

# **Medium-term Concept of the Development of the Roma National Minority in the Slovak Republic**

SOLIDARITY – INTEGRITY – INCLUSION

2008 - 2013

## **1. Definition of Terms**

The government, the civil society and the international society actively promote initiatives targeted on sustaining Roma children at schools, broadening access to employment and overcoming discrimination. Although many of the present impacts have helped, it is high time to increase and broaden this effort. Knowledge acquired from the presently implemented programs and projects for the improvement of the Roma national minority situation in connection with larger civil engagement, greater participation of Roma and respect for their diversity may help to overcome the unfavorable living conditions of the majority of Roma in society. The process of policy design in relation to the solution of Roma issues, their social integration and co-existence with the majority society is defined as a multi-dimensional circle of issues which must be approached comprehensively and especially with the direct active participation of individual ministries, relevant institutions, non-governmental organizations and Roma themselves.

While preserving continuity in the successful and effective ongoing programs for the resolution of Roma national minority development from the sphere of state, self-government and non-government sectors, it is necessary to define positionality for the use of the most significant terms, which are however characterized by a certain lack of terminological clarification. We are especially referring to the following terms:

- the use of the term Roma, which also evokes a certain degree of imprecision, especially in relation to official self-identification in the nationality category (see the census from 2001 with 1.7 % of population) and “unofficial statistics” (estimates of Roma actually residing in Slovakia from 300,000 to 400,000). For the purposes of this Concept, Roma is defined as a citizen, co-citizen who is considered as Roma by the majority population, while also emphasizing internationally adopted conclusions and recommendations regarding the use of the term Roma (World National Congress of Roma),
- the second level is constituted by defining Roma as a national minority. Professional and scientific discussions provide ambiguous definitions of these terms and categories and that is why it is not easy to achieve even a certain “terminological purity” in everyday practice. Based on the above, the submitted draft of the concept in using the above mentioned categories is based on the status of recognition of the Roma national minority defined by the Constitution of the Slovak Republic with a preference for the civic principle and the principle of building a multicultural and plural society,
- the third level is constituted by the requirement for accepting the present Roma-related discussion which takes into consideration the desirable change in the status of Roma in Slovakia:
  - in relation to the traditional Roma culture with its several positive elements in social-cultural areas, the timelessness of the contribution of Roma artists and other personalities (this discussion introduces traditions and other socio-cultural and normative elements of the Roma culture, customary law, ethics, ritual folklore, traditional Roma crafts, categories of spiritual and material values of the Roma culture),

- in relation to the Roma national culture (ethnic revitalizing, self-identification in the national category, generating and building the Roma nation and other current issues in relation to the changes),
- of the marginal Roma communities manifesting elements of marginalization and existence in an environment of “cultural poverty” (the terminology of the anthropologist, Oscar Lewis), which shows the features of specific models of behavior (a strong feeling of marginality, powerlessness, dependence and subordination, exclusive orientation to the present, day-to-day survival, minimal social organization, poverty, resignation, apathy...) and the registration of their life as a social issue not as an ethnic quality of life of integrated Roma.

In the draft of the Concept in question, the terms presented in the individual ministerial materials are used throughout the entire profile (Roma national minority, marginalized Roma communities, Roma community, Roma, socially disadvantaged environment, economic and social exclusion, young Roma generation, community social work, field social work, segregated settlement, poverty, majority and minority).

**Structure of the Medium-term Concept of the Development of the Roma National Minority in the Slovak Republic (hereinafter the “Concept”):**

- Concept background,
- present political situation and current governmental materials,
- principles and approaches of the Concept,
- objective and target group of the Concept,
- main goal of the Concept,
- partial and supplementary objectives of the Concept,
- problem areas,
- upbringing and education, culture and forming of Roma identity,
- employment and other social activities,
- housing,
- profile topics,
- support programs in fulfilling the Concept objectives,
- EU Structural Funds and their support for marginalized Roma communities,
- objectives and intentions of the Horizontal Priority – Marginalized Roma Communities,
- structure of the Horizontal Priority – Marginalized Roma Communities,
- comprehensive approach – local strategies of the comprehensive approach,
- Horizontal Priority – Marginalized Roma Communities and the National Strategic Referential Framework for 2007 – 2013, projection of the horizontal priority into the Operation Programs.

**2. Concept Baseline**

The baseline framework of the Concept is constituted by the Policy Statement of the Government of the SR approved by Resolution No. 660 of July 31, 2006 and the concepts approved by the Government which pointed to the fact that the process of policy design in relation to the solution of Roma issues, their social integration and coexistence with the majority society is defined as a multi-dimensional circle of issues which must be approached comprehensively and directly. One of the possible effective methods for resolving the current status is to identify and name the causal relations using a more exact definition of current social issues and situations, especially in relation to marginalized Roma communities (their diagnostics) with a proposal for actual necessary social interventions and system measures.

Unfortunately, no political platform of Roma representation has been created which could define the problem areas of Roma life and thus have the opportunity to influence and enforce governmental policies. For a long time, the Roma issues have remained continuously under the management of state and self-governments. Presently, the population of Roma settlements in Slovakia has the opportunity to resolve their unfavorable situation through current social assistance (through the resolution of material and social needs) however a more distinctive possibility for utilizing social services is lacking, especially in the form of preventative, counseling and development programs. To date, Roma issues have been resolved based on political will and under the influence of external factors (Roma as a domestic and European problem). Their unfavorable social situation has been insufficiently observed through the optics of community life while resolving the above mentioned issues.

The implications of implemented social reforms in marginalized communities have been (after 1989) less distinctively accented especially in their causal relations. New problematic social phenomena, such as the multi-problematic character of the Roma family, which is defined as a family with the long-term existence of more than one issue, also arise. Serious and current social issues can only be resolved through a system approach supported by the synergic effect of the coordination of all involved parties. Social interventions for marginalized communities should always constitute the common work of individual participants – individuals representing the social network of clients applying innovative, professional and especially coordinated effective courses of action in all spheres of social life: state (governmental), territorial self-government and with the participation of non-governmental non-profit organizations. At the same time, the Concept creates space for the uninterrupted continuation and development of good, well-tested programs which will require appropriate financial support.

## **2.1. Present Political Solutions and Current Governmental Materials**

The submitted Medium-term Concept of the Development of the Roma National Minority in the Slovak Republic is based on the following strategic governmental documents: the Policy Statement of the Government of the SR of July 31, 2006, the National Strategic Referential Framework of the SR, the National Action Plan of the Decade of Inclusion of the Roma Population 2005 – 2015, the Concept of the Integrated Education of Roma Children and Youth Including the Development of Secondary School and University Education, the Long-term Concept of Housing for Marginalized Groups of the Population, the National Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion Strategies for 2006 – 2008, the Concept of the Equality of Opportunities for Women and Men, the National Strategy for the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women and in Families, the Program of Health Support of Disadvantaged Communities in Slovakia 2006 – 2013, from professional and scientific work in relation to the given minority in the psychological, sociological, anthropological, ethnological, Roma-related and practical aspects related to the field of social work, from domestic and international documents: the EU Lisbon Strategy, the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages, the European Social Charter, the Recommendation Rec (2005)4 of the Committee of Ministers of the European Council on Improving the Housing Conditions of Roma and Travelers in Europe, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, etc.

## **2.2. Principles and Approaches of the Concept**

- the subsidiarity and social solidarity principle,
- the personal responsibility principle,
- application of the civic principle (assessing marginality not ethnically but socially) and forming of cultural identity,
- the comprehensiveness principle,
- application of multiculturalism principles (especially in their present forms, for example critical multi-culturalism),
- the promotion of long-term community social work and field social work,
- the systematic organizing of social interventions and the creation of bridges between experts and communities,
- the effective fulfillment of social change and the coordination of community activities (in the social, pedagogical, psychological, legal, healthcare, school, and cultural areas ...),
- promoting activities of self-help groups formed directly in communities (own participation of the population of the marginalized Roma communities), in coordination with other participants in the social area and representatives of public and social life,
- cooperation on the national, regional and local levels.

### **3. Objectives and Target Group of the Concept**

Based on the results of the Socio-graphic Mapping of Roma Settlements in Slovakia (2004) the size of the population living in Roma settlements is estimated at 320,000, which constitutes approximately 3.5 times the number reported in the official statistics of the Statistical Office of the SR from the last census. According to this census in 2001, the number of Roma in Slovakia was 89,000 and according to the demographic statistics in 2004, the number of Roma was 96,257. The age structure of the Roma population significantly differs from the Slovak and EU averages. In comparison with the Slovak and European trends, the Roma population is progressive with a distinctive share in the younger age categories and a lower share in the productive ages and older generations. This fact arises from higher birth rates and shorter life spans. The average life span of Roma women and men is 12 to 15 years less than the numbers for the majority population. Approximately half of the Roma are integrated among the majority population. The rest live in marginalized communities which are classified as segregated and separated (within municipalities) and concentrated (in urban areas) with elements of ghettoization. And this is the environment in which the specific issue of social exclusion is manifested, which the Roma population must face. Social exclusion endures due to the fact that marginalized Roma communities live in irregularly dispersed, isolated, spatially and socially excluded Roma communities. The shortcomings in the quality of the environment are connected with the shortcomings in the technical infrastructure and public utilities. They live in extremely substandard municipal and urban settlements. The status of social exclusion in the context of housing is aggravated due to various factors such as: lacking resolution of property relationships and ownership of land under these settlements, poor accessibility of social housing and the non-existent legislative definition of social housing, the non-existent definition of types of housing, the “Illegal status” of many settlements (built without building permits, de jure non-existent constructions).

The social life of marginalized communities is characterized by specific social constraints and an overall specific attitude towards the wider social environment, specifically with problematic proximity (the segregation, de-motivation and resignation of the population). The highest concentration of socially excluded communities is found in eastern

Slovakia and the southern districts of central Slovakia. This population group faces extreme poverty which is transferred to the following generations. 9% of the above mentioned settlements lack electricity, 81% of the settlements lack sewage systems, gas is lacking in 59% of these settlements and water supply is missing in 37% of them. 20% of the settlements lack paved access roads.

149 of all settlements are considered segregated, which means that these settlements are situated on the edge of or beyond the municipality or town. The percentage of illegal housing facilities in these settlements is higher than 20%. Only 39% of the housing facilities are connected to the water supply, 13% to the sewage system, 15% to the gas supply and 89% to the electricity supply. From the perspective of infrastructure, 46 settlements were identified as lacking almost all technical infrastructure. These settlements lack water, sewage systems, gas and paved access roads. 12 of these settlements lack electricity. The majority of these settlements are situated in the Košice and Prešov regions and in the southern section of the Banska Bystrica Region.

Almost one third of the houses in Roma settlements were built illegally (we are referring to huts, portable mounted housing units, non-residential buildings and houses). The settlements outside municipalities or towns have the highest percentage of illegal housing facilities (49%). Huts constitute the most frequent type of illegal housing facility. They constitute almost 16% of all housing facilities in these settlements and 14% of the population of the Roma settlements live in them. Again the settlements situated outside municipalities or towns have the highest percentage of the hut-residing population. Those living in huts constitute 21% of the overall population living in such type of housing facility in these settlements (Atlas of Roma Communities in Slovakia 2004).

### **3.1. Concept Objectives**

The main goal of the Concept is to design a conceptual model for forming a more favorable environment for marginalized Roma communities in the sense of sustainable social development, community development and the development of social services and integration targeted on social change.

A wider, more comprehensive impact which requires the cooperation of several experts providing assistance must be applied in the strategy of community social work activities oriented on the population of Roma settlements. This will follow the goal to create a wider potential of community and social services oriented to the needs of these specific communities. The Concept system approach must be goal-oriented on the transfer of the Roma settlements from the periphery of interest to a mutual relationship with the course of events of the entire municipality or pertinent territorial unit, in other words, to be transferred from anonymity to individual civic responsibility and involvement. Of course, this includes the possibility of analyzing the quality of life and social development of individuals, specific families, houses, neighbors, inhabitants of the street, communities, municipalities and the entire region. More suitable space for entry of development capital, sponsors and partnership international cooperation is created by creating a more favorable environment.

The proposed conceptual solutions are targeted on two groups of marginalized Roma communities:

1. the population living in Roma settlements on low social and cultural levels,
2. the population living in municipalities and towns on an average level (with a focus on supporting their efforts to educate their children, find jobs and raise their standard of living, with a particular emphasis on acquiring or regaining social skills).

Achieving the comprehensive goal and its partial objectives from the Concept will only be possible through the active participation of the state administration, territorial self-governments, non-governmental organizations and marginalized Roma communities through the accumulation of financial means from the EU structural funds, state and territorial self-government budgets and non-governmental non-profit organizations.

#### **4. Problem Areas**

In order to successfully fulfill the goal of the Concept, comprehensive statistical data must be made available. The key is to provide the data in such a scope to enable the measurement of Concept outcomes in individual periods. Data collection is limited by legislative protection which does not permit the identification of persons based on ethnicity. In many cases, Roma are not included in research; they are insufficiently included in the regular censuses which traditionally serve as the basis for creating statistics and which leads to inaccuracies in the data. Other difficulties arise from the reluctance of Roma themselves to officially declare their ethnic origin. Since defining Roma for analytical purposes is complicated, the application of the broad notion of ethnicity and the creation of preconditions for statistically relevant and systematically current data collection on the Roma national minority appears to be a suitable solution.

Acquired data would be used for drafts and guidelines of social policy for implementing actual programs of the Slovak government, territorial self-governments and non-governmental organizations in relation to part of the Roma national minority. It would at the same time become the starting point for ministries in implementing project monitoring financed from the state budget and from EU Structural Funds with an impact on marginalized Roma communities.

The Concept specifies activities which, from the aspect of correcting the starting status, must be implemented, according to individual areas, which at the same time corresponds with the pertinence of these areas to the relevant ministries. The basic circles also correspond to the priority areas of the Roma Inclusion Decade (housing, employment, health and education) on one hand, and on the other hand with the four priority areas of the Horizontal Priority – Marginalized Roma Communities. The common issues overlapping all priorities and which will be implemented in the Concept are the following: identity, equality of opportunities, “Gender,” the sensitizing of the majority population in relation to the Roma community and the sensitizing of the Roma community in relation to the majority population (media, culture, human rights). Based on the above, the following constitute the problem areas:

1. upbringing and education;
2. health, hygiene, healthcare education and prevention;
3. employment and other social activities;
4. housing; and
5. profile topics: culture and the forming of Roma identity, sensitizing the general public towards Roma, creation of a wider social mandate for the fulfillment of this task through the media and other socialization agents through education and cultural activities; gender equality; and poverty.

##### **4.1. Area of Upbringing and Education, Culture and Forming of Roma Identity**

The Constitution of the Slovak Republic declares that it “guarantees citizens who are members of national minorities or ethnic groups the right to learn the state language and the right to education in their own language under the terms and conditions established by the

law.” The existing legislation is not sufficient especially considering education in the Roma language. Despite the constitutional guarantee for the members of all national minorities, including Roma, for education in their mother tongue, the valid School Act does not incorporate Roma on the list of minorities.

The educational level of the Roma population has been well below the Slovak average for a long time; this is especially true for the members of the marginalized Roma communities. The present education system in the Slovak Republic continues to be strongly mono-cultural and unwelcoming of ethnic minority groups and groups at risk, and largely unsuccessful in activating and motivating students from such groups. Although the existing system has accepted many differences of ethnic minority groups and groups at risk, it is still insufficient. Except for small exceptions, the content and form of the curriculum ignore the specifics of Roma culture, history and language. Furthermore, teachers do not always sufficiently reflect the different social and cultural backgrounds of their students. Such unpreparedness frequently causes misunderstanding, conflict and mutual ignorance. Working with families at many schools does not correspond to the needs of the students. School administrators do not pay enough attention to the work of teachers and their motivation (including financial motivation) at schools with increased percentages of children from marginalized Roma communities. Ethnic segregation at schools, the high percentage of Roma at special schools and large class sizes in general contribute to the problem. One of the signs of the low integration of Roma children in society is seen in their small representation at pre-schools, incomplete elementary school education and low representation at secondary schools, universities and colleges.

Based on the draft of the Concept of Upbringing and Education of Roma Children and Students Including the Development of Secondary School and University/College Education (MoEdu SR, 2008), we recommend that from 2008 to 2015 state administration bodies, public administration bodies and self-government and non-governmental organizations focus their activities on the strategic intentions and proposed measures.

#### **4.1.1. Strategic Intentions in the Area of Upbringing and Education**

- In cooperation with the pertinent ministry, to reform the management of the educational process in the SR to ensure that specific local social and cultural conditions are respected in the design and implementation of the school curriculum, reflecting the need to raise the educational level of the Roma community,
- to stabilize and professionalize the position of teacher’s assistant for children from socially disadvantaged environments as an upbringing-pedagogical worker-specialist,
- to prepare proposals and measures aimed at opening new accredited fields of studies targeted on the Roma language and Roma life and cultural institutions (Institute of Romology Studies at the Faculty of Social Affairs and Healthcare of the University of Constantine Philosopher in Nitra, in cooperation with the Philosophical Faculty of Prešov University in Prešov, the Pedagogical Faculty of Comenius University in Bratislava and the Pedagogical University of Matej Bel University in Banska Bystrica, etc.),
- to legislatively support the implementation of school curriculum transformations to ensure that schools are able to co-participate in the preparation of the school curriculum with regards to the educational needs of students from socially disadvantaged environments,
- to legislatively define the term “child/student from a socially disadvantaged environment” and in cooperation with the pertinent ministry, to define students

coming from the socially disadvantaged environments as students with specific (individual) upbringing-education needs,

- to take a course of action in the reform of the school system that would also target the individuality of educated individuals with specific upbringing-education needs,
- to create the possibility for the upbringing and education of children and students from Roma national minority according to the national principle.

### **Proposed Measures in the Area of Upbringing and Education: Preschool Upbringing and Education**

- to motivate children from socially disadvantaged environments to participate in pre-school preparation from the age of 4 (justification: through early pre-school preparation, children entering elementary school, which is compulsory, will be better prepared to achieve the anticipated goals thus eliminating the risk of school failure. Moreover, the children will acquire basic social habits necessary for their continuous and trouble-free incorporation in the educational process),
- to legislatively resolve the compulsory preschool preparation of 5 year old children of by 2013 (justification: through enacting compulsory preschool preparation, children entering elementary school, which is compulsory, will be better prepared to achieve the anticipated goals thus eliminating the risk of school failure) and subsequently to gradually select the application of temporary compensating measures for raising 4 year old children,
- incorporate kindergartens into the Act on upbringing and education as an integral part of the school system (justification: to achieve the stability and integrity of the school system),
- to broaden the network of preschool facilities according to need in municipalities with high concentrations of Roma children; to use all possibilities and resources for financing (justification: to ensure the possibility of training all children in kindergartens by broadening the network),
- to legislatively resolve the normative financing of teacher's assistants at kindergartens in municipalities with high concentrations of Roma children (justification: this measure will stabilize the financial provision of teacher's assistants),
- to improve the quality of methodological assistance for expert employees of school authorities in the provision of preschool upbringing (justification: this measure will improve the professional and methodological management of kindergartens),
- to prepare and implement programs which are oriented on improving cooperation between parents of Roma children and preschool facilities (justification: these programs will improve school-family cooperation),
- to promote informal community centers which educate children, including maternity centers for future mothers and mothers with children.

### **Elementary Education**

- to maintain and develop a system of zero grades in elementary schools for six year old children who are not prepared to enter school (justification: the system of zero grades is successful); to develop the content and system of teaching at the zero grade in order to stimulate the development of personality, cognitive functions and socialization and replace the deficit of preschool preparation; after completing the zero grade to



determine other methods for educating students after assessing their achieved level of school aptitude through psychological methodology),

- to create and use a collection of professionally designed text-books dealing with Roma history, language and culture in the Roma language,
- to decrease the number of students in common classes, at least on the first level of elementary education (justification: this measure will increase the effectiveness of work and enable an individual approach to students),
- to legislatively resolve the issues of school attendance of juvenile mothers (justification: the above mentioned measure will prevent students from being held back due to health reasons and help to ensure the completion of compulsory school attendance in the 1<sup>st</sup> year of secondary school),
- to take advantage of possibilities in implementing courses for acquiring education provided by elementary schools, including the ensuring of financial means (justification: the goal of the above mentioned measure is to acquire a level of education for persons, even those who are older, who registered in labour offices),
- to implement educational programs of mono-cultural upbringing and education against prejudices and intolerance as part of the upbringing-education process in schools,
- to prepare calls for the design of developments projects for the completion of the school infrastructure (justification: the above mentioned measure will eliminate two-shift teaching at elementary schools and improve the conditions for the upbringing-education process),
- to increase the number of special pedagogues at elementary schools in order to ensure educational conditions for individually integrated students (justification: individual integration under the supervision of special pedagogues will improve the application of individual forms of work methods),
- to legislatively increase the financial normative per student for students from socially disadvantaged environments at common elementary schools,
- to incorporate teacher's assistants into the normative at classrooms with more than 7 students from socially disadvantaged environments (the above mentioned measure will enhance the quality of the educational process and create space for the development of cooperation between the school and family; meanwhile teacher's assistants from the local community will acquire stable work in the pedagogical process),
- to use education cards for activities in the course of school vacations,
- to create a modern profile of the elementary school graduate, to implement monitoring at the end of 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> grades with a link to already existing monitoring of 9<sup>th</sup> grade elementary school students ,
- to institutionally and financially support the system of after-school teaching activities for Roma children who fall behind academically (in cooperation with NGOs, community centers) – after school courses ,
- to monitor (control) the thorough adherence to procedures for accepting students to special elementary schools,
- to support the establishment of integrated classes at elementary schools by creating adequate conditions for the upbringing-education process,
- to define the category of students with psychological and social development disorders, behavioral disorders and study development disorders and students from socially disadvantaged environments (such as students with individual/specific upbringing-education needs) which would distinguish them from students with health disabilities requiring special upbringing-education needs,

- to regulate the integration and re-integration of students with psychological and social development disorders, behavioral and study development disorders and children from socially disadvantaged environments (with individual/specific upbringing-education needs),
- to design an alternative curriculum which can be used by elementary schools when adjusting the content of teaching Roma children from socially disadvantaged environments (justification: reduction of content, more practical orientation, teaching through experience, alternative forms of education – animation); at the same time to adopt measures which prevent the misuse of such curricula for the creation of segregated classes,
- to continue to provide subsidies for meals and school aids for children from socially disadvantaged environments,
- to establish the difference between teacher’s assistants for students from socially disadvantaged environments and teacher’s assistants for students with health disabilities,
- to implement a day-long upbringing system (justification: the above mentioned measure prolongs the time that children spend in a motivating school environment and allows for school preparation and the meaningful use of free time),
- to create an attractive educational environment that respects the social, cultural and language specifics of children,
- to take into consideration the upbringing and educational needs of Roma children and students when designing school education programs,
- to design social-cultural independent tests of school aptitude for 6 – 7 year old children (justification: based on knowledge and experience from practice, to update diagnostic tests – School Aptitude Tests for children from socially disadvantaged environments, since methodologies which respect the specifics of cognition and the experience of Roma children more adequately assess the selection of appropriate upbringing-educational methods),
- to ensure testing for school aptitude exclusively by pedagogical-psychological clinics (justification: based on the present practice, experience and knowledge from testing, of new diagnostic tests which will be updated).

### **Upbringing and Education at Special Schools and School Facilities**

- to re-evaluate the legitimacy of preparatory classes at special elementary schools for mentally disabled children in connection with accepting children from socially disadvantaged environments,
- to legislatively resolve the possibility of creating specialized classes,
- implement re-diagnostics of students incorporated into special elementary schools in two-year intervals and to elaborate reports,
- to ensure that diagnostics and re-diagnostics of children are carried out in a natural environment.

### **Secondary School Education**

- to legislatively resolve the possibility of acquiring certificates of apprenticeship after the completion of apprentice school,
- to carry out a survey regarding the status of Roma students at secondary schools,

- to introduce information from the field of Roma history, culture, literature and social life into the contents of subjects of social character and Slovak literature within the framework of curriculum transformation,
- to introduce multicultural upbringing and anti-prejudice upbringing as a profile topic among the content of teaching of individual subjects within the framework of curriculum transformation at secondary schools ,
- to respect the principle of the integrated education of students when establishing classes and schools,
- to extend the competency of the profession of teacher's assistant to secondary schools,
- to increase normatives in the financing of technical schools, especially apprentice schools and centers of practical training and education,
- to gradually create the preconditions for enacting compulsory twelve-year school attendance with the possibility of experimental grades after 2012. (Justification: low knowledge level and failure to acquire qualification due to early termination of study, non-effective use of financial means for one-year study at secondary schools; this would decrease the percentage of unemployment and eliminate socio-pathological phenomena),
- to implement experimental testing in the field of “community work” studies,
- to introduce fields of studies in which Roma students could be successful, this is related to the following fields of studies: making of musical instruments, carpentry, stove building, pottery, construction-related fields (painting, locksmithing, plumbing, masonry and others); to pay attention to the upbringing of healthcare personnel, volunteers and social workers, and traditional crafts according to the labour market needs in individual regions,
- to establish relocated classes with the possibility of technical education directly in municipalities with high population concentrations and in cooperation with the pertinent self-government authorities.

### **University/College Education**

- to implement projects that expand the study of multicultural education and upbringing within the framework of teacher training,
- to create a system of guardianship – counselors and assistants from university/college teachers or other university/college students for students from families from socially disadvantaged environments,
- to intensify the cooperation of the Institute of Romology Studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Healthcare in Nitra with university workplaces that deal with Roma issues, to promote the provision of financial means through grants, state orders and research tasks targeted on Roma issues,
- to introduce innovations in the content of programs of studies, especially regarding teacher training and social work,
- to create target impulses to motivate university/colleges to incorporate the given issues into the educational content in the following areas:
  - research of the actual educational conditions in which Roma children from socially disadvantaged environments are raised and educated,

- innovation changes in the content of programs of studies, especially in teacher training and social work,
- compulsory optional subjects by creating conditions for the development of professional competencies in the fields of community, field social work and community education and in the field of operations in educational subsystems operating outside the institution of schools,
- the creation of conditions for financing of study stays in locations where students will work in the future, at workplaces which solve the given issues and even abroad,
- the creation of conditions for the possibility of the further education of teachers (in specialized innovation study, post gradual study, 2<sup>nd</sup> qualification examinations) oriented on the issues of the target group,
- the creation of preconditions for deepening cooperation of university/college workplaces,
- the introduction of the programs of studies – Romology, which incorporates Roma language and literature, history and culture,
- to create a monitoring system in individual regions through which universities/colleges can incorporate into their programs of studies the content which allows for the profiling of graduates pursuant to the needs of the given region.

### **Further Education – Care for Pedagogical Workers**

- to design a model of professional standards for teacher-specialists in the upbringing and education of Roma students (within the framework of the career system of teachers),
- to implement research that monitors projects related to the current situation involving the work of teachers at schools with large concentrations of Roma students (work load, motivation, stabilizing, etc.),
- to ensure the nationwide re-training of teachers teaching in classes with integrated students according to modern trends and methodologies and in the field of multicultural upbringing,
- to significantly strengthen the evaluation and classification of behavior with an orientation on new approaches towards evaluation as one of the basic instruments for the motivation of the personality development of students and its auto-regulation in the content of the pre-graduate preparation and further education of pedagogical workers.

### **Life-Long Education**

- to broaden the counseling of schools, administrators – self-governments and employers, for example, in the preparation of re-qualification courses,
- to prepare community (education) center programs targeted on the comprehensive raising of the living standards of marginalized Roma communities (care of young mothers for children, including prevention, social skills, etc.),
- to deepen the cooperation with institutions operating in the field of informal education,
- to prepare voluntary work programs of foreign volunteers at the centers,
- to develop the informal education of Roma youth through national and international mobility programs,

- to prepare voluntary youth centers targeted on assistance to children in Roma communities and the development of philanthropy in the regions with the highest concentrations of Roma, and
- to develop the participation of youth in resolving their issues even on the international level.

### **School Counseling and Prevention**

- to create a unified (integrated) school counseling system that will ensure a common course of action in resolving the issues of children and students (provision of comprehensive services – prevention, diagnostics, therapy and further cooperation of experts – psychologists, special pedagogues, speech therapists, neurologists and others),
- to coordinate counseling care activities with the provision of services for schools and school facilities in the individual regions (districts) in relation to upbringing/career counselors, school psychologists, special school pedagogues and prevention coordinators in resolving issues of children and students from socially disadvantaged environments,
- to increase the number of psychologists and special pedagogues in the integrated school counseling system (increased needs for diagnostics, long-term group and individual work and counseling in various areas),
- to thoroughly use and implement the school aptitude and RR-screening tests of children from socially disadvantaged environments in order to rule out the diagnosis of mental retardation. To implement the tests in the language (of the ethnic minority) which children master the best,
- to ensure financial means for the ongoing purchase of new specific psycho-diagnostic methodologies,
- to ensure resources (personal, material, spatial, financial) for the diagnostics of children and students in the field (school).

### **Education in the Mother Tongue**

Based on the Constitution of the SR and binding international documents for the Slovak Republic, the Roma national minority may exercise their right to education in their mother tongue. That is why it is necessary to create the conditions for exercising the right to education in the Roma language in the context of the upbringing-education system of the Slovak Republic; currently, it is only implemented within the framework of the experimental testing of the subject of Roma language and literature and Roma life and institutions under the management of the State Pedagogical Institute, an institution directly managed by the MoEdu SR. In order to implement such teaching it is necessary to ensure:

- the preparation of teachers of Roma language and literature;
- the preparation of teachers of the individual subjects in the Roma language;
- basic pedagogical documents (teaching plans, curricula);
- the creation and publication of textbooks and teaching texts in the Roma language, implemented by the Ministry of Education; and
- the publication of technical literature.

Presently the standardization of the Roma language is being prepared under the management of the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the SR for Roma Communities.

### **4.2. Health, Hygiene, Health Education and Prevention**

The growth of social gaps between individual groups of the population also negatively influences the health status of the population and potential outbreak of health risks. Within the framework of these risks and endangered groups, the Roma community is considered as the group at highest risk. The health status of the Roma national minority is markedly different from that of the non-Roma community. The different age structure and achieved average age of segregated Roma living in settlements in comparison with the rest of the population is striking. Roma children up to the age of 14 comprise 38.7% of the entire Roma population in the SR, while non-Roma children up to the age of 14 comprise only 18.9% of the overall population. Based on the censuses in 1970 and 1980, the estimated life expectancy of Roma men and women was 55.3 years and 59.5 years respectively.

The preparation of actual steps for the solution of this situation must be supported by data regarding the actual health status (birth rate, death rate, vaccination and others) on the level of the Ministry of Health of the SR. In spite of the implementation of various programs, the system of use and administration of data on the health status of the Roma population is lacking, and a database of the status of Epidemiologic Study is non-existent. The verification of data on health and the gaps in health between the Roma population and majority population is also non-existent. The verification of the manifestation of the entry of the field health assistant system (hereinafter the “FHA”) for the improvement of access of Roma to healthcare, and cooperation between responsible institutions in the solution of identified problems regarding the health status in Roma communities are also missing.

### **Defining the Problem:**

#### **Poor Health Status and Lifestyle of the Population of the Roma National Minority**

Marginalized Roma communities suffer from the increased incidence of infectious diseases and bronchial illnesses due to poor living conditions. This is a consequence of insufficient hygiene and the lack of health prevention, the poor living conditions of the population living in apartment buildings due to the disconnection of fundamental utilities (heating, water, gas, and electricity) and the unavailability of sources of drinking water in segregated and remote locations. The permanent health threats to the population arising from its polluted immediate environment (epidemics and sickness affecting a large section of the population, rats, waste) causes reduced life expectancy and increases in oncological illnesses. High birth rates and the young age of new mothers in socially excluded communities along with the problem of sexual crime and prostitution is growing. The incidence of narcotics abuse, especially in the case of children and teens is on the rise in segregated locations.

#### **Lack of Information and Counseling in Relation to Health Prevention and Healthcare Services**

All of the above mentioned factors arise from insufficient and ineffective education regarding the issues of reproductive health, health risks (nutrition, lifestyle, smoking, drugs), insufficient information about hygiene-epidemiologic risks (drinking water, food), the necessity to visit gynecological clinics in the course of pregnancy, insufficient knowledge of providing first aid, and a lack of community centers in locations with high concentrations of Roma. The insufficient care of parents for their children regarding preventative checkups and vaccinations is another factor. The operating system of education and prevention outlined from the pre-natal age of children until adulthood is also missing.

In segregated locations, the population has limited access to health care, and the number of field healthcare assistants working in locations within the PHARE pilot project “Improvement of the Availability of Healthcare for Marginalized Roma Communities in Slovakia” is insufficient considering the community needs. As a result, the participation of

Roma in preventative checkups, healthcare clinics and vaccinations, and their knowledge of health risks is low.

### **System and Legislative Obstacles:**

- the absence of data – verification of activities implemented within the framework of the fulfillment of the intention – improving the sexual health of Roma from the National Action Plan of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005 - 2015,
- the absence of the implementation of actual programs oriented on upbringing to parenthood, reproductive health, motherhood and child care,
- the absence of a comprehensive program aimed at the disadvantaged groups of the population.

### **Proposed Measures:**

#### **To Improve the Health Status and Lifestyle in Roma Communities**

- to decrease the incidence of infectious diseases, bronchial illnesses due to poor living conditions,
- to improve and enhance the quality of hygiene and health prevention in settlements and urban concentrations,
- to contribute to the decrease of the birth rate (by creating the awareness of inductive parental responsibility) and to the increase in the age of new mothers in socially excluded communities,
- to decrease the mortality rate in Roma communities,
- to decrease the endangerment of the health of the population arising from its polluted immediate environment (epidemics, rats, waste),
- to decrease and gradually eliminate the incidence of narcotics abuse among children and teens (sniffing) in segregated settlements and urban concentrations,
- to stop the growth of oncological illnesses,
- to ensure the availability of sources of drinking water in segregated and remote locations,
- to enhance the quality of living conditions of the population living in apartment buildings by targeting the improvement of access to basic utilities (heating, water, gas and electricity – linked to the area of housing and infrastructure),
- to decrease the ecological risks of the environment,
- to decrease the incidence of sexual crime and prostitution,
- to establish balanced biological, psychological and socially favorable factors.

#### **To increase Information and Counseling Activities in Relation to Health Prevention**

- to intensify and make more effective education regarding issues of reproductive health and transmitted sexual diseases,
- to contribute to the increase of awareness regarding health risks (nutrition, lifestyle, smoking, drugs),
- to enhance the quality of information regarding hygiene-epidemiologic risks (drinking water, food),
- to increase and enhance the quality of information regarding the necessity to visit gynecological clinics during pregnancy,
- to enhance the quality of knowledge on the provision of first aid,

- to broaden and enhance the quality of the network of community centers in locations with high concentrations of Roma,
- to improve child care within the framework of preventative checkups, vaccinations and to increase the number of vaccinated children.

#### **To improve Accessibility to and Use of Healthcare Services**

- to ensure the availability of medical care even in remote segregated locations,
- to optimize and broaden the community workers network in the area of health education,
- to increase the participation of Roma in preventative checkups, healthcare clinics and vaccinations, to acquire data on the health status in Roma communities,
- to organizationally ensure and implement surveys, data and information collection and analyses regarding the actual health status (birth rate, death rate, vaccination and others) in Roma communities,
- to process and assess already existing health status data on Roma communities,
- to create a system of data use and administration regarding the health status of the Roma population,
- to create a database of the status of Epidemiologic Study, its verification of data on health and the gaps in health between the Roma population and the majority population,
- to assess the Program of the Promotion of Health in Disadvantaged Communities and the contributions of community workers in the field of health education,
- to improve cooperation between responsible institutions in resolving detected issues regarding the health status of the population in Roma communities.

#### **System and Legislative Instruments**

- to prepare materials for defining the term *social healthcare*,
- to process and make available data from activities implemented within the framework of fulfilling the intention – improving the sexual health of Roma from the Action Plan of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015,
- to initiate the implementing and preparation of actual programs targeted on parental education, reproductive health, motherhood and child care,
- to incorporate the community worker in the field of health education into the catalogue of activities.

### **4.3. Employment and Other Social Activities**

#### **Defining the Problem**

Lack of qualifications, insufficient education and semi-literacy up to illiteracy are closely related to the high rate of unemployment among Roma. These unfavorable factors have negative effects on the opportunities for the future employment of the young Roma generation (demoralization of values orientation). The shortage of jobs provides space for open and hidden discrimination on the labour market, the existence of which is proved by Roma and representatives of the Third Sector. Activities in the underground economy and until recently high social benefits did not motivate the population to look for jobs. A generation of young



people without education, qualifications, work habits or skills has grown up. An autonomous value system has developed within the Roma community which is passed on to the next generation because children who grow up in an environment at risk automatically accept the above mentioned model. A high percentage of Roma children attend special elementary schools. However after graduating they have only limited possibilities for further education or employment. The entire environment in which they grow up is degrading. School preparation is at a minimum. The children spend their free time on the streets; some of them are truant. In many cases, the parents do not motivate them to work or study. They lack any incentive from the community; in fact, the experience that the place to live is a socially degrading environment is commonly passed on and the young generation adopts the behavior of the community in which they live.

Economic and social exclusion, segregation and discrimination are the factors which distinctively lead to de-motivation in marginalized Roma communities and which overlap in all areas of social policy. Enhancing employability by creating jobs through a comprehensive, coordinated and systematic approach with the help of national, regional and local cooperation under the precondition of objectively implemented control and monitoring throughout the entire process, constitutes one of the possibilities for preventing social exclusion.

The Roma community is characterized by high, long term and in some regions of Slovakia (especially the Prešov, Košice and Banská Bystrica Regions) a high percentage of unemployment. The Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family in the above mentioned regions record a high rate of long-term unemployed (i.e., more than 24 months). Furthermore, the structure of previous occupations includes labourers and unskilled workers and persons without working classifications (i.e., persons without work experience). Such an environment nurtures the growth of socio-pathological phenomena. In the 1990s, the long-term unemployed jobseekers participated in public work and small municipal services in the interest of increasing their employability. Presently, the long-term unemployed jobseekers depend on welfare benefits and by performing activation activities in the form of minor municipal services and voluntary work they acquire and maintain their working habits and skills. They receive bonuses for carrying out the above mentioned activities. These bonuses in some locations in relation to the work possibilities are de-motivating. The above mentioned measure only partially aids in the acquisition of work habits; this is not a system solution. Nor does it solve the problem in municipalities with large Roma concentrations; the number of jobs is limited and most are related to cleaning, thus the possibility of satisfying everyone is low. For many Roma, social discrimination constitutes a distinctive barrier to employment and a reason not to look for work outside their communities and municipalities, which considering their traditional culture and way of life is almost impossible. In the Slovak Republic, discrimination in employment is legislatively banned. However Roma talk about their experience with discrimination. Due to the process of the transformation of the economy, the demise of industrial enterprises and agricultural coops, the majority of Roma lost their jobs. The introduction of new private companies and foreign investors is connected with the introduction of new production programs and technologies which require higher technical education.

**Priorities:**

- to create jobs – to increase employment also through social employment in social, municipal enterprises, establishing municipal farms (agriculture),
- to implement comprehensive projects through system, comprehensive and coordinated solutions through the participation of state administration bodies, authorities of other

and territorial self-government, civic associations, non-governmental organizations and marginalized Roma communities,

- to implement pilot projects using a comprehensive system approach,
- to accumulate financing resources (from EU Structural Funds, state budget, local and regional self-government, NGOs),
- to improve housing conditions, broaden services in the most isolated and disadvantaged Roma settlements in the form of municipal services (social enterprises) with the active participation of Roma,
- to decrease regional differences through a differentiated provision of support and assistance that favors “disadvantaged and problematic” regions and to prevent the misuse of financial means through effective monitoring and control,
- to promote the establishment of social enterprises pursuant to the prepared amendment to Act No.5/2004 Coll. on employment services and on changes and amendments to some Acts,
- to pay attention to the structuring of daily programs through community activities (not to live passively but to actively change their own social reality in relation to the labour market).

#### **Proposed Measures:**

- to build “social enterprises”,
- to activate marginalized Roma communities in a comprehensive system approach to self-fulfillment and improvement of living conditions with the necessary participation of the community, state administration and self-government bodies and NGOs,
- to build community centers (financed from means from EU Structural Funds) as centers for families (with the provision of comprehensive services – from creating new jobs through educational activities for children up to adult education). To assess the effectiveness by implementing pilot projects in the regions based on comparisons for further orientation or for implementing of a given approach in different towns for the upcoming years,
- to preferentially involve long-term unemployed jobseekers in activation activities.

## **4. Housing**

### **Defining the Problem.**

The support of housing for marginalized Roma communities reflects the level of solidarity with these groups of the population, the economic level of the state and the respect for international documents which anchor the right to adequate housing. The level of solidarity with those marginalized and poor in Slovakia in the case of Roma is complicated by the cultural and structural racism of the population. The transition to a market economy with apartments after 1989 led to the fact that the state did not resolve housing for the weaker social groups. At the time of the adoption of the Concept of Housing Policy and the Development of the Construction of Apartments in 1994, which, besides others, recommended reserving approximately 20% of rental apartments from the existing fund of apartments for the socially weaker layers of the population, the massive privatization of rental apartments took place. As a result, in 2006 the share of all rental apartments in the ownership of municipalities and towns in the Slovak Republic was approximately 2.7%. Housing has not

been the priority of any political party. The promotion of housing has only been targeted on the support of individual ownership and construction.

The above mentioned situation produced an insufficient rental sector for socially weak citizens, which was reflected in the most negative way in housing for Roma. The specific problems of Roma housing are related to poverty and open racism; in the transformation of the land fund in Slovakia; in the law on reporting permanent residency, in the denial of the fact that municipalities and towns created ghettos; and in the ethnization of forced evictions. However, the newly established ghettos are not social ghettos. Their establishment is also supported by open discrimination of Roma in access to social rental apartments. In many cases, the poor social status of Roma and their lack of legal awareness is also misused. The need to build a system that would react to the social characteristics of the population was ignored. The consequences of the unclear defining of the right to adequate housing, the lack of an existing definition of social housing, the insufficient allowance for housing or its unavailability in combination with changes in the Civil Code are such that in Slovakia the number of people evicted without claims for replacement housing has grown.

### **Current Status**

Dissatisfaction with housing conditions and the quality of housing is one of the main factors influencing this unfavorable social-economic situation. The quality of housing and infrastructure creates a wide scale of disproportions in the social environment of citizens from marginalized Roma communities which is the direct result of the downsizing of the physical environment in which part of Roma live and which unfavorably influences their living standards. Disproportions are also caused by the unequal position of Roma citizens in society, especially in municipalities where they live in isolation from society, in segregated settlements on a lower socio-cultural level (the “Roma settlement”). These disproportions are manifested by the fact that in several cases the territory of settlement, in breach of the law, does not constitute part of built up section of a municipality. Roma live in provisional housing facilities which were built in previous years as so called black (illegal) constructions. The territory of Roma settlements is not settled in terms of ownership rights towards the plots. The housing facilities in which Roma live are degrading in many cases. Some housing facilities were not de-limited in the phase of self-government establishment after 1989. The residents have neither ownership deeds nor lease contracts. The permanent residency of a citizen of a municipality may not be based on a housing facility which is situated on unsettled property beyond the built up section of a municipality. The conditions for housing are the worst in the most isolated and segregated settlements. The following is a breakdown of the number of such settlements according to region: in the Prešov region, there are 131 settlements on the edge of municipalities and 85 settlements outside municipalities, in the Košice region there are 105 settlements on the edge of municipalities and 111 settlements outside municipalities, in the Banská Bystrica region there are 55 settlements on the edge of municipalities and 63 settlements outside municipalities, in the Trnava region there are 16 settlements on the edge of municipalities and 10 settlements outside municipalities, in the Nitra region there are 14 settlements on the edge of municipalities and 4 settlements outside municipalities, in the Žilina region there are 5 settlements on the edge of municipalities and 5 settlements outside municipalities, in the Trenčín region there are 7 settlements on the edge of municipalities and no settlements outside municipalities, and in the Bratislava region there are 5 settlements on the edge of municipalities and 6 settlements outside municipalities. (Atlas of Roma Settlements in Slovakia 2004). Financial resources for the construction of rental apartments and related technical utilities in connection with the possibilities of state budgets

for towns and municipalities are provided either in the form of direct subsidies from the state budget or from advantageous loans through the State Fund for the Development of Housing.

Access to public services in many marginal settlements is limited or non-existent. The lack of transparency in the ownership of property hinders the improvement of housing conditions – because individuals and local and urban authorities are not able to maintain and invest in buildings or local infrastructure while ownership is not transparent or settled. This leads to the creation of seat formations (especially fully segregated settlements, segregated settlements and independent seat formations within the framework of a municipality), in which no public roads, water supplies, sewage systems, public lights, etc. are built. Municipalities often have legal arguments that allow them to not resolve desperate situations related to the technical status of infrastructure or its absence and utilities in settlements with Roma communities. Houses built without building permits do not exist *de jure* and that is why it is impossible to request state subsidies for the building of technical infrastructure. On the other hand, unresolved legal property ownership cases prevent the obtaining of building permits, etc. The above mentioned situation will constitute the source of problems in acquiring financial means from European Union funds in the period 2007 - 2013. Due to their unfavorable economic and social situation, part of the population of marginalized Roma communities is unable to ensure adequate housing through standard approaches. As a result, other forms of housing for low-income groups must be provided. In light of forced evictions of families with children, housing facilities whose expenses do not exceed the user's income must be built. When designing housing strategy it is also necessary to place emphasis on the building of low-cost housing which will eliminate the threat of the creation of population groups whose way of life leads to the pushes of the quality of life of individuals and families to borderline situations, such as homelessness. In this relation the payment of housing allowance (through changes to § 13 of the National Council of the SR Act No. 599/2003 Coll. on assistance in material need) must be resolved.

#### **Factors Causing the Unfavorable Housing Situation of Marginalized Roma Communities in Slovakia:**

- the substandard social-economic situation and financial inability of Roma to solve their housing situation which is connected with high unemployment and low income,
- the lack of interest of the self-government to build new housing for Roma communities due to fears of the migration of other populations, the destruction of new apartments and the non-paying of rent,
- the lacking subsequent monitoring of the maintenance of the quality of housing after implementing the construction of low-cost municipal rental apartments,
- insufficient access to electricity and water supply, sewage system and waste collection,
- growing underpayments for rent and services connected with the use of apartments and subsequent forced evictions,
- the ethnic seat segregation of marginalized families and establishing of ghettos,
- the overcrowding of apartments, substandard technical and hygiene status of apartments, limited possibility to acquire adequate housing and frequently the inability to maintain the acquired housing in a satisfactory status,
- the insufficient use of the institute of special recipient in practice ,
- the absence of the definition of social housing,
- non specified expenses connected with housing,

- unprotected lease relations – contracts with those accommodated in dormitories are not concluded as lease contracts (when concluding lease contracts, the circle of recipients of housing allowance increases),
- the absence of care for common shared spaces in Roma settlements and urban Roma enclaves,
- the absence of self-help activities on the level of those settlements and seats,
- buildings built on unsettled plots and without construction permits,
- insufficient legislation,
- the long-term status of the inaccessibility (segregation) of communities without sufficient and regular communication with owners of apartments or communication in connection to courses of events in actual municipalities (specific places).

Based on the Constitution of the SR, the human right to adequate housing arises from the right to preserve human dignity, which relates to the ban of humiliating treatment which must be carried out by ensuring the human-legal principle. The gradual implementing of this right is anticipated as the outcome of this undertaking. However the undertaking for action (adherence to undiscriminating treatment) anticipates immediate implementation. The right to access to adequate housing must be implemented without any discrimination according to race, skin color, gender, language, religion, political or other persuasion, national or social origin, property, descent or other status. At the same time, requiring a balanced application of obligations from the Roma citizens is desirable.

**When Implementing the Above Mentioned Rights the Following Must Be Taken into Consideration:**

- the legal certainty of housing – it incorporates legal protection from forced eviction and various types of molestation/harassment,
- ensuring access to services and infrastructure (services and facilities necessary for health, safety, comfort and nutrition),
- affordability of housing – adequacy of costs for housing and income, ensuring protection from inappropriate rent and inappropriate rent increases,
- inhabitability – housing with enough space and protection from the cold, damp, rain, heat and other factors constituting risk to health,
- availability of housing – ensuring access for disadvantaged persons (older persons, children, people with disabilities, victims of natural disasters, persons living in high risk areas),
- adequate location of housing allowing for access to employment, healthcare services, schools, kindergartens and other social facilities.

**Priorities in the Area of Housing**

- to select Roma settlements (after updating the Atlas of Roma Settlements and other databases) whose existence is due to various unsuitable reasons, especially from the aspect of distance from the mother village and unsolvable issues connected with ownership, infrastructure, etc.,
- to design plans for their relocation to provide the population with the chance to overcome social exclusion and segregated intolerance,
- to solve the issue of illegal constructions in Roma settlements, this problem must be approached on two levels:

a) if illegal constructions and Roma settlements are built on someone's else land and their legal status is illegal, it can be continuously confirmed and solutions from the aspect of constitutionality which would lead to the liquidation of illegal construction must be adopted,

b) with the assistance of significant contributions from the state to acquire settled plots selected in municipalities from the aspect of their character and location, where legal apartments must be built with active Roma participation,

- to elaborate minimum binding standards for utilities in Roma settlements (drinking water, connection with the mother municipality, social infrastructure, etc.),
- to check up on the implementing of pilot projects for the completion of a comprehensive infrastructure and utilities pursuant to minimum standards based on the example of several Roma settlements and municipalities in the three regions with a high number of marginalized Roma communities. To pay special attention to the social aspects of the implementation of these projects,
- to ensure the provision of financial means for the sustainability of the program of construction of low-cost municipal rental apartments for the housing of citizens in material need,
- to design a timetable for ensuring housing for every socially dependant family in cooperation with the regions, in order to fulfill the standards for adequate housing valid pursuant to the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the European Council on the Improvement of Housing Conditions for Roma and Travelers in Europe Rec(2005)4; the addressees would be municipalities and towns which would create such conditions within the framework of their possibilities,
- to continue to fulfill the adopted tasks arising from adopted conceptual materials regarding housing for marginalized groups of the population (Long-term Concept of Housing for Marginalized Groups of the Population and the Model for its Financing),
- to design a model pilot project by applying a comprehensive approach while ensuring adequate (social) housing in problem regions with high Roma concentrations and high unemployment rates. To emphasize quality and well-tested human resources and well-tested institutions to involve marginalized Roma communities in its implementation,
- To achieve synergy and sustainability with an emphasis on effective spending of financial means for given projects through regular controls of the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the SR for Roma Communities and monitoring by independent institutions,
- to re-evaluate the legality of the course of action in evicting non-payers of rent and their concentration in a certain territory so that on one hand it will be fully clear that the failure to pay rent won't be tolerated, but on the other hand to prevent eviction by expert social work with the goal to achieve the due fulfillment of obligations and especially to ensure that after eviction the family will become the subject of long-term social work,
- to prevent the occurrence of high debts in rent and services connected with housing,
- to prevent the overcrowding of apartments, to stop the destruction of apartments and common spaces in buildings and their surroundings through community social work and regular control (in an appropriate method by Roma activists and representatives of territorial self-government and state administration competent for the issues in question).

## **Proposed Measures**

- to continue to eliminate the segregation and ghettoizing of Roma settlements and urban enclaves through repairs of the housing fund especially in cases related to apartments or housing facilities whose technical status may threaten the health or life of its residents and to stop the process of further ethnic seat segregation and spatial concentration of members of socially excluded Roma communities,
- to continue to allocate financial subsidies for municipalities for the elaboration of project designs for the construction of low-cost municipal rental apartments,
- to gradually resolve the illegal constructions and Roma settlements on other property which is not legally settled and with the effective assistance of the state in selecting suitable plots for the construction of apartments for Roma from the aspect of their character with their active labour participation in the construction,
- to create conditions for the improvement of living conditions through the activity of individuals with the assistance of community social workers,
- to improve access to community utilities and public services (isolated settlements will become a part of main engineering networks),
- to increase hygiene in apartments (through community work and building hygiene centers),
- to create conditions and opportunities for improving the basic infrastructure and services in Roma communities,
- to amend the National Council of the Slovak Republic Act No. 599/2003 Coll. on assistance in material need dealing with the provision and terms for claiming allowances for housing to enable payments to go directly to the apartment caretakers,
- to define the contents of the term “social housing”,
- to introduce the obligation of apartment caretakers to keep records about non-payers of rent and to take action when the amount of the debt exceeds 5 times the minimum wage,
- to introduce the possibility of working off the debt (cleaning, digging or other manual auxiliary and other work), to involve lessees and residents in the care for common spaces, apartments and the control of implementing this care,
- to achieve changes in attitudes to housing through expert and long-term implemented community social work,
- to determine the state allowance for housing through community social work or field social work,
- to ensure the completion of the building of the infrastructure and utilities of selected Roma settlements in Slovakia in compliance with the minimum standards and Recommendations of the European Council Rec (2005)4,
- to implement the projects in the regions with a high representation of persons at risk of social exclusion through a system of comprehensive solutions (education, health, employment and housing) pursuant to the Recommendations of the European Council,
- to design a timetable for the completion of the building of public utilities and technical infrastructure in selected Roma settlements and all Roma enclaves in towns (according to urgency) so that these settlements and enclaves achieve the level of required utilities in Slovakia,
- to prevent the occurrence of high debts on rent and services, to prevent overcrowding in apartments, to stop the destruction of common spaces in buildings and their surroundings through intensive field social work (or so called social guidance),
- to create offers of housing for marginalized Roma communities which would correspond with their needs of mobility, education and professional inclusion (diversity of housing from worse to better),

- to implement a system approach in preventing the non-payment of rent through field social work,
- to build the network of facilities for low-income groups of the population (reconstruction of unused buildings for housing facilities for low-income groups, changes in their use),
- change in legislation in cooperation with the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development of the SR, the possibility of providing allowances from the state housing fund for the reconstruction of buildings also for the purposes of low-cost housing for persons at risk of social exclusion (so called dormitories).

**5. Profile Topics:** Increasing the sensitivity of the general public in relation to Roma, establishing a wider social mandate for the fulfillment of this task through the media and other socialization agents through educational and cultural activities

### **5.1. Culture and Forming of Roma Identity**

The depicting of Roma in the media, especially from the perspective of the creation of an objective picture of the community and thus the preconditions for the solution of their complicated life situation by creating conditions for their acceptance by the majority population through positive shifts, has recently improved but these were connected to certain time limited topics and projects. The media continues to focus on the scandalizing of community life (the balance between information, objectivity and a conceptual approach is lacking), of the majority population towards the minority and vice versa based on negative examples.

#### **Current Status**

Based on the assessment of the current status, it is possible to state that the Slovak society is poorly informed about the actual issues of the Roma community in Slovakia, about its history, traditions, about the ability of the community to contribute to the solution of issues and also about the causes of the current status. In the past there was no success in the propagation of a Roma middle class which would have been able to present an active approach of the community to the solution of the problem. To date, no system has been created to systematically and adequately inform journalists and the entire general public about the Roma community which would lead to the removal of elements of soft racism in everyday life which constitutes the main barrier for integrated groups of Roma or for groups of Roma prepared for integration to become a full part of society. Promotion in the media of positive models and cultural activities of Roma are lacking; this is due to the ethnocentric perception of society. Furthermore, the system support of Roma journalists and publicists in the media in general and those presenting Roma issues is lacking.

The negative picture of Roma in the media is also projected in the field of culture and co-existence with the majority. The absence of the perception of the Roma language and the possibility of its use in public causes a lack of information about Roma history, which leads to low self-esteem and self-consciousness of the community. Information is lacking about the traditions of Roma in the field of crafts and life style, not only in the community itself, but also in the majority environment. This lack results in the apprehension of Roma as a unified social group and prevents the general public from perceiving it as community with an internal structure. Institutions working with the spiritual and material culture of Roma, research of Roma history, libraries, literary values and artifacts do not exist. Roma culture is usually



reduced to the field of amateur music. Society is not prepared to accept the cultural and ethnic distinctiveness. Integration and multicultural programs and presentations of Roma culture as an article of tourism (living open air museums) on the international and local levels are lacking.

### **Proposed Measures:**

#### **Improvement of Roma Attitude Towards Their Own Identity**

- to support projects targeted on enhancing the awareness of the Roma national minority, information about Roma culture, history, language and culture and standardization of Roma language,
- to support projects targeted on increasing the interest of the Roma community in presenting their traditions, customs and cultural values,
- to implement surveys of needs of the Roma community in the field of culture.

#### **Improvement of Institutional Ensuring of Presenting Roma Culture and Media**

- to support projects presenting the spiritual and material Roma culture,
- to cooperate in the creation of priorities and the financing of the spiritual and material Roma culture with public administration institutions,
- to support research activities related to Roma history and preserving spiritual values of Roma culture and language,
- to promote the activities of the Museum of Roma Culture with the goal to strengthen the development of spiritual and material Roma culture – to build a permanent exposition presenting the history and culture of Roma living in Slovakia by 2011,
- to create a research-documentary and interpretation center of Roma culture within the competence of the Slovak National Museum by 2011,
- to annually update the system of the allocation of financial means from the Ministry of Culture according to demographic data,
- to systematically support projects targeted on talented Roma youth through grant programs,
- to promote alternative modern trends of Roma culture,
- to support projects of civil associations and foundations at elementary, secondary and art schools and projects of leisure time centers in the process of educating Roma children in art and culture with targeting on multicultural upbringing and education,
- to continue to promote the development of Roma media (internet, print, audio/TV).

#### **Enhancement of the Acceptance of Cultural and Ethnic Distinctiveness of Roma by the Majority Population**

- to support cultural social projects leading to the elimination of racism, xenophobia and manifestations of any discrimination,
- to support the implementation programs of upbringing in the spirit of the multicultural and multi-ethnic dimensions of Slovak society,
- to support integration programs for Roma.

## **5.2. Gender Equality**

### **Defining the Problem**

In order to implement the Concept's measures, attention must be paid to the issues of gender equality, i.e., equality between men and women and thus to the issues of gender-specific discrimination. Gender equality means that men and women are free to develop their personal abilities and make decisions without the limitations of stereotypes, strict gender roles and prejudice. Different behavior, aspirations and needs of women and men are taken into consideration, evaluated and preferred equally. The rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men will not depend on being born as a man or woman. Equal rights for men and women mean equal promotion, support and participation of both genders in all fields of public and private life. The strategy designated as gender mainstreaming, which consists in the re-organization, improvement, elaboration and assessment of decision-making processes in terms of gender in one way and another is constituted by gender specific measures targeted especially on women who are discriminated against based on the social situation. The status of Roma woman in society depends on several factors. First of all, from the level of segregation, depending on the type of settlement (rural, urban), and depending on the traditional ethnic-cultural models (age, place in the social structure, etc.). The archaic distribution of labour continues in a Roma family. Women have their roles in the Roma society, which depends on their reproduction and caretaker activities. Girls are prepared for this role from a very young age. The woman is the driving force in the family and is the informal leader in segregated communities. She makes decisions regarding finances, selection of partners for children, and their education. Experts point out the link between the status of Roma woman in the community and education level. After completion of compulsory school attendance, Roma women frequently do not continue in their preparation for an occupation; they quickly form partnerships and become mothers in early adolescence. Due to their low professional and education preparation, they belong to the large group of unemployed with the worst chances of finding work. Frequently they lack interest in employment because they lack education, and because family care in fact becomes their occupation. In several cases, tradition plays a significant role when the husband does not allow his wife to work. That is why these women are dependant on income from the social network and thus their possibility to resolve their employment is not positive. The current status is influenced by the fact that parents make decisions even for children who are almost adults. This way of life together with the high level of segregation (impossibility of apprehending different patterns of behavior) constitutes a decisive factor in maintaining archaic cultural models in the community which preserves their closeness. Even today, Roma families determine the forms and rules of behavior, control their adherence and punish violations and in this way of life erase the boundaries between private and public life.

### **Current Status**

In 2005, within the framework of the European Social Fund (ESF), SKK 1.5 billion were drawn in Slovakia. A large part of the supported projects were targeted on improving the situation in the case of disadvantaged groups in finding work and related to gender issues. Many organizations embark on the resolution of these issues unprepared and with unrealistic expectations. Almost one third of all organizations which acquired support from the European Funds to solve the issues of women on the labour market, a priori rejected the participation of Roma women in the project if Roma women did not constitute the direct target group (for example, there is no plan to include them in projects targeted on women after maternity leave,

for mothers and children, for long-term unemployed women, etc.) They answered questions regarding the number of Roma women involved in the project as follows: “this project is not designated for Roma women”, even the organizations from locations with a high representation of integrated Roma communities).

Frequently, financial means are not used for the benefit of community, but for the benefit of the organizations implementing the projects. This results in the practice that Roma women refuse to constantly seek new re-qualifications which is interpreted by the donors and the general public as lack of interest in work. The offer of jobs for Roma women is probably another problem. The offer is too narrow (tailors, weavers). The projects should be prepared so that the entire community can become involved (not selected individuals only) and individual activities should be “tailor made” for existing structures in the community (gender, age, education, etc.) i.e., representatives of communities which are anticipated as the target groups should participate in the preparation of projects; these projects should not be prepared from the “outside” and forced onto the community.

In connection with the above mentioned, the issue of publicizing of good projects in the media is lacking (but the same is true for the summary of projects financially supported for the mentioned target group). In relation to the implementing of the projects from the structural funds, despite the design of the information monitoring system (ITMS) whose task incorporates the financial and monitoring data regarding implemented projects, sufficient quality data fails to reach the interested parties. Based on the detected facts, we propose strengthening the qualitative evaluation of project implementation to ensure that it has a higher factual value.

### **Proposed Measures**

- to promote the establishment of maternity centers for mothers and children, even in the regions with high representations of Roma women while the condition will be their non-segregation character,
- to promote the establishment of crisis centers for battered women and victims of domestic violence,
- to implement information activities in Roma communities oriented on increasing the informing of Roma women regarding issues of domestic violence, the status of women in society, double discrimination, the role of the woman in the family, etc.
- to create a database of NGOs active in the area of the above mentioned issues in the environment of Roma communities and to support them in the integration of Roma women in the society on all levels,
- in cooperation with the MoLSAF SR, to enforce the inclusion of gender aspects in projects supported by the EU, MoLSAF SR, i.e., so that gender oriented projects will not be ethnically segregated while also promoting the maximum participation of Roma women,
- to implement activities towards the majority to increase sensitivity in the field of gender issues in the environment of Roma communities,
- to implement research targeted on the status of Roma woman in society, in all areas of life with an emphasis on their education level and possibilities for finding work,
- in cooperation with the MoLSAF SR, to prepare a database of work activities suitable for women from Roma communities – non-qualified, with low-qualifications,
- to carry out information seminars for workers of social departments targeted on the specifics of the status of Roma women in the society and community with the goal to improve mutual communication,

- to enforce the proportional representation of Roma women in the centrally implemented programs (health assistants, teacher's assistants, social field workers, community workers, etc.),
- to prepare a proposal of programs of study at secondary schools for Roma women,
- to prepare a proposal of programs of study for Roma women in cooperation with universities, to enforce the higher representation of Roma women in individual study areas,
- to enforce the proportional representation of Roma women in public administration,
- to recommend the strengthening of qualitative evaluations of project implementation.

### 5.3. Poverty

Part of the Roma population is being confronted by a new phenomenon of poverty. Poverty is frequently connected with the non-existence or shortage of economic resources, as one of three most significant social resources (economic resources, power, prestige) of a specific society. The Concept also incorporates these issues which will be implemented in the programs for some Roma. Poverty and social exclusion have a multidimensional character. Poverty and social exclusion are measured by the findings of the EU SILC income and living conditions. This is a harmonized source of data regarding differentiations of income, levels and structures of poverty and social exclusion.

The finding is implemented by the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic and based on this, a user's base is created which serves in the calculations of common poverty indicators within the framework of the EU and for research purposes of various aspects of poverty. First of all, data on income poverty is monitored, but also from the aspect of material deprivation and social exclusion in relation to education, health, working conditions, social participation, etc. According to the latest outcomes of the EU SILC 2006, which represent the referential period of 2005, 11.6% of the population of the Slovak Republic was at risk of poverty. This is a decrease in comparison to 2004 (13.3%) despite the increasing of the poverty risk line to SKK 6,395 per month (from SKK 5,663 in 2004). The difference in the extent of poverty risk between men (13.2% in 2004 and 11.7% in 2005) and women (13.5% in 2004 and 11.5% in 2005) in Slovakia was negligible.

From the aspect of regional division, the Prešov Region recorded the highest poverty risk rate and the Bratislava Region recorded the lowest poverty risk rate. The poverty risk line is defined as 60% of the median equivalent of available income. The sustainable decrease of poverty and the elimination of social exclusion require more massive investments in the development of human capital of policy designers, providers of services and measures and excluded persons as mentioned in the Lisbon Strategy of Slovakia and the National Reform Program 2006 – 2008. The above mentioned is reflected in the National Strategic Referential Framework and Structural Funds Operation Programs for 2007 – 2013. Thus the strategic approach of the Slovak Republic in the field of social inclusion reflects the acknowledgment of the process of globalization and demographic changes and related challenges in the field of ensuring economic growth, sustainability of public finances, increasing of employment, elimination of unemployment and increasing of social standards. Priority political measures are focused on poverty and the exclusion of individuals and groups of the population at highest risk, i.e., children and young people, families with children, the unemployed and especially long-term unemployed, marginalized Roma communities, people with disabilities, the homeless, ex-convicts and drug addicts and other addicts. The Social Memorandum on Inclusion and the related national action plans and reports constitute the basic and strategic documents for this field. The current National Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion Strategies for 2006 – 2008 and the National Social Inclusion Action Plan **establish the objectives** as follows:

- to reduce the poverty of children and to solve the inter-generational continuation of poverty through preventative measures and through the support of families with children,
- to increase inclusion and to combat discrimination of vulnerable groups of the population through the support of the availability of public services, the development of local solutions and the increasing of the participation of excluded groups in the life of the society,
- to improve access to the labour market and to increase the employment and employability of groups of the population at risk of exclusion,
- to strengthen the management, implementation and monitoring of political measures on the national, regional and local levels.

The social policy goals targeted on the elimination of poverty and social exclusion constitute the continuation of the common objectives of the European Union Member States (the “EU”). The social policy priorities in the field of social inclusion are targeted on the elimination of causes of poverty and social exclusion of individuals and individual groups, including marginalized Roma communities. More detailed steps in the field of social inclusion are elaborated within the framework of the Policy Statement of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the period 2006 – 2010 and subsequently interconnected to the National Reform Program, updated in 2007. First of all, this refers to ensuring adequate resources for everyone and protecting those who can not increase their income by themselves, preventing the inter-generation continuation of poverty and exclusion due to the rising costs of low-income households.

#### **5.4. Support Programs in the Fulfilling of the Concept Objective**

##### **EU Structural Funds and Their Support of the Roma National Minority, Roma Marginalized Communities in Particular**

EU Structural Funds also constitute one of the significant resources for the resolution of issues of Roma communities in Slovakia. The space for resolving issues of marginalized Roma communities through the independent Horizontal Priority was created in the National Strategic Referential Framework of the Slovak Republic (the “NRSF”) for the period 2007 – 2013.

The resolution of marginalized Roma communities in Slovakia through EU Structural Funds constitutes one of the key priorities of the European Commission for the period 2007-2013.

##### **Horizontal Priority Objective – Marginalized Roma Communities**

The goal of the Horizontal Priority Marginalized Roma Communities (the “HP-MRC”) is to increase the employment and education levels of the members of marginalized Roma communities and to improve their living conditions.

The Horizontal Priority will be implemented through a comprehensive approach, i.e., through the integration of projects from several Operation Programs (the “OP”).

The intent of the HP-MRC is to strengthen cooperation and improve the coordination of activities and financial resources related to the improvement of living conditions of members of marginalized Roma communities. The support of marginalized Roma communities is targeted on *four priority areas*: education, health, employment and housing and *three mutually related problem circles*: poverty, discrimination and gender equality.

ustrightThe HP-MRC is the instrument for increasing the effectiveness of structural funds interventions in resolving issues of marginalized Roma communities which will be implemented through a comprehensive approach. The comprehensive approach will join several activities or projects into an overall strategy for the actual location to ensure that their implementation will be continuous and contribute to the long-term development of the marginalized Roma community in the given location.

The comprehensive approach emphasizes the mutual interconnection of activities and the active participation of the local community. The comprehensive character in resolving issues of marginalized Roma communities is a necessity because it will ensure system resolutions of issues in marginalized Roma communities and will allow for long-term strategic planning and management of community development and positive change.

### **Horizontal Priority Structure – Marginalized Roma Communities**

The HP-MRC will be implemented through:

- common, demand-oriented projects,
- a comprehensive approach through comprehensive projects (the call of the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the SR for Roma Communities (the “OPGRC”) which will be represented by the Local Comprehensive Approach Strategies (the “LCAS”). The LCAS consist of a strategy and 3 to 6 project plans. If approved by the Inter-ministerial Evaluation and Selection Commission (the OPGRC secretariat) the project plans will be elaborated in the form of projects, subsequent applications for the provision of non-returnable financial allowances and submitted within the framework of calls of individual Managing Authorities.

The comprehensive approach resolves several focal problem circles and ensures their connection from the perspectives of the resolution, implementation (time-wise and subject matter-wise) and maximum effectiveness of their development.

Already existing models for structural funds use will allow final recipients to implement activities within the framework of one measure of the actual Operation Program. The comprehensive approach overcomes the partiality of the resolution of issues and proposes a management model which will ensure financial means and financial flows necessary for the implementation of the entire vision.

### **Comprehensive Approach – Local Strategies of the Comprehensive Approach**

The goal of the comprehensive approach is the overall resolution of issues of the problem of Roma settlements in the form of a combination and concentration of various areas of activities of individual partial projects.

Areas of activities:

- support of education and identity formation,
- support of healthy lifestyles,
- re-qualification and increasing of employment and employability,
- community social work,
- support of business,
- infrastructure and housing,
- elimination of mutual prejudices of the majority and minority, etc.

The population of Roma settlements and seats are the final users of assistance.

## **Horizontal Priority – Marginalized Roma Communities and the National Strategic Referential Framework for 2007 – 2013, Projection of Horizontal Priority to Operation Programs.**

The National Strategic Referential Framework of the SR for the period 2007 – 2013, as the basic document on the use of contributions from structural funds, defines the resolution of the social inclusion of members of marginalized Roma communities as one of the priority areas of assistance. The Deputy Prime Minister of the SR for Knowledge Society, European Affairs, Human Rights and Minorities is the administrator of the HP-MRC. The Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the SR for Roma Communities (the “OPGRC”) was appointed to coordinate the HP-MRC.

The HP-MRC provides space for achieving a more effective impact of structural funds in the resolution of issues of marginalized Roma communities.

The National Strategic Referential Framework for 2007 – 2013 (the “NSRF”) incorporates eleven Operation programs. Due to the profile character of the HP, the following Operation Programs are focal: OP Education, OP Employment and Social Inclusion, OP Healthcare, Regional OP and OP Competitiveness and Economic Growth. The Horizontal Priority is reflected in each of the Operation Programs.

The Horizontal Priority does not constitute an operation program with specific allocations and the coordinator of Horizontal Priority is neither the Managing Authority, nor the Intermediary Body under the Managing Authority. From the aspect of Horizontal Priority coordination as such, the OPGRC does not have any competencies related to financial management.

The system of the management, implementation and monitoring of the implementation of the Horizontal Priority Marginalized Roma Communities is defined in the document entitled, “The System of Management of Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund in the Program Period 2007 – 2013” and in the methodological guidance of the central coordination authority for the NSRF.