

The decade of Roma Inclusion

ROMA GROUPS
Focus Groups Discussion
June, 2005

Montenegro

Realized by



**For
World bank**

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Situation in the country

- **Life in Montenegro today is considered to be really bad and getting a lot worse. The main identified problems are unemployment and poverty.**
- **The Roma are not optimistic about the future of Montenegro.**
- **Politicians are blamed for this situation in the country, but also the wars and crises which shook our country during the past years.**

Roma Identity

- **Roma people think that attitude of the non-Roma towards them has worsened radically during the last couple of years. Today, Roma people feel very unsafe and scared.**
- **The biggest problems that they are faced with are unemployment, poverty (malnutrition, inadequate footwear and clothes), bad housing conditions (no electricity, water, sanitary facilities), bad hygiene conditions, discrimination, inadequate health and social care and uneducated population. Young Roma women also accentuate the problem of violent communication within families.**
- **Position of Roma minority is estimated as worse than position of other minorities. Members of other minorities are educated, they have the opportunity to find better jobs, they have pensions, health insurance, better living conditions.**
- **Unemployment is perceived as the main cause for poverty.**
- **The Roma are not optimistic regarding the future of young people. They think that improvement depends a lot on general situation in the country, that is, it depends primarily on employment opportunities.**

Integration of Roma into community

- **Roma people have very positive attitude towards integration into non-Roma community.**
- **They think that living together would lead to increased level of culture of Roma people and to elimination of prejudices of non-Roma people towards them.**
- **The Roma think that the non-Roma would be divided in terms of acceptance of the Roma integration.**

Helping within community

- **Government should spend extra resources on helping the Roma community. However, this help should be the same as the help to other minorities and groups which suffer from poverty. People in Roma community fear that they would be under even stronger pressure in case that greater social attention is paid to them.**
- **It is estimated that the Government doesn't invest money in Roma community because there is not enough money in the state budget.**
- **If the changes could be influenced, they would, first of all, request the following things from authorities: employment, peace and equal rights for all citizens, adequate housing and hygiene conditions, healthcare, as well as a club where the Roma would be able to socialize.**
- **Roma community has no way of helping itself. The greatest problems are financial problems, and Roma people are helpless there.**

- **Help is expected from educated Roma who could articulate problems of the Roma community and provide some minor financial help. The opinion is also that Roma leaders cannot do a lot without the help of the state.**

The decade of Roma inclusion

- **The citizens are not aware of the action “The decade of Roma inclusion”. They have a very positive attitude towards the suggested concept, they think that such actions are necessary, but they also express their suspicion that this improvement would come about.**
- **The respondents think that the money planned for these actions wouldn’t be adequately used, since misuse of donations is a reality in this country.**
- **It’s a general impression that “The decade of Roma inclusion” would be supported by majority of population, because it would be to everyone’s benefit if the Roma were more educated and more cultivated.**
- **The Roma have a very positive attitude towards the proposed objectives related to education.**
- **Considering the fact that Montenegro is faced with a serious problem of unemployment, which particularly strongly hits the Roma population, the Roma have an affirmative attitude towards possibility of micro-loans for starting the businesses. They think that this would also be good for majority of population, since, it would remove a lot of Roma from the streets.**
- **Enacting anti – discrimination laws is rated very positively, but there is also suspicion, based on previous experiences, that these laws wouldn’t really be enforced in practice.**
- **Free vaccination of Roma children already exists in Montenegro.**

Methodology

TYPE OF RESEARCH

Qualitative research, focus group discussion.

PROCEDURE - TECHNIQUE

Discussion in focus groups (one of the methods of qualitative research) last approximately from 90 to 120 minutes, they are facilitated by trained moderator (psychologist), and they include from 6 to 10 participants. This techniques makes possible deeper understanding of behavior, attitudes, motives, etc, as well as the collection of a big number of information in a relatively short period of time.

Results of discussions in focus groups can not be generalized to population, because the sample is too small.

Taking into consideration that the participants are selected according to previously chosen criteria, opinions expressed in the focus groups should be considered typical for that segment of population only.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

- ✓ Examining of attitude of Roma people towards their own position in the state and towards the action "The decade of Roma inclusion"

Specification of objectives:

1. Perception of direction of our country: defining the main problems and positive trends
2. Perception of their own national identity
3. To what extent are the Roma accepted by non-Roma population
4. Attitude towards integration of Roma into society
5. Attitude towards action "The decade of Roma inclusion"
6. Testing of messages for promotion of "The decade of Roma inclusion"

PARTICIPANTS

A total of 17 respondents participated in focus group discussions. They were divided into 2 groups, and structure of the groups according to place of residence, age and sex is presented below:

	City	Age range	Sex
FGD1	Nikšić	18 - 30	Female
FGD2	Podgorica	31 - 60	Male

Screening requirements

Participants in focus group discussions were recruited by quasi random method – the interviewers find the respondents according to screening questionnaire, but the sample can not be considered as representative for population

- Participants have not lately (during the past 12 months) participated in any discussion group, interview, or any other form of market research;
- Participants do not know each other;
- Participants are aged from 18 to 30 and 31 to 60
- Participants are the residents of urban territory of Nikšić, Podgorica

SURVEY RESULTS

Situation in the country

- It's very difficult for Roma to talk about situation in the country and its direction apart from problems of their own. **Problems are so numerous and intensive that they overwhelm the discussion about any other topic.**
- **Life in Montenegro today is considered to be really bad and getting a lot worse. The main identified problems are unemployment and poverty.**

"It's very difficult for other people, but also Roma. Especially we, Roma, have difficult living conditions"

"Nobody is working, nobody is paid"

"Instead of better living, this is getting worse and worse"

"Since communism failed, there is no life for us, not just us Roma people, but also Serbs and Montenegrins. There was a time when you could sleep in the streets how safe it was, while now it's unsafe to sleep in our own homes".

"This is not democracy, this is the worst capitalism"

"Some 5, 6 years ago it was better than it is now. I somehow have no hope"
- **The Roma are not optimistic regarding the future of Montenegro.** They think that there are neither positive trends nor reasons for optimism.

"Nobody hopes for anything"

"Nothing is getting better, it will be even worse"
- **Politicians are blamed for this situation in the country.** Some respondents say that it's a logical consequence of **warfare and crises** that shook our country during the past years.

Roma Identity

- **Roma people think that attitude of non-Roma towards them has worsened radically during the last few years.** While living used to be peaceful in time of communism, years of crises led to **Roma feeling very unsafe and scared today.**

"We used to be respected more before, it's a lot worse now"
- The biggest problems they are faced with are:
 - ✓ **Unemployment**

Majority of Roma earn money by collecting secondary goods from trash cans or working in public services. Respondents assert that, becoming poor and losing jobs which happened to citizens of non-Roma nationality, resulted in the fact that these non-Roma people are now taking the jobs that Roma used to do in the past.

"We Roma have some trades, but we have no jobs"

"Life used to be better, there were opportunities to work for private business owners. There is no place to work now, neither state nor private"

"It used to be better before, we could work for peasants and find stat jobs quickly, and prices used to be lower"

"I have to go out there and search through trash cans"

"If there were not for those cans, we would die of hunger and thirst"

Working Roma have no steady jobs, therefore they are not paid pension insurance and also, in case of injuries, they have no paid sick leave.

"Our Roma used to work in public service, but their jobs weren't steady. When refugees came, they got employed and we were left without jobs"

✓ **Poverty**

Very big problems are hunger and lack of money for clothes and footwear. Nutrition is very often monotonous (usually without meat).

"We don't have enough money. If we earn something today, we eat tomorrow, if we don't earn anything, we don't eat"

"Food is weak. If you have money, you buy for children, we don't eat that. There is fruit here and there, but meat - poor"

"It's difficult to buy clothes and shoes for children"

"If my husband works today, he earns 10, 15 euros and we have money to eat, and if he doesn't work, then we are silent, there is nothing and that's it. You want to steal. We eat fruit here and there, we usually give it to children to eat, we don't even think of it"

"There are no children's allowances, no social help"

✓ **Bad housing conditions**

People live in wooden barracks (without electricity and water) which are built on the public property.

"We don't have our own house. Those houses we live in are wooden barracks. Everything leaks when it rains. When wind is blowing, it can be felt inside, it blows off everything"

"Our houses are terrible, they are 50 years old"

"Electricity isn't ours, we steal it from poles"

"We live on somebody else's land. This land belongs to Iron factory, we are just waiting to be thrown out. It's somebody's land"

✓ **Poor hygiene conditions. Houses have neither water nor sanitary facilities.**

"There is not enough water, there is one fountain and everybody has to go there"

"We don't have bathrooms to wash ourselves, really bad hygiene"

"We have no place to throw garbage, we throw it behind our houses. It piles up and stinks terribly, we step on it and it makes us sick most often"

✓ **Discrimination**

The Roma assert that they are exposed to various kinds of insults wherever they appear. Very often, disrespect for the Roma is also shown when non-Roma are being let in various institutions before the Roma (skipping the turn in health institutions etc.)

"We are insulted wherever we go"

"They don't respect rows. We also have sick people. Others are admitted before us, they push and shove"

"Other citizens mistreat us because we search through trash cans. Montenegrins say- go away"

Older men in Podgorica say that violence towards the Roma is increasingly felt. Somewhat stronger feeling of security is present only when they are in groups.

"Nobody harassed me before. Now they start chasing me out of the blue when I search through trash cans. I went to the police, but I couldn't report it because I didn't have the number of their license plates"

"They swear our Gypsy mothers. There was a fight and they just took away one of us and they didn't touch Montenegrins. Hawks will not pick out hawk's eyes"

"A nephew of mine came from Italy. They attacked him just because he took out his mobile phone when he was out in the city. They broke him 2 teeth. There were ten of them on these two. He was beaten up just because he had a phone"

"When I go out, I'm with 3,4 friends. It's safer like that"

✓ **Inadequate healthcare**

- Numerous Roma **do not have medical care booklet.**

- Majority **have no money for medications, check-ups, surgeries**

"I have to pay for everything when I go to see the doctor"

"If there is no money for medications, there is no money, we have to stand pain"

- **They are discriminated by other citizens when they wait for their turn** in Healthcare centers (*"others enter when it's our turn"*).

- **Corruption** rules in healthcare facilities and **Roma have no money for that.**

"I was to have a surgery of hernia and they were telling me that there were no vacant beds on and on. I and some Vido go to some doctor's house and Vido pays him 100 marks for the surgery and tomorrow, all at once, there was a vacant bed. If he hadn't given that money, I could have died perhaps".

"My sister is very ill, she's been waiting for a bed in the hospital for a year and a half. And medications they prescribe cannot be found in state pharmacies. I have to earn money to buy them in private pharmacy"

✓ **No education**

Roma are becoming increasingly **aware of the fact that education is very important for finding better jobs, but they point out that:**

- **They have no financial means to educate their children: there is no money for books and other necessary materials, clothes, footwear and hygiene.**

"Two of my children go to school, but they have no shoes, clothes, no money for books"

"This gentleman has eight children ready for school, but he has no money to buy them shoes"

"More children have started school this year, but we have no money, no hygiene"

"My child is in the eight grade and he has no scholarship, but I have to finance him and I don't know where to find money"

- **There is discrimination in schools towards Roma children, both by teachers and other pupils.** Teachers fail children very often or give them low marks just because they are Roma.

"My brother's granddaughter goes to school and she is instantly failed just because her surname is Beriša"

"My brother and sister go to school and they also get insulted, children beat them up"

"I will enroll my son in school, but if somebody mistreats him, I will withdraw him"

"Three of my children go to school, and five of them used to go. They mistreat them there and children don't want to go"

"Sometimes our children don't even want to go to school because of insults. My sister used to go to school, but she doesn't go there any more because she got beaten up"

"There has always been mistreating. They say, look, Roma don't have shoes, they ridicule children there"

"They had more insults by Serbian children than they learned something. They were beaten, and sister who followed them was also beaten, that's why they had to quit school, they had to"

- ✓ **Social protection isn't regulated.** It is considered that **corruption is overwhelming in the field of social protection**, that is, those who pay are entitled to social help. Respondents think that large amount of help planned for Roma doesn't reach them.

"If you give something, you get social help"

"We don't have social help, no children's allowance"

"Those in charge of social help steal half. When something has to be given to our children, it's all dirty, old. We find better things in trash cans than they give us"

"When you go there to complain, you just return as you went. They have never helped me with 10 euro or 5. They tell you go there, go there, and nothing".

- **Young Roma women point out the problem of violence in families. Quarrelling and fighting is frequent between spouses and it's usually over money.**

"I keep quarrelling with my husband ... he has for example 20 euro and he tells me that he has 5. He plays Bingo and leaves everything there. And then the time comes, he wants to eat. If you brought, you have. And the two of us always have problems, over money. "

"They fight, quarrelling"

- **Position of Roma minority is estimated as worse than position of other minorities. Members of other minorities are educated, they have the opportunity to find better jobs, they have pensions, health insurance, better living conditions.**

"We are in the worst position"

"We aren't even a minority in Montenegro. Other minorities are at least employed or they have some kind of pension"

"Albanians have their own land, their houses, their radio station, their news. We don't have news in Roma language"

"Others go at least one step ahead and Roma have nothing. Wherever something is happening, Roma are the last ones. Everybody is progressing and Roma are always going step back. Also Kosovars and Shiptars, every nation is respected"

- **It's a general impression that Roma national minority has greater rights in the surrounding states than in Montenegro.** Positive examples are better arranged settlements, Roma radio stations, clubs etc. in Serbia and Macedonia.

"Roma in other cities, in Belgrade, Niš, Skoplje have all opportunities. We have nothing here"

- **Unemployment is mentioned as the main cause for poverty.**

"Roma are poor because they have no jobs, nobody's working, there is no money. Even when you start working they have no money to give you"

"When you have 10 children, how can you survive with 100 euro?"

"When someone cannot find a job, he has to search through trash"

- **Roma are not optimistic regarding the future of young Roma people.** They think that NGOs have done a lot for education of Roma lately, but that there are still many obstacles (lack of money, discrimination).

They think that improvement depends a lot on general condition of the country, that is, it depends primarily on employment opportunities.

"If there would be jobs, they would be able to do something"

"It doesn't look as if things are going to get better"

"There are no better opportunities, I don't see future anywhere"

"It's never going to get better, not like this"

Integration of Roma into community

- **Roma people have very positive attitude towards integration into non-Roma community.** They would like to live, learn, work with non-Roma. They also say that they have nothing against living in isolated Roma settlements, but they still think that integration would be more beneficial.

"We also want to live with Orthodox people. We want to live like our ancestors used to live. We have no other country"

"Of course I would like to socialize with them. I would also like them to come to our house"

"Of course I would agree not to sit in this barrack"

"It's all the same to me. I would like both Roma settlement and some other settlement"

"I would like to live with Montenegrin, Muslim, Albanian because I was born here and we should live all together"

Respondents think that life together would lead to:

- ✓ **raising the level of culture of Roma**
- ✓ **elimination of prejudices of non-Roma people towards them**
"I live among Montenegrins. My children and theirs have different cultures. That's why I would like us to live together"
"If we lived together and went to school together it would be different if we went out together. When you go out with a Montenegrin girl, everybody looks at you differently"

- **Roma people think that part of non-Roma population would accept integration and that the other part would be against integration of Roma into wider community.**

"There are orthodox people who don't want to accept us and there are those others who want to"

"When I got that apartment, all the people around me were orthodox. It was hard for me to get it because they all rebelled. There, who would accept us?"

"I have been living in my building for 30 years and we have never had any problems, any quarrelling"

"I live between Serbs and Muslims. My children play with their children. Other families accepted it greatly".

"They would accept us. If they could, they would gladly help us"

Helping within community

- **Government should spend extra resources on helping the Roma community. However, this help should be the same as the help to other minorities and groups which suffer from poverty.** People in Roma community fear that they would be under even stronger pressure in case that greater social attention is paid to them.

Certain dose of fear lies in the background of very frequent statements by Roma people that they have always been, and that they still are completely apolitical. It is also very frequently stressed that Roma are not against anybody and that they are ready to live with the non-Roma.

"We Roma are not jealous. We mind our own business. We are not against Albanians, we are not against Orthodox people".

"All people are equal, it should be invested in everybody"

"Government should help everybody. Roma and Serbs and Montenegrins"

"We want to be friends with all nations. We don't hate anybody"

"The way it is for others, let it be for us"

- **It is estimated that the Government doesn't invest money in Roma community because there is not enough money in the state budget.**

"The Government doesn't have money also. They have neither somebody else's help nor money"

"The Government would invest if they had money"

"There are no investments because there is no money"

"If they had money, they'd help, when they don't have, they cannot help"

- **Roma do not recognize any differences between republic and local authorities.** Both of them are perceived as **equally distant from everyday problems of Roma people.**

Both authorities would be **primarily asked for:**

✓ **Employment**

"To find a job and to know that I have earned a Dinar, not to search through trash cans. Although I'm 40, I'm able to work"

"We need jobs to be able to earn money"

"It's really a shame to search through trash cans"

"We need normal jobs"

Older men think that it's necessary to provide also

✓ **Peace and equal rights for all citizens**

"Not to insult my child at school"

"For the police to react equally both in my case and anybody else's. There is a big problem because of that police. I have a fight with Montenegrins and I turn to the police and they don't help me. I want to go to the Ministry to complain, but they won't let me go anywhere"

"Peace is most important, not to harass us"

"We need respect and we respect this country of ours - Yugoslavia"

✓ **Club** where Roma people would gather and where various sport and entertainment activities would be organized.

"Our greatest desire is to have some club of our own, to have our music.."

"Everywhere where Roma live, they have their club where they entertain themselves. In Nis, they have their TV, radio station"

Citizens mention Albanian minority in Montenegro who have their TV station, while there are no Roma radio or TV stations.

"Albanians have 4, 5 TV stations here in Montenegro. We don't have anything just because we are Roma"

Younger women think that, apart from employment, it is most important to provide:

✓ **Adequate housing and hygiene conditions**

"It's the main thing to have: house, electricity, hygiene"

✓ **Healthcare**

"I would ask for medical treatment for myself, I'm ill. They gave me pills and said "buy injections to cure you. And who can I take money from to buy Palitrex (antibiotic) for the morning and evening for 10 days"

- **The Roma think that their community has no way of helping itself.** Respondents say that **the biggest problems are of financial nature and Roma are helpless there.** They don't have developed consciousness of possible ways of associating, of citizens' initiatives that could lead to solving of certain problems.

"Why should we gather and talk? We can talk like this for years, but what it's worth when we have no private property"

"We wouldn't be able to do anything. We barely have food to eat".

Help is expected from educated Roma who could articulate problems of Roma community and provide some minor financial help. It is also considered that the Roma leaders cannot do a lot without the help of the state.

"How can they do anything differently when the authorities won't accept them. They can't take their roofs off and say - live here".

The decade of Roma inclusion

- **The Roma were given some minor help from the state in form of food or fuel.** They are not aware of any other national or international campaigns for improvement of life of Roma.

"There used to be some help from the Government. We received oil and sugar"

"They used to give us three meters of wood in winter"

- **Citizens are not aware of the action "The decade of Roma inclusion". They have a very positive attitude towards the suggested concept, they think that such actions are necessary, but they also express their suspicion that this improvement will really come to pass.**

"It would be a really good idea, but it will never be like that exactly"

It's considered that money planned for these actions wouldn't be adequately used, since misuse of donations is a reality here in this country.

"Here.. if Europe sends one Dinar, they will give us half, if even that much"

"I am for that idea, but not to give that money to everybody"

- **It's a general impression that "The decade of Roma inclusion" would be supported by majority of population, because it would be everyone's benefit if Roma were more educated and more cultivated.** Education of Roma would lead to better opportunity for employment.

"Everybody would like our children to be more cultivated at school"

"It would be better because our children would live better"

- **Roma have a very positive attitude towards set objectives related to education.**

An attitude is present that children should be educated because it's the road to better employment and better quality of life for Roma children, but lack of financial means is mentioned as a great obstacle to that. Therefore loans, scholarships, textbooks etc. are considered to be very beneficial. It is thought that such a program would also be accepted by non-Roma population.

There are no separate Roma classes in Montenegro, therefore it goes without saying that children would be integrated into non-Roma classes.

"That education would be good. Also youth would be educated and then they would be able to create better conditions for themselves, better jobs"

"Somebody who loves his child wouldn't complain about that child going to school"

"Montenegrians wouldn't have anything against it. Everybody wants our children to attend school. When I go to see a doctor, they always ask me – does your kid go to school"

- Since **great problem of unemployment** is present in Montenegro and it especially involves Roma population, Roma people have **positive attitude towards possibility of micro loans for starting the businesses. They think this would also be good for majority of population, since, in this way, a great number of the Roma would be removed “from the streets”.**

"We would all be glad if we could be engaged in doing something, to have something, it's a relief for everybody. People would have their own terms, they would work, support their families, not be in the streets, not torture anyone, be without problems".

- **Enacting anti – discrimination laws is rated very positively, but there is also suspicion based on previous experiences, whether those laws would really be enforced in practice.**

"It would be good, but it's hardly going to happen"

"That should exist, everything should be the same also for Roma"

"That would exist if somebody wanted to intervene. We go to Social care center to complain and ask for the director, but they tell us that he isn't there"

- **The Roma say that free vaccines for Roma children already exist in Montenegro.**

"They are already for free. My children are vaccinated. It already exists".

Ambassadors of change: Voices to trust

- **Of prominent Roma leaders**

- ✓ **Roma women in Nikšić** mention Veselj Begenaj, Tahir Haljuši and Azem (whose surname they don't know) who are engaged in providing financial and advisory help to Roma families.

"While Veso had more before, he gave me a lot".

"Azem gave us those roof tiles to cover our old barrack"

- ✓ **Roma from Podgorica** mention Nezbedin Šalja, Gaši Hisen, Beriša Maki and Vesko Begenaj who is Roma leader from Nikšić.

- **Roma don't think that any of prominent Montenegrin leaders would truly get engaged in solving their problems.**

"Nobody pays attention to us, we are betrayed by everybody"

"We haven't noticed that anybody is doing anything"

They still think that, **first of all, the Government and president of the Republic should be responsible for these issues.** Citizens trust **prime minister Milo Đukanović and president of Montenegro Filip Vujanović the most.**

"Milo Đukanović has always liked us although he is not Roma"

"We like Filip because he has always avoided war"

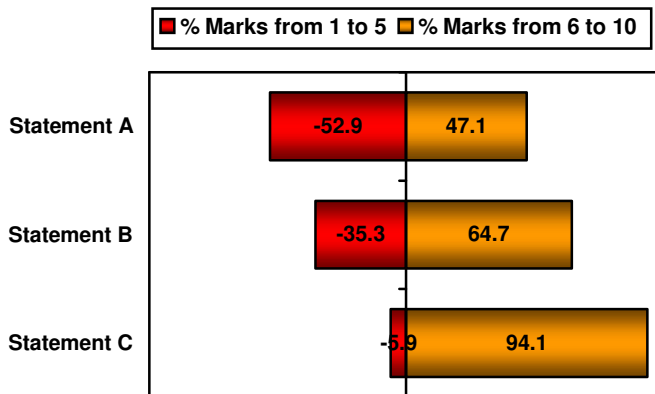
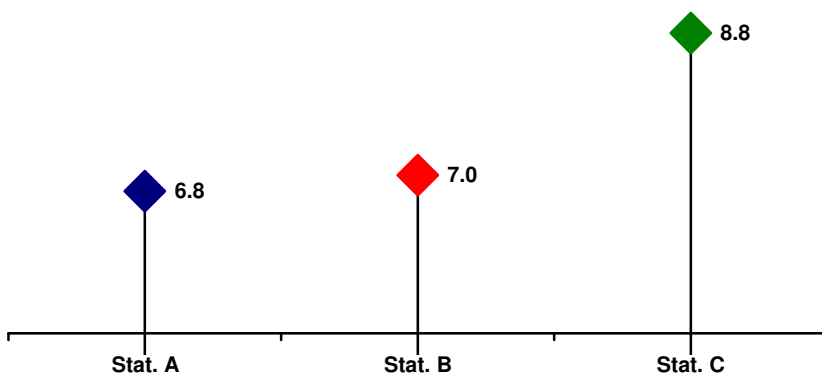
"Đukanović helped Roma people, he is a good man"

Message concepts

Statements which explain why „The decade of Roma Inclusion“ could be good for Roma society are the following ones:

- A. I believe the decade of Roma effort will have a positive impact on the lives of Roma here in Montenegro because governments have committed real resources. It's not just 'talk.'
- B. I believe the decade of Roma effort will have a positive impact on the lives of Roma here in Montenegro because of the involvement of organizations like the World Bank and the Open Society Institute.
- C. If the decade of Roma effort is to have a positive impact on the lives of Roma here in Montenegro, we Roma will have to play a prominent role in ensuring that the goals are achieved.

Average mark



- It is our impression that the respondents didn't really think too much the degree of agreement with the given statements while they were ranking them. Since they are illiterate, questionnaires were filled in by moderator.
- The highest ranked statement was statement C and the worst - statement A.
- The grades coincide with the statements of the respondents that **they trust the least that enough means are really going to be invested, and that all that won't be just an empty talk.** Since they have been betrayed many times until now, the Roma are suspicious whether the help will be assigned to them and really get where it should.

"I don't believe that any means will be invested"

- **Respondents trust international organizations more than domestic institutions and NGOs.** Respondents think that money which goes through domestic institutions, most frequently doesn't reach the Roma people.

"If foreign institutions do it themselves, then I believe, but if they are together with these ours, then I don't believe anything"

"Those organizations are always heard, but they have never done anything"

- The Roma think that **it's very important that they are actively involved in realization of the action** "The decade of Roma inclusion", that is, that their role has to be important.

"If something good appears, there will be some of us who are clever, it's very important"

"It's important that we do something ourselves"