

Contract title: Support to the Implementation of the Roma Strategy

Contract number: 2010/258-484

Subject: Roma Strategy Assessment Report
SUMMARY

Approach

The aim of this Report is to assess the status of implementation of the Strategy for Roma and Action Plans and the current operational co-ordination and implementation mechanism, with an emphasis on the latter. The research undertaken for this purpose consists primarily in a desk review and discussions with relevant stakeholders in focus groups and semi-structured interviews. Additionally, a consultative meeting with the Agency for Realization of the Rights of the Communities was useful for considering alternative institutional arrangements, as were regular consultations with members of the Project Team.

Structure of the Report

The Report offers an examination of key documents and relations among them, including the Strategy for Roma, the National Action Plans (NAPs) adopted in the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, the local action plans (LAPs) adopted by some municipalities for bringing the Decade to municipal level, and the Memorandum of Cooperation with the central government signed by an overlapping but not identical set of municipalities. Next, the Report turns to institutional arrangements, treating the roles of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MLSP) and its sub-units, the Minister without Portfolio and his Cabinet, and the National Coordinating Body (NCB) in coordinating implementation of the Strategy and Action Plans to date. Also included is a brief look at Romani Information Centers (RICs) as local-level structures established for implementation of the Strategy and Action Plans. The Report's fourth chapter consists in assessment of the institutional arrangements presented in the previous chapter, with this assessment forming the basis for a set of recommendations in the fifth chapter.

Key findings

Strategy and action plans:

- The 2004 *Strategy for Roma in the Republic of Macedonia* continues to provide a broad framework for the elaboration of operational documents aimed at improving the situation of the country's Romani population and contains clear guidelines for coordinating with the Decade of Roma Inclusion.
- Relations among the National Action Plans (NAPs) for Roma adopted in the priority areas of education, employment, health, and housing are generally clear. Less clear is the relationship between these NAPs and the NAP for gender equality for Roma, which might be caused by the fact that it was developed separately.
- There has been neither a unified approach to drafting LAPs for Roma, nor a clear and consistent relationship between the LAPs and the corresponding NAPs; although some LAPs are presented as based on an analysis of the corresponding NAP in relation to the corresponding municipality, none contain references to specific provisions of the NAPs.

- Funding for the implementation of action plans for Roma has been insufficient at both national and local levels. Factors contributing to this state of affairs at national level include radical reductions in the Ministry of Finance to the budgets proposed by line ministries on the one hand and last-minute and *ad hoc* preparation of budgets by some line ministries on the other. At the local level, incomplete fiscal decentralization means that municipalities often await needed funds from line ministries.

Institutional arrangements:

- Whereas the consistent inadequacy of funding for implementing the action plans may be understood as an indication of the absence of political will beyond lip service to a set of values, the situation is exacerbated and the current potential for effective implementation compromised by problems in coordination at both central and municipal levels, as well as between these levels.
- Roles which MLSP appears to be performing successfully include:
 - Informing government about activities undertaken by the ministries for implementation of the NAPs;
 - Overseeing and informing the government about implementation of the Strategy and the Decade at local level;
 - Cooperating with Romani non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in addressing problems encountered in implementing the Strategy and the Decade;
 - Coordinating and providing information on the work of the RICs; and
 - Preparing informational documents and analyses on activities for the implementation of the Strategy and the Decade, as well as preparing projects for attracting foreign donations.

Areas of activity in which MLSP has been less successful are the following:

- Informing the general public about activities undertaken by the ministries for implementation of the NAPs;
 - Collecting data for the preparation of a database containing information important for the Strategy and the Decade;
 - Planning, monitoring, and evaluating all events related to the Strategy and the Decade;
 - Coordinating activities of ministries in relation to the Strategy and the Decade; and
 - Cooperation with and assistance to the National Coordinating Body.
 - The Cabinet of the Minister without Portfolio has been more effective in receiving and transmitting information received from UISDR than in providing consultations to line ministries and municipal authorities or in informing media about progress in relation to the Decade and the Strategy. Notwithstanding the importance of the political decision to create the position of Minister without Portfolio, this institution would require significant strengthening in order to fulfill the mandate assigned it.
 - The National Coordinating Body has not fulfilled its roles since at least 2008, neither ensuring effective coordination between state institutions and civic associations, nor overseeing implementation of the Decade NAPs, nor yet advising the Minister without Portfolio and UISDR on measures needed to secure implementation of the NAPs. Reasons for this include frequent turnover in the membership of the NCB and the assignment to a junior employee of the management of an NCB consisting largely of senior representatives of line ministries.
 - While RICs have neither formed structures for cooperation with municipal-level institutions for issues related to the Decade nor been effective in informing the general public about the Decade and there is no evidence that implementation of the Strategy has been monitored effectively at local level, central-level coordination of the RICs has been unproblematic, and the combination of relocation to municipal premises and continued financial support from MLSP bodes well for them to grow into their mission.
 - The parallel existence of two types of municipal-level mechanisms for addressing the needs of local Romani populations (i.e., LAPs and Memoranda of Cooperation with the
-

Government as represented by the Minister without Portfolio) risks compromising coordination at central level while spreading confusion at local level.

Recommendations

Key documents:

1. Relevant personnel in ministries, state institutions, and municipalities which have taken on tasks related to implementation of the Strategy and the Decade, as well as all members of the National Coordinating Body, should be provided with training on the Strategy and the Decade in general, as well as on the Decade NAPs in particular.
2. National Action Plans should be made relevant and achievable through a centrally coordinated revision process based on an analysis of empirical data and taking into account IPA funding priorities for 2011-2013.
3. Documents adopted at municipal level should correspond to national priorities, with alternatives to LAPs explored. To the extent that LAPs continue to be employed for municipal-level implementation of the Decade, their relation to the corresponding NAPs should be explicit, specific and systematic, with local particularities reflected in similar fashion and sufficient funding budgeted for implementation. Any funding related to a Memorandum of Cooperation between Municipalities and the Minister without Portfolio should be allotted on the basis of a combination of demonstrated need and the fit between proposed initiatives and previously adopted programmatic goals in a transparent process.

Institutional arrangements:

1. A single institution should be made responsible for coordination between the government and international institutions, among national-level institutions, and between national and local levels in relation to implementation of the Strategy and the Decade. Responsibility for all three levels of coordination should be vested in the National Coordinator for the Decade, who should have a status equivalent to minister or deputy minister and a budget set at a level sufficient to fund the measures foreseen at minimum in the Decade NAPs.
2. The National Coordinating Body should be returned to operation, with its mandate, membership, and procedures redefined for this purpose.
3. Internal working groups for implementation of the Strategy and Decade should be formed within the Ministries of Culture, Education and Science, Health, Labor and Social Policy, and Transport and Communications; as well as within the National Employment Agency and the State Statistical Office. Each working group should be headed by the representative of the respective institution who serves on the Executive Committee of the NCB, who should also be responsible for securing timely completion of tasks within the institution in relation to implementation of the Strategy and Decade.
4. A uniform budgeting process should be established for funding the measures contained in all NAPs related to the Strategy and Decade. Such a process should also be established for funding the measures contained in LAPs, to the extent that LAPs continue to be used for bringing the Decade to local level. Transparent procedures should be established and applied consistently for any grants to be awarded for projects related to implementation of the Strategy and Decade.
5. The ongoing institutionalization of RICs within their respective municipalities should be supported both administratively and financially, with RICs upgraded from a project to a state program and funded accordingly. RICs should be housed in municipal premises in space physically divided from that occupied by NGOs and their roles in relation to institutions operating at local level should be defined precisely and formally.

Monitoring and evaluation:

1. The quarterly reports of the Ministries of Culture, Education and Science, Health, Labor and Social Policy, Transport and Communications and of the National Employment Agency on implementation of the NAPs should provide information explicitly related to indicators for to specific measures contained in the NAPs, referring to the measures by
-

number. To the extent that LAPs in the priority areas of the Decade continue to be used for bringing the Decade to local level, their implementation could be monitored by the RICs. Any future project funding provided on the basis of Memoranda of Cooperation signed between municipalities and the Minister without Portfolio should be conditioned on regular reporting of progress in implementation.

2. Ongoing monitoring of implementation of the NAPs should be supplemented by objective external evaluations of NAP implementation on at least a bi-annual basis, with funds from the state budget allotted for this purpose. The performance criteria applied in the evaluations should be the targets set in the NAPs, rather than the country's progress relative to other countries participating in the Decade. To the extent that LAPs in the priority areas of the Decade continue to be used for bringing the Decade to municipal level, objective external evaluations of their implementation should also be commissioned on at least a bi-annual basis.
3. The next revision of the NAPs (slated for late 2011) and any subsequent revisions should take into account the findings of the external evaluations described under the previous recommendation, with revised NAPs including indicators to allow measurement not only of whether services were delivered, but also of the quality of the delivered services. To the extent that LAPs in the priority areas of the Decade continue to be used for bringing the Decade to local level, this recommendation applies to those action plans as well.



Support to the implementation of the Roma Strategy
This project is funded by the European Union

