



ETHNOCULTURAL  
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CENTER

## A NECESSARY CHANGE OF STRATEGY

- Report on the implementation of the Romanian Government's Strategy for the Improvement of the Roma Situation -

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## INTRODUCTION

They generally are regarded as defying people who live beyond the usual conventions. They bear the mark of the mirage specific of people typically attracted by wild musical rhythm or people that are capable of giving up everything for their genuine freedom. Although they have shared the same space with the rest of the population of Romania, they have always been looked upon as if from a distance.

Most often described in terms that pertain to the social and economic dimensions, rather than their cultural dimension, the Roma, the Gypsies, for these are the people we are talking about, are an unknown group for most of the population of Romania. Although they are very much present in the daily world, and even more so in the collective mentality – where most often there are negative labels attached to them – the Roma are a problem and a challenge.

They are part of the transnational minorities that do not have a land of origin and who borrow from the cultures and the characteristics of the countries in which they live. Their collective conscience is different from that of other minorities, consisting in a distinct lifestyle and a feeling of belonging to informal groups, therefore the family, neighborly or professional relations are predominant.

Almost always on the outskirts of history and of the society in which they have lived, in the last decade, the Roma have been paid increased attention and care, generated not so much by the need of knowledge and support of the 'foreigner', but rather by the obligation Romania has to consolidate its' institutional-administrative capacity regarding the protection of minorities. Everything in the name of European accession.

In this context, in April 2001, the Government of Romania adopted a Strategy for the Improvement of the Roma Situation, a many-page and elaborated document which sets the objectives and a series of measures whose final aim is to raise the living standard, enhance the education and diminish the stereotyping of the Roma minority.

The present report sets out to analyze the stage of the Strategy's application, three years after it was adopted.

After a succinct presentation of a brief history of the Roma minority in Romania and of the major problems associated to them, we will analyze the stipulations of the Strategy and the manner in which they have been translated into practice.

Afterwards, based on some sociological interviews carried out with people directly involved (representatives of the authorities, of some of the most important Roma organizations, and independent experts), we have identified the most significant barriers which in our opinion affect the implementation of the Government's Strategy for the Improvement of the Roma Situation.

Naturally, the present report does not cover everything. The problems of the Roma, who are a very diverse ethnic minority, are much more numerous and this is why we have tried to limit ourselves to identifying the common and more urgent issues.

In the closing part, we provide a list of conclusions and recommendations, all based on the idea that although so far there have been numerous actions for the social integration of the Roma, the lack of a coherent strategy and of minimal funds has led to rather poor results.

We also urge that the exclusively social perspective on the Roma be given up, as this is a limited point of view as compared to the complexity of the problems the Roma communities are confronted with.

We hope that our approach will contribute to the affirmation of a positive ethnicity of the Roma minority. We naturally know that a positive re-evaluation of the Roma image is necessary, as well as improvement of their social situation in order to have a positive evaluation, but we are also aware that it is up to us all to face the burden of history and mentalities.

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## THE ROMA MINORITY

### A matter of terminology

The British and the Americans call them *Gypsies*, the Germans - *Zigeuner*, the Hungarians - *cigany*, the French - *gitan/tsigane*, the Italians *zingaro*, while most of the Romanians still call them *igani*. All these words come from the Greek *athinganoi*, which means "untouchable" and designates a population, probably of Indian origin, met especially in Eastern Europe. Only the term, which most often has pejorative connotations, is used only by persons outside of the ethnic group, while members of the ethnic group prefer the term "Roma", which in the original – Sanskrit (Romani) language – means "man", "married man", and in the wider sense, "a person belonging to our group (us)". This is to distinguish them from "gadjo", which means "he/they", that is non-Roma.

Another aspect to be clarified is: why do we prefer the word "Roma" instead of the *sui generis* other spelling "Rroma"? Of course this is a conventional aspect, representing the simple phonetic transcription of the term. Several experts, among whom professor Gheorghe Saru, consider that "Rroma" represents the more accurate transcription of this basic word in Romani language.

As you will easily notice, in this report we will not use the term "igan" (Gypsy), and we shall spell the word with one "r", although there is this quasi-familiar variant spelled with double *r*. We believe this is not simply an action in agreement with the commandments of the contemporary political correctness, but we start from the premise that any terminological approach reveals some things about the social relations and reality. (1)

A reality which, whether we like it or not, is not one of the most cherished, as long as the Roma are a dispersed ethnic group (both in various states, and lacking identity homogeneity), who are never positively received by the population among whom they live. More precisely, we consider that the term "Gypsy" has too many pejorative connotations and it designates an attitude of rejection and exclusion. Hence the preference for the term "Roma", based on the principle of respect for each group's rights to self-identification, a right which is safeguarded in international documents which Romania is a signatory of (The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities), but also in the Romanian legislation.

(1) At the official level, the term Roma has had an interesting history since December 1989, a history that reflects both the political implications of this linguistic approach, and especially the mentalities of the period. Thus, in January 1995, the then Foreign Minister Teodor Melecanu issued a Memorandum through which he proposed the consistent use of the term "Gypsy" instead of "Roma". The argument he brought: to avoid the confusion that might arise "especially in the international public opinion through the possible identification of the Romanians in general with the members of this ethnic group". Only 5 years later, in February 2000, did the new Foreign Minister Petre Roman produce a counter-Memorandum, which the Government assumed, and which recommended the use of the term "Roma", in parallel with other terms (Gypsy, Sinti). This change was due not only to the "pressure of the Roma associations", but especially to the need for Romania to respect its obligations undertaken at the international level.

## Brief history

There are several theories about the time of arrival of the Roma on the present territory of Romania. Their presence here was first attested in documents in 1385, but it is very likely that the members of this ethnic group actually arrived in the Romanian principalities earlier than that.

There are various opinions as concerns the origins of enslaving the Roma. Some historians believe that the Roma, who were war prisoners of the Tartars, followed them to the banks of the Danube during the Mongolian invasion in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. After they were defeated by the local population, the Tartars became slaves themselves, and thus the fate of the Roma was the same. (2)

The Roma remained slaves for several centuries, belonging to either the rulers of the Romanian principalities (the Gypsies of the ruler), or the clergy or the boyars. In the two Danubian principalities, and especially in Transylvania, several measures of secularization and civilization of the Roma were taken along the centuries, but these were never completed.

Only in the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, under the influence of the European Enlightenment ideas, were the Roma set free from slavery. In 1837, the Divan of Wallachia decided to set free the Gypsies that belonged to the state, and settle them in the villages of the Boyars. The Roma received arable land and were treated like free peasants. In Moldova, in 1844, the People's Council adopted a draft law to abolish slavery for the Gypsies of the clergy and for those who were practitioners of various crafts in towns. (3)

The liberation of all Gypsies, including those that belonged to the boyars, was decided in Moldova in 1855, and in Wallachia a year later.

For almost a century, the Roma continued to live generally on the margins of the Romanian society. Only in the inter-war period did the identity conscience of this ethnic group start to coagulate. In April 1933, Calinic I. Popescu laid the basis of the first organization, "The General Association of the Gypsies in Romania", which aimed to enhance the culture and education of the Roma (by establishing kindergartens, ensuring access to education, professional training, preservation of traditions, etc.), and to achieve their social integration (provision of free medical and legal assistance, settling down the nomad groups by providing them with land, etc.).

After a short while, however, there occurred divergences among the leaders of the Association, and one of them, A. L. Zărescu, set up, in September, the same year, "The General Union of the Roma in Romania", which had identical objectives and aims. L. Zărescu proved to be much more active, and he managed to organize the first Congress of the Roma in Romania on 8 October 1933, and to be elected "Prince" of the Roma. The honorary president of the Union was Grigora Dinicu, a well-known musician and a descendent of an old musicians' family. Not least, L. Zărescu imposes for the first time in the conscience of his contemporaries the use of the term Roma instead of Gypsy. (4)

The first significant study about the Roma, in fact a genuine ethnological and linguistic history entitled "Contributions to the History of the Gypsies in Romania", was also published at this time, in 1939, by the historian G. Potra.

In Romania, with the rise of the authoritarian regimes in March 1938 (royal dictatorship, the legionary state and the government of Ion Antonescu), the situation of the Roma minority also worsened a lot. Things would culminate with the forced regime of deportations enacted by the Romanian authorities after 1942.

The deportation of the Roma to Transdnier is still insufficiently studied by historians, and therefore the controversial issues abound. While some authors speak about the existence of a phenomenon comparable in dimension with the Holocaust (Pojaros in Romani) (5), the only reliable evidence leads to the conclusion that around 25 thousand Roma people were deported, and some hundreds or thousands of them died due to the hardships encountered, such as lack of food, the cold weather, etc. (6)

After World War II, several Roma ethnics were used by the communist regime to consolidate the people's power (7), but with the change of state policy at the beginning of the 1960's continued by Nicolae Ceau escu, more and more Roma would become the victims of the official policies of ethnic homogenization. Under the pretext of supporting the unique model of the new socialist man, the concept of 'social uniformity' was attempted, which thus justified the forced assimilation policy of the communist regime especially as concerned the Roma.

From this perspective, the Roma were perceived as persons originating from somewhere else who had to be Romanianized, since their identity was assimilated with the culture of poverty and underdevelopment. Officially, the Roma did not exist, as their specificity was associated with an inferior status. They worked in appalling conditions, doing especially under-qualified jobs. Until the fall of the communist regime, almost half of the Roma workers were employed in agriculture, in the agricultural cooperatives and on state-owned farms. Commerce was officially prohibited for them, and the traditional practical activities were carried out at the limit of legality. Several Roma people fell under the incidence of Decree 153/1970, which punished "social parasitism", "anarchism" and any other "deviant conduct" with prison and forced labor. (8)

The communist government also tried to "Romanianize" the habitat of the Roma through settling them and eliminating the nomadic lifestyle. With the policy of forced urbanization of villages, the Roma were moved in estates at the outskirts of the cities (or in the houses of the Saxon population, as was the case in Transylvania), where life conditions were not much better, and in addition the Roma had a hard time adjusting to the new lifestyle.

The assimilation policy was also served by the educational system, but although education was compulsory for all, the rate of illiteracy among the Roma stayed high. This was because many families were too poor to afford to send their children to school (preferring to have them work at an early age), or because many Roma children only speak their mother tongue, and therefore have difficulty in the educational system.

Emanuelle Pons concluded, "In conclusion, one can state that the integrationist policy as regards them was not deliberately assimilationist, as in the situations when denationalization and deprivation of statehood of a group perceived in ethnic terms are explicitly pursued. The issue of the Roma was only treated in terms of social progress, not in terms of depriving them of their culture and their ethnicity. However, by trying hard to level differences and encourage social mobility, the communist policy also affected the ethnic specificity of certain groups, and especially of the Roma." (9)

The lack of programs adapted to reality, the real needs of the Roma, which would take into account their cultural specificity, favored the perpetuation of inequality among this ethnic group. Although in the communist regime a middle class of the Roma managed to emerge (educated, well integrated, but who also tended to hide their ethnic origin), numerous members of this ethnic group remained close to the lower limit of poverty and on

the edge of the society. In addition, prejudices and negative stereotypes persisted among the non-Roma, who did not manage to understand why – despite the official policies of integration – many Roma people continued to stay on the bottom rungs of the social ladder. At the end of 1989, most continued to believe that the Roma had the same rights as the rest of the population, but that they did not want to use them and that was why they 'refused' to work, value cleanliness, go to school, etc.

(2) Emmanuelle Pons, *iganii din România – o minoritate în tranziție*, București, Editura Compania, 1999, pp. 12-13

(3) *Ibidem*, pp. 20-21

(4) Lucian Nastasă, Andrea Varga (eds.), *iganii din România – măruri documentare*, Cluj, Centrul de Resurse pentru Diversitate Etnoculturală, 2001, pp. 15-16

(5) Aven Amentza, the Roma organization, cites the Romanian Commission for the Victims of the Holocaust, which allegedly declared that there were 36,000 victims among the Roma, "but other estimates suggest a much higher figure". According to the same organization, in the 1970's, 36,000 survivors handed in requests for damages, without the Romanian state having officially recognized deportation to Transdnister.

(6) In the volume *iganii din România – măruri documentare* it is pointed out, based on historical documents, that on October 9, 1943, 11,441 nomad Roma people (tent-dwellers) and 13,176 settled Roma people were deported. Later, there were other deportations, but smaller ones; however, the phenomenon was counterbalanced by the return to Romania of some of the deported persons. The authors' conclusion is that "no case of assassination is known or was reported, which would have been committed by the Romanian or German law-enforcement or military authorities, let alone a possible pogrom or massacre. Losses of human life were blamed on the bad organization of deportation, on the places where the people were taken and settled, in addition to a sum of specific factors." (*op. cit.*, p. 18)

(7) "Some Gypsies are appointed mayors by the new regime and many will enroll in the party. Recent folklore records these events: *Cobori Doamne pe pământ / Să vezi Stalin ce-a făcut. / Ce-a făcut din cal mgar / și iganul secretar!*" [Come, Lord, on the Earth / And see what Stalin did. / He turned horses into donkeys / And made the Gypsies Secretaries!] (Cf. Emmanuelle Pons, *iganii din România – o minoritate în tranziție*, p. 25)

(8) Nicolae Gheorghe, *Roma-Gypsy ethnicity*, in *Social Research*, vol. 58, no. 4, Winter, 1991

(9) Emmanuelle Pons, *iganii din România – o minoritate în tranziție*, Editura Compania, București, 1999, pp. 29-30

## SPECIFIC PROBLEMS OF THE ROMA COMMUNITIES

The fall of the communist regime in December 1989 marked an obvious raise in the interest for the Roma community, as concerns both the attempts to redefine the ethnic group, and the need to improve their economic and social conditions.

The new Constitution adopted in 1991 stipulated freedom of expression for the individual, as well as the right of any person to freely declare belonging to an ethnic group (this despite the fact that Romania continues to fail to provide for explicit procedures of recognition for the status of national minority).

In addition, based on Law 68/1992 – which stipulates that the organizations belonging to the national minorities may participate in the elections and may have a



representative automatically in the House of Representatives – numerous political and cultural organizations of the Roma were set up: The Democratic Roma Union, the Roma Party, the Ethnic Federation, the Cultural Christian center of the Roma, etc. At present there are about 200 Roma non-governmental organizations.

Only there are still numerous unsettled or unclear issues. We will try in the following to outline the most important ones, considering that the lack of an as precise as possible inventory of the real problems of the Roma, any initiative – no matter how sincere and well supported it could be – cannot possibly have any chances of real success.

### *How diverse are the Roma?*

The Roma are an extremely diverse, heterogeneous population, lacking common features that may define them. According to the specialists, there are about forty groups (or clans), structured depending on the family links, profession, dialect, lifestyle (settled or nomad). Among these are the *spoitori*, the fiddlers (musicians), the *ursari* (who gave up altogether their old custom to provide bear shows), the cauldron-makers (craftsmen who make and repair brass or gold pots), the iron-mongers, the horse-sellers, the *rudari* (woodworkers), the *boldeni* (florists), the silver-workers (jewellers) or the *zl tari*.

The linguistic differences are significant, too: not all Roma speak their mother tongue, all of them speak Romanian, naturally, but some have assimilated the language of other ethnic groups: Hungarians, Germans, Turks, etc.

Not lastly, we should mention that they do not have a common religion and they have not transcribed their culture or history in books. "In the absence of some objective and homogeneous criteria, the Roma seem to be a sub-ethnic group as compared to the other ethnic groups, and this is the status of national minority." (Pons, p. 31)

According to sociological research, the Roma have the weakest self-consciousness among all the significant ethnic minorities in Romania. According to the barometer of Ethnic Relations, published in October 2002, around 33% of the Roma consider themselves Romanian first of all, 37% Roma in the first place, while the rest identify themselves regionally (10). It is worth mentioning that the number of Roma who assumed their ethnic origin was much higher than that revealed in a similar research carried out only a year before.

### *How many Roma ethnics are there?*

The official censuses conducted in communist times indicate that in 1956 the Roma population included 104,216 people (0.6% of the total population), in 1966 – 64,197 people (0.4% of the total population), while in 1977 229,986 people (1.1% of the total population).

The 1992 Census identified 409,723 Roma people, representing approximately 1.8% of the total population. In the same year, under the auspices of the Institute for the Research of the Quality of Life, Elena and C t lin Zamfir carried out a national study in Roma communities, trying to obtain an estimate of the real number of the people belonging to this ethnic group. Besides the figure they obtained as a result of free statement of identity, they also used estimates based on hetero-identification (more precisely, based on the statements of other members of the ethnic group), and the figure that resulted in this way indicated approximately 1,010,000 Roma ethnics (cca. 4.6% of the total population).

Six years later, in 1998, a similar study of the same institute, using identical methods, arrived at 1,580,000 Roma in Romania (6.6% of the total population of the country).

However, an explanation for the 500,000-person increase of the members of the Roma community was not provided.

Finally, at the 2002 Census, only 535,140 people stated that they belonged to the Roma minority (most of them, more precisely 438,162 declaring their Orthodox religion). On the other hand, reports of the Ministry of Education indicate 158,000 Roma children enrolled in schools in the educational system, although it is believed that the real figure is over 400,000.

The significant numerical variations from one census to the next, as well as the discrepancies between reality (in fact, a possible reality that will never be verifiable precisely), and the statistical data can be explained by that many Roma people prefer to declare themselves Romanians so that they can benefit from a certain respectability and so as to distance themselves from the traditional, less educated, group of the Roma.

### *How discriminated are the Roma?*

One of the most difficult problems which the Roma community had to face immediately after the fall of the communist regime was organized violence aimed at some of its members. Cases such as the ones in H d reni, Bolintin or Mihail Kog Iniceanu, when Roma ethnics were killed and their houses set on fire, show the tense relations between the majority and the Roma minority.

Although in the last years there have not been situations as the ones mentioned above, the attitude of rejection and discrimination against the Roma continues to be very widespread. According to the last Barometer of Ethnic Relations, close to 40% of the Romanians think that there are conflicts between them and the Roma. About 15% of the Roma have the same perception, while the majority of the Roma (71.6%) believes that they have a good relationship based on collaboration with the Romanians, while only 31.3% of the majority population has a similar opinion about their relations with the Roma. (11)

This vision tends to change in the positive sense, when the Romanians or the Roma refer to the position they have toward the people living in their immediate proximity. "The relationship between the Romanians and the Roma is still seen as a problem, a situation that results from the low living standards of the Roma, but also from the completely different way in which the members of each ethnic group regards itself as compared to others", stated sociologist Mircea Kivu. (12)

About the Roma, the Romanians also believe that they are thieves (50.6%), lazy (43.5%) and dirty (47.2%). Over half of both the Romanians and the Hungarians believe that being a Roma person is a disadvantage in getting a job, while for the representatives of the Roma ethnic group this perception is shared by almost 70%. (13)

### *How poor are the Roma?*

After 1990, transition toward market economy was made with great difficulty in Romania, negatively affecting numerous people, including the vast majority of the Roma population. As most of them were poorly qualified professionally, with especially badly paid jobs (working often in agricultural cooperatives or state companies that were close to bankruptcy), the Roma were among the people who were made redundant or marginalized from the perspective of professional evolution.

In 1992, in the above mentioned study, carried out by Elena and C t lin Zamfir, it is shown that over 51.2% of the interviewed Roma did not have a job, and only 3% received unemployment benefit. Six years later, a similar research showed some improvement of the situation. Thus, only 52.4% of the active population (over 16 years) had no professional qualification, as compared to 79.4% in 1992. On the other hand, 67.7% of the Roma said that their families do not have the necessary means for minimal daily living, as compared to 40.5% who stated the same in 1992.

The Barometer of Ethnic Relations of 2002 shows that the Roma are the poorest segment of the Romanian society. In the last 12 months, 90.5% of the Roma had been at least once in the impossibility to buy food due to lack of money. The money necessary for paying the expenses related to maintaining a flat or house was a problem for 90.2% of the Roma, as compared to 42% of the Hungarian ethnics. Over half of the members of the Roma ethnic group earned a monthly income of a maximum 1 million ROL, 16.8% had no income, and only 1.5% had a salary over 4 million ROL. (14)

Although in the transition period of the 90's several Roma ethnics adapted to the specific conditions and either managed to get rich, or they left for work abroad (where they did "unorthodox" jobs, too, such as singing, small traffic, and soliciting), the vast majority of the Roma remained at the lower end of the society. This is also revealed in the Ethno-barometer, where only 42% of the Roma consider that they indeed have more money than the members of the other national minorities.

#### *How educated are the Roma?*

In close connection with the poor economic situation, we must mention the issue of education, or rather the lack of education for the members of the Roma ethnic group. In 1992, 27.3% of the Roma adult population only completed four years of education or had never been to school. 44% of the men and 59% of the women could not read or could do so only with difficulty, which means that they were practically illiterate. Six years later, their percentage dropped significantly to 26.1% (according to a study carried out by the Resource Center for Social Action).

While the problem of education continues to be worrying, in the last years, the initiative of the Ministry of Education led to numerous measures to support the Roma youth. Thus, in secondary schools and universities there are specially allocated places for them. Despite this, most of the Romanians think that there should not be reserved places for the Roma in secondary schools and colleges, while most of the Roma think they are necessary "to a great extent". (15)

#### *How non-social are the Roma?*

Another result of poverty is the high rate of delinquency and lack of socialization within the Roma community. The specialists nuance this widespread opinion, "In general, due to life conditions, customs, rejection of some morally accepted values of the rest of the community, the Roma marginalize themselves as a sub-culture that acts aggressively, not admitting and breaking with premeditation the institutionalized legal norms in the society." (16)

Also, in order to make a living, some Roma people turn to illegal means. However, they only very rarely do something really dangerous crime, "and while this is in general petty theft, through its frequency, it attracts general discontent" (17). The data provided by the

police show that in most of Romania's counties the number of crimes committed by Roma is only a little higher in percentage than their percentage in the total population of the country. Thus, in 2001, out of the total number of people investigated by the Romanian Police (237,796), 10.6% were Roma ethnics. The year 2002 saw a decrease of the percentage to 9.5%. This falling tendency continued in 2003, when 8.5% of the investigated people in the first semester of the year were Roma people.

(10) Barometer of Ethnic Relations, a program of the Ethnocultural Diversity Resource Center, conducted by Metro Media Transilvania, October 2002

(11) *Ibidem*

(12) According to Divers ([www.divers.ro](http://www.divers.ro)), November 2002

(13) Barometer of Ethnic Relations, a program of the Ethnocultural Diversity Resource Center, conducted by Metro Media Transilvania, October 2002

(14) *Ibidem*

(15) *Ibidem*

(16) Margareta Fle ner, Ioaneta Vintileanu, *Aspecte generale cu privire la conflictele sociale desf urate în perioada 1990-1995*, in Ioneta Vintileanu and Gábor Ádám (eds.), *Polii a i comunit ile multiculturale din România*, Cluj, Centrul de Resurse pentru Diversitate Etnocultural , 2003, p.27.

(17) *Ibidem*, p. 175

## THE GOVERNMENT'S STRATEGY FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE ROMA SITUATION

### *General principles*

Since the middle of the 90's, the Government of Romania started being seriously concerned by the issue of national minority protection, in order to meet some of the necessary conditions for joining the European Union.

Nevertheless, besides ideological commandments, Romania's file as concerns the problems of the Roma minority was a thick one, as it was shown in the 'inventory' above, and hence the need of urgent and concerted measures.

The Department for the Protection of National Minorities was set up in 1997, and within this there was a National Office for the Roma. A year later, the Inter-Ministerial Commission for the protection of National Minorities was established, aiming to monitor and implement the Convention of the European Council for the Protection of National Minorities. Within the Commission a sub-commission was set up to deal with the problems of the Roma; this Commission had to elaborate a White Book of the PHARE RO 980301 Programme, and which later took on the shape of a memorandum regarding the "Strategic Framework for the Improvement of the Roma Situation". The memorandum was going to be adopted by the Government on 7 December 2000.

A few months later, in April 2001, the executive in Bucharest adopted a document elaborated by the Ministry of Public Information (18) and the result was Governmental Decision 430/2001 regarding the **Government's Strategy for the Improvement of the Roma Situation**.

The governmental document, which from here on we will simply call the **Strategy**, was designed for a ten-year period, with a medium-term 4-year plan of measures (2001-2004).

The strategy has one over-arching objective – the improvement of the situation of the Roma in Romania, and seven more specific objectives, which we will briefly list below:

- institutionalization of the political objectives undertaken by the Government in the Roma issue and holding central and local public authorities accountable for this;
- support for the training and promotion of an intellectual and economic elite among the Roma, who shall function as a facilitator of the social integration and modernization policies;
- elimination of stereotypes, prejudices and practices of some public servants that encourage discrimination of the Roma ethnics against other citizens;
- bringing forth positive changes in the public opinion about the Roma ethnics, based on the principles of tolerance and social solidarity;
- stimulation of participation of the Roma ethnics in the economic, social, educational, cultural and political life of the society;
- prevention of institutional and social discrimination of the Romanian citizens of Romani ethnicity as concerns their access to services provided by the society;
- ensuring the conditions for equal chances of the Roma ethnics for them to reach a decent life standard. (19)

The strategy has seven major lines of action:

- administration and community development
- housing
- social security
- healthcare

- economy
- justice and public order
- child protection
- education
- culture and cults
- communication and civic participation (20)

Therefore, the strategy remains a generous document which approaches in detail, in principle, the problems that the Roma minority faces.

At the beginning of 2004, Romania joined the Program "Roma Inclusion Decade", a program implemented in Central and South-eastern Europe; in March 2004 the necessary implementation structures were set up for this program. Without affecting the role of the implementation structures of the Strategy in a negative sense, this process aims to expand the role of the Mixed Committee for the implementation of the Strategy in the sense of changing it into a National Committee of the "Roma Inclusion Decade". The National Committee will be structured in four permanent subcommittees: for healthcare, for housing, for social security and for education.

### *Concrete results*

Although it has been planned to last until 2010, the Strategy had a plan of measures for the medium term (2001-2004) and that is why at this time an evaluation of the results that have been obtained in the four years can be attempted.

In its evaluations, the Government is generally optimistic as concerns the general plan of measures for the period 2001-2004. In the public report for 2003, the Ministry of Public Information showed that out of the 123 measures that had been planned, 60 were completely achieved, 48 were partially accomplished or were being implemented, and only 15 were not achieved, but rescheduled. (21)

Because the listing of the measures that were considered accomplished does not make the object of this report, we will try to present in general the main concrete achievements of the implementation of the Strategy four years after it was developed.

- Ensuring the representation of the Roma at various levels of the local and central administration: setting up of the Ministerial Commissions for the Roma, the Roma County offices, employing local experts, appointing Roma experts in the major institutions (government, presidency), support for the election in the Parliament of another Roma person in addition to the one seat grant by the law, etc.
- Elaboration of a plan of measures and actions at the local level in education, healthcare, labor (campaigns of vaccination, employing healthcare mediators, regular job fairs for the Roma, special places for Roma youth in secondary schools and universities, etc.)
- Developing partnerships between the Government, local authorities and non-governmental institutions (three PHARE programs were implemented out of which one was for the elaboration of the strategy, and the fourth was launched in 2004; the Government launched out of its own funds "Partnership for the Support of the Roma 2003"). Some of these partnerships led to the

increase of accessibility and simplification of the means by which the Roma communities can participate in the Romanian economic, political, social, educational, cultural and political life. Thus, vocational education projects were funded, as well as income-generating activities, construction/rehabilitation of housing, construction/rehabilitation of small infrastructure and health improvement.

- Support for the inclusion of the healthcare mediator for Roma people, a category of people whose role was to provide support for access to healthcare insurances. According to the official data, the Roma healthcare mediators (around 150) supported around 38,000 people to access the insurance system.
- A series of projects that aim at the stimulation of school participation for Roma children and reduction of school drop-out were implemented. The study of Romani language in schools has been intensified. It is estimated that at present over 18,000 pupils study Romani, which is the equivalent of 10% of the total official number of Roma children enrolled in schools.
- Starting programs that aimed at ensuring identity cards for the Roma (in the first semester of 2003, 7,798 Roma ethnics were registered, out of whom 760 were minors). This issue has so far been handled by the public authorities at the county or national level, without a well defined strategy.
- Elaboration and implementation by the Romanian General Police Inspectorate of the program "Conflict Prevention and Management in multicultural communities", funded by the European Union, and in partnership with the Ethnocultural Diversity Resource Center. Within the activities of this program, 465 policemen working in multicultural communities were trained to identify and efficiently handle conflicts arisen in the communities.
- Direct approach of combating discrimination: setting up the National Council for Prevention of Discrimination (in which two Roma people are hired – a personal councilor of the President of CNCD and an expert on Roma issues), and media campaigns.
- Implementation of cultural programs and activities as well as of awareness-raising campaigns for the Roma;

(18) After the general elections in the fall of 2000, the Department for the Protection of Ethnic Minorities (re-named later as the department for Interethnic Relations) was passed under the direct subordination of the Ministry of Public Information.

(19) Report on the progresses made in the implementation of the Government's Strategy for the Improvement of the Roma Situation, Ministry of Public Information, April 2003

(20) *Ibidem*

(21) *Ibidem*, p. 75

## PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY

Is it much or little what has been accomplished within the Strategy? It is quite easy to answer this question as long as things can be evaluated positively but only if we take into account the definition of the Roma minority's problems as provided by the authorities, the establishment of a general framework of action, and the start of some concrete programs.

However, the problems that have not been solved seemed much more numerous, as do the inherent difficulties. In addition, there is still quasi-general discontent of most of the population and of most of the Roma organizations as concerns the visibility of the changes in the Roma communities, and the slow pace of the process so far does not leave room for the hope that something spectacular will happen in the near future.

After discussions with government officials, independent experts and representatives of the Roma organizations in Romania we have identified several sets of problems, which we will present below.

### *1. Poor functioning of the implementation scheme of the Strategy at the central level*

One of the strengths of the Strategy, from the perspective of officials – representation of the Roma in the administration and the establishment of an institutional framework to promote the governmental document – proves in fact a weakness.

The Mixed Monitoring and Implementation Committee is in charge of the organization, coordination and monitoring of the Strategy. This consists of state secretaries, representatives of the ministries responsible for the implementation of the strategy and leaders of Roma NGOs.

Although this should be a body that evaluates periodically the stage of implementation of the Strategy or that accelerates this process, in fact the **Mixed Committee meet randomly**, and most often the meetings are attended by lower rank delegates, appointed by the state secretaries of each of the ministries involved. The latter do not exclusively deal with the Strategy, which they consider often as an extra task, which “must be ticked off”. (22) In addition, one of the participants in the first meetings of the Committee considers that these discussions “do not follow any methodology; they are simply information sessions by state secretaries saying that everything is going well in this country”. (23)

Not lastly, the Mixed Committee does not have rules of operation and has not issued any decisions that can be applied concretely. “Most of the problems in the functioning of the Committee originate from the fact that this is not led by an influential person who is listened to by the members, and especially by the state secretaries in the various ministries. The public institutions have their own rhythm and the only decisions that can be taken are those from top down”, states a Roma expert. (24)

Also, it is believed that the presence of the Roma on the Mixed Committee is still insufficient, and there have even been attempts to remove some of the Roma representatives. (25)

The executive body of the Mixed Committee was at the beginning the National Office for the Roma (ONR), under the Department for Interethnic Relations. Only **this body**, which should prove vital in the implementation of the strategy, **has experienced many changes in leadership, as well as a variety of organizational structures**, which shows its low efficiency. Thus in June 2003, ONR changed its name in the Office for Roma Problems (OPR), under the



General Secretariat of the Government. Since March 2004, OPR has been operating as a new structure within the Department for Interethnic Relations, led by a state secretary.

Each ministry was supposed to form its own **Commission for the Roma**. Only – although on paper there are 16 such commissions, **most of them are inactive**. (26)

The funding of the Roma projects is up to each ministry, because the Strategy does not provide for any centralized accountancy mechanism or budget control. Not lastly, there are no mechanisms to sanction the ministries that fail to carry out the tasks that they undertook in the Strategy.

(22) Information provided by a government representative. According to this person, in 2003, the Mixed Committee never met. However, according to Mr. Ilie Dinc , sub-secretary of state within the Department for Interethnic Relations, the Mixed Committee met “at least six times, to discuss various problems”, and at these meetings only representatives of the Roma organizations were present.

(23) Interview with Costel Bercu , executive director of Romani Criss and with Gelu Duminic , president of the “Împreună ” Development Agency.

(24) Interview with Mariea Ionescu, expert within the Office for the Problems of the Roma.

(25) According to a report, *„Monitorizarea implementării la nivel local a Strategiei de îmbunătățire a situației romilor romilor”* [Monitoring the local implementation of the Strategy for the Improvement of the Roma Situation], prepared and published by the Resource Center for Roma Communities and the Open Society Institute, April 2004.

(26) Interview with Mariea Ionescu, expert within the Office for the Problems of the Roma. Mariea Ionescu indicated that there are only three commissions that really function, and where they collaborate with the Roma experts: the Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of Healthcare, and the Ministry of Education.

## ***2. Lack of involvement of the local authorities***

According to the tasks taken on by the government within the Strategy, an important role in its implementation should be played by the local authorities.

Thus, in each county of Romania, as well as in the capital, there are County Offices for Roma Issues (BJR), which should have at least one representative of the Roma organizations. (27)

However, although at present there are Roma experts in all prefectures, **most of them do not exclusively handle Roma issues**, and their status is unclear. “Those who work on the implementation of the Strategy, at least in the capital city, but as far as I know in other places in the country, too, were hired before in the culture, education or healthcare departments, and they do not get extra payment to deal with the Roma issues”, says one of the Roma experts. (28)

The Roma employees of the BJR also accuse the **lack of a methodology of implementation of the Strategy**, the lack of involvement of the local authorities, lack of expertise of most of the non-Roma members, but first and foremost, lack of funds for projects. On the other hand, most of the BJRs carry out their activities in improvised spaces, without the least equipment. The lack of experts in crisis situations is limited by their direct subordination to the prefects, as these are the ones to approve, for instance, each mobility or emergency intervention in the Roma communities. (29)

One of the **problems** is, according to the experts, the fact that BJRs are under the authority of the Prefectures. "Even if there is a job description of the BJR employees, which is quite coherent, they are on the one hand at the disposal of the prefect, and on the other hand at the disposal of the Ministry of Administration and Internal Affairs, but first and foremost they are the second echelon of the Roma Party. This mixture is not beneficial to anyone. People do not know who to obey. They know only one thing: that the Government pays them to implement the Strategy. Only this is not true: the government does not give money to the prefectures. Even the placement of these Offices in the prefectures is a problem. If they were in the county council, where the money is, we could say that the government may allocate funds for the Roma based on regional programs. But in this way, the Prefecture only has the name, with no real power", says Mariea Ionescu.

Furthermore, according to the chart of organization provided in the Strategy, in the town halls there should also be Roma experts. (30) However, overall, **their number is still very low in the country**, and this happens because the mayors do not have funds to cover that position, and they prefer to delegate responsibility to a public servant without expertise. However, out of the approximately 3,000 units of local administration, in about 150 there are local Roma experts, while the Roma population is present in almost 1,500 towns and villages. (31)

**The lack of Roma experts at the local level leads directly to the lack of a detailed inventory of the problems faced by the communities.** The BJRs should receive information from the local experts about the real problems of the people, and the lack of this information prevents the implementation of projects and programs that would have the desired impact.

However, most often the major problems that the local experts are confronted with in the Roma communities are connected to the lack of housing and utilities (water, sewage system, gas or electricity), the lack of identity documents, problems in receiving social assistance and the lack of employment.

(27) According to the Strategy, the County Roma Offices (BJR) are in charge of the organization, planning and coordination of the activities at the county level.

(28) Interview with Elena State, Roma expert with the Bucharest Prefecture.

(29) *Idem*. See also the report „*Monitorizarea implementării la nivel local a Strategiei de îmbunătățire a situației romilor*” [Monitoring the local implementation of the Strategy for the Improvement of the Roma Situation], prepared and published by the Resource Center for Roma Communities and the Open Society Institute, where there is a detailed presentation of the specific situation of five BJRs.

(30) According to the Strategy, the local Roma experts are subordinated to both BJR, and the mayor. They represent the main mediators between the public authorities and the Roma communities.

(31) Interview with Ilie Dincă, sub-secretary of state within the Department for Interethnic Relations.

### ***3. Lack of consensus in the application of the Strategy***

Not lastly, the Strategy provides for the setting up at the county or local level of mixed working groups consisting of representatives of the BJRs or Roma councilors, NGOs or

elected representatives of the Roma communities, to evaluate the major needs of the Roma population and the application of the support programs provided to them. (32)

Out of the public institutions that collaborate within the Groups we mention: the National Agency for the Training and Occupation of Workforce, the National Agency for Housing, the Direction of Public Health, the Social Insurance House, Police Inspectorates, ect.

Although the measure is tick off at the chapter "achievements", in fact **there is still a huge discrepancy between what the government took on and what is happening in reality.** In these mixed groups there are often people delegated by the authorities, who lack the needed competencies to approach the specific issues of the Roma. In addition, **the money is missing, as does the institutional validation of the mixed groups.** But these things, as shown above, are no news.

The specificity of the mixed groups is the **reticence of the numerous non-governmental structures to join the experts and the local authorities**, their reserve being generated by both the lack of cohesion of the Roma civil society (as much as there is), but especially by the difficult collaboration with the Social Democrat Roma Party. (33)

Although the Strategy was developed by a group of organizations that are representatives of the Roma, after its adoption the government chose to work predominantly with only one organization, the Roma Party. "The reasons were various, from the political ones to the personal ones, as well as the gross indifference of the political factors for the Roma issues. What does the Social democrat Roma Party do? After a failed attempt to lay its hands on the "Framework Convention for the Roma" in 2001, the next year it tried to set up a new structure called the "CARTEL RO 430", a structure which died as soon as it was set up, and as if it had not been enough, last year they set up "For Romenge", a structure of non-governmental organizations that obey the Roma Party. 90% of the members of these structures are directly related to the county or municipal presidents of the Roma Party. Moreover, the list also includes organizations that never claimed that they are members of For Romenge. Anyway, if someone believes that they can fool the European Union or the Roma civil society with such stories, namely that these are the representative organizations of the Roma in Romania, they are bitterly wrong. On the other hand, I would be happy to know these organizations better, even if they have not been very much present in the public life, even if some don't even have an accountancy balance submitted to the financial administration, etc. I have never seen them work, and we move around in this area, but we have not met, therefore the structure is worthless. This flag of false participation of the Roma civil society cannot be waved in front of anyone. As for the rest, there is the Strategy as a programmatic document, but without any practical dimensions." (34)

These things are, however, generally known by the European Union, too, which is interested in the efficiency of the strategy as its major donor. This is what the report of the Open Society Institute says: "The local Roma experts were primarily named based on the proposals made by the Social Democrat Roma Party, without keeping in mind the standard procedures coming from other representatives of the Roma civil society. Hence, the situation in which a single political organization is accepted as the only body that represents the entire Roma population, which is very varied, while the expertise and the experience accumulated in the other Roma NGOs are ignored. Also, the Roma activists accuse the government that through its selective interaction with the civil society it has done nothing but accentuate its division instead of facilitating cooperation among the Roma NGOs". (35)

The latest country report of the European Union, for 2003, concerning Romania's progress in the accession to the EU, mentions "concern" for the fact that the government chose to work with only one Roma organization, which is against the principles laid down in the Strategy by the Government itself. (36)

However, in reply, the governmental representatives consider that the Roma organizations that cooperate at present in the implementation of the Strategy are representative. (37) In addition, the chief of the Department for Interethnic Relations believes that there is a cultural discrepancy among the Roma: There emerged an elite of the Roma organizations, an elite that carries out some programs but who don't go to the communities. This is an elite that do programs for other leaders. To me it seems that like this there'll be a rupture because the real needs of change are in the local communities." (38) Cristian Jura justifies a planned change in the application of the strategy, a change directed toward "more visible, more concrete and feasible things". "We want concrete results, based on integrated programs. This is anew approach that will necessitate doing things simultaneously in a certain community: both infrastructure and jobs, and the attempt to attract children to school. I hope that this new approach which we will pilot in the area of Zbruji in Bucharest will yield concrete results as soon as possible". (39)

(32) Measure 10 of the General Plan of Measures of the Government's Strategy for the Improvement of the Roma Situation

(33) The report *„Monitorizarea implementării la nivel local a Strategiei de îmbunătățire a situației romilor romilor”* [Monitoring the local implementation of the Strategy for the Improvement of the Roma Situation], prepared and published by the Resource Center for Roma Communities and the Open Society Institute, April 2004

(34) Interview with Florin Mois, executive director of the Resource Center for Roma Communities. Similar opinions were expressed by the representatives of other organizations interviewed when the report was prepared (Costel Bercu – Romani Criss and Gelu Dumnic – "Împreună" Development Agency)

(35) The report *„Monitorizarea Procesului de Aderare la Uniunea Europeană – Minorități etnice”* [Monitoring the Process of Accession to the European Union – Ethnic Minorities], Open Society Institute (OSI), December 2002

(36) *Regular Report on Romania's Progress Towards Accession*, October 2003

(37) Interview with Ilie Dincă, subsecretary of state within the Department for Interethnic Relations

(38) Interview with Cristian Jura, secretary of state, chief of the Department for Interethnic Relations

(39) *Idem*

#### **4. Insufficient funds...**

The issue of money is always a delicate one, even more so in the case of a public policy of this complexity and difficulty as the Strategy.

There is no precise evidence of the funds so far allocated for the Strategy, states Mr. Cristian Jura. This because there are several sources of funding (both governmental, and European Union funds, plus the international donors' funds), but also because a part of the budget allocations for the population in general (especially in the case of protection for the disadvantaged categories) implicitly also reach the Roma communities. This is in fact about

the social assistance money, Law 416/2001 regarding the minimum granted income, the ordinance regarding the provision of school materials for students in families with low income, money for the government's "roll and milk" program (whose aim is to reduce school drop-out) etc. The National Roma Office estimates that in 2003 these funds reached cca. 10 million Euro.

The representatives of the civil society consider that including the latter categories of money is merely an accountancy artifice, as they were not allocated directly for the Strategy, and for this reason they should not be included in another category of expenses. "In this way, we could add the money for the salaries of workers in the BJRs, although they are public servants. However, for the Strategy proper, the Government spent only about 10 percent of the money it should have allocated." (40)

Florin Mois , director of CRCR, says that in 2001 consultants estimated the costs that would be necessary for the implementation of the Strategy, and the money that was suggested amounted to approximately 105 million Euro. Out of this money, the contribution of the Government should have been cca. 31%, and the rest was going to be attracted from foreign funds. Mois estimated that so far the contribution of the authorities was 3 million Euro at most, which is almost ten times less than necessary.

Most of the money spent so far on the Strategy has been allocated through PHARE. More precisely:

- 900,000 Euro, PHARE RO.9803.01, which financed 26 projects focused on training programs and programs that support employment, training of the Roma to become social assistants, combating illiteracy, integration of the children in primary education, etc.
- 1,226,097 Euro, PHARE Civil Society (RO.0004.02.02) through which 37 partnership projects between Roma communities and the local public administration were financed, in social services, public administration, education, healthcare, communication and civic participation.
- PHARE 2002, continuation of the support for the Government's Strategy. The program has a 1,200,000 Euro component, launched in September 2003, whose major aim is professional training.
- 56,651,200,000 ROL within the Program called "Partnership to support the Roma – 2003." This is a public fund managed by the General Secretariat of the Government and as a result of which 27 projects were selected in the field of housing construction, integration of the Roma on the labor market, integration of the Roma in agricultural activities. According to the statements of a governmental official, until June 2004, 44 billion ROL was spent, i.e. 83.6% of the total amount. (41)
- 3,452,000 Euro within the PHARE RO 2002.000-586.01.02, launched in April 2004. This amount is divided for projects in healthcare (652,000 Euro), professional training and income-generating activities (1.8 million Euro) and small infrastructure and social housing construction.

To all these we should add the program of the Ministry of Education and Research, which implements a PHARE program financed by the European Commission and the Government of Romania, called "Access to education for disadvantaged groups, with a focus on Roma", with a 7 million Euro budget. Not lastly, the Social Democrat Roma Party, which represents the Roma minority in the Parliament, receives an annual subsidy of 24 billion ROL. (42)

(40) Interview with Florin Mois , executive director of the Foundation Resource Center for Roma Communities.

(41) Statement of the Minister for the coordination of the Government's Secretariat General, Eugen Bejinariu. According to Divers ([www.divers.ro](http://www.divers.ro)), June 2004

(42) Report on the progress made in the implementation of the Government's Strategy for the Improvement of the Roma Situation, Ministry of Public Information, April 2003

### *5... but also low capacity of absorption of NGOs*

All the non-governmental organizations of the Roma consider that the amounts allocated for the implementation of the Strategy are insufficient, and they most often mention the situation of the year 2002, when the Government allocated no penny for the Strategy in the budget.

However, the funds necessary for implementing the programs meant to contribute to the improvement of the Roma situation are quite numerous: the World Bank through its program for reducing poverty, the organizations within the structure of the United Nations, various regional funds and even funds from the budget of the Romanian ministries. A Roma expert says, "There is money, but several NGOs do not have the capacity to attract these resources. There is need for more inventiveness and there should be something like this, because many programs in the mid 90's were aimed at preparing the NGO activists to raise funds." (43)

Also, the non-governmental organizations do not have enough human and material resources to ensure their own contribution to the programs of the European Union. They accuse the inherent bureaucracy of the PHARE programs. However, the leader of the organization what has so far been the major Implementing authority for these programs, says this is in fact a false problem. "The bureaucracy of the PHARE projects cannot be done away with because this is public money we are spending and there has to be strict control of the manner it is being spent. And thus we cannot give up some standards just because an organization cannot meet them. However, what we can do is support the organization to achieve the capacity to face the challenges of the PHARE projects. And this is being done, there are all sorts of training sessions, we provide consultancy where there is need, we inform the people, etc. And this cannot change for a relatively small number of organizations, which is why we need to raise the organization to the standard, not to lower the standard itself." (44)

Despite the discontent of some organizations about the rigidity of the procedures to obtain funds from PHARE, the support of the European Union has made possible the implementation of several projects aimed at the real needs of the Roma.

A very good example for the implementation of such programs that had an impact, even in the absence of funds allocated through the strategy, is that of the Ministry of Education, where the initiative and the efforts of the people counted more than the funds allocated from the budget. Thus, a Romani language section at the University, or special courses for teachers were organized before the Strategy was developed. "Starting with 1999, we already had summer schools in which we trained, at a time, 45 to 60 youth from the Roma communities to enable them to work as unqualified teachers of Romani language and the history of the Roma. All of them are now in the educational system as teachers", says professor Gheorghe Saru. He considers that the Strategy is important only because it

provides the legal framework promoting principles such as affirmative action (special places for the Roma youth in high schools or in higher education), or the need to cultivate Romani at all levels of education. (45)

(43) Interview with Mariea Ionescu, expert within the Office for Roma Problems.

(44) Interview with Florin Mois , executive director of the Resource Center for Roma Communities

(45) Interview with prof. Gheorghe Sar u, inspector for the issues of the Roma minority within the Ministry of Education and Research.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Government's Strategy for the Improvement of the Roma Situation is undoubtedly a step forward as concerns the inclusion, in the wide sense, of the Roma ethnics in the Romanian society.

Three years after its adoption, the Strategy managed to define the legal framework, to set objectives as the necessary measures for their achievement.

Despite all these, the concrete results of the implementation of the Strategy continue to be little visible. Three years are a short time for notable changes to occur in the Roma communities' life (especially as concerns changes in mentality, either of the Roma, or of the majority population), but the Strategy seems to have come to a dead end.

However, for the process of the implementation of the Strategy to be real, efficient and with concrete results, we consider that there is need for the application of very clear measures such as:

- **Efficient management structures to implement the Strategy.** As we have seen, the operation of the Mixed Committee for Monitoring and Implementation is poor. The committee will have to ensure in reality the coordination of activities at the central and local levels, to plan and evaluate permanently the activity of people involved in the implementation of the Strategy.

The Committee should be led by an influential person, who has real powers, which should also be the case for the Office for Roma Problems.

The presence and the involvement of the Roma specialists in the Mixed Committee should be increased and encouraged.

The Commissions for the Roma need to be reactivated at the level of the ministries involved in the implementation of the Strategy.

One may even think of a distinct body to be in charge of the effective implementation of the Government's Strategy and/or there should be an explicit position within the Office for Roma for this position.

- **The local authorities need to be reminded of the obligations they have in the implementation of the Strategy.** One of the most serious issues of post-communist Romania continues to be the difficult implementation of the existing laws. This phenomenon also often occurs in implementing the strategy, and it is due either to bureaucracy or ignorance of the laws, or simply to the lack of involvement of the local authorities. For this reason, the

Government should send a clear signal to the prefects and the local authorities to remind them of their obligation to get involved in the Strategy, but also to ensure the necessary financial resources and logistics.

On the other hand, the Mixed Groups should be made up of representatives of the County Offices for the Roma, or Roma councilors, NGOs or elected representatives of the Roma communities, to become functional and efficient.

At the same time, it is necessary to identify the mechanisms to sanction the persons and institutions that fail to fulfill their tasks they have taken on within the Strategy.

- **strengthening the institutional capacity of BJR and the town halls.** The County Roma Offices should work with experts that deal exclusively with the issues of the Roma. They should be provided with the methodology to apply the Strategy and they should be granted more power to make decisions. The possibility of passing BJRs under the authority of the County Councils should also be considered, as a means of obtaining more money for the projects.

Solutions must be found to establish positions of experts in Roma issues in all the towns and villages where the number of the Roma population is significant.

Not lastly, the premises of a process of selection and correct competition should be designed for occupying the positions of Roma expert.

- **Supplementing the funds allocated to the Strategy.** Testing the efficacy of the Strategy can only be done if there are visible results. However, for this money is necessary first of all. So far, the Government, as the provider of funds, allocated insufficient resources for the implementation of the Strategy. It is also very important that the money be directed directly for the achievement of concrete results, which would influence in reality the life of the Roma communities.

- **Respect for the principal of consensus in the implementation of the Strategy.** Collaboration between the executive and the representative organizations of the Roma should be genuine and the partnership with the one and only representative of the entire Roma population should be given up. Of course it is easier and more efficient to work with one representative but the means need to be found to establish punctual partnerships, where certain organizations have the experience and the proven expertise.

This major representative could be a Public Foundation (which is, in fact, mentioned in the strategy) which reunites the most authorized representatives of the Roma communities.

Also, the Roma organizations must be more serious about their role of facilitators between the local communities and the authorities or the persons in charge of the implementation of the Strategy.

- **Widening the perspective in the implementation of the Strategy.** At present, the Government tends to look upon the Strategy from a strictly social perspective, according to which a large part of the problems of the Roma are connected to poverty and under-development, as well as lack of participation in public life. Hence, the predominant orientation toward programs of housing construction, employment, healthcare campaigns or educational problems. Therefore, the perspective specified by the Roma civil society must not be ignored: they state that the essential problem is about discrimination and social exclusion



of the Roma. The first measure in this sense could be to appoint a Roma representative in the management structure of the National Council for Combating Discrimination.

- **Support for coherent programs that promote ethnic identity** and the removal of the stigma associated to the Roma ethnics. In this sense, the social and cultural elite of the Roma should be supported through encouraging their involvement in community development. The Cultural Center for Roma Communities (an institution that exists on paper) should be activated for this purpose to include the Museum of Roma Culture and Civilization, and a Theater of the Roma.

- **Identification of means to monitor the application of the Strategy.** Although the implementation of the Strategy is done generally in a transparent manner, at present there is no mechanism of control and monitoring of this process. Therefore, beyond the periodic evaluations done by governmental institutions involved in the Strategy, international organizations should also have at their turn a mechanism to pursue and evaluate the application of the Strategy.