

Inter-Agency Coordination Forum Meeting (RCF) - Hungary

Ukraine Emergency Situation

5 May 2023

Agenda:

- **Opening remarks**
- **Part 1 Local landscape of Roma inclusion in the refugee response in Hungary:**
 - **Needs and Vulnerabilities of Roma Refugees in Hungary (Romaversitas)**
 - **Response strategies:**
 - Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights;
 - OSCE's Mandate on Roma and Sinti Inclusion (ODIHR);
 - EU Roma Strategy Framework (European Commission).
 - **Discussion**
- **Part 2: Lessons learnt/Recommendations for Roma Inclusion in the Refugee Response**
 - **Presentation of key lessons learned and recommendations from consultations with Roma refugees, Roma-Led Organizations and within the RCF**
 - **Discussion and exchange of best practices**
- **AoB**

Event co-
chaired with
Romaversitas

Participants 89 participants; ENG/HUN translation available.

Opening remarks Mr. Sztójka Attila, Government Commissioner for Roma Inclusion
Mr. Roland Schilling, UNHCR Representative for Central Europe

PART 1

1.1 Needs and Vulnerabilities of Roma Refugees in Hungary (Romaversitas)

Protection. The lack of updated and comprehensive data on Romani refugees in Hungary and on their difficulties in accessing humanitarian services hinder effective service planning. Romani refugees without complete documentation or adequate information on the procedures face challenges in accessing the TP status and related benefits. Also, Hungarian-Ukrainian dual nationals, face administrative obstacles that result in the denial of benefits such as subsistence allowance or free health care [[HHC](#), [Voice Amplified](#)].

Gender-based violence. Romani women in Ukraine already faced significant gender-based discrimination, limited education and employment opportunities, financial dependency on male family members, and increased vulnerability to protection risks. The escalation of the conflict and displacement further exacerbated the vulnerability of Romani refugee women, increasing the likelihood of sexual exploitation, dependence on abusive relationships, trafficking, school dropout, and other forms of gender-based violence [[Voice Amplified](#)].

Accommodation. Romani refugees in Hungary are often housed in institutional settings such as homeless shelters, temporary family shelters, and workers' dormitories that are not suitable for long-term housing due to overcrowding, lack of privacy, and necessary facilities [[Romaversitas](#)]. The lack of affordable rental housing and discrimination in the private housing market creates significant barriers for refugees to access independent housing, making them particularly vulnerable, and only a few are accommodated through individual offers of solidarity or humanitarian programs [[UNHCR](#)].

Health and Psychosocial Support. Romani families faced difficulties accessing healthcare and basic services pre-displacement, due to historical exclusion and segregation, leading to higher rates of health complications and untreated psychosocial conditions [[ROR](#), [Chirikli](#)], exacerbated by the conflict and the displacement [[Voice Amplified](#)]. Moreover, access to healthcare in Hungary can be challenging for refugees with institutional support, due to complicated administrative processes, and for dual citizens as they may be mistakenly denied free healthcare, due to the lack of administrative papers. [[Voice Amplified](#)].

Participants have highlighted the challenges for Romani refugees to get admitted into collective shelters across the country and the importance of hiring Romani workers as cultural mediators for conflict management and to identify local solutions. The importance for local Roma-led organizations to receive adequate funding for the continuation of their programs was stressed by several organizations, for more sustained and predictable humanitarian programming. The Karpatok Foundations has calls of proposals regularly published. A meeting in Eger (May 17) will be dedicated to refugee assistance, including Romani refugees, bringing different stakeholders together.

1.2 Response strategies

Office of the
Commissioner
for Fundamental
Rights
Dr. Benedek
György

The Deputy Commissioner for the Protection of the Rights of Nationalities plays an important role in the refugee response by providing a mechanism for refugees to voice their concerns and seek redress for any grievances or violations of their rights. The ombudsman is an independent and impartial institution that serves as a mediator between refugees and government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders involved in the refugee response. The ombudsman can investigate complaints made by refugees about issues such as access to services, discrimination, or mistreatment by officials or other actors. They can also make recommendations to address systemic issues and improve the overall response to refugees. Additionally, the ombudsman can provide advice and guidance to refugees on their rights and the options available to them. This includes information on legal processes and procedures, access to services such as healthcare and education, and other issues related to their protection and well-being.

Several important activities were carried out to support refugees: the establishment of temporary regional offices in Zahony, Beregsurany, and Bok, which offered information on administrative and legislative procedures; regular updates were also provided in Hungarian, Ukrainian, and English on the website and social media; monitoring of refugee shelters and border crossing points, as well as consultations with refugees (including Romani refugees), were conducted in collaboration with the Commissioner for Roma Inclusion. Other specific activities related to Romani refugees included collaboration with government departments, charities, UN agencies and NGOs to address challenges in access to education and socio-economic inclusion for refugee families.

Romani refugees in Hungary face challenges with accommodation, employment, and education, and also experience discrimination due to their already disadvantaged situation in their home country. School enrollment of Romani refugee children is affected by institutional barriers, lack of mental health and psychosocial support, cultural differences, and staff shortages.

OSCE/
ODIHR
Ms. Beata
Bislim
Olahova,
Advisor on
Roma and
Sinti Issues

The OSCE ODIHR has adopted the [2003 Action Plan](#) to improve the situation of Roma and Sinti. The Action Plan mandates ODIHR to observe, monitor and analyze the human rights situation of Roma and Sinti during crisis and post-crisis situations, and co-operate with relevant authorities to ensure protection of Roma communities at risk. In 2022, the ODIHR has engaged six national Roma human defenders in six OSCE states, including Hungary, and found discriminatory instances throughout the refugee process in neighboring countries, substandard and segregated housing, indirect discrimination from legislative provisions, and increased risk for Roma women refugees. Roma-led organizations had difficulty accessing funding dedicated for refugees and providing assistance. Authorities are recommended to develop national mechanisms to monitor the situation of Romani refugees and facilitate reporting of discrimination, investigate cases, and provide compensation and counseling to victims. In 2023, OSCE/ODIHR will continue the human rights monitoring in nine states and explore the monitoring scope in Baltic countries, investigating challenges and concerns related to Ukrainian Roma refugees and monitoring Romani people affected by the conflict in Ukraine while building the capacity of Romani human rights defenders from Ukraine.

European
Commission,
Roma Strategy
Framework, Mr.
Pavel Dan
Doghi,

The 2020-2030 [EU Roma strategic framework](#) (EURSF) and its related 2021 Council Recommendation on Roma equality, inclusion and participation sets out a comprehensive three-pillar approach focusing on fighting and preventing antigypsyism and discrimination, reducing poverty and social exclusion, and promoting participation of Roma through empowerment, cooperation and trust. This approach is envisaged to be embedded in all measures covering the sectoral areas of education, employment, health, and housing. The EU level objectives are associated with quantitative targets to be collectively achieved by Member States by 2030. Most Member States have adopted new national Roma strategic frameworks, emulating to varying degrees the EU Roma Framework. Following the guidance from this framework, the national strategies include a combination of mainstreaming and targeted approach, also taking account of the diversity within the Roma population and their specific needs and challenges. Concerning the situation of Roma refugees from Ukraine, the EURSF and Council Recommendation, as well as the Cohesion Policy programs, include specific reference that allow for both national Roma strategies and certain EU funding instruments to address the needs of Roma from Ukraine, and support their access to essential services. Excerpts of these references are copied below:

EURSF / COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION: III.1. Guidance for national action following a common but differentiated approach: In order to help Member States develop meaningful and effective national Roma strategic frameworks, the Commission proposes a series of common features, as well as minimum commitments for all national strategic Roma frameworks. In terms of common features, all national frameworks were expected to embed them, including to Reflect the diversity among Roma: Member States should ensure that their strategic frameworks cover all Roma on their territory and reflect the needs of diverse groups through an intersectional approach. They should set quantitative and/or qualitative targets to ensure that diversity in terms of age, gender, sexual orientation, mobility and other personal characteristics is reflected. In addition to these common features and minimum commitments, additional national efforts, according to specific national contexts, can be important. Challenges in Roma equality, inclusion and participation vary depending on the size of the Roma population and their share of the overall population, as well as on the wider economic context and the legacy of exclusion and discrimination. These challenges also vary depending on where and how Roma live (rural, urban, mobile, segregated areas) and specific aspects such as transnational mobility, migration or issues associated with civic documentation. These different challenges can be reflected in national Roma strategic frameworks, with differentiated objectives, levels of investment and types of policy solution.

Mainstreaming Roma equality in EU policy initiatives and mobilising EU funds for Roma: Mainstreaming Roma equality, inclusion and participation in all relevant Commission initiatives will be key to achieving the objectives set out in this EU Roma strategic framework. When developing policies, integrating the equality dimension also includes ensuring that EU and national policies serve the interests of all Roma people.

COMMUNICATION ASSESSMENT REPORT (JAN 2023). The situation of Ukrainian Roma is acknowledged, namely the fact that Russia's war against Ukraine has exposed them to a range of risks, including that of unequal treatment. While acknowledging Member States' efforts to tackle the situation so far, more should be done to accommodate the needs of Roma refugees from Ukraine by making optimal use of the national frameworks to ensure they have equal access to mainstream education, employment, housing, health and social care, and other essential services.

EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND PLUS: (20) In light of the persistent need to enhance efforts to address the management of migration flows in the Union as a whole and in order to ensure coherent, strong and consistent support to solidarity and responsibility-sharing efforts, the ESF+ should provide support to promote the socio-economic integration of third-country nationals, including migrants, which may include initiatives at local level, complementary to the actions financed under the AMIF, the ERDF and other Union funds which can have a positive effect on the inclusion of third-country nationals. The Specific objectives of the ESF+ (Article 4) are : promoting the socio-economic integration of third-country nationals, including migrants; promoting the socio-economic integration of marginalized communities, such as Roma people.

EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND:(18) [...] in view of the demographic and migration dynamics... Union migration policy requires a common approach that relies on the synergies and complementarities of the different funding instruments. Therefore, the ERDF should pay attention to demographic challenges when preparing and implementing programs. In order to ensure coherent, strong and consistent support for solidarity and responsibility-sharing efforts between Member States in managing migration, the ERDF should provide support, at the most appropriate territorial level, to facilitate the long-term, inclusive integration ... including to migrants, ... by adopting an approach aimed at protecting their dignity and rights. And the Specific objectives for the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund (Article 3): "[...] the ERDF shall support [...] implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights (PO 4) by: (iv) promoting the socio-economic integration of third-country nationals, including migrants through integrated actions, including housing and social services.

PART 2 Lessons learnt/Recommendations for Mainstreaming Roma Inclusion in the Refugee Response

Presentation of key lessons learned and recommendations from consultations with Roma refugees, Roma-Led Organizations, and within the RCF (see PPT for details). Recommendations in 10 key areas were presented: discrimination, protection, child protection, gender empowerment, socioeconomic inclusion education/employment, community empowerment, housing, health and MHPSS, context awareness, and data collection.

Participants stressed the importance of involving Roma-led organizations in the response and collaboration between civil society, government institutions, the UN, and the NGO, Charity Council. Strengthen the cooperation with municipalities on social cohesion at the local level. Education actors appreciated the recommendations included and will further discuss them with partners in the Education Sub-WG.