

Ministry of the Interior and Administration

**PILOT GOVERNMENT PROGRAMME
FOR THE ROMA COMMUNITY
IN THE MAŁOPOLSKA PROVINCE
FOR THE YEARS 2001-2003**

Warsaw, February 2001

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I. Description of the situation and major problems

The pilot government programme for the Roma community covers the area of the Limanowa, Nowy Sącz, Nowy Targ and Tatrzy districts, inhabited by the Roma of the Bergitka Group, and Tarnów, inhabited by the Polish Roma (the largest of four groups traditionally residing in Poland). The Roma population living in this area is estimated at ca 3 000 to 3 500 (ca 10% of all Roma living in Poland). The Roma of the Bergitka Group have inhabited these areas of Poland since at least the end of the 18th century. The Roma currently residing in Tarnów moved there as a result of the Roma settlement action undertaken by the Polish People's Republic in the 60-ties.

The Roma of the Bergitka Group, also called the Mountain or Carpathian Roma, form the most compact settlements traditionally living in villages of the southern part of Poland. This is the poorest group, one which is least respected by its fellowmen and has the loosest internal structure (no traditional superior, "*Szero Rom*"). In their everyday life, members of the group use a dialect of the Romany language ("*rromani*"). The community is not organised in a well-developed structure. However, each Roma settlement is headed by a superior called "chief settlement officer" ("*wójt*").

The key problems of the Roma community are related to the low level of education of its members. A high percentage of Roma children do not attend school on a regular basis. Roma do not attach due importance to schooling, considering education to be of little benefit. Other serious problems include: poverty, unemployment, poor accommodation conditions, poor health condition, low level of hygiene. The financial situation of Roma families is exceptionally difficult due to the high rate of unemployment, the fact that families have many children, and alcoholism being a common problem. Simultaneously, the community is characterised by a demanding attitude and feeble efforts undertaken to change the life situation of its own members. This is due to far-reaching historical and social determinants as well as many errors committed during the Polish People's Republic period.

The Roma of the Bergitka Group are definitely in the most difficult situation as compared to other Roma groups in Poland. This view is shared not only by local Roma activists but also those working at the national level. It is therefore evident why the government programme covers this Roma group in the first place.

II. Need for the Programme

The need to establish the Programme results from the particularly difficult situation of the Roma community living in the districts /administrative units below the province level/ of the Małopolska province mentioned in Chapter I. Previous experience and conferences devoted to these issues have shown that

local governments are unable to cope with the existing problems on their own, without any involvement of the Government.

Roma often accuse the authorities of insensitivity to their specific problems. In turn, local governments emphasise that Roma are treated in the same way as other Polish citizens, and that resources allocated to Roma families in some communes /administrative units below the district level/ of the Małopolska province are much higher than those provided to the rest of the local community due to the extremely difficult situation of Roma. Both parties agree that solving difficulties which they are faced with requires the involvement of government administration.

The problems linked with the situation of Roma in the Małopolska province, differing fundamentally from contemporary civilisation conditions, are also highlighted by Polish Parliament deputies and Western Europe experts (including those from the European Commission and the Council of Europe).

It is also worth emphasising that the Roma community is treated in Poland as a national and ethnic minority, and as such it is entitled to receive full protection and assistance from the State in accordance with international agreements signed by Poland and its national legislation (including the Constitution in particular).

Poland has adopted a number of international legal instruments which include regulations concerning the protection of national minorities. These are, inter alia, the following: *Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms* of November 4, 1950, *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination* of March 7, 1966, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* of December 16, 1966, *Convention on the Rights of the Child* of November 20, 1989. The key document which regulates the rights of national minorities in Europe is the *Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities*, ratified by the President of the Republic of Poland of November 10, 2000.

Within the framework of the United Nations and European organisations, a number of documents have been adopted which refer exclusively to Roma. The key ones include:

- Resolution of the UN Human Rights Commission No. 65 of March 4, 1992 *on the Protection of Roma/Gypsies*;
- Recommendation of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly No. 563, 1969, *on the Situation of Gypsies and Other Travellers in Europe*;
- Recommendation of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly No. 1203 of February 1993 *on Gypsies in Europe*;
- Resolution of the Council of Europe's Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities No. 243 of March 16-18, 1993 *on Gypsies in Europe: the Role and Responsibility of Local and Regional Authorities*;
- Recommendation of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe No. 11, 1995, *Towards Europe of Tolerance: Roma/Gypsies' Contribution* ;

- Recommendation of the Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance No. 3, 1997, *Combating Racism and Intolerance against Roma/Gypsies*;
- *Brussels Declaration* of July 12, 1996 adopted by participants in round table discussions in the European Parliament in Brussels concerning Roma/Gypsies in Europe.

Roma are the national minority whose situation is most often discussed within European institutions. In 1995, an Expert Group for Roma/Gypsies was set up at the Council of Europe, and a Contact Point for Roma and Sinti was established at the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. A number of conferences and international programmes were organised as a result of the interest in the situation of Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. Many countries of this region have adopted national or regional programmes for the Roma community.

The situation of Roma in Poland is a matter of interest to European institutions and the European Union countries, particularly those which are the destination for Polish Roma seeking to acquire the status of refugees (e.g. the United Kingdom and Finland). The Government of the Republic of Poland cooperates with specialised agencies of the Council of Europe and the European Union countries in solving Roma's problems. Activities undertaken jointly with the British Know-How Fund have already yielded some results in, for example, Nowy Sącz and Tarnów.

The situation of Roma in Poland has been described in international reports. The latest ones which are worth mentioning include a very critical report concerning the Małopolska province, prepared by Jenny Beesley in November 1999 for the British Foundation "Westminster for Democracy" and presented to members of the European Parliament and representatives of the British Government, and the *Second Report on Poland of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance*, which describes the situation as of December 10, 1999. The latter states, inter alia, the following: *Prejudices against the Roma/Gypsy community persist in society and certainly lead to discrimination in everyday life (...). It is reported that the Roma community is generally excluded from the Polish communities alongside which it lives and that conflicts on the local level occur, although they are seldom acknowledged to be on ethnic grounds (...). Some sources have also indicated that Roma/Gypsy communities face discrimination on the part of local authorities in the provision of services. ECRI draws the attention of Polish authorities (...) that governments take the appropriate measures to ensure that justice is fully and promptly done in cases concerning violations of the fundamental rights of Roma/Gypsies and ensure in particular that no degree of impunity is tolerated as regards crimes committed against Roma/Gypsies. ECRI also stresses that it is particularly important to render illegal any discrimination on the part of public authorities in the exercise of their duties. ECRI urges the Polish authorities to devote immediate attention to these problems.*

The situation of Roma in Central and Eastern Europe is a matter of special interest to European institutions and the European Union Member States, which

results mainly from fears of migration. This was clearly demonstrated in bilateral contacts with, inter alia, British, Finnish and Irish authorities during the last two years.

The interest of the European Union Members States and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe in the Roma issue, primarily in the Central and Eastern Europe countries, is based on the following two general observations:

- the Roma minority is the largest ethnic minority in Europe, and particularly in the countries of Central Europe;
- the situation of Roma is regarded, on the basis of, inter alia, the report of the OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities dated March 2000, as “often the worst among all groups living in the OSCE area”.

Far-reaching involvement is also declared by deputies of the European Parliament who intend to encourage strongly the European Commission to undertake further action for the Roma community in the candidate countries. Moreover, keen interest in solving problems of Roma communities in Europe is shown by the OSCE, both by the High Commissioner for National Minorities and via the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in Warsaw. Informal dialogue concerning Roma issues between European institutions and the Central and Eastern Europe countries (particularly Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary) was initiated by the Finish Presidency in the second half of 1999. Aiming to combat prejudices against Roma and to encourage activities changing the position of public administration, this dialogue builds on a recently produced analysis “Situation of Roma in the candidate countries; background document” and guiding principles drawn up by the Working Group of the “Central Europe” Council, OSCE, on the basis of this document. Special emphasis is placed on establishing and financing educational programmes which would increase Roma’s chances on the labour market, as well as on implementing other programmes, these to be financed from the national budget funds of the countries concerned and supported by the European Union assistance funds. Improvement in the situation of the Roma community is a short- and medium-term priority within the Accession Partnerships for 5 candidate countries (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia). Ca 10 million Euro were allocated from PHARE funds for these priority activities in 1999. Ca 13 million Euro will be allocated for these objectives in 2000. Furthermore, the Roma community may benefit from horizontal programmes, designed within the framework of the pre-accession strategy, such as “PHARE DEMOCRACY” and “Lien” (Development of support for a civil society). As part of preparations for the implementation of “ACCESS”, a new PHARE programme for non-government organisations, special representatives of the Commission will seek to identify priority target groups (beneficiaries) in the candidate countries. Some of these will include only Roma. Moreover, the Roma community may participate in EU programmes for young people which are open to the candidate countries (Socrates, including Comenius in particular, and Youth for Europe where 5 million Euro are allocated exclusively for Roma) and Tempus II.

The Roma problem in Poland, though acute, is of much less intensity than in some other countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Consequently, the European Union's interest and its readiness to provide measurable and tangible assistance in solving problems in Poland is relatively low. However, to what extent Polish Roma benefit from assistance offered by the European Union will be largely determined by the level of activity on the Polish side. At the international forum, Poland declares it is open to cooperation and emphasises its interest in joint programmes to improve the overall situation of Roma.

The last European Commission's report on progress towards accession in Poland and other candidate countries highlights the fact that no strategy for integration of the Roma community has been developed in Poland at the government administration level. It is also noted in the report that Roma's economic and social conditions are worse than those of other members of the society. Referring to programmes for Roma undertaken by the applicant countries, the report points out that these should be financed from the national budget funds: "Such programmes should be supported by the budgetary resources (...) should be implemented on a regular basis in cooperation with Roma representatives".

The difficult situation of the Roma community in the Małopolska province and the inability of local governments to cope with it were the factors underlying the decision about the involvement of government administration in solving the problems which have emerged (for a detailed description of problems see: Chapter V). The necessity to establish a *pilot government programme for the Roma community in the Małopolska province* was highlighted during the 8th session of the Inter-Sector Task Force for National Minorities which took place of March 1, 2000. The Programme was jointly developed by:

- central institutions, in particular the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration,
- local government units of the Małopolska province,
- Roma organisations (the involvement of the Roma community in the development and implementation of the Programme is a key precondition of its success),
- non-government organisations.

The key role in collecting materials necessary to draw up a timetable for carrying out and financing tasks was played by commune councils of the Małopolska province. Other structures involved in the drafting of this document were district labour offices, the Małopolska Province Office and the Local Department of Education in Cracow.

The process of programme development and implementation involves plenipotentiaries for Roma, appointed in the first half of 2000 and working within local government structures (in Nowy Sącz and the Nowy Sącz District), as well as plenipotentiaries designated by local Roma communities.

The Roma issue is a subject of intense discussions in various circles in Poland. On the other hand, the community itself is seeking its own identity and ways for solving its pressing problems. Roma problems are and will continue to

be solved on the basis of dialogue with the Roma community and its representatives.

III. Objectives of the Programme

The principal objective of the Programme is to achieve full participation of Roma, who live in the areas of the Małopolska province mentioned in Chapter I, in the life of a civil society and to mitigate the disparities between this group and the rest of the society. It is particularly important to achieve equal levels of development in areas such as education, employment, health, hygiene, accommodation conditions, skills for functioning in a civil society.

Discontinuing activities in these areas would aggravate further the disparities between the Roma and the rest of the society in respect of the civilisation level. The Roma community, and the Bergitka Roma in particular, is the group that suffered most during the period of systemic transformations. Because of the low level of education of its members and its cultural specificity, it has been affected by all negative effects of transformations in Poland (unemployment, social problems, lower level of security). Moreover, it is this group that finds it most difficult to understand the transformations now taking place. Without reasonable external support, Roma will continue to rely on social welfare, which will be a heavy burden for both commune budgets and the State budget. Discontinuing activities today means higher costs in the future.

The Programme is not designed to offer ad hoc assistance in a difficult situation which the Roma community has found itself in, but to develop mechanisms which would make it possible to achieve the above-mentioned objectives. At the same time, it is essential to enable Roma to preserve their own cultural distinctness. With no educational background and difficult living conditions, Roma are susceptible to negative effects of civilisation, and thus their native culture is likely to disappear. In turn, preserving positive elements of the Roma culture may help this community to find its place in the contemporary Poland.

IV. Aims of the Programme

The Programme is a pilot initiative. Solutions proposed in the document are innovative and have not yet been applied in Poland. As the Programme is implemented and necessary experience gathered, its individual elements (especially in the area of education) should also be used in other regions of Poland. The Programme should first be extended to cover the whole area of the Małopolska province, including Nowa Huta where the Bergitka Roma have established a large settlement. It should be recognised that the Programme needs to be a multi-annual one. Its minimum duration should range between one and two decades. The three-year period as laid down in the law is clearly not long enough to achieve the strategic objectives of the Programme defined in Chapter III.

The Programme covers issues related to education, health, combating unemployment, welfare, housing, security, Roma culture, awareness of Roma

issues in the Polish society, and awareness of reforms taking place in Poland in the Roma community.

In addition to government agencies, the following are involved in the implementation of the Programme:

- representatives of the Roma community,
- local governments (with communes being the basic units in the Programme),
- non-government organisations which are concerned with problems of the Roma community (*Helsińska Fundacja Praw Człowieka* /Helsinki Human Rights Foundation/, *Fundacja Wspomagania Wsi* /Foundation for Supporting the Country/, *Europejski Instytut na rzecz Demokracji* /European Institute for Democracy/, *Fundacja im. Stefana Batorego* /Stefan Batory Foundation/, *Biuro Porad Obywatelskich Stowarzyszenia Centrum Informacji Społecznych* /Citizen Consultancy Office at the Association 'Social Information Centre'/, *Polska Fundacja Dzieci i Młodzieży* /Polish Foundation for Children and Young People/.

The coordinator of the Programme is the minister competent for internal affairs.

The involvement of local communities in the Programme is a necessary prerequisite for the achievement of its objectives. While designing the Programme, efforts were made to ensure that it would integrate the Roma minority in these communities and, instead of generating conflicts, would prevent any possible disagreements. Hence also the need to involve in the Programme those from the local community who, though not being Roma, are most in need.

The Programme includes information about costs to be incurred in its implementation and proposes institutions which will provide financial support. It may be financed from funds offered by:

- central government,
- local governments,
- non-government organisations,
- European assistance programmes.

It should be emphasised that, in accordance with the aims of the Programme, applications for grants under assistance programmes should be submitted by local government units or non-government organisations (including organisations which bring together members of the Roma minority). The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration has prepared and distributed to all interested parties a material on Assistance Funds which may be used in the implementation of the Programme. In cooperation with the Małopolska Province Office, the Ministry also intends to organise training sessions concerning the preparation of applications so that they meet the requirements of Assistance Funds.

The European assistance programmes which are potentially of key importance for the financing of the Programme include: ACCESS, SOCRATES-COMENIUS, LEONARDO DA VINCI, YOUTH, SAPARD. The World Bank

offers the Rural Development Programme. Resources for individual tasks set in the Programme may also be obtained from the following national institutions and funds: the British KNOW-HOW FUND and THE PRINCE OF WALES, the Canadian Cooperation Fund, the Programme of Small Grants (KAP) of the Royal Netherlands Embassy, the programme of the Swedish International Development Agency, the Polish-Swiss Commission for Polish Zloty Funds. At the stage of programme development, contacts were established with all institutions and funds mentioned above.

Continuous financing of the Programme requires that expenses for the following three years be already now budgeted for. In order to ensure that resources for the implementation of the Programme are available in the State budget, a specific-purpose reserve should be established and remain at the disposal of the minister competent for internal affairs. These resources will be released at the request of the minister competent for internal affairs and transferred via the Małopolska Province Governor to individual local government units in the province. The government administration at the province level will also be charged with the task of on-going monitoring of the programme implementation and assessing the extent to which the aims of the Programme are achieved in individual years.

Local government units have agreed to take part in the Programme and to share costs of its implementation.

V. Measures designed to improve the situation of the Roma minority by area

1. EDUCATION

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAMME:

Most problems of the Roma community are related to the low level of education of its members. Roma children do not attend school regularly or at all; this is because their parents underestimate the role of education at a later stage of life and treat school as a repressive institution and as a threat to the Roma identity.

Roma children at the compulsory education age attend integrated classes or the so-called "Roma classes" (first such classes were established in the Bergitka Roma community several years ago on the initiative of the Reverend Stanisław Opocki, the National Priest for Roma); however, they often finish their education at the age of 12. Young Roma set up their own families very early and, consequently, drop out of school while still at the primary level. Another reason explaining the dropout is that children beginning education in the primary school find it difficult to adapt to new conditions. When entering the first year of

primary education, they often have a very poor knowledge of the Polish language. This problem also concerns their parents.

The report “*Romowie o edukacji swoich dzieci – na przykładzie Cyganów Karpackich*” /”Roma about education of their children: the example of the Carpathian Gypsy”/, prepared for the Ministry of National Education, indicates that Roma children most often lack the initial preparation which is provided as part of pre-primary education. Roma do not normally enrol their children at nursery schools or in the so-called “zero classes”. One of the reasons is that they have no funds to pay for pre-primary education. Regrettably, in some cases social welfare benefits paid to parents were reduced because the Ministry of National Education awarded financial support for pre-primary education and integration camps. This definitely discourages Roma parents from enrolling their children at nursery schools and “zero classes”.

The fact that Roma drop out of school early may also be explained by adaptation barriers which result from the specificity of their culture and their poverty; the latter manifests itself in the lack of educational aids, malnutrition and clothes that are not as good as those other children wear. Moreover, adaptation difficulties of Roma pupils stem from their strong need to defend their own identity as well as the low social and economic status of their parents. Major problems in the education of children are related to the low level of education of parents who are unable to help their children in doing homework (Roma families believe that the responsibility for education rests only with the school and there is no need to study at home).

Roma children take over patterns of behaviour picked up in their families; these are: parents having no educational background and underestimating the role of education in the adult life; no regular job due to their low professional qualifications; passivity in solving life problems; a demanding attitude and the belief that one may function in the adult life without training for profession and changing or upgrading skills.

Educational difficulties are also determined by Roma’s poor accommodation conditions. Children have no “nooks for study” at home, which is related to overcrowding and poor technical condition of buildings occupied by Roma. Roma families are unable to provide for several school-attending children at the same time; consequently, most young people do not continue their education at the post-primary level.

Moreover, given the fact that there is no single and generally recognised Roma language and teachers knowing Roma dialects are not available, it is not possible to organise classes for the Roma minority in its own language as in the case of other national and ethnic minorities.

OBJECTIVES:

The objective of the pilot government programme for the Roma community in the Małopolska province is to raise the level of education among Roma through increasing the completion rate, improving school attendance and

learning achievements of Roma children and young people, and facilitating further study in post-primary schools for Roma young people. In the area of education, the Programme aims to ensure that the number of those of Roma origin who are unemployed and hold no professional qualifications will not increase to any higher level; to prevent this group from being marginalized in society even further than it is at present; and to halt the process of inheriting poverty by next generations.

TASKS:

Education is the most important element of the Programme because the situation in this area determines the possibility of improving conditions for the Roma community in other areas. Given the shortcomings of an experiment where separate “Roma classes” were set up, it seems most appropriate to provide intensive support to Roma children in integrated classes. The desirable model is that of integrated classes where teachers, who are familiar with the methodology of working with multicultural groups, devote special attention to Roma children, treating them as non-native speakers and bicultural children.

Every two or three Roma children should be assisted by a supporting teacher whose task would be to monitor the progress of children, to run compensatory classes, to help in doing homework and to keep in constant contact with families.

Supporting teachers, employed as additional staff in schools with Roma children and properly trained, should have access to literature on Gypsy issues as well as to assistance of intercultural methodologists and volunteers recruited from among students following higher education courses in social rehabilitation, care and education. Such teachers should be able to develop Roma children’s motivation for learning as a means for social promotion and, at the same time, develop their interest in their ethnic distinctness, traditions and history of their own group. Special efforts should be made to encourage teachers working in classes with Roma children to establish good contact with parents; this will help to avoid bad climate around school issues and to ensure greater involvement of parents in the education of children. Other major tasks include:

- providing financial support for education in “zero classes” and ensuring the possibility of extending education at this level;
- introducing compensatory classes to help children fill in their gaps in education;
- enabling children to do homework in the school under the supervision of the teacher;
- organising special interests’ clubs to enhance the elementary knowledge about the world which Roma children lack;
- organising classes devoted Roma culture and traditions;
- organising education and integration classes for children and young people to promote tolerance and to support Roma’s adaptation in a new environment;
- encouraging children to take part in competitions, school contests and sports contests;
- establishing community centres where children may spend time under the pedagogical supervision;

- organising psychological and pedagogical support for parents and children;
- organising educational activities for adult Roma;
- organising vocational courses for young people and adults;
- organising meetings with parents devoted to compulsory education and obligatory school attendance;
- organising summer integration-oriented leisure activities in Gypsy camps for Roma and Polish children;
- enabling Roma children to take part in summer and winter camps;
- employing Roma parents who will take children to and from the school and look after them during field activities, excursions and other events;
- providing financial support for children's stay in nursery schools;
- providing financial support for the purchase of textbooks, teaching aids and school kits;
- providing financial support for the transport of children to schools;
- providing financial support for extra meals for children in the school;
- providing financial support for insurance of pupils against accidents.

2. COMBATING UNEMPLOYMENT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM:

Unemployment among Roma is directly related to their low level of education, the lack of professional qualifications and their insufficient knowledge of the Polish language. Other factors impinging on the high unemployment in the Roma community include: the high unemployment rate in Poland, the restructuring of industry and the collapse of state-owned enterprises where Roma have so far been employed, the disappearance of traditional Roma occupations such as smithing, horse trade, coppersmithing, etc.

The new system introduced after the collapse of communism could no longer offer the relatively secure economic position which was previously ensured by obligatory work and the absence of unemployment (the so-called hidden unemployment). In the market economy, Roma are unable to compete with Poles on the labour market, mainly because they have no formal qualifications. Consequently, they are faced with the risk of long-term exclusion from the labour market: the longer members of the Roma community remain unemployed, the lower is their level of education and the more limited is their work experience, the more difficult it is for them to find a job.

It should be emphasised that the high unemployment also results from the passive approach taken by Roma themselves; for example, they are reluctant to or do not enrol in retraining courses organised by district labour offices.

The report "*Romowie – bezrobocie. Elementy opisu położenia społecznego Romów w Polsce w 1999 r.*" ["/Roma: Unemployment. Selected elements describing the social position of Roma in Poland in 1999"/], prepared for the National Labour Office, indicates that:

- one third of Roma has not completed primary education;
- only 0.8% of the population surveyed hold higher education qualifications;

- not more than 43% of those surveyed indicated employment as a source of income for their families;
- although 32% of those surveyed declared readiness to take up employment, as many as 56% did not give any answer to the question about the interest in taking up paid work; moreover, a peculiar explanation, rooted in the tradition, was given to justify the lack of interest in paid work: statements such as “Gypsies do not have that”;
- only ca 30% of the Roma surveyed had contact with labour offices;
- not more than 25% of those surveyed declared readiness to attend vocational training courses, despite the very low level of education.

In the light of the data quoted above, the Roma community may be regarded as particularly exposed to the risk of long-term exclusion from the labour market. It is worth emphasising that the increase in the unemployment rate among the Bergitka Roma adds to their apathy.

Among all Roma groups, the Bergitka Roma are most affected by unemployment. It should be pointed out that 53.9% of the unemployed in the Małopolska province live in the rural areas where the Roma covered by the Programme are in the majority, and nearly all the Roma population there is unemployed and lives on social welfare benefits.

OBJECTIVES:

The objective of the Programme in the area of combating unemployment is to reduce the percentage of those without a job. This is particularly important in a situation where unemployment is of long-term character and affects nearly the whole ethnic group, families who have several children, live in appalling conditions and have no educational background. Roma as a group facing the risk of long-term unemployment should be a special target group for labour offices. Training for Roma should be designed to stimulate their psychosocial activity: developing their motivation to acquire, upgrade and change professional skills; encouraging them to seek for jobs actively; strengthening their self-esteem.

TASKS:

Activities designed to combat unemployment should be carried out by district labour offices in the target areas of the Programme, with the support of the National Labour Office. It is envisaged that the Programme will comprise the following elements:

- I. developing motivation for retraining, and raising the level of general knowledge;
- II. involving the unemployed in activities which encourage them to take an active approach;
- III. training for occupations which are in demand on the labour market.

Individual tasks are as follows:

- segmenting the unemployed Roma with regard to forms of support to be planned;
- organising subsidised workplaces;
- providing skill upgrading and retraining courses;
- organising career guidance services;
- setting up an Information and Legal Advice Office for Roma;
- creating jobs in traditional Gypsy areas (support for the development of artistic handicraft, artistic smithing, Gypsy restaurants);
- promoting an active approach.

It should be pointed out that special schemes are envisaged as a statutory instrument used to mitigate effects of unemployment in social groups which are most at risk (these including Roma) (Law of December 14, 1994 on employment and combating unemployment, Journal of Law 1997, No. 25, item 128 with later amendments, and the Regulation of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy of November 15, 1995).

3. HEALTH

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM:

The health condition of Roma families living in the foothill areas of the Małopolska province is an issue of great concern. Serious health problems result mainly from the low level of hygiene and disastrous living conditions: no water supply and sewage system, no heat insulation in buildings and their appalling technical condition, lack of money for fuel, poor diet, limited access to health-care services, and no tradition to monitor pregnancy among Roma women, which would help to cure congenital defects of children at an early age. Regrettably, prenatal care is non-existent among Roma.

Genetic diseases may also result from endogamy of the Roma living in the region covered by the Programme; the Bergitka Roma group is regarded as inferior by other Roma groups and there are thus no mixed marriages between its members and Roma from other groups.

According to Jenny Beesley's report mentioned in Chapter II, the health condition of Roma living in the foothill areas of the Małopolska province is extremely poor. They suffer from diseases such as viral hepatitis B, asthma, pneumonia, bronchitis, tuberculosis, anaemia, mental handicaps and hyperthyroidism. Because of disastrous sanitary conditions personal hygiene is at a very low level. The life expectancy for Roma in this area, as reported by J. Beesley, is 55 years.

OBJECTIVES:

The objective of the Programme is to improve the health condition by ensuring easier access to health care services for Roma in the Małopolska region, and to improve the level of hygiene. Special attention should be given to children and young people who, as reported by social workers, are neglected and are not vaccinated.

TASKS:

- organising “white days” for Roma;
- promoting improvement in hygiene;
- increasing the frequency of medical examinations taken by Roma women;
- subsidising medicines;
- creating possibilities for elderly people to stay in sanatoria;
- employing community nurses of Roma origin who would be in a much better position to persuade Roma women to take regular medical examinations;
- establishing points where Roma could be provided with immediate medical aid;
- carrying out summary examinations;
- checking personal hygiene of pupils;
- promoting vaccination;
- preventing jaundice;
- exterminating insects and rats;
- organising public lectures on hygiene and disease prevention measures;
- ensuring regular garbage disposal.

4. LIVING CONDITIONS

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM:

The overwhelming majority of the Roma living in the foothill areas of the Małopolska province is the social welfare clientele. In 10 communes of the province which are inhabited by Roma, 75% of Roma families received or still receive various social welfare benefits, and in some communes various forms of such support are granted to over 95% of Roma families. These families are provided with the whole range of benefits such as cash allowances, meals paid for school-attending children, and in-kind assistance, including fuel.

Support is granted mainly in the form of regular social welfare allowances and specific-purpose allowances. Because of their arrears for the rent, Roma families are often ineligible for accommodation allowances. Premises occupied by Roma require repairs to be undertaken immediately; some of them do not meet the requirements of housing regulations, and in some cases construction licenses have not even been applied for. If repairs are not undertaken very soon, some buildings will be only due for demolition. Accommodating families with a large number of children and several generations, Roma apartments are overcrowded. Another major problem is that the question of the ownership of land occupied by Roma remains unsettled and, consequently, no new apartments may be built.

Income obtained by a large number of families remains below the poverty line. Only those who are of or above the retirement age, and thus benefit from state pensions, receive regular payments. It is, however, estimated that the next few years will see a growing number of Roma who, though reaching the retirement age, will never be eligible for state pensions; this means a further increase in the number of those with no source of regular income.

Social welfare benefits have so far been granted in the form of cash allowances, which enhances the already strong demanding attitude among Roma. Roma are a special group of social welfare beneficiaries due to their specific culture. Therefore, standard measures aiming to stimulate their psychosocial activity fail to bring desirable outcomes. Roma should be covered by special social welfare schemes which take into account their specificity. Though clearly necessary, social welfare as offered so far does not serve to encourage economic independence among Roma families or to restore their capacity for performing various duties, nor does it support their social integration.

OBJECTIVES:

The objective of the Programme is to improve Roma's living conditions, and accommodation conditions in particular. The Programme also aims to help Roma families achieve the financial situation which would make it easier for them to benefit from other areas of the Programme. e.g. **EDUCATION**. In this context, it should be pointed out that those most affected by poverty are children; children are deprived of basic equipment and clothes or opportunities to take part in holiday trips; moreover, they may not continue their study in post-primary schools because parents have no funds to pay for their transport to schools outside the neighbourhood. Another important element of the Programme is the improvement of sanitary conditions (connecting apartments to sewage and water supply systems; access to running water, etc.).

One should bear in mind that this area of the Programme may not be treated as an objective itself but only as a means for the achievement of other objectives such as education. Cash allowances should be reduced to the minimum, and support should be granted conditional on Roma's own activity. Social welfare should also be linked with other areas, e.g. education.

TASKS:

- repairing existing apartments and buildings;
- building low-cost or subsidised apartments;
- settling the question of ownership of land;
- allocating land for construction sites;
- supporting the construction of small apartments;
- drawing up technical documentation for buildings;
- purchasing construction materials;
- arranging for engineering supervision during construction;
- providing installations for electricity and water supply;
- connecting Roma settlements to water supply and sewage systems;
- building house-based biological sewage treatment stations;
- building house-based septic tanks or purchasing container sanitary facilities;
- offering assistance to facilitate the payment of rent arrears, e.g. providing for payment in instalments;
- granting social benefits;
- mobilising the Roma community in order to ensure its psychological and social independence through social work and guidance;

- granting specific-purpose and periodical allowances for the purchase of clothes, medicines, fuel;
- improving skills of social workers.

5. SECURITY

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM:

Roma are the national minority which is most exposed to racist attacks. They are sometimes attacked by skinheads because of their different skin shade or lifestyle. However, according to the General Police Headquarters, Roma are not frequent victims of crimes, and crimes committed against them bring a rapid reaction of the Police. Some Roma communities complain that the Police are sluggish in reacting to racist attacks; they do not, however, submit official complaints about the conduct of individual officers.

An important factor which makes it more difficult to detect perpetrators is the reluctance among Roma themselves to cooperate with the Police and the fact that committed crimes are not reported to the Police. At both the local and central levels, efforts have been made by the Police to arrange meetings with representatives of Roma associations to discuss the risks involved, but the Roma side has shown no interest in these initiatives. Nevertheless, some Roma communities complain that there is no awareness among police officers of possible ethnic grounds underlying such attacks. Police statistics concerning crimes committed on ethnic grounds, which most often involve victims from the Roma minority, are optimistic; however, this may also suggest that there is only limited information available in the Police to assess the situation in the Roma community. Roma do not, as a rule, cooperate with the Police, even in the case of crimes against members of its own community, often seeking justice on their own. The Police do not have among their staff any officers of Roma origin who would be in a better position to work with injured fellowmen.

Measures designed to protect national and ethnic minorities (including Roma) against crimes committed on grounds of nationality have now been introduced in the new Polish Penal Code. However, resentment is often voiced by Roma against sentences for crimes against them and the provision allowing those indicted for such crimes to be released pending trial.

Because of the rule that the ethnic origin of crime perpetrators should not be recorded, the Police are unable to assess accurately the level of criminality among Roma. Likewise, no data on the nationality of convicts are available in the Ministry of Justice, this being forbidden by law (The Law of August 29, 1997 on the protection of personal data, Journal of Law No. 133, item 883). With incidents involving Roma being publicised widely by the press, it is generally believed that criminality in this community is running high. According to the Police, however, the level of criminality among Roma does not differ from national indicators.

Even though the Police do not keep any detailed registers of crime perpetrators or victims with respect to their ethnic origin, the experience gathered

shows that offences or crimes most often committed by Roma are thefts, thefts with burglary, and robberies. When studying criminal circles, the Police and criminology researchers observe that the level of criminality among Roma is much higher in large agglomerations than in the country, where most of the Bergitka Roma live.

OBJECTIVES:

The objective of the Programme is to improve security by enhancing the sensitivity of the Police to racist crimes and taking action to change the conviction that such acts are not socially harmful. The Programme also aims to help Roma see the necessity for cooperation with the Police in combating crime and to build greater confidence in law enforcement agencies. In the longer term, efforts should be made to recruit persons of Roma origin to police forces.

TASKS:

It is advisable to provide training in the area of racist crimes for police officers working in the Roma community, to make them more sensitive to the issues related to racist hatred, and to raise their awareness of the cultural specificity of Roma which requires a special approach. Extensive cooperation between the Police and Roma would be helpful in this area (several cases of assault on Roma at their homes were reported where the injured parties did not file a request for legal action, even though perpetrators were captured on the spot as a result of the Police intervention). Furthermore, tasks in the following areas should be undertaken:

- preventing crimes committed on ethnic grounds, and ensuring rapid reaction to such crimes;
- providing support for victims of crimes committed on ethnic grounds;
- changing the attitude of Roma so that they see the necessity for cooperation with the Police in order to punish perpetrators of crimes against Roma;
- patrolling the areas inhabited by Roma;
- recruiting persons of Roma origin for police forces (patrol and local police forces);
- ensuring cooperation and exchange of information between the Police and representatives of the Roma community;
- employing guardians appointed by court who understand the specificity of the Roma community.

6. CULTURE

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM:

After the year 1989, a large number of Roma associations have been established which mainly organise cultural events. Since then, the Festival of Roma Culture and the International Gypsy Band Meetings have been held

regularly, and periodicals “Rrom p-o Drom” and “Dialog-Pheniben”, subsidised by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, have been published.

The National Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau in Oświęcim is organising an exhibition devoted to the martyrdom of Roma during World War II in the Auschwitz Concentration Camp. It will be based on documentation gathered by the Centre of Sinti and Roma Documentation and Culture, materials provided by the Museum in Oświęcim and collected by Roma organisations in various countries.

In Tarnów, inhabited mainly by the Polish Roma group, the first Gypsy museum collection in Poland was displayed in 1979, and the first permanent exhibition devoted to the Gypsy culture and history in the world was opened in 1990. This place also hosts folk events. One of the regular events held there is the Gypsy itinerant camp which leaves Tarnów in July each year to make a several-day tour. Another permanent exhibition is the Gypsy sector in the heritage park in Nowy Sącz.

The Bergitka Roma living in the foothill areas of the Małopolska province have largely forgotten their own culture. Therefore, special efforts should be made to encourage the involvement of this most assimilated Roma group in cultural activities which would help to create a positive image of Roma culture in the Polish society.

Roma have lived on the margins of the European society throughout centuries; as a result, like in other countries, there is no awareness in Poland of Roma customs and traditions. Efforts should therefore be made to encourage the involvement of local communities in cultural activities. These are linked with the tasks proposed in the Programme for the area of **EDUCATION** (establishing special interests' clubs for children and young people, setting up musical bands) and **COMBATING UNEMPLOYMENT** (supporting the establishment of Gypsy restaurants, restoring artistic handicraft).

Moreover, steps should be taken to commemorate the places of Roma martyrdom during World War II, because only those specialising in this area are aware that half of the Roma population in Europe lost their lives during that period in concentration camps and ghettos. It was not before the beginning of the 80-ties that the Roma war tragedy was first discussed at the international forum. Because of the vague awareness of common national heritage among Roma, their memory of suffering during the war has emerged in the recent years as an important factor in developing the sense of belonging to the Roma community.

The main obstacle in the process of social integration of Roma is their fear to lose their cultural identity. The tasks to be undertaken should aim to convince Roma that raising the level of education of the Roma community will serve to strengthen their cultural identity.

OBJECTIVES:

The objective of the Programme is to preserve and develop the Roma culture. This should be achieved through activities designed to present this

culture to wide circles of the society. Simultaneously, the cultural diversity of the Małopolska region should be highlighted with a view to promoting tolerance and openness to other cultures among Roma as well other communities.

The Programme also aims to preserve the places of Roma martyrdom during World War II and thus to reawaken the memory of Roma victims in the Polish society.

TASKS:

- providing support for existing musical bands and for the establishment of new bands;
- providing support in the preparation of cultural and sports events organised by the Roma community;
- introducing aesthetic education for Roma children and young people through their direct contact with the art;
- organising a review of Roma artistic works;
- providing support for young people to develop their artistic talents;
- preparing historical documentation which illustrates the history of Roma in Małopolska;
- organising events devoted to history;
- extending the Gypsy sector in the heritage park;
- supporting publication activities;
- establishing a Centre of the Roma Culture;
- providing support in the organisation of the International Festival of Roma Children and Young People;
- supporting the International Roma Memory Camp;
- commemorating the martyrdom of Roma during World War II.

7. KNOWLEDGE IN AND ABOUT THE ROMA COMMUNITY

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM:

A major issue of concern is both that the Polish society has too little knowledge about the situation of Roma and that Roma themselves can hardly find their way in the contemporary realities of a civic society. This concerns in particular the Bergitka Roma who communicate only with their next-door neighbours and have very limited contact with information coming from the world outside their community. It is especially difficult for the Mountain Roma to understand changes recently taking place in Poland, and in particular reforms carried out by the Polish Government.

Relations between Roma and non-Roma communities in Poland are largely based on stereotypes. Dishonesty, reluctance to work, the lack of hygiene and high levels of criminality are some of the elements in the image of Roma which still prevails in the Polish public opinion. On the other hand, living in social isolation which have been both imposed on and chosen by them, Roma are distrustful and contemptuous of 'outsiders', though often not showing such feelings. With its state and law enforcement institutions, the external world is unacceptable to Roma. A wide-ranging educational action may be a solution to

this problem; such an action, to be undertaken mainly in communities of ethnic Poles, should promote tolerance and openness to OTHERS, and should encourage efforts to raise the awareness of changes taking place in Poland among Roma.

OBJECTIVES:

The main objective of the Programme is to ensure social integration of Roma through improving the image of Roma in the Polish society and raising the awareness of processes taking place in the country and throughout the world among Roma.

TASKS:

The tasks undertaken in the framework of the Programme aim to propagate in the Polish society the true image of Roma with the variety of their customs and their distinct identity, which may enrich Polish culture in line with the old tradition of “the Republic of Nations”. Opinion-shaping media, including regional TV divisions as well as national radio and TV stations, may provide an important contribution by taking up these issues in their programmes. The Polish TV Division in Cracow is now preparing a programme devoted to Roma culture and problems, and to the promotion of tolerance and social integration. The Cable Television now working in Nowy Targ may be used as a channel to promote programmes focused on problems of the Roma community and its culture as well as this Programme for the Roma community on the Małopolska province. A programme about the situation of Roma in Małopolska was broadcasted in September 2000 by Channel I of the Polish Radio.

Educational activities should be carried out in the Roma community to inform them about the realities in the country which they live in: civic rights and duties, rights they have been granted as a national minority, reforms being currently introduced, access to pedagogical, psychological and social welfare services, Poland’s accession to the European Union and changes involved in this process. Such awareness-raising activities are designed to prevent the exclusion of Roma from a civic society. Other major tasks include:

- establishing posts of local plenipotentiaries of the Roma community;
- organising a mobile Citizen Consultancy Centre;
- promoting publications about Roma;
- organising a Polish-Roma camp with an integration programme;
- broadcasting regular programmes about Roma in local and national media.