



REPUBLIC OF POLAND

MINISTER OF
ADMINISTRATION AND
DIGITIZATION

Michał Boni

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Ms

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European Commission

In response to the call of the European Commission on the Member States to set National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020, please accept the following information.

Pursuant to Article 2(4) of the Act of 6 January 2005 on national and ethnic minorities and on the regional languages (Dz. U. [Journal of Laws] No 17, item 141, as amended), Roma people living in the territory of Poland constitute an ethnic minority. During the National Census of People and Housing conducted in 2002, 12,731 Polish citizens declared their affiliation to this ethnicity and 15,657 respondents said that the Roma language was spoken at their home. Roma people live across the entire territory of Poland, in larger towns and cities in particular. Among the Roma people, five sub-groups can be distinguished which differ in terms of their cultural, social and economic characteristic.

Most of the problems which affect the Roma community in Poland (unemployment, poverty, social exclusion) are related to the very low level of education which results in the lack of professional or vocational qualifications, which in turn generates the disadvantageous economic situation of the Roma families.

As an ethnic minority, the Roma community is entitled to the full scope of legal protection and state aid, pursuant to the provisions of the aforementioned Act on national and ethnic minorities and on the regional languages as well as other legal acts binding in Poland.

National Roma Integration Strategy

The primary instrument for providing state aid to the Roma people is the *Programme for the Roma community in Poland*, hereinafter referred to as the “*Programme*,” adopted by the resolution of the Council of Ministers of 19 August 2003. The *Programme* has been foreseen to be implemented in the years 2004-2013, with the possibility of prolongation. The adoption and implementation of the national *Programme* was a result of earlier activities carried out by the government as part of the *Pilot government programme for the Roma community in the Malopolskie Province for 2001-2003*. The *Programme* is a part of the affirmative action for social integration, with a particular view to economic, care-providing and educational functions in the meaning of the action provided for by the *National Development Strategy for 2007 – 2015*.

Due to the fact that the implementation period of the *Programme* is now coming to its end, Poland does not predict any changes to be introduced in the activities carried out as part of the *Programme*. It should be mentioned that the programme activities reflect all the priorities indicated by the European Commission in the document titled *An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020*, i.e. education, employment, healthcare and housing. These guidelines will also be reflected in the next long-term national strategy for Roma integration which will be carried out from 2014 onwards.

The governmental *Programme for the Roma community in Poland* is complementary in its nature: it comprises tasks related to education, improvement in housing and social conditions, health, prevention of unemployment, safety, culture, dissemination of knowledge about the Roma community and civil education of the Roma people.

Poland does not have a separate educational system for Roma students. They attend public schools, and no system of “Roma classes” can be said to exist. What remains problematic is the overrepresentation of Roma students in the special education system; the national average is 16%, although for 3 provinces the percentage of Roma students in special education amounts to as much as 20-30%. This situation results e.g. from the fact that Roma students are examined in psychological and pedagogical counselling centres by means of verbal tests. It should also be mentioned that most Roma students of special schools hold certificates of mild degree of disability, which entitles their parents to enrol them to general public schools instead of special schools. It seems that the financial support provided by the social care system to students who hold medical certificates of disability is the primary reason why Roma parents prefer to enrol their children to special schools. Coordinator of the

Programme has already undertaken activities aiming at the promotion of examining Roma students by means of non-verbal tests.

National Roma Contact Point

The *Programme* had previously been coordinated by the Ministry of Interior and Administration. On 18 November 2011, the Ministry underwent a restructuring process, as a result of which the Ministry of Administration and Digitization was established. The latter is now responsible for the national and ethnic minority issues. The Ministry of Administration and Digitization includes a Department for Religions and National and Ethnic Minorities, which encompasses a Roma Minority Section. This Section acts as the national Roma Contact Point.

Financing for the Roma Integration Strategy

The actions implemented as part of the *Programme* are financed from the specific state budgetary allowance for the integration of the Roma community. The annual allocation amounts to PLN 10 million (approx. EUR 2.5 million – this also covers educational tasks, whose implementation is the *Programme's* priority). Moreover, PLN 700 thousand (approx. EUR 175 thousand) from the state budget managed by the Ministry of National Education is annually spent on textbooks for Roma students. Implementation of various projects is also financed from own resources of local governments. Moreover, funds for incentive scholarships for gifted Roma students (since 2011 – at all levels of education) are also granted annually.

No changes in the financing structure for the *Programme for the Roma community in Poland* are foreseen for 2012-2013.

Support for Roma Integration Activities from the European Funds

In 2007, due to the large scale of needs of the Roma community and owing to the efforts made by the coordinating entity, the activities for the benefit of the Roma people covered by the *Programme* were granted support from the European Social Fund for the Human Capital Operational Programme (*Submeasure 1.3.1 Projects for the Roma community – contest projects*). The allocation for the “Roma component” for 2007-2013 amounts to EUR 22 million. This component has been designed as complementary to the governmental *Programme*. So far, 50 project co-financing agreements have been undersigned as a result of

contests organized as part of *Submeasure 1.3.1*; the total value of the projects amounts to PLN 39 million (nearly EUR 10 million). Vast majority of these projects comprises pro-employment and pro-education activities addressed to members of the Roma community.

The proposal to employ people of Roma origin in governmental structures, referred to in the European Commission's document, has been put to life since the beginning of the *Programme's* operation. As part of this activity, local governments employ educational mediators (at the moment, approx. 100 people are thus employed).

Increased Educational Subsidy for Roma Students

Apart from the aforementioned activities, the Polish legal system provides for another permanent budgetary mechanism which allows for the financing of additional educational tasks undertaken for the benefit of Roma students. This mechanism comprises the so-called increased educational part of the general subsidy which local governments are granted for educational tasks addressed to students representing national and ethnic minorities. Annual funds earmarked for the financing of activities to support Roma students are by 150% higher than the funds earmarked for the support of non-minority students (example: education of an average school student in Poland was supported from the state budget with approx. PLN 4,700, i.e. approx. EUR 1,175 in the 2010/2011 school year, whereas education of a Roma student was supported by approx. PLN 11,750, i.e. approx. EUR 3,000). These funds cover e.g. additional educational tasks, including speech therapy, remedial, compensatory and other special classes aimed at sealing the educational gap experienced by such students. This mechanism is also complementary to the *Programme*.

Representation of the Roma People

All activities for the benefit of the Roma people are consulted with the permanent representation of this community acting as part of the Joint Committee of the Government and National and Ethnic Minorities, which – pursuant to the Act of 6 January 2005 on national and ethnic minorities and on the regional languages referred to above – acts as the consultative and counselling body for the Prime Minister of Poland. As part of the Joint Committee, a Roma Task Force has been established due to the special needs of this particular ethnic group. The Task Force comprises governmental representatives and 22 persons representing Roma minority organizations.

The diagnosis of the Roma situation, selection of areas covered by the *Programme* and the indication of education as the *Programme's* priority have all been carried out in close cooperation with representatives from Roma organizations active at the time of the strategy's preparation. It should also be highlighted that, during the years when the strategy has been implemented, the number of active non-governmental Roma organizations has increased significantly. Another tendency observed during the recent years has been the increase in both the number and the quality of applications for financial support to be granted from the *Programme*, submitted by Roma organizations. Currently, the autonomous share of Roma NGOs in task implementation accounts for approx. 30%.

Monitoring and Evaluation

As it was necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of the activities carried out since 2001 (which, since 2004, assumed the shape of a national strategy) and to make preparations for the next long-term strategy, the Ministry of the Interior and Administration announced an open contest in early 2011 to select an independent entity which would evaluate the implementation of the *Programme*. Currently, works are being conducted on the final evaluation report, which will be presented by the end of 2011.

Annual evaluation of tasks implemented as part of the *Programme* is carried out at the regional level, by Province Governors (representatives of the Council of Ministers in 16 provinces, according to the administrative division of Poland). All problems which appear in the course of the *Programme's* implementation and are notified by the beneficiaries (local governments, province offices, mediators, the press or even natural persons), are being monitored, reviewed and solved on an ongoing basis by respective Province Governors, the Ministry of Administration and Digitization, the Racism and Xenophobia Monitoring Task Force operating as part of the Ministry of Interior, the Government Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment or during the meetings held by the Roma Task Force operating as part of the Joint Committee of the Government and National and Ethnic Minorities.

The results of the evaluation and monitoring process will be employed for the preparation of the continuation of the national Roma integration strategy for 2014-2024.

For additional information, please find attached the full text of the *Programme*, including appendices, and the summary of the evaluation report.