

**Office of the Plenipotentiary of the
Slovak Government for Roma
Communities**

**Perspectives of the integration of
the Roma in Slovakia**

Ábel Ravasz

Bratislava, November 30, 2017

The Roma in Slovakia

- An estimated 450 thousand (8%) Roma
- 1/3 integrated, 1/3 separated, 1/3 segregated
- Heavily concentrated in east/central regions
- 200 “informal settlements”, extreme poverty
- Diversity within the community itself
- Atlas of Roma communities (2004, 2013)

Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities

- Highest level executive representative
- Coordination of ministries and offices
- Legislative activities
- Network of field offices
- Project implementation

EU funding for “Roma projects” 2014-2020

- Operational Program Human Resources
 - PO 5: soft interventions (PRC, MinHealth)
 - Field work, community centers, various assistants
 - PO 6: hard interventions (MinInterior)
 - Investment projects
 - PO 1: education (MinEducation)
 - PO 2, 3, 4: labor market (MinLabor)
- Other operational programs
 - IROP
 - Interreg etc.

Strategy for the Integration of Roma

- Framework strategy since 2011 until 2020
- 2015-2017 actualization of Action Plans
- Seven priority areas
 - Education
 - Employment
 - Health
 - Housing
 - Financial inclusion
 - Non-discrimination
 - Public opinion

Education

- Key challenges
 - Extremely low levels of preschool enrollment
 - Segregation into special schools
 - Low number of secondary level graduates
- Key remedies
 - Preschool free from 2018, compulsory from 2019
 - New system of diagnostics
 - Solid financing for school assistants
 - Scholarships at the secondary level
 - Better coordination of schools & employers

Employment

- Key challenges
 - Very low levels of employment in settlements
 - Discrimination on labor market
 - Demand/supply mismatch
- Key remedies
 - Individualized field work consulting
 - Connecting vocational schools to employers
 - Social aspect in public procurement
 - Least developed regions initiative
 - Labor agencies

Housing

- Key challenges
 - Informal settlements on illegal land
 - Low quality of basic services (water, road etc.)
 - Ineffective social housing schemes
- Key remedies
 - Land ownership resolution
 - Self-help housing schemes
 - Multistage housing scheme
 - Infrastructural projects for basic services
 - Personal bankruptcy reform

Other areas

- Key challenges
 - Abysmal public health in informal settlements
 - High levels of prejudice & discrimination
- Key remedies
 - Health Communities project (EU best practice)
 - Sensitization of media, police, field workers
 - Better application of nondiscrimination laws
 - Financial inclusion projects

Factors hindering improvement

- EU projects used for services, not only pilots
- EU projects finance 90%+ of interventions
- Bureaucracy hindering sustained work
- Projects landing in unprepared legal framework
- Insecure position of plenipotentiary's office
- Public opinion
- Controversial decentralization of services
- Post 2020 world will be very different

Key issues to resolve

- Extending interventions beyond 2020
- Securing a better legal framework in general
- Strengthening the executive position
- Executing key pieces of legislation
 - Compulsory kindergartens
 - New diagnostics, fewer children in special schools
 - Integrating field workers into state service
- Improving absorption of municipalities

Thank you for your attention!

Ábel Ravasz

abel.ravasz@minv.sk