

Equal Opportunity Funding Policy
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BACK GROUND PAPER

1. Background

Nowadays about 10-12 million Roma people live in the EU Member States. Most of them live in extreme-poverty brought about by the fact that they have low school qualification, they are long-term unemployed and they live inhuman environment in Roma settlements or ghetto. The segregation, which manifest itself primarily in Roma people's separation and social exclusion based on their social and ethnical status, causes serious problems as well. The segregation hinders equal access to basic services as health care, social services, educational system etc. or provides access to services with lower quality only.

The equal access to EU funds by Roma is essential for their social integration. The past experiences of Easter-European countries (2004-2006) show significant unequal access to funds by Roma and other people living in extreme poverty.

The unequal access to funds, to development resources by Roma is influenced by the following reasons:

- **Regional deprivation** – Roma are living in most disadvantaged regions and in segregated neighbourhood
- **Roma have low capacity** for showing the interest in resource-allocation
- **Direct exclusion (discrimination)** from EU support

Taking into account these conditions, there is an essential need for new principles in allocation of funds, particularly EU funds. The Hungarian Government has developed the so called **Equal Opportunity Funding Policy (EOFP)** in 2007, which were introduced first in the field of public education and urban-rehabilitation. **The main goal of the EOFP is to introduce a new, Equal Opportunity Plan for allocation of EU funds.** The Equal Opportunity Plan is an obligatory part of all tender proposals in the field of public education and urban-rehabilitation, submitted by municipalities, schools, etc.

The main purpose of the Equal Opportunity Plan:

- The introduction of Equal Opportunity Plan will contribute to equal access to **EU funds by Roma**. In the allocation of sources with considering horizontally the principle of equal opportunity, the equal access to EU and national funds of people living in extreme poverty – among them a great number of Roma – could



- be ensured.
- Professional planning sources for solving equal opportunity/exclusion problems.
- Besides, further goals ensuring the sustainability and efficiency of developments:
- **abolish segregation** in the field of housing and education.
 - **facilitate participation of disadvantaged persons in labour market** as well as adult training programs.
 - **ensure equal access to public services, health and social services.**

2. Cases:

- **In the region only Hungary uses the Equal Opportunity Funding Policy in the field of education and urban-rehabilitation programs.** Its goal is to support only those tenders and programs, which can ensure diminishing of Roma segregation in schools and housing.
- **In Hungary in the framework of the EU development program for public educational institutions, about 1000 villages were covered by an analytical report on the local situation of equal opportunities in public education.** This report ensures that institutions practicing segregation should prepare and implement **Equal Opportunity Plan, which can contribute to desegregation.**
- **While in the framework of urban-rehabilitation programs, 160 anti-segregation plans are to be prepared.** These plans have to address the cities' interventions and measures until 2013 for housing, social, health and employment integration of people living in Roma settlements.
- **The applications/tenders are to be approved by independent experts.**

3. Proposal

- **Based on the above mentioned facts, implementation of minimum requirements in EU funds' allocation is proposed.** It can ensure the inclusion of Roma in the European Union. The allocation of EU funds (particularly European Social Fund and European Regional Development Fund) should consider the following measures:
 - **Equal Opportunity Plan** should be an essential part of EU projects
 - programmes and projects increasing segregation in the field of education and housing should not be supported by EU funds.
 - the aspect of anti-segregation should be considered in all projects supported by EU funds.
 - priority for programs aimed desegregation.

