

The Decade of Roma Inclusion in February 2010 is entering its second implementation stage. In almost five years of informal coordination among states there is still need for accumulation of institutional knowledge and systemic approach in addressing Roma needs. The political participation of Roma is not included within the 4 Decade priority areas as many governments and donor agencies still believe that Roma issues are mostly of human rights and social exclusion type. The Roma Decade is a process with political, policy and financial component but when it comes to the operational level there are no legally binding instruments and mechanism for implementation. After 5 years of weak implementation we experience that policies in place without effective political participation of Roma do not bring the planned and expected progress.

In April this year our organization has examined institutional set up in 6 Decade countries, Croatia, Serbia, Macedonia, Hungary, Slovakia and Czech Republic. Either each country has its different position and context regarding to EU, we find many similar approaches on addressing the Roma policies through the institutions. Each country has national coordinator which has high position in the government, mostly deputy prime minister or minister. This gives political weight but limited activities on daily basis as this positions have to deal with many mainstream priorities. All other structures dealing with Roma policies from central to local level have mainly consultative or operational role, but without decision making and financial instruments. Even in case as in Macedonia, where the National coordinator is Roma, once again we conclude that one ministerial position, without adequate structures and legal mechanism can't change the complex situation on Roma exclusion. Roma have been successful in electing MPs in each of the Decade member state parliaments, reminding that Hungary for second time elected Roma as MEP, but once again to reiterate our disappointment on the impact and contribution to the overall success of Roma policies, with full understanding of barriers and challenges that our Roma MPs are facing as a minority politicians. We also witness that even in countries, as Croatia, where sufficient funds are allocated on Roma policies the positive change for ordinary Roma citizens do not happens simply because there is lack of complementary structures. At municipal level Roma political representation is even weaker compared with the national level either there are many positive action efforts to ensure reserved seats or double majority principle when minorities are concerned with some legal act. Our arguments are included in the following recommendations aiming to ensure effective political participation of Roma: We urge all State members of Roma Decade to: create legally binding mechanisms and measures for effective political participation of minorities, develop affirmative policies in strengthening minority decision making, advance the capacities to the level necessary for the complex role, clarify tasks and responsibilities, and finally create a structure to serve both the general and specific tasks.