



## **Conclusions and recommendations**

Following from the international specialist seminar organised within the Presidency of the Slovak Republic of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 entitled

### **Programmes supporting social inclusion of the disadvantaged population groups, held on 17 and 18 May 2010**

#### **Programme:**

##### **Introductory addresses :**

1. Viera Tomanová, Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic
2. Ľudovít Galbavý, Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Roma Communities
3. Valentina Petrus, programme manager of the Open Society Foundation

##### **Bloc I: Supporting employability of the disadvantaged population groups**

1. Supporting employability of the disadvantaged population groups, Ján Sihelský – General Director of the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, Slovakia
2. Recommendation Rec (2001)17 on improving the economic and employment situation of Roma/Gypsies and Travellers in Europe, Louiza Kyriakaki – Chairperson of MG-S-ROM
3. “Activities aimed at supporting jobseekers disadvantaged in the labour market,” Ida Melichová – Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family at Rimavská Sobota, Slovakia
4. Implementing active labour market tools designed to increase employability of the disadvantaged population groups in the region of Košice, Juraj Briškár – Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family in Košice, Slovakia
5. Care services for citizens of Handlová with regard to increasing employability and supporting job creation, Veronika Rýšová – Municipal Office Handlová, Slovakia

6. Situation of the Roma on the labour market in the Žilina Region, Zdenka Lacková – OZ SRDCE Martin, (Civic Association HEART Martin), Slovakia
7. Experience aimed at employment as priority of the Decade in the Serbian Republic, Ljuan Koko – Director of the Office for the Implementation of the Roma National Strategy, Serbia
8. Roma employment mediators, Milen Milanov, national coordinator of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005 – 2015, Bulgaria

### **Bloc II: Local partnerships of social inclusion**

1. Local partnerships of social inclusion, Eva Schmidtová – General Director of the Social Development Fund, Slovakia
2. Systemic measures for the integration of marginalized groups implemented within the Austrian Territorial Employment Pacts, Anette Scoppetta – head of the National Coordination Unit of the Territorial Employment Pacts in Austria, Austria
3. Experience of the Orava LPSI addressing social inclusion in the Orava Region and identifying the options to address impacts of the current economic problems under the conditions of the Orava region, Jozef Šimek - LPSI Dolný Kubín, Slovakia
4. Partnership of Social Inclusion of the Vranov nad Topľou District, Imrich Konya – member of the Council of the Managing Board of PSI Vranov nad Topľou, Slovakia

### **Bloc III Field social work in the marginalized Roma communities**

1. Field social work in the marginalized Roma communities, Darina Košutová – Director of the Department of Social Inclusion Community Projects of the Social Development Fund, Slovakia
2. Social work in the marginalized Roma communities, results of research, Tatiana Podolínska - Institute of Ethnology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Slovakia
3. Field social work and the institute of special beneficiary in the municipality of Veľký Šariš, Jana Scepaníková, Veľký Šariš, Slovakia
4. Field social work in the municipality of Čierny Balog, Mária Muránska, Čierny Balog, Slovakia
5. Field social work in the marginalized Roma communities from the aspect of the activities of field social workers and their assistants, Miroslava Bobáková et. al. – Social Development Fund, Slovakia.
6. The effect of field social work as a social service tool upon the integration of the marginalized Roma communities, Helena Jonášová – the Cultural Association of the Roma of Slovakia, Banská Bystrica, Slovakia
7. Field social work in the municipality Letanovce and the FSW research in Spiš, Klaudia Nemčíková and Lenka Vavreková – Letanovce and Spiš, Slovakia
8. Presentation of experience in the area of field social work, Mária Michalková – Jazmín n.o, Slovensko (not-for-profit organisation Jasmine), Slovakia
9. Field social work in Stará Ľubovňa, Stašáková Ľudmila – the town Stará Ľubovňa, Slovakia

## Summary of basic ideas and the formulation of problem areas and measures

### Supporting employability of the disadvantaged population groups

- More than 60 % of the unemployed Roma have low education and almost 70 % have been jobless for at least one year
- Approximately 30 % have not attained primary education
- Approximately 30 % have attained only primary education
- 9 % have dropped out of secondary school
- 15 % have attained secondary education
- 2 % have attained higher than secondary education

Employment/unemployment of a section of the Roma is one of the key factors having a direct impact upon the living standard of the Roma community. The priorities reflected in the action plans of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005 – 2015 are aimed at:

- Increasing job opportunities through education and skills
- Increasing participation in the labour market through active labour market measures
- Improving the information on the labour market
- Improving the effectiveness of work with the Roma in the labour offices and employment agencies.

1. In the area of gathering ethnic data, differences persist among particular regions. These involve the implementation of legal regulations, their interpretation, or the data processing. There is not a universally accepted definition of ethnicity. The Slovak Republic also encounters this problem. The Slovak Republic approaches the data collection in accordance with the Constitution of the SR, international conventions, the act on data protection, the anti-discrimination act, as well as other acts partially making provisions for anti-discrimination. In the data on the number of Roma population there are abysmal differences between the official statistics, according to which there are 90 thousand of Roma in Slovakia and the unofficial data putting their number at 320 – 430 thousand. Sensitivity of the collection of ethnical data is subsequently reflected in the collection and evaluation of the data regarding the financial assistance for the implementation of particular programmes and projects targeting the assistance to the Roma, which renders monitoring and control of assistance more difficult. As the result we have available inaccurate data on the number of Roma involved in the projects, on their further integration in the labour market, etc. These barriers result in inaccurate evaluation of the provided assistance. Accurate evaluation of the provided assistance in the future will help to design better the programmes and projects aimed at the assistance to the Roma. It is crucial to build on the fact that the data have to, first and foremost, benefit the Roma themselves, which in turn would affect their social inclusion. Bearing this situation in mind, a multi-disciplinary working group has been set up with the Government Office of the SR for the elaboration of the national concept of the collection of ethnic data, which is expected to define the areas and methods of ethnic data collection and their subsequent exploitation.

2. Long-term unemployment is typical of the Roma. Unemployment becomes a generation problem when not only parents but also their children and grandchildren are jobless.

3. There is a link between the level of education attained and employability, which is why it is necessary to pay more attention to the education of the Roma population. The low level of education or incomplete primary education is among the crucial factors affecting long-term unemployment and the low level of employability of this disadvantaged group that has minimal chances of employment. Persons of this group have problems in acquiring any skills and potentially rank in the category of people who have never worked or acquired any work habits and work skills.

4. Active labour market policy tools are used as effective vehicles facilitating employment of the Roma. Particularly efficient and effective tools to increase employment and employability are those that create greater scope for individualised approach to individuals requiring increased personal supervision in their integration in the labour market. In view of the low level of education attained by the Roma their employment is mostly concentrated in the low-skill jobs with a low added value, such as in the communal services of towns and communities, selected activities in social services, in the profession of unskilled labourers. Within the financial tools, the provision of support in entrepreneurship is also seen as effective, e.g., the introduction of microcredits or business start-up contributions. Special attention should be paid to the integration of the Roma women in the labour market, particularly in the spheres having a direct and imminent impact upon increasing the quality of life of their families.

5. Partnerships play an important role in addressing Roma unemployment at local and regional levels. The willingness to solve Roma employment must be based on the cooperation of self-governments, representatives of non-governmental organisations and employers. It is vital to eliminate prejudice of employers in employing the Roma, fight discrimination in practice, and create equal opportunities for the entry of the Roma to the labour market.

### **Recommendations:**

- Design a uniform methodology for the evaluation of programmes and active labour market policy measures and harmonize the system of ethnic data collection with the law
- Propose a system of more active integration of long-term unemployed citizens in the labour market, using active labour market policy measures
- Support increasing of the education and qualification levels of job seekers and job changers with incomplete education at primary or secondary schools, living in municipalities with the presence of marginalized Roma communities
- Support the creation of partnerships based on the cooperation of local state administration and local self-government, representatives of non-governmental organisations and employers
- Remove prejudice of employers in employing the Roma, fight discrimination in the practice and create equal opportunities for the entry of the Roma in the labour market.

### **Local partnerships of social inclusion**

The essence of the local partnerships of social inclusion (hereinafter referred to as “LPSI”) consists in the effort to improve the management and governance of public affairs, particularly at a local level. The crucial ingredients include the development of cooperation, the creation of partnerships of entities at horizontal and vertical level, as well as the involvement of all stakeholders, including the excluded groups, in the creation, implementation and monitoring of policies of social protection and social inclusion. LPSI can be considered to be the tool for improving the local administration of public affairs through

- Strengthening of cooperation
- Developing the strategic plans
- Implementing the local strategic plans

LPSI is an independent local association made up of representatives of local organisations of the third sector, business sector, public administration, and, in certain cases, also of individuals. Partnership acts with a view to creating the conditions for the governance of public affairs at local level through networking, mobilisation and active involvement of stakeholder groups in the decision-making processes.

Rather than being an entity of direct and immediate assistance to individuals, LPSI, is mainly a platform for communication and cooperation of representatives of relevant groups that are affected by particular problems or challenges. Indeed, partnerships add value to the individual and distinct efforts of particular local actors taking the form of facilitation of interfaces of their goals and overall synergies in achieving them.

In LPSI activities the following principles should be applied:

- Stimulation of economic activities
- Promotion of equal opportunities and the reduction of social exclusion
- Seeking of new innovative approaches to achieve community involvement
- Coordination at governmental level and in the existing public, private and voluntary organisations.

Experience from the activities of LPSI gained in our country and from partnerships in other countries show:

- The existence of persisting problems at local level - a potential solution, if all these actors unite (division of competences, finance, improved integration through innovative management methods, process-oriented innovations, structural innovations)
- The need for partnership coordination, one that is independent of the state
- Mapping of the target groups needs, a directory of the lacking social services, meetings with the target groups
- Processing of proposals, visions, strategies - the involvement of the target groups
- Processing of outputs, particular activities, new types of services in the region

### **Recommendations:**

1. Define local partnerships of social inclusion in the legislation

2. Involve the target population groups, the majority population, state administration bodies, and local authorities at all levels of management and NGOs more actively in the solution of regional problems via the local partnerships of social inclusion,
3. Seek new methods and forms of cooperation of LPSI
4. Create an independent coordination unit to coordinate the activities of local partnerships of social inclusion
5. Direct the activities of local partnerships of social inclusion at developing the community plans of service provision, and through them define the need for social services, pursue innovation in the services provided
6. Organise local conferences with the participation of all stakeholders at local and regional level.

### **Field social work in the marginalized Roma communities**

As marginalized Roma communities are regarded groups of the Roma belonging to the most at-risk population groups, suffering from a high level of deprivation and social exclusion and running the highest risk of social and geographical exclusion. They are communities strongly socially dependent upon the state. A special tradition and a specific way of life are peculiar to them. Inadequate level of education and work skills is the major obstacle to the employability of the members of the marginalized Roma communities, as well as their poor awareness of healthy habits of common social environment. Another problem is their minority way of life in segregated communities and settlements. All these factors accentuate the need to carry out field social work, particularly in the marginalized Roma communities in municipalities.

The field social work, carried out through selected municipalities is deemed to be the key tool of social inclusion of the marginalized Roma communities. It covers a broad range of activities carried out by field social workers and their assistants in cooperation with the target group concerned. Without the field social work particularly in the marginalized Roma communities, these activities would not have been covered within the activity of the local state administration, local self-government, and non-governmental organisations in the required extent.

Both the contributions of the international seminar participants presenting their knowledge and experience from practice and the results of the research to date conducted in the area of the performance of field social work in the marginalized Roma communities, highlighted the support for this tool of social assistance in terms of its need and the significant role it plays in the process of social inclusion of the marginalized Roma communities and in fighting poverty in general.

From the aspect of field social work that is carried out, counselling services were the most commonly provided – particularly in the areas of mediation of communication with authorities and assistance in administrative acts; ensuring of the basic living needs of citizens (food, clothes, housing), as well as in the area of financing.

In the evaluation of field social work, the presentations pointed out to certain weaknesses that have emerged over time and persist. They involve in particular:

1. Risk to the sustainability of the execution of field social work and its non-systemic nature
2. Instability of financing sources for the execution of field social work
3. Necessity to optimise the number of social workers in the continuation of the execution of field social work
4. Improvement to and deepening of coordination of the field social work and the introduction of supervision for the execution of field social work
5. More active links of field social work with the relevant institutions and programmes of other sectors
6. Frequent use of field social workers and assistants of field social workers by the beneficiaries of subsidies for activities not consistent with their job description
7. Contraventions of contractual conditions, particularly incompliance with the time limits for notification duty in changing workers in work positions, delayed sending of supporting documentation, addenda
8. Insufficient occasions for professional development (education, training and courses) – absence of any professional growth for field social workers

**Recommendations:**

- Create the organisational and material conditions for sustainability of the programme of field social work in municipalities with the presence of marginalized Roma communities
- Create organisational and material prerequisites for better coordination of field social work and the introduction of supervision for the field social work
- Ensure more active links of field social work with the relevant institutions and programmes of other sectors
- Design a systematic education for field social workers and assistants of field social workers
- Develop a more active system of monitoring of the execution of field social work in municipalities, with a link to its coordination
- In the event of suspicion that field social workers and assistants of field social workers are used for the performance of other activities than those defined in their work descriptions, suspend the provision of non-repayable financial contribution (NFC) until the date the matter at hand has been investigated. If suspicion is confirmed the provider of assistance will denote expenditure on those activities as ineligible and may back out of the contract on the provision of NFC.