

EXPLANATION OF ACTION PLAN FOR ROMA EMPLOYMENT IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The purpose and the desired outcome of the Roma Employment Action Plan is to improve Roma employment in Bosnia and Herzegovina, increase employment, improve entrepreneurship and encourage Roma to become involved in all employment processes, thereby in other social developments and processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina with the view to reducing their poverty.

Objective 1

Defining – updating database

This objective is planned to provide a functional database on unemployed Roma for the purpose of establishing appropriate unemployment records to include all indicators which are provided for under legislation and which are a basic prerequisite for the inclusion of Roma in labour market. Without updated and good-quality records on unemployed Roma, the competent authorities cannot undertake activities aimed at their employment, preparation for employment, retraining and additional training, and employment mediation, nor can it be ensured that they have other rights unemployed persons exercise under the law.

Measure 1

Systematic collection of data on unemployed Roma

This measure is to ensure the collection of data on as many unemployed Roma as possible, from 15 to 65 years of age, the starting point being the fact that registration in the unemployment records is voluntary and that only a small number of Roma are registered with employment services as unemployed persons. Apart from the competent employment services, the systematic collection of data on unemployed Roma also means the inclusion of Roma associations as per the place of residence of unemployed persons, as well as the use of the records of other competent authorities which maintain and publish information on citizens within their competence and programme activities.

Measure 2

Establishment of appropriate records and their maintenance

This measure enables the establishment of appropriate records on unemployed Roma, which the competent employment services are bound to keep in accordance with laws and other by-laws, and to update, i.e. maintain them. The appropriate unemployment records are a basis for undertaking planned activities in the process of Roma employment and self-employment.

Measure 3

Conduct training for staff which is to create database

This measure needs to provide and conduct training for staff that is to create the database. Additional training concerning the use of information technologies needs to be conducted for staff in employment services, statistics services and Ministries, while a more comprehensive training in creating an unemployment database in accordance with the procedures used by employment services and statistics services needs to be provided for Roma representatives.

Objective 2

Creating stimulating programmes

Stimulating programmes and measures aimed at Roma employment and self-employment are to be provided within this objective. It is also necessary to provide funds in the entity, canton and municipal budgets for active employment measure programmes by the competent institutions, introduce reliefs through tax exemptions and subsidizing payroll contributions for a period of two years, and administrative reliefs for setting up their own enterprises and independent businesses. There have been no specific programmes or incentives aimed at Roma employment in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Measure 1

Regularly adopt annual Roma employment programmes

This measure obliges the competent authorities to adopt annual Roma employment plans given the eight-year period of the Employment Action Plan implementation. Apart from employment in the private and public sector, employment programmes also involve Roma self-employment and other forms of their engagement, such as for instance public works, etc.

Measure 2

Employ Roma with employment services at canton and regional levels, and in local communities.

This measure will contribute to involving Roma in the adoption of annual Roma employment plans as well, and they would be employed with employment services and in local communities, that is, places where employment is defined and planned.

Measure 3

Provide funds to: co-finance employers for Roma employment, support for Roma employment (for setting up family business or small business)

This measure is to provide funds to co-finance employers who would employ Roma, as well as support for self-employment for Roma who want to start up a family business or an independent business. Besides financial, self-employment may as well see support that includes administrative reliefs and benefits granted by the authorities registering an activity or granting an approval for the performance of an activity.

Measure 4

Simplify procedures, introduce reliefs, and provide professional assistance in local communities relating to Roma self-employment.

It is very important for Roma self-employment to simplify procedures and shorten deadlines for the registration of an activity and for obtaining the work permit in local communities, thereby not only speeding up the process, but also encouraging and stimulating self-employment among Roma as one of significant ways of their engagement. It is also necessary for competent services to provide professional assistance to Roma in relation to self-employment given the fact that the procedures before the competent authorities require a certain level of knowledge and familiarity with the regulations.

Measure 5

During implementation of projects of housing and business facilities construction and reconstruction in Roma communities, give priority to construction companies owned by Roma (including amendments to legislation)

Through amendments to legislation, this measure would allow giving priority to construction companies owned by Roma in relation to the implementation of the projects of housing and business facilities construction and reconstruction in Roma communities, thereby providing not only easier Roma employment, but also the economic sustainability of companies owned by Roma.

Measure 6

Provide funds to co-finance Roma women and youth employment and self-employment programmes

This measure is to enable co-financing employment programmes for target categories within the Roma community, and these are Roma women and youth, which also means self-employment in traditional Roma activities, which does not constitute discrimination, because the employment of target categories is provided for by laws and by-laws relative to this field.

Measure 7

Provide funds in entity, canton and municipal budgets for active employment measure programmes by competent institutions

Bearing in mind that the competent institutions dealing with employment do not have the necessary funds for active employment measure programmes, it is necessary, as anticipated under this measure, to provide funds for active employment measure programmes in the entity, canton and municipal, that is, local community budgets.

Measure 8

Plan for introduction of Roma employment reliefs by means of exempting employers from income tax and subsidizing contributions for a period of two years if they employ Roma

The measure introducing reliefs by means of tax exemption and subsidising payroll contributions for a period of two years for employers who employ Roma stimulates quicker Roma employment. The payroll contributions must be paid in the interest of persons employed and their present and future social security, while the state can waive income tax as direct budgetary revenue, which is something this measure aims to achieve.

Measure 9

Support adoption of recycling programme as one of requirements for BiH accession to EU, source of income and possibility for Roma employment, establish recycling agency and solid waste management associations

When it comes to this measure, the starting point is the traditional involvement of the Roma in the collection of secondary raw materials, and a proposal has been made to adopt a recycling programme, and establish a recycling agency and solid waste management associations, because this is one of the requirements for the BiH accession to the European Union. This measure enables Roma employment.

Measure 10

Ensure equal treatment relating to granting funds by micro-credit organisations (with lower interest rates and longer grace period)

This measure is to ensure an equal treatment of Roma and the same requirements for getting funds from micro-credit organisations with the aim of providing funds for starting up businesses or independent activities by Roma.

Measure 11

Support programmes for setting up companies by Roma

This measure places an obligation on all competent bodies and authorities responsible for employment to support programmes for setting up companies by Roma by all means of support allowed under law, including financial support, administrative reliefs, advisory and professional assistance.

Measure 12

Create special stimulating programmes for Roma employment in economic and social activities sectors where there is interest of Roma (traditional artisan, small business, ...)

This measure places an obligation on competent bodies and authorities responsible for employment to create stimulating programmes for Roma employment in sectors where the Roma have interest, and these are traditional crafts and the collection of secondary raw materials, the starting point being the fact that Roma currently have restricted possibilities and knowledge to independently create programmes for their employment.

Measure 13

Create specific employment programmes for disabled Roma, Roma women and young people

This measure places an obligation on competent bodies and authorities responsible for employment to create specific employment programmes for persons among the Roma population that are difficult to employ, such as disabled persons, women and youth. Population categories that are more difficult to employ should be the focus of the competent authorities' activities, not only in terms of employment, but also in terms of creating conditions for their self-employment.

Measure 14

Exempt companies owned by Roma and employers employing Roma from fees in the course of allocating business premises and land lots owned by municipalities, as well as from other obligations within municipal competence.

This measure improves and increases Roma employment, and it does not require deployment of funds, but is related to exemption from fees within the competence of local communities, which will not significantly endanger local budgets, but will considerably assist Roma financially, and additionally encourage them to undertake such activities.

Measure 15

Stimulate Roma employment in registered Roma associations

This measure enables the employment of Roma in registered Roma associations, which are a significant factor in the overall activities pertaining to the implementation of the Roma Employment Action Plan and the protection of the interests of the Roma population in general.

Measure 16

Give Roma priority, through special programmes, when allocating state-owned land to be used (e.g. for organic food production)

This measure enables local communities, but only through special programmes, to give priority to Roma in terms of the allocation of state-owned land to be used for organic food-production, which will not endanger the local budgets, but will allow local communities to contribute to Roma employment in this manner.

Measure 17

Involvement of Roma in public works programmes in local communities.

A contribution made by local communities as bodies implementing planned activities is also that of the inclusion of Roma in public works they (local communities) organise, which is anticipated by the said measure.

Objective 3

Amendments to legislation and enforcement

Amendments to the legislation will be provided within this objective, thereby creating normative requisites for the implementation of the Employment Action Plan, the inclusion of Roma in the labour market under the same terms, a friendlier environment for Roma employment and the involvement of Roma associations in the preparation of regulations. The most important thing is that this objective will enable the adoption of special measures aimed at employing and stimulating Roma, which will not constitute discrimination against other citizens as compared to Roma.

Measure 1

Analysis of general employment conditions and their control for the purpose of preventing all types of discrimination.

This measure is to primarily ensure an analysis of general employment conditions and control to prevent all types of discrimination as a prerequisite for amendments to the legislation.

Measure 2

Expedite process of adoption of regulations on establishment and operation of private employment agencies.

Bearing in mind the importance and role of private employment agencies under market economy conditions, this measure is to ensure their establishment in the BiH Federation through amendments to the legislation, in order to strengthen competition between employment services and private agencies, all of which is aimed at increasing employment.

Measure 3

Examine legal prerequisite for introduction of special measures aimed at Roma employment

The aim of this measure is to see whether there are prerequisites for the introduction of special measures aimed at Roma employment, because it is only laws that may provide for special measures aimed at Roma employment which will not be considered discriminatory against other unemployed persons as compared to Roma.

Measure 4

Introduce tax relief for work of businesses owned by Roma for a period of two years upon registration

This measure allows the introduction of tax relief for the work of businesses owned by Roma for a period of two years upon registration by means of amendments to the legislation pertaining to taxes and finances, thereby economically supporting the work of Roma enterprises and ensuring in a way their economic sustainability.

Measure 5

Involve and consult Roma NGOs in the course of making analyses and drafting regulations

Involving and consulting Roma non-governmental organisations in the course of analysing the situation and drafting regulations is a measure that is to contribute to the quality of the programme activities, and to a large extent guarantee their implementation.

Objective 4

Roma education, additional training and retraining

As part of this objective, Roma are to be trained for active job search, starting up their own business and swifter inclusion in labour market, owing to the fact that the educational structure of unemployed Roma is extremely poor and does not meet the labour market needs. Education, additional training and retraining of unemployed persons are quite important in the current circumstances, and represent one of the main tasks of employment services.

Measure 1

Adopt programmes and operational plans on unemployed Roma educational needs

This measure is aimed at binding the competent authorities to, above all, adopt programmes for the educational needs of unemployed Roma who are registered in the unemployment records, given the fact that the educational structure of unemployed Roma registered in the records does not meet the labour market needs. As a starting point, this programme would primarily take the actual structure of unemployed Roma in terms of their qualifications and education, and the labour market needs and requirements.

Measure 2

Adopt plan for additional training and re-training according to labour market needs for the purpose of Roma self-employment

This measure ensures the adoption of plans for Roma additional training and re-training according to the labour market needs for the purpose of their employment by employers or in the public sector, as well as for the purpose of self-employment, because the fact is that unemployed persons wait longer for employment within their profession and matching their qualifications, and the need therefore arises for additional training or re-training.

Measure 3

Adopt plan for disabled persons' professional rehabilitation according to labour market needs for the purpose of self-employment

Apart from measures providing re-training and additional training, this measure provides for activities in relation to the professional rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, without which it is not possible to include persons with disabilities in either the labour process or self-employment process.

Measure 4

Adopt programme for primary education of Roma registered in records

Since the illiteracy of the Roma registered in the records poses a major problem in relation to employment, this measure provides for the endorsement and implementation of an unemployed Roma primary education programme as a prerequisite for further professional development of Roma aimed at employment.

Measure 5

Training Roma for active job search, setting up their own business and self-employment

Bearing in mind that there are educated Roma among unemployed Roma population, this measure refers to training Roma for active job search, setting up their own business and self-employment. Skills the Roma have do not include skills in job seeking and setting up their own business.

Objective 5

Awareness raising and information

It is necessary, as part of this objective, to ensure raising Roma awareness and informing them of the labour market needs and possibilities for additional training and re-training, as well as of the existing benefits, incentives and other reliefs they may use for employment and self-employment, particularly in reference with the employment and self-employment of disabled persons. It is also necessary to ensure more sensitive reporting by the media about Roma issues and enable the launch of a Roma bulletin.

Measure 1

Inform Roma of labour market needs and possibilities for additional training, re-training and professional rehabilitation. Inform Roma of already existing benefits, incentives and other employment and self-employment reliefs.

This measure ensures that unemployed Roma are informed of the labour market needs and possibilities for additional training and re-training, as well as of the existing benefits, incentives and other reliefs that may be used for employment and self-employment, particularly in reference with the employment and self-employment of disabled persons, as important prerequisites for the swifter inclusion of the Roma in the labour market in general.

Measure 2

Create conditions for Roma associations to work as info-centres

The implementation of this measure creates conditions for Roma associations to work as info-centres, which is of great importance to Roma awareness raising and informing, because there is a lack of Roma media and bulletins in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Measure 3

Establish partnership between Roma associations and authorities

The measure which is aimed at establishing partnership between Roma associations and the authorities will significantly contribute to Roma awareness raising and informing, as well as improve and strengthen their capacity to jointly solve problems.

Measure 4

Increase society and Roma NGOs awareness of need for greater mutual solidarity, but also taking on responsibility for socio-economic position, with higher level of coordination

This measure is aimed at breaking down stereotypes about Roma, increasing the entire society and Roma NGOs awareness of the need for cooperation and equal responsibility for solving Roma issues and for their position in society.

Measure 5

Raise Roma awareness of need for registering with employment bureaus and involvement in all programmes

This measure is to achieve raising Roma awareness of the need for registering in the unemployment records, as a prerequisites for Roma inclusion in the labour market and employment programmes.

Measure 6

Raise Roma awareness of necessity to become involved in training, re-training and additional training programmes, as well as of needs for compliance with systemic regulations.

The measure refers to raising Roma awareness of the necessity to become involved in training, re-training and additional training programmes, as well as a need for compliance with systemic regulations, which are the facts that change Roma attitude to employment, and create trust in institutions, and the organised and systemic dealing with employment problems, as the main instrument to reduce the poverty of every citizen.

Measure 7

Develop programme for improvement of media treatment and ensure the media (public broadcasting services) in BiH make their own programme

This measure, which refers to the adoption of a programme aimed at improving the treatment by the media and is to bind the media to make their own programme aimed at improving the treatment of the Roma by the media, certainly serves the function of Roma awareness raising and informing.

Measure 8

Launch information campaigns (publications and manuals)

This measure is aimed at launching an information campaign for the purpose of raising Roma awareness and informing them, not only of employment problems, but also of other problems the Roma encounter.

Measure 9

Raise society awareness of need for Roma employment

(educational institutions, media)

This measure is aimed at raising society awareness and breaking down stereotypes about the Roma as citizens who do not want to work, as well as awareness of the need for their employment as a basic prerequisite for solving other issues, such as housing, education, etc.

Measure 10

**Prevent discrimination through advertising system
(special ads and trafficking)**

This measure binds the competent authorities to prevent, through control, discrimination in advertising, thereby contributing to reducing discrimination against the Roma as compared to other citizens, especially in terms of access to employment.

Measure 11

Promote positive examples from Roma communities

This measure promotes positive examples and experience related to the work of Roma and Roma communities with the aim of changing the perception that the Roma do not want to work, prejudice and stereotypes against the Roma.

Measure 12

Launch Roma bulletin (bi-lingual) through Roma Information Centre

This measure is expected to result in the launch of a Roma bi-lingual bulletin and more sensitive media in terms of reporting about the Roma, which would be available not only to Roma, but to other citizens as well, thereby informing the general public of the outstanding Roma issues and problems.

Conclusion

Bearing in mind that unemployment in Bosnia and Herzegovina equally affects all citizens regardless of their nationality, and that the care by the entities and the state must be equal for all its citizens, the special and bigger concern for Roma employment reflected through the Action Plan may increase employment, decrease unemployment and alleviate overall poverty in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The results anticipated by the Plan are achieved through the clearly defined measures of the Action Plan that include a series of activities which need to be undertaken and which must also take into account the already existing incentives and activities in the area of employment, which have already produced certain results.