

## **EXPLANATION OF OBJECTIVES AND MEASURES IN ROMA HEALTH CARE ACTION PLAN**

This document defines the objectives and measures aimed at improving Roma health care by including them in the existing health care system in accordance with: the “International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights”, “European Social Charter”, “European *Health for All* Policy and Targets”, “Resolution on the Health Policy for All Citizens of BiH”, etc., as well as at creating conditions for Bosnia and Herzegovina’s joining the “Roma Decade”.

### **OBJECTIVE 1**

#### **Ensure right of Roma national minority members to health care**

The attainment of this objective ensures that the Roma national minority fulfils the necessary requirements for exercising the right to health care.

The positive legislation in BiH allows this population the right to health care, because the Health Care Act guarantees every citizen the right to health care, while the Health Insurance Act guarantees the right to mandatory health insurance based on some grounds. In order for members of the Roma national minority to be able to exercise these statutory rights, it is necessary to first meet certain requirements. These requirements have been identified as problems, for which four appropriate measures to address them are proposed, and they concern the following:

#### **Measure 1**

##### **Register new-born children and other persons of Roma national minority who are not registered in birth records, in compliance with law**

The main requirement necessary for members of the Roma national minority to exercise any rights, including the right to health care, is registration in the birth records, based on which identification documents are provided, which is attained by this measure. In the course of registration, the law should, to the greatest extent, be applied in the best interest of the Roma.

#### **Measure 2**

##### **Develop database of insured persons of Roma national minority, health care beneficiaries, by gender and age**

This measure provides precise data on the number and structure of persons of the Roma national minority to be provided with the status of an insured person within the health insurance system, and the calculation of funds necessary for exercising the right to health care, integrated in the existing health care system in the entire BiH territory.

### **3. Measure**

## **Align legislation in order to ensure Roma national minority's rights to health care are exercised in uniformed manner in entire BiH**

This measure stipulates the alignment and harmonisation of all regulations relative to birth records, health insurance, health care and other, in order to ensure the use of the right to health care by the persons of the Roma national minority under the same conditions, integrated in the existing health care system in the entire BiH territory.

### **Measure 4**

#### **Oblige governments at all levels of authority in BiH to provide funds to ensure right to health care for all members of Roma national minority that are not insured on some other grounds**

This measure obliges the governments at all levels of authority in BiH to provide in their budgets the necessary earmarked funds to cover the right to health care for about 50,000 newly registered insured persons of the Roma national minority. The annual amount of these funds is 400.00 BAM per insured person, or a total of twenty million convertible marks. Following the first year of implementation, this amount will decrease because the health care regulations at BiH level will be harmonised and because the implementation of the Employment Action Plan will see an increase in the number of persons insured on these grounds.

## **OBJECTIVE 2**

### **Raising awareness in health care field**

Raising awareness of the importance of health care for the overall quality of life and a need for its use by members of the Roma national minority resulted, as one of the objectives, from the fact that they are the least frequent health care beneficiaries even when they are provided with the respective rights. This is accompanied by certain prejudice and stereotypes held against the Roma national minority by the majority of health care professionals. Five measures, which will last until the end of 2015, have been proposed for its attainment.

#### **Measure 1**

**1. Additional training of health professionals in fighting prejudice and stereotypes about Roma**

**2. Additional training in specific risks for health of this population and specific health care programmes.**

This measure is comprised of two segments. The first one ensures that health professionals within the existing health care system become familiarised with the main habits, customs and lifestyle of the Roma in order to eliminate stereotypes and prejudice against them. (1) and the other one ensures that health professionals receive additional training in the Roma specific health risks, and programmes for their elimination. (2).

## **Measure 2**

### **Run information campaigns on right to health care and work on raising awareness of importance of health care within Roma national minority**

This measure is aimed at informing the members of the Roma national minority of their rights to health care and conditions under which they may exercise those rights. It is implemented in several ways, amongst others, through the media, conferences, for-public debates, and directly through Roma NGO activists' action.

## **Measure 3**

### **Train Roma trainers within local communities in preventive health care measures (total of 50 trainers at the proposal of BiH Roma Council, including consideration for gender equality)**

## **Measure 4**

### **Implement health and educational activities by local trainers concerning importance of prevention in health care.**

Through these measures, 50 trainers, representatives of local Roma communities, first receive training in preventive measures in health care (measure 3), and then they continuously work in their respective local communities on training their fellow Roma in the importance and types of preventive measures, thereby directly assisting health care staff in providing health care more efficiently. (measure 4).

## **Measure 5**

### **Financial support by governmental and non-governmental organisations to education and training of health care staff within Roma national minority**

This measure rounds off the package for the attainment of the second of the three set objectives of the Roma Health Care Action Plan. It means the provision of funds for the education of medical staff of various profiles within the Roma national minority, because according to the experience, this is the best way to attain the set objectives. Roma health professionals know and understand the habits, customs, mentality and psychology of their fellow Roma best, and the Roma national minority will have the greatest confidence in «their own» health professionals.

## **OBJECTIVE 3**

### **Provision and implementation of preventive measures aimed at improving health state of Roma national minority**

The fact that the regular health care does not cover most of the members of the Roma national minority, and that the specific preventive health care programmes are

implemented partly or are not implemented at all, results in the health state of this population being poorer than that of others.

The aim of setting this objective and measures to attain it is to change this, and the final result will be a higher level of health care of this population.

### **Measure 1**

#### **Priority programmes of preventive health care:**

**1.1. Reproductive health and maternity, 1.2. Sexually transmittable diseases with emphasis on HIV/AIDS, 1.3. Early detection of TBC, 1.4. Child growth and development, 1.5. Addictive diseases, 1.6. Larger immunisation coverage of children, 1.7. Infectious and mass non-infectious diseases, 1.8. Oral health (oral and oral cavity diseases) and 1.9. Other programmes aimed at health improvement according to needs and local community specificities.**

The proposed preventive health care programmes are those that are the swiftest and most efficient in improving the health of this population, and raising every individual's awareness of the importance of preventive measures and the awareness of the Roma national minority as a whole.

### **Measure 2**

**Ensure proper health care provision, including immunisation and complete medical check-ups of risk groups within the competent primary health care unit the Roma national minority belongs to**

This measure is intended to provide health care not covered by the previous measure, including immunisation and complete medical check-ups of risk groups within primary health care units in accordance with the territorial organisation, adhering to the general rule: that health care is provided at the health care institution nearest to the place of residence.

### **Measure 3**

**Integrate Roma programmes from strategies pertaining to other fields**

This measure means that programmes from strategies pertaining to other Roma-related fields may be integrated in this Action Plan.

### **Recommendation:**

**In order for this Action Plan to be implemented as successfully as possible, a coordinating institution must be designated immediately upon the adoption or even before, given the fact that it involves a number of institutions, as well as team work. We are of the opinion that the most natural thing is for that institution to be either the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees or the Health Sector within the Ministry of Civil Affairs. A successful implementation also requires supervision by independent experts who are familiar with the health care and health insurance**

**systems. As donors or special EU funds will certainly be involved in financing, it is necessary for the institution that will be coordinating the implementation of the Action Plan to have a separate account in which funds from all sources will be collected and spent. This is also necessary for the reasons of transparency and easier control.**