

Recommendations to the Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy

Prepared by a group of Hungarian non-governmental organizations

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Introduction

Hungarian Roma and non-Roma non-governmental organisations co-operated in the elaboration of a document containing expert observations on the Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy and its Action Plan, to share with European and national actors, who participate in the technical evaluation and further development of the Strategy.

The observations aim to increase the acceptance of the 10 year Roma Strategy among professionals, and provide assistance for a more effective implementation of the Strategy, regardless of change of governments in power. The document contains expert observations in the field of human rights, education, employment, housing and culture, as well as the equal opportunities of Roma women and stakeholders' participation. At the end of our document there is a separate chapter dealing with the problems related to the distribution of EU funds, which are meant to be the primary source of the Strategy's implementation.

The work has been initiated by Partners Hungary Foundation with the support of the Open Society Foundations. The document was sent by the Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat, inter alia, to the relevant bodies of the European Commission, the Office of the Minister of State for Social Inclusion of the Ministry of Public Administration and Justice, as well as the National Roma Self-government.

Key findings were discussed on 21 February in the NGO consultation initiated by the European Commission, and presented by participating organisations to representatives of the Commission, the Hungarian government and the National Development Agency on 6 March, at the high level meeting „The role of EU funds in the promotion of Roma integration” organised by the Commission.

The aim of participating NGOs is to maintain, widen and further develop the cooperation of the participating civil organisations throughout the implementation period of the 10 years' long Strategy; and on the basis of such a co-operation, to follow up the implementation of the Strategy and will provide regular feedback to the European Commission and the given Hungarian government in power.

Organisations preparing the analysis:

Amnesty International Hungary (human rights)
Autonómia Foundation (employment, housing, distribution of EU funds)
Habitat for Humanity Hungary (housing)
Hungarian Women's Lobby (gender issues)
Legal Defence Bureau for National and Ethnic Minorities (human rights)
Polgár Foundation (employment)
Romano Instituto (culture)
Romaversitas (education)
Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (human rights)
Metropolitan Research Institute (housing)

Supporting organisation:

RomNet-Média Foundation

The drafting of the report was coordinated by:

Partners Hungary Foundation
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Executive summary

Human Rights

In the Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy (hereinafter: Strategy) the human rights approach is **almost completely missing**. It does not prevail as a horizontal principle and there is no separate part dealing with fundamental rights. It is very important that the Strategy should contain **specific anti-discrimination measures and tools**, which aim to reduce prejudices and serve to prevent the spread of racially or ethnically motivated crimes. It is important that **dedicated funding** should be available for this purpose both in the document and in the Action Plan. Considerations for defending fundamental rights and the related concrete measures should appear in the Strategy at least with the same weight as social-economic and territorial aspects.

Employment

The Strategy gives a priority role for the expansion of employment, however the amount and distribution of resources, the number of people to be engaged in programmes suggests that among the three pillars of the program (integration into open and legal labour market; social economy; public employment), it is not the first, but the third one, namely **public employment that plays the leading role**. It is necessary that besides the Strategy the Action Plan should also contain concrete measures that could facilitate and provide the basis for finding employment at the **open labour market**, such as: mapping and dissemination of bottom-up local initiatives; effective training and mentoring programmes; giving priority to employing unemployed Roma as a horizontal aim in the Operative Programmes; giving support to bottom-up local initiatives to launch entrepreneurships by Roma, either individually or as a joint venture; support for micro-loans; elaboration of complex interventional programmes to which preference has been given also by the Strategy.

Culture

No social inclusion can be achieved without the active participation of Roma based on the recognition of their national identity. Only through their culture can they protect their human dignity from a range of prejudices. That is why Roma national institutions are required, and the promotion of a decent image of Roma in mass media by introducing quotas similar to the American model concerning Afro-Americans. The strategy and the action plan do not guarantee positive measures will be taken for protecting Roma cultural values, traditions, minority languages, or developing Roma cultural institutions, and improving the media representation of Roma.

Housing

The situation analysis as well as the goals and tools of the Strategy contain components related to housing, territorial disparities and segregation, but we also find it necessary that in accordance with the identified problems the section on Ultimate goal (vision) defines **specific goals**. In case of some of the identified problems (lack of a well operating social housing system, affordability problems, social rehabilitation of deprived urban areas) the Action Plan **does not define concrete measures and funding**, it would be necessary to do so. The Action Plan contains launching programmes for the inclusion of people living at settlements, however the allocated resources can only cover a part of the needed actions, and are partly irrelevant, and their quantity is scarce compared to the problem. Among the sources identified no reference is made to the newly opened **ERDF support** for the purposes of housing interventions targeting marginalised communities, despite of the fact that the EU Framework, sets de-segregation as a key priority. We found it mandatory that both the Strategy and the Action Plan should contain and define positively complex measures to improve the housing situation of marginalised communities, involving inter alia the newly opened ERDF funds.

Education

In accordance with the EU Framework, The Hungarian National Strategy also states non-discriminatory access to quality education, as the way to play a primary role in the reduction of the educational failures of disadvantaged children, including Roma children, however, the **currently undergoing changes in the educational policy close the access to quality education** for the children of the poorest families (especially with multiple disadvantages and Roma). Examples for such changes are: providing support to establish a parallel training system with mainstream education; instead of active desegregation of segregated schools they will be maintained by the National Roma Self- Government; radical decrease of quota of state funded students in higher education; reducing the age of compulsory school attendance; **abolishing grant and scholarships schemes assisting Roma pupils and students** since decades. The primary financial support for all of these planned developments would be provided by EU sources, which originally aim to strengthen mainstream educational systems via providing support for integration, and not establishment of a parallel and costly system, which mostly reduces the chances of the most needy and disadvantageous social groups.

Equal Opportunities for Roma Women

The Strategy gives an extensive and astute analysis of the situation of the Roma and children. However, the chapters dealing with the aims of the strategy, the areas and means of intervention are less elaborate. The least well thought through and established are the **legal and financial conditions** and **long-term assurances** for the implementation of the strategy. The Action Plan should define **specific measures, deadlines, and resources** for the problems identified (e.g. action plans to increase the participation of Roma women and girls in educational systems, initiatives aimed at improving the reproductive health of Roma women (including access to family planning methods), targeted occupational programs including vocational training education, programs to prevent domestic violence against Roma victims and the provision of adequate services to victims, efforts to combat trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. We are convinced that situation of Roma women should be addressed both by provisions of equal opportunities for men and women horizontally as well as in the form of targeted interventions in the different policy areas. Therefore, the “political principles of social inclusion” should include the principle of **gender mainstreaming**. The strategy contains somewhat general ideas about improving the situation of Roma women. Therefore the factor of gender should be represented with **much bigger emphasis** in the list of indicators.

EU Funds

The Strategy clearly states that in order to implement the necessary measures, EU funding is indispensable, and in comparison to programmes financed from national resources they will play a key role. At the same time the Strategy indicates at several places that results of the previous – mainly EU-funded – programmes are not even close to the expectations, and are far from the effectiveness, which could be assumed in light of the amount of funds spent. Based on the Strategy and recent developments in development policy – such as: overwriting the results of the former equal opportunity based funding policy, softening the equal opportunities criteria system - no endeavour for a comprehensive review of funding schemes , on the basis of (self) criticism appearing in the Strategy, can be detected. Based on our experiences, in order to achieve a substantial change in the utilisation of EU funds in the field of Roma integration, a **comprehensive reform of the funding distribution system** would be indispensable; there is a need for: capacity development of the institutional system; discontinuing the exclusiveness of tender constructions, which result in unequal competition; diversification of distribution techniques of funds; rationalising and simplifying procedures; changing the approach and capacity expansion of Intermediate Bodies. Without these changes – at least in the first 3 year of the implementation of the Strategy – the funding policy itself will render impossible the implementation of most of the Strategy’s otherwise justified targets.

Participation and Support

Following democratic procedures, it is vital the Roma take part in the design, implementation, and monitoring of the strategy on local, national, and European levels. Allocated funds should facilitate both mainstream and targeted policies that have to be monitored and evaluated.

Human Rights

(Amnesty International Hungary, Legal Defence Bureau for National and Ethnic Minorities, Hungarian Civil Liberties Union)

The lack of the human rights aspects

Despite the fact that the Council of the European Union in its Council Conclusions¹ underlines² the importance of defending fundamental rights in relation to the improvement of Roma people's situation, the human rights approach is almost completely missing from the Hungarian strategy. It does not prevail as a horizontal principle (covering each issue) and there is not a separate part to deal with fundamental rights, unless we count here a one page long part bearing the subtitle "Equal Treatment".³

While in this only human rights related subchapter of the Strategy *the principle of equal wages for equal work* is specifically mentioned, the new Fundamental Law which came into effect 1 January 2012 – opposed to the former constitution – does not contain this principle at all. Consequently, Roma are widely employed in public works programmes for lower salary than the rate of the minimum wage. Concerning the changes affecting the ombudsman system, also discussed in this part of the strategy, we consider the abolishment of the autonomous institution of the minority ombudsman by the new Fundamental Law as a serious step back in the protection of the rights of Roma.

In our view, a radical reduction of racism and discrimination against Roma in almost all walks of life, which have spread in a frightening extent in our society are preconditions of Roma communities' integration. As these are basically human rights issues, these aspects should play a part in the strategy at least with the same weight as the social-economic and territorial considerations. Hungary, as part of the European Union and the Council, also as a country which has signed international human rights conventions, has numerous commitments and obligations which have to be fulfilled and should prevail in regard of the entire strategy – and be considered at the elaboration of each of the main fields of integration.

The strategy mentions the damages of discrimination and exclusion from a comprehensive social aspect, however it does not state in a clear way that the disadvantageous discrimination and exclusion against Roma communities, manifested both in the economic and social fields, are important reasons for the overrepresentation the Roma population among people living in extreme poverty and being socially and economically marginalized.

The strategy is not dealing with the responsibility of all of the governments, different authorities, governmental bodies and local governments having been in power since parliamentary democracy exists, in relation to the exclusion of Roma. The terminology of the strategy (instead of "exclusion" using "being excluded", instead of "have included" it uses the notion of "inclusion") it shows that the government basically does not face the responsibility of the state in relation to the serious extent of discrimination against Roma and the wildly spread racism, but rather makes the Roma people

1 The Council of European Union AN EU Framework For The National Roma Integration Strategies Up To 2020 Council Conclusion 24 May 2011: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2011:258:0006:0009:EN:PDF>

2 *ibid*, para. 13. „[...]the protection of fundamental rights, notably by combating discrimination and segregation, in accordance with existing EU legislation and the international commitments of the Member States, is essential for improving the situation of marginalised communities including Roma.”

3 National Social Inclusion Strategy- – Extreme Poverty, Child Poverty, The Roma – (2011–2020), December, 2011 http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_hungary_strategy_en.pdf, page 106.

themselves responsible for their own situation and expects them to become socially integrated by the means of their own contribution.

Lack of adequate tools to tackle discrimination, prejudices and exclusion against Roma

Taking measures against social prejudices is one of the basic elements of fighting against discrimination. The Strategy states the need of “two-directional awareness raising” and “campaigns targeting public opinion” and training courses organised for those working in governmental agencies and public administration⁴. These ideas and the concepts on commercial media⁵ are very important in the fight against stereotypes; however, there are no concrete anti-prejudice or anti-discrimination measures or tools assigned to them, and for this reason there are no resources marked off for this purpose either in the Strategy or in the action plan⁶.

The lack of taking firm actions against racially or ethnically motivated crimes

We welcome that the final version of the Strategy contains “The State must take firm action to [...] prevent the spread of [...] racially or ethnically motivated crimes”⁷ as this part has been missing from the earlier drafts. In this regard the Council has already clearly formulated its requests - also quoted above - towards the Commission and the Member States.⁸

Nevertheless, we consider highly problematic that in the relevant section of the Strategy Roma are mentioned “as crime perpetrators ” and according to the text East of Hungary, publicly-known for highly populated by Roma is referred as “the Eastern region of the country has become some kind of a crime emission zone”⁹. The Strategy further states when referring to Roma and people living in extreme poverty that “they follow the specific values and goals of the sub-culture of the poor which the public opinion associates with the sub-culture of criminals due to the more frequent minor crimes against property and other crimes amongst them which often merely stem from a state of helplessness”.¹⁰

This way of linking and associating Roma communities and people living in extreme poverty with crime – without any scientific evidence or reinforcement - is nourishing those stereotypes and prejudices the Strategy has targeted to defeat. Condemnation without any foundation is extremely harmful as it appears in the very part of the Strategy that speaks about more effective measures to tackle with racially or ethnically motivated crimes.

In addition, beyond the recognition of the State’s responsibility, there are no concrete action, measure, tool, accountable person/body in charge, or dedicated funding to enforce fight against racially or ethnically motivated crimes.

4 *Ibid*, p. 97.

5 *Ibid*, p. 99.

6 Resolution No. 1430/2011. (XII. 13.) of the Government Regarding the National Social Inclusion Strategy and Governmental Action Plan for the Implementation Thereof in the Years 2012 to 2014
: <http://romagov.kormany.hu/download/a/58/20000/Strategy%20Action%20Plan.pdf>

7 See as in footnote 3. above p. 102.

8 See as in footnote 1. above, point. 40.

9 See as in footnote 3. above p. 101.

10 *Ibid*.

(Polgár Foundation, Autonómia Foundation)

The employment concept of the Strategy is built on the assumption that there will be an economic growth in Hungary in the upcoming years. However, in case this expectation fails, the planned actions will hardly meet the targeted results. The Strategy gives a priority role for the expansion of employment. The measure of resources of the 2 year Action Plan indicates the same. The Strategy defines a 3 pillar system of the support targeting employment. Among the 3 pillars, the one considered to be the most important is urging and providing support for seeking employment at the open labour market. The second pillar is social economy, which is defined as a temporary form of employment. The third pillar is public employment, which is closely connected to the changes introduced in the system of social allowances/benefits in order to “encourage people to engage in work”.

However, considering the amount, distribution of resources, and the number of people to be engaged in the programme - as published in the Action Plan - suggests that among the 3 pillars not the first, but actually the third one, namely public employment plays the leading role.

Problems:

- Despite the fact that public employment is considered a temporary form of employment before getting potentially employed at the open labour market, neither the intention nor the necessary measures can be detected, which could base or make this realistic. Even the different wage and allowance benefits, which can be welcomed, may bring only limited results due to the firm prejudices against Roma. The planned training programmes, the few months’ long employment offered in the framework of some projects, and the different mentoring services, all in all are not able to bring a breakthrough of changes. No measures can be discerned that would set the improvement of employability as a horizontal goal, to be included in all relevant operative programmes. On the basis of such measures, e.g. the employment of the highest number of long-term unemployed, especially Roma people could be required by contractors of EU-financed investments. Bottom-up local initiatives of civil organisations, which would support the launching of entrepreneurs by Roma, either individually or as a joint venture, could channel people to the primary labour market. Although the Strategy sets as a task to map and disseminate best practices, we cannot find any programmes with this aim in the Action Plan.
- Despite of the fact that the Strategy contains that micro-credit can be used as a tool to help self employment of poor people living in extreme poverty, and it even names a pilot programme which operates in Hungary with EU support, - “we must process, further improve and extend the experiences of the *Way Out Programme* that targeted Roma communities in Hungary and provided micro-credits,” – The governmental bodies in charge show a lack of interest and no sign of cooperation towards the programme.
- The analysis of the Action Plan shows that the expansion of employing long-term unemployed people is heavily builds on public employment, so the changes to be implemented in this field from 2012 onwards will greatly affect Roma. The *Start Public Work Programme* argues for changing the public work scheme to “encourage people to engage in work” by reference to avoiding generating unemployment, i.e. not preventing individual job seeking, and not taking workforce from the private sphere. In reality, there is little chance for long-term unemployed and Roma to be employed by the private sphere. Consequently, the transformation of the public work scheme pushing wages below the guaranteed minimum and reducing social allowances when non-employed represent rather a scheme of penalty further increasing poverty.
- Although the Strategy –rightly - prefers complex interventions, the listed measures, which basically rely on EU funded tenders, do not contain such programmes.

(Romano Instituto)

Despite of the fact that the Communication of the Commission has no separate chapter on culture and does not deal with cultural issues in detail, the Strategy states that “The preservation of Roma cultural values and traditions, the development of their institutions and organizations and the promotion of the use of minority languages may continue to remain important tasks to which minority self-governments may contribute significantly with their activities. [...] To this end, the National Roma Self-Government and the Government will jointly create a Roma Cultural Centre to the highest European standards. We must also support the operation and development of already operational Roma cultural institutions, the establishment of a Roma theatre, museum, gallery, library, an independent radio and television studio, and must provide the conditions necessary for their ongoing operation. We must offer scholarships and targeted opportunities to Roma artists as well as for the promotion of the regular appearance of Roma artists and the custodians of Roma traditions in the media.”

By contrast, we have experienced that without a calculable state support the first and only Roma radio of Central Europe, (a Rádió C) stopped broadcasting after more than 10 years, in 2010. The Roma Educational and Cultural Centre for the Capital (FROKK), was established on paper, but in reality it has not started its operation ever since. The Hungarian Roma Parliament, a civil organization, which provides the only permanent venue for presenting Roma culture – has not received its support from the local municipality for 2 years now, despite of the successfully organized programmes and events and the valid and fulfilled contract. One of the most important Roma organizations involved in establishing parliamentary democracy, slowly but surely is closing down.

The Strategy does not contain specific measures that would guarantee that either State or EU funding will be available to implement the above plans.

Summing up the above we draw the conclusion that in order to make any changes with the active participation, contribution, and endorsement of the involved parties, it is necessary to manifest cultural difference as a value. However, the institutions to represent minority culture and autonomy are missing from the Hungarian institutional system and public life. There is neither a real Roma theatre company, nor an operating Roma cultural centre, nor an independent research institution to carry out research that would be necessary to preserve Romani languages and to produce scientific publications in Romani languages, nor public education in Romani languages. In addition, what has key importance that neither Roma civil society, nor Roma intellectuals or anybody else has got any accountable commitments in their hands which would guarantee that in the process of using either the limited domestic resources, or the existing EU funds these horizontal principles could prevail, and Roma emancipation could gain a new impetus.

(Habitat for Humanity Hungary, Autonómia Foundation, Metropolitan Research Institute)

- The situation analysis as well as the goals and tools of the Strategy contain components related to housing, territorial disparities and segregation, but the section on Ultimate goal (vision) **does not mention any specific goals related to housing**. Without this, measures or steps taken to tackle problems cannot be assessed and are not accountable.
- Closely related to the above, there is no **explicit goal and commitment** in the Strategy **to reduce segregation and fight against ghettoisation**.
- Although the Strategy identifies relevant problem groups in the field of housing (segregation, affordability problems; lack of a well-operating social housing sector), **specific measures on housing are missing** from the **Action Plan**. Financial sources of planned actions, if identified, include **solely EU-financing**.
- Although the Strategy mentions the lack of a well operating social housing system and refers to affordability problems among the problem areas, there are no specific measures to tackle these issues in the Action Plan (measures included in the plan “to determine the framework conditions for the creation of social housing”, “reconsidering of the system of housing benefits” cannot be considered as such) and **there are no resources rendered to them**. For example **we cannot find among the planned measures** complex financial and other debt management solutions to avoid, stop, or liquidate the accumulation of household/public utility debts, to tackle the management problems of the social housing sector, to renovate public housing, to increase the social housing stock in various ways (not only via construction). Measures to promote energy efficiency are also missing, **while these could provide a solution for the most critical affordability issue**, and bear key importance from the point of view habitability as well.
- **We welcome** that the Strategy lists among the initiatives which are worth of developing further the **identification of the segregated neighbourhoods** in Hungary, the development of maps, databases and related analysis concerning such areas, and the application of these tools in territorial targeting; and that the Action Plan includes relevant measures regarding the above.
- The plan **aims to launch programmes for the rehabilitation of deprived urban areas**, however the aim of such actions is not clarified (social rehabilitation or interventions aimed at gentrification), **besides, specific resources and deadlines are not indicated**.
- The Action Plan mentions launching programmes to promote the inclusion of Roma living at settlements, however the allocated resources can only cover a part of the needed actions, are partly irrelevant, and their quantity is scarce compared to the problem. **Among the sources identified no reference is made to the newly opened ERDF support for the purposes of housing interventions targeting marginalised communities,¹¹ despite of the fact that the EU Framework, which sets de-segregation as a key priority, defines the maximum use of those ERDF funds as a key priority**. Based on the Action Plan no guarantees can be seen that those complex programmes, which are mentioned in the National Strategy to improve the situation of those living at settlements, could be actually launched. This is reinforced by the fact that the housing component was missing from the draft tender announcements on the “complex settlement programme”, which underwent social reconciliation by National Development Agency during the holiday season between 20 December and 3 January; the draft tender announcement contained no reference to the above mentioned ERDF funds.
- On the whole, based on the contents of the Action Plan (and recent events in development policy) no guarantees can be seen that actions mentioned in the Strategy regarding the problems identified – affordability, lack of a well-operating social housing sector, segregation – will actually be implemented.

¹¹ http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/regulation/newregl0713_en.htm

(Romaversitas)

As the **Commission Communication** states at various places ¹² they consider that a non-discriminatory access to education is the primary and most important tool to break out from disadvantaged, marginalized position and poverty: “Member States should ensure that all Roma children have access to quality education and are not subject to discrimination or segregation”, (...)They (Member States) should also widen access to quality early childhood education and care and reduce the number of early school leavers from secondary education pursuant to the Europe 2020 strategy. Roma youngsters should be strongly encouraged to participate also in secondary and tertiary education.”

The Hungarian National Strategy¹³ states the same accordingly: “The development of an inclusive school environment that supports integrated education and provides education that breaks the inheritance of segregation and disadvantages as well as the development of services assisting inclusion play a primary role in the reduction of the educational failures of disadvantaged children, including Roma children.”

In Annex 2 of the National Inclusion Strategy, in the Framework Agreement with National Roma Self Government¹⁴ also states that “realization of a complex educational reform to be realized by 2015 (...) which results in support the education of 10 000 Roma young people in high schools [...] 5 000 talented Roma individuals to take part in Higher (university/college) education”.

However, the facts below strongly contradict the above listed plans:

- SROP(ÁROP)-2011/2.2.15 The call for proposal of the “methodological support for Roma inclusion” a priority project¹⁵ aiming to establish an alternative training system, financed from EU funds, which would operate parallel to mainstream education. In the framework of the project there are plans to establish a Roma Educational Integrative Network, an Integrative Pedagogical System, and Roma Pedagogical Service Centre.
- Instead of an active desegregation, the National Roma Self-Government (ORÖ) wishes to maintain segregated schools, which have been established so far for any kind of reason (white flight, colonies that became an ethnic enclosure, selectivity of schools, etc.) as their maintainer.¹⁶
- The Government wants to reduce the quota of state funded students in higher education within less than a year from 53 000 to 34 000, and this action has publicly announced just 2 weeks prior to the submission deadline of the entrance examination applications. This practically means that the children of the poorest families (especially with multiple disadvantages and Roma) have no chance to get into state funded places under the current economic situation; and there are hardly any possibilities to change mobilization strategies.¹⁷

¹² COM(2011) 173 final – Page 6 - <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0173:FIN:EN:PDF>

¹³ National Social Inclusion Strategy- – Extreme Poverty, Child Poverty, The Roma – (2011–2020), December, 2011 http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_hungary_strategy_en.pdf page 69.

¹⁴ Framework agreement with the National Roma Self-Government:

http://romagov.kormany.hu/download/a/e3/20000/Strat%C3%A9gia_2sz_mell%C3%A9klet_Korm%C3%A1ny-OR%C3%96meg%C3%A1llapod%C3%A1s.pdf

¹⁵ Code number:ÁROP-2011/2.2.15 State Reform OP

<http://ujszechenyiterv.gov.hu/download/37759/Felhivas%20es%20utmutato.pdf>

¹⁶ Method: „establishing Roma Pedagogical Service Institutions registered by an ID number from the Ministry of Education, setting up educational institutions of National Roma Self-Government (ORÖ).” – point 3 page 5

¹⁷ Directory On Entrance Examinations to Higher Education and Academic Programmes in Hungary, September www.felvi.hu/pub_bin/dload/FFT2012A_AOF/FFT2012A_Tajekoztatas.pdf

On the whole, in our view, while the Government declares equity as a principle at theoretical level in every document and plan, when we examine details (beyond the listed issues above: reducing compulsory school attendance to the age of 16, allow teachers to fail pupils in 1-4th grade of primary school, abolishing grant and scholarships schemes assisting Roma pupils and students, which have been existing for decades, enduring segregation etc.) we see that the government clearly excludes the most disadvantageous, mainly Roma children from having equal access to high quality education which could assure their future.

In addition it is important to note, that primary financial support for all of these planned developments would be funded from EU sources, which aim to strengthen mainstream educational systems via providing support for integration, not the establishment of a parallel and costly system, which mostly reduces the chances of the most needy and disadvantageous social groups.

The National Strategy gives an extensive and astute analysis of the state of poverty, the situation of the Roma and children as well as regional disadvantages. **The document makes a commendable effort to rely on the accessible research results and documents, including research results and the policy recommendations of NGO experts regarding Roma women.** Compared to the ambitious, elaborate and extensive character of the evaluation section, the chapters dealing with the aims of the strategy, the areas and means of intervention are less elaborate. **The least well thought through and established are the legal and financial conditions and long-term assurances for the implementation of the strategy.** We are convinced **that situation of Roma women should be addressed both by provisions of equal opportunities for men and women horizontally as well as in the form of targeted interventions in the different policy areas. Therefore, we regret that the “political principles of social inclusion” do not include the principle of gender mainstreaming.** We also regret, that the strategy contains somewhat general ideas about improving the situation of Roma women, while **the list of indicators mentions only on a very few occasion the factor of gender at all:**

- Gender disaggregated indicators are suggested: poverty (1); promoting entrepreneurship (1.1.2.); 1.1.3. labour market inclusion (1.1.3.), public work (1.1.4.)
- The aim of decreasing early pregnancies (3.3)

We still suggest that the following interventions should be included in sectoral policies:

- Provide adequate services to the Roma victims of domestic violence too (shelters etc.), and initiate special programs with a preventive aim.
- Special scholarship programs should be started to help Roma girls attend police academies.
- Design programs to combat child marriages and other harmful traditions
- Initiate programs to prevent and combat human trafficking aimed at women; furthermore, provide appropriate services for Roma women who became victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation and were forced into prostitution.
- Draw up action plans and programs to fight and prevent hate crime, including hate speech, aimed at the most vulnerable (e.g. Roma women).
- Increase the participation of Roma women and girls in educational systems, organize special mentoring and supporting systems, and allocate scholarships for them to assist them in attaining higher qualifications.
- Create targeted occupational programs including vocational training education, for Roma women especially in the fields of education, social and health services.
- Make sports attractive to Roma girls, as this can promote girls' social mobility.
- Support the role of parents' associations in encouraging and assisting girls in continuing their studies
- Review and revise curriculums and textbooks in order to provide a more positive picture from the aspect of the Roma and from a gender equality point-of-view.
- Enhance the gender awareness of decision-makers in education, paying special attention to issues concerning Roma women.
- Provide safe working conditions and legal employment in health care for Roma women.
- Make family planning methods accessible for Roma women to improve their reproductive health.
- Found micro-credit systems for the Roma in a framework of which mostly (based on international experiences) women could receive credit.
- Create indicator systems that including both the factors of ethnicity and gender in order to make the evaluation and monitoring of social inclusion programs possible.

(Autonómia Foundation)

On the experiences of the usage of EU development funds aiming to support Roma integration

The Strategy clearly states that in order to implement the necessary measures the EU funding is indispensable and in comparison to programmes financed from national resources they will play a key role. The document states word by word: "Short-term funding for the implementation of the Strategy up to 2014 will be supplied from the operational programmes concerned of the New Széchenyi Plan"¹⁸, this is fully reinforced by the action plans of the first 3 years, which are built on those development structures having been planned well before or independently from the elaboration of the Strategy.

At the same time the Strategy indicates at several places that results so far – primarily EU programmes – are not even close to the expectations and are far from the effectiveness which could be assumed in light of the spent funds. According to the Strategy the main reasons behind this inefficiency are the lack of systemized solutions and complex programmes, which are linked to the lack of problem-oriented planning and evaluation systems that would be vital for complex programmes. Effectiveness of the support system is further reduced by the fact sustainability, applicability, and internalization of the results are not guaranteed. A very important observation of the document is "In many cases, interventions are not aligned to the interests and needs of the target group in focus; are not practical and exclude the target group, whose inclusion is essential to the success of interventions"¹⁹. Then the Strategy points at another very important and comprehensive obstacle: "Rigid (local and EU) regulatory and funding systems tied to specific sectors which do not meet the criterion of flexibility necessary for the management of problems".²⁰

Based on the wide-ranging experiences of Autonómia Foundation – which have been gained primarily by planning and assisting EU funded projects for small settlements with the aim of integrating Roma, partly acquired as an intermediate body to provide grants – there are several other reasons behind the ones having unfolded by the Strategy. These experiences are reinforced by the study prepared in 2011 which evaluated the effectiveness of funds spent on Roma integration²¹, and has drawn similar conclusions from the evaluation of several New Hungary Development Plan (UMFT) constructions.

The most important experiences of Autonómia Foundation, many of which show significance beyond the problems indicated by the situation analysis of the Roma Strategy:

1. The potential project owners, who play the most important role in Roma integration, suffer from a many folded lack of capacity. Their lack of competences in the field of analysing problems, project planning, building partnerships, territorial and structural strategic planning basically make impossible to plan effective projects. In the current practice of tendering these actors feel obliged to launch unrealistic projects, which are obviously beyond their implementation capacities, for the very reason that calls for smaller scale tenders, providing smaller support, which would be based on the principle of a conscious and gradually built up development concept, simply do not exist.
2. There is hardly any track of a local policy or strategy to aim inclusion. The involvement of Roma and participation into the work of local municipalities is superficial even in the best cases. Among the potential beneficiaries and applicants of the majority of the development programmes, there are only a few local municipalities, which would be committed to and would be willing to take an active role in Roma integration. The National Roma Self-Government is the only acknowledged and

¹⁸ National Social Inclusion Strategy- – Extreme Poverty, Child Poverty, The Roma – (2011–2020), December, 2011 http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_hungary_strategy_en.pdf page 9.

¹⁹ Page 11

²⁰ Page 55

²¹ Evaluation of EU Developments Assisting *Roma Integration*, Pannon Elemző Iroda Ltd. - Hétfa Elemző Központ Ltd. - Városkutatás Ltd, 2011.

legitimate organization to assure Roma involvement in the planning and implementation phase of programmes for Roma integration. Regarding the new programmes the Self Government has to undertake such an amount of tasks and responsibilities, which highly exceed both its professional and operative capacities, while the experiences of the civil players, who are able to demonstrate results, cannot be built into the governmental measures. The new institution, Türr István Training and Research Institute has been given a key role in the implementation of the Strategy, however, its professional competences, resources, and references in the field of social integration, which would justify the assignment, are not known.

3. The possibilities offered by the support systems, and the needs and capacities of the small settlements having a significant Roma population, hardly ever meet. There is a relevant and logical funding policy strategy behind the tender systems. However, when the goals are transformed into support schemes, and tender systems, many important problems and issues are getting lost, or their emphasis is lost. During the actual/practical operation of the tender systems several other elements of the original targets are vanishing or become unrealistic. This way the overall results of the supported projects are not even close the original goals of the funding policy.
4. The tenders serving social cohesion very often aim at mixed target groups typically based on social or territorial aspects. On one hand, this provides room in the Strategy for the so called “skimming”, the phenomenon (first named in a study prepared by the State Audit Office in 2008) of members of a target group who are in a more advantaged position cut out the most disadvantaged ones, typically the Roma, from attaining support. On the other hand, very different target groups, with rather diverse needs are merged by the methodology, and this will hinder effective planning and project implementation.

Based on our experiences, without the comprehensive reform of the funding distribution system, capacity development of the institutional system, discontinuing the exclusiveness of such tender constructions, which create and result in unequal competition, diversification of distribution techniques of funds - utilisation of EU funding in the field of Roma integration will not be able to and will not change in merit. Roma integration programmes will not be more effective in the future without rationalizing and simplifying procedures, changing the approach and capacity expansion of intermediate bodies.

Related to the utilization of “mainstream” funds (not necessarily dedicated to Roma integration, but with a more general aim), which have a much greater importance compared to dedicated funds, it cannot be assured without firm guarantees that Roma people will benefit from the developments in an adequate extent.

Although it appears in the text of the Strategy: “In developments financed by EU funds, we must set up firm guarantees for the maintenance of equal opportunities and the reduction of segregation.”²² Opposed to the above sentences evoking hope, those governmental measures raise doubts which overwrite the results of the former equal opportunity based funding policy, also having been acknowledged by the EU as best practice, and soften the requirement system of equal opportunities.

The Action Plan of the strategy planning for 2012-2014 is heavily based on programmes which will be financed from EU funding. However, we cannot detect intensions for self criticism and implementing a comprehensive review of funding schemes in practice, which are often mentioned in the document. For this reason – at least in the first 3 years implementation period of the Strategy- funding policy itself questions the credit for most of the Strategy’s otherwise justified targets.

²² National Social Inclusion Strategy- – Extreme Poverty, Child Poverty, The Roma – (2011–2020), December, 2011 http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_hungary_strategy_en.pdf page 126