

STANDARD SUMMARY PROJECT FICHE

Project Number : RO 9803.01

Title : Improvement of Roma situation

Sub-programme : Strengthen democracy, the rule of law and human rights

Objectives :

The wider objective of the project is to set up, through a Government strategy, the institutional, legal and policy basis for the improvement of the social and economic situation of Roma, including respect for their rights as defined in national and international law.

The Immediate objectives are two-fold:

1. Setting up of the Government strategy by 2000 based on an accurate overview of the current situation of Roma; and
2. Enactment of consistent policies and programmes for improving the situation of the Roma through innovative partnership programmes between authorities and communities at the local level.

The socio-economic integration of Roma is highlighted in the Accession Partnership and, in a more detailed fashion, in the NPAA (part IV, chapter 2) where social integration of the Roma and the need to consolidate the institutional-administrative capacity for the minorities' protection is underlined.

Description:

The National Census from 1992 registered 408.000 Roma. However, more realistic estimates put their number between 1 and 1,5 million. The traditional lifestyle of Roma is going through profound change. A part of them still live in extended families and tribal organisation forms; a large number, however, are either employed in jobs requiring low start up capital or as unskilled workers in industry or seasonal/full-time workers in agriculture. Existing data indicate a worsening of the Roma educational and welfare level with unemployment, bad health conditions, low level of school attendance (80 percent of the adult population are illiterate) and problems of social integration. At the same time Roma face specific problems concerning their rights. According to opinion polls 67 percent of the Romanian population have a decidedly unfavourable attitude towards Roma, far exceeding the feelings expressed against any other minority group.

1. Formulation of Government Strategy

The definition of a strategy will have to be conceived within the interest of the majority in order to be sustainable. The successful implementation of the programme would need the active support of all parties concerned and, also, of the Government. This implies that a consensus has to be built among all political parties, a *sine qua non* condition for the success of the project is the active participation of the Roma community. An inventory of existing Government initiatives and projects will be initiated already before the actual project support materialises. The project should thus, in its first phase, based on an in-depth assessment, work out a White Paper; this would define gaps and provide a synthesis and mapping of problems to be addressed, so as to work out a Government strategy for the implementation of sustainable sectoral and inter-sectoral programmes including reform of existing regulatory framework. Gradually, in the second phase, the project should introduce grants for programmes based on partnerships at the local level between the authorities and local communities to test policy approaches, and to secure further institution building for strategy implementation.

The in depth assessment shall consist of the following activities:

- inventory and an assessment of existing policies and programmes (set up of a database);
- analysis of cultural, social and economic indicators (support a continued research capacity on Roma issues);
- review of statistical data by National Commission for Statistics and other sources with a view to ensuring a clear picture and to establishing criteria to be used for next census;
- analysis and review of international conventions and recommendations and their application to Romanian law including the appropriate institutional set up. The Ministries of Justice and Interior shall participate in ad hoc working group;
- an inventory and an assessment of external aid support will be ensured through a database established in co-operation with donors on the ground and by organising donors' meetings. Compilation of mainstream political/representative organisations of Roma and other organisations working on Roma issues;

- attitude studies and opinion polls as well as media monitoring will be carried out through outsourcing on a competitive basis;

The strategy shall be formulated and implemented through the following activities:

- White Paper recommendations for policy implementation and number of action proposals within the overall policy framework, actively backed by the President and Prime Minister. Ministerial staff properly trained;
- sectoral policies regarding Roma; cross-fertilisation of programmes between Ministries; and, set up of ad-hoc working groups. Inter-Ministerial Task Force (ITF);
- background documentation and analysis will be carried out by a Technical Support Unit; this should include accurate quantitative description of the issues;
- real involvement and feedback from Roma organisations and communities through the Council for Co-ordination of Roma Issues under DPMN;
- ownership among stakeholders, including Ministries, parliamentarians and local authorities will be mobilised through a high level conference to comment the White Paper;
- a European conference will be organised on lessons learned in the fields of social and economic development of Roma communities with the participation of practitioners;
- formulated drafts for Government 2000 Programme with short- and medium term plans and budget implications
- integration of specific Roma support component in regional development policy.

2. Consistent policies and programmes.

Quick response measures for testing policy and programme approaches will be implemented through grants for policy development, as well as for awareness building and training.

- public foundation structure to provide grants for special measures to test programmes and policies; the possibility of linking this structure with regional development ones should also be pursued;
- projects for policy formulation, would typically deal with positive actions in areas such as health, education, MOH mobile health stations, MLSP social service programmes, labour markets counselling, Roma school drop outs, MOE Roma mother tongue development, community partnership with Police, DPMN regional resource centre for debate and dialogue etc. Of particular priority would be cross-sectoral programmes. The co-operation and co-ordination of local authorities for implementation of partnership arrangements is a condition in order to unite local population;
- awareness building activities (media awareness, code of ethics for media), particularly on issues such as migration, rule of law and the land; these activities should be carried out in the framework of a national campaign including also a national call for Roma integration projects under the auspices of the President and the Prime Minister;
- training and education activities for capacity and institution building, skills development. Particular emphasis to combine adult and child training and education; role of Roma women in the field.

Institutional framework:

The Department for the Protection of National Minorities (DPNM) has been established by Government Decision No. 17 of January 1997; it includes the National Office for Roma. Further to the ratification of the Framework Convention for the Protection of Minorities on 1 February 1998, the Department is seeking to be assigned the responsibility of annual reporting on the implementation of the Convention; also, to set up an Inter-Ministerial Committee for National Minorities in general and for Roma, in particular. Such an institutional framework would empower DPMN with the right to ask for data or information from any Ministry and central or local authority implementing sector policies or dealing directly with minorities. This request coincides with the adoption of the Government Programme 1998-2000 explicitly calling for the setting up of an Inter-ministerial Task Force on Roma Problems. This should be set up as a priority matter.

DPMN lacks human and financial resources and experience. The institution building plan of the project will strengthen the role of the Department through:

- 1) the Inter-ministerial Task Force for the integration of Roma (ITFIR) which will be responsible for the in-depth assessment, the production of the white paper and the operational strategy implementation. The Inter-Ministerial Task Force will be based on key ministries (such as Labour, Education, Health, Interior), plus local government representation. As chairperson of ITFIR the Delegate Minister of DPMN will perform the overall supervisory role;
- 2) the Council of Co-ordination on Roma Issues (CCRI) - a consultative body, must be given the opportunity to influence events. In this way, Roma organisations and communities as well as the majority will have ownership of the process;

- 3) a Technical Support Unit (TSU) as a separate unit under the supervision of DPMN. TSU will assist, with analysis and research, ITF and the Working Groups. The unit will have the necessary administrative and technical expertise to monitor outsourcing of tasks and carry out quality control. Specific job descriptions and division of labour will be clarified in the inception report;
- 4) the establishment of a public foundation to allocate partnership grants for measures to test policy approaches. The independence of such a foundation and the representative composition of its board (including DPMN, EC Delegation as observer and representatives of Roma organisations) is a precondition for the allocation of grants.

Budget (in Mecu):

Line Item	Investment	Institution Building	Total Phare (=I+IB)	Recipient*	IFI*	TOTAL*
1. Government Strategy based on Assessment		1.1	1.1			1.1
2. Partnership grants through Foundation		0.9	0.9			0.9
TOTAL		2.0	2.0			2.0

Implementation arrangements:

The implementing Agency will be the Central Financing and Contracting Unit (CFCU); the Department for the Protection of National Minorities will be the Implementing Authority. The CFCU shall be responsible for tendering, contracting and payments. The Project shall be managed under DIS rules; consortia must include a Romanian based organisation with experience in local funds administration and documented knowledge of Phare rules and procedures. The Implementing Authority shall be responsible for the selection of staff for the Technical Support Unit and of local experts in the framework of the DIS rules. Open and transparent procedures will be followed for the recruitment of staff. Grants will be paid out by CFCU based on the decisions taken by the Board of the Foundation through open and transparent procedures. The programme allocations will be based on clear and transparent criteria, which need to emphasise the expected outcome and impact from projects and the efficiency of Partnerships. The ways in which partnerships and projects create links between the Roma and the majority population should be encouraged through the project based on self-help actions and capacity building of Roma communities.

Implementation schedule:

Start of tendering: October 1998. Start of project activity: January 1999. Some activities will be set in motion by the DPMN during 1998 such as the compilation of the inventories of on-going programmes at the ministerial and local government level. The ITFIR should be set up as early as possible in order to draft and submit a first business plan for the implementation of the programme. The public relations campaign should be launched in February 1999 and the funding of the first round of actions should be envisaged for April of the same year. Completion: December 2000.

Equal opportunity:

During the implementation phase participation in project by both women and men will be ensured and recorded. Women participation will be measured both by recording gender breakdown of people trained and by the participation in the plans, programmes and schemes as well as by the consultants employed. In view of the role of Roma in the family special emphasis will be put on the crucial role of Roma women in training and education.

Conditionality and sequencing

Successful implementation and long-term sustainability of the project requires:

Government commitment : shall be measured in concrete will to (a) establish the Ministerial Committee for national Minorities under the aegis of which the Inter-Ministerial Task Force will operate; also, set up the Consultative Committee on Roma issues; (b) provide office space and satisfactory counterpart arrangements for the programme; (c) strengthen the Roma Office by providing, *inter alia*, for the integration of the functions of the Technical Support Unit into the Department on programme completion. No contracting will take place before these conditions are not met. (d) a concrete allocation of funds from

the state budget (2000) to support strengthening of the Roma Office should therefore take place before project completion. If the Government fails to meet this condition, the Commission might consider cancelling of the then balance of funds.

The political process of consensus should entail active involvement of both the President and the Prime Minister. This would help ensuring the success of the programme.

The management and organisational arrangements shall ensure the commitment of each of the participating Ministries in the inter-ministerial process in developing the overall Strategy 2000 and its ensuing operational programmes based on sectoral and cross-sectoral strategies. The degree of commitment must be carefully evaluated at regular intervals to ensure that the DPMN receives full backing in managing the White Paper process.

The public foundation envisaged shall be legally registered according to the new Law on Foundations. It is the political chapeau as well as the mechanism for attracting further funding opportunities for improving Roma life conditions.

Stakeholder participation particularly of Roma organisations and communities and the role of DPMN therein must be continually evaluated. At the community level, the crucial link rests on the formation of partnerships, on collaboration between the local authorities and the local Roma communities, based on the principles of sustainability, replicability and participation.