

## Report from the Third Meeting of the Self-Governance Working Group (SGWG)

22-24 October 2013, Skopje

### Background

At the first meeting of the Self-Governance Working Group, the local self-governments participating in the project “Best Practices for Roma Integration” identified data collection and policy monitoring as one of the key topics for regional exchange. This meeting attempted to address these broad issues by focusing on good practices from the municipalities of Stip and Prilep in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, while also drawing on national data collection systems. Special attention was paid to the work of Roma Researchers from the Western Balkans who presented their studies on the gap between policies and their implementation.

### Participants

There were 23 municipalities present at the meeting with a representation of some 30 civil servants. Often the non-Roma civil servant would be joined by a Roma co-ordinator, thus strengthening their knowledge and relations. Some 18 NGOs sent a representative, while 11 representatives from Ministries of Human and Minority rights were present as well as 3 representatives of Statistical Bureaus. In total there were 97 participants from the Western Balkan region present.

### Notes

#### 1. National data collection and policy monitoring systems

- The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – “*Evidence-based Advocacy: Findings of the nationwide household survey on the perception of discrimination among Roma*” – presented by Marijan Ponjavic, State Councillor, Ombudsman’s Office

A total of 1,200 persons were interviewed in the municipalities of Kumanovo, Prilep, Stip, Suto Orizari, Tetovo and Gostivar. A vast majority (79%) of the ethnic Roma respondents stated that they themselves or a close member of their families, a friend or a co-worker were subject to discrimination. The majority of respondents who were subject to discrimination live in the municipality of Suto Orizari (96%), and most of them work in the private sector (88%). Interestingly, there is a difference in the perception of discrimination based on the religious background of the respondents. Namely, 58% of Christian respondents believe that discrimination based on personal or social status occurs often or very often, while only 30% of Muslim respondents agree with this statement. There was also a pronounced difference in the percentage of discrimination between Kumanovo and Tetovo (fairly high) and Prilep and Stip (fairly low). The reason why this is so should be checked and incorporated in the study.

- “*Approaching 2015: Tracking the results of the Decade for Roma Inclusion*” – presented by Orhan Usein, Programme Co-ordinator, Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation

All participating governments are obliged to submit progress reports, which are published on the Secretariat website. Of late also civil society is submitting reports and it is interesting to compare reports submitted by governments and civil society. Roma Decade Focal Points also play a key role in informing the Secretariat about the latest developments in the field.

Ideally, all data collected should be evaluated by a committee and preferably accompanied by a country visit. Following a dialogue with civil society, the committee should provide recommendations to the government. The Roma Decade currently has an incomplete monitoring framework (the EU

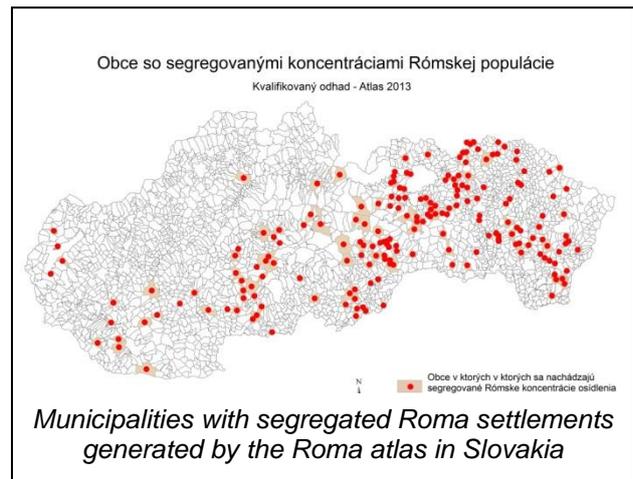
platform faces a similar problem) because there is no evaluation committee and no space for official shadow reports.

In addition, the Decade Intelligence initiative aims to collect good and bad practices and publish this information online (<http://romadecade.org/about-the-decade-decade-good-practices>). Points are awarded for different aspects of the project, including its contribution to reducing the gap between Roma and non-Roma. Five projects will be evaluated per country (through interviews with beneficiaries, stakeholders and implementers) - at least one project per priority area and they will focus on the 'worst' and the 'best' project. This means that evaluation reports will be published for 60 projects.

- Slovakia – “Atlas of Roma communities” presented by Jaroslav Kling, UNDP Regional Centre in Bratislava

This exercise aimed to provide information at the level of Roma communities (not individuals as is the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina). Through co-operation with Roma NGOs and other local partners, the project aimed to collect more accurate data about different characteristics of Roma settlements and communities.

Data was collected about 804 Roma settlements in 584 municipalities. Out of all Roma dwellings, a water pipeline can be used by 73% of households. Research also showed that 45% of dwellings are not connected at all to sewage, septic or domestic wastewater treatment equipment. The system used for data collection also enables the creation of different maps, such as the one pictured here.



- Albania – “Monitoring the implementation of the National Strategy for Roma Inclusion” – presented by Jaroslav Kling, UNDP Regional Centre in Bratislava

Albania is in the process of developing a system for monitoring the implementation of the National Strategy for Roma Inclusion. The first step in this process was to agree on indicators to be used, which was already completed in co-operation between NGOs, academia / think-tanks and government representatives. It is essential to include all stakeholders in this stage, in order to ensure relevant data is collected and reported on regularly. The system was then moved online and will enable the government to generate periodic reports on the implementation of the Strategy, as well as to identify gaps where more intensive action is needed.

Code	Name	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Ministry of Education	1.1.1 Statistics that provide data on education situation of Roma community, developed	0	0	0	0	0	0
	1.2.1.1 Number of teachers/specialists trained to counsel Roma parents	132	30	0	0	0	0
	1.2.1.2 Number of teachers/specialists trained to counsel Roma parents female	0	0	0	0	0	0
	1.2.1.3 Number of teachers/specialists trained to counsel Roma parents male	0	0	0	0	0	0
	1.2.2 Number of awareness raising campaigns run by the Regional Education Directorates with Roma parents	54	0	0	0	0	0
	1.2.3.1 Number of Roma parents participating awareness raising campaigns run by the Regional Education Directorates	401	0	0	0	0	0
	1.2.3.2 Number of Roma parents participating awareness raising campaigns run by the Regional Education Directorates female	0	0	0	0	0	0
	1.2.3.3 Number of Roma parents participating awareness raising campaigns run by the Regional Education Directorates male	0	0	0	0	0	0
	1.3.1.1 Number of Roma children enrolled in kindergartens	659	650	660	780	841	890
	1.3.1.2 Number of Roma children enrolled in kindergartens female	0	0	0	0	0	0
	1.3.1.3 Number of Roma children enrolled in kindergartens male	0	0	0	0	0	0
	1.3.2.1 Number of Roma children enrolled in the preparatory classes in kindergarten	36	0	0	0	0	0
	1.3.2.2 Number of Roma children enrolled in the preparatory classes in kindergarten female	0	0	0	0	0	0

- Bosnia and Herzegovina – “Data collection mechanism” presented by Zoran Husanovic, Head of IT Department, Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees

Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees introduced an online system for collecting information about Roma communities in locations throughout the country (for now, focusing on municipalities with the largest Roma populations). Information is provided by Centres for Social Work who were also trained for this when the system was still being developed. Information includes personal data about individual beneficiaries, but generic reports can also be generated to show trends. The Ministry uploads basic details for every project funded from the public budget and the Centres for Social Work nominate beneficiaries from their records (their main characteristics were recorded including age, gender, number of children, etc). Proposed beneficiaries are approved by the Ministry, but they may also be declined if not deemed eligible. This enables the Ministry to ensure better co-ordination of Roma-related projects and prevent the so-called “double-dipping” when a person may apply for the same assistance at different places. The Ministry is now raising awareness about this system and working with NGOs to add their projects in the system (currently, this is optional).

**ERP Evidencija Romskih Potreba** | Ministarstvo za ljudska prava i izbjeglice Bosne i Hercegovine

Početna Domaćinstva Članovi Projekti Izvještaji Obavijesti Kontakt Korisnik Pomoć Dobro došli Zenica TestUser Odjava

**Član (Zenica)** Lista

Parametri pretrage

Datum rođenja od:  Datum rođenja do:

Traži Poništi pretragu

Prikaži 10 zapisa

ID	Ime (Roditelj) Prezime	DID	Datum rođenja	Adresa
13528	Arsić (Elvir) Musić	19156	30.10.1997	BiH 26
13274	Arsić (Međed) Tahirović	19064	1.3.2003	Kamnička 17, B.ša
13523	Arsić (Međed) Musić	19156	28.6.1955	Var Kulina 2
13516	Arsić (Elvir) Mukić	19153	5.2.1981	op Banloz
13525	Arsić (Elvir) Musić	19155	28.9.1981	Var Kulina 2
5602	Arsić (Elvir) Mukić	19118	22.8.2008	Bar
15386	Adžemović (Međed) Džerferović	19129	10.2.2005	13
13233	Adžemović (Međed) Osmanović	18943	4.7.2006	P.ovići
5418	Arsić (Elvir) Rasvalić	18997	25.5.1992	1-a
16313	Arsić (Elvir) Mrgić	18938	10.11.1984	Ve. udije Građeše 21

1 do 10 od 1,036 Zapisa - Bosanski

Prvi Nazad 1 2 3 4 5 Naprijed Posljednji

- Serbia – “Participation of Roma in the 2011 census” – presented by Jasna Milankovic, Head of Group for Census Preparation, Census Department, Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia

Preparatory activities for the census were implemented by the Statistical Office in cooperation with the Ministry for Human and Minorities’ Rights, the National Council of the Roma national minority and the Office for the Inclusion of the Roma of Vojvodina. The Statistical Office trained 80 Roma people for active participation in organizational preparations and field work for the census. A pilot census was conducted in 23 municipalities in which, according to the 2002 census results, the Roma population was most predominant. When the time came for the 2011 census, 638 enumeration areas in which Roma settlements were located (in 150 municipalities), the Statistical Office recruited about 150 coordinators and about 550 additional enumerators. These people had to also describe the location of Roma settlements, some of which are built illegally and do not have proper addresses. This was all accompanied by a promotional campaign and the number of Roma that registered increased with almost 40,000 people compared to the 2002 Census.

## 2. Experience in data collection by local self-governments

- Serbia – “Monitoring the implementation of the Roma Inclusion Strategy in the City of Krusevac” – presented by Zorana Pavlovic, Co-ordinator for Roma Issues

The City of Krusevac has over 3,500 Roma living in 16 settlements with various infrastructural conditions. In 2009, the City adopted a Strategy for Improving the Position of Roma for the period of 2009-2011 (subsequently extended until 2014). The City established a Council which leads the implementation of the Strategy as well as several technical committees overseeing specific fields.

Every year, funding from the City budget is allocated to different measures specified in the Strategy and is allocated through public calls for projects. While realization of committed funds is around 50%, many valuable activities have been implemented such as the development of cadastre-topography plan for Roma settlements, various cultural activities, etc. The Council and its committees submit regular reports to the City Council and the Mayor on the progress of these activities.

- The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – *“Mapping of Roma settlements in Stip and Prilep”* – presented by Tatjana Peric, consultant

The Roma Information Centres (RICs) in the municipalities of Stip and Prilep conducted a survey focusing on the housing conditions of Roma, as well as some other aspects of their life (civil registration, education and others). Through this exercise, the RICs strengthened their capacities for data collection and analysis. Thanks to the survey, it was established, among other things, that only around 40% of houses have running water and approx.. 30% have a toilet. Just over a half of Roma have legal documents showing ownership of their houses – and most dwellings are owned by Roma men (82% in Prilep, 75% in Stip). The RICs will use this data for advocating for new measures in their respective municipalities and developing new projects in this field.

### 3. Policy-Practice Gap Studies developed by Roma Researchers with support of the BPRI project

BPRI supported Roma Researchers from the Western Balkans in developing policy-practice gap studies. The Roma Researchers selected the topic and settlement where the research was conducted, and they received methodological advice from Research Advisors (members of academia, think tanks in the region). Four studies have been completed to date:

- *“Healthcare services for Roma communities in the commune of Shushicë, Vlorë”* (Albania) written by Bledar Taho with advisory support from Alban Nelaj

The study found that 79% of the 175 Roma surveyed in the commune of Shushicë, in southwest Albania, do not have a health card, and this was identified as the main obstacle for their access to health services, thus having a negative impact on their health. The report also provides an overview of Roma living conditions in Shushicë, with 77% of respondents assessing public sanitation in their neighbourhood as being poor or very poor. Three-quarters of the interviewees were dissatisfied with the waste-collection services.

The report is available in English, Albanian and Romani at [http://www.bpri-odihr.org/single-news/items/PPGS\\_Albania.html](http://www.bpri-odihr.org/single-news/items/PPGS_Albania.html).

- *“Possession of identity documents as a requirement of social integration of young Roma in the settlement of Veliki Rit in Novi Sad”* (Serbia) written by Marina Simeunovic with advisory support from Svetlana Djurdjevic-Lukic

The study addresses civil registration problems, paying special attention to the impact this issue has on young people looking to get a job, start a family or access services. The recommendations coming out of her research include that national authorities simplify procedures for registration and that greater efforts are made towards sensitizing civil-registration officials to the needs and concerns of the Roma. The report notes that the digitization of data held in registry offices could accelerate the procedure for obtaining identity documents and reduce the costs.

The report is available in English, Serbian and Romani at [http://www.bpri-odihr.org/single-news/items/From\\_exclusion\\_to\\_inclusion\\_through\\_identification.html](http://www.bpri-odihr.org/single-news/items/From_exclusion_to_inclusion_through_identification.html).

- *“Access to Housing and Public Services for Repatriated Communities in Fushë Kosovë / Kosovo Polje”* with Muhamet Arifi as the Researcher and Adrian Zeqiri as the Research Advisor

Many Roma returning to Kosovo\* are unable to go back to their former homes, or are not being provided with adequate homes, and this is limiting the effectiveness of government repatriation policies. Half of the 61 repatriated Roma interviewed as part of the study said they were unable to return to the areas they had lived in before they left. Even for those who could go back to the areas where they had previously lived, the experience of returning home had been difficult. Many could not afford the rent for these properties. Others were forced to live in empty homes abandoned by other people who had left Kosovo, only to be forced to relocate again when the property owners also returned.

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\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/99 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

The report is available in English, Albanian, Serbian and Romani at [http://www.bpri-odihr.org/single-news/items/Repatriation\\_before\\_reintegration.html](http://www.bpri-odihr.org/single-news/items/Repatriation_before_reintegration.html).

- *Registration and Possession of Personal Identification Documents as Preconditions for Better Education of Roma People, through Case Studies of the Settlements of Topaana and Sredorek in Skopje and Kumanovo*, written by Ajnur Sulejman with advisory support from Vladimir Misev

The study found that shortage of money is the key obstacle in preventing Roma from obtaining personal identification documents and this, in turn, prevents their integration into mainstream society. One-third of respondents who had problems in obtaining identification documents, and 95 per cent of them said they were too poor to apply for identification documents. Thirty-six interviewees said that insufficient assistance from the authorities in the application procedures also prevented them and many other Roma from obtaining personal identification documents.

The report is available in English, Macedonian and Romani at [http://www.bpri-odihr.org/single-news/items/MAC\\_Policy\\_Practice\\_gap\\_study.html](http://www.bpri-odihr.org/single-news/items/MAC_Policy_Practice_gap_study.html).

### Field visits to the municipalities of Stip and Prilep

**Stip** is located in the Eastern part of the country and has a total of 47,796 inhabitants. The Roma community in Stip officially numbers 2,295 persons, or 4.59% of the total population, according to the most recent census in 2002, however local activists believe the actual number of local Roma to be around 5,000. Most of the Stip Roma live in two settlements – the Radanski Pat and Kosovska streets, located on the outskirts of the town. Dwellings are a combination of solid houses and shacks, and basic infrastructure is selectively available. To address the needs of the local Roma community, the Municipality of Stip employs two community officers of Roma ethnicity, and hosts the local Roma Information Center (RIC) office. The first Roma Local Action Plans in Stip were developed for the period of 2006-2010. They are now being revised and updated for the next four-year period.

The municipality of **Prilep** is located in the central part of the country and its Roma population mostly lives in three major settlements: Trizla 1, Trizla 2 and Tri Bagremi. The first two have a mix of various infrastructure conditions and housing types, ranging from substandard shacks to modern solid houses with all necessary amenities. Tri Bagremi, on the other hand, is smaller and has difficult living conditions. According to the State Statistical Office, 4,333 persons of Roma origin live in Prilep, yet unofficial estimates place these figures in the range of probably 6-8,000 persons, mainly concentrated in the Trizla settlement. Despite the fact that most Roma in Prilep are covered by health insurance, with the exception of persons who do not have personal identification and whose situation is currently addressed by the RIC, the poor health situation of many local Roma largely reflects their weak economic status and their inadequate housing conditions. Local Action Plans for Roma are either adopted or in process of being adopted. The municipal council has one member who is Roma, and one staff member of the administration is also Roma and serves as the Roma Focal Point.

What is quite surprising in these two municipalities is that since there is a Roma Co-ordinator in the Municipal administration, things have started to improve in the Roma neighbourhoods. Municipal officers on Roma (and/or Interethnic Issues) work together with the staff from the Roma Information Centers (RIC) and now in Prilep they have multi-million projects for improving the infrastructure in the Roma neighbourhoods with new water, drainage and sewage systems, asphalted roads and street-lightening. BPRI project only provided a small grant for street lights, but the Roma co-ordinator valued the exchange with other regional actors and the research carried out as substantial support and he was proud to share their achievements. What is more, in these two municipalities the RIC staff do not only help Roma people, but also majority people, this way diminishing the gap between the local government and its citizens.

### Conclusions and recommendations

Participants discussed their on-going practices in data collection and policy monitoring, and provided the following recommendations:

- Qualified Roma activists and students should be included in data collection and analysis at the local and national levels. Programmes in this field should be expanded as they are essential for developing the capacities of Roma researchers and ensuring they participate in the design and implementation of social inclusion studies, the census and other initiatives. Every municipality can identify the needs of their local Roma community by co-operating with Roma NGOs and helping them to develop data collection capacities if needed.
- Participation of local Roma is essential for accurate data collection as there are often trust issues towards external survey administrators. Questionnaires should be translated into Romani language.

Roma women should particularly be encouraged to participate in research projects and pursue higher education.

- Data should not only be collected but also used by local and national governments to formulate new measures, respond to local needs and publish periodic reports about results.
- Relatively taboo topics, such as early and forced marriages, should be examined through new research projects to raise awareness of these issues.
- National and local data collection should be used to gain a more complete picture in problems faced by Roma. Electronic systems should be explored to connect different institutions and link this data to monitoring of policy implementation.
- Inter-sectoral co-operation should be improved as healthcare providers, schools, police and other stakeholders need to exchange data in order to more effectively promote Roma integration. Some issues, such as street begging, can only be addressed jointly and through continuous monitoring.
- Data collected in the field should be used as a basis for developing Local Action Plans for Roma Integration and initiating concrete activities to remedy the situation.