



Updated Civil Society Monitoring Report

on the Implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategy
and Decade Action Plan in 2012 and 2013 in

SLOVAKIA

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Prepared by a civil society coalition comprising the following organizations:

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Coordinated by

the Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation
in cooperation with the Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma programme
and the Roma Initiatives Office of the Open Society Foundations



Published by

Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation
Teréz körút 46.
1066 Budapest, Hungary
www.romadecade.org

Design and layout: www.foszer-design.com

Proofreading: Jessica Wolf

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In the pilot year of 2012, the Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation supported reports from civil society coalitions in seven countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia and Spain) and the Roma Initiatives Office commissioned an additional report from the Czech Republic.

In the reports, civil society coalitions supplement or present alternative information to Decade Progress Reports submitted by Participating Governments in the Decade of Roma Inclusion and to any reports submitted by State parties to the European Commission on implementation of their National Roma Integration Strategy (NRIS). These reports are not meant to substitute for quantitative monitoring and evaluation by State authorities but to channel local knowledge into national and European policy processes and reflect on the real social impact of government measures. The civil society reports provide additional data to official ones, proxy data where there is no official data, or alternative interpretation of published data. All reports are available at <http://www.romadecade.org/civilsocietymonitoring>

When the European Commission requested further input for assessing NRIS impact in 2012 and 2013, the Decade Secretariat supported the same civil society coalitions to update and streamline their reports.

The project is coordinated by the Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation in cooperation with the Open Society Foundation's Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma program and the Roma Initiatives Office.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

DCPMI	Department of Crime Prevention of the Minister of the Interior
EEA	European Economic Area
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund ()
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gross National Income
GPRC	Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities
HP	Horizontal Priorities
HP MRC	Horizontal Priority of Marginalised Roma Communities
IBMA	Intermediary Bodies of Management Authority
LSCA	Local Strategy of Comprehensive Approach
MLSAF	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family
MRC	Marginalised Roma Communities
MTCRD	Ministry of Transport, Construction and Regional Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NP FSW	National Project for Field Social Workers
NRIS	National Roma Integration Strategies
NSRF	National Strategic Reference Framework
OP	Operation Plan
OP EaSI	Operation Plan Employment and Social Inclusion
ROP	Regional Operation Plan
SDF	Social Development Fund
SF	Structural Funds
SR	Slovak Republic

INTRODUCTION

The Civic Society Coalition report evaluates the policy development which relates to the implementation of the Decade's Revised National Action Plan for the Roma population's inclusion during the period of 2005–2015 within the 2011–2015 period ("Revised Action Plan"), approved by the Slovak Government in 2011 and the implementation of the Slovak Republic Strategies for Roma Inclusion (National Roma Integration Strategies – NRIS) until 2020, approved by the Slovak Government in January 2012. The report follows from the implementation assessment provided by the Secretariat evaluating the period between the approval of the Revised Action Plan in August 2010 and March 2013.¹ This report is submitted as an update of the monitoring process from April 2013 to the end of October 2013.

Roma and non-Roma NGOs still report insufficient participation in implementing, monitoring and assessing implementation of the NRIS. More needed is to increase the coordination between multiple levels of management (especially between ministries and regional and local authorities) for the NRIS implementation and monitoring of the Revised Action Plan. The appropriate monitoring and assessment process is absent for both instruments. Funding of the particular measures within these instruments is very vague. The Slovak Government relies on European structural funds within the next programme period of 2014–2020 with minimal use of the Slovak state budget.

In 2013, lobbying groups' efforts to weaken the legal human rights agenda have still been present. Radical right-wing opinion was expressed in the communication of mainstream political parties and this could be seen even in the elections in autumn 2013. Representatives of radical and nationalistic movements ran for the position of district governor in several districts. The leader of nationalist and extremist movement Marián Kotleba, was elected in the second election round by more than 26,000 votes in one of the districts.

With the aim to influence public opinion positively, the Slovak Republic took part in the Council of Europe campaign called "Dosta! (Go Beyond Prejudices, Meet the Roma)" on 5th November. The campaign was opened by the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Republic Government for Roma Communities, Peter Pollák, in the presence of Council of Europe and European Commission representatives in Košice.

1 http://www.romadecade.org/cms/upload/file/9270_file22_sk_civil-society-monitoring-report_sk.pdf.

POLICY MEASURES

Coordination Body: The Office of the Slovak Republic Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities

There have been no changes to the institutional framework of the NRIS. The Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities of Slovak Government (Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities – GPRC) remains the main body in this area. The initial Civic Society Coalition report pointed out the deficiencies in the position and functioning of the GPRC. This office was integrated into the Ministry of Interior last year. This caused many concerns that Roma would be treated largely as a security issue. There was also concern about risks caused by the complicated structure of this Ministry.

Many more concerns came out in 2013. Here are some examples:

1. The call within the grant scheme of GPRC for 2013 was announced in April and the project approvals came only in late October, which means two months before the end of the year.²
2. Contrary to the Statutes of the GPRC, which asserts that the Plenipotentiary has the duty to establish an Interministerial committee for Roma community issues, the committee has not been established until now.
3. The bureaucracy of the Ministry of the Interior SR structure caused a significant delay in the start of the Healthy Communities program and hiring mediators (healthcare education assistants).³
4. The more repressive approach to tackle the situation of Roma communities, which was declared year ago, has been clearly demonstrated through new law on assistance in material need. The Plenipotentiary called this law the major success of his function so far.⁴
5. The negative effects of integrating the GPRC into the Ministry of the Interior were fully visible in the case of police intervention in Moldava nad Bodvou. Although there was significant suspicion of human rights and legal breaches applied to the Roma community, the Plenipotentiary stated he is not mandated to inspect the case and yields his power to internal authorities of the Ministry of the Interior.⁵

Moving of the Office of the Slovak Republic Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities

GPRC employs 50 employees, and 20 of them work in six regional offices. Part of the central office is supposed to move from Bratislava to Spišská Nová Ves in the east of Slovakia in January 2014. This proposal has been criticised by the Plenipotentiary himself as well as by some experts. They are concerned that the office will have insufficient access to other ministries and central institutions and it may decrease its influence on public policies.⁶

2 http://www.minv.sk/?spravy_rk&sprava=vyzva-na-podporu-socialnych-a-kulturnych-potrieb-a-mimoriadne-nepriaznivych-situacii-romskych-komunit-je-zverejnená; http://www.minv.sk/?spravy_rk&sprava=zoznam-schvalenych-ziadosti-o-poskytnutie-dotacie-na-podporu-socialnych-a-kulturnych-potrieb-a-riesenia-mimoriadne-nepriaznivych-situacii-romskej-komunity-je-zverejneny.

3 Status of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Republic Government for Roma Communities, Art. 3 (2) http://www.minv.sk/?statut_rk.

4 <http://www.topky.sk/cl/100535/1363616/Pollak--Na-zakon-o-pomoci-v-hmotnej-nudzi-som-hrdy>.

5 http://www.minv.sk/?spravy_rk&sprava=splnomocnenec-apeluje-na-zavedenie-opatreni-ktore-by-prispeli-k-objektivnemu-posudzovaniu-policialnych-zasahov.

6 <http://romovia.sme.sk/c/6964483/kalinak-chce-prestahovat-pollaka-na-spis-aby-bol-blizsie-k-osadam.html>.

The Slovak Republic Strategy of Roma integration for the period until 2020

The Government, with its Prime Minister Robert Fico, has claimed allegiance to the Slovakia's NRIS as well as to the Decade's Revised Action Plans, namely in the Manifesto of the Government in April 2012.⁷ However, after one and a half years it is clear this was only a formal declaration.

The Plenipotentiary was supposed to prepare action plans for a new strategy in the area of financial support and approach to the majority society (the deadline for this was 31 March 2012), but none have been prepared and approved yet. Every year he is also supposed to prepare a monitoring report on NRIS performance until 31st December and submit this report to the Government by 15th February the following year.⁸ According to our information, GPRC commenced to draft the named report for 2012, but has never finished it and, of course, it has never been submitted to the Government of the SR.⁹

The absence of references to these documents in the other policies relating to the solving of Roma communities situation. (either prepared by several departments or by GPRC) shows the indifferent or even negative attitude towards the NRIS and the Decade. For example, there is no link to the NRIS or Decade¹⁰ in the annual clearance report that Plenipotentiary Peter Pollák released in October 2013. He even stated his negative attitude to the various strategies as such; according to him, *"They show no effect"*.¹¹

Roma Reform

The representatives of the current executive and Members of the National Parliament (Minister of Interior Robert Kaliňák, State Secretary of MI Marián Saloň, President of the opposition party OĽaNO Igor Matovič and Member of the National Parliament and the Slovak Republic Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities Peter Pollák) presented basic principles of a new approach to the Roma in Slovakia.¹² "Roma Reform – The Right Path" was supposed to present a complex system reform with over 90 measures. However, the initiators never presented what is supposed to be the final form and character of the document and the relationship between the Reform and the NRIS. The reform was criticised by several Human Rights Organisations. On the other hand, a part of Roma community and local authorities' representatives accepted the initiative. Despite some meetings in Ministry of the Interior for the preparation work, the Reform has never been accomplished, particular measures have never been published (except the first two chapters – Education and Law Enforcement¹³) and the Reform has neither been approved by any of the public authorities nor adopted by the Slovak Government. In spite of the Reform not having the character of the conceptual document with clearly stated goals and deadlines, and also not being an official policy document, the expression "Roma Reform" has become a part of mass media discourse and even the Plenipotentiary often refers to it.

Considering the current situation, we can assume, that NRIS is not being regarded as a source of creation and implementation of public policies in Slovakia by the Slovak Government or GPRC.

7 Program of the Slovak Republic Government, Art. 7, Slovak region's development http://www.vlada.gov.sk/data/files/2008_programove-vyhlasenie-vlady.pdf.

8 The SR Government Resolution SR 1/2012.

9 Information from the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Republic Government for Roma Communities as a reaction on the information request handed by the Centre for the Ethnicity and Culture research (no.: USVRK-KUS-20132/000801-002).

10 http://www.minv.sk/swift_data/source/romovia/dokumenty/romska_reforma/hodnotenie_PPOLLAK.pdf.

11 <http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/pollak-politici-romovia/46981-clanok.html>.

12 <http://www.minv.sk/?tlacove-spravy&sprava=vlada-vymenovala-noveho-splnomocnenca-pre-romske-komunity>.

13 http://www.minv.sk/?vzdelavanie_rk; http://www.minv.sk/?pravo_rr.

Integration of NGOs and Local and Regional Authorities into the Roma Related Policy-Making

The number of participants involved in Roma related policy-making has significantly decreased in 2013. The consultations with Civic Society were interrupted after a few meetings with the Ministry of the Interior in 2012 regarding the Roma Reform – The Right Path. Most of the measures stated below were implemented without any public discussion. Considering the absence of a clear strategy defined by the current government, the policies emerged at random, often without any initial document provided to NGOs for evaluation and comments. Often, the public learns about prepared measures given by GPRC only through the Plenipotentiary's declarations, mass media or public events. The experts usually learn about GPRC and ministerial working groups' conclusions only afterwards. This "oral" policy-making makes it difficult for other participants to take part.

The only exception is the working group of GPRC for EU funds in the Programme Period 2014-2020, which has been gradually transformed from a non-formal group into an official working group with its own status. The members of the group are GPRC representatives, specific ministries' representatives and representatives of managing bodies as well as other professionals. The group has met three times to date and the Office introduced its plans for EU funds use for Roma communities in the next Programme Period and offered a wide discussion range on this topic during these meetings.¹⁴

Atlas of Roma Communities 2013

The first results of the project called Atlas of Roma Communities realised by the Regional Centre of United Nations Development Programme in Bratislava in cooperation with Association of Towns and Municipalities in Slovakia, University in Prešov and GPRC¹⁵ were announced in September. It is the second large sociographic mapping of Roma communities within Slovakia. The first took place in 2004. According to the Atlas, the Roma population is located in 37% of Slovak municipalities (in 1,070 out of 2,890 villages). The total number of Roma people living in Slovakia is over 400,000, or 7.45% of the total population. The highest ratios are in the Banská Bystrica region (25%), Košice region (24%) and Prešov region (23%). Also, 46.5% of the Roma population lives integrated within the majority population; 12.9% live concentrated within the villages; 23.8% on the outskirts of the villages and 17% in segregated concentrations.¹⁶

Resignation of the Plenipotentiary for National Minorities

László A. Nagy resigned as Government Plenipotentiary for National Minorities effective 30 June 2013. His decision came as a result of Parliament not approving the amendment of the law regarding the minority language usage. The amendment would have enabled minority language usage in railway stations along with Slovak language.¹⁷

A new person was authorized to manage, regulate and monitor the activities of the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary on 1 July 2013. A new Plenipotentiary has not been announced to date.¹⁸

14 http://www.minv.sk/?spravy_rk&sprava=priprava-programovych-dokumentov-pre-zaclenenie-romskych-komunit-bola-temou-pracovnej-skupiny-splnomocnenca.

15 http://www.minv.sk/?atlas_2013.

16 http://www.minv.sk/?atlas_2013.

17 <http://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/282833-most-hid-vyzval-splnomocnenca-nagya-na-odstupenie/>.

18 <http://www.narodnostnemensiny.gov.sk/poverena-riaditelka-uradu-splnomocnenca-vlady-sr-pre-narodnostne-mensiny-pozvala-na-stretnutie-clenov-vyboru-pre-narodnostne-mensiny-a-etnicke-skupiny/>.

1. EDUCATION

1.1 The Most Important Measures in 2013

1.1.1 Pre-Primary Education

Since January 2013, GPRC has implemented a project called “Early Childhood Investment – Support of Social Innovation and Integration of Roma” together with the Slovak Governance Institute, Roma Educational Fund and the World Bank. The project lasts until the end of 2014 and is financially supported by the European Commission Progress Programme (DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion) and by the Ministry of the Interior/GPRC. The aim of this project is to decrease the language barrier faced by Romani pupils/parents, improve teacher-parent cooperation, improve the cognitive knowledge of children as well as mothers, change the teachers’ approach towards Romani children as well as change the approach to bringing up children in segregated Roma communities, establish a support network for Romani mothers within the communities and increasing the awareness of the importance of education within the Roma community.¹⁹

The national project “*Inclusive Model for Pre-primary Education*” has been put into practise within the monitored period. The project is implemented by Methodical-Pedagogical Centre – a centrally managed organisation of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports – in cooperation with GPRC. The project includes kindergartens in Trnava, Trenčín, Nitra, Žilina, Banská Bystrica, Prešov and Košice regions. These institutions are supposed to educate pupils from socially disadvantaged areas. The project’s main activities include: training teachers to work in marginalised Roma communities and implementing inclusive education in kindergartens. One hundred ten working positions for teacher assistants have been established within this project. These positions had only existed at primary schools until now.²⁰

1.1.2 Inclusive Education

A working group composed of GPRC and the Slovak Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports along with their main leaders – the State Secretary of ministry and the Plenipotentiary of GPRC – reached agreement on establishing a pilot process for mainstreaming children diagnosed with mild mental disability type-A into common primary schools. The pilot project is to be implemented in 60 selected locations in Slovakia in the school year 2015/2016.²¹

On the other hand, the working group for inclusive education, which had been active at the Slovak Government Office since 2011, came to an end after the establishment of the new Slovak Government in 2012 and the elimination of the position of Deputy Prime Minister for Human Rights and National Minorities.

The Slovak Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs has taken over the human rights agenda, but has not shown any interest in continuing the working group. The State Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports promised to establish an advisory committee for inclusive education in March 2013, but has not done so yet.

19 Information from the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Republic Government for Roma Communities as a reaction on the information request handed by the Centre for the Ethnicity and Culture research (no.: USVRK-KUS-20132/000801-002).

20 Ibid.

21 http://www.minv.sk/swift_data/source/romovia/dokumenty/romska_reforma/hodnotenie_PPOLLAK.pdf.

1.1.3 Building New Schools

There have been several analyses pointing out the insufficient capacity of the primary schools, which result in a two-shift regime in dozens of schools. The Slovak Republic Ministry of Finance provided financial support for building new module (container) schools in five locations: Jarovnice, Stráne pod Tatrami, Podhorany, Križová Ves and Kecerovce. All schools are intended for children from marginalised Roma communities. The first container school was opened in Jarovnice by GPRC Plenipotentiary Peter Pollák with a large media presence.²²

1.2 Impact of Measures

1.2.1 The Ombudsman Report

In August, the Ombudsman introduced a *Special Report on issues witnessing serious violations of basic rights and freedoms, along with a proposal to negotiate the issues during the meeting of the National Parliament*. She stated several negative issues regarding the violation of Romani children's right to education.²³

The Ombudsman says in the report based on the research carried out in 21 schools:

[The] current school system does not provide children studying in special classes/schools with the opportunity to continue at higher level of education. Many students from socially disadvantaged areas are therefore excluded from the possibility to get education because of their origin – they are mostly Romani children. This disadvantage plays a major role in their future working life – they have no possibilities to get work and come out of poverty. Romani children do not have any possibilities to study in their native language, not even along with the state language. There are no conditions for the education in their native language and schools are not prepared for this, and they are not going to do so in the nearer future. There is a huge language barrier between school and students, which has an enormous impact on their educational results and it may play a significant role in their output and learning needs assessment. This does not create appropriate conditions for child's development in learning abilities, especially in the time of pre-primary education or within the first school years, as the child's communication is not understandable until he/she is able to understand the state language. We cannot exclude the possibility that these children are not equally treated in some localities or schools because of their origin, and this is not only about the possibility to be educated but also the way they are educated.

There were also several recommendations which, according to the Ombudsman, should be implemented as soon as possible. The Ombudsman requested to speak about this special report in the National Council of the Slovak Republic. The request was turned down in September 2013. The report was marked as "making politics" by the Ministry of Interior,²⁴ "I do not see any reason for my reaction. This report does not meet needed criteria given by law," stated the Home Secretary. On the other hand, several non-governmental organisations supported the Ombudsman's initiative and some international organisations called on the Slovak Government to engage in these issues.²⁵

1.2.2 Building New Schools

Several risks connected with building module (container) schools were pointed out by non-governmental organisations and activists. The first is deepening the segregation of Romani children, especially when these schools are built right in the middle of the Roma settlements or near them. Also, there are concerns about the possible substandard quality of these schools when compared with common schools, especial-

²² <http://www.pluska.sk/regiony/vychodne-slovensko/v-jarovniciach-maju-novu-kontajnerovu-zakladnu-skolu.html>.

²³ <http://www.vop.gov.sk/files/Mimoriadna%20sprava%20VOP.pdf>.

²⁴ <http://romovia.sme.sk/c/6970093/osn-viac-veri-ombudsmanke-ako-kalinakovi-a-policii.html>.

²⁵ <http://romovia.sme.sk/c/6922670/ombudsmanka-poslanci-rezignovali-na-prava-deti.html>.

ly in technical and space issues (gym, canteens, etc.). And finally, there is concern for the future of these schools – they could become a symbol of segregation if they are built only for Romani children.

1.3 Employment

1.3.1 The Most Important Measures in 2013

New law on assistance in material need

The Slovak Republic Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (MLSAF) introduced a new bill on assistance in material need in summer 2013. The obligation to work for a portion of the basic social benefit is the most significant change in the bill. According to the wording of the bill, approved by Parliament in October and entering into force next year, the basic social benefit will be cut by 61.60 Euro for every family member if he/she does not participate in certain defined forms of work which will be offered to him/her. Also, the child benefit is now made contingent on the child's proper school attendance and also introduces the possibility of social benefit income's execution – so-called abolition infringement immunity.²⁶

GPRC Plenipotentiary Peter Pollák said about the new bill, which was prepared with the help of GPRC, as well: *"I am aware of the fact that these measures are among the toughest in the Right Path reform principles, but these changes are necessary for establishing basic fairness, and they act as a motivation for people. They create preconditions for people used to passively receive the help from state to improve their lives and lives of their families."*²⁷

1.3.2 Impact of measures

The new Act on assistance in material need

Many comments by several non-governmental organisations and coalitions have been submitted about the new Act on assistance in material need.²⁸ It was pointed out that the bill violates the ban of forced labour, the right on appropriate material provision, and the international laws protecting children's rights and protecting from discrimination. They proposed to take the bill off the legislative process and establish a public discussion on fundamental issues related to social benefits. Unfortunately, the NGOs' comments have not really been taken into account.

The fact that the social benefits have not been increased for several years has caused a significant decrease of beneficiaries' living conditions. Benefits were finally increased by the 2012 inflation rate, but the resulting amount represents only a small part of the real decrease of incomes since 2009. For several years, experts have also suggested introducing the guaranteed access to "activating work," which represents the motivational part of the social benefits. The state is able to provide these services only to a small number of beneficiaries (about 55,000 people per month). The NGOs also pointed out the risks of the new bill's negative impact when it comes into force next year. According to these organisations, the bill will worsen a part of the Roma community's social situation, especially when applying the new sanctions of the bill. There is also a threat of further decreasing the additional amount of activation work (motivational benefit) as a result of limited capacities of local authorities, which will be now obliged to organize the new scheme of compulsory work (basic benefit).²⁹

Roma employment increase

GPRC Plenipotentiary Peter Pollák stated that GPRC has contributed to the establishment of 590 new work positions.³⁰ These are positions for assisting new projects implementation, namely: "Inclusive Model of Ed-

26 <http://www.nrsr.sk/web/Dynamic/Download.aspx?DocID=392728>.

27 http://www.minv.sk/?spravy_rk&sprava=urad-splnomocnenca-spusta-informacnu-kampan-o-zakone-o-pomoci-v-hmotnej-nudzi.

28 <http://www.mecem.sk/rpa/?id=human&show=23285>.

29 <http://www.scribd.com/doc/154767732/Podporte-pripomienku-k-zakonu-o-hmotnej-nudzi>.

30 <http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/pollak-romovia-problem-riesenie/59881-clanok.html>.

ucation for Pre-Primary Stage of Educational Structure"; "Early Childhood Investment – Social Innovation and Integration for Roma"; "Healthy Communities"; "Roma Civil Guards"; "Purchase of the Technologies and Hardware for New Work Positions' Establishment".³¹

The data on the success of other public policy tools, especially on projects financially supported from structural funds and employment policy tools with the impact on Roma in labour market, are not available. However, we would like to quote Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico's recent statement: *"The unemployment rate is clearly deformed by the Roma population living in Slovakia. We know that it is really difficult for these people to find work, and that they are difficult to be requilified in order they meet the work habits and work discipline which is required. The unemployment rate could be decreased to 8-9 % without this problem."*³²

31 http://www.minv.sk/swift_data/source/romovia/dokumenty/romska_reforma/hodnotenie_PPOLLAK.pdf.

32 <http://www.webnoviny.sk/ekonomika/romovia-zhorsuju-nezamestnanost-let/683802-clanok.html>.

2. HEALTHCARE

2.1 The Most Important Measures in 2013

2.1.1 *The Restoration of the Health Education Assistants Programme: Healthy Communities*

The only relevant long-lasting policy in the healthcare section was the Programme supporting Slovak underprivileged communities' health. In the period between 2009 and 2011, 30 community workers were part of this programme in the section of healthcare education and the programme was administered by the Office of Public Health. The Ministry of Health in Slovakia did not allocate any financial support for its follow-up in 2012, so the programme was stopped.

In early 2013, GPRC started negotiations with the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, and the Ministries of Finance and Interior. The result has been allocated financial support for the programme, Healthy Communities. The first part of the programme consists of training coordinators' assistants and health education assistants. Each of the participants takes part in a training accredited by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports. The second part is the fieldwork itself, focused on 108 localities. This is supervised by 12 coordinators.³³

2.2 Impact of Measures

2.2.1 *The Restoration of the Health Education Assistants Programme: Healthy Communities*

The restoration of this programme is an important success as this is the only long-lasting public sector programme focused on health in Roma communities. Its cancellation in 2012 was an indication of an indifferent attitude of the Government to Roma health needs. Its restoration was not an idea presented by the Ministry of Health but by a new association; Platform for the Support of Disadvantaged Groups' Health. This platform includes 13 entities from different sectors.³⁴ The restored programme is no longer managed by the Ministry of Health, but by GPRC. The good news is the increase of the number of assistants and coordinators from 30 to 120. The aim is to increase this number to 270.

Less positive is the complicated agenda that caused a significant delay of the programme – the assistants started their work in October 2013, three months before the end of the year. The programme should continue throughout the year 2014, however the positions of the assistants are not secured as the state budget for 2014 has not been approved yet. Moving forward, GPRC would like to finance the programme itself and secure its continual functioning in the future.

33 Information from the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Republic Government for Roma Communities as a reaction on the information request handed by the Centre for the Ethnicity and Culture research (no.: USVRK-KUS-20132/000801-002).

34 <http://www.ppzs.sk>.

3. HOUSING

3.1 The Most Important Measures in 2013

3.1.1 New Construction Act

The Ministry of Transport, Construction and Regional Development of the Slovak Republic (MTCRD) has introduced a new Construction Act to replace a 40-year-old law.³⁵ Part of the new Act is designed to eliminate illegal buildings. This causes great concern regarding its impact on Roma communities. The Ministry assumes that there are more than 10,000 illegal buildings and that most of them are in Roma settlements. The Act states that these illegal buildings must be legalized (presumably through renovation and settling legal title) within a year of the Act coming into force, and this poses a significant problem for Roma settlements. According to the bill, there will also be an obligation to remove an illegal building from somebody else's property (constructor, owner of the building, owner of the land). The sanctions for violating law are very strict in this case. Not removing an illegal building could become a criminal offence in the near future.³⁶

The bill has been introduced to the public for discussion by the Ministry, and the discussion should take two months. GPRC Plenipotentiary Peter Pollák expressed his regret for GPRC not being a part of the preparation process for the bill, especially when considering his Reform's main priority is the settlement of land tenure issues.

A meeting between the Plenipotentiary and František Palko, the MTCRD's State Secretary took place in August. The representatives of the Association of Municipalities and Towns, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Affairs, and the Permanent Mission of the Slovak Republic to the International Organisations in Vienna participated as well. The result of these negotiations is the establishment of a special committee responsible for an alternative version focused on Roma settlements. The Plenipotentiary said:

Cooperation with the Slovak Land Fund and with the Ministries of Agriculture, of the Interior and with the State Forestry Office is the solution to this problem. A working group has been established in cooperation with the Association of Municipalities in SR. This group should be responsible for the land settlements as well as for the solutions for this problem. I am afraid there is no solution possible without participation of the Slovak Land Fund. Current owners should be offered an adequate compensation for land which is not usable in any other way for them. It is necessary to point out that our state should be part of the solution as this situation – where Roma people were allowed on somebody else's land – was caused by the state. This situation was ignored for long time before. The state even built infrastructure into these settlements, and in the communist period these illegal buildings obtained their own inventory numbers. And these facts underline the necessity to the state to become a part of the solution as they have to act responsibly. I expect the same responsibility from today's land users to act accordingly and to settle their piece of land as soon as possible. They are expected to purchase these land pieces on their own in the very near future. Nobody in this country gets anything for free, neither Roma should do so.

35 [http://www.telecom.gov.sk/index/index.php?ids=36301&prm2=144426&sword=&date\[od\]=1&date\[om\]=1&date\[or\]=2005&date\[dd\]=12&date\[dm\]=11&date\[dr\]=2013](http://www.telecom.gov.sk/index/index.php?ids=36301&prm2=144426&sword=&date[od]=1&date[om]=1&date[or]=2005&date[dd]=12&date[dm]=11&date[dr]=2013).

36 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MdUdvx3wMQc>.

And the State Secretary of MTCRD added:

The land order is only one part of the solution introduced by MTCRD SR. The second part is to offer a housing perspective. We have to bear in mind that not all of the illegal buildings are suitable for legalisation. Many of them are substandard and do not fulfil the basic housing requirements. According to my information, the negotiations on a new Programme period of 2014–2020 tend to see the possibility of allocating the European funds for social housings within marginalised groups.³⁷

The preparatory process for the Construction Act has not been finished yet. Professional discussions continue to take place, even in autumn 2013.

3.1.2 The Land Settlement

GPRC has worked on the legalisation of the ownership relationships to the land where Roma settlements are found. The Plenipotentiary introduced his aim to perform passportization of land, which could help to illuminate the problem as a whole and to prepare the settlement of land.³⁸

3.1.3 House Construction

The GPRC has launched a pilot programme to develop a methodology for building rental houses and assessing the efficiency of the project. In this way the project could be spread to problematic sites within the country, drawing financial support from EU funds for the Programme period 2014 – 2020.³⁹

3.2 Impact of Measures

The impact of all the above-mentioned measures cannot be evaluated yet.

37 http://www.minv.sk/?spravy_rk&sprava=p-pollak-do-vysporiadania-pozemkov-musi-byt-zainteresovany-stat-a-ich-uzivatelia-romovia.

38 http://www.minv.sk/swift_data/source/romovia/dokumenty/romska_reforma/hodnotenie_PPOLLAK.pdf.

39 Information from the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Republic Government for Roma Communities as a reaction on the information request handed by the Centre for the Ethnicity and Culture research (no.: USVRK-KUS-20132/000801-002).

4. ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

4.1 The Most Important Measures in 2013

4.1.1 National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights

Preparations for the first National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights have been in place since the second half of 2011. The aim of the Strategy was to identify current problems in human rights and set basic priorities for next few years. The date for the introduction of the Strategy to the Slovak Government has been postponed three times. In fact, the preparation has become active only since the first half of 2013. Some topics included in the Strategy (gender issues, rights of LGBTI) have caused a huge public discussion, postponing the Strategy introduction from September 2013 to June 2014. The work schedule for this period has been approved.⁴⁰ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Affairs took patronage over the preparatory work on the Strategy and the Minister is supposed to appoint a counsel for its preparation and implementation. He has not yet done so.⁴¹

4.1.2 The Case of Police Brutality in Moldava nad Bodvou

The largest political scandal relating to the Roma within the monitoring period has been a police raid on a Roma settlement Budulovská in Moldava nad Bodvou.

The non-governmental organisation ETP Slovakia, which has been active within this area for long time, stated:

On Wednesday, 19 June at about 5PM, SR Police came to Budulovská village in approximately 20 cars with approximately 50 masked policemen and they started an inspection without any previous notice or communication with settlement inhabitants. The inhabitants did not put up any resistance. More than 30 people were hurt during the incident (including a few-month-old baby, which became unconscious and had to be treated by the ambulance doctor and taken to the hospital after the incident – the cause of his/her injury is unclear so far). Several settlement inhabitants had to be medically treated after the incident and the truncheon traces are visible even on young children's bodies. The houses and properties of inhabitants were also considerably damaged during the incident (broken windows, furniture, scattered things, and damaged vehicles. Several inhabitants were taken to the police station in Moldava nad Bodvou, where they were physically attacked by the policemen. The detainees were released afterwards.⁴²

It was reported by media that, according to witnesses, doctors did not want to treat Roma after the incident. The police rejected any responsibility for violating the law or brutality in this incident. The police action was planned and focused on a search for wanted persons and things, as stated by the District Police Directorate in Košice-suburb.

40 <http://www.radavladyp.gov.sk/zacina-sa-siroka-diskusia-o-celostatnej-strategii-na-ochranu-a-podporu-ludskych-prav-v-sr/>.

41 The Resolution of the Government Council for Human Rights and National Minorities.

42 <http://www.scribd.com/doc/163197259/Podkladove-materialy-k-rokovaniu-vyboru-NRSR-pre-LP-k-policajnemu-zasahu-v-Moldave-ETP>.

The police declared that publicized information about their violating the law and being brutal was defamatory, and they even claimed the information was motivated by an attempt to get compensation for property damaged before the police raid. They also denied the injury of the minor, as previously reported by the mass media.⁴³

Minister of Interior Robert Kaliňák and Chief of Police Tibor Gašpar declared that the raid was appropriate, and that hundreds of similar ones are performed annually.

According to local Roma people, this action was police revenge for an incident that happened a few days earlier, involving a confrontation between the State Police Guard and some Roma residents. During the police intervention, a mentally disabled Roma man was detained and subsequently arrested for an illegally long time.⁴⁴

4.2 Impact of Measures

4.2.1 The National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights

Repeated delay of Strategy approval had a negative impact on developing public policies regarding discrimination. The recent action plan for preventing discrimination, racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance was in force between 2009 and 2011. Since then, no other action plan has been introduced or even prepared. The Strategy for Roma Integration up to 2020 refers to the one that should be prepared, as this was supposed to be a part of upcoming National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights.

4.2.2 The Case of the Police Brutality in Moldava nad Bodvou

This action has been investigated by the Ministry of Interior; however no police misconduct was found. The report specified:

Based on the information ascertained from our investigation, the activity of policemen participating in its planning, announcing, and performance can be characterised as appropriate police activity.... The appropriate number of policemen were allocated for this police activity for the successful completion of the task, even when considering the incident from 16.06.2013 in Moldava nad Bodvou. The intent to discriminate against a particular minority or even against particular witnesses of the event from 16.06.2013 in Moldava nad Bodvou has not been proven by the inspection. Regarding the place of the action, the fact that this was a Roma settlement was not a reason for not performing this action.⁴⁵

The Ombudsman decided to investigate the incident and her conclusions are significantly different from those of the Ministry. In its report the Ombudsman stated:

The proof of identity process is given by law and if the police had kept to it, it would have taken significantly more than the stated 30 minutes to prove the identity of approximately 250 or 300 people. Logically, the police did not follow the process. It is illogical to perform a search action over matters and people in front of the buildings and not inside them (only if that were not the search action). The police needed to search for things and people even in the inside of houses and if they did, they would enter the houses without the house owner's permission, and because they did not have the permission to enter the dwelling or to perform house search at their disposal they violated the basic human right to inviolability of person's home.

43 <http://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/231119/video-razia-kuklacov-v-osade-mlatili-zeny-a-deti/>.

44 <http://romovia.sme.sk/c/6898146/patracia-akcia-v-moldave-nad-bodvou-bola-ina.html>.

45 <http://www.scribd.com/doc/158485338/Sprava-o-kontrola-k-zasahu-v-Moldave-nad-Bodvou>.

The fact that the search action was performed without any of the above-mentioned documents (permission to enter the dwelling or to perform a house search) as the documents' acquirement could cause difficulties, is such a serious deficiency, that the Ombudsman was forced to point it out. The Ombudsman continued:

*The Identified process proves that even the police knew they were not going to have all the needed documents (permission to enter the dwelling or house search) at their disposal and consequently they were going to violate the basic human rights, yet they approved the action, anyway. And this is something that raises concern. The police cannot ignore human rights simply when needed. This detection is a serious warning to the police to change the controlling mechanisms of its functioning. However, the fact that this procedure has been approved by the Members of Parliament should cause even greater concern.*⁴⁶

Although the Ombudsman addressed her report to the Parliament, Members of the National Council refused to deal with it. As mentioned before, the Plenipotentiary of the SR Government refused to investigate this case as he stated his competences are not sufficient. However, he introduced measures to the Home Secretary to avoid such incidents in the future. The Plenipotentiary would like to have more Roma in the Police and he suggests keeping visual records from each police action.⁴⁷

Two pilot training courses were planned for autumn 2013 with the aim to provide the specialists with new skills and knowledge for more efficient work activities and to enable sharing experience among them. This training course has been prepared by the Department of Crime Prevention of the Minister of the Interior (DCPMI) SR in cooperation with the Office of the Slovak Republic Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities and funded by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.⁴⁸

4.2.3 Working Group on the Positive Measures

The approval of the amendment to the Antidiscrimination Act enabling positive measures was considered the most positive aspect of our previous report. It was positively rated by experts in the expert survey published by the Milan Šimečka Foundation in September.⁴⁹

As there are concerns regarding the proactive approach of institutions in implementing these measures, a working group was established with the support of the Ministry of Justice and initiated by the Centre for Research on Ethnicity and Culture. This group should focus on methodological guidelines for the adoption of positive measures. The first meeting was held in September 2013.

46 <http://www.vop.gov.sk/files/Mimoriadna%20sprava%20VOP.pdf>.

47 <http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/pollak-videozaznam-pollak/53996-clanok.html?mostViewedArticlesInSectionTab=2>.

48 http://www.minv.sk/?spravy_rk&sprava=splnomocnenec-apeluje-na-zavedenie-opatreni-ktore-by-prispeli-k-objektivnemu-posudzovaniu-policialnych-zasahov.

49 <http://odz.sk/nadacia-m-simecku-odpocet-plnenia-zavazkov-vlady-sr-vo-vztahu-k-inkluzii-romov/>.

5. FUNDING

5.1 Estimation of Funds Spent on Measures in the Framework of the NRIS or Settting of Policy Measures for Improving the Situation of Roma People in 2012 and 2013

The Decade's Revised National Action Plan for Roma Population Integration 2005–2015, for the period 2011–2015, adopted by the SR Government Resolution no. 522/2011 contained only partially defined funding for some measures. Subsequent adoption of the NRIS in 2011 shows the need to specify further action plans, especially budget planning. In many Strategy articles this refers to the next Programme period 2014–2020.

However, this does not mean that there have not been any financial sources used for marginalised Roma communities in Slovakia.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Research and Sports estimated the cost of implementing measures from the Operation Program on Education at 4,100,000 Euro in excess of funds allocated in the state budget in 2013.

The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family SR (MLSAF) prepared three national projects supported by the European Social Fund (ESF) with Social Development Fund (FSR) help, totalling 16,557,000 € within the Operation Plan Employment and Social Inclusion (OP EaSI). The financing rate was set at 15% from the state budget and 85% from ESF.

The Ministry of Transport, Construction and Regional Development administers the *State Housing Development Fund* to support rental housing. An amount of 24,550,000 € was allocated for this programme in 2011. Fifteen applications for construction of 153 housing units totalling 2,561,140 € were delivered to the support of construction of the lower standard housing in 2011. Construction of approximately 2,900 housing units has been supported within this programme since 2011.

At the same time, measures or programme support mentioned in the above chapter and coordinated by GPRC were implemented.

Within the period from 2012 to 2013, the following financial sources were allocated (some of the programmes last until 2015):

1. Construction of five module basic schools – **1,000,000 €**
2. Early childhood investment – support of social innovation and integration of Roma people – **933,645 €**
3. Inclusive model for pre-primary education) – **7,372,029 €**
4. Health Education in 108 communities – **450,000 €**

5.1.1 Budgetary Allocations within Policies Related to Roma

GPRC plays the role of the Central Coordinating Body for the Horizontal Priority of Marginalised Roma Communities area (HP MRC). The Annual Report 2012 on the status of this problem published in July 2013⁵⁰ states the level of financial funds allocated to marginalized Roma communities through six Operational Programmes (OP) projects. These Regional Operational Programmes (ROP) – Employment and Social Inclusion (EaSI); Education; Health; Competitiveness and Economic Growth; and Environment – brought the possibility of direct support for Roma communities. The possibility for local administrations (and in some projects even for other types of institutions) to apply for support in demand-oriented projects existed parallel to OPs. This possibility was available for all applications except the ones for Local Strategy of Comprehensive Approach (LSCA). It was possible to finance these projects within some of the above-mentioned Ops. For example, OP EaSI 2.1: The support of social inclusion for individuals at risk of social exclusion or socially excluded through care services development that focused on marginalised Roma communities and 2.2: The support of establishing equal opportunities in job market access and the support of underprivileged groups' integration into the job market that focused on marginalised Roma communities; or within Regional Operation Programme 4.1.c: Development projects for municipalities affected by floods; and within OP Education measure 3.1: The Education level increase by members of marginalised Roma communities.

Last but not least, projects that indirectly support Roma communities should also be taken into account as they hold promise for real improvement of employment, education, health and environment in those communities. As stated in the Annual Report of HP MRC 2012,⁵¹ most of the projects mentioned in Table 1 were implemented through demand-oriented projects within measures 2.1. and 2.2.

Table 1. The aims of HP MRC through Comprehensive Approach – Direct impact (2011–2012)

Priority section	Use of EU funds in 2011 EU source in €	Use of EU funds in 2012 EU source in €
Education	333,372.00	9,048,856.13
Employment	1,271,652.00	28,933,524.47
Health	144,636.00	4,134,007.44
Housing	0.00	8,604,011.81
GRAND TOTAL	1,749,660.00	50,720,399.85

Source: Information from HP MRC, MISR, GPRC.

LSCA is a set of project aims focused on MRC problem-solving. These project aims generate synergistic influence on every aspect of Roma community life together and they influence the improvement of living conditions in Roma communities.

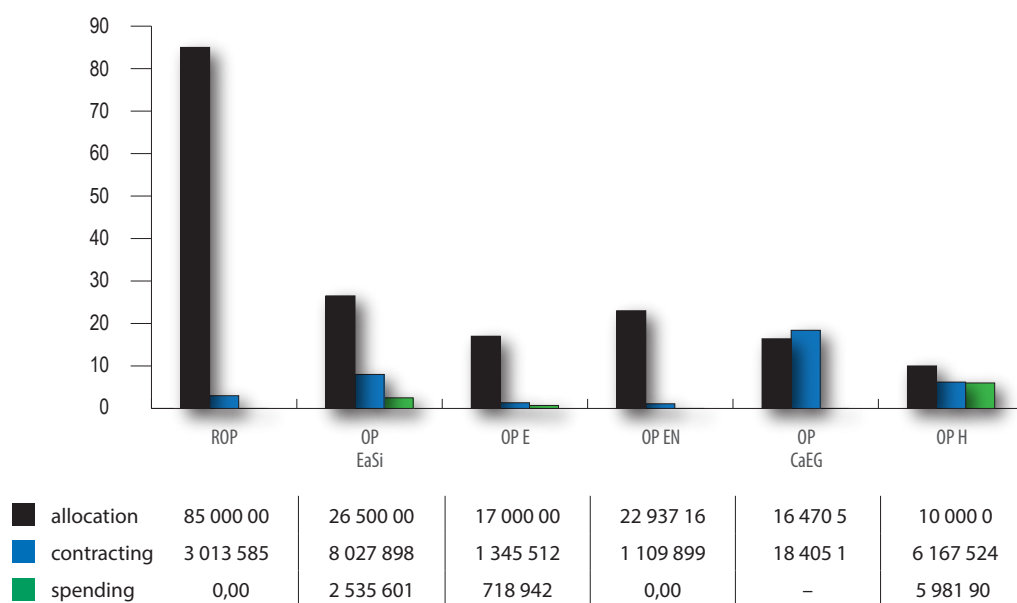
⁵⁰ <http://www.minv.sk/?monitorovanie>.

⁵¹ <http://www.minv.sk/?monitorovanie>.

Table 2. Financial implementation LSCA, status as of 31. 10. 2013

OP	Contracted indicative allocations for (LSCA+NP) (between MI SR and RO OP)		Contracted projects (LSCA+NP) (EU sources +Slovak budget)		Status of the contract from the allocation
	Source	EUR	Number	EUR	%
ROP	EU	85,000,000.00	16	3,013,585.11	3.55
OP EaSi	EU	26,500,000.00	17	8,027,898.73	30.29
OP E	EU+SR	17,000,000.00	14	1,345,512.26	7.91
OP En	EU	22,937,163.00	3	1,109,899.73	4.84
OP CaEG	EU+ŠR	16,470,588.00	41	18,405,188.51	111.75
OP H	EU	10,000,000.00	9	6,167,524.27	61.68
GRAND TOTAL		177,907,751.00	100	38,069,608.61	21.40

Graph 1. Allocation illustrating, contracting and use of projects LSCA as of 31.10.2013



Projects with indirect HP MRC support are projects not directly focused on MRC, but their results influence the employment, education, health and living conditions of MRC indirectly.

Table 3. Financial Implementation of Projects with the indirect HP MRC support as of 31. 10. 2013

Operational program	Number of contracted projects	Contracted amount in € (EU sources)
Regional OP	754	567,020,804.89
OP Employment	163	469,022,919.81
OP Competitiveness and Economy Growth	84	82,608,414.49
OP Education	65	91,975,587.32
OP Research and Development	19	30,767,588.31
OP Employment and Social Inclusion	106	16,456,125.80
OP Healthcare	45	217,078,101.99
OP Bratislava region	15	4,808,932.87
GRAND TOTAL	1,229	1,479,738,475.48

Subsidy Scheme of GPRC

The aim of the subsidy scheme of GPRC provided under the Act no. 526/2010 of Legal Code is to fund activities focused on support of social and cultural needs of the Roma community, in particular on ensuring social assistance – establishment and sustainability of community centres; ensuring a better standard of housing units for citizens on a low social-cultural level; development, protection and revival of cultural values; furtherance of art works and cultural activities; support for teaching and education; development of free time sports activities and many more.

The subsidy scheme of GPRC was not implemented in 2012. The reason for this was the transfer of GPRC from the Government Office to the Ministry of the Interior. The whole budget was allocated for the following year – 2013. The annual budget for the subsidy scheme is approximately 800,000 Euro. To date, 1,200,000 Euro has been allocated to the subsidy scheme and the remaining amount (up to 1,600,000 Euro, which is total amount for 2012 and 2013) was assigned for emergencies.

Supported Areas in Subsidy Call in 2013

- Support for education and teaching
- Support for employment and employability
- Support for project documentation and construction of houses
- Support for strategic and development documents
- Support for culture and mass media

The Evaluation Committee of GPRC has approved 68 projects and allocated the above-mentioned budget of 1,200,000 Euro, however this did not happen until October 2013. The demand from non-profit organisations and other institutions was high. There were 220 projects that were not approved because of the lack of fulfilment of the criteria and 50 more because of the non-compliance under the Act subsidy scheme.

5.1.2 System of Budget Allocations

In Programme Period 2007–2013 Cohesion policy in EU was implemented through the contributions concentrated into three main aims: **Convergence, Regional Competitiveness and Employment, and European Territorial Cooperation**. The National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF SR) includes only the first two aims in accordance with Regulations.

In the Convergence aim, the financial support from ERDF and ESF funds is focused on regions where the GDP per capita has been 75% of the average of the enlarged EU after new Regulations adoption in the last three years. In Slovakia this means the whole country except the Bratislava region.

When being funded from the Cohesion Fund, the Convergence aim covers those member countries in which GNI did not reach 75% of the average of the enlarged EU in the three years before Regulations adoption and that also have a convergence programme. The entire Slovak Republic meets these criteria.

The NSRF SR Strategy is based on three strategic priorities and their three aims, which they have tried to meet through funding projects in Programme Period 2007–2013:

1. Infrastructure and regional accessibility (The increase of regional infrastructure density and the efficiency of public services connected with this infrastructure)
2. Knowledge Economy (Development of sustainable economic growth sources and increase of service and industry competitiveness)
3. Human Resources (Employment increase, labour force quality growth for knowledge economy needs, and increase of social inclusion of high-risk groups)

NSRF SR Strategy defines the horizontal priorities (HP), which influence the aims of NSRF SR in four areas. Every HP's priority was to fulfill its designated aim concerning several NSRF SR priorities. One of the HPs is marginalised communities. The aim of this priority was to increase employment rate and employability, MRC members' knowledge level and improvement of their living conditions.

Every request for grant assistance had to be approved by a group of experts under several criteria:

- Appropriateness and effectiveness of the project
- Method of project implementation
- Budget and cost efficiency
- Administrative, expert and technical capacity of the applicant
- Sustainability of the project

5.1.3 *Strengthening the Capacity of Roma Organizations*

European Social Fund

One of the measures of the OP Employment and Social Inclusion (OP EaSI) is to focus on capacity building and local authorities' quality improvement. One of the framework activities was to support Human Resources development and improve the quality of services provided by non-profit organisations. The most recent call within this measure took place in 2010. This call was not focused on MRC. It was an indirect type of support. According to published results, at least three Roma non-profit organisations were approved.

Norwegian Financial Mechanism

The Fund for NGOs, focused on the development of civic society strengthening, increasing social justice, democracy and developing sustainability, is a part of EHP Financial Mechanism implementation in 2009–2014. The financial contribution for this fund is 6,903,000 Euro for the given period. At minimum, 10% of the total eligible expenditure is provided for the support of children and youth. The Fund is focused on specific minority's needs including the Roma minority.

The call for NGOs was announced early in 2013. Four priorities have been set within this call. One of them is active citizenship. Within this measure, the priority area that focused on participative democracy was supported, including tools of participative democracy in praxis, advocacy and anti-corruption activities, participation at public policy making, etc. Open Society Foundation Slovakia awarded a grant to 26 projects and three out of them were for Roma NGOs, with another three providing activities focused on Roma people. Allocations for NGO project support amounted to 1,929,173,41 EURO.

The above-mentioned grants are surely not sufficient for meeting needs of capacity increase within Roma non-profit organisations. There is no satisfying form of support nor ability to implement project funded by the EU funds and there is a lack of support for active citizenship and advocacy skills improvement.

5.2 Budget Planning for the Period Between 2014 and 2020

5.2.1 Allocation of EU Funds for Roma Inclusion in the 2014–2020

The SR Government decided on the number and structure of OPs, their management authorities (Ministries), and their intermediary bodies (ministries and, in the case of integrated regional OP, eight regional local authorities' offices as well) for the period 2014–2020:

1. Research and Innovations
2. Integrated Infrastructure
3. Human Resources
4. Environment Quality
5. Integrated Regional OP
6. Efficient Local Authorities
7. Technical Support.

All OPs (except the last one) will be funded from combined sources of EU (ERDF and ESF) Central fund coordination will be transferred from the Ministry of Transport, Construction and Regional Development to the newly created position of Deputy Prime Minister in the next Programme Period. Roma inclusion should become a part of OP HR. It should be implemented through two priority axes (funding one from ESF and one from ERDF). This OP will be managed by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. MLSAF agencies will function as Intermediary Bodies of Management Authority (IBMA) for two priority axes focused on social inclusion as well as for the priority employment. The two priority axes that are focused on inclusion of Roma people will be implemented via the SR Ministry of the Interior and its intermediary bodies. There is an active discussion about the possibility of the GPRC assuming the role of IBMA. The second option is another section within the Ministry of the Interior or even another independent unit. As for the financial allocations, they are not officially known. However, there was discussion on the MLSAF proposal of 250 mil. EURO for Roma inclusion priority (200 mil. EURO from ERDF and 50 mil. EURO from ESF). We think this amount is not sufficient for the real need of so-called soft type projects funded from ESF sources. The stated amount does not even cover already established projects in Slovakia which have their justification. (Note: the budget of the National Project for Field Social Workers (NP FSW) was approximately 30 mil. Euro for a period of 5 + 2 years, but the current Programme period is longer – 7 + 2 years).

The GPRC estimated the total amount needed for projects and programmes focused on Roma inclusion within 2014–2020 implementations at 257 mil. Euro. On the other hand, the amount of allocations from ERDF seems too high as the infrastructure investments should be realized through a new Integrated Regional OP.

5.2.2 Involvement of Roma Organizations/Experts in the Planning of the EU Funds for the 2014–2020 Periods

The preparatory work for future OP Human Resources and its coordination is managed by the MLSAF, but the part concerning Roma inclusion is delegated to GPRC based within the Ministry of Interior. In Slovakia, the five-year project A Bridge to Europe (Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma) is implemented thanks to financial support from the Open Society Institute. Its aim is an efficient use of EU funds for Roma communities. The Consortium of NGOs (Roma Institute, Institute for Good Governance and EPIC employment services) has been established alongside this project to provide technical support in the preparation process for the next Programme Period 2014–2020.

The Consortium cooperates with GPRC very intensively and supports it through the parts of the project preparation concerning the proposed priority of Roma Inclusion and by the negotiations with MLSAF and other Slovak authorities as well as with European Commission representatives. This Consortium consults on proposals with other non-profit organisations, experts and academics. GPRC established an interdepartmental working group including municipalities' representatives, non-profit organisations and local authorities with the aim to prepare the Programme Period 2014–2020. This group obtains continuous information about steps taken by GPRC and has the opportunity to comment, consult and interfere in the activities

of authorities, districts, villages and NGOs. This participative mechanism is new to Slovakia. This was not possible in the past and it is considered a very positive change, allowing Roma people to participate in the important topic of how best to use structural funds.

However, the negative aspect is that all the decisions are made by GPRC and their IBMA bodies, where neither experts on Roma inclusion nor GPRC representatives take part. How can we speak about the positive impact on the new Programme Period for structural funds 2014-2020 if there is no guarantee for Roma non-profit organisations' proposals to be accepted and implemented into the new programming period of EU funds and its priorities?



6. OTHER INFORMATION

The European Commission evaluated the status of the approved National Roma Integration Strategies in all EU member countries in its Communication of May 2012.⁵²

In its assessment, the Commission relied on the information provided in the strategies and focused on the specific issues highlighted in the EU Framework under the four key priority areas. As the aim of the EU Framework is to bring about a change in the approach to Roma inclusion from scattered, project-based and unrelated interventions to a comprehensive approach embracing all four key areas through an integrated and coordinated effort, the assessment also examined whether such strategic thinking could be seen in the strategies.

The European Commission points out positive aspects of the approved strategies but also weaknesses and gaps in the key areas. We would like to draw attention to how these recommendations have been met in Slovakia.

Although the Commission points out a high rate of segregation and recommends deeper focus on desegregating education, we have to state that the segregation of Roma children in common schools persists and the critical final judgement in the civil case of the segregation practices in Šarišské Michal was not taken as a cue by the state to support the elimination of segregation comprehensively. Even the proportion of Roma children within pre-school education has not improved. The ratio of Roma to non-Roma children is still very low and there appears to be no tendency for improvement in this field.

In the employment section, the Commission points out that high inactivity, long-term unemployment and low skill levels should be addressed by more specific measures and supported by adequate budgets. The Slovak Government created a new Act on social assistance, but it has been criticised since the beginning for its unconstitutionality. The impact of this law is crucial for many Roma families and surely does not meet the recommendations to help create solutions for their difficult situation; it also means the reduction of their incomes from approximately 220 € to 65 € for many Roma families. There was a protest of Slovak Anti-Poverty Network sent to the President of the Slovak Republic requesting that he not sign it, referring to the article of the Constitution dealing with the human rights for every person – the right on human dignity.

In the Health sector, a positive development is the start of the Healthy Communities programme under the patronage of The Slovak Republic Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities. Despite a significant delay, this programme has established approximately 80 working places for coordinators and health education assistants. On the other hand, there are not yet any approved systematic measures to address Roma women's high vulnerability in the area of their reproduction rights and gender inequality. Although there are no data mapping discrimination in the area of health care, the NGOs active in this problem state that there is segregation in gynaecological and delivery wards. The Commission recommends defining clear actions, responsibilities and budgets. Even though the Commission evaluated many aspects of this topic in Strategy positively, there are no other activities focused on increased hygiene measures in Roma settlements or even resettlements of dwellings that have a high health risk, besides the Healthy Communities Programme.

52 SWD (2012)133 final.

Housing interventions have been very rare during the monitored time. No laws have been approved to enable people living in illegal housing and settlements to become entitled to housing benefits. Housing policy is not accompanied by so-called “soft” measures, e.g. area social work, education measures and measures for increasing employment.

According to the NRIS, the first step in implementing the EU framework⁵³ – which has been addressed to the European Parliament, European Council, European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee for Regions – recommends that EU member countries interact with regional and local authorities. Member countries (Slovakia as well) should ensure that the approved Strategy is meeting the regional and local plans. The Commission points out that if we want to achieve some changes, we have to cooperate with local and regional authorities. According to available information, this has not happened in Slovakia.

Another recommendation is to cooperate with civil society intently, as this can contribute to integration and help build between majority and Roma minority. Again, we have to state that the Slovak Government was not able to prepare or propose any measures sufficient and relevant to these recommendations. Possibilities for non-profit organisations to take part in the monitoring of Strategy implementation are part of this area as well. The results of the Subsidy Scheme have only been published in October 2013. The Scheme is coordinated and allocated by the Coordination Programme for NRIS implementation. A small positive of all this is that one Roma non-profit organisation was granted funds for monitoring.

Important issues from the Commission document are the allocation of funds, (national sources and EU funds), and the obligation to monitor the transformation and enable the policy adjustments. Member countries are asked to solve the Roma integration issue in their national reform programmes accordingly. No information on the Slovak Government’s intention to include the Roma Marginalised Communities (MRC) issues into the National Reform Strategy was available at the time of writing this report. The Commission requires EU member countries to ensure that anti-discrimination legislation is adequately enforced on their territory.

With the aim to influence the public opinion positively, the Slovak republic took part in the Council of Europe campaign called “Dosta! – Go Behind Prejudices, Meet Roma” on 5th November. The campaign was opened by the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Republic Government for Roma Communities, Peter Pollák, in the presence of the Council of Europe and European Commission authorised representatives in Košice.

At present, the preparation of the new Programme Period for the Structural Funds (SF) 2014-2020 is in progress and the Slovak Government has submitted the Strategy draft for approval at the time of closing this report. Consequently, the results are not known.

53 <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2012:0226:FIN:SK:PDF>.



In the pilot year of 2012, the Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation supported reports from civil society coalitions in seven countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia and Spain) and the Roma Initiatives Office commissioned an additional report from the Czech Republic.

In the reports, civil society coalitions supplement or present alternative information to Decade Progress Reports submitted by Participating Governments in the Decade of Roma Inclusion and to any reports submitted by State parties to the European Commission on implementation of their National Roma Integration Strategy (NRIS). These reports are not meant to substitute for quantitative monitoring and evaluation by State authorities but to channel local knowledge into national and European policy processes and reflect on the real social impact of government measures. The civil society reports provide additional data to official ones, proxy data where there is no official data, or alternative interpretation of published data. All reports are available at <http://www.romadecade.org/civilsocietymonitoring>.

When the European Commission requested further input for assessing NRIS impact in 2012 and 2013, the Decade Secretariat supported the same civil society coalitions to update and streamline their reports.

The project is coordinated by the Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation in cooperation with the Open Society Foundation's Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma program and the Roma Initiatives Office.



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