



HELLENIC REPUBLIC
MINISTRY OF LABOUR, SOCIAL SECURITY AND WELFARE
NATIONAL CENTRE FOR SOCIAL SOLIDARITY



**DIVISION OF COORDINATION AND ORGANIZATION
DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION**

National Contact Point-The Implementation of the National Strategy for Roma Population

Social exclusion and poverty are fundamental policy priorities for all Member States of the European Union. The Roma are one of the most marginalized social groups in Europe suffering severe discrimination and facing social exclusion in respect of inadequate housing, high unemployment, low educational level and poor health. In this framework, each Member State of the E.U. was called on to develop a national strategy/national strategic plan for the social integration of the Roma people.

In Greece, the strategic approach has followed the reasoning set out in the previous Integrated Action Plan for the Social Integration of Greek Gypsies (2001-2008), the main objective of which was the implementation of a housing policy for the Greek Roma, in conjunction with other measures to support and promote their social integration (training, education, promotion into employment, provision of health services and cultural and sporting amenities).

The National Strategy for Social Integration of Roma 2012-2020, which is specified in regional strategies, aims to end the social exclusion of the Roma and to create the necessary conditions for their social integration, focusing on four priority axes: housing, employment, education and health.

Taking into account the shortcomings of the preceding programming period (2001-2008), the National Strategy set the following objectives:

- the systematic and comprehensive inventory and description of the current situation
- a review of the rationality of the planning priorities, based on the results of the aforementioned inventory
- a redefinition of the priorities on the short-, medium- and long-term levels, based on the existing needs of the target group and the resources (human and financial) available
- the establishment of an administrative mechanism for the integrated management of the national strategy

The **National Centre for Social Solidarity (E.K.K.A.)** was designated as the **National Contact Point (NCP)** of the National Strategy for the Social Integration of Roma, according to the Inter Ministerial Decision (3.27695/οικ.3.1773/04-10-2013). E.K.K.A. has the responsibility of coordination and supervision of each organization involved, at regional/local administrative level to implement and monitor the National Strategy, which acquires a close collaboration with regional and local authorities. Despite this collaboration, E.K.K.A. is also going to have a close collaboration with National Centre for Social Research, the Greek Ombudsman and several NGOs involved in the field. Moreover, at the national level, there is a close collaboration with the Ministries involved, and soon, the NCP will carry out technical meetings with each Ministry in order to share information on progress made on their sectoral policy for the Roma strategy and further specify their strategy. Finally, E.K.K.A. should prepare a Report till 18 November 2013, on progress made on the follow-up in the implementation of the national Roma integration strategies regarding the four priority axes mentioned above.

The current situation of the Roma population in Greece

This particular social group is subject to multiple forms of social exclusion – in the areas of housing, employment, health and education.

According to a study based on a questionnaire sent to local councils in 2008, designed to map the main sites where the Roma were living, the greatest concentrations of the settled Roma population are to be found in the major conurbations and in rural regions, where there are more opportunities for employment. The whole Roma population residing in distinct and identifiable locations, amounts to approximately 12,000 permanently settled families, or 50,000 individuals – in other words, there has been an increase of an 8%-10%, compared to the 1998 estimates which was approximately 43,000 individuals. The major concentrations of the Roma (over 1,000 families) are found in four (4) regions (Eastern Macedonia-Thrace, Thessaly, Western Greece and Central Macedonia).

Status of the four priority axes are described below:

HOUSING:

Housing is the Roma population's main problem, with the majority living in makeshift accommodation. Housing conditions (with 50% of the population living in prefabricated homes, shacks, shanty dwellings and, in general, accommodation of a makeshift nature, in overcrowded conditions and without the basic technical and social infrastructure) are a serious obstacle to providing the Roma a decent standard of living.

EMPLOYMENT:

For the majority of the Roma, the main source of income is dependent on occupation, which is usually of a seasonal nature, often not covered by the safeguards of the formal labour market or of the informal 'black' employment". Many households depend on the seasonal labour of just one member, and on the welfare benefits they may be entitled to as large families or without means of leaving. In general, the Roma incomes are low, meaning that the majority of households live below the poverty threshold.

EDUCATION:

The majority of the Roma population (especially the older age groups) continues to be illiterate, and although school attendance is more common among the younger Roma compared to their older counterparts, their involvement in the educational process is still characterized as insufficient to strengthen and improve their vocational status and mobility. Most Roma children aged 12 and above leave school in order to find work to supplement the family income.

HEALTH:

The health problems of the Roma population are directly linked to their low socioeconomic profile, poor living and working conditions and low level of education. All these factors lead to morbidity and ill health, a lower life expectation and high rates of child mortality.