunity to see very difficult living conditions. The neighbourhood is similar to the Roma camp in “Shkoza” in Tirana, Albania. Approximately 60 Roma families live in Bangladesh.

In 2007-2008, the project *Sustainable Renewal of Roma Settlements* supported Roma families to upgrade their housing units by improving their roofs and toilets, as well as constructing collective septic tanks, additional rooms and bathrooms. This model included Roma participation in the works. However, the common septic tank is not working because of misunderstandings and difficulties in common maintenance among Roma families.



### Visit to Roma settlement “Adice” in Novi Sad:

The settlement of “Adice” shows another example of how collaboration between Roma communities, NGOs and local authorities can result in a successful model of improving Roma living conditions. The Roma Resource Centre offered to Roma families assistance in construction materials and training, while Roma families upgraded themselves their houses by improving toilets and roofs.



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### Municipality of Stara Pazova:

Representatives of the municipality of Stara Pazova explained to the Albanian authorities their model of opening a position for a Roma co-ordinator in their local administration. They explained the benefits of including the position of Roma co-ordinators in their organigram. The most important benefit was co-ordination among all sectors at the local level to provide assistance to Roma individuals and families.

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### Wednesday, 17 April 2013

The Roma Assistance Programme is supporting Ministries of Education, Health and Human Rights with regards to implementation of the National Roma Strategy specifically by supporting the positions of Roma Health Mediators, Pedagogical Assistants and municipal Roma Co-ordinators. This programme supports the decentralization of Roma issues in Serbia. It enabled the OSCE Mission to Serbia to extend its support at the local level, including small grants and the capacity building of municipal officials.

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### **Municipality of Pancevo:**

The municipality of Pancevo is one of the first cities to adopt a Local Action Plan for Roma Integration. This strategic document oversees four main areas of intervention: education, employment, health and housing.

The Roma co-ordinator has a specific unit at the One-Stop-Shop centre. All the claims by Roma community members were introduced to her and she was following their co-ordination within the institution. She worked primarily on civil registration, especially registration of unregistered children to enable them access to public services. Pancevo has adopted a segregated budget for dealing with Roma issues - this budget is specified as per the lines and objectives of the Roma Local Action Plan.

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**Thursday, 18 April 2013**

### **City of Kragujevac:**

The position of Roma Co-ordinator has been made permanent within the City Administration. The Roma Co-ordinator has to fulfil the same requirements as other public servants in the City (has to have the same educational and professional background). To date, the most successful areas of the Roma Co-ordinator's intervention include social protection, social insurance, employment and education. He also collaborates with Roma NGOs. The municipality finds the position of Roma Co-ordinator very beneficial in the framework of provision of services towards Roma individuals and families.

The NGO Roma Information Centre works on improving the quality of life of the Roma through exercising rights to education, improvement of social, cultural and political life. Primary activities of the RIC include the promotion of activism among women and youth, as well as networking and information sharing within Roma organizations with the aim of development of Roma civil society sector in Serbia.

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