

THE ACCOUNTABILITY OF EU FUNDING TO ROMANI WOMEN'S ISSUES AND PRIORITIES

- Initial Work and Advocacy Plan -

1. Aims and objectives for the fellowship year

The research project *aims* to show how the accountability of EU funding instruments to Romani women's issues and priorities can be made more effective, in view of the implementation of the goals of the Decade for Roma Inclusion.

The *objectives* of the research are:

- i. to *design a methodology* for monitoring EU funding in the areas that have been identified as priorities of the Decade for Roma Inclusion (education, health, housing and employment) for its accountability to promoting the goals of social inclusion and gender equality particularly for Romani women
- ii. to *apply and test the monitoring methodology* by observing the use of EU funding for programs that aim to improve economic opportunities for Romani women (particularly employment)
- iii. to *formulate preliminary conclusions* about the accountability of the EU funds available under the new Financial Perspective 2007-2013 to Romani women's issues and priorities in the key area of employment, and
- iv. to *make recommendations* for achieving more inclusiveness and accessibility of EU funding instruments.

2. Identification of OSI network programs and foundations that may serve as partners and expected benefits from this cooperation

Roma Participation Program, OSI Budapest

My previous experience in working with the RPP office of OSI Budapest has already provided inspiration for my current project. I have been a consultant for the report "Broadening the Agenda: The Status of Romani Women in Romania". RPP – OSI Budapest has supported an initiative of training for Roma organizations and Roma activist on the use of Structural Funds. The office has an on-going interest in advocacy efforts aimed at more accessibility for Roma organizations and Roma activists to EU funding.

Network Women's Program, OSI Budapest (<http://www.soros.org/initiatives/women>)

OSI's Network Women's Program (NWP) supports multiple approaches to empowering Romani women throughout Central and Eastern Europe. The Roma Women's Initiative (<http://www.romawomensinitiatives.org/>) is their most important program designed to provide support to Romani women leaders, so that they can fruitfully take advantage of the opportunities offered by the Decade for Roma Inclusion, and the EU accession processes.

OSI Brussels

During initial discussions with OSI Brussels, on May 26, 2006, we have identified possible contributions of my project to (1) their on-going campaign to lobby for reform of the financial

regulations, that guide the allocation of EU funds; (2) their advocacy campaign for the Decade for Roma Inclusion.

Ann Isabelle von Lingen, Policy Officer, has emphasized in our conversation that the most important contribution that I could make to the work of OSI Brussels would be in the form of concrete recommendations for action, which are sometimes missing in advocacy efforts. She also expressed interest in case studies or examples of successful projects that may provide inspiration for further initiatives. She also stressed that this is the kind of information that the European Commission is most interested in – that is, concrete answers to the often very broad question of addressing the plight of Roma in Europe.

Institute for Public Policy, Bucharest (www.ipp.ro)

Having worked with the IPP, Bucharest in the period 2003-2004, I am familiar with their interest in advocating for the political participation of minorities. I have been in touch with the Director of IPP, Violeta Bau, and she has agreed to support initiatives of lobbying the agencies of the Romanian Government that will design the programming documents for allocating the newly available EU funds.

UNIFEM – CEE, Bratislava (<http://www.unifem.sk/index.cfm>)

During my work as an intern with UNIFEM-CEE (June-August 2005), I have been involved in developing their GenderWatch concept paper, which outlined a program of monitoring the realization of EU commitments to gender equality. The monitoring program is intended to examine the accountability of EU to these commitments also in terms of allocating concrete financial assistance. UNIFEM-CEE has also been supporting a program on Gender Responsive Budgets, developed by NGOs in Poland, Kosovo, Georgia, Serbia and Bulgaria. UNIFEM CEE is committed to ensuring the involvement of Romani women in all activities, under the programs supported by the agency. UNIFEM CEE also has a willingness to coordinate its activities with similar OSI initiatives, particularly regarding Romani women.

3. Final outcomes: deliverables of the project

- A short brochure outlining a methodology for monitoring EU funding for its accountability to Romani women's issues and priorities;
- A 20 pages Policy Paper and a longer Research Paper presenting the findings and recommendations;
- Increased awareness among EU management personnel and decision-makers within national governmental bodies about the relevance of thinking about Romani women's issues and priorities in their regular work.
- More specific lobby initiatives at the level of EC DG Enlargement, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities and DG Regional Policy, as well as the Cabinets of respective Commissioners, and at the level of national managing agencies and governmental bodies in Romania, Hungary and Slovakia.

4. Advocacy plan

The results of the research will be offered to the Roma Participation Program (RPP) of OSI Budapest, OSI-Brussels. The Romanian version of the policy paper may be published jointly with the Institute for Public Policy, Romania. I have also been exploring with them the idea of

organizing a workshop in Bucharest, with the participation of governmental officials, experts working in public administration, Roma, women's and human rights NGOs, as well as representatives of international organizations or agencies.

The results of the research will be disseminated through the existing networks of Romani women's activists and other human rights networks, as well as through participation in national and international conferences.

- Upcoming, "The European Union and the Roma", 6-7 June 2006, organized by Minority Rights Group.
- Applying for "2nd International Learning Program on Budget Analysis and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights", Buenos Aires, 2-11 October 2006.

The Roma Exclusion working group has already agreed to collaborate in the realization of a book project. This will offer a further opportunity for dissemination of the results and advocacy. We will continue to explore opportunities for publication and/ or conference participations.