

# DecadeWatch

Roma Activists  
Assess the Progress  
of the Decade of  
Roma Inclusion

2007 Update



DECADE  
WATCH



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# Overview



# DecadeWatch—Background

## The Decade of Roma Inclusion

In February 2005, heads of governments from Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia launched the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015 by signing the following declaration:

*“Building on the momentum of the 2003 conference, ‘Roma in an Expanding Europe: Challenges for the Future,’ we pledge that our governments will work toward eliminating discrimination and closing the unacceptable gaps between Roma and the rest of society, as identified in our Decade Action Plans. We declare the years 2005–2015 to be the Decade of Roma Inclusion, and we commit to support the full participation and involvement of national Roma communities in achieving the Decade’s objectives and to demonstrate progress by measuring outcomes and reviewing experiences in the implementation of the Decade’s Action Plans. We invite other states to join our effort.”*

In addition, all countries drafted Decade Action Plans in the priority areas of education, employment, health and housing and created institutional arrangements for implementing the Decade commitments. The Decade promoted the participation of Roma civil society in drafting action plans and their implementation, including in monitoring implementation.

## DecadeWatch

**Building on the principle of Roma participation in the Decade, DecadeWatch is an initiative of a group of Roma activists and researchers to assess progress under the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015 since its launch in February 2005. DecadeWatch is supported by the Open Society Institute and the World Bank. This support has included training and mentoring the research teams, as well as developing the methodology for, providing editorial support to and printing this series of reports.**



# 2007 DecadeWatch Update —A Progress Review of the Decade by Roma Activists

## What Is DecadeWatch?

DecadeWatch is an assessment of government action on implementing the commitments expressed under the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015. Since the Decade aims at giving Roma a voice in the process of inclusion, this assessment has been **conducted by coalitions of Roma NGOs and activists from all countries participating in the Decade**. DecadeWatch is a constructive contribution by Roma activists towards making the Decade a success.

The first issue of DecadeWatch, published in June 2007, reviewed the period from the launch of the Decade in early 2005 until the end of 2006. **This Update covers the year 2007** and reports any changes and new initiatives that governments introduced in that year.

**DecadeWatch assesses government action**, not the changed situation for Roma on the ground. Given the absence of consistent and systematic outcome indicators and data, this exercise focuses only on input: What did governments do in 2007 and what have they done since the launch of the Decade? DecadeWatch summarizes a range of indicators measuring: (i) the existence and quality of Decade Action Plans, including the availability of data with which to report on progress; (ii) the institutional arrangements for Decade implementation; (iii) whether measures have been put in place across the four Decade priority areas. As with the first volume, **this DecadeWatch Update does not measure the impact and change of outcomes for Roma**. Systematic outcome monitoring—in particular making cross-country comparisons—is currently impossible because of significant data gaps. Moreover, the Decade has only been implemented over three years, and it may be premature to assess outcomes.

This is the 2007 Update of DecadeWatch—A Progress Review of the Decade by Roma Activists.

DecadeWatch assesses government input, not the effectiveness of policies for Roma ...

...identifies and maps good experience...

In identifying government action across all countries, DecadeWatch country reports aim to **identify good experience** and highlight achievements that countries can learn from. DecadeWatch also includes in its analysis government measures, programs and policies that were introduced before the Decade, and continue to exist.

...and makes cross-country comparisons.

DecadeWatch is an **attempt to compare government action** across countries and to provide a snapshot of whether, and to what extent, governments have acted on their Decade promise. It recognizes that countries differ in size—in the size of their Roma populations and their level of economic development—and therefore may require differences in scale of effort. However, it is important to gain some measure of political will and pro-activity, as well as to identify good practice and gaps across countries and priority areas.

The last year has seen further progress...

### What Was Accomplished in 2007?

The Decade gained momentum in 2007. Compared to 2005–2006, this Decade-Watch Update finds that 2007 saw **progress across all countries, with some seeing more significant progress than others**, and major developments for the Decade as a whole:

- **Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Spain expressed their wish to join the Decade in 2007**; Spain was the first Western European, non-transition country to join. The addition of new countries to the Decade is a powerful signal as to the importance of the Roma inclusion agenda in Europe and will enrich the process with new experiences and perspectives;
- **Macedonia and the Czech Republic provided an example for increased government pro-activeness in introducing systemic change even over the short-term.** Macedonia began to seriously tackle the Roma inclusion agenda, by developing reporting mechanisms, making efforts to strengthen the Decade co-ordinating body and mainstreaming Romani issues into employment and health policies. The Czech Republic launched a “Governmental Department for Social Inclusion of Excluded Romani Communities” (Agency) which will promote local-level partnerships and innovative and complex social inclusion policies in marginalized Roma localities;
- During the first year of its EU membership, Bulgaria indicated that it is willing to tie Decade priorities to EU funding, especially in the area of school desegregation, by funding partnerships of Roma NGOs, local governments and schools to implement school desegregation action;
- The Decade remains the **framework for discussing Roma inclusion both for the governments and Roma civil society** of all participating countries. It is increasingly becoming an “Open Method of Co-ordination”-type mechanism for the exchange of good practice and peer learning. The Hungarian Government, the seat of the Decade Presidency in 2007–2008, has led this

...including towards adopting systemic Roma inclusion policies...

process by making use of financing under the Decade Trust Fund for a workshop on housing, jointly organized with Croatia, and in forming an expert working group on indicators for Roma inclusion;

- The Hungarian Presidency and other Decade countries have taken the lead in **calling for the adoption of a European Roma Policy**, to be elaborated taking account of the goals and mechanisms of the Decade of Roma Inclusion;
- The Decade process aims at **giving Roma a voice** in the countries' efforts at promoting inclusion and Roma are being increasingly heard at national and European levels.

Although the 2007 DecadeWatch Update finds increasing signs of enhanced and more systematic attention to Roma inclusion across most countries, integrated inclusion policies with a focus on achieving and demonstrating results remain a distant goal. Moreover, coinciding with positive measures, there are also examples of government policies which are likely to have a detrimental effect on Roma inclusion, for example the tightening of access to social benefits in several countries without adequate accompanying measures for promoting social inclusion and access to employment. **The Decade has launched a process towards making a difference, but it has not yet had the impact that Roma in Europe need—tangible and real integration into mainstream societies.** The challenge over the coming years is to design more systematic solutions and to look at positive examples across the Decade countries and the EU as a whole. There are good examples of systematic policy approaches in most countries, and the Decade should be used as an effective forum for exchanging this experience, in order to maximize the effect of any government measure on Roma inclusion.

One of the biggest gaps in Decade implementation remains **the lack of data on Roma, covering education, employment, health and housing, as well as information on overall poverty.** Data collection is sparse, irregular and not nationally representative. Many countries collect data on the ethnicity of individuals enrolled in programs, or recipients of services (e.g. employment services). That allows for tracking absolute numbers of individuals covered, but does not allow for relating the data to the entire population. The Hungarian Decade Presidency has launched an expert working group to advise on data collection and results monitoring for the Decade. It will report back to the Decade International Steering Committee in the autumn of 2008. However, focusing the Decade on real results requires a renewed push from governments to ensure the national statistics services record ethnicity in household surveys. The agenda of introducing outcome monitoring and evaluation in Roma inclusion policies would also benefit from support by the European Commission and Eurostat. It should be a core element of any EU Roma policy.

...and strengthening the Decade as a knowledge forum...

... yet the challenges remain big.

The lack of data remains a serious shortcoming.

## Looking Ahead:

### The Decade Agenda for Governments for 2009–2010

The agenda for government action laid out in the first volume remains valid, and this Update confirms the following key messages:

- **Set targets for outcomes and achievements in Roma inclusion for 2015.** While reporting systems and data collection mechanisms remain absent with regard to tracking performance over time, setting targets would allow governments to demonstrate their success in 2015;
- **Adopt intermediate operational plans,** for example covering two-year periods. Shorter-term operational plans allow for setting a more concrete agenda and demonstrating progress. They would be a key tool to re-invigorate the Decade at national and local levels and to link the Decade to the governments' reform agendas in the four priority areas;
- **Decentralize the Decade.** It is essential that the Decade be embedded in what local governments, as well as local branches of sector ministries do. The Czech Republic's new Social Inclusion Agency shows one promising avenue, as do the elaboration of local Decade Action Plans in many countries. National governments carry the prime accountability for progress under the Decade, but they need to **involve municipalities in the Decade and decentralize to the local level their political commitment** expressed in the Decade pledge;
- **Promote systemic solutions.** Countries should move away from a fragmented project approach to developing systematic targeted policies and to make mainstream programs and policies inclusive of and effectively reaching out to Roma. This requires the involvement of Roma themselves in advising on design and implementation, in particular where programs cater for the population at large and do not have specific Roma targeting;
- **Push towards an EU Roma policy, building on the Decade.** The Decade is a pan-European initiative to foster the integration of the Roma—the largest minority in Europe—and has been the vehicle for a European solution to the challenge of Roma exclusion. The move towards an EU Roma policy is an effort to take this agenda to the next level. DecadeWatch strongly endorses the development of an EU Roma policy and suggests reflecting key Decade principles, such as Roma participation, involvement of Member States and non-Member States, focusing on results and the monitoring of and cross-country exchange of good practice.

## Comparative Country Performance

The 2007 DecadeWatch Update shows progress across all countries. However, progress remains uneven and no country performs consistently well across all indicators. This suggests that, despite the fact that some countries are ahead of others in their efforts to implement the Decade, serious challenges in both the design of Action Plans and their implementation remain for all Decade countries.

As in the first volume of DecadeWatch, the overall difference in performance remains mainly related to the varying degrees of government ownership and systematic government policies. The DecadeWatch progress assessment finds that countries fall into the following groups:

1. **Hungary** remains the country participating in the Decade which has made the most advances, with the most significant progress on implementation across most, if not all, of the priority areas;
2. Following Hungary—at some distance—are **the Czech Republic and Macedonia**. Both have made substantial progress since 2005/2006, with Macedonia the most active reformer in the Decade in 2007 (together with Montenegro);
3. The main group includes **Bulgaria, Slovakia, Romania and Croatia**—all with very similar scores. These four countries show a mixed performance with examples of both systematic and limited government action across the priorities. Slovakia's performance has least improved, and thus has fallen behind in comparison;
4. **Serbia and Montenegro** continue to lag behind, although both have made above-average improvements, in particular Montenegro, and have closed the gap between them and the main group.

Some countries have made remarkable progress ...

... with Macedonia, Montenegro and the Czech Republic having made the biggest gains ...

Table 1: Comparative Performance

RANK	COUNTRY	2007 SCORE	DIFFERENCE TO 2005/2006
1	Hungary	2.42	0.13
2	Czech Republic	2.16	0.40
3	Macedonia	2.08	0.71
4	Bulgaria	1.96	0.12
5	Slovakia	1.87	0.05
6	Romania	1.84	0.11
7	Croatia	1.83	0.13
8	Serbia	1.45	0.20
9	Montenegro	1.38	0.75

*Note:* Scores presented in this table are averaged across all indicators. Scores vary from 0 (lowest) to 4 (highest).

... and differences continue to be explained by the degree to which governments have put systematic policies in place.

The DecadeWatch methodology  
has limitations ...

As in the first assessment for 2005–2006, it is obvious that any **assessment of progress based only on the review of whether governments have put measures in place has limitations**, as by definition this does not capture whether these measures are having an effect. A further limitation lies in the fact that the choice of indicators is, naturally, arbitrary. However, DecadeWatch has chosen a set of indicators that are key to the likelihood of the Decade’s success in achieving its aims.

DecadeWatch argues that success in Decade implementation relies both on the right institutional framework and the policies put in place by governments in the four priority areas. The ranking presented in Table 1 is, therefore, based on a range of indicators covering:

- the availability of **action plans** with indicators and targets and associated tracking and reporting mechanisms;
- **institutional arrangements** for Decade implementation;
- **government measures** across the four priority areas: education; employment; health; housing (including on data availability and collection); the availability of EU-compatible anti-discrimination legislation.

The top score is 4, awarded to best practice performance, while 0 measures no government input. As Table 2 explains, the intermediate scores differentiate between the various degrees of government pro-activity. It is worth noting that the score of 4 is not necessarily 4 times better than 1, but that 4 reflects the standard of what is achievable. The difference between 0 and 1 is more relevant than the difference between 3 and 4.

The DecadeWatch scores present an average across the indicators without a weighting of individual indicators. Attaching different weights can result in slight changes to the ranking, but would not change the groupings as listed above. The detailed DecadeWatch scorecard methodology is presented at the end of this report.

Table 2: Defining DecadeWatch Scores

SCORE	SUMMARY DEFINITIONS
0	No action by the government.
1	Sporadic measures, initial steps taken, but not regular and systematic.
2	Regular measures. Not systematic, nor amounting to a programmatic approach.
3	Government program. Advanced action, but not integrated policy.
4	Integrated policy. Setting the standard for government action and ownership.

... but is based on indicators  
that capture necessary inputs to  
make the Decade a success.

The 2007 DecadeWatch Update reveals that, overall, progress on Decade implementation falls between the scores of 1 and 2.5, suggesting that country performance ranges on average between a predominance of sporadic measures on the one hand and more systematic programs on the other. Compared to 2005–2006, sporadic measures and initial steps have increasingly made way for more systematic approaches across most countries.

The overall picture: the previous dominance of sporadic action is increasingly making way for regular and continuously provided measures and systematic approaches.



# Country Summaries

## BULGARIA

### Bulgaria's Challenges

In 2007, the government made efforts to build institutional capacity at a central level for coordinating the implementation of the Decade Action Plan; an inter-governmental working group was established with the aim of monitoring this implementation. In addition, tasks in the Decade priority areas have been discussed by the Council for Roma Integration in Bulgarian Society and the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. A major achievement in securing the financial sustainability of Roma integration activities has been the incorporation of some activities, especially in the fields of education and employment, in the EU Structural Funds programs for the period 2007–2013. Activities in other Decade priorities, however, such as access to healthcare and housing, remained underfunded and a systematic approach in these areas has not been achieved.

### Action Plans

Bulgaria has adopted operational plans related to some of the Decade priority areas. These include the Plan of Action of the Center for Educational Integration of Children and Pupils from Ethnic Minorities at the Ministry of Education and Science, and the 2007–2008 Action Plan on the implementation of the National Program for Improving Living Conditions of Roma in the Republic of Bulgaria 2005–2015. The Decade Action Plan, however, has not been operationalized by short-term work plans, and has no targets or indicators to measure progress. The absence of detailed work plans makes it difficult to assess the progress of the Action Plan implementation. At the local level, action plans for the Decade priorities have not been elaborated, although a number of municipalities have adopted implementing strategies for the Framework Program for Equal Integration of Roma—a policy document adopted in 1999 and set for revision in 2008.

The Ministry of Labor and Social affairs has prepared a monitoring report on the implementation of the Decade Action Plan for 2007, not published as of this writing.

### Education

The most significant advancement in the area of education has been the inclusion of school desegregation activities in the Operational Program Human Resources Development, co-funded by EU Structural Funds and a government budget for the period 2007–2013. In early 2008, several school desegregation initiatives received financial support from this program; so far, this is the most significant financial commitment from the government for school desegregation projects implemented by Romani NGOs in the last eight years. The Ministry of Education and Science has also launched a funding scheme to be managed by the Center for Educational Integration of Children and Pupils from Ethnic Minorities, which covers school desegregation activities, among others, and is co-funded by the Roma Education Fund.

Several hundred teachers have been trained to work with children from different ethnic backgrounds as part of Phare projects, and funding for reconstruction has been provided to schools integrating Romani children.

### Employment

According to the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, in 2007, about 22,000 Roma participated in programs aiming to enhance their competitiveness in the labor market by providing professional qualifications, professional orientation and the motivation to actively search for jobs. There is no information, however, about the number of Roma who have been employed as a result. The government's Employment Agency organized four job fairs for Roma in areas with a concentrated Roma population. Out of 900 unemployed Roma who participated, 338 were reported to have

been subsequently employed. Despite this relative success, the number of these job fairs has decreased from ten in 2006 to four in 2007.

The Employment Agency has employed 13 Roma experts in order to improve services for Roma. 238 staff in Sofia and Montana have been trained in working with Roma clients. While the impact of government employment measures on the integration of Roma in the labor market has been uncertain, recent legislative developments threaten to deepen social exclusion, especially with regards to those who are more financially deprived. Amendments to the Social Assistance Act (which had been in force since June 2006) introduced a temporary limitation of 18 months for monthly social assistance payments. Before the amendment these payments had had no such limitation and were conditioned only by the needs of the recipients. The amendments, which discontinue social assistance payments for one year after January 2008 for those who had received them in the previous 18 months, are expected to have a marked impact on Roma, who are over-represented in the category of unemployed persons receiving social assistance. In addition, many will lose other rights previously provided for by the law, notably to free medical insurance.

There has been little progress in the area of healthcare. Major systemic obstacles to access to healthcare, such as excluding a large number of Roma from receiving health insurance, has persisted despite government attempts to ameliorate the problem. Two regulations were adopted in 2007 by the Ministry of Health, providing hospital care for persons without income, and obstetrical care for women with no health insurance. However, these regulations are limited in scope. The aforementioned healthcare can only be applied for through a complex bureaucratic procedure, which makes the impact of the Ministry of Health's regulations minimal. Actions in the area of healthcare remain haphazard and limited to several Phare projects. Although health mediators are being trained, their status has not yet been regulated.

In 2007, more planning than actual work was carried out in the area of housing. The government adopted an Action Plan for 2007–2008 of the National Program for Improving the Living Conditions of Roma in the Republic of Bulgaria 2005–2015, and a number of municipalities adopted development plans for improving the living conditions of Roma. In 2007, the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works received 80 proposals from 41 municipalities for financing infrastructural projects in concentrated Romani settlements. Projects from 35 municipalities were approved for financing in 2007. Only nine municipalities reported having developed property boundary maps for concentrated Romani settlements; seven small municipalities had selected land with the purpose of constructing social housing for Roma. Funding allocated for social housing in 2007 has been insufficient, and as of this writing, the government has not made any progress in implementing the National Program for Improving the Living Conditions of Roma.

Comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation has been in place since 2003. Complaints before the Anti-Discrimination Commission increased by 66.8%—from 389 in 2006 to 649 in 2007. The Commission is important in combating unequal treatment. In contrast, the national Ombudsman is largely passive and still not recognized as a public advocate.

Securing EU Structural Funds for Roma integration activities in the field of education.

Health

Housing

Anti-discrimination Legislation

Key Achievement

## CROATIA

### Croatia's Challenges

In 2007, in comparison with the previous two years, the Croatian government increased funds allocated for the implementation of the Decade Action Plan, and supported a number of new projects in education, housing and employment. While, according to the government, the increase of these funds broadened the range of Roma beneficiaries, the impact of government programs on Roma in several areas is unclear. Apart from reporting on the number of Roma who participated in various programs, the government has not established a mechanism for evaluating the impact of these programs' implementation. Some programs, notably in the area of education, have reportedly not met their goal of integrating Roma into education. The government has still to define a strategy for desegregating education and preventing the segregation of Roma at school, as well as formulating objectives and undertaking action in this respect.

The development of a more detailed Action Plan for the Implementation of the Decade, as well as the adoption of short-term operational plans will contribute to the move from sporadic activities towards more systematic action, especially in areas such as healthcare and employment.

### Action Plans

The Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion adopted in 2005 has not been improved despite critical remarks addressed by the first Decade Watch report (2005–2006). The deficiencies in terms of targets, indicators and deadlines remain. Furthermore, the government has not adopted detailed operational plans in any of the priority areas. Progress was made in developing a monitoring mechanism through reports submitted by the line ministries to the government Office for National Minorities. In July 2007, the government approved the 2005–2006 reports of the respective ministries. Reports for 2007 have not been publicly available as of this writing. Although ministries' reports provide data about the number of Roma who benefited from various programs (and in some instances data for 2005–2006 is comparable to 2004) overall assessment of progress is difficult due to the fact that the data provided in the reports do not relate to previously formulated targets.

### Education

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sports provided funding for Roma education projects covering all stages from pre-school to university education. These financial commitments notwithstanding, the quality of the educational services available to Roma continued to raise concerns in several places throughout the country. A negative assessment by the Roma Education Fund (REF) of a joint project on pre-school education with the Ministry of Education resulted in the suspension of funding by the REF in mid-2007. The reason for this development was the finding of the REF that, in a number of locations, pre-school facilities established under the project effectively segregated Romani children, were poorly organized and did not meet satisfactory professional standards.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sports reported a threefold increase of Romani children enrolled in primary schools, as well as an increase of Roma enrolled in secondary education (these being supported by government scholarships). However, the practice of segregated education of Roma in some counties, especially Međimurje, was reported to have persisted; the government did not indicate what measures were undertaken to eliminate such practices.

Several new programs for the training and counseling of job seekers and entrepreneurs from Romani communities were launched. Awareness-raising activities targeting employers were also implemented with the purpose of creating a favorable environment for Roma job seekers and employees. Although several hundreds of Roma were reported to have benefitted from training and counseling programs, the government did not provide information about the number of Roma who were successful in finding jobs or starting businesses as a result of these programs.

A new law on crafts, which provides opportunities for home-based business, is expected to boost entrepreneurial activities among Roma, for whom the cost of establishing a business is often prohibitive.

While there have been many activities in the area of improving access of Roma to healthcare, they have remained of a sporadic nature. Some one-off programs were implemented (such as a pilot program in Osijek-Baranja county) involving surveys of the health status of Roma, healthcare education and the engagement of health mediators. In four counties, targeted vaccination campaigns were carried out. Although new health mediators were being trained, measures to regulate the function of the health mediator have not yet been undertaken. As a result there is no systematic employment of health mediators for Roma communities throughout the country.

The government continued to support the development of local plans and infrastructure projects for Romani settlements in accordance with the county programs on Roma housing adopted by 12 counties in previous years. Out of 14 counties designated to develop such programs, two did not complete them by the end of 2007. According to the Office of National Minorities, by the end of 2007, three regions—Medimurje, Osijek-Baranja, Varazdin, and the city of Zagreb—developed settlement plans for all Romani settlements within their boundaries, and provided conditions of legalization for individual housing units and infrastructure development. Another nine counties implemented programs, which had been adopted in previous years, for improving the housing conditions of Roma; in two other counties, the development of such programs began in 2007. Other government measures to facilitate the access of Roma to decent housing included: transferring state ownership to local governments for the purposes of building housing for Roma; preparing technical documentation for communal infrastructure; and support for building houses for persons in extreme need.

Croatia has not adopted an anti-discrimination law yet. A draft has been in the process of elaboration as of this writing.

The government increased funds allocated for the implementation of the Decade Action Plan, and continued to support the development of local plans and infrastructure projects for Romani settlements.

Employment

Health

Housing

Anti-discrimination Legislation

Key Achievement

## CZECH REPUBLIC

### The Czech Republic's Challenges

The government has identified Roma as a target group in some mainstream social inclusion policies. However, there have been few targeted measures to address the multiple social exclusion factors affecting Roma. A major development, which is expected to answer the need for specific Roma-related integration policies, is the launching of the governmental Department for Social Inclusion of Excluded Romani Communities (Agency). This department will function as a pilot project with regard to its approach of working locally and filling the gap between government and communities.

The government has yet to find a solution to the inequalities facing Roma in education, these inequalities being a result of prevailing segregated education, especially the over-representation of Roma in schools and classes with substandard curricula. The discriminatory nature of placing a disproportionately high number of Romani children in schools for learners with mental disabilities has been condemned by the European Court of Human Rights in their judgement against the Czech Republic in the case of *D.H. and Others v. the Czech Republic*. Reforms to educational legislation in recent years have not introduced a systematic approach to the issue of school segregation, and have not had a practical impact on the educational conditions for Roma in the Czech Republic.

### Action Plans

In addition to the Decade Action Plan, the government has adopted several other resolutions on the integration of Roma. A major weakness of all the documents is the lack of targets and benchmarks. The lack of measurement makes it impossible to quantify the impact and progress of activities. Even though a system for data collection in the Decade priority areas was launched at the end of 2007, there are two main areas of concern regarding the efficiency of this system. First, the system does not identify Roma among the general group of socially excluded persons. Second, there is unwillingness among many Roma to give information about their ethnic background, due to persisting anti-Gypsyism.

### Education

Activities in 2007 have been focused on pre-school education and the implementation of the Government Concept Project of Early Intervention for Socio-Culturally Disadvantaged Children. The controversial terminology “socio-cultural disadvantage” in the Concept refers to Roma, among other target groups. Activities in the area of pre-school education have mainly included the development of methodological and diagnostic tools for identifying the educational needs of children from disadvantaged backgrounds, and promoting their integration into mainstream education. The education of children from disadvantaged backgrounds in the pre-school phase will also be the focus of a thematic inspection by the Czech School Inspection in 2008.

In 2007, the number of preparatory classes in primary schools has increased. However, almost half of all preparatory classes are based in the former remedial schools, which still use adapted versions of the standard curriculum. Given that Romani children were enrolled in preparatory classes in the special and practical schools, often on the basis of residential proximity to these schools, the prospect of these children transferring to mainstream education are uncertain. The comprehensive school reform undertaken in 2005–2006, which also involved the transformation of remedial schools into regular primary schools, had an insignificant impact on the segregation of Romani children in education. There have been no specific measures aimed at desegregating the former special remedial schools. Many of these

schools have remained with a predominantly Romani student body and have continued to teach substandard curricula.

In 2007, the Ministry of Education allocated funding for the employment of 318 teacher assistants to support Romani children. Currently, this position is dependent on funding from the central government, as most school owners are not willing to allocate funds from their own budgets. The Ministry of Education provided support to a reported 2,715 Roma high school students on the basis of their social needs. In higher education, no special measures for supporting Romani students have been introduced. The Romani students' organization Athinganoi has recorded about 50 Roma in higher education, although the real number is likely to be higher.

In 2007, the government continued funding non-governmental organizations for projects to increase the employability of Roma as part of the National Program "Social Inclusion of Members of Romani Communities in Society 2006–2008". Funding for re-qualification courses, job assistance mediation and other measures was also available from the European Structural Funds. Apart from NGO-implemented projects, there have been no other targeted measures in this field. Roma are covered by general employment programs. The effect of these on Roma employability cannot be assessed due to a lack of ethnically disaggregated data. The Governmental Office for Roma Community Affairs, together with the World Bank, has started preparations for a joint research project aiming to identify the causes of high unemployment among Roma in the Czech Republic and propose recommendations for systematic change.

The Ministry of Health piloted the Sastipen project for health mediators in Romani communities, managed by the Romani organization Drom Association. As part of the project, 18 female mediators were trained and worked in the field. As of this writing, the evaluation of the project is under review by the Ministry of Health; the Ministry is expected to decide on follow-up activities in 2008. Another development in the field of health was the resolution of the Council for Roma Community Affairs to provide compensation to victims of forced sterilization. This proposal was put forward by the governmental working group on Romani women and should initiate the process of finding a solution to the issue.

In 2007, the government funded 1,376 low-cost flats in 137 towns and villages. It cannot be specified how many were allocated to Romani families due to a lack of data. The year 2007 experienced no high-profile forced evictions of Romani families as in previous years. However, there are still public expressions of anti-Romani sentiment from local public officials. The government has not managed to introduce measures that would curb the progressive housing segregation of Roma.

In July 2007, a draft anti-discrimination law was submitted to the Chamber of Deputies for discussion. The Chamber of Deputies gave its assent to the proposal in March 2008 and the Senate approved it on April 24, 2008. On May 16, 2008 President Václav Klaus vetoed the law on the grounds that it was "unnecessary, counterproductive and poor, and its implications are very problematic". The President returned the draft to the Chamber of Deputies, which scheduled its discussion for the Chamber's 32nd meeting on June 3, 2008, which was subsequently cancelled.

Establishment of the Governmental Department for Social Inclusion of Excluded Romani Communities (Agency).

Employment

Health

Housing

Anti-discrimination Legislation

Key Achievement

## HUNGARY

### Hungary's Challenges

During the second term of its Presidency of the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2007–2008), the Hungarian government continued to play an active role in maintaining the momentum of international cooperation for the realization of Decade goals. The Call for a European Roma Policy issued by the Hungarian Presidency in February 2008 was an important step towards placing Decade priorities on the EU policy agenda. Signed by Hungarian government ministers and Members of the European Parliament, the Call appealed to European institutions for a more coherent strategy on issues concerning Europe's Roma population.

Domestically, there have been no new major developments in any of the priority areas as most Decade activities were designed to be part of Hungary's mainstream social inclusion measures funded by the EU Structural Funds in the period 2004–2007. Despite the fact that Roma have received priority among beneficiaries in a number of mainstream social inclusion measures, what impact these measures have had on Roma is not clear. Hungary's main challenge in 2007 remained the absence of any mechanisms to assess Roma access to general social inclusion measures and their impact on Roma. The unavailability of ethnically disaggregated data is a serious barrier for evaluating Roma integration measures and, generally, for measuring progress in the Decade priorities. Monitoring of the Decade implementation in particular, has also been frustrated by the insufficient transparency of the line ministries' reports, which were not made available to the public in 2007 and early 2008.

In addition, the Hungarian government needs to address the issue of access to public funding for Roma-related activities by a range of actors. The public tender system through which the government funds a number of social inclusion measures seriously disadvantages some grassroots Romani organizations, municipalities and schools, which do not have the capacity to compete in tenders.

### Action Plans

In June 2007, Hungary made significant progress in streamlining measures for Roma integration when Parliament adopted the Decade of Roma Inclusion Program Strategic Plan. This was followed by a two-year implementation plan, endorsed by a government decree in December 2007. While the implementation plan is well developed in terms of goals, deadlines and responsibilities, it does not link the activities to specific budget lines from the national budget. Financing is realized through the New National Development Program.

The Roma-specific measures are encompassed in general social inclusion measures in the National Development Plan, for which funding is available through the EU Structural Funds (2004–2007 and 2008–2011). The National Development Plan requires municipalities and inter-municipal structures to develop equal opportunities plans as a condition for applying for the EU Structural Funds. It is uncertain as to what extent these equal opportunity plans contain Roma-specific objectives and measures. In any case, the requirement to develop such plans is an assurance of municipal focus on equality of opportunity, and ought to be seen as a progressive measure.

### Education

Government action in this field has been governed by the tasks formulated in the first phase of the National Development Plan (2004–2007), funded under the EU Structural Funds. One component of the EU Operational Program Human Resources Development formulated the aim: "to ensure equal opportunities in education for disadvantaged pupils". Specific objectives included: preventing failure at school and the dropping out of disadvantaged students, especially Roma and those with special educational needs; promoting the success of disadvantaged youths, especially Roma and

those with special needs; and eliminating segregation in the public education system and promoting non-discriminatory, inclusive practices. The effect of these activities on the education of Roma has not yet been evaluated. However, there is evidence to suggest that measures to eliminate segregated education have been met with resistance by some local authorities, and funding available for such measures has been underused or misused due to the lack of interest in promoting the integrated education of Roma by educational institutions at a local level. This is evidenced by the fact that there continue to exist homogeneous Roma schools/classes in approximately 170 settlements. A general weakness concerning the Hungarian government's programming is a lack of consistent data—including a lack of ethnically disaggregated data—which disallows an assessment of the impact of measures in the educational or any other social field.

The government has developed a number of programs for the integration of disadvantaged individuals into the labor market. The effectiveness of public works programs in building competitive skills and integrating participants into the labor market has often been questioned. The National Employment Public Foundation has supported career-development training programs aimed at moving Roma workers from public works programs into the competitive labor market. A handful of such programs are Roma-specific, although most target the wider population. These programs are generally run by county employment centers, regional training centers, or by contracted NGOs. Career areas focused on have included education, social work, office management and information technology. The findings of the National Employment Foundation, however, do not indicate how many have been able to find employment after the training programs. Similarly, data are unavailable on businesses set up by Roma having participated in the Ministry of Agricultural and Rural Development entrepreneurship development programs.

There were no major improvements in Roma healthcare programming in 2007. The year saw little targeted action; projects were *ad hoc* and limited in scope and impact. The first phase of the National Development Plan (2004–2007) provided some funding for healthcare mediators, working in some areas with concentrated Roma populations. Some mainstream programs by the Ministry of Health, such as breast tumor screening, supposedly benefitted Romani women, but no specific information as to the outreach to disadvantaged communities has been made available.

In 2007, the government continued its program to eliminate ghetto-like Romani settlements. No progress has been made in overcoming the sporadic nature of this program's activities; neither have there been efforts to develop a multi-dimensional approach to these problems. Funding allocated for the regeneration of small villages and towns with concentrated Romani populations has been misused in certain instances and the program has not achieved its objectives. Given the limited number of settlements affected (nine in 2007–2008), this is still best seen as a pilot program. There are plans to develop housing in micro-regions.

The Equal Treatment Authority continued activities in 2007. There has been an increase in complaints filed before the ETA (mostly involving Roma). Whether this was a result of increased awareness or more effective outreach programs, however, is uncertain. Problems regarding the ETA revolve around its method of funding, staff capacity, and levels of public awareness.

The Hungarian Parliament's adoption of the Decade of Roma Inclusion Program Strategic Plan, and the subsequent adoption by a government decree of a two-year implementation plan.

Employment

Health

Housing

Anti-discrimination Legislation

Key Achievement

## MACEDONIA

### Macedonia's Challenges

The Macedonian government made significant progress with regard to the management of Decade activities by developing reporting mechanisms and managing to collect some data on the situation of Roma; it also elaborated an action plan on gender and strategies on human rights. In addition, the government increased the members of the Decade Coordinating Body and staff members at the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy involved in the implementation of the Decade priorities. With regard to this substantive work, the government made efforts to mainstream Romani issues into general public policies, particularly on employment and health. The 2007 state budget included a line designated for the implementation of the Decade activities. These developments mark a significant change in Macedonia's commitments to the Decade, compared to the previous period. However, Macedonia has yet to design targeted programs or accelerate the implementation of existing ones to ensure sustainable change and a realistic decrease in the gap between Roma and non-Roma in all priority areas. Better outreach and fieldwork by the institutions is also strongly recommended.

### Action Plans

While the Action and Operational Plans for the Decade priority areas have not been qualitatively improved through a detailed formulation of tasks and indicators measuring progress, Macedonia initiated a planning process on the cross-cutting issues of the Decade. A plan on gender issues has been developed and adopted, while another plan on human rights is being drafted. The government's reporting system on the implemented activities and outputs has been improved through collecting and recording data during the implementation of activities by the line ministries. These data are publicly available through the Roma Information Centers, outreach events (such as press conferences) as well as through a written report provided upon request. More institutional efforts are needed at the municipal level, where implementation of the Decade priorities depends mostly on the efforts of local NGOs.

### Education

Although education is still a strong area compared to other Decade priorities, little progress has been made towards a pro-active engagement of government institutions at central and local levels. Activities have overwhelmingly been dependent on external funding, primarily by the Roma Education Fund. Most of the projects initiated through this fund were ongoing in 2007. A new development is the effort of the Ministry of Education and Science to increase the number of Roma students through recommendation letters to primary and secondary schools, and through an increase of the quota for Roma at certain universities. Roma access to state scholarships for university education has been improved through simplifying the application process. In addition, the Ministry of Education and Science initiated the provision of free textbooks for Roma students and started activities for the promotion of Roma identity and overcoming stereotypes and prejudices at schools. Two large-scale projects have also been initiated: building a secondary school at the Suto Orizari municipality, where the majority of residents are Roma; and the establishment of a Romani studies institute and Romani-language study group at the teacher-training faculty. Problems of segregated schooling of Roma however, are not recognized and remain unaddressed by the authorities.

A major effort to improve access for Roma to mainstream employment has been undertaken by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, which instructed central and local employment agencies to include Roma registered as unemployed in ongoing training and re-training programs, active employment measures and self-employment and micro-finance programs. This effort makes employment the area which has seen the furthest advances in 2007. The only Roma-specific measure during the period has been the subsidized employment of around 50 Roma, paid for with the government's contribution to the Decade Trust Fund. Romani women, however, have not been prioritized with regard to these activities, despite evidence indicating that Romani women have fewer opportunities to access employment than men.

Employment

As in the previous two years, no specific activities targeting Roma were implemented in the area of access to healthcare, although some of the mainstream programs developed by the Ministry of Health have benefited Roma. There has been an improvement in the mobilization of health workers with the implementation of the Decade Action Plan. On instructions by the Ministry of Health, health workers in a number of places throughout the country have sought cooperation with Romani NGOs in order to reach out to Romani communities. No significant efforts have been made by the government to challenge major problems, such as the exclusion of Roma from access to health insurance, and obstacles in accessing healthcare created by the lack of personal documents. Roma remain largely under-represented in health institutions.

Health

There have been isolated initiatives at the local level to ensure access for Roma settlements to utilities and infrastructure. The water supply, sewage system and road infrastructure have been renewed in the municipality of Suto Orizari, and urban development plans are underway for two major Romani settlements in Prilep and Bitola. Social housing is provided by the Ministry of Transportation and Connections, but no data on the access for Roma to social housing are available. With the assistance of the World Bank and UN HABITAT, the Ministry of Transportation and Connections drafted a Law on Legalization of Illegal Buildings and Establishment of Digital Data-Base on Urban Plans, and started a process of re-registration of land and estate. These legal instruments, when adopted, should allow for the improvement of the housing situation for Roma, particularly with the registration of housing. However, the government needs to take into consideration the situation of Roma during any further implementation of these projects.

Housing

The government, in consultation with civil society, is elaborating a new draft anti-discrimination law. It is expected that, unlike the previous draft, the new one will include prohibition of discrimination on the basis of race and ethnicity. According to the government, the law will be adopted in September 2008.

Anti-discrimination Legislation

In 2007, the government undertook measures to mainstream Romani issues in public policies, particularly in the areas of employment and health. It also improved the system of reporting on the Decade implementation and the situation of Roma.

Key Achievement

## MONTENEGRO

### Montenegro's Challenge

In 2007, the Decade Action Plan was not efficiently implemented, largely as a result of insufficient institutional capacity and scarce financial resources. Mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of the Action Plan have not been developed and there are no clear lines of responsibility regarding its actions. The National Coordinator of the Decade has neither adequate information from the field, nor valid sector reports; neither is there constructive communication with civil society. Actions within the Decade of Roma Inclusion in Montenegro are still overly dependant on foreign donors and international organizations. Inclusion policies on Roma are primarily within the orbit of the central government, whereas local authorities are not sufficiently involved. The government has yet to develop policies for the integration of Montenegrin citizens re-admitted to the country from EU Member States. Deported Roma, mainly young people, remain excluded from social and economic developments, because they do not speak the official language, do not have personal documents, and their qualifications are not recognized.

### Action Plans

Since the beginning of the Decade initiative, there have been no public and systematic reports by the government on the progress of activities, and the Decade Action Plan has not been recognized either by the government or by the public as a functional mechanism for improving the situation of Roma. This situation may be remedied with the adoption by the government, by the end of 2007, of the Strategy for Improving the Status of the Roma Population for 2008–2012. This Strategy is an amendment to the Decade Action Plan which provides more concrete tasks in the Decade priority areas. Furthermore, the Strategy expanded the Decade priorities to include improvement of the legal status of Roma in Montenegro, and the participation of Roma in public and political life. The Strategy also envisages the development of an official statistical-analytical document on numbers of Roma. The implementation of the Strategy will be monitored by a Commission set up by a government decision and chaired by the Minister for Protection of Human and Minority Rights; the Commission also includes a member of the Romani community. Funding for the implementation of the Strategy has been allocated in the state budget for 2008.

### Education

There has been no strategy to prevent Romani children dropping out of school, and no adequate support has been provided to Romani organizations dealing with the issue of education. Although school mediators have started functioning in several municipalities, their employment status is unclear and their remuneration is irregular.

Segregated education of Roma refugees from Kosovo has not been addressed by the government.

The government continued distributing free schoolbooks for Roma children in primary schools, but with mixed results. More than 50% of Roma children in primary schools reportedly did not receive schoolbooks for the 2006–2007 school year. Roma children attending secondary schools did not receive free schoolbooks either. More effective have been the affirmative measures for the enrolment of Roma in high schools and state universities. According to information from NGOs, the number of Roma in high schools has increased by about 15%. Although the government provided scholarships to Roma high school and university students, it failed to

provide any additional support, such as accommodation in dormitories. At the same time, renting apartments for those children in the vicinity of the schools proved to be difficult due to ethnic bias on the part of owners.

The Romani language is not part of the official curriculum and the government has not undertaken any teacher training or textbook production. Although by law 20% of the curriculum can be adapted to local specificities, in the case of Roma this provision has not been implemented.

During the monitored period, significant progress was made in creating conditions for the participation of Roma in active employment policy and increasing the employment rate of Roma. In 2007, the National Employment Agency (NEA) completed and presented the results of a comprehensive research project: “Roma Visible in the Labor Market”. The research filled gaps in basic information and gave indicators to guide the design of targeted measures on Roma. Following the publication of the results, NGO representatives with the support of employment bureaus contributed to the development of practices and interests as regards regular registering of Roma in the employment bureaus. As a means of identifying Roma for employment purposes, the NEA provided the possibility of declaring one’s ethnicity in the process of registering with the employment bureaus.

Another positive measure which is likely to benefit Roma is the adoption of tax reliefs for employers who hire certain categories of people facing difficulties in accessing the labor market. In previous years, tax relief was only applicable to public employers.

Despite the measures undertaken so far, due to widespread discrimination of Roma by employers, opportunities for employment of Roma are still minimal. The government has not taken measures to confront discrimination against Roma. The anti-discrimination legal framework is inefficient; and there is no initiative on the part of the government to place the issue of discrimination on the agenda of the employers’ associations.

Measures to promote access of Roma to healthcare are a weak point of the government’s social inclusion policy. The special program for the health protection of Roma was not designed in 2007 as stated by the Decade Action Plan. The proposal of Roma NGOs concerning the appointment of health mediators who would facilitate access of Roma to health services was not accepted by the government either. Although the Decade Action Plan envisaged as a priority the carrying out of healthcare research in order to analyze the health status of Roma, such research has not been conducted. The new Strategy for Improving the Status of Roma, adopted at the end of 2007, significantly improves the institutional framework of healthcare protection of Roma. The Strategy defines new, more precise objectives: the reduction of the influence of poverty and low education on health and preventive healthcare protection; raising the general quality of healthcare of Roma; the inclusion of as many Roma as possible, especially women and children, in the basic package of healthcare; and the inclusion of all Roma in the system of obligatory health insurance. Apart from being more concrete, these objectives and activities pay attention to vulnerable groups within the Romani communities such as mothers, children, the elderly and the disabled. Strengthening the capacity of the health services in those areas with a Roma population has been envisaged, as has the monitoring and

Employment

Health

evaluation with participation of Roma, and measures to increase the numbers of Roma in the medical profession.

#### Housing

None of the measures in the area of housing envisaged in the Decade Action Plan were implemented in 2007. Governmental representatives in charge of the field of housing policy, in spite of regular invitations, do not participate in public events related to the Decade, nor is it possible to access information about the implementation of the Decade Action Plan.

There has been no action to legalize Romani settlements or build infrastructure and improve their hygiene. A large number of these settlements remain in dangerous proximity to waste sites. The risk of exposure to substandard conditions is increased in the process of urbanization and new construction in Montenegro. In many instances, authorities act in violation of international standards on the right to housing, which require the state to postpone evictions in winter and refrain from forced evictions if they result in homelessness and if alternative housing is not provided.

The new government Strategy for Improving the Status of Roma presents concrete objectives and activities in the field of housing. It foresees water supplies for the main Roma settlements, and connections for these settlements to sewage and electricity networks, the construction of buildings using substantial materials for all Roma who live in substandard buildings, subventions for building and reconstructing living areas, a fight against the segregation and ghettoization of Roma, tax reliefs for individual housing construction, etc. There is a concern, however, that the funds allocated for the realization of these objectives—around 10% of the total funding for the implementation of the Strategy—are insufficient and would hamper the final results.

#### Anti-discrimination Legislation

No comprehensive anti-discrimination law was adopted as of this writing.

#### Key Achievements

The improvement of the Decade Action Plan through the adoption of the Strategy for Improving the Status of the Roma Population for 2008–2012; the increase of the number of Roma in high schools and universities; significantly improved conditions and capacities of Roma participating in the labor market.

## ROMANIA

In 2007, Romania continued to develop Roma integration practices in education and healthcare but lagged behind in housing and employment issues. Major structural problems in these areas, such as the lack of security of tenure and exclusion from the labor market, had not been addressed by any systematic government action to forge progress. On the other hand, the government failed to react to a rise in forced evictions of Roma, which deepened social exclusion for many. Overall funding of Roma-related activities within the Decade priorities remained problematic, as the Decade Action Plan had not been adopted and consequently, no budgetary allocations for its activities were made.

In 2007, the government made progress toward enacting Decade Action Plans (a separate one for each of the Decade priorities). However, as of this writing, the Plans are still pending before the Romanian Parliament, with no clear time schedule for its adoption. In April 2007, the draft Decade Action Plans were elaborated by the National Agency for the Roma and submitted to public consultation in May of the same year. The Plans were harmonized with the Romanian National Strategy on Roma and are expected to become one of the tools for the implementation of the Strategy in the future. The Romanian Parliament is expected to adopt normative provisions based on the measures proposed in the Decade Action Plans, which will set the legal framework for the implementation of the Decade priorities and ensure budgetary allocations.

Affirmative action for Roma in the areas of secondary and higher education continues to be the strength of the educational system in Romania. In 2007, the government undertook to strengthen the legal framework for preventing and eliminating the segregated schooling of Roma by the enactment of Ministry of Education and Research Order 1540/2007. The Order, adopted after consultations with civil society, elaborated the methodology for school desegregation and set specific tasks for school inspectorates and school administrations with regard to preventing Roma segregation. In practical terms, however, the implementation of the Order as well as its predecessor (the notification of the Ministry of Education and Research which mandated action to desegregate education) have been hampered by the failure of school inspectorates to provide baseline data about segregated schooling of Roma throughout the country. While the segregated education of Roma has been acknowledged by the government as a serious barrier to equal education opportunities, the practical steps made to reduce this segregation have not been commensurate with the extent of the problem.

Not much progress has been made by the government in scaling up positive practices which had been developed in previous years, such as the placement of school mediators. The number of qualified Romani school mediators remains very low with regard to the needs of the education system. The school mediator position initiated within EU Phare projects continues to exist on an *ad hoc* basis. School mediators were temporarily employed or paid by local councils only for the duration of the respective project; once the project ended, their position remained uncertain and in many cases contracts were not renewed. Another position created to facilitate measures on the educational integration of Roma—Roma school inspectors,

Romania's Challenges

Action Plans

Education

Employment	<p>appointed to the school inspectorates at county level—also remains underdeveloped. The functions of the Roma school inspectors are not clearly defined and the position is not sufficiently budgeted.</p> <p>In the field of employment, the government did not make any significant progress towards developing a coherent policy for integrating Roma into the labor market. Some sporadic measures such as job fairs for Roma continued to be implemented, although the impact of these measures has been questioned. There have been no pro-active government measures to tackle discrimination against Roma in the labor market, including the requirement of public and private employers to develop equal opportunity plans for the inclusion of disadvantaged groups. Even though government operational programs for the EU Structural Funds contain specific measures for tackling Roma unemployment, such as increasing access to and participation in the labor market, promotion of social inclusion and combating discrimination, the launch of several operational programs was delayed, so that the first results are expected in 2009.</p>
Health	<p>The Ministry of Health is one of the ministries actively involved in Roma inclusion activities and the only one which has allocated funds from its budget for Roma-related projects. In 2007, working in cooperation with civil society, the Ministry employed more health mediators, whose number throughout the country reached 600. Related to the new profession of health mediator, Romani Criss has developed occupational standards, which are to be adopted by the Ministry. These occupational standards offer an official recognition of the health mediator profession, the first step in the creation of an inclusive public health service. The government also supported a program for the professional development of trainers for health mediators, which has trained 50 Roma.</p> <p>While the Ministry has been active in the training and engagement of Roma to serve their communities as health mediators, it has so far neglected activities targeting the medical profession itself. The lack of programs promoting a culture of tolerance among medical professionals and curbing widespread discriminatory practices against Roma by mainstream medical personnel remains a gap in the policies on health which should be immediately addressed.</p>
Housing	<p>The lack of security of tenure continues to be a major problem affecting many Roma. In recent years, this problem has given rise to an escalating number of forced evictions of Roma, which has rendered many individuals homeless and has intensified the ghettoization of Roma in some parts of the country. In 2007, as in previous years, government action in dealing with the problem of security of tenure (including measures to provide individuals with documents proving identity and property ownership) remains sporadic and inefficient. The National Agency for Roma benefited from technical assistance under an EU Phare Program, which allocated €2.83 million specifically for solving the problem of personal and property-related documents. 65 projects selected by a tender procedure are to be implemented in 2008.</p> <p>At the local level, the implementation of central government measures, such as programs for the rehabilitation of Roma settlements, building of social housing and others is often blocked by a lack of adequate funding. At the same time, the central</p>

government remained passive with regard to the increasing number of forced evictions of Roma and other actions at the local level, which resulted in the ghettoization of communities. The existing procedure for allocating social housing to families at risk is not transparent, and is overly bureaucratic. In 2008, the building of new social housing is expected to begin with funding from the EU Structural Funds.

A number of problems concerning the status and practices of the National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD) remained. A lack of clarity as to whether the NCCD has a purely administrative or quasi-judicial character has created major confusion with regard to the legal procedures for appealing NCCD decisions. Despite substantial dialog with civil society, the NCCD has failed to adopt transparent internal procedural rules, which seriously hampers the procedure to be followed in front of the NCCD.

The NCCD has not been consistent in its actions concerning instances of racist speech against Roma. While the NCCD publicly admonished the Romanian President for discriminatory remarks concerning Roma, it failed to find any violation in a case involving the Prime Minister. At least two other cases of racist speech against Roma have been pending before this body for about a year.

The NCCD has failed to put into practical effect the provision for reversal of burden of proof in Romanian anti-discrimination law. Moreover, in at least one instance, the NCCD has disregarded the legal force of written declarations (sustained also by oral testimony in front of the NCCD) by victims of Roma origin, and thus failed to establish the minimum threshold for shifting the burden of proof.

The main achievements of 2007, related to the education and health systems, are as follows:

- the Ministry of Education (MoE) ordinance on the development of diversity in the national curriculum; the MoE ordinance regarding the methodology for the employment and professional activity of school mediators; the MoE ordinance forbidding school segregation of Romani children and its associated methodology (for the prevention and elimination of segregation of Romani children in schools);
- the development of occupational standards for the network of health mediators.

Anti-discrimination Legislation

Key Achievements

## SERBIA

### Serbia's Challenges

In 2007, Serbia raised the profile of the Decade Action Plans in the domestic policy scene by establishing a subcommittee on the Decade of Roma Inclusion at the Parliamentary Committee on Minorities. However, the practical impact of this development on the design and implementation of government policies has yet to be seen. The overall implementation of the Decade Action Plans in 2007 was delayed as a result of the prolonged process of government formation after the January 2007 elections. Changes in government affected structures for the coordination of the Decade Action Plans' implementation, which had been instrumental in previous years. The effectiveness of the Secretariat for the Roma National Strategy was compromised by the lack of a clear mandate under the new government; the Working Groups at several line ministries effectively stopped their work. Coordination between line ministries remained low and the overall engagement of the government—financial and operational—did not contribute to the development of systematic policies on the integration of Roma. Serbia has yet to ensure sustainability for Roma integration measures by allocating sufficient funds from the national or local government budgets. Financial commitments on the part of the government will help sustain positive practices in Roma integration, which are often discontinued after the termination of donor funding.

### Action Plans

The government did not elaborate short-term priority plans for the implementation of the tasks in the Decade Action Plans. The lack of clear indicators to measure progress or the impact of activities, as well as the lack of mechanisms for gathering data in each of the Decade priority areas, are serious obstacles for evaluating the implementation of the Decade Action Plans. At the local level, several municipalities have adopted local action plans for the integration of Roma and, additionally, Roma were prioritized in general social inclusion/poverty reduction strategies. However, only a few local Roma coordinators engaged by municipalities in previous years with donor support, continued working with municipal administrations after the donor funding had ended.

In 2007, the government started revising the Strategy for the Integration of Roma, a document which, in addition to the Decade priorities, covers issues of particular relevance to Serbia, such as access to personal documents, the situation of internally displaced persons and the situation of returnees according to the General Readmission Agreement between Serbia and the EU. The revised Strategy is expected to be adopted in March 2008.

### Education

The government continued implementing positive action measures by providing scholarships to Roma in secondary and higher education. Other activities in the field of education relied primarily on donor support by the Roma Education Fund (REF), the OSCE and the European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR). In most cases, the government did not provide funding to secure continuation of these activities after the donor funding had ended. For example, following the training of 54 teacher assistants as part of a project supported by the OSCE and the EAR, and the selection of 20 of them to work at schools, the Ministry of Education did not secure salaries for most of them. Romani non-governmental organizations sought cooperation with local schools in Vojvodina and Bujanovac to eliminate the segregation of Roma in schools; an overall strategy for preventing school segregation has not been developed at central or local levels of government. A positive development

has been the decision of the Ministry of Education to elaborate a manual for preventing discrimination in education. The project is being carried out in cooperation with Roma organizations with the support of the REF. Participation of Roma in pre-school education remained problematic in 2007. In addition to the very short term of mandatory pre-school education specified in the Public Education Act (six months), studies by NGOs indicated that school authorities were enrolling Romani children in the first grade, despite children attending pre-school classes for only a few weeks, rather than the six months required by law.

The government made efforts to expand the outreach of employment activation programs to Romani communities by allocating specific funds for Roma in the budget of the National Employment Agency and undertaking the targeted recruitment of Roma in public works programs. Some projects funded by the Ministry of Economic and Regional Development were aimed at improving the infrastructure of Romani neighborhoods. A major concern for public works programs has been that they are not effective in developing skills to increase employability, and many participants remain excluded from the labor market after completing such programs. Roma were also prioritized in the government self-employment program which envisages financial support for unemployed individuals starting businesses.

Employment

The Ministry of Health has been the only ministry which has allocated specific funds for Roma-related projects and has been actively engaged in implementing Decade Action Plan tasks. In 2007, the Ministry announced a public call for projects to improve the health status of Roma and hygienic conditions in Romani settlements, and for setting up a selection commission involving Roma civil society organizations. The 2007 budget for Roma projects, however, was less than in 2006, as funds for 2006 had not been spent. The Ministry of Health also paid for the engagement of Roma health mediators trained as part of a project implemented in cooperation with the OSCE and the EAR.

Health

The Ministry of Infrastructure elaborated guidelines for the legalization of Roma housing and offered financial support to local self-governments for the development of urban plans to regularize informal Romani settlements. The Ministry of Infrastructure organized a meeting for representatives of the 18 municipalities that had submitted applications in order to provide them with information about these legalization procedures. Despite the fact that, along with the Ministry of Infrastructure, the Ministries of Health and Economic and Regional Development implemented activities for improving the living conditions of Roma, limited financial resources and the lack of designated budget lines for such activities have resulted in sporadic rather than systematic actions in this area. A few municipalities have adopted general housing strategies, which have highlighted the problems of Romani settlements.

Housing

As of this writing, a draft of an anti-discrimination law is pending before Parliament.

Anti-discrimination Legislation

In 2007, the government for the first time directly allocated money from the state budget to the Decade of Roma Inclusion; 12 million dinar (EUR 151,000) was allotted to the Agency for Human and Minority Rights to realize special programs. Also, in October-December 2007, the National Council of the Roma National Minority engaged eight people to establish cooperation with local institutions in order to foster efficient implementation of the Decade Action Plans.

Key Achievement

## SLOVAKIA

### Slovakia's Challenges

Although the Slovak government implemented a number of targeted programs funded by both the state budget and the EU Structural Funds, actions undertaken in 2007 have not been proportional to the gravity of the problems facing Roma, especially in the fields of education and housing. Some of the government measures may have provided a temporary improvement of the situation but they did not address the systemic causes of the social exclusion of Roma. Due to an overall lack of a systematic approach to education and housing, the high levels of Roma segregation and deprivation were not effectively addressed. In some Decade areas such as employment and healthcare, the government relied mostly on mainstream programs, the effect of which on Roma is hard to assess. A major obstacle for measuring the impact of such programs on Roma is the lack of a mechanism for the standardized collection of ethnically disaggregated data. The government has yet to ensure that progress in the implementation of activities is systematically measured, and that the impact of these activities on Roma is assessed in relation to indicators for non-Roma in the respective area.

### Action Plans

The Decade Action Plan has not been operationalized by short-term work plans in a number of priority areas. Although the government has reported on the progress of activities, follow-up data do not exist for most of the outcomes listed in the Action Plan. The Action Plan has not been improved in terms of specifying indicators which compare the situation of Roma to that of non-Roma in various fields. In 2006, the Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities initiated an analysis of strategic documents, including the action plans of three regional self-governments for areas with high concentrations of Roma: Banska Bystrica, Presov and Kosice. This analysis, however, was not taken into account in the elaboration of the mid-term concept for Roma, which was approved by the Slovak government in March 2008.

### Education

The government provided financial support for various activities, ranging from promoting the participation of Roma in pre-school education to enhancing the number of Roma in higher education. The Ministry of Education started a large-scale project, co-funded by the Roma Education Fund, which includes training primary school teachers to work with Romani students in mainstream education, and targeting Romani children for enrolment into pre-school education. During the first phase of the project in mid-2007, nine nursery schools in the Presov Region were supporting 135 Romani children by preparing them for education in mainstream schools.

Although measures undertaken by the Slovak authorities contribute to mitigating inequalities in education with regard to Roma, the government has yet to demonstrate progress in reducing the high number of Roma in segregated education—especially the over-representation of Romani children in remedial schools dealing with mental disabilities. The disproportionate placement of Romani children in such schools remains the major issue in Roma education. Financial incentives for mainstream schools which integrate children with special educational needs notwithstanding, the benefits offered by special schools tend to attract socially vulnerable Romani families.

In secondary and tertiary education, the government continued providing scholarships to Romani students. With funding from the EU Social Fund, the State Pedagogical Institute developed a curriculum for Romani studies, a subject introduced in secondary schools teaching Romani language and culture. With support from the European Social Fund, the government continued implementing a project for career guidance for pupils and students with special educational needs.

There have been no major developments in the implementation of Decade priorities in this area. As in previous years, the Slovak government has been implementing a number of mainstream active employment programs; these have presumably also included Roma, but the level of Roma participation in such programs has not been defined due to the lack of ethnically disaggregated data. Roma were targeted through minor projects realized by non-governmental organizations as well as through social entrepreneurship projects for which small-scale funding was available through the Office of the Slovak Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities.

Employment

Targeted measures in the area of healthcare have remained haphazard and limited in scope. Training and employment of community healthcare workers by the Regional Offices of Public Healthcare continued in 2007. However, the reported number of 30 community healthcare workers employed by these offices is far less than what is needed, especially in the eastern parts of the country with large, concentrated Romani communities. At the local level, several NGOs carried out campaigns for vaccinating against hepatitis as well as health education programs. In 2007, the Ministry of Health carried out research on the health status and health awareness of Roma. The findings have not been made available as of this writing.

Health

Roma access to healthcare has been problematic despite legislative amendments, which have eliminated most service fees. There have been reports that medical professionals have refused to provide services to Roma in the segregated settlements.

Government measures have not been efficient in improving housing conditions for many Roma. Segregation of Roma has deepened as a wave of forced evictions from municipal housing resulted in Romani families being placed in substandard housing, in isolated areas, where public services are partially or entirely unavailable. Slovak authorities have not yet implemented the decision of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in the matter of *L.R. and Others v. Slovakia* from 2005, in which the Committee found violations of international law as a result of implemented policies of racial segregation in Dobsina.

Housing

The aggravated situation is a result of the progressive withdrawal of previously existing tenants' rights, as well as changes in social assistance legislation limiting many people's access to social assistance. In 2007, the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development proceeded with projects for the construction of low-standard apartments for the socially vulnerable. Although this type of housing is not specifically for Roma, in many instances Roma families are the only tenants. While construction of such housing may be a temporary solution, it is not conducive to improving housing conditions or social inclusion. Following a public hearing in 2007, in early 2008 the Slovak Parliament's Committee for Human Rights, Nationalities and the Status of Women adopted a resolution on forced evictions of non-payers of rent which called on the government to undertake a range of measures to protect individuals against poverty and social exclusion, and guarantee the right to adequate housing.

Anti-discrimination legislation was passed in 2004, but it is largely untested. No major decisions on Roma discrimination were delivered by the Slovak National Human Rights Council in 2007.

Anti-discrimination Legislation

Establishment of the horizontal priority "Marginalized Roma Communities" in the National Strategic Reference Framework for 2007–2013, to more effectively coordinate activities aimed at improving Roma living conditions.

Key Achievement



# DecadeWatch Monitoring Framework



## Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015 DecadeWatch Monitoring Framework

Category	Scores				
	0	1	2	3	4
<b>I. Cross-cutting/institutional</b>					
<b>1. Action Plans</b>					
1.1 Is there an approved detailed Decade Action Plan with clear targets, deadlines and measurable indicators?	Plans do not cover all focus areas and have no targets and/or deadlines	Plans cover all focus areas but without targets and/or deadlines	Plans cover all focus areas but have targets and/or deadlines only for some measures	Plans cover all focus areas and have targets and/or deadlines for most measures	Plans cover all four focus areas and have a complete list of targets and/or deadlines
1.2 Has the government approved any annual or biannual priority action plan with cost estimates and a financing plan?	Government has not approved any priority operational plan	Government has approved at least one priority operational plan but not in all Decade focus areas and without cost estimates or a financing plan	Government has approved at least one priority operational plan in all Decade focus areas but without cost estimates or a financing plan	Government has approved at least one priority operational plan in all Decade focus areas with cost estimates and a financing plan	Government has approved more than one detailed annual priority operational plan in all Decade priority areas with full cost estimates or a financing plan for their implementation
1.3 Is there a formal government progress reporting mechanism with public progress reports?	Government has not reported publicly on progress under the Decade since its launch	Government has reported only once publicly on progress under the Decade since its launch	Government has reported once a year on progress under the Decade since its launch	Government has been reporting regularly and publicly, but not linked to actual action plan targets	Government has been reporting regularly, publicly and comprehensively, with clear link to action plan targets
1.4 Does the Action Plan include baseline data to measure implementation progress?	There is no baseline data	There is baseline and follow-up data for less than 10 percent of identified outcomes	There is baseline and follow-up data for up to 50 percent of identified outcomes	There is baseline and follow-up data for up to 75 percent of identified outcomes	There is baseline and follow-up data for all key identified outcomes
1.5 Are there efforts to develop regional or municipal action plans and/or engage municipalities in the Decade (e.g., to develop local level action plans)?	There has been no outreach and involvement of municipalities	There are donor-financed pilot activities to engage municipalities	Central government has selectively involved municipalities and/or conducted outreach activities	Municipalities have been engaged formally at least once by central government since the launch of the Decade	There is proactive and country-wide government strategy of involving municipalities in partnership with association of municipalities; availability of municipal or regional Decade action plans

Category		Scores				
		0	1	2	3	4
2.	<b><i>Institutional</i></b>					
2.1	Is there a government Decade Coordinator?	No national coordinator has been appointed or the position is vacant	There has been a national coordinator for most of the time, but there have been disruptions and/or the coordinator was not officially appointed	A national coordinator has been appointed but has appeared publicly in this capacity only once since the Decade launch.	A national coordinator has been appointed and has made frequent public appearances in this capacity since the Decade launch.	A national coordinator has been appointed and has made frequent public appearances in this capacity to give the Decade visibility.
2.2	What is the level of seniority of the current Decade Coordinator?	No national coordinator	Civil Servant	Deputy or Assistant Minister	Minister	Deputy Prime Minister or above
2.3	Is there a Decade coordination office or support office for the national coordinator?	There is no Decade coordination/support office for the national coordinator	There is a Decade coordination office/support office for the national coordinator with 1 staff actually working on Decade issues	There is a Decade coordination office/support office for the national coordinator with 2-5 staff actually working on Decade issues	There is a Decade coordination office/support office for the national coordinator with 6-10 staff actually working on Decade issues	There is a Decade coordination office/support office for the national coordinator with more than 10 staff actually working on Decade issues
2.4	Is there Roma representation at senior level within government (permanently employed civil servants or with a political mandate)?	There is no Roma in central government or civil service	There are Roma in junior civil service or appointed positions in central government (below Head of Directorate)	There are Roma in senior civil service or appointed positions in central government (Head of Directorate and above)	There is at least one Roma in an assistant/deputy minister position in the central government	There is at least one Roma Minister in the central government
2.5	Is there a standing formal consultation body to involve Roma civil society in national Decade implementation and monitoring?	There have been no formal Decade-related consultations between government and Roma civil society since the Decade launch	There has been one consultation meeting with Roma civil society since the Decade launch	There have been irregular consultations with Roma civil society	There is a formal standing consultation body which has met less than once a year since the Decade launch	There is a formal standing consultation body which has convened at least twice per year since the Decade launch
2.6	Do line ministries have special inclusion and access units also in charge of Roma inclusion?	No line ministry has designated staff or units on access and integration of national minorities	Some ministries have designated individual staff working on access and integration issues, but no designated units	One line ministry has designated units on access and integration	More than one line ministry has designated units on access and integration	All line ministries have designated units on access and integration

	Category	Scores				
		0	1	2	3	4
2.7	Has the government been represented at the International Steering Committee meetings since the launch?	Government has not been represented at any meeting since the launch	Government has been represented at 1 of the last 3 meetings since the launch	Government has been represented at 2 of the last 3 meetings since the launch	Government has been represented at all the meetings held since the launch	Government has been represented at all the meetings held since the launch as well as thematic workshops
2.8	Has the government contributed to the Decade Trust Fund?	Government has not agreed to contribute to the Decade Trust Fund	Government has agreed, but not yet contributed to the Decade Trust Fund	Government has agreed, but not yet contributed to the Decade Trust Fund	Government has agreed, but not yet contributed to the Decade Trust Fund	Government has contributed to the Decade Trust Fund
II.	<b>Decade Priority Areas</b>					
3.	<b>Education</b>					
3.1	Monitoring and evaluation (availability of regularly collected, nationally representative data on outcomes, collected within the last five years)	There is no enrolment and attainment data for Roma	There is some enrolment data for Roma for some years, but there is no regular updating process and the data is not nationally representative	There is nationally representative enrolment and attainment data for Roma for some years, but there is no regular updating process	There is nationally representative enrolment and attainment data for Roma for some years which is regularly updated	There is annual nationally representative enrolment and attainment data for Roma
	<b>Programs</b>					
3.2	Promotion of access of Roma children to pre-schooling and early child care services (e.g., access to daycare programs and kindergartens, parent support work, out of school activities, etc)	There are no government-supported activities	There are sporadic government-financed and/or externally financed measures endorsed by the government	There is a free preparatory year	There is a free preparatory year and sporadic government-financed measures to promote access to such programs and other early childhood education activities	There is an integrated government policy on early childhood education for Roma with substantial financial backing
3.3	Promotion of access of Roma children to primary and secondary education (e.g., teacher assistant/mediators, special after class tutorials for Roma children, support during exams and material incentives such as free textbooks, support for transportation costs, meals in school, scholarship programs, etc)	There are no government-supported activities	There are sporadic government-financed and/or externally financed measures endorsed by the government	There are regular government-financed measures in place but not a program	There is an official government program in place with some financing	There is an integrated government policy with substantial financial backing

Category	Scores					
	0	1	2	3	4	
3.4	Promotion of access of Roma to higher education (e.g., scholarships programs, etc)	There are no government-supported activities	There are sporadic government-financed and/or externally financed measures endorsed by the government	There are regular government-financed measures in place but not a program	There is an official government program in place with some financing	There is an integrated government policy with substantial financial backing
3.5	Desegregation policy	There are no government-supported school desegregation activities	There are sporadic government-financed and/or externally financed school desegregation measures endorsed by the government	There are regular government-financed school desegregation measures in place but not a program	There is an official government school desegregation program in place with some financing	There is an integrated government school desegregation policy with substantial financial backing
4.	<b>Employment</b>					
4.1	Monitoring and evaluation (availability of regularly collected, nationally representative data on outcomes, collected within the last five years)	There is no data on employment outcomes for Roma	There is some employment data for Roma for some years, but there is no regular updating process and the data is not nationally representative	There is nationally representative data on Roma employment outcomes for some years but it is not regularly updated	There is nationally representative data on Roma employment outcomes for some years which is regularly updated	There is annual nationally representative data on Roma employment outcomes
	<b>Programs</b>					
4.2	Promotion of access of Roma to training and retraining programs	There are no government-supported activities	There are sporadic government-financed and/or externally co-financed measures	There are regular government-financed measures in place but not a program	There is an official government program in place with some financing	There is an integrated government policy with substantial financial backing
4.3	Promotion of access of Roma active employment promotion programs	There are no government-supported activities	There are sporadic government-financed and/or externally co-financed measures	There are regular government-financed measures in place but not a program	There is an official government program in place with some financing	There is an integrated government policy with substantial financial backing
4.4	Promotion of access of Roma to self-employment or microfinance programs	There are no government-supported activities	There are sporadic government-financed and/or externally co-financed measures	There are regular government-financed measures in place but not a program	There is an official government program in place with some financing	There is an integrated government policy with substantial financial backing

Category		Scores				
		0	1	2	3	4
5.	<b>Health</b>					
5.1	Monitoring and evaluation (availability of regularly collected, nationally representative data on outcomes, collected within the last five years)	There are currently no surveys or other activities aimed at improving information base on Roma health	There is some health status data for Roma for some years, but there is no regular updating process and the data is not nationally representative	There is nationally representative health status data for Roma for some years but it is not regularly updated	There is nationally representative health status data for Roma for some years which is regularly updated	There are annual nationally representative health status data for Roma
	<b>Programs</b>					
5.2	Promotion of access to healthcare for excluded groups, including Roma (e.g., mechanism of health protection for the uninsured)	There are no government-supported activities to promote access to healthcare	There are sporadic government-financed and/or externally co-financed measures	There are regular government-financed measures in place but not a program	There is an official government program in place with some financing	There is an integrated government policy to promote access to healthcare with substantial financial backing
5.3	Special health programs for vulnerable groups that can benefit Roma (e.g., information outreach and health awareness activities, vaccination activities, etc)	There are no government-supported activities	There are sporadic government-financed and/or externally co-financed measures	There are regular government-financed measures in place but not a program	There is an official government program in place with some financing	There is an integrated government policy with substantial financial backing
5.4	Employment of Roma healthcare providers (e.g., Roma health mediators)	There are no government-supported activities	There are sporadic government-financed and/or externally co-financed measures	There are regular government-financed measures in place but not a program	There is an official government program in place with some financing	There is an integrated government policy with substantial financial backing
6.	<b>Housing</b>					
6.1	Monitoring and evaluation (availability of regularly collected, nationally representative data on outcomes, collected within the last five years)	There is no data on housing conditions for Roma	There is data on Roma housing conditions for some years, but there is no regular updating process and the data is not nationally representative	There is nationally representative data on Roma housing conditions for some years, but not regularly updated	There is nationally representative data on Roma housing conditions for some years which is regularly updated	There is annual nationally representative data on Roma housing conditions

Category	Scores				
	0	1	2	3	4
<b>Programs</b>					
6.2 Overcoming non-registration and illegal settlements (e.g., provision of tenancy or rental contracts, measures to prevent evictions, development of physical mappings/plans)	There are no government-supported activities	There are sporadic government-financed and/or externally co-financed measures	There are regular government-financed measures in place but not a program	There is an official government program in place with some financing	There is an integrated government policy with substantial financial backing
6.3 Access to communal services	There are no government-supported activities	There are sporadic government-financed and/or externally co-financed measures	There are regular government-financed measures in place but not a program	There is an official government program in place with some financing	There is an integrated government policy with substantial financial backing
6.4 Access to quality social housing	There are no government-supported activities	There are sporadic government-financed and/or externally co-financed measures	There are regular government-financed measures in place but not a program	There is an official government program in place with some financing	There is an integrated government policy with substantial financial backing
<b>7.</b>					
7.1 Is EU compatible anti-discrimination legislation in place and adequately enforced?	There is no EU compatible anti-discrimination legislation	The government is developing EU-compatible anti-discrimination legislation	There is EU-compatible anti-discrimination legislation in place but there are no cases of application for Roma	There is EU-compatible anti-discrimination legislation in place and there are some cases of application for Roma	There is EU-compatible anti-discrimination legislation in place and it is systematically applied for Roma

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**DecadeWatch** is an assessment of government action to implement the commitments expressed under the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015.

The Decade aims to give Roma a voice in the process of inclusion. This report on developments during 2007 has been conducted by coalitions of Roma NGOs and activists from all countries participating in the Decade. It is a follow-up to the first DecadeWatch report, which reviewed the period from the launch of the Decade in early 2005 until the end of 2006..

DecadeWatch is a contribution by Roma activists toward making the Decade of Roma Inclusion a success.

DecadeWatch is supported by the Open Society Institute and the World Bank.

[www.decadewatch.org](http://www.decadewatch.org)