

NGO - Joint Statement - Roma Democratic Development Association, and Initiative for Social Change on Item VII and VIII

Thank you Madam Chair,

Roma in Macedonia represent about 3 per cent of the overall population of two million. Officially have double unemployment rate when compared to the mainstream population and unofficially a rate of even 90 per cent. Reasons and consequences are similar to all those discussed so far. But I would like to add that survival strategies are sometimes come at expense of the identity of the Roma, changing for example their religion to one providing aid to their poor. On the other hand Roma in Macedonia are considered to have advanced participation in the political life with member of Parliament, Mayor and majority of councillors in predominantly Roma municipality of Shutto-Rezori and at the moment a minister in the government. Roma also participate in national and local bodies dealing with minority or inter-ethnic issues. One could say this could be sufficient for Roma to participate in the policy-making, well... that would not be exactly true. First, Roma participate in planning and decision-making only for policies directly targeting Roma and this is also limited. For example, the revised National Action Plan in Employment within the decade of Roma inclusion waited six months for its adoption regardless of the Roma minister sitting in the government.

Thus, the first recommendation is to ensure effective and meaningful participation of the Roma in the decision-making where Roma are not only the cause but are actually heard and responded to. Second, Roma don't have a say in the mainstream economic policies, which are the current government's priority. For example Roma don't participate in the National Action Plan in Employment, sometimes such mainstream economic policies are even contradictory to the Roma targeting policies. This is not only because Roma are politically marginalised but also because they don't have sufficient capacity to meaningfully participate in such policies. Thus, the second recommendation is that Roma are empowered to participate in economic policies and mechanisms are created for such participation. The third, and most important note is that the policy-making process does not stop with making decision. It has to be followed by allocation of resources, implementation, monitoring and evaluation without changing the lives of people any decision is meaningless, and when it comes to Roma the persistent level of unemployment over time shows that neither targeting nor mainstream policies have effects. So above all it is important to implement policies and enforce law. Implementation should be followed by monitoring and evaluation, and Roma should be involved in all the stages. When it comes to monitoring and evaluation meaningful indicators should be adopted to measure progress and achievements. So instead of counting number of trainees in vocational training one should look how many Roma have actually been employed, have retained their jobs over certain period of time and whether these jobs ensure dignified life.

Madam Chair, I have left a written copy of this statement along with comments to the draft recommendation to the Secretariat and I kindly ask you to consider them. Thank you for your attention.