



Evaluation of Efficiency of the Local Mechanisms of Social Inclusion of Roma

RESUME



Government
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of Serbia



SOCIAL INCLUSION
AND
POVERTY REDUCTION
UNIT



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ТИМ ЗА СОЦИЈАЛНО
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**Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit Cabinet of the Prime
Minister of the Government for European Integrations**

Evaluation of Efficiency of the Local Mechanisms of Social Inclusion of Roma

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Contents

RESUME	3
GENERAL FINDINGS	3
SUCCESS FACTORS	4
FAILURE FACTORS	5
FINDINGS ABOUT INDIVIDUAL MECHANISMS.....	6
RECOMMENDATIONS	8

Resume

The subject of this study is the analysis of programmes and mechanisms of social inclusion of Roma in Serbia, implemented by the National Employment Service, the social welfare centres, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Science, Education and Technological Development, the Office for Human and Minority Rights and local governments in 11 selected municipalities and cities in Serbia. The study was initiated and supported by the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister of the Government for European Integration of the Republic of Serbia. The initiative aimed to assess whether the observed mechanisms, individually and summarily, respond to the objectives and priorities in the domain of social inclusion of Roma.

The Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015), as well as the Strategy for Improvement of the Position of Roma (2009) identified education, housing, health and employment as areas crucial for reduction of poverty among the Roma. In accordance with the strategic framework, several programmes were launched in Serbia: a programme of teaching assistants at the Ministry of Education, a project of health mediators at the Ministry of Health and a programme of Roma coordinators within the local governments. The line ministry in charge of employment and the National Employment Service developed additional measures for activation and employment of Roma through the national action plans/employment 2009, 2010, 2011. The centres for social welfare are the only institution with no specific programmes targeting this minority. Notwithstanding, they have been included in the present analysis as they deal with basic subsistence problems of the vulnerable population, a big part of which are Roma. All the above mechanisms and institutions for social inclusion of Roma have been established in some 20 cities and municipalities in Serbia.

Aiming to develop the study and starting from the strategic and programmatic framework of social inclusion of Roma, the research team of CENTER Public Policy Research Centre conducted, in October 2012, 65 interviews with the representatives of the National Employment Service, social welfare centres, teaching assistants, health mediators, Roma coordinators, representatives of local governments and relevant ministries and other Government bodies. The findings and recommendations presented herein for each specific mechanism, as well as those referring to cooperation and coordination between them, the success and failure factors are based on this research.

GENERAL FINDINGS

The findings of this research point to enormous differences in the way the observed institutions deal with the problems of Roma as the beneficiaries of their services. There exists **programmatic asymmetry** between the mechanisms: teaching assistants, health mediators and Roma coordinators are programmes of line ministries and local governments that target Roma problems. Centres for social welfare are the institutions working with different vulnerable categories and their programmes do not recognize the Roma as a specific beneficiary group. The National Employment Service has introduced the programmes for the Roma in 2010, but the number and capture of these programmes remains limited. The differences of approach impacted the results achieved, and thus the teaching assistants' and the health mediators' programmes are considered to have achieved tangible results.

There is also notable **asymmetry in utilization of data**. Thus, Roma coordinators and local governments have neither data on the profile and the needs of the Roma minority nor access to the databases of other institutions. NES and CSWs keep files, albeit limited, on all their beneficiaries. Even when Roma are identified as a specific category (NES registries), it is only those that declare themselves as Roma. CSWs do not keep registries based on ethnic affiliation. The most informative database about the Roma population is that of the Ministry of Health, but they do not share it with the other systems.

The findings show almost all mechanisms and institutions, with the exception of teaching assistants, to be primarily directed to **cooperation** with the social welfare centres. This indicates that the needs of Roma remain in the primary domain of CSW work and that the CSWs are the key institution in charge of resolving their individual, basic subsistence problems.

The collocutors from all the programmes consider **their work important** for the Roma beneficiaries, but differences exist. While some perceive their work as technical support (NES and CSWs), others believe they contribute to the more general aim of social inclusion of the Roma minority, in addition to their specific mandates.

Even though discrimination was not a topic of this study, it was noted as a problem faced by the Roma in all areas of social inclusion. **Discrimination** is mentioned by most of the collocutors, but they fail to recognise it within their own ranks. Of all the observed institutions, only the Ministry of Health introduced trainings for health mediators on how to identify cases of beneficiary discrimination and developed a rulebook setting down formal response to it.

SUCCESS FACTORS

With respect to success factors, none of the identified factors *per se* was recognized as guarantor of success of operation of the five mechanisms, though some may be assumed to be preconditions. These are primarily local action plans and the budgets adopted for implementation thereof. Personal involvement and sensitization for work with the Roma, as well as motivation of beneficiaries have been identified as very important to the efforts towards a successful programme implementation. A coordinator who is more involved contributes to the visibility of Roma problems in a local community. The support and understanding of local communities is an important link for both the operation of coordinators and adoption of LAPs, as well as for planning budgets for their execution.

The existence of **local action plans** (LAPs) in the area of social inclusion of Roma and the budget for their implementation proves to be a key prerequisite for solving the problems of Roma in their communities. The LAPs, irrespective of the quality of documents, have a cohesive function and become a reference framework for the programmes and activities focused on social inclusion of Roma. In the majority of the cities visited (six of eleven) there are no LAPs, either because they were never adopted (Novi Sad, Surdulica, Zrenjanin), because their timeframe had expired (Bujanovac, Kragujevac), or because they were never “extrapolated” from the existing municipal strategies although Roma were recognized as a category of priority (Jagodina). Most of the municipalities have earmarked budgets for the implementation of LAPs. In absolute amounts, the largest funds are allocated by the cities of Kragujevac, Pančevo and Sombor. Interestingly, according to the data of 2011 Census of Population, these municipalities also have a below-the-average share of Roma in the overall population.

Although the institute of **Roma coordinators** proved of a relatively limited scope, their work is relevant as the visibility of the Roma problems in a local community depends on their involvement. These conditions were identified as crucial to the successful work of the coordinators: that their post with clearly set objectives and duties, exists in the organigram and that their work is monitored through the local action plans. It is also important that these be supported by the budgets earmarked for LAP implementation and for the work of the coordinators themselves. Successful coordinators have two roles at the very least: that of mediators and of advocates of Roma rights in the community. The support of municipal structures to their work is also relevant. The posts of coordinators are best organised in municipalities where greatest funds are allocated within the LAP budgets (Kragujevac, Pančevo and Sombor).

The findings show that **sensitization** for work with them is *sine qua non* of success. However, there are considerable differences between the institutions: In the programmes it offers, the National Employment Service pays least attention to the specific characteristics and needs of Roma. The situation is similar at the social welfare centres: although Roma represent the majority of their beneficiaries, they remain almost invisible as a separate category assisted by the CSWs. Thus, these centres have neither insight nor do they systematically follow up on the results of their services and programmes with respect to social inclusion of this population. The other three mechanisms are much better sensitized for work with the Roma beneficiaries. Among them, health mediators are the best informed about the needs and problems of the Roma. All the institutions and mechanisms believe **motivation of beneficiaries** to participate in programmes to be the key to their success. While all the other institutions perceive this motivation to be very strong and thus the infrequent drop out from programmes, the majority of respondents at the NES see motivation as a crucial problem and believe that the programmes targeting Roma are not successful for their lack of motivation to partake in them.

FAILURE FACTORS

The key failure factors identified are inefficient management within mechanisms, absence of coordination between the mechanisms and non-existence of integrated social services. The consequence of these is the reduced capacity to respond to beneficiary needs.

Although this analysis may imply that existence of an efficient system of **management** does not suffice for success of a particular mechanism, absence of this factor evidently and largely precludes success. Therefore, absence of efficient management has been identified as one of the notable factors of failure, and that on the example of Roma coordinators' work. Since their place in the system has not been clearly defined, it reflects on the vaguely set objectives, non-existence of work plans, oftentimes in lack of transparent control of the work done and a clear hierarchy. And so they "wander" within the system and recognition of the problems of Roma by the municipal decision-makers mostly depends on their personal dedication and leadership talent.

In not one single case has **coordination** between the existing mechanisms been identified - neither at national nor at the local level, or among these two. Cooperation was ascertained as a sporadic phenomenon only, and in as much as the actors thought it necessary for completion of tasks. The reason for this lies in systemic solutions, as each of the mechanisms was established on the basis of independent actions be it through the operation of line ministries or municipal administration.

The Failure of employment programmes is largely a consequence of absence of a mechanism of **integrated social services** committing both CSWs and NES to a more active search of solutions for their able bodied beneficiaries who continuously receive financial assistance. In such a setting, an unemployed beneficiary is referred to social benefits and the recipient of social welfare assistance is not motivated to find a job.

FINDINGS ABOUT INDIVIDUAL MECHANISMS

Although the observed mechanisms and institutions differ in their organisation and level of importance they attach to the problems of the Roma, each of them plays an important role for social inclusion of Roma. As shown by the survey, the relevance of work performed by the **Roma coordinators** lies in the fact that the members of the Roma community have a person to contact directly and believe that they would be well represented before the institutions. The coordinators agree that they represent a link and a mediator between the Roma community and the institutions. This encourages the Roma to speak about their problems and to feel less excluded from the society.

The **teaching assistants** programme is one of the main programmes for inclusion of Roma into the primary education system. Their direct beneficiaries are children whom they help find their bearing in school settings and overcome different problems, but also parents who see them as advisors for the entire realm of family life and social rights. The findings imply that the teaching assistants perceive their mission wider, as significant for integration of the society as they prevent discrimination of Roma in schools and introduce Roma children into the system of socialisation thus fighting segregation in the education system.

From the aspect of systemic approach to planning, unification of the process of work and supervision the **programme of health mediators** was ascertained to be the best organised. On the other hand, the mediators, more so than the other mechanisms, are focused on their own operation and direct communication with the supervisors at the Ministry of Health and express the least need for cooperation and coordination with the other mechanisms of social inclusion of Roma. The mediators provide different services: they ensure health booklets and inoculation of children, take care of women's reproductive health, engage in education and prevention. All the health mediators recognise the significance of work they are doing and consider their work extremely important for the Roma.

The **National Employment Service** is the best organised institution with clearly defined procedures for assessment and work with the beneficiaries, monthly work plans, an integrated beneficiary database, as well as managerial monitoring and supervision. However, NES knows Roma as their beneficiaries the least and least pays attention to their specific characteristics and needs. The results achieved by the NES programmes targeting Roma are relatively modest compared to those of the other mechanisms. According to the interviewed NES advisors, Roma are rarely active in search of employment. Rather, NES records are a prerequisite for them to receive social welfare assistance. The study shows that, on the one hand, the key problems that NES has with the Roma are systemic: lack of education, long-term exclusion from the labour market, prejudices and discrimination of employers. On the other hand, the problem is also a scarce offer of jobs and an insufficient number of NES programmes targeting the Roma with or without primary education.

In the **social welfare centres**, beneficiaries are not recorded on the basis of their ethnic affiliation and so the CSW programmes do not identify Roma as a specific group of beneficiaries. The findings show that the CSW work is useful for Roma as it resolves their basic problems, primarily so through social welfare assistance and child allowance. In the course of their work, the research team faced a dilemma with respect to assessing of success of work of social welfare centres. Could it be said that CSWs are successful in their work with the Roma in the municipalities with the majority Roma population covered by the social welfare system as this is a group in the most dire social and economic position? As noted in certain CSWs, for as long as the able bodied beneficiaries are under the jurisdiction of CSWs there will be a problem of presenting success and interpreting the indicators on the number of beneficiaries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A series of recommendations towards improvement of operation and programmes of individual mechanisms for social inclusion of Roma have been developed on the basis of the findings of the survey. The recommendations are addressed to the decision-makers in line ministries and to local governments.

MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT. The system of management needs to be improved and these improvements must be reflected in the clearly set objectives, work plans, transparent control and clear hierarchy within each of the observed mechanisms. All the existing mechanisms of Roma inclusion must be viewed as parts of a comprehensive support package. Their roles and relationships should be further developed relative to this. Since the management problem is the most pronounced among the Roma coordinators, this mechanism deserves particular attention. This recommendation is addressed to local governments and the Office for Human and Minority Rights.

REDUCTION OF DISCRIMINATION. Aiming to enhance the role of teaching assistants in prevention of discrimination within their own institution, the possibility of concluding contracts and supervision must be considered as per the model of the Ministry of Health i.e. health mediators. This recommendation is addressed to the Ministry of Science, Education and Technological Development.

IMPLEMENTATION OF TRAININGS AND INTRODUCTION OF ANTI-DISCRIMINATION-RELATED PROCEDURES. Regular anti-discrimination trainings in the institutions observed need to be organised with a view to raising awareness of the employees about the problem of discrimination of the Roma population. With respect to NES, consider training for employees who take part in NES Roma activation and employment programmes. In addition, introduce Rules of Procedure and the protection mechanism in cases of discrimination into all the institutions, and take advantage of the importance and role of the Commissioner for Protection of Equality and the possibility of sending complaints to her address.

IMPROVEMENT OF ACCESS TO DATA ON THE NEEDS AND SITUATION OF ROMA. It needs to be enhanced by allowing access to the database of the Ministry of Health. By way of precondition, improve the existing software in order for all the relevant actors to be able to use and add to it. Conditions of access to the said /developed database for representatives of other bodies need to be clearly defined so as to prevent violations of the law governing personal data protection. This recommendation is addressed to the Ministry of Health and all the other observed mechanisms and institutions.

PROFILING OF THE ROLE OF ROMA COORDINATORS. In addition to the role of mediators between the Roma population and the state bodies, the role of Roma coordinators needs to be clearly defined relative to other mechanisms and in implementation of LAPs. This means that the relationship between the coordinators and the other ministries funding the mechanisms needs to be defined. With respect to this, coordinators should perform the duties of a "secretariat" to LAPs. Along these lines, harmonise and set out their terms of reference. This recommendation is addressed to the Office for Human and Minority Rights and local government units.

PREPARATION OF LOCAL ACTION PLANS. LAPs need to be adopted as part of documents related to any area of social inclusion of Roma with mandatory adoption of the budget for their implementation in local government units. This recommendation is addressed to the local governments.

LIAISING LOCAL AND NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS. All the mechanisms – relevant ministries and local government units alike – must, in the TORs of their employees include work towards the objectives set out in LAPs, so as to allow for their direct involvement in execution of the planned programmes. The local government units should develop LAPs in the way as to adequately include the mechanisms developed at the national level. This recommendation is addressed to all the observed mechanisms and institutions. Also, adequately coordinate mechanisms for implementation of policies dealing with Roma inclusion at the central level in order for this coordination to come down to the local level.

DEVELOPMENT OF PROTOCOL ON COOPERATION. Develop protocols on cooperation between the implementers of Roma social inclusion public policies at national and local level. The instruments for cooperation of national mechanisms with the municipal ones should be the local action plans for social inclusion of the Roma.¹

Protocols on cooperation may also represent an important tool to encourage cooperation and exchange of information between the mechanisms.

SOCIAL WELFARE CENTRES. All the institutions need to establish protocols on cooperation with the social welfare centres in the municipalities with the established mechanisms for social inclusion of Roma. The special role of the centres in resolution of the basic problems of Roma must be recognised through their greater and more active involvement in local action plans for social inclusion of Roma. This recommendation is addressed to local governments, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Protection, social welfare centres, NES, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Science, Education and Technological Development.

Social welfare centres are the key actors for resolution of Roma problems in all the mechanisms. With respect to that fact, formal cooperation between CSWs as an institution and other national and local mechanisms needs to be established.

COOPERATION BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL INSTITUTIONS. The Ministry of Health on the one side, and the Ministry of Science and Education on the other should, separately, establish and develop modes of cooperation between the health mediators and the teaching assistants with a view to monitoring medical status and needs of school children. Education of parents to support education of their children calls for joint efforts of the teaching assistants and the Roma coordinators. Therefore, the Ministry of Education, local governments and the Office for Human and Minority Rights need to harmonize it.

¹This recommendation is in line with the recommendations of the round table “Implementation of Measures, Activities and Services for Roma Population at the Local Level” organised by the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration of the Republic of Serbia, 20- 22 February 2012.

The cooperation of NES and the teaching assistants is rendering good results with respect to identification and motivation of Roma to complete primary education. Also, the cooperation of NES with the Roma coordinators is useful for a swifter identification of those members of the Roma community who are interested in taking part in the NES programmes. This recommendation is addressed to all the observed mechanisms and institutions.

INTEGRATION OF LABOUR MARKET AND SOCIAL PROTECTION SERVICES. The cooperation initiated between the CSWs and the NES with respect to provision of integrated social services for the able-bodied Roma – recipients of social welfare assistance – must be enhanced in order to promote continued employment of Roma. For this, planning at the level of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Protection is required as well as joint implementation through social welfare centres and NES.

REGULAR FOLLOW-UP OF BENEFICIARIES. Regular consultations with the beneficiaries must be conducted and systemic surveys of their needs undertaken with a view to precisely defining the outstanding needs of the Roma population that the mechanisms failed to respond to. Adequately developed programmes, established on the basis of the needs of Roma population, may result in an increase of motivation among the beneficiaries and also lead to improved functioning of the mechanisms that this was the main limiting factor to (NES) to date. This recommendation is addressed to all the observed mechanisms and institutions.

PROCEDURES. The procedures and mode of work of the Roma coordinators and the teaching assistants should be harmonised at the national level in order to ensure comparability of data about the problems and the needs of the beneficiaries. This recommendation is addressed to the Ministry of Health, the Office for Human and Minority Rights and the local governments.

TRAINING. Additional trainings as well as those for work with vulnerable groups in all the institutions and CSWs and NES in particular should be introduced. Other mechanisms need to consider approach to trainings of their employees as per the modelo of the Ministry of Health and adjust them to their own needs. A sustainable mechanism or one training curricula for all the mechanisms needs to be established. This recommendation is addressed to all the observed mechanisms and institutions.

As this study shows, since 2005 a series of programmes aimed at social inclusion of Roma have been established in the Republic of Serbia. Each of them has contributed to the improvement of the social situation of the Roma minority in Serbia as compared to that of seven years ago. While some of the programmes (NES, CSWs, Roma coordinators) still only partially respond to the deeply rooted social and economic problems such as unemployment and/or poverty, the programmes in the area of social protection and education (contributing to improvement of a social and economic position of Roma in Serbia) have been developed and put in place.



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