

Minority Protection in Slovenia

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE PROGRAMME OF MEASURES
FOR HELPING ROMA IN THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
AND EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR ROMA
– A JOINT CHALLENGE.

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Slovenia has adopted two programmes specifically addressing the situation of the Roma. The first and more general programme was promulgated in 1995, the “Programme of Measures for Helping Roma in the Republic of Slovenia” (hereafter, the “1995 Programme”). In May 2000, the Government adopted a more specific programme entitled “Equal Employment Opportunities for Roma – a joint challenge” (hereafter, the “Employment Programme”), which concluded in 2001.

The two programmes, together with more general measures such as the Programme on the Fight Against Poverty and Social Exclusion (hereafter, “Social Inclusion Programme”), address all major spheres of social life, including education, employment, housing, and healthcare. Local authorities implement projects under the auspices of the programmes, with ministries allocating funding through a tender system. There are few mechanisms to coordinate activities under these programmes around a coherent national strategy, and the involvement of Roma themselves in planning and implementing projects has been minimal. Consequently, results have been uneven, with some projects faltering after only a short period, while others have successfully incorporated participants’ feedback and have even expanded into new areas. A more coordinated approach, centred around projects that foster initiative from Roma communities and reduce their reliance on Government aid, could be more effective in addressing the critical issues Roma face.

Administration

The Government Office for Nationalities coordinates implementation of the 1995 Programme; individual ministries carry out activities under the Programme by funding local projects generally selected by tender. The Employment Programme was coordinated and implemented by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs in collaboration with the Employment Service. However, local bodies are primarily responsible for formulating and carrying out the actual projects, often with minimal coordination from central authorities. Government level evaluations appear to offer little guidance to local authorities for improving existing projects or developing future initiatives. Moreover, a lack of funding has forced the conclusion of many projects despite continuing demand from local Roma communities.

EU Support

The European Union has allocated accession funding to a number of Roma-related projects since 1996.¹ The Employment Programme mentions that it is partly Phare-

¹ DG Enlargement Information Unit, *EU Support for Roma Communities in Central and Eastern Europe*, May 2002, p. 30.

financed.² However, the most recent Accession Partnership priorities, which generally form the basis for Phare funding areas, do not mention any issues related to minorities.³ No Phare national programme funds appear to have targeted Roma; smaller projects, such as legal counselling for refugees and parents' education have been supported through the Phare Democracy Programmes.⁴

Content and Implementation

Discrimination is not explicitly addressed in either of the Government programmes, although some measures recognise the need to ensure equal opportunities in spheres such as education and healthcare. Measures to improve access to education for Roma communities have been among the most successful initiatives, many working closely with participants to ensure that projects reflect their needs. While the Employment Programme's text calls for a greater contribution from Roma, its more innovative component of creating public-private partnership cooperatives failed to materialise when there was no response to the project tender. Instead, public works programmes have constitute the primary source of employment under the programmes, with demand exceeding availability in spite of low salaries and lack of opportunity to gain marketable skills.

Although the protection of Roma culture is a priority for many Roma civil society organisations, this dimension of minority policy is not greatly elaborated in any of the Roma Government programmes. The inclusion of "socialisation" elements in many projects developed for Roma suggests that some aspects of Roma culture are still viewed as being at odds with majority society. The Social Inclusion Programme emphasises the importance of reducing factors alienating underprivileged groups, but its provisions do not extend to spheres such as public participation or language rights for the Roma. Government policy thus reflects Slovenia's reluctance to come to terms with multiculturalism when it comes to Roma.

Conclusions

The major success of the 1995 Programme is its existence. The Programme is the first to recognise the need for State involvement in addressing the problems confronting Roma. Since the Programme was developed, many projects have been funded under its umbrella, and local initiatives have started in many municipalities. The Employment Programme developed the themes of the 1995 Programme, but went farther

² Equal Employment Opportunities for Roma, p. 6.

³ European Commission, DG Enlargement, *Slovenia: Accession Partnership*, 2001.

⁴ DG Enlargement Information Unit, *EU Support for Roma Communities in Central and Eastern Europe*, May 2002, p. 30.

conceptually in recognising the importance of including Roma as active participants, not merely recipients.

Both programmes lack sections on racial violence, discrimination, and minority rights in general. Problems with access to healthcare are also not addressed to the extent necessary. Neither of the programmes addresses the situation and legal rights of the many “non-autochthonous” Roma without citizenship.

The decentralised approach of both programmes has proven to be an effective means to address the varied and distinct problems Roma face in different regions. However, as most of the programming decisions lie with local authorities, their discrete programmes fail to coalesce around a coherent Government policy to address problems in a systematic and comprehensive manner. Consultation with Roma organisations and representatives would facilitate the identification of both specific regional issues and common issues confronting Roma throughout the country. Projects where such consultations have taken place appear to be more successful and durable than those elaborated by local authorities alone. Poorly targeted initiatives offer few obvious benefits to the target group and fail to encourage a long-term shift away from dependence on social welfare or other forms of State support. There are especially few projects designed to increase women’s capacity to enter the workforce, as most of the public works projects established involve unskilled labour – jobs usually undertaken by men.

Progress could be more effectively achieved if the many diverse approaches, both successful and less so, were drawn together to construct a more cohesive strategy. The importance of local decision-making should be balanced against the need for the expertise, capacity, and authority of a Government-level body. This would help to ensure that efforts are not misdirected, and expectations are fulfilled.

2. The Government Programmes – Background

Slovenia has adopted two specific programmes designed to address the situation of the Roma minority. The first and more general plan was launched in 1995, the “Programme of Measures for Helping Roma in the Republic of Slovenia” (hereafter, the “1995 Programme”). In May 2000, the Government adopted the special programme entitled “Equal Employment Opportunities for Roma – a joint challenge” (hereafter, the “Employment Programme”). The National Programme on the Fight Against Poverty and Social Exclusion (hereafter, the “Social Inclusion Programme”), adopted in February 2000, also includes measures that are intended to benefit the Roma minority, among other disadvantaged social groups.

2.1 Background to Present Programme

The 1995 Programme represents the first effort to draft a Government strategy addressing the needs of the Roma minority, which is granted special status under Article 65 of the Slovene Constitution.⁵ Prior to 1995, the only measures in place were scattered legal provisions defining Roma as a vulnerable population group within the Law on Social Protection, the Law on Education, and the Law on Local Communities, *inter alia*.⁶ Generally, past Government policy towards Roma was directed towards assimilation.⁷

2.2 The Programme – Process

2.2.1 The 1995 Programme

The 1995 Programme was introduced as a joint initiative of seven ministries, the Government Office for Nationalities of the Republic of Slovenia (hereafter, “Office for Nationalities”), and the governmental body for local government reform. In 1995 the Office for Nationalities, in cooperation with the Roma association “Romani Union,” began preparing a report on the situation of the Roma.⁸ At the same time, the Government Commission for Roma Questions asked ministries to prepare reports on the current situation of Roma in their respective spheres. The final report drafted by the Office for Nationalities, presented to the Government in April 1995, focused on the poor living conditions of the Roma, and the problems of poverty and underdevelopment. Observing that many Roma are “autochthonous,” or indigenous inhabitants of the country, the report recommended that State action was necessary to address the inequalities of their situation.⁹

In response, the Government then passed a decision to draft a strategy addressing the situation, and various ministries were called upon to prepare a programme of measures

⁵ The Constitution of Slovenia, Article 65 on the Status and Special Rights of Gypsy Communities in Slovenia provides that “the status and special rights of Gypsy communities living in Slovenia shall be such as are determined by statute.”

⁶ *Informacija o položaju Romov v RS, EPA 1102, Poročevalec DZ RS*, (Information on the Situation of Roma in the Republic of Slovenia, Official Gazette of the Parliament of Slovenia), No. 18, p. 56.

⁷ Interview with Vera Klopčič, Institute for Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana, 13 March 2002.

⁸ The full title of the report was “Information on the situation of Roma in the Republic of Slovenia” No. 019-06/95, 24 January 1995.

⁹ Programme of Measures for Helping Roma in the Republic of Slovenia, p. 1, (hereafter, “1995 Programme”).

to improve living conditions for Roma, and to secure their cultural and linguistic identity.¹⁰ The Government document was sent to Parliament, which then discussed the programme's priorities and terms. The approach finally adopted incorporates a system of separate legal provisions, rather than a single unitary law for the protection of the Roma minority, although the latter approach was favoured by Roma groups. In practice, just seven laws address Roma rights directly, while the Hungarian and Italian minorities are addressed in 37 provisions.¹¹

The 1995 Programme suggests that although the State and local authorities have made efforts to improve the situation of the Roma, the processes of integration and socialisation are too slow.¹² It asserts that responsibility cannot be delegated to local communities alone, but that the State must provide professional and financial support.¹³ In the process of preparing the 1995 Programme, the Government solicited the input of local employment offices, especially those in Maribor and Velenje. Although the Programme was drafted in line with European standards, there were no formal consultations with the European Union or other international bodies.

The Roma NGO "Romani Union," which was established in 1991 (and later joined the larger Association of Roma of Slovenia), first proposed that the Government should enact a separate law to regulate Roma rights. Although unsuccessful in arguing for a unitary law, the Association was able to initiate discussions that ultimately led to the promulgation of the 1995 Programme. During this process the Government frequently met and negotiated with Roma representatives.

2.2.2 The Employment Programme

In 2000, the Ministry for Labour, Family, and Social Affairs developed the Employment Programme, after the Alliance of Roma of Slovenia submitted a draft strategy of their own in 1997.¹⁴

¹⁰ 1995 Programme, p. 1.

¹¹ P. Winkler, *Pregled predpisov o posebnih pravicah Romov v RS. V: Poti za izboljšanje položaja Romov v srednji in Vzhodni Evropi*. (Overview of Regulations About Special Rights of Roma in Slovenia), Council of Europe, Ljubljana 1999, pp. 31–33.

¹² 1995 Programme, p. 1.

¹³ 1995 Programme, p. 1.

¹⁴ Open Society Institute EU Accession Monitoring Program, *Monitoring the EU Accession Process: Minority Protection*, Budapest 2001, p. 510, available at <<http://www.eumap.org>>, (accessed 3 October 2002), (hereafter, "Minority Protection 2001").

The Government programme was based on a research project, “Roma and Unemployment in Pomurje,” carried out by the Employment Service of the Republic of Slovenia (hereafter, ESS) in June 1995.¹⁵ The Ministry initially convened a group of experts to analyse the employment situation of Roma. The analysis took into account the demographic and social situation in the period from 1994 to 1995, which showed that within the sample of 1,396 Roma families only 13 percent had members who had secured paid employment.¹⁶ Based on the data assembled, the analysis concluded that despite occasional educational and employment campaigns, employment among Roma was increasing only slowly, partly due to low levels of education. Moreover, the analysis indicated that many Roma depended upon State benefits as their primary source of income, and had found only illegal employment. Despite the availability of subsidies to encourage employers to take on Roma employees, there was still a strong reluctance to do so – a symptom of the general tension and lack of understanding between Roma and the rest of the population.¹⁷ The Ministry also took into account studies suggesting that the ways in which Roma support themselves contribute to negative perceptions held by majority society, and engender mistrust, conflicts, and the isolation of the Roma population.¹⁸ However, Roma representatives expressed concern that there was no attempt to consult with the Roma community in preparing the programme.¹⁹

The strategy developed on the basis of these conclusions was more focused than the 1995 Programme, but only provided for short-term measures. Projects initiated under the Employment Programme began in 2000, and the programme was concluded in 2001.

In order to extend efforts to reduce unemployment among Roma, in 2001 the Ministry for Labour, Family and Social Affairs financed a research project on the “development of models for educating and training Roma aimed at providing increased regular employment.” This research was then elaborated into a project with the same

¹⁵ The research project provided the first up-to-date information on the number of unemployed Roma in one region of Slovenia. The research determined that 78 percent of Roma had not finished primary education, 12 percent had finished primary school, and only three percent of Roma had more than a primary education. Institute for Employment of the Republic of Slovenia, June 1995, unpublished internal document.

¹⁶ Equal Employment Opportunities for Roma, p. 2. The programme estimated that the majority of families in the study (74 percent) survived with the help of State benefits including child benefits and cash assistance, 41 percent of families had members who worked irregularly, 25 percent of families had occasional or seasonal jobs, 13 percent of families received support from private charitable sources, and six percent of families engaged in “socially unacceptable ways of making a living.”

¹⁷ Equal Employment Opportunities for Roma, p. 5.

¹⁸ Equal Employment Opportunities for Roma, p. 3.

¹⁹ See *Minority Protection 2001*, p. 510.

title.²⁰ The project is part of a broader international project under the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, “Roma in the processes of European integration/comparison of models for educating Roma in Slovenia, Austria and Croatia,” which is expected to run for three years on an experimental basis.

The project will analyse different models of Roma employment strategies from other countries to identify best practices and formulate potential projects for improving the situation in Slovenia. The National Employment Office and its local branches cooperated in designing the Programme, as they have practical experience with Roma employment. Roma themselves have thus far only been encouraged to propose projects for inclusion.

2.3 The Programme – Content

2.3.1 1995 Programme

The Programme identifies ten broad areas as priorities, including education, healthcare, social benefits, and employment.

There is no explicit mention of anti-discrimination measures in the 1995 Programme. The promotion of minority rights is not addressed directly either, but certain projects incorporate elements to enhance public participation and support minority media.²¹ The Programme assumes that the integration and “socialisation” of Roma is necessary, and cannot be achieved without the help of the State. Its perspective characterises the Roma population as “underdeveloped,” poor, and socially and economically threatened. Accordingly, its provisions generally target the Roma as passive recipients of State support, with the exception of a measure to help Roma organise themselves and to increase their inclusion within local community organs.²² The 1995 Programme is essentially decentralised, giving local governments the possibility to initiate Roma-oriented projects and programmes of their own.²³

While no formal mechanism was established for Roma groups to contribute to drafting the 1995 Programme, their involvement at the local level has been possible. An elected Roma representative in Murska Sobota reported that he had actively collaborated with the municipal authorities in planning local projects since 1999 and is satisfied with the

²⁰ Project leader: Vera Klopčič, Institute for Ethnic Studies.

²¹ 1995 Programme, Measure 10, p. 6.

²² 1995 Programme, p. 6.

²³ 1995 Programme, pp. 1–6.

level of cooperation.²⁴ Overall, however, Roma programmes receive a lower level of Government support than do projects for the two national minorities, Hungarians and Italians.²⁵

2.3.2 Employment Programme

The assessment drafted by the Ministry for Labour, Family, and Social Affairs expert group emphasised four main areas for improving the employment situation for Roma:

- Preparation for employment, including training;
- Facilitating self-employment, through Roma cooperatives and integration companies;
- Public works programmes;
- Subsidised employment.

The aim of the programme was to enable social and labour integration through training for independent work, thereby increasing the proportion of Roma in regular employment. The target group of the programme was unemployed Roma seeking work through the Employment Service of Slovenia (hereafter, ESS) in the Prekmurje and Dolenjska regions, where there are large Roma communities.²⁶ The Programme also sought to address other important issues for the Roma community, such as education and housing, through training and the development of public work projects in those areas. (See Section 3.2.2)

Prevention of discrimination was not identified as an objective in the Employment Programme, although the text noted that a lack of understanding between Roma and the rest of the population is a problem in some areas.²⁷ In contrast with the somewhat paternalistic approach of the 1995 Programme, the Employment Programme took the view that the Roma should “contribute through their work and other activities, in accordance with their abilities, to the wider community.”²⁸ The Employment Programme was also

²⁴ Interview with Darko Rudaš, Roma Counsellor in Murska Sobota, 14 April 2002.

²⁵ Poročevalec DZ RS (Official Gazette of Parliament), Ljubljana 28. 2. 2002, Year XXVIII, Nr. 20: *Predlog zaključnega računa proračuna RS za leto 2000* (Proposal for a financial report for state budget for 2000). The total budget of the Governmental Office for Nationalities in the year 2000 was SIT 253.2 million.

²⁶ Prekmurje is in the eastern region of the country near Hungary and centred in the town of Murska Sobota, while Dolenjska is on the border with Croatia. The main city is Novo Mesto.

²⁷ Equal Employment Opportunities for Roma, p. 2.

²⁸ Equal Employment Opportunities for Roma, p. 1.

based on more thorough research and provides for more specific measures than does the more general 1995 Programme.

As an extension of the Employment Programme's objectives, the "Development of models for educating and training Roma aimed at providing increased regular employment" is planned as a three-year project to offer specific proposals for the experimental implementation of selected projects for education, vocational training and employment of Roma each year. Members of the Roma community are also expected to cooperate in the procedures of proposing and selecting specific models.

2.3.3 Social Inclusion Programme

Although the Social Inclusion Programme does not focus on the Roma population, it designates the Roma as one of the underprivileged, socially excluded groups of beneficiaries. In the Programme's proposals for measures, Roma are specifically addressed in the section on employment, which calls for the integration of Roma into the labour market through cooperative schemes.²⁹ Other measures, such as those in the education, health, and housing sectors are likely to include Roma in their target groups.

2.4 The Programme: Administration/Implementation/Evaluation

The Employment Programme was coordinated and implemented by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs with collaboration of the Employment Service. The 1995 Programme is implemented by the relevant ministries and coordinated by the Office for Nationalities. However, local bodies are primarily responsible for formulating and carrying out the actual projects, often with minimal coordination from the central authorities. Little appears to have been done at the Government level to evaluate the success of the individual projects, or to offer guidance for future initiatives. Moreover, a lack of funding has forced the conclusion of many projects despite continuing demand from local Roma communities.

²⁹ Government of the Republic of Slovenia, National Programme on the Fight Against Poverty and Social Exclusion, Ljubljana, 2000, p. 64 (hereafter, "Social Inclusion Programme").

2.4.1 The 1995 Programme

The Programme is a general responsibility of the Government, with each of the ten priority areas assigned to one of the ministries under the 1995 Programme as follows:

- Improving living conditions: Ministry for the Environment and Planning
- Education: Ministry of Education, Science and Sport
- Employment: Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs; Ministry of Economics
- Family issues: Ministry of Labour, Family, and Social Affairs
- Social welfare: Ministry of Labour, Family, and Social Affairs
- Healthcare: Ministry of Health
- Crime prevention: Ministry of the Interior
- Cultural development: Ministry of Culture
- Media: Office for Nationalities
- Public participation: State Body for the Reform of Local Communities; Office for Nationalities.

At the local level, a number of government bodies and services are responsible for implementing the 1995 Programme, including municipal authorities, employment offices, centres for social work, public health centres, cultural organisations, schools, and media outlets.³⁰

Each ministry determines the allocation for Roma programmes within its respective annual budget. The Parliament then confirms the ministries' proposals. Funds are disbursed through one of two ways. NGOs may develop their own projects and apply directly to the ministries for support; the ministries also publish tenders for specific programmes, and select projects on the basis of standard administrative procedures.

Local officials have reported that notification of tender procedures is not always adequate. Municipal authorities in Trebnje indicated in March 2002 that they were not aware of a public tender that had been issued by the Ministry of Economics in January that year.³¹ Moreover, as tenders generally do not specify under which Government programme

³⁰ 1995 Programme.

³¹ Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 6, 2002: *Javni razpis za sofinanciranje projektov osnovne komunalne infrastrukture na območjih, kjer živi romska etnična skupina* (Public tender for co-financing projects for basic communal infrastructure in regions where the Roma ethnic group lives).

funding is available, funding is not specifically earmarked for Roma projects. Consequently, local bodies submit applications for projects addressing Roma concerns without consulting with Roma representatives. According to one local official, “if a local institution thinks a Roma project could go under the section ‘Adults with Special Needs,’ they try and apply for funding that might be useful for the Roma community.”³²

To date, no ministry has taken steps to ensure that funding is reserved specifically for Roma programmes and projects through the public tender system, which has been a source of concern. The Slovenian ombudsman for the protection of human rights suggested that a specific fund for the improvement of the situation of Roma minority would help to ensure consistent and focused funding.³³ Municipal officials have also suggested that the Office for Nationalities should have more control over funding decisions than individual ministries, which are not as well informed about the situation of Roma. According to the municipal representative responsible for Roma issues in Trebnje, “the Office for Nationalities should have funds for Roma at its disposal, since they know the situation of Roma best,”³⁴ and should be responsible for allocating those funds to the local authorities.³⁵

One official has suggested amending Article 26 of the Law on Financing Local Municipalities, thereby authorising the Government to require local authorities to allocate more money for the improvement of Roma situation, as is legally required for the Italian and Hungarian minorities.³⁶ In 2000, the Office for Nationalities allocated SIT 1.27 million (Slovenian Tolars, approximately €5,590³⁷) for Roma organisations and SIT 3.75 million (approximately €16,500) for financing Roma radio programmes. In comparison, the Italian national minority – comprising a comparable percentage of the population³⁸ – was allocated SIT 34 million (approximately €149,600) in the same

³² Interview with Meto Gašperič, Developmental Education Centre, Novo Mesto, 20 June 2002.

³³ *Večer*, “We adopt, Europe takes note,” 10 July 2002.

³⁴ *Dolenjski list*, 4 April 2002; interview with Dušan Mežnaršič, Trebnje, 30 March 2002.

³⁵ Interview with Dušan Mežnaršič, Trebnje, 30 March, 2002.

³⁶ Telephone interview with the advisor to the Director of the Office for Nationalities, 11 March 2002.

³⁷ The exchange is calculated at SIT 227.291 = €1.

³⁸ According to 1991 census figures, ethnic Italians comprise 0.16 percent of the population, Hungarians 0.43 percent, and autochthonous Roma 0.12 percent. See *Minority Protection 2001*, p. 529.

year.³⁹ To compensate for the lower levels of central funding, the Office for Nationalities has appealed for municipalities to allocate more money to Roma.⁴⁰

Each of the ministries or offices responsible for implementing aspects of the 1995 Programme is required to produce reports on its activities for the Government; however, these reports are not made public, and apparently are not shared with the local authorities implementing projects under the Programme's auspices. NGOs generally must submit interim and final reports on projects that they implement as part of their funding agreement. Locally, municipalities prepare project implementation reports in most cases. Local programmes implemented by the Roma Union are initially assessed by its internal Organisation Assembly, and then are forwarded to the Government Committee for Roma. These reports are public and generally made available through the media.

2.4.2 The Employment Programme

Overall coordination of the Employment Programme was the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs. Within the Ministry, the Employment Service of Slovenia (ESS) managed some aspects of implementation. In addition, a Roma Employment Coordination Group of the ESS was formed to specifically oversee and direct the Programme. The Coordination Group is comprised of members representing the Ministry of Labour, the Office for Nationalities, the ESS coordinator for people with barriers to employment, and a representative of a Roma organisation.⁴¹ The Coordination Group has posted information about the Programme on several web sites.

General reporting obligations

The Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs and other participating ministries are also obliged to report annually to the Governmental Commission for the Protection of the Roma Ethnic Community.⁴² This is a coordinating body consisting of representatives of different ministries and governmental bodies, representatives of five municipalities with larger Roma populations, and the representatives of the

³⁹ The total sum for radio and television programmes for all national minorities in the year 2000 was SIT 134.26 million (approximately €590,700). *Poročevalec DZ RS* (Parliamentary gazette), Ljubljana, 28 February 2002, Vol. XXVIII, No. 20, p. 35.

⁴⁰ Telephone interview with the advisor to the Director of the Office for Nationalities, 11 March 2002.

⁴¹ Equal Employment Opportunities for Roma, p. 5.

⁴² Interview with Danica Ošljaj, Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, Ljubljana, 1 July 2002.

Romani Union. The Commission was established in 1997 with three major responsibilities: to develop activities for the improvement of the situation of Roma; to make recommendations to the ministries; and to ensure efficient cooperation between municipalities and State bodies. The Commission is also responsible for producing an annual evaluation of the situation of Roma and any general measures that have been undertaken in this regard. On the basis of this evaluation, the Office for Nationalities prepares and publishes an annual report on the situation of Roma.

While the Commission is only authorised to make recommendations, these have been quite effective in practice. As a result of the Commission's intervention, a large number of Roma settlements have been legalised since 1997, and an initiative has been taken to provide for the election of one Roma councillor in every local municipality where Roma constitute more than two percent of the population. (see Section 3.4.3)

2.5 The Programme and the Public

Generally, awareness of the programmes is quite low. The 1995 Programme was presented to the public in the Roma-oriented newspaper *Romano Them* only after it had been adopted. A summary was presented also at the First Roma Conference in 1997 and thereafter in a workshop discussion. It was also published in the *Gazette Poročevalec* (Parliamentary gazette). Otherwise, there has been no activity to present the Programme to the wider public. Roma representatives – the intended beneficiaries – have criticised the lack of initiatives to inform their communities about the Programmes, and in many cases individual Roma are unaware of the existence of any Government-supported projects.⁴³ Making the Government's existing reports more widely available could provide an opportunity for broader evaluation of the Programme and its constituent projects. A special governmental committee for Roma questions, which is presently chaired by the former ombudsman, is competent to respond to Roma-related questions from the public, but this committee does not undertake promotional measures.

After its adoption in May 2000, the Employment Programme was presented to the public at an event in Murska Sobota in which many Roma representatives, media, and politicians took part. One of the Government representatives observed that there were no Roma women at the event, and the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs

⁴³ Interview with Darko Rudaš, 14 April 2002; Interviews in Dolga Vas, 19 April 2002.

thereafter agreed to take special care to ensure their participation.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, no programmes targeting Roma women specifically have been implemented to date.

A discussion of the programme “Development of models for educating and training Roma aimed at providing increased regular employment” was held at a roundtable and workshop prepared by the Council of Europe in Novo Mesto from 3 to 5 October 2001. Examples of good practises were presented, and experiences from Slovenia and other countries such as Sweden and Romania compared. The roundtable also took note of significant questions and suggestions for the future. Participants included staff of the local Employment Services and Centres for Social Work, representatives of the Association of Roma of Slovenia, local representatives of Roma from Dolenjska, employers from the region, a representative of the Office for National Minorities, representatives of the Institute for Ethnic Questions, and experts from Sweden and Romania.⁴⁵ The event was covered in the local newspaper.⁴⁶

2.6 The Programme and the EU

The European Union has allocated accession funding to several Roma-related projects since 1997.⁴⁷ The Employment Programme was partly Phare-financed.⁴⁸ However, the most recent Accession Partnership priorities, which generally form the basis for Phare funding areas, do not mention any issues related to minorities.⁴⁹ No Phare national programme funds appear to have targeted Roma; smaller projects, such as legal counselling for refugees and parental education have been supported through the Phare Democracy Programmes.⁵⁰

The 2001 Regular Report takes note of the Employment Programme, but observes that “there is still a need for policies promoting Roma socio-economic integration, especially in the areas of employment and health. Sustained efforts are also required in the area of education.”⁵¹

⁴⁴ Interview with Vesna Miletić, Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, Ljubljana, 4 July 2002.

⁴⁵ Institute for Ethnic Studies, Thesis and documents (*Razprave in gradivo*), No. 38/39, pp. 309, 2001.

⁴⁶ *Dolenjski list*, 3 October 2001.

⁴⁷ See *Minority Protection 2001*, p. 495.

⁴⁸ Equal Employment Opportunities for Roma, p. 6.

⁴⁹ European Commission, DG Enlargement, *Slovenia: Accession Partnership*, 2001.

⁵⁰ DG Enlargement Information Unit, *EU Support for Roma Communities in Central and Eastern Europe*, May 2002, p. 30.

⁵¹ European Commission, *2001 Regular Report on Slovenia's Progress Towards Accession*, p. 21.

3. THE GOVERNMENT PROGRAMME: IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 Stated Objectives of the Programme

3.1.1 The 1995 Programme

The ten priority areas of the 1995 Programme are the following:

- Improvements to the living conditions of Roma
- Socialisation and education of Roma children
- Improving the employment situation for Roma
- Protection of the family
- Social welfare
- Healthcare
- Crime prevention among the Roma population
- The cultural development of the Roma community
- Information for Roma through the media
- Helping Roma to self-organise and support for their interaction with local authorities.

3.1.2 The Employment Programme

The Employment Programme planned the elaboration of special employment projects (cooperatives and “integration companies”⁵²) and the establishment of a support structure for enhancing the integration of Roma in the labour market.⁵³ This was to be accomplished through:

- Increasing work abilities and employment opportunities for Roma;
- Enabling Roma to acquire practical skills and work experience through “learning by doing” programmes;

⁵² Cooperatives and integration companies were planned as public-private partnerships in which Roma would be able to gain skills and experience with the State subsidising their salaries; however, no such projects have been carried out.

⁵³ Equal Opportunities for Roma, p. 5.

- Including Roma in public works or subsidised forms of employment;
- Establishing cooperatives or integration companies;
- Setting up local municipal project groups composed of Roma, non-Roma, experts, and representatives of local communities;
- Providing counselling and assistance on self-employment, cooperatives and related themes.

The need to improve Roma living conditions was also addressed, based on the observation that the majority of Roma live in separate or outlying settlements, which in many cases fail to provide even the most basic necessities such as running water, electricity, and sewage systems.⁵⁴

3.2 Government Programme and Discrimination

Discrimination is not addressed in the Government programmes, although some measures recognise the need to ensure equal opportunities in spheres such as education and healthcare. Projects to improve access to education for Roma communities by working closely with participants to ensure that the programmes reflect their needs have been among the most successful. While the Employment Programme's text calls for a greater contribution from Roma, its more innovative component of creating cooperative enterprises failed to materialise when there was no response to the project tender. Instead, public works programmes have been the primary source of employment under the programmes, with demand exceeding the number of places in spite of the low salaries and lack of opportunity to gain marketable skills.

The prevention of discrimination is not generally a priority, which is reflected in the Government programmes' priorities as well. A Government representative has noted that the Employment Programme addressed the effects of discrimination through the creation of equal opportunities, and that programmes cannot explicitly include anti-discriminatory measures as such provisions must be promulgated through legislation.⁵⁵ In fact, however, the 1995 Programme includes a priority area based on discriminatory assumptions: the prevention of criminality in the Roma community.⁵⁶ Under this heading, the Programme provides for increasing "preventative actions" in the primarily

⁵⁴ Equal Employment Opportunities for Roma, p. 4. See also, *Minority Protection 2001*, pp. 506–509.

⁵⁵ Interview with Vesna Miletić, Advisor to the Minister of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, 4 July 2002.

⁵⁶ 1995 Programme, Point 7.

Roma areas of Novo Mesto and Murska Sobota, through measures such as better police training and enhanced visibility of law-enforcement in these areas, all intended to decrease the number of criminal acts perpetrated by Roma.⁵⁷

The anti-discrimination legislative framework is well designed, but has been criticised for the fact that it excludes certain minority groups, particularly the “non-autochthonous” Roma.⁵⁸ Generally, there are very few cases of discrimination reported. The Office of the human rights ombudsman is competent to investigate complaints of discrimination, and to propose remedies upon finding a violation.⁵⁹ Recently, the human rights ombudsman visited the Hudeje Roma settlement in Trebnje after Roma representatives demanded his intervention because of unemployment and the poor conditions within the settlement. The visit prompted the ombudsman to call for greater State involvement in resolving the situation for Roma more generally.⁶⁰

According to a representative from Semič municipality, local politicians deliberately do not prioritise Roma programmes because the local non-Roma inhabitants would react very negatively.⁶¹ A commonly-held view is that Roma must do more to improve their own situation; acknowledging that discrimination is a factor in preventing the integration of the Roma has not been commonly accepted even among professionals working with Roma.⁶²

Although there has been no systematic research on the issue, Roma representatives across Slovenia all identify discrimination as a problem and report that police violence against Roma is widespread.⁶³ The European Commission has noted that there have been some cases of discrimination against Roma.⁶⁴

⁵⁷ 1995 Programme, Point 7.

⁵⁸ Slovenian law distinguishes between “autochthonous” and “non-autochthonous” Roma, the latter having fewer rights guaranteed. See *Minority Protection 2001*, p. 496. For an analysis of Slovene anti-discrimination law, see generally V. Klopčič, *Legal Analysis of national and European anti-discrimination legislation: Slovenia*, Brussels, 2001.

⁵⁹ See *Minority Protection 2001*, p. 522.

⁶⁰ Out of 200 persons only one is employed, and only one-fifth of all flats have water. *Dolenjski list*, “Ombudsman: nujen odločnejši nastop države do Romov” (Ombudsman: stronger involvement of the State towards Roma is needed), 4 July 2002.

⁶¹ Interview with Sonja Ličen Tesari, Semič, 30 March 2002.

⁶² OSI Roundtable, Črnomelj, July 2002. *Explanatory Note: The Open Society Institute held a roundtable meeting in Slovenia in June 2002 to invite critique of the present report in draft form. Experts present included representatives of the Government, municipalities, Roma representatives, and non-governmental organisations.*

⁶³ Interviews with Roma individuals in Prekmurje, 20–24 May 2002, 4–8 June 2002.

⁶⁴ European Commission, *2001 Regular Report on Slovenia's Progress Towards Accession*, p. 21.

3.2.1 Education

As in many other countries in the region, Roma children in Slovenia are disproportionately placed in special schools or education programmes for the mentally handicapped.⁶⁵ Roma children in the Leskovec primary school are segregated from other children in a cottage near the school, reportedly because the school does not have money to enlarge the existing building.⁶⁶ The Government has supported various initiatives to improve access to education for Roma children, such as covering transport costs and providing meals, and community leaders report a gradual increase in the general level of education.⁶⁷

The Employment Programme also has an educational component, entitled “Programme 5000,” which provides for adult education from the primary level to special professional training. This is the only existing programme that offers a formal certificate to adults for primary education or special professional training.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport has supported individual educational projects together with municipal educational centres. Projects also receive funding from different ministries at a level determined annually.

Roma socialisation, improvement of the quality of life and education in general

Under the Phare Programme adopted in December 1999, a project for “socialisation of Roma, the improvement of the quality of life and education in general” was approved for a three-year period in Bela Krajina.⁶⁸

The Institute for Education and Culture (hereafter, ZIK) Črnomelj, a municipal body, was invited to collaborate with the Italian NGO Nuova Frontiera on the project. The ZIK applied for funding together with the Association of the Public Universities, as support was conditioned on partnership with an NGO. The project was initially elaborated in 1997 under the title “Increasing the Education of Young Unemployed People,” and was not directed at the Roma population. However, when there was little interest in the programme as it was first conceived, with Phare’s approval the ZIK modified its approach to target the Roma community, although at this point there had been no consultation with Roma representatives.

⁶⁵ See *Minority Protection 2001*, p. 502.

⁶⁶ Interviews with Roma individuals in Krško area, 20–24 May 2002, 4–8 June 2002.

⁶⁷ See *Minority Protection 2001*, p. 502.

⁶⁸ Interview with Nada Žagar, Director of ZIK, Črnomelj, 12 March 2002.

When the project began, the project managers made efforts to adapt their plan to suit the Roma beneficiaries and incorporate their suggestions. The project offers vocational training for builders, carpenters and other construction workers, as well as home economics and cooking courses.

Although combating discrimination is not a stated objective of the project, it does aim to moderate educational inequalities. The Director of the ZIK summarised the project's goals as being "not about protection of minorities, only about raising the quality of life and living conditions. Roma in Bela Krajina are at such a low level in this regard, that this should be a priority." She added that "Roma were encouraged to self-organise and one of the results of the programme was three new Roma associations in Bela Krajina."⁶⁹

The EU provided substantial support to the project. Its total budget was estimated at €115,660, of which Phare contributed €92,480, and the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport covered the difference. The European Commission (EC) sent a monitor to observe the project in progress for a week in October 2000, and the ZIK produced complete content and financial reports every three months during the course of the project. The project managers received beneficiary questionnaires from the EC, but because of literacy problems among the participants, their opinions were collected through interviews.

The project has received significant coverage in the media: promotions and presentations appeared in local newspapers, on television and local radio stations. In February 2001, Črnomelj held an International Roma conference with the participation of Roma representatives and Roma experts from Romania, Italy, and Bulgaria. In March 2001, the programme was presented at an Education Festival in Celje.

The Director of the ZIK reported that the project has been very successful and that it continues to address the community's needs. She considered the participation of local partners in the Centre for Social Work, educational institutions, local authorities, and Roma themselves as a positive accomplishment. "Our goal was achieved in this regard, it is up to us now to continue and raise funds from other sources."⁷⁰ At the end of the Phare funding period, various ministries allocated funds for the project to be continued.

The role of the family in the integration of Roma children

The Institute for Education and Culture in Črnomelj (ZIK) also initiated an integration programme in elementary schools in Bela Krajina, which began in

⁶⁹ Interview with Nada Žagar, Director of ZIK, Črnomelj, 12 March 2002.

⁷⁰ Interview with Nada Žagar, Director of ZIK, Črnomelj, 12 March 2002.

September 2001 after the ZIK applied for a public tender from the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs.⁷¹ The programme concluded at the end of June 2002.

Local educators, teachers and social workers working with Roma identified the need for such a programme, which was organised in cooperation with elementary schools in the municipalities of Metlika, Črnomelj, and Semič. In September 2001, while developing their project proposal, the ZIK organised a meeting to identify the needs of Roma in the region, involving four Roma representatives, representatives of the Centres for Social Work in Metlika and Črnomelj and the Novo Mesto Branch employment office.

At the beginning of the project, school-counselling services identified 19 families for involvement in the project, which targets children who have attended classes irregularly or have learning difficulties. Social workers conducted interviews with these families and all but one agreed to participate. 37 children took part in the programme.

Four workshops for Roma parents and individual interviews and counselling were organised in October 2001. The workshop themes addressed the situation of Roma pupils in school, improving communication with public institutions, the position of Roma in adult education, and the role of Roma women in families. There was also training for teachers and school counsellors involved in the programme.

Those who were involved in the programme support its continuance,⁷² which has helped to forge a stronger relationship between the ZIK and the Roma community. As a result of this programme, three of the parents have entered an elementary school for adults run by ZIK (in 2002, 30 Roma enrolled overall).⁷³ The main criticisms noted in an interim report were a lack of time and lack of continuity.⁷⁴ Following the model from this project, and in cooperation with Ministry of Health, health promotion was suggested as an additional topic for a future programme.⁷⁵ The total costs for the programme were SIT 885,680 (approximately €3,900), which was provided by Črnomelj, Metlika, and Semič municipalities, the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social affairs, and the ZIK.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Interview with Nada Babič Ivanuš, programme coordinator, Črnomelj, 12 March 2002.

⁷² Interview with Nada Babič Ivanuš, programme coordinator, Črnomelj, 12 March 2002.

⁷³ Interview with Nada Žagar, Director of ZIK, Črnomelj, 12 March 2002.

⁷⁴ Interview with Nada Babič Ivanuš, programme coordinator, Črnomelj, 12 March 2002.

⁷⁵ Interview with Nada Babič Ivanuš, programme coordinator, Črnomelj, 12 March 2002.

⁷⁶ Expenditures included SIT 58,160 (approximately €255) intended directly to cover beneficiaries' costs, and SIT 87,247 (approximately €384) for material costs. Other costs included salaries, travel costs and *per diem* for programme lecturers and executors.

Pre-school Socialisation of Roma children

A programme for introducing Roma children to the school environment was organised by the primary schools in Metlika and Semič, with financing by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport under a public works scheme. Regarding this programme, one teacher from Metlika noted that “those Roma children who attended kindergarten are easier to work with when they enter school. The rest sometimes don't even know what a doorknob is, or have never seen running water. These children take more time to teach.”⁷⁷ Within the public works scheme, schools employ workers who prepare children for class in the morning, occasionally participate in classes to offer individual assistance, accompany children on day trips, and accompany them home, and offer guidance on hygiene issues if necessary.⁷⁸

In Semič, the programme “Socialisation of Roma in Sovinek settlement” operated in the 2000-2001 school year. As part of a public works scheme in cooperation with the Črnomelj Centre for Social Work and the Ministry for Labour, Family and Social affairs, two workers were employed through the scheme to help Roma children in school and at home. The two workers were not Roma, and the municipality experienced difficulties finding people willing to accept the positions. Ultimately, the project proved too expensive for the municipality, and the programme was eliminated after one year.

A similar programme “Group work with Roma children and young people” operates at the Leskovec primary school near Krško, where a social worker and a public worker organise interaction games and workshops with schoolchildren once a week. The programme is carried out during regular school time.⁷⁹

Adult Education Programmes

Since January 2001, the Society of Allies for a Soft Landing (*Društvo zaveznikov mehkega pristanka*) has organised a programme entitled “Work with Roma” in Krško. In addition to many smaller projects, the organisation carried out two education projects as part of the Employment Programme’s “Programme 5000,” which has also organised primary education for adults in Črnomelj, Trebnje, Novo Mesto and Murska Sobota. The Krško project was also supported by the Employment Service, the Organisation for Promotion of Preventative and Voluntary Work and the Krško Centre for Social Work.

In Krško, 22 illiterate Roma were enrolled in primary education at the Krško Public University for one year. The members of the Society of Allies for a Soft Landing

⁷⁷ Interview with Milena Hočevar, assistant principal, Metlika Primary school, 11 March 2002.

⁷⁸ Interview with Milena Hočevar, assistant principal, Metlika Primary school, 11 March 2002.

⁷⁹ Interview with Marina Novak Rabzelj, Krško Centre for Social Work, 7 June 2002.

assisted the participants with individual tutoring in their homes, and group education at the Leskovec primary school. Eighteen participants completed the programme, and six completed an equivalent of six years of primary school. In November 2001, 15 Roma enrolled in primary education through the same project.⁸⁰

The Novo Mesto Developmental Educational Centre also organised primary education for Roma adults in the 2001-2002 school year. Also as part of "Programme 5000," the project was financed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, with travel expenses and scholarships underwritten by the Novo Mesto Employment Service. The programme was carried out in Bršljin, Šmihel and Šentjernej, with a total enrolment of 70 Roma between 15 and 20 years old. The programme is intended for those who have not completed their primary education, but reportedly the Employment Service sends all unemployed Roma into the educational programme.⁸¹

The programme has been adapted to meet the needs of Roma, as it is organised between October and April to accommodate the season for gathering herbs and mushrooms. During this period participants can finish two classes of primary school.⁸²

Trebnje Literacy Programme

The Centre for Education and Culture (hereafter, CIK) has organised a Roma literacy programme in Trebnje municipality since 1992,⁸³ offering elementary school-level education for adults.⁸⁴ The principal participants are illiterate Roma. Soon after the programme started, it was moved from the CIK to a private apartment in Hudeje (a Roma settlement) where it operated for five years. However, when problems arose with renting the apartment, the programme returned to the CIK facility.

The programme was initiated by the Trebnje Centre for Social Work, which shares a building with the CIK. In its first year, the Trebnje Literacy Programme was entirely financed by the municipality. In 1993, the CIK successfully applied for a public tender from the Ministry for Education, and received additional financial support from the

⁸⁰ Interview with Marina Novak Rabzelj, social worker, Krško Centre for Social Work, 7 June 2002; Report of the programme "Equal Opportunities," Employment Service of the Republic of Slovenia, 6 December 2001.

⁸¹ Interview with Meta Gašperič, creator of the programmes at the Developmental Educational Centre Novo Mesto, 20 June 2002.

⁸² Interview with Polde Jevšček, social worker, Novo Mesto Centre for Social Work, 26 April 2002.

⁸³ *Dolenjski list*, "Iz obrobja gozda v šolske klopi," (Coming from the edges of the forest to the school tables), 4 February 2000.

⁸⁴ Interview with Darinka Tomplak, Director of Trebnje CIK, 30 March 2002.

Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs. After 1995, the Literacy Programme was incorporated into the 1995 Programme.⁸⁵

Funding currently is provided by both local and State-level sources. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport covers salaries, the Ministry for Labour, Family and Social Affairs provides tuition for the beneficiaries, and Trebnje municipality covers material costs, rent, and costs for those participants not listed as officially unemployed. In its first year the programme lasted for four months, and eventually developed into a year-round programme.

In the ten years of its existence, the programme has become well recognised and accepted within the Roma community. Currently, it operates for three hours a day, six days a week. In the first year the project had 19 pupils, with the highest attendance in 1999-2000. To date, eight participants have completed the primary school programme, and nine are expected to finish in 2002. One of the former participants now attends vocational school.

The CIK has made a number of adjustments to respond to participants' needs and improve the programme's effectiveness. The Roma community was not involved with the preparation of the programme, and the CIK ascribes some initial difficulties in part to this omission. For example, after encountering initial resistance from participants who feared they would "lose their Roma identity," the CIK began to offer its classes within a Roma settlement, rather than the Centre for Social Work. A number of other modifications have been introduced over time. Participants now work together in small groups divided by age. Groups were initially formed according to the level of previous knowledge, but these groups were too large and the work had to be better tailored to individual needs.⁸⁶ Because there has been some friction between Roma from different settlements, the CIK staff has also divided classes along these lines. Language was also an obstacle: the participants' poor knowledge of Slovene often led to misunderstandings. When the first groups returned from the summer break, they had forgotten most of what they had learned, and thereafter the breaks were made shorter.

The programme has become more successful and effective over time as a result of these changes. Some participants have even completed two classes in a single term, and many are thinking about further education. Overall, only 25 percent of the participants have been women.

Similar programmes have been initiated by the CIK in Zagradec and in Grosuplje.

⁸⁵ Interview with Darinka Tomplak, Director of Trebnje CIK, 3 June 2002.

⁸⁶ Interview with Darinka Tomplak, Director of Trebnje CIK, 30 March 2002.

Adult Programmes in Novo Mesto

Since 1999 the Novo Mesto Developmental Education Centre has been organising shorter programmes for adult Roma, with funding from the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport. These included the “School for life, ” which aimed to help Roma women make use of the facilities they already have at home. Other projects included traffic rule refresher courses, instruction on nursing babies and children, sewing and cooking classes, and courses on the collection and use of local herbs. It is not clear whether this programme was developed in response to the Roma community’s interest or in consultation with Roma representatives. A similar programme was carried out in the Roma kindergarten in Novo Mesto, where one of the staff who speaks Romanes led a cooking workshop.

3.2.2 Employment

Measures to improve access to the labour market are included in both the 1995 Programme and the Employment Programme. Decreasing unemployment is also a priority in the Social Inclusion Programme, although its provisions are applicable to all marginalised groups, not only Roma. Discrimination is not explicitly addressed as a factor contributing to high unemployment in the Government programmes, although Roma report discrimination particularly in hiring.⁸⁷ While partnerships between local government bodies and private enterprise were originally planned under the Employment Programme as a means of creating longer-term employment prospects, a lack of interest from private businesses and a lack of funds from local governments have limited implementation. Instead, the Government programmes have invested heavily in public works projects. Despite the fact that these programmes offer poorly paid and irregular employment, interest remains high, and demand continues to outstrip the number of positions available.⁸⁸

The Social Inclusion Programme provides for the elaboration of specific policies to focus on employing Roma; the Government’s official evaluation report, however, does not detail any such programme for the year 2001.⁸⁹ The report does details a number of programmes and policies targeting unemployment generally, but none appear to

⁸⁷ Some Roma have reported that social welfare staff have suggested they change their names so that prospective employers would not know that they were Roma. OSI Roundtable, Črnomelj, July 2002.

⁸⁸ OSI Roundtable, Črnomelj, July 2002.

⁸⁹ Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, *Implementing the Social Inclusion Strategy with Report on the Realisation of the Programme on the Fight Against Poverty and Social Exclusion*, Ljubljana, April 2002, pp. 48–54 (hereafter, “Social Inclusion Implementation Report”).

have components directly targeting the needs of the Roma community.⁹⁰ The Employment Programme focused on programmes helping to develop professionalism and job-seeking skills, personal growth programmes, professional education and training programmes, and “Programme 5000.” (See Section 3.2.1)

The Employment Programme set out more concrete and specific objectives for improving the employment situation for Roma than the 1995 Programme. SIT 70 million (approximately €307,975) was initially allocated for the programme, but when the response was greater than anticipated – 200 participants were expected, and 418 ultimately took part – funding was increased to approximately SIT 118 million (approximately €519,160).⁹¹

The Employment Programme provided for the establishment of Roma “cooperatives” (partnerships with local governments and businesses) with the assistance of Employment Service experts, but these have not materialised. Although this concept was developed in order to make use of skills such as collecting, processing, and selling mushrooms and medicinal herbs, processing other raw materials, construction, and landscaping, no businesses applied for the tender to set up a cooperative.⁹² SIT 2.5 million (approximately €11,000) had been set aside for this purpose in the year 2000, to establish non-profit corporations and provide training for participants and managers, but this funding was reallocated to other projects when the tender failed to attract any offers.

Cooperatives could become an important form of employment for Roma and a way of actively engaging whole communities. This form of enterprise is adaptable to suit different needs, and would allow for a greater degree of individual initiative and autonomy. It is unclear whether further funding will be set aside for this project, or if there are any attempts to revise the project terms to attract bids on a new tender. As an alternative to existing public works schemes, these programmes could offer improved opportunities for Roma to develop marketable skills and find longer-term prospects for employment.

Other subsidised employment projects planned under the Employment Programme also failed to materialise. These projects were to utilise existing “integration companies” to provide occupational training and employment for the unemployed, particularly Roma, in activities selected on the basis of the needs and interests of the community, rather than by the market. The resulting enterprises were to function as non-profit organisations, using any proceeds to expand services or improve working conditions, but the project was never implemented.

⁹⁰ See generally, Social Inclusion Implementation Report.

⁹¹ Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, No. 017-002/95, 19 April 2002.

⁹² Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, No. 017-002/95, 19 April 2002.

Some municipalities such as Novo Mesto and Murska Sobota hired Roma under general public works schemes. During 2000, there were nine public works programmes in Novo Mesto municipality, in which 57 Roma participated:

- Improvements to Roma settlements in the Črnomelj local community;
- Development of infrastructure in Roma neighbourhoods in Metlika;
- “Roma for Roma” in Metlika and Trebnje (see Section 3.3.3);
- Construction of individual houses and work on a settlement in Brezje;
- Preventative programmes in the field of social welfare;
- Helping Roma children in the Šmihel primary school;
- Local street construction in the Semič community;
- Promotion of the local environment.

In 2001, the municipality included 55 unemployed Roma in public works programmes. New projects included:

- Revitalisation of local orchards;
- Archaeological work on the Kapiteljska Njiva (Dolenjski Museum, Novo Mesto);
- Work with the Miran Jarc Library in Novo Mesto);
- “Roma for Roma” in Šentjernej (see Section 3.3.3);
- Communal work in Roma settlements.

Despite these efforts, there are fewer Roma employed in Novo Mesto than there were ten years ago. In 1992, just after Slovenia became independent, 50 to 60 Roma were employed in the municipality, but in 1998 between eight and ten Roma were engaged in registered, paid employment.⁹³

Between 1991 and 2001 a private enterprise in Novo Mesto, in cooperation with the national Employment Service, organised employment programmes and skills training for both Roma and non-Roma long-term unemployed in a project called “Mint of Knowledge.”⁹⁴ However, the programme was discontinued due to lack of funds.⁹⁵

⁹³ *Poročilo o reševanju romske problematike v mestni občini Novo mesto* (Report on solving Roma problems in the local municipality Novo Mesto), 7 April 1998.

⁹⁴ Interviews with Dora Zagorc, councillor to the director, and Borut Hrovatin, psychologist, Papilot enterprise, Ljubljana, 3 July 2002.

⁹⁵ OSI Roundtable, Črnomelj, July 2002.

In Metlika municipality, there are 124 Roma above the age of 15; of these only 17 have permanent employment, including one who runs his own business. Seven work for the municipality in Metlika as cleaners or gardeners. The municipal Workers Union is not active in the area of Roma rights protection, and hostile attitudes are prevalent; one representative asked, “Why would [the Union work to increase Roma employment]? They live better than we do!”⁹⁶ Social service staff report that there are no chances for new jobs in the area. The unemployed live on social assistance, and collect mushrooms and herbs in season to earn some additional money. Even these traditional activities have been constrained by new regulations on the protection of wild mushrooms,⁹⁷ and there is no agreement to permit collection of herbs across the nearby border with Croatia.

These public works projects, while consistently in demand among Roma, fail to offer a real incentive to move away from dependency on State support. A social worker from Bela Krajina stated that “the law on social protection is very generous, and does not encourage Roma to search for employment [...] Roma would rather sit at home in the shade for SIT 25,000 a month than work for [SIT] 40,000 a month.”⁹⁸ Roma themselves agree that incentives are low, adding that: “[public workers receive] too little money for the hard work they have to do. And those Roma who have regular jobs laugh at others, [saying] that they wouldn’t work for such a salary.”⁹⁹ Moreover, wages can be garnished if an individual owes money to the State, while social benefits are not subject to such deductions.¹⁰⁰ Further public works projects are described in the next Section.

3.2.3 Housing and other goods and services

Discrimination in housing has not been identified as a problem by Roma communities, but it is clear that many Roma live in segregated, poor conditions.¹⁰¹ Some local projects organised to improve the housing situation for Roma are already financed under the Employment Programme. The Social Inclusion Programme also details a number of measures expected to benefit Roma, among other vulnerable groups. The National Housing Fund offers loans to municipalities to encourage construction of

⁹⁶ Interview with S. Č., administrator with the municipality, 11 March 2002.

⁹⁷ Official Gazette, št. 38/94.

⁹⁸ Interview with X, anonymity requested, 13 November 2001.

⁹⁹ Interview with Sonja Ličen Tesari, representative of Semič municipality, 18 March 2002.

¹⁰⁰ OSI Roundtable, Črnomelj, July 2002.

¹⁰¹ See *Minority Protection 2001*, pp. 506–509; 535–541.

social housing and acquisition of land for this purpose. However, available funding has been lower than anticipated.¹⁰²

Examples of local housing projects undertaken as public works include:

Programme for the improvement of public roads in Semič

The programme was implemented between 1996 and 2001 as a public works project, and employed local Roma men for light manual labour such as cutting trees and gardening. The National Employment Office coordinated the project. The costs for year-round implementation of the project in 2000 comprised monthly expenses of SIT 270,000 (approximately €1,190) in transport and material costs, and SIT 60,000 (approximately €264) for paycheque bonuses covered by the municipality. Salaries were covered by National Employment Office, and the project was executed by the Novo Mesto road company. In the year 2001 there were only five Roma applicants: three of these dropped out on account of the poor salary, and one was employed for a single day. The positions were left vacant thereafter. The local authorities subsequently closed down the programme, although there are plans to try to reestablish it.

Local programme for Roma in Šentjernej

In 2001 the programme “Roma for Roma” was initiated in Šentjernej municipality. In cooperation with a private company, the local Employment Office organised work for nine Roma in a clean-up and maintenance programme around the Roma neighbourhood.¹⁰³ The local official responsible for the programme noted that the poor condition of the neighbourhood had prompted interest in initiating the project;¹⁰⁴ Roma also cleaned garbage in the municipality, built fences, and worked on the sewage system. In 2001, the municipality also spent SIT 2 million (approximately €8,800) to improve the street to the settlement.

The National Employment Office and the municipality shared the material cost of SIT 1 million (approximately €4,400) in 2001. A municipal official indicated that funding had not been requested to continue the project for a second year, as it was viewed as a failure in the municipality: “Last year’s [2001] goals were not achieved – when the project was finished there were again loads of garbage in the settlement. They haven’t learned anything.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Social Inclusion Implementation Report, p. 70.

¹⁰³ Interview with Janez Hrovat, municipal official responsible for public works, Šentjernej, 25 March 2002.

¹⁰⁴ *Dolenjski list*, 1 April 2001

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Janez Hrovat, municipal official responsible for public works, Šentjernej, 25 March 2002.

House Construction in Novo Mesto

Novo Mesto municipality is assisting six to eight Roma in constructing their own houses through public work schemes, with a view towards promoting the acquisition of skills they can then use to find other employment. The municipality also took steps to legalise the Brezje settlement. The municipality is currently managing the project and will provide SIT 2.5–2.7 million (approximately €10,970 to €11,850) for the material to construct the houses and the infrastructure.¹⁰⁶

Public works scheme “Roma for Roma” in Metlika

This programme has offered employment to Roma in light manual labour such as gardening, cleaning, and maintenance for three years. The work usually lasts for eight months of the year, from morning until mid-afternoon. Salaries are funded from the Ministry for Labour, Family and Social Affairs; otherwise, the municipality receives no State support for Roma projects.¹⁰⁷ In 2002 only 14 Roma enrolled in the programme because of a decrease in funding from the Ministry.¹⁰⁸

According to municipal officials, the programme was initiated due to the fact that the Roma settlements in the area are neglected and poorly maintained. The programme emphasises the “importance for Roma to learn how to keep their homes and settlements in order.”¹⁰⁹

Roma residents generally agree with the project objectives.¹¹⁰ While many of the participants are satisfied with the possibility to earn money, they pointed out that after taxes their salary is the same as unemployment benefits.¹¹¹ Those involved in the programme do not receive social welfare. However, some Roma involved maintain that their efforts were misused and they were given tasks outside the scope of improving Roma neighbourhoods: “they sent us to work and we had to do also things that weren’t in the plan. It looked like the municipality was making up its mind each time. So they sent us ten kilometres away to

¹⁰⁶ *Dolenjski list*, “Interview with Mojca Novak, director of the communal administration of the local municipality Novo Mesto,” 24 January 2002.

¹⁰⁷ Salaries for Roma workers comprised SIT10.4 million, and SIT 2.7 million went to salaries for mentors and supervisors. The total cost of salaries in 2001 was approximately SIT 14 million (approximately €3,182). Interview with Jože Nemanič, Metlika, 19 February 2002.

¹⁰⁸ OSI Roundtable, Črnomelj, July 2002.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Jože Nemanič, representative of Metlika municipality, published in *Dolenjski list*, 8 March 2001.

¹¹⁰ Interviews with Roma in the Boriha settlement, Metlika, 17 February 2002.

¹¹¹ Interview with Jože Nemanič, Metlika, 19 February 2002.

another community to clean an old castle, [and] we cleaned roads for other non-Roma communities as well ... we didn't think this was fair."¹¹²

Improvements to the Boriha neighbourhood

The municipality of Metlika prepared a plan to improve conditions in the Boriha settlement two years ago. The project proposed to legalise the housing situation of the Roma, and to acquire other necessary permits, upgrade sewage infrastructure, connect all houses to the electricity grid, and draw up two different plans to improve housing. All the houses in Boriha lack the necessary permits, although all settlements but one do have water and electricity at present. According to one resident, "only when our children began to get sick, did they give us a water connection."¹¹³ Previously, the Roma had to collect water from the river that is two kilometres away.

However, the municipality cannot legalise its Roma settlements without the Ministry's permission. The municipality sent the project documents to the Ministry of the Environment for approval in 2000, but had not received a response as of July 2002.¹¹⁴

Legalisation of the Sovinek settlement, Semič Municipality

Nine Roma families live in Semič municipality, of which only five have houses and the remaining four live in containers. The municipality applied for funds to legalise the settlement and received SIT one million (approximately €4,400) from the Ministry of the Environment for that purpose in 1995. The municipality subsequently allocated land to every family, built a road to the settlement, and provided access to water. In 2002, the municipality applied for Government funds to improve the settlement's infrastructure and connect it to the electricity grid.

3.2.4 Healthcare and other forms of social protection

The 1995 Programme provides that the Ministry of Health shall develop projects to promote preventative healthcare for Roma communities. Additionally, the Programme calls upon the Ministry to reconsider the plan to develop a registry of the specific health needs of the Roma community, and to encourage Roma to enter the health professions.¹¹⁵ The Social Inclusion Programme also has provisions related to improving

¹¹² Interview with Matjaž Hudorovec, who participates in the programme every year, Metlika, 21 April 2002.

¹¹³ Interview with Sonja Hudorovac from Boriha, 18 January 2002.

¹¹⁴ OSI Roundtable, Črnomelj, July 2002.

¹¹⁵ 1995 Programme, Section 6, p. 5.

healthcare for underprivileged groups, including the Roma, and an implementation report indicates that the 2000 National Healthcare Programme “Health for All” includes the elimination of discrimination and improving access to healthcare among its priorities.¹¹⁶

The relatively high number of Roma with uncertain status affects their access to healthcare.¹¹⁷ Social benefits are contingent upon Slovenian residency or citizenship; the difficulty of acquiring official status has been well documented.¹¹⁸ No action has been taken to follow up the commitments outlined in the 1995 Programme at the national level.

At the municipal level, a number of projects have been carried out to increase access to healthcare and promote healthy lifestyles. In 1998, the Centre for Social Work in Novo Mesto organised an educational programme known as “Minimal Hygienic Standards in Roma Families,” which was financed by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs. The programme was managed by an instructor in the Novo Mesto Roma kindergarten, who also speaks Romanes. She visited Roma families in their homes on a weekly basis, to provide instruction on hygiene and the use of various cleaning products. The Centre for Social Work opened an account in the one of the local supermarkets for the participants to shop for supplies with the instructor.

Research has shown that Roma, in particular women and children, have higher rates of diseases such as tuberculosis, asthma, diabetes, and anaemia than the general population.¹¹⁹ To address the problems highlighted by this research, an imaginative project was instituted at the request of the Roma community in Črnomelj, and ran from 2000 to 2001 under the direction of the ZIK. The course “cooking for a large family” brought together eight Roma women from two different settlements for a free 30-hour workshop in Autumn-Winter 2001. The programme’s organisers considered it a success in part because it took place outside segregated Roma settlements, and women from different areas had the opportunity to work together.¹²⁰ The content was

¹¹⁶ *Social Inclusion Implementation Report*, p. 69.

¹¹⁷ See *Minority Protection 2001*, p. 505.

¹¹⁸ See, e.g. International Helsinki Federation, *Annual Report 1998, 1999*, available at <<http://www.ihf-hr.org/reports/ar98/ar98slv.htm>>, (accessed 3 September 2002); United States State Department, *1998 Human Rights Report*, available at <http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/1998_hrp_report/slovenia.html>, (accessed 3 September 2002).

¹¹⁹ *Jana*, 12 February 2002, p. 5; Report of the Outpatient Clinic Črnomelj to the Ministry of Health, 16 November 2001.

¹²⁰ Interview with Nada Žagar, Director of ZIK, Črnomelj, 12 March 2002.

designed according to the needs of participants, and was a continuation of a programme that took place from 2000 to 2001 in Roma settlements.

In September 2000 the first Women's Forum was created as part of the Association of Roma of the RS. It has 40 members, and aims to promote of women's rights. The Forum has drawn attention to certain women's health issues, such as breast cancer, in addition to its other activities.

No other concrete measures appear to have been implemented in these spheres. A governmental representative from the Ministry of Health recently reported that there are some general healthcare initiatives underway, but there are no specific programmes for Roma.¹²¹

3.2.5 The criminal justice system

Possible inequalities in the criminal justice system are not addressed in the 1995 Programme or the Employment Programme. No projects have been identified to support additional research or otherwise address discrimination in this sphere. The Social Inclusion Programme recognises the importance of legal aid for indigent defendants, but does not elaborate a strategy beyond the existing guarantees of legal representation and advice.¹²²

As mentioned above, the 1995 Programme introduces a measure to authorise increased police activity, which has discriminatory overtones in itself, as it is based on an assumption that a high rate of criminality is prevalent among Roma.

There are reports of discrimination within the penal system. In the Koper prison, Roma have been placed in high-security, closed facilities regardless of whether their conviction merits such severe measures. Social workers and other professionals claim that because Roma are from the lowest classes of society, it is appropriate to confine them to closed wards.¹²³ Prison officials in Novo Mesto have had Roma inmates sent to other prisons around the country, to reduce the proportion of Roma in the Novo Mesto facility.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Telephone interview with Ciril Klanjšček, Ministry of Health, 3 June 2002.

¹²² Social Inclusion Implementation Report, p. 76.

¹²³ Jure Vest, *Slovenske Novice*, 21 September 2002, p. 11.

¹²⁴ Jure Vest, *Slovenske Novice*, 21 September 2002, p. 11.

3.3 Protection from Racially Motivated Violence

Local officials in some municipalities acknowledge that instances of racism and racial hatred occur; one official from Trebnje stated that: “No one wants to have [Roma] in their community.”¹²⁵ Some Roma organisations also identify racially motivated violence as a problem, noting that such incidents less frequently reported in Prekmurje than in the Dolenjska region, where Roma are not allowed to enter some local pubs. However, reports of actual attacks on Roma are few; there has never been a conviction under the Criminal Code’s provision against incitement to hatred, and there are no additional provisions or sanctions for racially motivated crime.¹²⁶

Prejudice may be a factor in the lack of attention to racially motivated violence. Rather than focusing on attacks against minorities, official attention has focused on the allegedly violent tendencies of the Roma population. Mayors of three municipalities in the Bela Krajina region reported disturbing levels of violence and criminality among Roma, and requested a greater police presence within Roma settlements or nearby.¹²⁷ The negative attitudes expressed by professionals working within local communities also gives cause for concern. One social worker stated: “For Roma it is best that they work with garbage – who else will? They live in garbage anyway.”¹²⁸ Recent studies suggest that a substantial majority of the Slovenian population as well as some prominent right-wing politicians manifest negative attitudes towards Roma and reject any kind of affirmative action.¹²⁹

3.4 Promotion of Minority Rights

Although the protection of Roma culture is a priority for many Roma civil society organisations, this dimension of minority policy is not greatly elaborated in any of the Government programmes. The inclusion of “socialisation” elements in many projects developed for Roma suggests that some aspects of Roma culture are still viewed as being at odds with majority society. The Social Inclusion Programme emphasises the importance of reducing factors alienating underprivileged groups, but its provisions do not extend to spheres such as public participation or language rights for the Roma.

¹²⁵ Interview with Dušan Mežnaršič, Trebnje, 30 March 2002.

¹²⁶ See *Minority Protection 2001*, p. 512.

¹²⁷ *Dolenjski list*, 14. March 2002.

¹²⁸ Interview with Y, anonymity requested, 13 November 2001.

¹²⁹ Darja Zaviršek, *Ali res hočemo živeti v demokratični družbi?* (Do We Really Want to Live in a Democratic Society?) *Večer*, 31 August 2002, p. 42.

Government policy thus reflects Slovenia's reluctance to come to terms with multiculturalism when it comes to Roma.

Under the 1995 Programme, the Ministry of Culture is responsible for the "development of the cultural integrity of the Roma community."¹³⁰ There is no other explicit mention of the promotion of minority rights in the 1995 Programme, and few projects include components that relate to this aspect of minority policy. The Employment Programme cites "the preservation of ethnic identity and progress within it"¹³¹ as a basic premise for the measures provided, although in the sphere of employment there is relatively little scope for expansion of this principle.

There are currently 20 Roma organisations in Slovenia, all of which implicitly or explicitly demand the protection and promotion of their culture and identity. There has been significant growth in Roma civil society since 1991, when the first Roma association, Romani Union, was established. At present there are 15 organisation that participate in Romani Union, most of which have been established since 2000, and many initiated by the president of Romani Union.

3.4.1 Education

Roma minority education is not provided in the 1995 Programme or in any other Government policy; programmes directed at Roma generally focus on preparing children for mainstream Slovene-language education. Efforts to build interest in mother-tongue education among the Roma community have not met with much support, and available materials on the culture and traditions of Roma for general education purposes have not been included in mainstream curricula.

Within the curricula of mainstream primary schools there is almost no information about Roma, except in a textbook for the seventh grade which features a short text with a photograph of a Roma group.¹³² There are some newly published books in Slovene that promote Roma culture, such as the book "Just stay, the Roma are coming!" published in 2001.¹³³ The title is drawn from a traditional children's game, "Let's run, the Gypsies are coming!" (*Bežimo, tecimo, Cigani gredo!*). The book was written by a Rom from Kosovo, who gives a positive description of the Roma community and its history, customs and current situation. The book also includes some Roma fairy tales, poems and prose.¹³⁴ In

¹³⁰ 1995 Programme, Section 8, p. 5.

¹³¹ Employment Programme, Section 1, p. 2.

¹³² See *Minority Protection 2001*, p. 517.

¹³³ T. I. Brizani, *Le ostanite, Romi gredo!* (Just Stay, the Roma are Coming!), Klagenfurt, 2001.

¹³⁴ *Dolenjski list*, 29 March 2001.

1999 a book of poems by Jelenka Kovačič was published in Romanes and Slovenian with the title “Think of me!” (*Domislin pe pu mande – Pomisli name!*). However, none of these materials have been incorporated into the school curricula.

Kindergartens for Roma children have been established in several municipalities. For example, in the Roma settlement of Brezje in Novo Mesto, the “Pikapolonica” kindergarten for Roma children was established within the Roma community for children who speak only the Roma language.¹³⁵ There are six instructors and support staff, one of whom speaks Romanes. The instructors teach the children Slovene, and prepare them for entry into primary school. Since 1995 the instructors have received training, emphasising respect for the children as individuals.¹³⁶

Novo Mesto municipality reconstructed and renovated the entire kindergarten facility for Roma in Žabjak. The kindergarten received SIT 1 million (approximately €4,400) in municipal funds out of which SIT 400,000 (approximately €1,760) was used for reconstruction. Presently the kindergarten has 20 pupils and six staff.

The NGO sector has also enhanced the role of these kindergartens. For example, the Organisation for the Promotion of Voluntary Work from Novo Mesto has organised creative workshops in Pikapolonica as part of the project “Roma – Who am I.”¹³⁷ The group organises discussion groups about different aspects of Roma society and culture to help children improve their Slovene language skills.¹³⁸

3.4.2 Language

The vast majority of public officials and professionals who deal with Roma do not speak Romanes, which is considered a serious problem especially within health institutions, centres for social work and during judicial proceedings. In 2002 the Ministry of Education financed a 70-hour programme of instruction in Romanes for teachers, which was carried out in cooperation with the president of the Romani Union.

The Romani Union also organised and led a two-year project of Romanes instruction in 1999 and 2000, with two-hour lessons every Saturday in Murska Sobota. Most of the participants were younger Roma from various settlements around Prekmurje. Those who took a final exam received certificates.

¹³⁵ A similar kindergarten has been established in Prekmurje, Murska Sobota municipality.

¹³⁶ Interview with Tatjana Vonta, Director of the Research Centre for Education who also runs the Step by Step programme, 25 April 2002.

¹³⁷ Financed by the Open Society Institute.

¹³⁸ Interview with Andreja Šurla, of the Organisation for the promotion of voluntary work, Novo Mesto, 26 April 2002.

ZIK Črnomelj reports that it will apply for funding from the Ministry of Education to support the organisation of Romanes-language training for primary school teachers.

3.4.3 Participation in public life

While the 1995 Programme provides for measures “helping Roma to self-organise and support for their involvement into the local authorities,”¹³⁹ there has been very little activity to implement these objectives. The large number of Roma who lack citizenship or residency status presents an ongoing obstacle to full participation.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, in the 2002 national census only Slovenians, Italians and Hungarians were identified as possible ethnic identities; the Roma population could either choose to identify themselves as one of these groups or as “other.”

Still, Roma participation in policy-making has increased since the 1995 Programme was enacted. For example, although there are no formal mechanisms for ensuring Roma participation in policy-making processes, the Ministry of Culture has made it a practice to consult with Roma representatives on the development of projects and invites Roma participation in Ministry meetings that address Roma cultural issues. Staff of the Ministry for Culture also have offered their support and consultation to Roma groups.¹⁴¹

While the Hungarian and Italian minorities are guaranteed representation at the local and national levels, Roma are entitled to representation only at the local level and only in those areas where there are “autochthonous” Roma. The Law on Local Autonomy that would provide for Roma representation in a greater number of municipalities had not been fully implemented as of Spring 2002. To date, only Murska Sobota has a Roma representative in the local council.

A recent Constitutional Court ruling determined that the relevant provision in the Law on Local Autonomy must be implemented in other parts of the country.¹⁴² The president of the Romani Union advocated the election of Roma councillors in municipalities with Roma inhabitants as early as 1993; the Office for Nationalities recently suggested that in the local elections in Autumn 2002, 20 municipalities may

¹³⁹ 1995 Programme, section 10, p. 6.

¹⁴⁰ See *Minority Protection 2001*, pp. 517–518.

¹⁴¹ E-mail communication with Suzana Čurin Radovič, member of governmental committee for Roma issues, State Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, 17 June 2002.

¹⁴² V. Klopčič, *Legal Analysis of national and European anti-discrimination legislation: Slovenia*, Brussels, 2001, p. 32.

select a Roma councillor.¹⁴³ It has been observed that the poor level of communication between Roma communities and the various local government bodies could be greatly improved through a Roma councillor's good offices;¹⁴⁴ however, the level of authority and activity of these posts will only become clear after elections.

Following the Court's ruling earlier in the year, as of 1 September 2002 all 20 local municipalities with a large Roma population were expected to have changed their regulations in order to pave the way for the election of a Roma representative within the municipal council. However, at the end of August, six local municipalities (Beltinci, Grosuplje, Krško, Semič, Šentjernej and Trebnje) publicly refused to change their regulations and claimed that this kind of affirmative action is discriminatory against the Slovene majority. Some local representatives expressed the belief that Roma do not possess sufficient experience or education to be local councillors.¹⁴⁵ There were also claims that new regulations would give more privileges to Roma than to ethnic Slovenes, and local and national politicians have suggested that Roma are not an autochthonous ethnic group and thus not entitled to special recognition. Local representatives have also questioned why the State has not provided for Roma representation in Parliament if such representation is considered necessary at the municipal level.

Officials in Grosuplje municipality in the Dolenjska region addressed an official complaint to the Constitutional Court, demanding an investigation as to whether such affirmative action is constitutional. The strong reaction against this form of positive discrimination is ongoing: as of the time of writing, the Court had determined that those local communities that have already prepared new regulations should hold elections for a Roma councillor, and those that have not yet changed their regulations must still do so, although no deadline has been announced.

Training Roma to become councillors

The private company Papilot carried out a two-month project "Programme for training Roma councillors," on the suggestion of the Association of Roma in February 2002. The programme was carried out for five hours twice a week in Novo Mesto and Murska Sobota, with financing from the municipalities and additional support from the Association of Roma. Not every municipality was willing to support the

¹⁴³ J. Taškar, DELO, "Tudi v Romi v svetih občin," (Also Roma in municipal councils), 4 March 2002.

¹⁴⁴ OSI Roundtable, Črnomelj, July 2002.

¹⁴⁵ *Dolenjski list*, 29 August 2002, p. 16; Daily *Večer*, 31 August 2002, p. 41.

programme;¹⁴⁶ Grosuplje municipality, for example, did not take part as no Roma wanted to participate.¹⁴⁷

The programme had 13 components giving participants training in networking skills, how the State system functions, legislation, basic computer skills, English language, and about the role and the work of Roma organisations. The target participants are the current presidents of Roma organisations. The programme was discussed on a local radio broadcast, in which Roma participants expressed a highly positive opinion of the programme.

3.4.4 Media

There are no measures for media development in either the 1995 Programme or the Employment Programme. However, the State does provide limited funding to minority media outlets, including radio programmes for Roma.

An NGO, the Peace Institute, has developed a project to provide training for Roma journalists in reporting techniques and communication skills. The concept was suggested by Roma representatives, who approached Murski Val radio to suggest broader Roma involvement in the production of materials, including the development of programming in Romanes, for an existing Roma-oriented programme. The manager of this programme observed that in response to the EU's focus on improving minority rights, the importance of Roma journalists and media specialists will increase in the future.¹⁴⁸ Enhancing the participation of Roma in the production of media programming could be an effective means to present Roma culture to the general public, potentially challenging negative perceptions of Roma and promoting multiculturalism.

The Journal *Romano Them* receives governmental support from the Ministry of Culture and from the Office for Nationalities, also finances the previously mentioned radio programme on Murski Val radio ("The Roma Sixties") and a television programme ("Roma Views") on TV Murska Sobota. There is also a weekly one-hour radio programme about Roma on the radio programme "Studio D."

¹⁴⁶ Interview with Dora Zagorc, Papilot, 3 July 2002.

¹⁴⁷ Telephone interview with Marko Podvršnik, director of the local municipal administration, 8 July 2002.

¹⁴⁸ Telephone interview with Brankica Petkovič, Peace Institute, 22 April 2002.

3.4.5 Culture

Although one component of the 1995 Programme involves the development of Roma culture, the majority of projects in this sphere have been initiated by NGOs and Roma organisations.

The ZIK in Črnomelj, in partnership with the municipality, organised a “week of life-long learning” in October 2001, with the title “Get to know each-other – education and culture of Roma in Bela Krajina.” The aim of the event was to present the Roma culture to non-Roma, and emphasise the importance of life-long learning for integration; one day focused on the role of Roma women in particular.

Krško municipality, together with the Society of Allies for a Soft Landing, has organised discussions with young people about Roma traditions, of the importance of maintaining the Roma culture, and challenges facing Roma communities.

Under their programme “Equal Opportunities,” the Society of Allies for a Soft Landing also carried out a programme called “a Gypsy pot” in Kerinov Grm, in which approximately 150 Roma took part. The aim of the project was for non-Roma to learn about Roma cuisine, and to emphasise the importance of good nutrition.

The ZIK Črnomelj is currently preparing a number of projects for funding, including artistic and cultural productions and other means of increasing communication and understanding between Roma and non-Roma communities.

In Kamenci, Črenšovci municipality, the first Roma museum is in the process of being established.

However, there have been reports of discrimination in the cultural sphere. Recently, a Roma organisation wanted to take part at a cultural event organised by a municipality with a large Roma community.¹⁴⁹ The Roma organisation applied in April 2002 to perform in an ethnic dance festival. Two weeks before the event was supposed to take place, the organisation was notified that they had been rejected by the local authorities, on the basis that the whole programme had already been set before their official application was received. The organisation was allowed to perform after repeated requests to the organisers, but the president of the Roma organisation expressed the opinion that “the only reason we were rejected was that we are Gypsies.”¹⁵⁰ Another member of the community commented: “does it mean that we Roma do not have our culture? What is culture then?”¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Interview with the president of the Roma organisation S.K., 28 May 2002.

¹⁵⁰ Interview with the president of the Roma organisation S.K., 28 May 2002.

¹⁵¹ Interview with a member of the local Roma community, 30 May 2002.

4. EVALUATION

The major success of the 1995 Programme is its existence. It is the first Government strategy to adopt a more comprehensive approach to Roma issues, and to recognise the need for State involvement in addressing these issues. Since the Programme was developed, many projects have been funded under its umbrella, and local initiatives have been launched in many municipalities.

The Employment Programme developed the themes of the 1995 Programme, but went farther in recognising the importance of including Roma as active participants, not merely recipients. The Employment Programme also recognised that Roma remain physically segregated from the rest of the society and are seen as people with different values and mentality, but attributed this to “the result of different sets of living standards and moral values followed by the Roma [...] and [their] lack of integration.” The tendency to view Roma values as inherently inferior undermines the respect for cultural differences that is a foundation of multicultural society.

Both programmes lack sections on racial violence, discrimination, and minority rights in general. Problems with access to healthcare are also not addressed to the extent necessary. Neither of the Roma programmes, nor the Social Inclusion Programme, addresses the situation of “non-autochthonous” Roma without citizenship rights.

The decentralised approach of both programmes has proven to be an effective means to address the varied and distinct problems Roma face throughout Slovenia. However, there are several serious drawbacks to a system that devolves most of the programming decisions to local authorities.

With no central oversight, there is no comprehensive system of evaluation. This hampers the transfer of knowledge, both of successful projects and best practices, and of problems encountered in implementation. The tender system controlled by the individual ministries and driven by the annual budget process also fails to create incentives for longer-term projects. Where problems with implementation are encountered, the entire project may be abandoned rather than examining the cause of projects’ weaknesses and making adjustments as needed. Disbursing funding through an expert body could be more conducive to building institutional knowledge and modifying under-performing programmes to increase efficacy.

Such problems could also be reduced if greater emphasis was placed on consultations with Roma organisations and representatives. Projects where such consultation has taken place appear more successful and durable than those elaborated by local authorities alone, who may be more focused on meeting the needs of the municipality than the needs of the Roma community. Poorly targeted projects offer few obvious benefits to the target group and fail to encourage a long-term shift away from

dependence on social welfare or other forms of State support. There are especially few projects designed to increase women's capacity to enter the workforce, as most of the public works projects established are directed at men.

Municipal bodies, such as the Institute for Education and Culture and local centres for social welfare have initiated valuable and productive projects to assist Roma, in many cases in partnership with local authorities. However, some officials still hold discriminatory attitudes, undermining good working relations with Roma groups in those municipalities. More efforts are needed to educate authorities, particularly those working in areas with substantial Roma populations, to reduce prejudice and improve understanding of Roma needs and issues. Tolerance promotion programmes focusing on the Roma should also target the general public.

Much has already been done to address the problems confronting Roma communities in Slovenia. Further progress could be more effectively achieved if the many diverse approaches, both successful and less so, are drawn together to construct a more cohesive strategy. The importance of local decision-making should be balanced against the need for the expertise, capacity, and authority of a Government-level body. This would help to ensure that efforts are not misdirected, and expectations are fulfilled.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- A Government level-body should be authorised to oversee implementation of the Government programmes for Roma, to coordinate funding, evaluation, and reporting activities at the State level.
- The Parliament should allocate a set sum of money to Roma programmes in the annual budget, as is the case for the Italian and Hungarian minorities.
- A dedicated body, rather than individual ministries, should oversee the tender procedures for projects to implement the Government programmes.
- Ministries or other bodies offering funding should clearly indicate which tenders are issued for projects under the Government programmes for Roma.
- A single law should be elaborated to specify the rights of the Roma minority.
- Roma should have the option to declare their ethnic identity on the census.
- Training should be available for public officials working with Roma to increase awareness of the specific needs and concerns of the Roma community.
- Roma public participation should be enhanced through support to the election and training of councillors in relevant municipalities.