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Center Amalipe

Monthly newsletter

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FOCUS OF THE ISSUE :

SECOND EU ROMA SUMMIT

8 - 9 April 2010, Cordoba, Spain

The Second EU Roma Summit took place on 8th and 9th April in the city of Cordoba, Spain. It brought together leading politicians and public figures on whose actions the future of Roma integration depends on, more or less. The meeting was attended by the Vice-President and Commissioner for Human Rights Viviane Reding, Andor Laszlo, Commissioner for Employment, senior representatives of the European Commission and national governments of Member States, representatives of international Roma organizations. Center Amalipe was among the few national Roma organizations invited to participate in the forum, the organization was represented by Deyan Kolev and Teodora Krumova. Bulgarian side was also represented by Elitsa Stefanova (Association Integro), Tsonko Tsonev, Mayor of Kavarna municipality and winner of the prize for a most-favorable-to-Roma mayor, Natalia Efremova (representative of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy) and Philip Dimitrov (representative of Club de Madrid, an influential organization of former heads of state).



In the city of the philosopher Averroes, who lived in the 12th century and taught that all people shared a common sacred immortal soul, participants discussed how to make sure that Europe immortal sacred principles of equality, solidarity and social inclusion would reach Roma and become common fate of all Europeans.

The focus of the Spanish presidency of the European Union will be on four of the ten basic principles of European Roma Integration: explicit, but not excluding targeting, awareness of gender equality, use of community instruments, and inclusion of civil society. Therefore, these were the main topics of the four working groups following the plenary sessions. The meeting and the following discussions probably will be discussed in different ways in the forthcoming months. One thing is sure: there is sufficient reason to claim that it will affect the process of Roma integration. Below one can find information about the main speeches and a brief analysis.

The Communication from the European Commission: A day before the Summit the European Commission issued a special communication calling for social inclusion of Roma. The document outlines an ambitious medium-term program to meet the biggest challenges for Roma Inclusion, which includes:

Mobilization of the Structural Funds (including the European Social Fund) representing nearly half the EU budget to support Roma inclusion;

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LAUNCHING A NATIONAL SURVEY ON THE PROBLEMS OF EARLY MARRIAGES AMONG ROMA



On 9, 10 and 11 April Center Amalipe conducted a training of interviewers to carry out a survey among Roma community on the issue of early marriages. The training was conducted by Alexei Pamporov sociologist, member of the Institute for Sociology at BAS who had developed the questionnaire for the survey.

The study is part of Preventing forced marriages project funded by the European Commission, under the Daphne Programme III 2007-2013, Contract № JLS/2008/DAP3/AG/1298-30-CE-03124780080. It will be conducted nationwide covering all Roma sub-groups with special emphasis on Burgudjii and Kaldarashi communities in which the early marriages occur most frequently. Interviewers were explained the objectives, methods and methodology of the survey and sample survey among the Roma population in Gorna Oryahovitsa - inhabited mainly by Rudari, Kaldarashi and Burgudjii communities. It is expected that the results of the survey will be processed by mid-May.

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TEACHERS' TRAINING FOR PREPARING SCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR PREVENTING THE DROPPING OUT OF ROMA CHILDREN



For three days teachers teaching Roma folklore discussed problems of Roma children dropping out of school. The meeting is part of the project "Reducing the dropping out of Roma children", funded by America for Bulgaria Foundation. Based on their long experience, the teachers thought of possible situations and provoked one another to reach creative

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Taking into consideration Roma issues in all relevant areas of implementation of policies at national and European levels: from employment to urban planning and health to EU enlargement;
Mobilising the potential of Roma communities to support the inclusive growth as part of the "Europe 2020" strategy.



Although written in the usual for such a document diplomatic language the Communication demonstrates increased political commitment by the Commission to engage in Roma inclusion which creates a better basis for the Summit.

Key speeches:

The Spanish Minister of Health and Social Policy Trinidad Jimenez said at the opening of the forum that Roma culture is one of the richest cultures and Roma rights must be guaranteed. Jimenez noted that social discrimination against Roma could be addressed only through coordinated efforts between the EU institutions and Member States. She urged Roma to participate actively in the preparation of projects and programs since the initiative of the European and national institutions will not be effective without Roma participation. The Spanish Prime Minister expressed also satisfaction with the communication of the Commission which urges the Member States to use EU funds to ensure social and economic integration of Roma. It identifies education and employment as key priorities and highlights that the extremely high percentage of Roma teenagers drop-outs should be limited. Moreover, she added that special measures were needed to ensure the employment of Romani women, as only 30% of them worked outside their homes.

"Social inclusion of Roma remains one of the top issues in the agenda of the European Commission", the Vice-President and Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Viviane Reding stressed in her speech at the opening of the Summit. For the past 19 months from the first summit we all have worked to move from recognition and analyzing problems to solving them. The role of the European Commission in this process is to ensure the necessary European legislation and EU funds, and be an effective coordinator and facilitator in the efforts of various national governments, said Ms Reding. She pointed out that this was already assured: there has been a good European anti-discrimination legislation and access to Structural funds for initiatives targeting Roma. There is also a good experience in the development of programs which main focus are Roma. "So I do not believe that we should waste efforts to develop special laws for special funds and Roma. Existing legislation and funds are available to address the challenges and we must use them more effectively." Reding clearly said.

A symbolic idea in her speech was the placement of Roma integration into the wider perspective of the implementation of the Strategy2020. "We must ensure that it (Strategy 2020) will work for Roma as it works for everyone in Europe, the Vice-President of the European Commission stressed. In this respect, the Commission will use two instruments. The first one is the European Roma Platform. A medium-term work program of the Platform should be elaborated soon: an idea launched by the Spanish EU presidency. Other means are the Structural Funds and the Commission will work more

effectively for their commitment to Roma inclusion. "We can not afford another generation of Roma to grow without being able to use their potential", Viviane Reding pointed out.

The speech of George Soros, founder of the Open Society Institute was one of the most anticipated and can definitely be called "a sign": filled with compelling findings, brilliant argumentation and clear policy recommendations that would definitely draw the future frames of the development of the efforts for Roma integration. "The majority in the countries where many Roma live is hostile to them ... Roma and the majority are locked in a vicious circle in which reality and stereotypes feed off each other in an interconnected manner. This vicious circle must be broken - G. Soros underlined. And the key to this is education, a new generation of educated Roma who have successfully integrated in the macrosociety and at the same time have not been assimilated and have preserved the Roma identity. Soros pointed many of the things that the Open Society Institute has made to bring this key to the lock. He clearly asked the European Union to engage in decisive turning the key and unlocking the door of Roma integration.

Welcoming the European Commission's Communication of April 7, he stressed the need not only to bind the European funds with Roma integration but also to simplify application procedures and speed up the payments of funds which can effectively reach Roma. Soros called for establishing a long-term European Roma strategy based on the principles proven to be successful in the activities of the Roma Education Fund and the Decade of Roma Inclusion. He finished with four recommendations: to give priority to education (starting with the pre-school education) as a tool for social inclusion within Strategy 2020; the principle "explicit but not exclusive targeting" adopted by the European Council in June 2009 and already applied in the field of housing to be extended in education, health and employment; the European Union to use its leverage to influence Member States to strengthen their political commitment to Roma integration, the Union to ensure that new candidate countries will be accepted only if they ensure equal rights to their citizens.

"Our support for Roma Inclusion should be explicit, but not excluding, and must ensure that all Roma can benefit from their rights and equal opportunities, said in his concluding remarks Laszlo Andor, Commissioner for Employment, Equal Opportunities and anti-discrimination ... This should be done together with the Roma community and not for them, definitely - not despite them.



"As an example in this direction Commissioner Andor pointed out that the Roma community should not only participate but also be co-owners of all-European programs in order Roma inclusion to be able to happen in every village and town. It is also needed any reasonable initiative in the field of Roma integration to be co-financed by the Structural Funds through which key problems of Roma can be addressed.

Commissioner Andor underlined that the European Commission will not withdraw its commitment to the integration of Roma. The Commission will continue to initiate EU legislation, to coordinate national policies and to promote dialogue between civil society and governments to ensure that Roma issues are adequately addressed in all policy areas. We will work to make their policies more effective - the Structural Funds, the OMC, Program 2020 and so on, Commissioner Andor stressed firmly. In particular, the Commission will propose to Member States various

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successful models of integration which they will choose according to their national context.

"The inclusion of Roma is a duty and a necessity. It will not only enrich our cultural society but also create economic and human wealth."- with these words Commissioner Andor summarized the discussions and closed the forum.

"Explicit, but not exclusive targeting": The second principle of the conclusions of the EU Council from June 2009 has been the subject of one of the busiest round tables following the plenary session. Its moderator was Jan Jarab (current representative of the UN Commissioner for Human Rights and former advisor to former Commissioner for Employment VI. Shridla) and participants - Thomas Bender (Director of the European Social Fund), Tobias Linden (Roma Education Fund) Ilie Dinka (National Agency for Roma - Romania), Isidro Rodriguez (Foundation "Secretariat of the Gypsies (Gitanos)" - Spain). Participants agreed on the view that targeted action for Roma integration were necessary to overcome the existing segregation and only in this way Roma could benefit from their rights as European citizens. Thomas Bender referred to the example of Bulgarian in the preparation of the Human Resources Development Operational Programme. "Initially the Bulgarian government was not willing to allow targeted action - Bender said - then we (DG Employment of the European Commission) and Roma organizations in Bulgaria - they are here and will confirm that - proposed many arguments and today the Bulgarian OP has 6 measures targeting Roma; there is a special chapter "Fields of Action on Roma", Roma organizations are represented in the Monitoring Committee of the program and actively participate.,.

Statements were accompanied by comments and questions. Deyan Kolev (Center «Amalipe" and representative of the Roma organizations in the Monitoring Committee of the OP Human Resources Development ") pointed



specific numbers of program implementation in 2007-2009, stressing that only calls for projects targeting Roma could ensure that the funds would reach Roma and would help their integration. He called the next programming period the ESF to set an indicative budget for targeted operations directed to Roma (at least 5%) and Roma organizations to be included as a specific beneficiary (the status that have trade unions, employers and other institutions) which will enable them to achieve greater interventions.

Using of Community Instruments: Working Group 3 discussed the seventh principle of the ten basic principles for Roma integration. Local practices in the use of pre-accession funds and structural funds in Serbia, Sweden, Hungary and Ireland were presented. In addition, the main findings of the World Bank report "The economic costs of Roma exclusion." The study is to be finalized in June. It clearly shows that from a purely economic perspective the costs invested in measures to integrate Roma will be regained and is incomparably less than the costs a national governments should pay if the problems of vulnerable groups were maintained and deepened. By World Bank estimates the lower limit of estimates of annual productivity losses in the continuing exclusion of Roma is 231 million for Serbia, 367 million for the Czech Republic, 526 million for Bulgaria and 887 million for Romania. At the same time the survey shows that better education for Roma will bring much higher revenue. Compared to Roma with primary education, those with secondary education can earn up to 83% higher income in Bulgaria and 144 percent higher income in Romania. In this regard Teodora Krumova from Center Amalipe offered similar calculations to be made about the costs of exclusion of Roma



women. The proposal has received great interest from the World Bank representatives who said that they would surely include the gender aspect in the study. Moreover, they promised to consult and receive feedback from the Roma organizations in the four countries before the final completion of the report.

Cordoba Declaration, 9.04.2010

The summit ended with a joint statement by the so-called "triple presidency of the EU (including the current Presidency of Spain and the forthcoming Belgium and Hungary). The trio expresses its understanding that it is the time to give a boost to the Roma dossier in order to achieve substantial improvement in the social and economic integration of the Roma in Europe. Hence, it is necessary to ensure that current policies and instruments are fully developed and made work efficiently from a medium-term perspective by:

- mainstreaming of Roma issues in European and national policies in order to that European strategies and instruments include specific actions favouring socio-economic inclusion of the Roma. This mainstreaming should be guaranteed in areas such as fundamental rights, gender approach, personal safety and protection against discrimination, poverty and social exclusion, regional cohesion, economic development and access to education, housing, health, employment, social services, justice, sports and culture.

- Improve the design of a road map of the Integrated Platform on Roma Inclusion which establishes a framework for medium-term action, as well as for objectives and results to be achieved; prioritising the key issues to be addressed; and strengthening horizontal cooperation among Member States and civil society, with the adequate support and boost of the Commission for the preparation of the meetings and activities.

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- Ensuring the use of EU Structural Funds for Roma integration. The Declaration explicitly welcomed the recent additions to the art. 7 of the Rules of the European Regional Development Fund, which require a minimum of 3% of the fund to be used to improve the living conditions of marginalized groups and overcoming segregation in urban and rural areas. The Declaration clearly provides such a requirement, ensuring equal access of Roma to EU funds to be applied by the European Social Fund and the Fund for Rural Development. In addition, the document requires the simplification of procedures for absorption.

The declaration ends with a commitment to summarize the findings of the second summit and apply them in the policies of this and next two EU presidencies.

Commemoration ceremony of April 8: Participants in the Summit on Roma took part in the ceremony on the occasion of April 8, organized by the Roma in Cordoba. In a long procession they went together to the waters of the River Guadalquivir. Juan de Dios, the first Roma MEP recalled the horrors of the Holocaust and persecution of Roma during WWII.

BEYOND THE FACTS:

Several things have become clear after the summit in Cordoba. One of them is that Roma issue are getting higher in the agenda of the European Union. The European Parliament has demonstrated this long time ago by special resolutions calling for concerted efforts for integration of Roma. The European Council has also shown their commitment by adopting the 10 basic principle of Roma Inclusion at its meeting of June 8, 2009. All the speeches at the summit and the Communication of April 7 show that the European Commission will also be an active participant in the process of Roma integration: as a coordinator and facilitator of the efforts of national governments and at the same time as a factor that encourages national governments to act and, if necessary, punish them for their inaction.

The European Commission will indicate its support for integration of Roma through two main instruments. The first one is called European platform for Roma inclusion. It is an opportunity for the exchange of so-called "Best practices" between countries. Until recently the platform was considered only as a loose, quasi-structure, which held classified meetings 1-2 times a year. From the speeches at the summit in Cordoba, it became clear that national governments will offer models for integration and the platform would have its European medium-term program.

The second mechanism that will use the European Commission is making the EU Structural Funds more accessible for Roma integration. In this respect the Commission is more explicit. The Commission wants to ensure that national governments would not "circumvent" the issue of Roma integration in the absorption of EU funds. Furthermore, the Commission will insist on simplifying procedures and speeding up the payments on the implementation of projects financed by EU funds: a painful topic for everyone who was involved in similar projects.

FRA ROUND TABLE WITH ROMANI AND TRAVELLERS WOMEN ACTIVISTS "ON A ROAD TO EQUALITY"



On the eve of the International Roma Day (8 April) and the Second European Roma Summit, the Fundamental Rights Agency held a round table with Romani and Traveller women networks in Córdoba (Spain). The aim of the meeting "On a Road to Equality" was to provide space for Romani and Traveller women to discuss the gender dimensions of inequality and in particular how to promote the gender dimension in the agenda of the II Roma Summit and EU policies in general. The roundtable brought together representatives from the European Commission, the Fundamental Rights Agency and Romani women activist networks.

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solutions that can help schools who have a serious problem with the dropping out of Roma pupils in preventing this problem. During the meeting the group consisting of teachers from 13 schools across the country tried to systematize the experience that each participant has brought, to systematize the problems that each has experienced and how they had overcome the latter. We have discussed possible ways to exchange information among all the schools involved in the program as pilot schools. All agreed that this is an ongoing interactive process in which everyone learns from everyone and it will help us together as one big team to deal with the problems we face. It was definitely the view of all participants that we, teachers, have to start first by changing ourselves, to find the correct cause of threats to each child.

In that regard, and the next meeting with the teachers in each of the pilot schools to be held in April and May. And then ... is our new meeting at the Seventh Festival Roma children in Veliko Tarnovo



CENTER AMALIPE WILL PARTICIPATE IN THE BOARD OF CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL INTEGRATION

Amalipe will participate in the Board of the Centre for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities (COIDUEM). The other NGO represented in the Board are CEGA Foundation and Association Etnotolerans - Shumen as well as the National Association of Municipalities. The Board members are ten, among them the Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science Krassimir Vatchev, representatives of key Directorates in Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour (responsible for Roma integration at present) and the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Demographic Issues.

This became clear after the Minister of Education Prof. Sergei Ignatov issued an order to form a new Board of the Centre. The first meeting of the Board of renewed Center will be held on April 28.

The Center for Educational Integration of Children and students from ethnic minorities was established by Decree of the Council of Ministers 4/11.01.2005, as a secondary distributor of budget. The Center started its real activity in 2007 and since then under competitive procedures COIDUEM approved dozens of projects aimed at educational integration of schools and municipalities. COIDUEM implements the Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and students from ethnic minorities. Currently executive director of the Center is Dr. Iosif Nounev.

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The study of the problem includes also a desk review of the legal framework and the conducted research and analysis, theoretical developments and implemented activities related to the phenomenon of early / forced marriages. The studies so far point that early marriages are a problem determined by a number of social, demographic and cultural reasons that affect health, education, personal development and implementation, security and welfare of the individual. Cultural and social reasons, leading to early marriages can not be overcome only by the means of state coercion. Early, arranged and forced marriages are characteristic of all societies with patriarchal morality and clear generic structure of the "extended families", including the Bulgarian ethnic group in the early 20th century.

In addition, interviews were conducted with representatives of various government institutions related to the problem at a high management level and the terrain level. The aim is to examine the specific functions and activities which the institution conducts. An important aspect of the ongoing study is to discover opportunities for cooperation between different state institutions in the activities of prevention of early / forced marriages, and between them and representatives of community and civil society.

The results of the survey at the field workers level, carried out with the support of Ms. Lilia Mireva of the State Agency for Child Protection shows major gaps in coordination between institutions, lack of knowledge of the legal framework and lack of purposeful policy to the problem. Similar problems are reported from interviews at a high level as the main preventive activities, according to the interviewed representatives so far should be assigned to schools.



CENTER AMALIPE STARTS ACTIVITIES FOR PREVENTION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK

Following a tendering procedure Amalipe Center was chosen to implement Component 7: Reducing vulnerability to HIV among young people at the greatest risk (15-24 years old) for Veliko Tarnovo territory under the Program for the prevention of HIV / AIDS Tuberculosis and Malaria, funded by the Global Fund. The program includes several major activities:

- Outreach work among young people at risk to increase the knowledge to take a health risk, denial or reduction of risk behavior and support positive changes in behavior, individual counseling of individuals on safe sexual behavior, distribution of informational materials to promote sexual and reproductive health and HIV prevention, distribution of condoms, reasons for limiting the risk behavior and support positive changes in behavior;
- Analysis of the situation regarding young people at risk in the region and mapping of the area;
- Selection and maintenance of a team of peer educators;
- Maintenance of local club / center peer and materials for safe sexual practices;
- Reaching the maximum range among young people at risk in the region
 - Targeting young people at risk over 16 years for HIV testing, reasons for limiting the risk behavior;
- Provide regular supervision and professional team of peer educators for outreach work with young people at risk;
- Conduct media campaigns to reach young people at risk in the area three times a year;
- Organizing seminars and meetings of local and regional level with other teams for fieldwork, set up under the Programme, consensus meetings with those involved with the problems of young people at risk, institutions and organizations within the municipality / region / Training and seminars equal than equal for young people at risk in the region.

Program activities in Veliko Tarnovo start with a campaign dedicated to May 16 - International Day of sympathy with those affected by HIV / AIDS.

REGIONAL STUDY VISIT "SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES FOR ROMA EDUCATIONAL INTEGRATION"

On 13 and 14 April the National Democratic Institute – Bulgaria and Center Amalipe organized Regional Meeting "Successful Models for Educational Integration of Roma". It was attended by Roma experts Slovakia, Romania, Serbia, Kosovo, Macedonia and Bulgaria. The meeting was held in Montana and Sofia

The visit began on April 13 in the Roma square Kosharnik, Montana. The local elementary school is visited only by Roma children and is in-fact segregated. Participants saw how in the middle of the school day around the school freely walked children at school age. The Director of the segregated school blamed the parents of the children and assured guests that the school trains 105 students; Mr. Petar Borishov from the Roma Foundation Sham revealed another picture: not more than 30 Roma kids attend the school and even they do it not regularly. Although the school principal showed good will, he refused to allow the guests to access the classrooms.

Then the experts, along with Petar Borisov had the opportunity to visit VII School of Montana, where for nearly ten years the desegregation process is implemented and Roma children form Kosharnik are integrated successfully. The school director, the assistant director of the school, teachers and the Roma school mentor welcomed the guests. They told the experts how they overcame the initial difficulties in the desegregation of Roma students and assured them that there is no outflow of Bulgarian students and children because of the integration of students. The participants raised many questions regarding the way for preserving Roma identity through the educational system, etc.

After Montana, the group visited St. Kliment Ohridski school of Tishevitsa village, municipality of Vratsa. The participants were welcomed with bread and salt (according to the old Bulgarian tradition) by all students, teachers, school director, the mayor of the village Tishevitsa, the President of the Municipal Council - Vratsa and experts from the Regional Inspectorate of Education. The Tishevitsa school trains 116 children from 4 villages. Nearly 85 percent of those

children are Roma, but contrary to expectations, the school shows very good educational outcomes (one of the first places in the Vratsa region in test assessment year ago), there is no drop-out and no outflow of Bulgarian children to the municipal center. Director Dimitar Kostov explained these successes with the commitment of teachers and parents as well as with the cooperation and support of Center Amalipe: in introduction of "Folklore of the ethnoi - Roma folklore" subject and in other educational initiatives. Currently, the Tishevitsa School is mentoring school within Amalipe project "Decreasing the drop out rate of Roma children". The guests saw the brilliant building of the school that is maintained also by Roma parents and kids and spoke with the Roma parents who work as not-pedagogical staff.

On April 14 the visit continued with round-table "Successes and Challenges for the educational integration of Roma in Bulgaria" in Sofia. Mr. Milen Milanov, National coordinator of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, Joseph Nunev, director of the Center for Educational Integration, Asen Petrov, an expert from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science, Dimitar Dimitrov, national facilitator to the Roma Education Fund, Maria Metodieva, director of The Roma Program of Open Society Institute - Sofia, Vasil Chaprazov, Roma activist and publisher of the newspaper Drom dromendar took part in the conference.

In their welcoming speeches Deyan Kolev (Center Amalipe) and Denitsa Sacheva (NDI - Bulgaria) stressed that although there are still many problems, the efforts for educational integration of Roma children are step by step advancing and this is clear proof that serious investment in this area is necessary. Success stories and future actions for Educational Integration of Roma, the still existing problem of segregation and bridging it, ideas for strengthening cooperation between NGOs and government institutions related to educational problems of Roma were discussed. All the participants expressed gratitude to the Bulgarian hosts for sharing experience and asked for following visit in Macedonia.



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Discussions focused on European Union policies on Roma and Romani and Traveller women and the 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma inclusion, facilitating the application of these policies at local level and anti-gypsyism, hate crime and other forms of intolerance.

Bulgaria was represented by Teodora Krumova from Center Amalipe and Elitsa Stefanova from Integro Association. Teodora Krumova raised the issue that the problems of Romani and Traveller women are rather segregated within principle 5 "Awareness of the gender dimension". In order to achieve gender equality we should definitely introduce the gender principle in the agenda of all the other nine principles. Sabiha Souleiman from Antirropon – Greece shared that women at the grassroots level often do not even know that they have rights what about to fight for them. Letitia Mark (Roma Women Association 'For our children') appealed Roma culture and tradition not to be used as an excuse and pretext for Romani and Traveler Women discrimination and neglecting of their rights. Enisa Eminova from Macedonia reminded that speaking about Romani women rights is speaking about human rights and speaking about harmful practices in the Roma community is not a betrayal of the community. But again the problem comes to the lack of data about Romani women and the lack of strategic policy paper. Therefore, we should insist on including explicitly Romani women issues in the EU Roma Strategy.

Another issue raised in the discussion is how EU instruments promote Romani women equality. Many of the participants shared that practically at present no one makes use of the available EU instruments which create a favorable framework for enhancing gender equality. Ostalinda Maya from ERRC stressed that EU should ensure that structural funds were not provided to institutions, which participated on human rights violation of Roma, such as segregated schools, hospitals, which perform forced sterilisation of Romani women etc. Teodora Krumova pointed that the gender dimension in EU structural funds should be ensured practically, not just nominally. At present all project in Bulgaria, for example, should account on how they promote the gender principal and the inclusion of Roma. This statistic however is provided just nominally and often without any real measures. In this respect and in order to contribute to achieving gender equality Alina Covaci from the Public Health Program of OSI suggested the establishment of a concrete office dealing with Roma gender equality.

A number of other issues have been brought to the discussion such as the continuing violence against Romani women as we have witnessed in recent months in the Czech Republic in Vitkov and Opava, Hungary and Italy in Ponticelli, etc, the poverty, and so on.

Finally the women participating in the two day meeting came up with a position paper which had several major points:

- There is a need for both mainstreaming and targeted approaches in addressing the situation of Romani and Travellers women in all EU and Member States policies. Gender needs to be included in all Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion.
- There is a need to draw attention to the increasing poverty of Romani communities and to the increasing polarisation in the society, which results from anti-Gypsyism. Especially in the time of crises, Romani women and children are even more affected.

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NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR COOPERATION ON ETHNIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC ISSUES HOLD ITS FIRST MEETING IN 2010

The first for the current 2010 year meeting of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Demographic Issues was held on April 29 in the building of the Council of Ministers. Representatives of institutions related to ethnic issues and NGOs took part in the session. The meeting was chaired by the Deputy chairman Georgi Krastev.

Participants were acknowledged with the NCCEDI 2009 activities report, information about the epidemic of measles, the state of the problem "Block 20" in Yambol and about the upcoming Census of the population. The Council has adopted the proposal of Deyan Kolev for organizing a special meeting regarding the new Law for school education: the meeting will be scheduled in the period when this legal act proposal shall be introduced to the Council of Ministers. As a result from this meeting the Council shall elaborate a position regarding the new legislative act that will be included in the so-called "Coordination procedure".

The choice of Deputy chairman from the quota of non-governmental organizations passed without any intrigues: Thoma Kyurkchiev from the "Center for Aromanian language and culture", was elected with 13 votes convincingly against 4 for the other candidate - Assen Kolev from Inforama - Asenovgrad.

The meeting held could be defined as a slack after the formation of the Council in 2006. It was not a surprise that political figures did not attend the session - only Deputy Minister Raykov (MFA), Deputy Minister Konstantinova (MH) and National Coordinator of the Decade of Roma Inclusion Milen Milanov attended the meeting, other deputy ministers sent experts. Till the last moment it was expected that the Chairman of NCCEDI Tsvetanov shall appear, but at the end his welcoming nota were read by Georgi Krastev.

Participants seemed very skeptical about the existence of supporting will to assure that the Council should actually work. Deyan Kolev said that in 2009 NCCEDI has met just one time, which is in violation of its Rules, setting that at least 4 meetings per year shall be conducted. "I hope from here on, that the institutions from the executive power will comply with the rules of NCCEDI adopted by Decree of the Council of Ministers - if we really want to have the Council," said Kolev.

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL FOR ROMA INTEGRATION

OBSERVER

On 26 April the Council for Roma integration to the Coordinator of the Decade of Roma Inclusion Milen Milanov held another meeting. During the meeting measures under the "Human Resources Development" Operational Program specifically aimed at the integration of Roma, the need for urgent action to achieve greater involvement of the draft public Education Law with the educational integration of Roma children, as well as the forthcoming 2011 census were present.

Ivan Krastev underlined that thanks to the representatives of Roma organizations in the monitoring committee of the HRD OP the program not only devoted significantly greater financial resources for Roma integration activities (e.g. the Roma educational integration scheme was enlarged at the last meeting of the Monitoring Committee of OPHRD from 6 to 12 mln . lv at the request of Deyan Kolev, representative of the group of Roma organizations in the Committee), but given a greater role and activities to NGOs themselves. For the first time in the axis 1 NGOs will be eligible and targeted to reach inactive in the labor market. On the proposal of the coordinator of the Decade Milen Milanov in the axis 6 of the program will be ensured an opportunity to recruit Roma labor mediators in all 105 employment offices and their branches (total 245 people) for a period of three years. This measure will be reinforced by 84 regional and 12 specialized job fairs. Participants in the meeting, however, stressed that to be successful these measures, Roma labor mediators must have clearly spelled out job descriptions, not to be used as support staff. In addition, other 250 million BGN will release the program to provide training and subsidized employment. To be effective, however it needs more active involvement and inclusion of local authorities.



FOCUS

FRA ROUND TABLE WITH ROMANI AND TRAVELLERS WOMEN ACTIVISTS "ON A ROAD TO EQUALITY"

continues from page 6



- The European Commission should develop EU Roma Strategy. In order to ensure Romani and Travellers women access to human rights, we should be consulted on a regular basis in all stages of strategy making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation process.
- European Commission in the next programming period 2014-2020 should make the Structural Funds more accessible, flexible and develop micro credit programmes, which would support the grassroots Romani women and interlink small programmes, which already exist. EU should ensure that structural funds are not provided to institutions, which participate on human rights violation of Roma, such as segregated schools, hospitals, which perform forced sterilisation of Romani women etc.
- There is a need to raise awareness of fundamental rights with the Romani communities as well as with the service providers, who need to be more aware of and responsive to community needs and of their obligations in this regard.
- There is a need to be a critical reflection on what the First Roma Summit has brought to Romani communities. Concrete commitment of Member States needs to be in place for the outcomes of the II EU Roma Summit.



VISIT OF PILOT SCHOOLS FROM THE PROGRAM FOR PREVENTION OF DROPPING OUT



Center Amalipe organized visit of pilot schools from the Program for prevention of dropping-out, effectuated by America for Bulgaria Foundation and Center Amalipe. Representative of Amalipe, together with an expert from the pedagogical team of the Program, visited the schools in regions of Vratsa, Vidin, Montana, Targovishte, Dobrich, Silistra and Sofia. They met teachers from pilot schools and discussed with them problems that teachers encounter in their work, and also – ideas how to overcome those problems. Most of the teachers believe the important problems in the work with Roma pupils are the unemployment, migration, low parents' activity, insufficient knowledge of Bulgarian. Most of them are motivated to overcome those problems and offered some ideas – to establish clubs and art studios, after-school activities, education in Roma folklore, more classes in Bulgarian, optimization of educational process, involving parents in school life.

TRAINING FOR ROMA PARENTS AND LEADERS

Center Amalipe organized a training for Roma parents and leaders from April 21st to 23rd, 2010. The training was related to the Program for preventing dropping out from school of Roma children, supported by America for Bulgaria Foundation. Main topics discussed by 30 Roma activists, were how Roma parents could participate in school life and how to help the improving of educational quality for Roma children. The participants – parents of students, activists from NGOs, specialists from municipality's administrations, came from settlements, included in first year of the Program. Common thing for all of them is the influence that they have on Roma parents and their commitment and engagement with the education of Roma children.



The Program for preventing dropping out from school of Roma children, its philosophy, and its activities and frames was presented during the training. Participants discussed possible ways for inclusion of Roma parents in different activities and in the whole school life. Main problems, leading to dropping-out from school found definition: low quality of teaching process, lack of interest in some teachers, boring classes, lack of necessary equipment, lack of participation of Roma parents in school life. At some schools there is visible discrimination by teachers against Roma children.

Participants showed some steps for improving the connection between Roma parents and school. One of the most frequently proposed ideas was to be restored the practice of "home visitations", that existed in socialistic period – it is necessary the master of the class to visit his pupils and their parents at home, at least twice a year. Other idea was Roma to be included in school board and to have the possibility to control the quality of school process. The possibility for conduction of open lessons was also discussed: parents will be calm, if they periodically visit school, so they could see how their children learn. Everybody agreed on the proposal for organizing after-school activities with participation of parents such as celebrations for Vassilitsa, St. George's day, Bayram, Easter, 8th of April etc.

In the end of the training concrete activities that will help schools in different settlements to attract and keep Roma pupils in class were marked. Participants promised to be leaders of changes in Roma communities, by supporting children not only to finish school, but to continue their education at universities.





EASTER (PATRAGI) - CELEBRATION OF RESURRECTION AND HOPE



Easter (Patragi) is celebrated by almost all Romani groups in Bulgaria. The Kaldarashi make the most luxurious celebration of Easter. The celebration of Easter by Kaldarashi, Rudari and Dassikane-Roma is connected with their Christian religion. Patragi is really Christ's Resurrection for them.

Preparation for the feast: painting of the eggs. The eggs are painted on Thursday or Saturday like in the Bulgarian tradition. The preferred colour is red. It is obligatory the number of the egg to end on one for the Burgudjii group: 21, 31, 41, and so on. They also preserve the custom that the family members use the first egg (which is obligatory red) to paint their faces. It is believed to bring health. This egg is left aside for St. George's Day, it is not to be eaten. There is a similar custom preserved by some Kaldarashi.

Taking of "brazda". This extremely interesting custom is connected with meeting Easter's sunrise. It is preserved in one way or another by all Kaldarashi groups from Central Bulgaria: from the village of Kardam, Popovo region, to the town of Dryanovo, Gabrovo region. The core of the custom is bringing a wheat sod from some of the fields in the nearby into the house.

The wheat sod is called "brazda." This is a square with length of the sides around 50 cm (it is not an obligatory length). It consists of wheat stalks, roots, and soil. It is taken from the nearest wheat field or from just a field or a meadow (if there is no wheat field in the nearby)."

The Grebenari from Dryanovo put just a red egg on the brazda, and a vessel with red wine by the side of the sod. They do not put an iron spoon ("iron is not good metal, it gets rusty"). They do not give komka, either ("the Eucharist is given in the church").

The sod is taken early in the morning on Easter's day, at sunrise. In the group of the Kaldarashi from Dryanovo the sod is taken by the youngest



daughter-in-law, in the group of the Bakardjii from the village of Kardam, this is done by the man who is the head of the family.

The Bakardjii from Kardam put a red egg, money, a bottle of wine, and an iron spoon on the brazda. One of the ends of the spoon is on the sod, the other - on the doorstep of the house. At sunrise the oldest man in the family gives komka (Eucharist): each member of the family steps on the spoon ("to be healthy like the iron during this year"), drinks a gulp of wine, takes the Eucharist from the oldest man, makes a cross, and says: "Christ resurrected!"

The ritual with the brazda is aimed to bring health and fertility. It symbolizes spring regeneration of nature by combining fresh green



stalks of wheat and the red egg, and the red wine - the blood of the resurrecting Christ.

The mere feast. Easter is probably the only feast when going to church is obligatory (at least in the Kaldarashi group). This is the mere core of the feast. For the other Romani groups in Bulgaria the feast is celebrated in a family surrounding. Paying visits to relatives and friends and exchanging eggs is another important element of the feast.

Each guest presents the host with a red egg and receives in turn another red egg. The guest addresses the host with the words: "Bahtalos kyoges! Christos sam yat!" (Marry feast! Christ resurrected!). The host replies: "Adavara sam yat!" (He resurrected for the truth). Then they shake hands and exchange eggs.

There is obligatory a rich table for the feasts with chicken meat (usually a turkey) and ritual bread "kulatzi".



This year we were welcomed at the Easter feast table by Iliya, Nikolay, Sabi and other families in the Kaldarashi neighborhood in Pavlikeni. The children eagerly hurried to show us whose egg came out to be the fighter while the older again invited us to visit them next month at St. George's Day to show us how they chase the Davil with garlic during the feast.



PREVENTION OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES AMONG ETHNIC MINORITIES WAS DISCUSSED ON AN OFFICIALS' MEETING

Work meeting on the matter of prophylaxis of measles among ethnic minorities was held on the 6th of April, 2010. At the meeting, which was opened by the Deputy Minister of Health, Prof. Todorka Kostadinova, the needed measures for optimizing the prophylaxis of infectious diseases among minorities were discussed.

According to the actual information about the spread of the disease, until that moment, people in Bulgaria who had measles are 10 600. 93 % of them are representatives of ethnic minorities. 108 000 emergency immunizations were performed.

Ms Rossitsa Ivanova, a program manager of projects supported by PHARE in the National Council for collaboration on ethnical and demographical issues, presented briefly all activities on those projects, and the activities, related to prophylaxis, education of medical staff in intercultural environment and campaigns for healthy lifestyle etc.

D-r Assen Pachedziev from association "Higia +" presented measures for improving the immunization coverage for ethnic minorities. Prof. Ivajlo Tarnev - president of Foundation "Health problems of minorities" described their experience in organizing and executing prophylactic activities and also – the profession of health mediator. Petar Tzvetanov – president of Association "National league of health mediators", presented the activities of health mediators, concerning the prophylaxis of measles. The participants in the meeting were unanimous that good results could be attained only with effective collaboration between general practitioners, regional public health inspections, health mediators, Roma NGOs, local authorities and media. Ms. Rossitsa Ivanova had the obligation to inform the participants in the meeting about the recommendations and the proposals, reflected in final reports of consultants, accomplishing contracts on health components on mentioned FHARE projects, which could serve as a starting point in the following work of institutions and organizations for optimizing health awareness and health status of Roma population.

PHOTO EXHIBITION FOR THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ROMA



Centre Amalipe celebrated the International day of Roma April 8th with an exhibition of photos, made by pupils, with the motto "The World of Roma in my eyes". The exhibition was exposed at the Centre in the building of the European Information Centre in Veliko Tarnovo.

FORUM FOR IMPLEMENTING THE INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVE "DECADE OF ROMA INCLUSION"



Forum for implementing the international initiative "Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015" was held on the International Day of Roma on April 8 in Sofia.

This initiative started five years ago on Feb. 2 at a ceremony in Sofia, hosts of the event were Bulgarian Prime Minister Simeon Sakskoburggotski and Hungarian Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany. The official ceremony at the National Theatre was also attended by Prime Ministers of Croatia Ivo Sanader, Vlado Buckovski Prime Minister of Macedonia and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia Vojislav Kostunica. The special declaration has been signed also by Deputy Prime Ministers of Czech Republic, Romania and Slovakia - Pavel Nemecek, Marko Bela, Pal Chaki, and H.E. Chedomir Radoykovich, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Serbia and Montenegro to Bulgaria. They all declared that they pronounce period 2005-2015 the Decade of Roma Inclusion, and are committed to support full participation of Roma communities in their countries to achieve the objectives of the present decade and attained by the reporting of results and review the lessons learned process of implementation of action plans for the decade.

Forum to discuss progress in implementing the Decade in Bulgaria was held. Organizers of the forum are the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Open Society Institute and Permanent Representative of the World Bank in Bulgaria, the meeting was attended by numerous representatives of NGOs, Roma activists, ambassadors, ministers and representatives of international organizations.

An update of the National Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion is approaching, said the Minister of Labour and Social Policy Totyu Mladenov during the forum and that a consolidation of all stakeholders and resources to be solved the problems of the Roma community in Bulgaria are needed. He listed the measures which should be taken in this direction: increasing the competitiveness of the labor market, literacy, improve access to education and health, provide better living conditions.

During the roundtable organized by the MLSP, the World Bank and Open Society Institute, a review of policies for Roma integration in several main directions have been held:

Employment (presented by Krassimir Popov, Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Policy and Lilia Makaveeva Association Integro)

Priority Healthcare (presented by Todorka Kostadinova, Deputy Minister of Health and Milena Ilieva, World without Borders)

Housing (presented by George Pregyov, Deputy Minister of Regional Development and Maria Metodieva, Program Director at the Open Society Institute - Sofia)

Anti-discrimination (presented by Lalo Kamenov, Vice-President of the Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and lawyer Daniela Mihaylova Association Initiative for Equal Opportunities)

Culture (presented by Dimitar Derelev, Deputy Minister of Culture and journalist Valery Lekov)

Education (presented by Milka Kodzhabashieva, Deputy Minister of Education and Dimitar Dimitrov from Roma Education Fund in Bulgaria)

Presentations reporting the performance of the decade in Bulgaria can be found on the web page of the Open Society Institute, Sofia

Dr. Mariana Kotseva, president of the National Statistical Institute participated in the discussion and her presentation was devoted to the study of the ethnic composition of population censuses in Bulgaria. During the forum the DOSTA campaign of the Council of Europe was presented, which aim is to raise public sensitivity and overcome stereotypes and discrimination against the Roma in Europe.

Greetings to the participants in the roundtable from the President of Bulgaria Georgi Parvanov, Deputy Prime Minister Tsvetan Tsvetanov, Chairwoman of the National Assembly Tsetska Tsacheva, U.S. Ambassador to Bulgaria H.E. James Warlick, Zinaida Zlatanova Head of EC Representation in Bulgaria, Georgi Stoychev, executive director of the Institute Open Society Institute - Sofia.



FESTIVAL OF ROMA CULTURE IN THE VILLAGE OF ROSSEN

SONGS, DANCES AND CUSTOMS IN SREDISHTE FOR THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ROMA

Every year at “Hristo Botev” school in the village of Rosen, Sozopol municipality, a Festival of Roma culture take place. The celebration is dedicated to 8th of April – the International Day of Roma. It was organized with enthusiasm from the groups for ethnic folklore in the school. Pupils presented dramatization of a tale, showing traditions in Roma family – “Grandmother, grandfather and many children”. Their older friends offered information about International Roma organization. The culmination of the celebration was the performance of Russian Roma dances.

The fifth festival “Roma road”, dedicated to the International Day of Roma was opened on the 8th of April in Sredishte, the region of Silistra. It is a common initiative of the school “Tsanko Tserkovski” and the board of the Community center “Stefan Karadzha”.

Traditionally, the celebration was supported by the municipality administration in Kajnardzja, the mayor of Sredishte and by local political leaders. Many people, living in the village and in neighboring villages, came to see the program. To congratulate Roma community and to share the festival atmosphere, special guests were the children folklore dance group from Kajnardja and the sing group “Silver bells” from Sredishte.

The festival started with a street parade. Participants were carrying European and Roma flags. On the square in the village everybody listened hymns of Europe, Bulgaria and Roma.

After the presentation of all guests, started the concert of pupils from the school “Tsanko Tserkovsjky”. They presented the custom “Ederleze in Sredishte”, that finished with fortunetelling with nettle. Children recited poetries from Roma authors Anzhelo Malikov, Ussin Kerim, Sali Ibrahim, and also from Bulgarian poets, that dedicated works on Roma people: Pencho Slavejkov, Pejo Yavorov etc.

The culmination of the celebration was the performance of Roma and Indian dances and songs with accompaniment of tarambukas.

The festival finished with a competition for belly dancing. The audience also took part in the dances. The best performers received prizes.

The final words of the spokesperson of the festival were: “Dear Roma friends, we wish to see the sunshine in your eyes and happiness in your souls! Follow the spring wind that sweeps away memories of the cold winter and brings back to us the blue sky! Keep untouched your values and culture! Respect your motherland Bulgaria!”



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ROMA IN VRATSA

Children from kindergarten “Balgarche” in Vratsa prepared a concert “The sunrise is for all of us”, dedicated to the International Day of Roma – 8 of April.

Every guest on the celebration received a personal message on a child drawing and the traditional bunch of geranium.

The concert started with Roma dance “Sunrise” in the music of “Ederlesi”, continued with legends about the origin of Roma people “Garden of nations” and finished with the hymn of UNICEF.

There were presents for best pupil's drawing and essay for children from the schools “Climent Ohridski” in Tishevitsa, “Kiril and Metodi” in Vratsa, “Hristo Botev” in Banitsa, “Nikola Vojvodov” in Vratsa.

The closing speech of the kindergarten director – Ms Dourankeva were: “Let's join the efforts in using our potential and the possibilities of representatives of Roma communities for more convincing support of educational integration of Roma.”





IMPACT OF HEALTH REFORM IN BULGARIA ON THE SITUATION OF VULNERABLE GROUPS

Health care system reform stopped due to structural changes in the Ministry of Health - the resignation of former health minister and designation of the new health minister - Prof. Anna - Maria Borisova. The director of National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF) has been replaced as well. Nelly Nesheva MD was appointed to this position as her predecessor Mrs. Nacheva resigned. This raises many questions concerning the government newly committed course of actions regarding the health reform.

It is expected that an investigation of current state of affairs within the ministry shall be conducted before undertaking any new reforms. Ministry of Health began drafting a National Health Map which should be ready within 3 months, as well as gathering information to what extent the hospitals are provided with doctors and equipment. Based on the gathered data it is expected the new changes in health care system to be launched.

For now it is clear that government spending on administration is reduced by 273 million in total for all ministries in 2010, the largest decrease is in the health ministry budget - 80 million. It is expected that this will lead to problems in the functioning of health care system, which even without these budget cuts had insufficient funds. In this context, medical organizations insisted on unblocking of 450 million BGN from the reserve of the National Health Insurance Fund. According to them, this measure would cover the financial gaps in the budget of NHIF, without urging the need to increase the amount of health insurance installments. Parliament rejected this proposal, submitted by the Bulgarian Socialists Party, with motives that at first a reform of the NHIF must be carried out, otherwise the money will continue to be spent inefficiently.

Updated information on patient's rights, clarifying the health services a patient has the right to access can be found in the patient's handbook, prepared by the Ombudsman of the Republic of Bulgaria Ginio Ganev. The Handbook explains in an "easy to understand" language, the rights and obligations of the health insured patients and those persons with unpaid health insurance installments as well.

Vaccines and Immunization

According to the data from the Ministry of Health since 2009 to present day, over 130,000 immunizations of non-immune children in the Roma community have been made. The reason for this is the epidemic of measles which affected between 93 and 98% of non-immune Roma. Problems with the incidence of measles, of course, concerns not only Roma. From the epidemic also suffer elderly people and persons with reduced immunity, weakened by chronic illness or by other reasons. According to Violeta Uzunova MD, director of Regional Inspectorate for Protection and Monitoring of Public Health in the region of Sliven, immunized individuals also suffer measles, although the disease passes more easily due to the vaccine applied.

Changing the Ordinance 15 issued by the Ministry of health two new antigens against influenza and pneumonia are introduced in the national immunization calendar. From 01.04.2010 doses of those free vaccines are shipped around the country for compulsory vaccination. Changes in the Regulations of the Law on family allowances for children were introduced to increase the scope of immunizations. The changes legally bind the GPs to issue free certificates, certifying that the child has been subjected to all mandatory vaccines, prescribed in the immunization calendar, and have all of the necessary screenings completed. Health insurance card indicating all required vaccinations may replace the GPs certificate. If the parents are missing one of these two documents, they can not apply for the family allowances from the State budget.

Drugs and Prevention

Painkillers and drugs for patients suffering cancer are missing from the market as the Ministry of health delayed tenders for this type of medications. According to medical professionals this situation is forcing patients to resort to the use of heavily addictive morphine instead. Starting in April patient organizations launched subscription insisting that drugs for cancer patients to be awarded by the NHIF. Health Minister Anna-Maria Borisova has issued an order to stop all procurements in hospitals, which deprives people from quality hemodialysis treatment. Association of people with kidney disease also appeals that their patients' medicines must be paid by the State budget.

The right to receive funds from the State budget for travel expenses from province to the capital - Sofia for monthly preventive screenings and counseling of patients with transplanted organs will be reduced from 12 to 3 trips per year.

The introduction of a new prescription tax of 1 lev was proposed as anti-crisis measure in the government's plan. The tax is to be paid to pharmacies by patients taking free medications - drugs that are 100% paid by NHIF.

NHIF will create a new registry database for patients to whom are prescribed expensive medicines for home treatment. Thus, the NHIF shall be able to follow the effectiveness of treatment, monitoring different parameters: complications of the disease, hospitalization, replacement therapy and others. All items will be described in a designated card to each patient. It will contain description of the medication prescribed, the results of mandatory tests for the specific disease and previous treatment with other healing agents. This will assure a full traceability of medical care rendered to a patient - monitoring the treatment and prescribed medicine usage.

Amendment in regulations of the law on social welfare allows patients, who have received permission from the Ministry of Health to receive medical treatment abroad, to receive funds to cover their travel expenses and per diem. The measure will benefit the one who is receiving the treatment and one's companion.

Roma mothers

The problem with female healthcare consultations for the uninsured and migrant Roma women remains unresolved. Roma woman with a deceased fetus died in hospital in Gorna Oryahovitsa due to absence of GP and pregnancy monitoring. Under current legislation, regulation 26 issued by the Ministry of Health, any hospital that has a contract with the NHIF for an appropriate clinical pathway is required to assist the birth of health uninsured mothers.

They have the right freely to choose a hospital for these services throughout the country. Every doctor in medical centers and hospitals for pre-hospital and hospital care may forward them to appropriate facility for providing medical services related to obstetric care, with the direction for hospitalization (MNZ bl. 119). If a pregnant woman with unpaid health insurance taxes sought obstetric care from a hospitals or centers for emergency medical care which have no conditions to provide the necessary volume of diagnostic and curative activities, they are required to ensure timely transfer of patients to the nearest hospital for hospital care which can carry out such activities. Monitoring of the pregnancy, unfortunately, remains outside the guaranteed minimum for health uninsured mothers.

According to the opinions of medical professionals, monitoring of pregnancy and women's consultations are crucial for normal carriage and birth of a viable child without risk to the fetus and mother. There is a need to widen the scope of this care with engagement of these health services to ensure successful pregnancy and birth.

