

Contract title: Support to the Implementation of the Roma Strategy

Contract number: 2010/258-484

INCEPTION REPORT - SUMMARY

Subject: For the period 17 January – 14 February 2011

This Inception Report for the Project ‘Support to the Implementation of the Roma Strategy’ covers the first month of project implementation activities – between 17 January 2011 and 14 February 2011. It represents the major findings from the missions undertaken on the ground by the BBI Technical Assistance team. The format of the Report has been agreed in advance with the Contracting Authority, including the list of annexes.

The first part of the Report provides an update on the implementation environment, including the political and institutional situation, the legal environment and also projects implemented in the relevant sector. The section describing the political environment in which the project is being implemented refers to basic programmatic statements of the European Commission 2009 and 2010 Progress Reports, the 2010 Decade Watch Report and the EC Decision on Roma Policies from September 2010. These statements determine the high relevance of this project’s activities and results to be achieved. Provided are also national level data and conclusions from other reports and assessments of the situation of Roma in the country, which confirm that though progress and substantial improvements have been achieved the Roma are still the most vulnerable and marginalized group.

Second, the Report presents the findings of the project team with reference to the current situation regarding the implementation of **the Roma targeted policies in the Beneficiary country.** The key policy document is the National Strategy for Roma adopted by the Government in January 2005. One of the Project’s specific activities will be to assess the functioning of the implementation system of the Roma Strategy and to make specific recommendations for improvement. At present, five of the ten specific priority areas for action established by the Strategy are covered by the 5 National Action Plans developed in the framework of the Roma Decade. The Roma Strategy does not have a specific implementation programme – it is perceived that the operational aspects are covered by other sector specific plans. The Roma Decade and particularly the forthcoming Presidency of the Beneficiary country is one of the Project’s specific areas of intervention in terms of preparing the national stakeholders to successfully organise and manage the Presidency programme. Moreover, the project gives an excellent opportunity to plan and organise the activities taking into consideration the experience and lessons learned from the implementation of Roma targeted policies over the past five years of the Decade.

Further in the Report, it provides the **main conclusions of the project team about the implementation of the NAPs** in the four priority areas of the Decade. A common opinion stands out that the most successful interventions and improvements for Roma have taken place in **the area of education for Roma,** particularly in the last couple of years. This is mainly due to the remarkable tendency of mainstreaming the good practices of civil society organisations and foreign donors into the state policy system. As a result of the

Government's affirmative measure and the stipend, mentoring and tutoring programmes, the number of the Roma students in the secondary schools in the Beneficiary country has increased by 57% over the last 4 years.

There are positive results for the Roma also in **the area of employment**, although the real needs require much more to be done. Since 2010, the Roma have been defined as a separate target group of the Government's Employment Plan 2008-2012. Each year the MLSP adopts an Operational Plan for active programmes and measures for employment. The 2011 Employment Plan includes a special programme for support of unemployed Roma. However, the unemployment rate among the Roma is much higher than the average for the country.

The information acquired during the inception phase shows that the main issue with regard to the Government's policy implementation in **the area of healthcare** for Roma is the gradual reduction of the state budget allocated for this purpose over the last several years. The main healthcare activities for Roma in 2010 were health mediator trainings. This is in accordance to the initiative approved by the Government of the Beneficiary country to implement a Roma health mediators programme in the future.

In **the area of housing** for the Roma there have been limited achievements so far. The Ministry of Transport and Communications (MTC) has some major milestones planned to address the legislation, the revision of the new urbanization plan of Shuto Orizari, and construction of blocks of flats for socially vulnerable families. There is a governmental decision that 10% of these flats be provided for Roma. In 2010, out of the total of 1753 such flats 58 are provided for Roma located in 7 towns. The biggest issue with regard to housing for the Roma refers to the fact that in most cases they do not have property documents for the places where they live, which is mainly due to non-fulfilment of the legalization standards.

The Report provides a picture of the current situation on the availability of Local Action Plans (LAP) with regard to the four Roma Decade priorities. At present, there are 6 LAPs on housing, 10 – on employment, 5 – on education, and 4 – on health.

With regard to **the administrative environment**, the Report describes the key responsibilities of the Beneficiary institutions in relation to the Roma Strategy and the Decade. The main conclusion is that currently the MWP – NCB – UISDR tripartite relations and coordination is not fully clear in administrative and technical terms, and there is no official enactment or strategic document to regulate their interaction in a systematic manner.

The Report presents **the legal environment** of the Project, outlining the European legal framework, enlisting all relevant legislation of the Beneficiary country and other legally binding documents. Another section of the same Chapter gives an overview of the relevant recent or current projects and actions funded by the EU and other donors.

Chapter 4 provides a report of **activities implemented** in the course of the Inception Phase. Two main groups of activities were implemented - Administrative set-up and Inception of technical and project coordination. Within the first group, the main results refer to the mobilized project expert team and the consortium members, the established relations with beneficiaries and stakeholders, the initiated competitive procedure for selection and recruitment of 3 local support staff, and the fully operational and equipped project office at place. The main results of the second group of activities relate to the collected and reviewed relevant documents and donor initiatives, the updated project workplan and resource schedule, the conducted meetings with the CA and the Beneficiaries, and the participation in the project's kick-off meeting with the CA, beneficiaries and stakeholders.

The Report also provides the **plan of activities for the whole duration of the project**. There are some proposals for slight changes in the methodology proposed in the technical offer, which are clearly indicated in the text.

The technical assistance team proposes here an implementation plan for the next 3-month period, which will be used as a management tool and also for monitoring purposes.

Project governance is discussed in Chapter 5, which includes a description of the Project Steering Committee (to be established), project management, HR issues, reporting schedule and contractual aspects.

The last chapters deal with **monitoring and evaluation arrangements and an update of risks and assumptions** underlying the project implementation. A description of the indicators is made, classifying them by type – quality, quantity, and performance.

Annexes are included at the end of the Report.



Support to the implementation of the Roma Strategy
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