



Roma Democratic Development Association

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Report of Study visit in Bulgaria and Spain to learn about active labor market programs supported by DTF 7 November – 12 November 2010



Meeting with the representatives of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy – Bulgaria

Topic: Creating a policy for employment, with emphasis on the Roma

Venue: Ministry of Labor and Social Policy

On the meeting were present representatives from the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (Mabera Kamberi – Head of Department for Coordination and Assistant to the Minister, Mladen Frchkovski – Advisor in the Labor Department at the Ministry, Elvis Memeti – Advisor in the Department for the Implementation of the Strategy in the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015, Nahida Zekirova – Advisor in the Department for the Implementation of the Strategy in the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015), Blerina Zoto Tepelena - Technical Secretariat for the Roma in the Ministry for Labor, Social Issues, and Equal Opportunities in Albania, and Ferdi Ismaili – Executive Director in the NGO Roma Democratic Development Association “Sun” from Tetovo, Macedonia and Ms. Ermira Kamberi from the NGO Roma Democratic Development Association “Sun” from Teovo as well as representatives from the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy in Bulgaria (Dr. Elka Dimitrova, Director of the Labor Market Policy Directorate, Mr. Petar Atanasov, and Mr. Kancho Kantadjiev – Leading Expert in the RTP Department.)

Before the start of the meeting, the representatives from Macedonia, Albania, and Bulgaria gave a short introduction about some general country data in the area for employment.

In Bulgaria there are 9.1% registered unemployed people from the overall work-efficient population, in Albania 12.8%, and in Macedonia 32.2%. According to the representatives from Bulgaria and Albania, the statistics is not based on ethnicity, but this is not the case with Macedonia where there is a possibility for one to express his or her own ethnicity.

In regards to the Decade, Bulgaria has developed a framework program for the integration of the Roma in the Bulgaria society (2010-2020) with an emphasis on 6 areas: education, health care, housing, employment, non-discrimination and equal opportunities, and culture.) Macedonia has developed a Strategy for the Roma adopted and ratified in the Parliament of Republic of Macedonia including revised National Action Plans.

Mr. Kancho Kantardjiev, a representative from the Bulgarian delegation, presented the realized activities in the area involving active measures for employment in the frameworks of the Decade for Roma Inclusion until October 31, 2010. In regards to fulfilling the National Plan for activities within the Decade of Roma Inclusion, the Agency for Employment in Bulgaria has realized annual operational plans for employment. In 2010, the general activities had in plan to include 7,600 unemployed Roma and register them in the Bureaus for Employment for various vocations. According to the data gathered until October 31, 2010 there are 15,944 Roma people included in this plan. 4,778 Roma were included in the measures undertaken with the purpose of increasing the capacity for attaining vocations and qualifications such as: motivation for active behavior on the labor market, professional orientation, and professional qualification.

11,141 unemployed Roma were included in the active measures for security and employability. 25 Roma were included in activities involving motivation and how to start and run a business. Other activities included regular meetings (87 in total) with employers and businessmen in the frameworks of maintaining the social and civil dialogue as a form of support for improving the employment rate.

Realized activities in the Agency for Employment in accordance with the National Plan for Active Measures for Employment within the Decade for Roma Inclusion

Indicators	Plan for 2010
1.Improving the competitiveness and ability of Roma in the labor market in contemporary areas of labor activity	6600
1.1 Improving the qualifications of the unemployed Roma	2200
1.1.1 Motivation for active job search	700
1.1.2 Professional orientation	400
1.1.3 Literacy	400
1.1.4 Professional qualifications	700
1.1.4.1 Operational program	

1.1.5 Key components	
1.1.5.1 Operational program	
1.2 Job security of Roma	4000
1.2.1 Inclusion in programs	
1.2.1.1 National program	
1.2.1.2 Operational program	
1.3 Qualifications for employment	400
2. Directing entrepreneurship, starting and managing personal businesses	1000
2.1 Inclusion in motivation courses	400
2.2 Inclusion in trainings for starting and managing personal businesses	400
2.2.1. Operational program	
2.3 Inclusion in trainings for traditional Roma vocations	200
3. Promoting the social and civil dialogue	87
3.1 Organizing meetings, round tables, seminars, discussions	

In this presentation there is a particular emphasis on the implementation of the project **Labor Mediators** implemented by the Agency for Employment.

It is planned that 340 million euro from Bulgaria's budget including funds from the European Social Fund will be used within the frameworks of the national program for active measures for employment. Macedonia is planning to use up to 8 million euro for realizing the operational program for active employment measures.

After the presentation about the undertaken activities within the National Plan for Active Measures for Employment, the Macedonian delegation opened up a discussion on certain issues that it was interested in. Regarding the issue concerning the people who receive continuous financial government help (due to being unemployed) and the fact that they lose it if they do not sign up for a training in the Agency for Employment, we were told that in the past there was a different practice. Once Bulgaria became a member of the European Union followed by the ratification of the European Social Charter it is impossible to undertake any types of sanctions and limitations when it comes to this particular group. The beneficiaries of government financial help only have the obligation to do community service activities lasting for 4 hours each day for

14 days in total (in the past they were obliged to do this work for only 5 days.) If they refuse to do community service, they are losing the government help. One of the useful examples had to do with the activation of unemployed people in the community service in public institutions (800 people were included to do work in the municipality such as gasification, greenery, and public cleanliness.)

They also shared their experiences during the time when they organized trainings for unemployed people in Bulgaria where the people attending the training received a daily stipend to cover some expenses (4 euro/day or 24 euro/week.) The training for receiving a specific qualification lasts for 30 days.

The Bulgarian delegation emphasized that the target group (the unemployed) are not allowed to take government financial help if they are not registered in the Agency for Employment. At the same time, the beneficiaries have the right to receive health insurance. In Macedonia, the government help is provided through the centers for social work and the beneficiaries are not obliged to become registered in the Agency for Employment. The target group of beneficiaries does not lose the financial help from the government even if it refuses to participate in a certain type of training that has been organized as part of the active measures for employment by Agency for Employment. There are no sanctions that Agency for Employment can undertake against the beneficiaries who refuse to be part of the active measures for increasing the employment rate among the registered unemployed people.

In regards to the minimal wage, the Bulgarian delegation confirmed that it is worth 120 euro for all occupations while in Macedonia the minimal wage depends on the type of occupation.

During the discussion with the delegation from the Bulgarian Ministry of Labor and Social Policy regarding their experience about using funds from the European Social Fund, they shared few valuable experiences from the activities done in this respect. Besides the European Social Fund, that is helpful only for the members of the EU, they mentioned important opportunities that come along the Transnational and Transregional programs which are useful for developing projects and border cooperation. As a member of the EU, Bulgaria is using funds from the European Social Fund for developing projects that are part of the National Plan for Active Measures for Employment; however, according to the representative of the delegation from Bulgaria the opportunities offered are not adequately and fully used. The delegation from Macedonia showed interest in the possibility for developing mutual projects for social inclusion within the frameworks of the European Social Fund. In order to increase the number of human resources and the capacity for developing projects supported by the European Social Fund, the Macedonian delegation (Macedonia being a candidate country) was particularly interested to research on the possibility for applying together with Bulgaria in the European Social Fund with projects for social inclusion and in accordance with their national programs.

The Macedonian delegation asked if the employment increased once Bulgaria became a member of the EU. The reply from the Bulgarian delegation was very clear saying that the investments have a direct impact on the employment and the opportunities for employment increase. However, the current unemployment rate in Bulgaria is high and they believe that the financial crisis has negatively influenced the integration processes.

In addition, during the meeting both sides presented their experiences from their activities in the area of anti-discrimination. In fact, the anti-discrimination activities in Bulgaria had begun in 1999 as a consequence of the dedication the Roma organizations had in combating discrimination. At the same time this was one of the conditions from the EU concerning Bulgaria's accession. The Macedonian delegation spoke about its experience with the enactment of the anti-discrimination law that comes in force beginning January 1, 2011. It is expected that the responsibility for cases concerning discrimination to be placed within an independent organ having its own budget – the members of this organ will be chosen by the Parliament.)

Field visit of Roma mediators for employment / 9 November 2010

After the meeting between our delegation and the Roma employment mediators from Republic of Bulgaria, the delegations from Macedonia and Albania visited the Center for Employment in Sofia. We were greeted by the Director of the Center for Employment and three Roma mediators. In the same center we also visited the office of an employed mediator. As a delegation, we briefly presented the project and asked general questions regarding the experience of working as a Roma employment mediator.

In general, the Director was pleased with the activity saying that it provides for more effective and more efficient access of the Roma community to use the benefits from the government in terms of employment opportunities. A positive aspect is that even though the mediator works specifically on Roma issues, he/she works in the same office with the rest of the employees in the center and having his own desk and working area.

The Director was in general satisfied with the work done by the mediator. In addition, under the initiative of the Director, it is planned that the mediator is granted an Employment Contract like the rest of the employees in the Agency.

On the other hand, the employed mediators were not happy with the salaries that they receive because they work full-time while being paid as part-time employees.

From our visit to the office of an employed Roma mediator in the Center for Employment in the Republic of Bulgaria, we got the following general recommendations:

- **To come up with a solution that would provide the mediators with a sufficient salary covering their full-time employment**
- **Additional trainings involving field work and identification of needs**

- **More meetings between the mediators**
- **Creating quarterly action plans for the work of the mediators**
- **The need for developing a specific ToR for the mediators**

Useful linkas :

- The web page of the Ministry for Labor and Social Policy in Macedonia
<http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/?ItemID=FF5ABCD0FB50E44BACE7E5044640B7C6>
- The web page of the Agency for Employment in Macedonia
<http://www.avrm.gov.mk/>
- The web page of the Ministry for Labor and Social Policy in Bulgaria
<http://www.mlsp.government.bg/bg/index.asp>
- The web page of Agency for employment in Bulgaria
www.ees-bg.info

Meeting with the Vice president of Federation of Roma Associations in Catalonia (FAGIC) in Barcelona

The Federation of Roma Associations in Catalonia (FAGIC) non-governmental organization, founded in 1991, which aims at the equal treatment and social inclusion of the Roma in Spain and in Europe. FAGIC federates fifty-eight Roma NGOs in the region of Catalonia, acting as a primary interlocutor with the regional and central public administrations, coordinating the activities and advising on management and organizational issues.

Since its creation, FAGIC has been one of the most important actors, representing the over 80,000 Roma community in the Catalan region.

FAGIC was created in response to the increasing number of associations with the objective of uniting and coordinating actions aiming at the promotion of the Roma culture, carrying out activities for the defense of our interests. The main goal is to improve the policies and programmes that affect the Roma, drawing together the aspirations and concerns of people and establishing a channel for communication between the Roma community and Catalan society.

Employment

The Roma still face difficulties when entering the labor market. The great majority of Roma majority are less qualified– the low levels of education and fewer professional skills are an obstacle while searching for a job.

Roma women are even more vulnerable in this sector. Sin doubts, Roma still face discrimination in the labor market - the negative image existing within the general society causes that the potential employers are not keen on hiring Roma.

Participation and representation

The Roma still face numerous obstacles in their full and effective participation in the political and social life. According to the study conducted by FAGIC, as part of the European project “Enhancing Roma participation”, financed by EACEA, the Roma feel underrepresented in the current public system. A great majority of people feel that the current public system is not design to attend the cultural and social needs of the Roma people (63%). As for the political participation, the findings show that the current political system in Spain does not guarantee the participation of Roma in the decision-making process, and thus, does not answer the needs and interests of the Roma people (65%). Indeed, Roma are not present in the political scene in Catalonia, and thus cannot protect their own rights and interests during the decision-making process. The links between Roma civil society and political parties is greatly limited and there are few governmental spaces opened for debate, where Roma can make their voice heard.

Useful links :

FAGIC’S Report: Situation of Roma in Spain and Catalonia – Overview of what has been done and recommendations for future - <http://www.osce.org/home/documents/71777>

Foundation Secretariado Gitano

In 11th of November 2010 year the delegation from Macedonia and Albania visit Foundation Secretariado Gitano in Barcelona-Spain. There, we were acquainted about the organizational structure of the organization and the activities of the FSG. From the representatives of FSG we heard that FSG is established in 14 Autonomous Communities in Spain, undertakes activities in 109 towns and cities and has 67 work centers.

The main lines of intervention are:

- Intervention in the area of employment
- Intervention in the area of education
- Intervention in the area of housing
- Work with Roma from Eastern Europe
- Other areas of social intervention: health and youth

The main objectives of FSG are:

- Find employment for members of the Roma community
- Adapt vocational training to the demands of the labor market
- Establish direct links between Roma and companies
- Raise awareness with respect to prejudice and discriminatory practices
- Standardize pro-active policies targeting the Roma population

The impacts from the taken activities are:

- Change the mentality for Roma, the business world and the society in general
- Higher level of training and professional qualification for people facing difficulties integrating into working life
- Improved living standard for the Roma population
- A partnership network with administrations and companies has been promoted
- Better active employment policies
- Success in the development of individualized labor market integration pathways

Because Macedonia has the one of the biggest unemployment rate in Europe (about 33%), we were interested mostly for the pathways that FSG use for increasing employment rate especially for Roma people, and we learned that to achieve the aims in the area of employment, FSG has special ACCEDER program which general objectives are:

- **To find jobs for Roma in the mainstream labor market**
- **To adapt vocational training to the demands of the labor market**, professional capacity building and access for Roma men and women to paid professions and work, covering the demand for workers from private enterprise
- **To establish a direct link between Roma jobseekers and employment service providers**, closing the gap between vocational training and employment services for unemployed Roma, allowing them to gain access to these services on an equal footing with the rest of the society
- **To raise awareness** on concerns prejudices and discriminatory practices against the Roma population with a view to improving their social image
- **To standardize more pro-active policies** targeting Roma population with a view to improving living standards and guaranteeing equal opportunities in access to public goods and services

To achieve these objectives, FSG centers have inter cultural and multidisciplinary work teams comprised of Roma and non-Roma with diverse and complementary professional profiles. Each team has between 4 and 7 people (mostly 5) in charge of program execution at local level (coordinator, labor counselor, enterprise intermediation, intercultural

mediator and social technician) This team make contacts with Roma people, explain them about the possibilities to find job on the labor market, further education, help them to make contracts with the companies, etc .

Also, labor intermediation with companies specifically for those job vacancies that companies need to cover, contribute, more than 350 companies to sign formal agreements with the ACCEDER program.

The interesting fact is that the most of the programs of the FSG are funding by ESF (European social fund), by applying projects and certain percent from the local communities.

Directorate General for Equality of Opportunity in the Workplace

In 12th of November 2010 year the delegation from Macedonia and Albania visit Directorate General for Equality of Opportunity in the Workplace. In the premises of the Directorate we have meeting from the officials of the Directorate and we heard very useful informations about the organisational structure and activities that are taken with special accent to “tackling the problem of unemployment” among Roma people.

Namely, The Catalan Ministry of Employment has created the Directorate General for Equality of Opportunity in the Workplace with the aim of prioritizing the development of projects that will encourage quality at work, social justice and cohesion.

The mission of this Directorate General is to address the needs of the various social groups who do not, at the moment, enjoy equality in terms of access to employment, their presence and permanence in it, or in terms of job security.

The Directorate General for Equality of Opportunity in the Workplace is consist of two sub-directorates: Sub-Directorate general for equality programmes for women in the workplace which main activities are to eliminate obstacles that still prevent women from achieving real equality in the workplace and Sub-Directorate general for employment policies for diversity which main activities are to help those with most difficulty in finding employment (diversity of needs: the handicapped, those receiving the minimum insertion wage support (RMI) those in risk of social exclusion, immigrants, young people).

Strategic guidelines of the Directorate refer to finding pathways for increasing employment rate among different target groups, are:

1. Ensure access, presence and permanence of women in the labor market as well as that of other groups in function of their specific needs and diversity, while also guaranteeing conditions of dignity and quality.
2. Improve people's employment prospects through the acquisition of the tools, skills and abilities specifically necessary for successful insertion into the labor market.
3. Promote equality of opportunity in the workplace in public and private companies.
4. Improve the productivity of labor market integration companies, centers and bodies as competitive sectors and points of reference for labor market insertion policies.
5. Encourage socially responsible companies.

Sub-Directorate general for employment policies for diversity has 5 general aims:

1. Promote cross-sector actions for the insertion of groups with specific needs into the labor market .

This aim is expected to be achieved through different measures such as: Implementation of the Strategy for the insertion of handicapped people in Catalonia into the labor market; participation in the Accord for youth employment; participation in the Social Inclusion Plan for Catalonia; participation in the immigration and citizenship Plan; production of methodological tools and guides for equality of opportunity in line with the needs and characteristics of each group; design of awareness-raising and dissemination strategies aimed at promoting cultural change for diversity.

2. Improve strategies for labor-market guidance, training and insertion.

This aim is expected to be achieved through different measures such as: Strengthen innovation in labor-market insertion methodologies and strategies based on individual itineraries; Increase labor-market insertion by improving training in instrumental and cross-sector skills; Improve the response of public services and units for labor-market insertion so as to better cope with diversity; Promote measures to make better labor-market insertion possible for individuals who receive the minimum insertion wage (RMI); Promote direct measures to boost the contracting of individuals with disabilities or other groups at risk from exclusion in normal companies; Promote fore in which the public authorities can interact with the bodies representing the associations and organizations involved in social and labor-market insertion.

3. Provide tools for the business development of labor-market insertion organizations, centers and companies

This aim is expected to be achieved through different measures such as: Incentivize the creation and consolidation of insertion companies in Catalonia; Accelerate the transfer of special work centers to the Catalan Ministry of Employment and design a support plan to adapt them or bring them up to date; Improve and innovate with respect to funding systems for insertion

organizations and companies, to ensure the continuity of insertion actions and measures; Boost strategies for the territorialisation and contracting of insertion agents.

4. Increase the amount and quality of job opportunities in the ordinary labor market by creating incentives for socially-responsible companies

This aim is expected to be achieved through different measures such as: Promote cooperation by more companies in labor-market insertion within the framework of company social responsibility (CSR); Promote job support as a means of facilitating access to the ordinary labor market for vulnerable groups; Promote social purchasing and social clauses in public contracts; Strengthen the role of the prospector and other key figures in the company (work reception plan); Publicize the opportunities and advantages of contracting different groups with labor-market insertion difficulties; Encourage companies to adopt equal-opportunities and non-discrimination codes of conduct and action protocols (inclusive company).

5. Ensure the legislative development necessary to improve integration into the labor market of people with specific needs

This aim is expected to be achieved through different measures such as: Promote and monitor compliance with the LISMI (Law 13/1982, of 7 April, concerning the social integration of the disabled) and, if necessary, of the alternative measures established by law; Redesign the elements of the Interdepartmental Programmed for the Labor-Market Insertion Minimum Wage to make it more effective and adapt it to new exclusion situations in Catalonia; Seek new funding frameworks to break with the seasonal nature of insertion measures that inhibits the continuity of longer-term insertion processes; Incorporate equal-opportunity criteria in all new calls for tender and grant applications.

As a general conclusion of the delegation is that the Directorate has good measures for tackling the problem with unemployment, but these measures refer to many target groups: young people, disabled people etc, and they don't have special measures for increasing employment rate among Roma people, they don't have data how many Roma people are unemployed, they don't have system for collecting data for Roma people.

Meeting with Professor Mr. Raul Ramos, an expert for labor market in Catalonia-Spain

The mixed delegation from Macedonia and Albania in 12 of November 2010 year, had very fruitful meeting with Mr. Raul Ramos, professor at Economic institute in Catalonia-Spain.

Mr. Ramos gave review on the situation on the labor market in Spain, institutions that are involved in resolving problem of unemployment and the most important for us, the most effective employment policies necessary for resolving problem of unemployment.

The most important institution responsible for labor market is public employment service. This institution has its offices in different places in Spain which main aim is to be near to the unemployed people and they won't make travel costs to go to those offices to register as unemployed. When the person is registered as unemployed, he/she may start to receive social benefits and must contact with an **expert**, who is paid by the government. The unemployed answer the prepared questionnaire about his/her background, skills, previous working experience, affinities and etc. Then, an expert proposes kind of training which is compulsory for the unemployed person. The most of the experts are usually sociologists, but they also may be social workers, lawyers, economists, etc. Usually one expert work with 200 or 300 unemployed people, and they are not present in each place or town so they must go one time in a week in different place and it's very big problem for them to work individually with each unemployed person, to find its one pathway to employment. So as Mr. Ramos told, one of the incentives of the Government in near future will be increasing the number of experts in consideration of the effectiveness of their work.

Training, as active labor market measure is very important when there is mismatch between labor market demand and available unemployed people. **The training should be medium-term, to stimulate unemployed people hurry to find job, because if the training is long-term, the unemployed will be "captured" in training process and their expectations will be not only to find job, but to find better job. Also it's necessary to estimate for which target group of unemployed people, which kind of training is effective. Why training is also important-because it provide higher employability to the unemployed, and higher employability means higher possibility for employment.**

Also what was very interesting for us is another labor market measure, **job orientation and it's usually combined with job search assistance**. That means that according to the background of the unemployed, the representatives of the public authorities help him/her easier to find job, for example, search job through internet, preparing curriculum, etc.

The another interesting active labor market measure that Professor Ramos mentioned is **direct creation of jobs**. Usually, public authorities create these jobs, for example for disabled people which are more excluding from the labor market. First, they signed contracts for maximum three years, and after that if they show positive results on the working place, their contracts are changed into permanent.

Professor also explain to us that **subsidy** is not anymore popular active labor market measure because of high total amount money needed for implementation, and no long-term results from the aspect of employment.

Another interesting matter for us heard from the professor's exposition is that government has regular list of the most demanded jobs gated from the firms, and this list is distributed to all relevant institutions included into labor market.

As a general conclusion from this meeting With Professor Raul Ramos is that we learned new effective concept, system of active labor market measures which may give serious positive results in tackling the problem of unemployment.

1.1 EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL PROTECTION IN ALBANIA

1.1.1 Description of the situation

In comparison with most of the population, the Roma have less employment opportunities. Unemployment among Roma is higher than among non-Roma population. Based on a World Bank study, unemployment among the Roma population in 2002 was 71 percent, while national unemployment rate was only 15.8 percent¹.

Roma unemployment is very high and their incomes are usually derived from employment in low-skilled jobs, usually in the non-formal sector. The most common occupations include collecting scrap metal, street cleaning, begging, and seasonal work in the agricultural sector, or sale of second hand clothes. These jobs provide very low incomes to Roma families. The results of a UNDP survey showed that the unemployment rates of the Roma vary by age and education level.

The Roma unemployment level is in indirect proportion to their level of education. The unemployment rate for Roma individuals who completed elementary education is 39%, secondary education levels are at 15% and the percentage of those who have completed higher education is just over 8%².

The percentage of unemployment duration for a Roma individual is higher than that of a non-Roma and for those who have low level of education this percentage is several times higher.

Based on the results of the UNDP survey, 72% of the respondents secure their incomes from self-employment, occasional work or small business, while 13% receive their income from

¹ UNDP Albania, Human Development dep., 2005, pg. 38

² In danger: Social Tangibility of Roma in Albania, UNDP Albania, 2006, pg. 29

pensions, social assistance or unemployment compensation; 5 % from work in agriculture and 2% from non-formal activities such as begging or fortune telling³. The average income of Roma is significantly lower than that of non-Roma individuals.

The general lack of employment opportunities in Albania has severe consequences for the Roma communities, where it is reported that 92% of Roma find it difficult to secure a job. Moreover, there is little demand for traditional professions such as instrumentalist or artisans, professions which were exercised by the Roma during the socialist period. Most Roma head-of-households do not benefit from the financial aid schemes, because they are not registered at the civil registry offices, and due to continuous change of residence.

Integration of Roma through education and professional training is considered one of the measures that would increase employment and relieve the Roma community from poverty.

1.1.2 Existing initiatives

The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (MoLSAEO) has carried out a needs assessment regarding the strengthening and development of social protection programs, and is implementing various social policies aimed at improving access to services and benefits for all categories and vulnerable groups of the society, including the Roma.

MoLSAEO has adopted the necessary legal framework regarding the system of vocational education⁴. In 2005, free courses were provided to 67 Roma women seeking jobs. The low level of Roma women participation in these programs is linked to the lack of information and of cooperation between state institutions at central and local government level.

In the Council of Minister's Decision Nr. 632 of 18.09.2003, "On stimulation of the employment program for unemployed job-seeking women", employment of women above 35 years of age, Roma women, women with social problems and women head-of-households is considered a priority.

Women job-seekers all categories that will be employed will benefit incomes and professional qualifications, with the aim of securing long-term employment in the future. Currently three stimulating programs are being implemented; and the total number of women who have benefited is 500 among these 86 women, or 17.2% of the total were Roma women⁵.

Between 2006 and 2008 priority was given to stimulating the employment of specific vulnerable groups and to encouraging women employment, including Roma women.

³ In danger: Social Tangibility of Roma in Albania, UNDP Albania, 2006, pg. 30

⁴ Directive no. 394, of 23.02.2004; Direction no. 782, of 04.04.2006

⁵ Progress report on the implementation of the Strategy for the improvement of the living conditions of Roma community

The MoLSAEO decision No. 645, of 20 March, 2006, "*On priorities of the employment promotion program for 2006*", emphasized that participation of special groups in employment promotion programs should be no less than 20% of the total number of employees included in the program; Roma was considered as one of the special groups, among other vulnerable groups. The same decision emphasized that 50% of the program's funds should be used solely towards the implementation of "Employment of unemployed job-seeking women" program. However, this program was implemented only during 2006.

The Decision of the Council of Ministers 632, of 18.09 2003, amended, "On unemployed women jobseekers" has been one of the most successful employment promotion programs in terms of inclusion of special groups. This program provides that employers who hire an unemployed job-seeking woman listed in the Employment Office list, and give a regular 1-year work contract, can benefit a monthly income equal to 70% of the compulsory insurance during the entire implementation period; when a work contract is valid for 2 or 3 years, the compensation is respectively 85% and 100% of the amount of compulsory insurances. In the case of employment of persons from specific groups, the abovementioned reimbursement for 1, 2 and 3 years, is complemented with 4-6 wages at the national rate, respectively.

Taking into consideration law no. 8872 of March 29, 2002 "On vocational education and trainings in the Republic of Albania", the DCM No. 616 of 4 December, 2002 On outlining the special categories that benefit from the aforementioned law, the Order of the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs nr.2222, of 31 October, 2002 "On counselling and orientation regarding vocational training", it is clear that special attention must be devoted to the vocational training of specific groups.

Based on the decision nr.394, of 23 February, 2004 of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs "*On the payment of vocational trainings*", the fees in the vocational training system have been revised; currently public vocational training centres waive registration fees of individuals from vulnerable groups, including the Roma minority, who are registered as unemployed job-seekers in the Employment Offices. During 2004 and 2005, about 50 and 86 Roma individuals benefited from these courses respectively.

It is also envisaged by order no. 782, of 4 April 2006 on "Fees in the vocational training system", that the registration fees for the unemployed jobseekers registered in the Employment Office that wish to pursue vocational courses, will not be applied to individuals from special groups. This decision may be useful especially for the Roma community; however, they do not have proper information on this program.

Legislation in power at first glance does not discriminate the Roma community in terms of economic aid eligibility or access into public social services or services provided by NGOs. They are treated like all other vulnerable groups and are assisted to improve access into social services aimed at vulnerable groups or individuals in need. In most cases however, some of the eligibility

criteria for receiving economic aid or other social services cannot be filled by Roma individuals. One of the criteria that directly exclude the Roma is that of residence: according to the legislation in power, individuals are eligible to receive economic aid if their place of residence has remained unchanged until 1991, or if an application for change of residence has been submitted one month prior to the transfer.

The State Social Service (SHSSH), in its regional offices, has appointed a person who monitors the standards of social services, the level of reaping the benefits of social programs and the knowledge of the Roma community on the legislation. Moreover, the position involves monitoring the progress of the program objectives' implementation.

MoLSAEO has also developed the legal framework in the field of social policies⁶. The Social Protection Sectoral Strategy (2007-2013) as well as other legal acts adopted pursuant to Law No. 9355, allow the implementation of new policies targeting vulnerable groups, reduction of poverty and improvement of the quality of life. MoLSAEO has approved the full legal framework for the implementation of social protection. Although there is no discrimination from the legal standpoint, the Roma population continues to have low access, because they are not able to meet all criteria necessary to apply.

Based on law no. 9355, of 10 March 2005, "*On social assistance and services*", Roma communities are now starting to receive information on a local level by social administrators. Among other duties, these social administrators in municipalities and communes are obliged (1) to provide information and assist Roma individuals to complete the necessary documents in order to be eligible to benefit economic assistance and (2) to identify the service needs of vulnerable groups and individuals in need. The increase of the economic assistance ceiling to 7000 lek constitutes an advantage for Roma families with many members.

The employment promotion program targeting unemployed job-seekers who are in difficult situations (pursuant to Decision Nr. 48, of 16.01.2008, amended) has begun implementation in January 2008 and has continued during 2009. Employers that hire via a regular one-year employment contract unemployed jobseekers in difficult situations, may benefit: a) a one-year fund, amounting to 100 per cent of the employer's share of compulsory social insurance, b) a four-months fund, amounting to 100 per cent of the national minimum wage, to be disbursed from the ninth month of employment until the end of the contract; c) up to 50 percent of the average number of the insured of 3 last months before the application.

The program, aims to integrate unemployed jobseeker who find themselves in difficult situations into the labour market. This category includes: long-term unemployed jobseekers, recipients of unemployment compensation and economic aid, individuals between 18-25 years of age who enter the labour market for the first time, persons above 45 years of age, the Roma community

⁶ Law No. 9355 "About the help and social services", of 10.03.2005

and the persons with disabilities – a contingent that constitutes the largest number of registered unemployed at the employment office.

Through this program, the unemployed jobseekers who find themselves in a difficult situation, and who demonstrate the necessary work skills will be able to: secure employment and benefit more incomes; acquire professional qualifications through their job and benefit from the real chances for employment.

1.1.3 Recommendations for further action

Strategic purpose: Empowering the Roma community through improved access to the labour market, training programs and social protection schemes.

1. Inception and implementation of special programs that enable Roma employment

- 1.1 A study on the unemployment causes and consequences for Roma people which includes concrete recommendations
- 1.2 Informative campaigns targeting unemployed Roma on the opportunities and benefits offered by employment programs.
- 1.3 Implementation of public works programs where vulnerable groups of Roma individuals are employed, in order to improve their employment situation and alleviate their poverty.
- 1.4 Greater inclusion of Roma in the employment promotion schemes targeting vulnerable groups, such as wage subsidy schemes and the creditation of taxes for employers.
- 1.5 Development of programs / projects in cooperation with international institutions, which aim at the economic development and employment of the Roma community, which allow them to come out of poverty.

2. Study and implementation of fiscal incentives to stimulate the employment of Roma community

- 2.1 Feasibility study on the provision of fiscal incentives for companies that employ members of the Roma community.
- 2.2 Measures to alleviate the taxes for professions or enterprises owned by individuals from vulnerable groups (including the Roma), such as small trade, antique trade, etc.
- 2.3 Approval of bylaws to disburse business subsidies intended for the production of traditional Roma artisan works.

3. Integration of Roma community in the public general education system and the system of vocational education and training

- 3.1 Establishment of vocational training programs and other qualification programs for Roma youth in order to create a new generation of Roma who are trained and thus competitive in the labour market.
- 3.2 Provision of courses for Roma youth for trades for which there is local need and professions that can promise real employment prospects.
- 3.3 Improvement of the quality of professional training programs for the Roma by improving the existing curricula and by developing new curricula, training of trainers programs, etc.
- 3.4 Provision of support services for Roma entrepreneurs and participants in income generation programs. They should be enabled to receive information on possible support structures and receive training on business management and administration (including development of a business plans, accounting, legal procedures), as well as training in marketing.
- 3.5 Conducting informative campaigns on the Roma's rights and obligations at the workplace, about various assistance programs, as well as about the function of the social security scheme.

4. Capacity building and improvement of the quality of services for the protection of Roma children.

- 4.1 Strengthening of existing structures and the creation of new structures, to ensure timely intervention for the protection of children in need from any kind of abuse, violence or exploitation
- 4.2 Stimulation and support of Roma associations as representatives of various aspects of the Roma life
- 4.3 Integration of Roma street children in the normal life by admitting them to newly established daily centres which will serve them as a shelter and school facilities
- 4.4 Inception, financing and implementation of projects that educate and help the integration of children in need, in cooperation with local and foreign donors
- 4.5 Systematic monitoring of cases of Roma children labour exploitation.

5. Increasing benefits for the Roma minority through social protection schemes by undertaking mitigation measures

- 5.1 Conducting awareness-raising campaigns targeting Roma individuals about the benefits they are eligible to receive from social support schemes such as economic assistance, unemployment payments, pregnancy and birth benefits and other schemes in support of the poor.
- 5.2 Monitoring the implementation of mitigation measures targeting the Roma people to benefit from the social protection schemes.
- 5.3 Monitoring and enforcement of the order directed to the local units to offer help and assistance to Roma individuals to complete the necessary documentation that will allow them to benefit from social programs.

6. Elimination of abusive cases involving violation of the Labour Code

- 6.1 Continuous controls by the State Labour Inspectorate on businesses and institutions that have employed members of the Roma community.
- 6.2 Awareness-raising campaigns with the Roma community related to their rights stemming from the labour legislation.

7. Increasing the number of Roma individuals in the compulsory social insurance scheme

- 7.1 Awareness-raising campaigns and media programs targeted at the Roma community on the importance and benefits of social insurance schemes
- 7.2 Periodic audits by the State Labour Inspectorate to informal businesses in order to identify and register Roma workers who are not registered in the social security schemes.