

**Republic of Serbia**

**DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER**

**MINISTER OF CONSTRUCTION, TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

No: 02-02-00002/2017-12

Date: 5 June 2017

Belgrade

**MINUTES OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE COORDINATION BODY FOR MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION OF THE ROMA IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA 2016 -2025**

The session was held on 5 June 2017 at the Government of the Republic of Serbia building (Nemanjina11, Grand Meeting Room on the 1st floor), starting at 10 AM.

The session was chaired by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure Prof. Zorana Z. Mihajlović.

The meeting was attended by:

***Coordination Body****:*

* Alternate for Mr Aleksandar Vulin, Minister of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs – Mr Zaim Redžepović, State Secretary,
* Alternate for Mr Mladen Šarčević, Minister of Education, Science and Technological Development – Ms Anamarija Viček, State Secretary,
* Alternate for Mr Zlatibor Lončar, Minister of Health – Dr Vesna Knjeginjić, Assistant Minister,
* Alternate for Mr Dušan Vujović, Minister of Finance – Ms Mirjana Ćojbašić, State Secretary,
* Alternate for Ms Ana Brnabić, Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government – Ms Ivana Antić, Assistant Minister,
* Alternate for Ms Nela Kuburović, Minister of Justice – Mr Vladimir Vukićević, human rights consultant,
* Ms Tanja Miščević, Head of the Negotiating Team for Accession of the Republic of Serbia to the European Union,
* Alternate for Ms Ksenija Milenković, Director of the Serbian European Integration Office – Mr Srđan Majstorović, Deputy Director,
* Mr Ivan Sekulović, Manager of the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit,
* Ms Suzana Paunović, Director of the Office for Human and Minority Rights,
* Mr Jugoslav Milačić, Adviser to the Minister without Portfolio in charge of European integration,
* Mr Živojin Mitrović, Roma National Minority Council in the Republic of Serbia.

***Coordination Body Expert Group****:*

* Mr Miodrag Poledica, State Secretary at the Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure,
* Ms Jovanka Atanacković, Assistant Minister of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure,
* Ms Dragana Jovanović Arijas, Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit,
* Ms Aleksandra Benković, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure,
* Ms Danijela Janković, Office for Human and Minority Rights,
* Ms Danijela Lakatoš, Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs,
* Mr Dušan Jovanović, Roma National Minority Council in the Republic of Serbia,
* Mr Miloš Mihajlović, Roma National Minority Council in the Republic of Serbia,
* Mr Dragan Đorđević, Ministry of Health,
* Mr Igor Kostić, Roma National Minority Council in the Republic of Serbia,
* Alternate for Ms Đurđica Ergić – Snežana Vuković, Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development,
* Mr Božidar Jovanović, Roma National Minority Council in the Republic of Serbia,
* Ms Ivana Maksić, Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities,
* Mr Osman Balić, Standing Conference of Roma Citizens’ Associations,
* Ms Aleksandra Petrović, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

***At the invitation of the Chair of the Coordination Body, the session was attended by:***

* Ms Mirjana Maksimović, Delegation of the European Union,
* Mr Orhan Usein, Roma Integration Action Team,
* Ms Aleksandra Bojadijeva, Roma Integration Action Team.

The session was attended by Mr Vitomir Mihajlović, Chair of the Roma National Minority Council in the Republic of Serbia, at his own initiative.

**Agenda Point 1 – Role and Tasks of the Coordination Body**

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure Prof. Zorana Z. Mihajlović opened the meeting by welcoming the attendees and thanking them for their presence at the first session of the Coordination Body for Monitoring the Implementation of the Strategy for Social Inclusion of the Roma in the Republic of Serbia 2016-2025. She reminded the attendees that the Government of the Republic of Serbia had formed the Coordination Body by a Government Conclusion, as all were aware that it was necessary to sit together at the same table and that ministries and other institutions and offices should focus on and monitor the implementation of the Strategy, as well as the Action Plan. She added that ministers were absent for justified reasons, since this session coincided with the Social and Economic Council session. Seven ministers were members of the Coordination Body, representing all ministries important and relevant for the work to be done; their representatives were present, demonstrating that all had sufficient strength and will to focus on the work.

The first session of the Coordination Body proceeded according to the Agenda:

**Agenda Point 2 – Adoption of the Rules of Procedure of the Coordination Body**

Since the materials for the session, including the Proposal for the Rules of Procedure of the Coordination Body, had been provided to the Coordination Body members by electronic means, the Rules of Procedure were adopted unanimously.

**Agenda Point 3 – Information on the annual report on the implementation of the adopted Strategy for Social Inclusion of the Roma in the RS (2016-2025)**

Under Agenda Point 3, the Chair gave the floor to Mr Zaim Redžepović, State Secretary at the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs (MoLEVSA) to report on the current Strategy implementation status.

The MoLEVSA was preparing a Report on the Implementation of the Strategy for Social Inclusion of the Roma in the Republic of Serbia in 2016, following the template adopted by the European Commission under the “Roma Integration 2020” project, implemented by the Regional Cooperation Council.

The Report contained the contributions of the line ministries responsible for Strategy areas, as well as information on Strategy implementation at the local level. The Report was being finalised; work was being done on impact indicators. The final document would be presented on 13 June, at the *Roma Integration National Platform Meeting*, to be held at the Palace of Serbia.

Mr Redžepović highlighted several key results achieved in 2016:

Education – Between January and March 2016, the Social Inclusion Unit of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (MoESTD) had organised and participated in the panel for the selection of civil society organisations’ candidates for representatives in the Joint Body for support to social inclusion, support to the operation of and coordination of oversight of inter-sectoral committees (ISCs) for the assessment of needs for further educational, health and social support to children and students (hereinafter: Joint Body) together with representatives of the Office for Cooperation with the Civil Society, with a view to forming the Joint Body. The Joint Body was to be formed by the MoESTD, Ministry of Health, MoLEVSA and the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government (MoPALSG), as well as representatives of other bodies, as per ministers’ decision. The Joint Body was responsible for the coordination and monitoring of the operation of inter-sectoral committees.

Under the project “We Are Here Together – European Support to Roma Inclusion”, at the University of Kragujevac, on 20 October 2016, certificates had been presented to 174 teaching assistants, who had completed accredited training modules at the Life-Long Learning Centre of the University of Kragujevac. A Working Group was being formed to amend the existing Rulebook on the Teaching Assistant Training Programme, develop a framework for the teaching assistant job description, education type and level and training programme, performance quality standards, and deal with the rationalisation of the teaching assistants’ network, recruitment of new teaching assistants and their labour status, in accordance with Art. 121, para. 12 of the Law on the Foundations of the Education System (*Official Gazette of the RS Nos 72/2009, 52/2011 and* *55/2013)*.

**Housing** – The Government had taken measures to regulate eviction and resettlement. The Bill on Housing and Building Maintenance had been endorsed at the Government session on 17 November 2016, passed by the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia on 22 December 2016, and had entered into force on 1 January 2017 (Official Gazette of the RS No 104/16). It was aligned with the provisions of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. As of 2015, the Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure had established a GIS database to collect data on all substandard Roma settlements in the territory of the Republic of Serbia. Records of the number and locations of informal settlements in the Republic of Serbia had thus been established for the first time, offering an opportunity to channel funds in a planned manner with a view to addressing these problems (the development of this regulation had been awaited for several years).

Preparatory activities for the project “Durable housing solutions and physical infrastructure improvements in Roma settlements”, to be funded under IPA 2013, had been launched. Project documentation for these solutions had largely been prepared under the European Union project "We Are Here Together” (funded under IPA 2012), and local governments and non-governmental organisations would be able to apply with additional projects, provided that they had prepared project documentation. As part of these preparations, on 5 July 2016, a call for applications for the award of grants for activities aimed at providing durable housing solutions and infrastructure improvement in Roma settlements had been published on the EuropeAid website, website of the Department for Contracting and Financing of EU-Funded Programmes(CFCU) and the local paper *Politika*.

**Employment** – In 2016, a total of 801,583 individual employment plans had been concluded (including revisions); out of these, 28,357 individual employment plans had been concluded with Roma persons (12,672 Roma women). In 2016, 958,639 individual interviews had been held, of which 37,996 with members of the Roma national minority (18,750 Roma women).

In May 2016, the National Employment Service and the Embassy of the Republic of Austria to the Republic of Serbia had organised the Regional conference titled *Employment of Less Employable Groups*, with a view to promotion, sharing of experiences and good practices in the implementation of activities aimed at timely and high-quality integration or reintegration of less employable persons in the labour market.

As part of self-employment support, in 2016, funds for self-employment had been awarded in the form of a one-off subsidy amounting to RSD 180,000.00 per beneficiary. Professional assistance with a view to promoting self-employment had been provided to unemployed persons through information and counselling services at the National Employment Service business centres and entrepreneurship training, while support to entrepreneurs in the initial years of operation had been provided through a mentoring programme and specialist training courses. The number of unemployed Roma men and women registered with the National Employment Service who had exercised the right to a self-employment subsidy totalled 65.

**Social protection** – The Decree on Earmarked Transfers had been adopted in March 2016. The Decree enabled local government units, as beneficiaries of earmarked funds from the national budget, to launch the development of local-level social care services whose funding was the responsibility of local governments under the Law on Social Protection. In 2016, RSD 400 million had been provided. Earmarked transfers were intended for underdeveloped municipalities in the territory of Serbia, municipalities and cities in which institutions undergoing transformations were located, and the development of innovative services of importance for Serbia.

**Health care** – Health mediators had attended the health mediator professional development programme provided by the OSCE Mission to Serbia under the project “We Are Here Together – European Support to Roma Inclusion”. The development programme included seven three-day training courses, delivered by the *Belgrade* Secondary School of Nursing.

The Chair thanked the speaker and added that the Coordination Body had been formed primarily to deal with coordination among the numerous ministries, institutions and offices and management of strategic processes, i.e. that it was not necessary to spend time reading the report, which could be disseminated as an ancillary document. Such meetings would be held once or twice per month, as needed; the Coordination Body had its technical unit, i.e. the Coordination Body Expert Group, which would consider in detail any other matters agreed upon by the Coordination Body.

Following this, the Chair gave the floor to Mr Miodrag Poledica, State Secretary at the Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure, to supplement the information under Agenda point 3.

He highlighted several key activities coordinated in the past one and a half years, which had yielded concrete results.

In March of the preceding year, Deputy Prime Minister Ms Zorana Z. Mihajlović had signed a Memorandum with the Regional Cooperation Council, represented by Mr Goran Svilanović, Secretary General; the regional office “Roma Integration 2020 Action Team” had been established pursuant to the Memorandum and had started operating successfully thereunder. He added that Mr Orhan Usein, Action Team Leader, was present at the Coordination Body session. Good cooperation had been established with the Action Team, as its mission was to cover the Roma inclusion activities in the Western Balkans and Turkey. He stressed that regular consultations were held between all ministries and the Action Team.

The Law on Housing and Building Maintenance had been passed in December of the preceding year; for the first time, the Law incorporated a set of articles – from Art. 78 to Art. 87 – governing the procedures for eviction and resettlement, in accordance with the needs in the Republic of Serbia. Prior to that, a total of 583 informal or substandard settlements had been identified.

Since June of the preceding year, when the first conference under the IPA 2013 project titled “Durable housing solutions and physical infrastructure improvements in Roma settlements” was held, all local governments had been invited to apply for project grants from July onwards. A total of EUR 9.5 million were available for works and EUR 1.5 million for technical assistance and project implementation. According to the information received from the Ministry of Finance and CFCU, after a tender for project implementation had been conducted, the contract would be signed the following day.

The Coordination Body had been established in March of the current year, and now provided a forum for discussion. In May of the current year, a Case Study Conference on the Roma settlement of Crvena zvezda had been successfully held in Niš, aiming to provide recommendations to address a major issue faced by this settlement.

Almost a year and a half had been invested in consolidating the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Strategy for Social Inclusion of the Roma; the Action Plan was to be implemented by five ministries, one office and the National Employment Service. The Action Plan covered a two-year period. The last form – financial impact assessment (FIA) – had been completed and it was hoped that the Action Plan would be adopted at the following Government session, as there were no more reasons hindering its adoption.

**Agenda Point 4 – The Fourth Seminar on the Social Inclusion of the Roma in the Republic of Serbia Announced**

The Chair thanked the speaker and, under Agenda point 4, gave the floor to Ms Suzana Paunović, Director of the Office for Human and Minority Rights, who thanked the Deputy Prime Minister and her team for the successful formation of the Coordination Body and organisation of its first meeting.

She said that three seminars of this type had been held with the European Commission. The seminars were held every two years. We were required to report to the European Commission on the work done in those two years at the next seminar. The third seminar had been held in 2015. Following this, we had adopted 60 operational conclusions agreed with the European Commission. The Government had accepted to implement the 60 conclusions during the following two years.

We fulfilled our obligation of regular reporting each year. The Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit and the Office for Human and Minority Rights prepared reports on the implementation of the Operational Conclusions and submitted them to the European Commission. The first report had been prepared in June and covered the period of June 2015 – June 2016. The report showed that 14 operational conclusions had been fulfilled, two had not been fulfilled, 15 in progress, 27 ongoing, and data on the implementation status of two conclusions had been unavailable.

With regard to the two conclusions with no data on implementation status, which concerned health mediators and the Ministry of Health database to be filled in by them, she requested that the reasons for the delay and failure to fulfil these Operational Conclusions to date be provided by the colleagues from the Ministry of Health in the new report, which was due as soon as possible. She also invited proposals for how to address this area – perhaps not in the manner foreseen by the Operational Conclusion, but a proposed solution should be devised.

Developments at the local level were another area where insufficient data were available, especially with regard to employment promotion and updating local action plans. She announced that the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit and the Office for Human and Minority Rights, together with the line ministry, would organise another meeting to ensure this area was covered in sufficient detail in the second report. The second report would be prepared within a month at the latest. It would be consolidated with the line ministries, translated into English and submitted to the European Commission in a timely manner.

According to the information received, the fourth Seminar would be held in early October, rather than July as originally agreed.

Ms Tanja Miščević, Head of the Negotiating Team for Accession of the Republic of Serbia to the European Union, stressed that she was pleased and honoured to attend the session, having been involved in operational work for a long time. She thanked the Deputy Prime Minister, who had assumed this significant responsibility two years before, and noted that it was an honour to have her coordinate all the parties involved, as it demonstrated political support to all matters addressed at the session, which were of particular interest for our citizens.

As regards the Action Plan accompanying the Strategy, she added that it was only one segment of the important Chapter 23 – Judiciary and fundamental rights, as well as a segment that merited much attention, not only in the negotiation process, but also in assessing the earnestness of our efforts. She focused on the Seminar on the Social Inclusion of the Roma, specifically on the issue of reporting on the implementation of the Operational Conclusions, given that some questions from the previous report still remained unanswered.

She proposed to enhance efficiency and to ensure the preparation of the Report on the Implementation of the Operational Conclusions for the forthcoming Seminar so as to meet all needs. She also proposed a narrower expert meeting to prepare an overview of the status of Operational Conclusions, in order to successfully fulfil the obligations by the time the Seminar was held.

Mr Osman Balić, representative of the Standing Conference of Roma Citizens’ Associations (SKRUG), added that they regularly reported to all interested parties within the European institutions, and that the Report on the Implementation of Policy on the Roma had been published one month before. He added that the efficiency and effectiveness of the Seminar could be improved by more frequent meetings between the ministries and Roma non-governmental organisations and the National Minority Council, as practical changes could follow from them. He said that they had no established contacts with ministries, that ministries had no information about the positive changes taking place at the local government level, and that non-governmental organisations always followed up criticism by offering practical solutions. He highlighted a fact which gave rise to dissatisfaction and which was, in his view, unacceptable: at the end of a year, the number of Roma placed by a non-governmental organisation exceeded the number placed by the National Employment Service.

The Chair stated that she was not familiar with the Report referred to by Mr Balić, as it had not been shared. She proposed that the Report should be disseminated to all, and suggested to all to improve communication among all institutions, as well as with the non-governmental sector.

**Agenda Point 5 – Any Other Business**

The Chair gave the floor to Ms Aleksandra Petrović, representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, who informed the attendees about the progress concerning the case of the Roma settlement of Crvena zvezda, Niš. On 10 and 11 May 2017, the Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure had organised a conference at the Faculty of Law in Niš, in cooperation with the Mayor of Niš and the Dean of the Faculty of Law.

The conference had received highly positive evaluations from all participants (almost 80 in total) and had been recognised as an earnest effort on the part of the Republic of Serbia to find the best solution for the population of Crvena zvezda.

The development highlighted as the most positive was the fact that all three stakeholders – representatives of the settlement, representatives of the developer and the City of Niš – had gathered at the same table and engaged in open and constructive dialogue, discussed and proposed solutions; in particular, representatives of the settlement had discussed matters that directly concerned their lives.

The second day of the conference had been closed to the public. Only the three stakeholders had been present to discuss a solution that would be feasible and acceptable. Two proposals had emerged – first, to find a solution enabling the residents to remain in their current location, and second – the private developer had offered a plot of land on the same street, 900 metres from the current location of the settlement, where the residents could relocate voluntarily.

The talks among the stakeholders were still in progress, in particular among the residents themselves. It was expected that the general proposals made on the second day should be elaborated in more detail and a written agreement could possibly be drafted. Further steps were also foreseen; however, to avoid prejudgment, activities were being implemented one step at a time.

The Chair thanked the speaker for the information.

She highlighted the proposal made by Ms Tanja Miščević, which she accepted, that all conclusions should be available in the Romani, English and Serbian languages. This also meant that the invitations for future meetings would also be disseminated in all three languages.

She thanked all attendees for participation in the session of the Coordination Body and invited all to be even more successful in the coming months and yield tangible results.

**\* The Coordination Body session was closed at 10:30 AM, with the following conclusions:**

1. Conclusion under Agenda point 2: The Rules of Procedure of the Coordination Body for Monitoring the Implementation of the Strategy for Social Inclusion of the Roma in the Republic of Serbia 2016-2025 were unanimously adopted at the session.
2. Conclusion under Agenda point 3: The information on the list of local governments joining the project “Durable housing solutions and physical infrastructure improvements in Roma settlements” should be provided to the Coordination Body members in order for all to be familiar with the details of the grant.
3. Conclusions under Agenda point 4:

* A narrower expert meeting should be held to prepare an overview of the status and implementation of the Operational Conclusions, with a view to the successful organisation and realisation of the Seminar on the Social Inclusion of the Roma.
* A letter concerning the provision of information about the implementation of Operational Conclusions for the preceding reporting period should be sent to the ministries and institutions that had not provided the necessary information. The information should include the degree of completion of the activities from the Operational Conclusions, or the information why a certain activity had not been implemented, in order to provide an insight into the current status and facilitate assistance and preparations for the forthcoming Seminar, to be held in October.
* Representatives of the Standing Conference of Roma Citizens’ Associations should share the Report on the Implementation of Policy on the Roma with all Coordination Body members.

1. Conclusion under Agenda point 5: The Chair informed the attendees that the following Coordination Body session would be held in one month, with focus on the Action Plan of the Strategy for Social Inclusion of the Roma, and that decisions on further work and monitoring would be made, as well as decisions on the need to form sub-groups, in line with the operational needs of the Coordination Body.

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| *Minutes taken by:*  Aleksandra Benković  *Minutes endorsed by:*  Miodrag Poledica,  State Secretary | *Minutes approved by:*  CHAIR OF THE COORDINATION BODY  Prof. Zorana Z. Mihajlović,  Deputy Prime Minister and Minister |