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Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

Comments of the Government of Hungary on the Opinion of the Advisory Committee
on the Report on the Implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection
of National Minorities in Hungary

**REMARKS ON THE EVALUATION OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
FOR THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION FOR
THE PROTECTION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES**

In January 1999, the Government of Hungary prepared and endorsed, through resolution 2023/1999 (II.12.), the country report (hereinafter referred to as "the Report") on the implementation of the provisions of the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (hereinafter referred to as "the Framework Convention"). During 29 November 1999 and 1 December 1999, the designated Advisory Committee for the Council of Europe examined the implementation of obligations arising from the Framework Convention in Hungary.

Hungary would like to add the following to the Report and the evaluation based on on-site observations (hereinafter- referred to as "the evaluation") prepared by the Advisory Committee.

Minority rights and their continuous expansion, as well as the broadening of their use, are important elements of the Hungarian minority- policy. Hungary considers the cultural heritage and the language of her minorities as an integral part of the Hungarian culture and is interested in preserving and further reinforcing these cultural values.

During the past ten years, simultaneously with the strengthening of the fundamental institutions of democracy, the legal institutions (arrangements) guaranteeing the realization of the peculiar interests of minorities have also emerged. Hungary has a separate law on minority rights on the basis of which the local and national self-governments of minorities have been established. The Ombudsman for minority rights (hereinafter referred to as "the Ombudsman") has been elected and the native language education for minorities has been reinforced. For improving the living circumstances and promoting the social integration of the largest minority, the Gypsy community, the Government of Hungary has adopted and is in the process of implementing a set of measures containing concrete tasks.

It must be emphasized that there is a legal obligation for the Government to maintain continuous dialogue and consultation with the national self-governments of minorities on issues directly affecting them. Local public administration has similar obligations with respect to minorities in their jurisdiction.

Hungarian achievements in the field of minority policy are also recognized in the annual country reports of the European Commission. Hungary considers it necessary for the evaluation prepared by the Advisory Committee to reflect the findings of the European Commission's country reports.

Based on some sections of the Framework Convention and with respect to some elements of the evaluation prepared by the Advisory Committee for the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, we would like to touch upon the following:

Data on the number of those belonging to minorities (Sections 3 and 4)

On several occasions, the evaluation touches upon questions regarding the number of those belonging to minorities. Hungary holds a general census every ten years. Based on the decision of the National Assembly, the most recent census was held in February 2001. (The evaluation and the inquiry of the Advisory Committee in Hungary were both based on statistical data compiled almost ten years ago. It should also be stressed that the census of 1990 was carried out during the politically sensitive period of transition when less attention was paid to the professional questions of the census in process.) The law passed in 1999 on the February 2001 census ordered a more thorough than ever collection of data, including, among others, those on the religion, ethnic origin and native language of natural persons. At the same time, however, the law stipulated that the provision of such information was optional (voluntary): this is in harmony with the law on minority rights which states that nobody is under obligation to provide information about his or her ethnic origin, but any person has the right to declare ethnic origin, confidentially and without disclosing his or her name, in a general census. In the process of compiling the questionnaires of the general census of February 2001, questions regarding minority status were formulated on the basis of advice provided by the self-governments of minorities. Following this, the Government and the self-governments of minorities conducted widespread information campaigns to inform the public about the methods of the census as well as the questions aimed directly at minorities. During their campaigns, the parties in question stressed that the names of individuals providing information would not be recorded during the census and the appropriate handling of data was guaranteed by law. Information campaigns prior to the census emphasized that the success of the census was the common interest of every Hungarian citizen. During our preparation we attached special importance to making sure that minority communities would be enumerated by census-takers of ethnic minority origin. Questionnaires were translated to all national and ethnic minority languages spoken in Hungary. In its prompt analysis of the February 2001 census, the Hungarian Central Statistical Office stated that 95 per cent of citizens had answered the otherwise optional (voluntary) questions concerning their ethnic origin and native language. The Hungarian Central Statistical Office will publish the full findings of the general census in 2002.

Anti-discrimination policy (Sections 4 and 5)

Hungary intends to live up to its obligations in this field by following the relevant directives of the European Union. Hungary's Constitutional Court has also declared its position in its resolution 45/2000. (XII.08.), stating that the possibility of realizing the anti-discrimination provisions of the Constitution should not be confined to laws currently in force, it is the duty of the legislative to determine the desirable forms of regulation.

In conformity with the recommendation in question, contained in the evaluation of the Advisory Committee, the Ministry of Justice has established, on 29 March 2001, a work committee consisting of the representatives of the organs of state administration, the National Assembly Committee on Human, Minority and Religious Rights, minority civil organizations and the experts of the Office of Ombudsman for evaluating the state of legislation on negative discrimination. It will review the Hungarian legal order in order to establish what sort of legislative or other measures are necessary for the implementation of an effective anti-discrimination policy.

Partly wishing to meet the provision of directive 2000/43/EC of the Council of the European Union that declares the necessity of passing anti-discrimination legislation, the Ombudsman for the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities has expressed his opinion about the above subject by submitting a bill on ***Fighting Against Racism and Xenophobia and Guaranteeing Equal Treatment***. The Committee on Human, Minority and Religious Rights of the National Assembly of Hungary also discussed the bill. However, adapting some of the legal institutions proposed by the Ombudsman, to the already existing systems of institutions requires further legislative work and coordination. This process may be accelerated by the fact that the Hungarian Ombudsman for the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities has been elected the vice-chairman of the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI).

It is undeniable that discrimination exists in Hungary too and it should be fought against. At the same time, however, we consider it necessary to stress that none of the minorities is persecuted in Hungary. No doubt, a significant part of our Gypsy community encounters serious hardships. In order to find a remedy to their problems, we are in the process of implementing a comprehensive medium-term program, endorsed by the Government in 1999, aimed at assisting the Gypsy community. Measures to be taken fall within the fields of education, culture, employment, agriculture, regional development, social affairs, health-care, housing, fight against negative discrimination and improving the communication with the Gypsy community. Ministries responsible for the implementation of individual tasks and the deadlines have been appointed and set by the Government. Government measures are aimed at creating equal opportunities for all members of our society. preventing and easing prejudices and negative discrimination on the one hand and strengthening the identity and culture of the Gypsy community on the other. In our view, the social reintegration of Gypsy people is both a minority and a social policy issue. (Attached to this summary is the document assessing the implementation of the medium-term program referred to above and the topics of debate regarding the long-term social policy strategy aimed at the Gypsy community.)

Reports of manifestations of anti-semitism (Section 6)

In our opinion, the concerns expressed by the Advisory Committee about the manifestations of anti-semitism are causeless. Guarantees for fighting against and sanctioning such manifestations are well established within our legal system.

Tolerance, dialogue between cultures and information (Sections 6 and 9)

Since the Advisory Committee's inquiry in Hungary, several changes have taken place in this field. Among the positive changes, the public service Radio Hungary devotes time on a regular basis to minorities through its program ***I am from Hungary***, broadcast four times a week. Furthermore, it has a dedicated 30-minute weekly program (in Hungarian) for our minorities.

Every three months, the public service radio also prepares a 3-hour program for the better understanding of minorities with the cooperation of regional radios, which also broadcast information about the minorities in their service area. Fortnightly, the public service Hungarian Television broadcasts its 52 and 26-minute program ***Together*** for making people even more familiar with the circumstances of our minorities.

For ensuring adequate financial resources for non-profit radio and television programs about minorities, the National Radio and Television Commission (hereinafter referred to as "the NRTC") pays special attention to such programs in its tenders for the preparation of public service programs. In line with this policy, the NRTC decided to support numerous minority radio and television programs in Spring 2000. As a result of this support, Radio Hungary broadcasts the programs *On the roads of Romany Land* and *In a single country* and Radio Fresh, Radio Fortuna and Radio Szentes, as well as the Zemplén TV and the City Televisions of Debrecen, Miskolc, Nyiregyhaza, Szarvas and Ozd, broadcast their own regular programs about minorities. It must be highlighted that the public service Hungarian Television prepares programs for as many as thirteen minority communities in their native language. These programs are sub-titled in Hungarian, thus contributing to better mutual understanding between the minorities and the majority.

Within the framework of the tasks laid down in the medium-term program aimed at the Gypsy community and based on the programs of the Hungarian Television and Radio Hungary, the Office for National and Ethnic Minorities (hereinafter referred to as "the Office for Minorities"), a government branch responsible for minority issues, provides budgetary support for the establishment of a central database with the aim of forming a realistic picture about the Gypsy community. Furthermore, it assists in the training of personnel employed in the Gypsy correspondent network of the Hungarian Television. With support from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health, several portrait films introducing Gypsy paths of life were broadcast on the Hungarian Television recently. Within the framework of cooperation between the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Hungarian Television, a documentary about the recent field trip of the Council of Europe Expert Committee on Gypsy Affairs to Hungary is under preparation.

We would also like to say a few words about the fact that since the Advisory Committee's field-trip to Hungary, the Office of Minorities has expanded its information material published on the Internet: its web-site (<http://www.mch.hu/nekh>) can be found on the homepage and the server of the Prime Minister's Office in addition to the Government website and those of ministries. It is updated regularly with unbiased and credible information about minorities in both Hungarian and English. The web-site of the Office for Minorities has been registered by domestic Internet databases, the databases of the most important search engines in the world, international organizations and institutions. Providing information to and familiarizing the public with minorities are the main goals of the Internet information services provided by the Ministry of Justice web-site under *Protection of Minority Rights* and the documents published in recent times on the Ministry for Foreign Affairs web-site. Besides these, the weekly magazines of minorities have also been posted on the Internet (*Neue Zeitung*, *Foaia romaneasca*, *Ludove noviny*, *Srpske Narodne Novine*, *Hrvatski Glasnik*). *Etnonet* or *Rompage* are independent bulletins (published in Hungarian) on the Internet. It is a good news that Internet information services are provided by minority self-governments and settlements inhabited by minorities - Békéscsaba, Totkomlos, Szarvas, Szentpéterfa - have started to develop.

Police measures affecting the Gypsy community (Section 6)

In its evaluation, the Advisory Committee makes references to certifiable cases in which Gypsy persons were exposed to physical assaults and threats, and establishes that inadequate attention is paid to the investigation and persecution of such cases. It is the position of the Ministry of the Interior that the claims according to which the investigation of information on police abuse of Gypsy people are not dealt with as other cases have no factual basis. It also considers the opinion that criminal investigation authorities take a biased approach to issues involving Gypsy people as unfounded.

Naturally, we cannot deny that police measures infringing the rights of citizens belonging to the Gypsy community do occur from time to time (such cases create great stir in the domestic and international media and international human and minority rights organizations pay considerable attention to them). It is our position that the institutions and forums aimed at investigating and sanctioning unlawful police measures are well established within both the Hungarian constitutional and police systems.

It is well known that citizen complaints about police measures constituting a minor infringement of the law - particularly those where the infringement is believed to have occurred due to ethnic origin - must be investigated by central and local police authorities at regular intervals and reported to the National Police Headquarters in conformity with a decree issued in 1996.

In some cases, the investigation referred to above is carried out, on the order of the Minister for the Interior, by the Bureau of Supervision and Inspection of the Ministry of the Interior. Its annual summary report on the observation of investigation is submitted to the Interdepartmental Committee on Roma Affairs by the Ministry of the Interior.

Criminal proceedings in the case of police measures constituting an infringement of the law are done by the Public Prosecutors Investigation Office, an organization independent from the police, and decision rests upon the Court.

In case of presumed or real infringements of the law, the leaders of minority organizations dealing with legal protection, Gypsy interest groups and police authorities may lodge a complaint at the Public Prosecutors Investigation Office.

Police measures constituting a minor infringement of the law and those constituting a criminal act coincide, according to the uniform police and public prosecutors statistics, with the general tendencies of delinquency.

A number of measures are taken on a continuous basis with the aim of alleviating the biased attitude of the police. It must be particularly stressed that the National Police Headquarters has signed a cooperation agreement with the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government, on the basis of which regional police authorities have initiated further cooperation with the representative organizations of the Gypsy community in each of the counties. Preventing hostilities between the police and Gypsies, protecting the Gypsy minority and preventing the Gypsies from becoming either victims or offenders are the primary objectives of these agreements.

Beginning with the 1999/2000 academic year, Gypsy culture, conflict prevention and management have been added as part of social science and communication courses, to the curriculum of police training and further training as have been minority rights and inter-group sociology within the framework of human rights education, which is the prerequisites of policing activities in multicultural constitutional states. Making a good use of the assistance and the expertise of international organizations and Western European police forces (Council of Europe, the British and the Dutch police), we have been organizing common programs aimed at familiarizing the Hungarian police force with police activities in multicultural societies and the proper treatment of minorities. In the process of implementing these programs, our international and foreign partners have expressed their clear appreciation of the development of police measures in the right direction during the past ten years.

In our view, it is essential to emphasize that the Hungarian police make substantial efforts to recruit an ever-increasing number of young Gypsies. Police use several means of achieving this goal: for instance, by organizing courses to familiarize the target group with the police, by holding preparatory camping courses for entrance examinations to police schools and by announcing scholarship competitions for young Gypsies. In the course of cooperation with the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government, an independent expert cooperated with the police in preparing the so-called map of discrimination to enable us to take a complex approach to managing and eliminating the causes of conflict.

Based on the above facts, it can be claimed that the Hungarian authorities pay proper attention to the legality of police measures as well as preventing racially motivated crimes and are increasingly successful in their attempts to eliminate anti-Gypsy prejudices.

Minority media (Section 9)

In summarizing the changes that have taken place since the Advisory Committee's visit to Hungary in 1999, it must be stressed that the Hungarian Television already has programs for every minority group in its native language: its new minority program is the one in the Ukrainian language. A further development is that the previously bi-weekly program for the Serbian minority is broadcast every week. Beginning with 2000, the Gypsy Forum, a 52-minute program, is back on the program once every three months (we have already mentioned the expansion of minority television programs in Hungarian above).

In line with the Act on Radio and Television Services, the chairman of the Hungarian Television and those of minority self-governments, signed an Agreement on Cooperation 3 April 2000 in order to guarantee the minority self-governments' rights to consultation. The Agreement lays down the practical questions related to maintaining contacts between the two parties and those concerning the decision-making 'g mechanism. It needs to be stressed that the Agreement makes regular consultations between the Hungarian Television and minority self-governments permanent. It also sets the duration of and provides a permanent slot for minority programs. In line with the provisions of the Agreement, the leaders of the Hungarian Television and minority self-governments reviewed the current issues of minority broadcasting on 14 October 2000. At the request of minority self-governments, the Hungarian Television has allocated a more favourable broadcasting time for repeated minority programs. Despite the recent necessary cut backs in personnel at the public service Hungarian Television, the number of editorial staff involved in the preparation of minority programs has not been reduced, moreover, additional positions have been created in the case of Gypsy programs.

Similarly to the public service Hungarian Television, Radio Hungary broadcasts programs for every ethnic minority group in its native language. In recent times, it broadcasts 30-minute programs, with languages alternating every day, throughout the country for the Bulgarian, Greek, Polish, Armenian, Ruthenian and Ukrainian communities (we have already referred to the expansion of Radio Hungary minority programs in Hungarian above).

Besides the national public service radio and television, which regularly broadcast programs about the situation of minorities in Hungary, the media, controlled by local municipalities and other owners, also broadcast native language minority programs on a regular basis. The Public Foundation for Hungarian National and Ethnic Minorities (hereinafter referred to as "the Public Foundation") encourages, through targeted tenders, the operation of local minority media as well as the production and broadcasting of native language minority cable programs. It aims to have the native languages of minorities recognized at all levels of public life. In 1999, the Public Foundation provided targeted support for the preparation and broadcasting of 36 native language minority programs and the same figure for the year 2000 was 46. Kalocsa Television, supported by the Public Foundation, has an outstanding program; it broadcasts *Romany Studio*, a weekly report and news program edited by the local Gypsy community. In 2001, the targeted tenders of the Public Foundation continue to be aimed at supporting local minority programs. It should be noted that the overwhelming proportion of these programs is aimed at producing television programs (we have referred to the NRTC support, provided through tenders, for these topics).

In its evaluation, the Advisory Committee notes that the Gypsies, the largest minority group in Hungary, have disproportionately less radio broadcasting time compared with some other minority communities. With respect to this, we have to touch upon the fact that the structure of Radio Hungary's minority programs has evolved over several decades. Our aim is to increase the broadcasting time of the shorter -radio programs, thus securing a more proportionate distribution of broadcasting time. It should also be taken into consideration that the 1996 Act on Radio and Television Services clearly stipulates that the broadcasting time allocated to minority programs cannot be reduced.

The fact that Radio Hungary broadcasts numerous programs dedicated to the Romany (Gypsy) minority also deserves mentioning (we have touched upon these programs in detail above).

During the period that has elapsed since the Advisory Committee's visit to Hungary, two small radio channels have come into existence, thus serving the cause of native language broadcasts and improved access to media for minorities.

Availing themselves of the provisions of the law, the Slovenian minority was the first of minority self-governments in Hungary to establish their own radio. *Radio Monoster*, broadcasting from Szentgotthard, has its independent frequency on which to broadcast its program in Slovenian.

In conformity with the provisions of the Act on Radio and Televisions Services and without submitting an application, the national self-government of the Slovenian minority won the right, in July 2000, to broadcast its programs for eight hours a week. Slovenia provided the national self-government of the Slovenian minority for setting up its studio and additional foundation and budgetary resources were also available for this purpose. Financing the continuous operation of the radio, however, poses difficulties for the self-government.

Radio C the only independent Romany radio in Hungary, started its experimental broadcasting on 11 February 2001 and later on, on 6 March 2001, the National Radio and Television Commission granted for it an independent frequency for a seven-year period.

NRTC gave Radio C the permission to use the frequency with a view to the full realization of minority rights, promoting tolerance and multicultural plurality. Radio C defines itself as a community radio (as opposed to public service or commercial ones). According to its founders, only people of Gypsy origin would be involved in preparing its programs and the Gypsy minority would be their target group. Radio C, according to its program strategy, would like to take part in the process of *"socializing young Gypsy generations"*.

The National Radio and Television Commission has no knowledge about the cases which the evaluation prepared by the Advisory Committee refers to, whereby local radio stations failed to live up to their commitments, arising from their permission to broadcast, concerning minorities living in their service area.

Minority native languages in public life (Sections 10 and 11)

During the period that has elapsed since the Advisory Committee's visit to Hungary, identification documents, prepared by new technologies that make the indication of names in native languages technically possible, have been introduced.

With regard to using the native language of minorities as official language, it should be emphasized that no person should be at a disadvantage as a result of not speaking the Hungarian language, therefore every person may use his or her native language in both oral and verbal communication. Not valid yet, the Act XIX of 1998 on Criminal Proceedings contains additional provisions according to which any person may use his or her native language, or any other language known by the person in question, in both oral and verbal communication. Moreover, based on the provisions of a separate law, the native language of ethnic minorities may also be the medium of communication in Court proceedings.

Minority education (Section 12)

In Hungary, minority schools receive additional normative funding from the budget to contribute towards their operational costs. In view of the fact that this support depends on the number of enrolled students, some minority schools teaching a smaller number of students would not be able to perform their duties adequately even with such additional financial support for this reason, the budget has substantial reserves for special circumstances (HUF 300 M in 2000, HUF 320 M in 2001 and HUF 340 M in 2002). Starting with 2000, all operational costs of primary schools, both bilingual ones and those where teaching is delivered in minority native languages, are financed through these budgetary resources.

Related closely to the questions raised by the Advisory Committee in this Section, we must emphasize that education has a priority among government measures aimed at the Gypsy minority. Hungary's Government intends to support the education of the Gypsy youth by setting up a scholarship system for them. In conformity with this, in the year 2000, the Government has aside such budgetary resources for this purpose that every young Gypsy applicant intending to pursue primary or secondary education, university or college studies was awarded a tuition scholarship. For the 2000/2001 academic year, a total of 7580 young Gypsy students received a tuition scholarship from the Ministry of Justice, the Public Foundation for Hungarian Gypsies and the Public Foundation for Hungarian National and Ethnic Minorities. Budgetary financial resources for the financial years of 2001 and 2002 are sufficient for realizing and even expanding this program.

For the implementation of tasks related to the successful schooling of Gypsy children, the Ministry of Education - in addition to central budgetary resources - relies on PHARE support too. In 2000, the PHARE program titled *Promoting the social integration of children, primarily Gypsies, in cumulatively disadvantageous situation*, formulated together with the Ministry for Social and Family Affairs, was launched. Within the framework of this program, support, to be obtained through applications, amounts to HUF 2500 M of which HUF 1200 M is provided by the state itself.

Education for the Gypsy minority was and remains a highly debated issue even in these days. It is a fact, however, that education for the Gypsy minority is available in 250 nurseries and 650 primary schools for an estimated 25,000 children in nurseries and 55,000 primary school pupils. It is also a fact that the schooling of Gypsy students is complete and most students obtain primary school leaving certificates.

The Advisory Committee noted that Gypsy students were often visibly over-represented in schools with special curricula. With respect to this, it should be mentioned that the Ministry of Education has issued a decree guaranteeing that students are placed in such institutions only in justifiable cases. The most important of these provisions is that the aptitude testing of children may happen only at the request and with the consent of the parents, who have legal remedies in case of an unfavourable decision. Parents have to be informed in writing about the expert opinion and legal remedies available. Aptitude testing of the child should be repeated every year and every second year later on. We would like to note that according to the finding of recent surveys, Gypsy students tend to be over-represented in the special classes of normal primary schools too. Of the approximately eighty thousand Gypsy children attending public institutions of education, however, this affects about seven thousand students.

Our position coincides with the Advisory Committee's opinion that the effectiveness of nursery and school education, which lay the foundations of equal opportunities for Gypsies, depends to a great extent on the professional quality of teacher training and further training. For this reason, Romany studies have been introduced at several higher education institutions departmental level, or as part of special and independent courses, with the support of at the Ministry of Education. Even though the proportion of the Gypsy minority students remains very low in higher education, the number of young Gypsies in higher education has been on the rise in recent years. During the past academic year, 539 young Gypsies were awarded university scholarships by the Public Foundation for Hungarian Gypsies and the Public Foundation for Hungarian National and Ethnic Minorities.

The Advisory Committee's evaluation with respect to Section 12 touches upon the other aspects of minority teacher training. With regard to this, it should be stressed that the Ministry of Education provided substantial support for the further training of minority teachers, particularly their preparation for teaching ethnic studies, during the past two years. In the case of linguistic and methodological further training, Hungary welcomes support in these fields from the native countries of minorities.

System of minority self-government (Section 15)

For further developing of the minority system of self-government, the Government initiates the amendment of the act on minorities. In doing so, the Government wishes to clarify the questions raised by the Advisory Committee. Expanding the cultural autonomy of the minorities is an essential component of the amendment. Simultaneously with this, the Government also intends to amend the provisions on the election of minority self-governments to ensure that only the members of the ethnic group concerned participate in minority self-government elections. It must be admitted, however, that several national minority self-governments are opposing proposals, including those of the Ombudsman, aimed at amending the election law.

Relations with our neighbours (Section 17)

Hungary, partly due to the relations between the minorities living on her territory and their mother country, is interested in the non-introduction of visa requirements for the citizens of any neighbouring country.

Summary

In summarizing its evaluation, the Advisory Committee touches upon the situation of the Gypsy community. With regard to this, we consider it necessary to state that Hungary is a democracy with a stable institutional background where the rule of law prevails and human and minority rights are both respected and safeguarded.

Consolidating the situation of Gypsies is an all-European social problem, the Government of the Republic of Hungary intends to promote the social integration of Gypsies without strengthening the process of their segregation. Some tasks have a direct impact on the Gypsies, while others target the Gypsy community as a disadvantaged class of the society. Government measures are aimed at creating equal opportunities for all members of our society, preventing and easing prejudices and negative discrimination on the one hand and strengthening the identity and culture of the Gypsy community on the other. In the Government's view, the social integration of the Gypsy population is both a minority and a social policy issue. In 1999, for the purpose of coordinating the related work of numerous ministries, the Government established the Interdepartmental Committee and the chairman of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government participates as a permanent member in the work of the committee. Budgetary resources are allocated to the realization of individual concrete tasks, for instance the Ministry for Social and Family Affairs will start a special public work program for improving the living conditions of Gypsies. Local Gypsy minority self-governments take part in the recruitment of public workers and the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government is part of the supervisory process. This year alone, the Ministry for Social and Family Affairs will spend a total of HUF 3,000 M on public work programs and

the Ministry for Transportation and Water Management will supplement those resources by HUF 450 M.

Experts from the Council of Europe assist in formulating the Government's long-term strategy for the social integration of the Gypsy community.

It is the firm intention of the Government of Hungary to create a minority-friendly environment in which citizens belonging to minority groups native in Hungary can freely exercise their rights contained in the law. Hungary regards the promotion of minority cultures not only as a duty arising from her international obligations but also as her long-term national interest.

Hungary was among the first countries that have signed the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. In line with this, Hungary was one of the first countries that have given account of their performance in meeting their commitments. In congruence with the provisions of the Framework Agreement, Hungary strives to continuously expand minority rights. Since the Advisory Committee's visit to Hungary in 1999, Hungary has succeeded in attaining new results in the field of minority policy. Our summary was intended to lay down the factual elements of this policy.

GOVERNMENT MEASURES TO IMPROVE LIVING CONDITIONS FOR HUNGARY'S ROMA

The Roma affairs policy of the current centrist administration is a continuation of the efforts and achievements of the previous government. The current administration adopted a medium term package of measures {104711999 (V.5) Gov't Decree} that rests on an evaluation of the medium-term programme adopted in 1997 and follows co-ordination with representatives of the National Roma Self-Government, the professional ministries, social organisations, and specialists.

The tasks defined in the medium term package are intended to promote social integration of the Roma without reinforcing segregation processes.

One purpose of the government measures is to increase chances for equal opportunity and to prevent or reduce prejudice and discrimination, while the other is to reinforce the identity and culture of the Roma communities. The government avows that the social integration of the Roma is an issue that includes both minority policy and social policy.

The government established an Interdepartmental Committee on Roma Affairs on June 25, 1999, to co-ordinate, execute, and monitor the medium term package.

To improve the effectiveness of task implementation, the various line ministries have been compiling annual action plans, beginning with 2000, complete with funding from their own budgets. These ministries work in full co-ordination with the National Roma Self-Government and the Office of National and Ethnic Minorities.

Each year the line ministries review the lessons of implementation, and recommend any amendments to the package they deem necessary.

A separate task triggered by the medium-term package has been to design a comprehensive, scientifically founded, long-term strategy encompassing social and minority policy.

The Interdepartmental Committee on Roma Affairs brought about a sub-committee to prepare the long-term strategy. Following the sub-committee recommendations, the Office of National and Ethnic Minorities produced a discussion paper on strategy for presentation to the government. (An abbreviated version of the working paper, in its November 2000 form, is attached.)

1. Financial Resources

The various ministries have earmarked their own funding from set-asides in their budgets to implement their parts of the package. The ministries with primary responsibility for implementing the programme set forth in the package are required to turn over their funding drafts to the Interdepartmental Committee by May 31 of each year, showing exactly how they intend to secure funding for the following year's programmes.

The funding comes from three different budgetary sources. The National Budget Act specifies certain supports targeted directly towards the Roma population, contains other resources made available to both national and ethnic minorities, and has earmarked still other funds focused on economically disadvantaged groups and other professional tasks.

In 2000, the total amount of central funding available to the medium-term package through the ministries' own budgets was HUF 4.86bln. Including other funding earmarked for Roma issues plus funding to ensure the exercise of rights as defined in the Minority Act (particularly as add-ons to guarantee minority education, as budgetary support for the national and local Roma self-governments, as support by parliament and the fine ministries to civil organisations, and as special funding from the Ministry of Justice for minority co-ordination and intervention, etc.), the overall amount comes to about HUF 7.2bln.

A joint education programme being run by the Ministry of-Education and the Ministry for Social and Family Affairs, focused primarily on promoting the social integration of Roma youth, is being funded by the European Union's 1999 Phare programme for Hungary. (The two-year budget for this programme amounts to approximately -HUF 2.5bln or EUR 9.6mn).

The Office of National and Ethnic Minorities submitted a bid for funding, called the Roma Social Integration Programme, as part of its programme for 2000. (The two-year budget of the programme is nearly HUF 1 bin or EUR 3.35mn.)

The bid is targeted at promoting the establishment of a societal environment conducive to the social integration of the disadvantaged Roma population, at developing communication between the Roma and non-Roma population, at starting up anti-discrimination training, at supporting legal protection offices, and at evolving an information database and network.

2. Implementation of Tasks Defined in the Medium-Term Package in 1999 and 2000

a) Education

An amendment to the Education Act, in 1999, made it significantly easier to implement the education tasks defined in the medium-term package. The amendment made it possible to prolong pre-school education when recommended by experts, to allow an individual pace of progression in the lower four grades of elementary school, and to expand opportunities to learn trades and to reduce education gaps while still of mandatory school attendance age. A quality control system introduced to public education is promoting successful minority education.

Scholarships for Roma youth come primarily from public foundations and a Ministry of Justice set-aside fund. With the scholarship system, in 2000, the government used HUF 355.5mn to support 7,580 Roma young people to continue their education. The Ministry of Justice set-aside education fund has gone up from HUF 100mn in 2000 to HUF 200mn in 2001, and will increase to HUF 250mn in 2002 to help fund scholarships for Roma.

For Roma youth participating in higher educational programmes requiring that costs be covered, the Ministry of Education has cost reimbursement available to some applicants. The

maximum amount of support is HUF 60,000, or if the student is attending a higher-level trade school or seeking a second degree, it is HUF 40,000. In 1999, 139 students received such support, while 178 received it in 2000.

The Ministry of Education offered HUF 20mn in competitive grants to institutions doing an outstanding job of educating the Roma minority.

To increase resident accommodations in schools, in 1999 the Ministry of Education used its own set-aside to support three grant applicants with HUF 13.5mn, and in 2000 it supported 19 applicants with a total of 150mn.

The two-year Phare project includes plans for two dormitories, funded by HUF 286mn in Phare support. The Ministry of Education will add HUF 52mn to these funds. to complete the project.

The Phare project also has funding to assist school dropouts to finish their education and to acquire vocational training. The total amount set aside for the current two-year period is HUF 936mn, of which the Hungarian budget is contributing HUF 728mn.

In both 1999 and 2000, the Ministry of Education provided HUF 20mn in grants available through bids to develop and offer professional and financial support to institutions maintained by local governments, foundations and other bodies that play an outstanding role in educating the Roma minority.

To promote the teaching of Roma studies, the ministry offered competitive research grants to summarise the experience of higher education in Roma studies.

The Ministry of Education and the National Roma Self-Government concluded a separate agreement to provide HUF 10mn in textbooks and teaching aids to disadvantaged Roma children attending elementary and secondary school.

The Ministry of the Interior, together with the Ministries of Education and Justice, used HUF 300mn in 2000 alone, to assist in funding pre-schools and schools attended by minorities. In 2001 the funding increased to HUF 320mn, and in 2002 it will rise to HUF 340mn.

b) Culture

A National Roma Information and Cultural Centre, operated by the National Roma Self-Government, was started up in 1999. The central budget provided HUF 180mn towards its establishment in 2000, and in 2001 and 2002 it is providing HUF 35mn in running costs.

Several dozen multi-functional Roma community centres, started with national support, began operation in recent years. In 1999, the Public Foundation for the Roma of Hungary provided HUF 15mn to help with the overhead costs, programmes and infrastructural expansions of the Roma Community Centres, an amount that was increased to HUF 30mn in 2000. The ministry has been supporting the training and extension training of professionals who run the Roma Community Centres in various local communities throughout the country.

The Ministry for Cultural Heritage offered HUF 7mn through competitive bids in 1999 to support cultural services, the publication of books and methodology guides, and native

language culture. In 2000, it devoted HUF 70mn to specific parts Of the medium-term package. In addition, this ministry provided HUF 43mn in 2000 to sponsor programmes and institutions targeting the Roma minority (support towards the operation of national Roma civil organisations, other, ad hoc support, etc.), totalling HUF 113mn for this purpose.

In order to comply with the task of presenting a realistic image of the Roma communities, this ministry used HUF 0.5mn in 1999 to prepare a documentary broadcast on Hungarian Public Television. In 2000 it offered HUF 6mn in support to the making of three films (documentary and educational) on the lives of the Roma. In the first quarter of 2000, it opened bidding for an integrated camp, to which it devoted HUF 10mn

c) Employment Farming, Regional Development

In 1999 and 2000, the various County Employment Centres worked continuously to build relationships with numerous partners who could promote re-integration of the Roma into the labour market. Just about all of them concluded written co-operation agreements with local Roma self-governments, local civil organisations, and county-level associations and organisations to promote job access.

To alleviate the most serious labour market problems, the County Employment Centres initiated 2-3 year labour market programmes.

Of 27 programmes recommended for support, 8 are focused exclusively on promoting jobs for unemployed Roma. An additional 9 programmes are targeted at organising jobs for people who have been jobless on long term, and at other disadvantaged strata, programmes that are counting on Roma as participants.

The Ministry of Social and Family Affairs prepared an information and methodology booklet for small town local governments, local minority self-governments, and other organisations, presenting the employment programmes available to job seekers.

In 1999 and 2000, this ministry spent HUF 2bln on public work projects. According to estimated data, Roma make up 40% of the people participating in public work projects overall.

Among the Human Resource Projects of the National Development Programme, a European Social Fund type model project was set up for people with multiple disadvantages in 2000, in three regions where assistance is particularly needed (the Northern Great-Plain, North Hungary, Southern Great-Plain), using EUR 4mn in Phare support and EUR 4mn (approx. HUF 1 bin) from the Labour Market Fund.

County labour organisations earmarked HUF 7.7bln, or 30% of the total amount they had available, to priority support for public work projects financed by the Employment Fund portion of the Labour Market Fund. An empirical investigation showed that 10% of the support promotes employment for jobless Roma.

- In 2000, the Labour Market Fund turned over HUF 6.8bln to local governments, creating additional opportunities for temporary public sector jobs for aid recipients.

In most counties, young Roma, just entering the workforce, also can apply for jobs offered, and participate in training courses organised for, or offered to, labour market entrant jobseekers, as well as take jobs in transitional employment projects. Working in co-operation with county labour centres and together with the trainees, the ministry has set up a network of mentors to assist Roma who have been jobless on long term to become re-integrated into the workforce.

The project, aimed principally at supporting the social adjustment of Roma youth, is part of a Phare project initiated in conjunction with the Ministry of Education.

Support for the Job Assistance Project for Unemployed Labour Market Entrants is being augmented by a series of projects run by National Employment Public Foundation (hereinafter: NEF), supervised by the Ministry of Economic Affairs. From 1997 to 1999, these labour market services received HUF 2.9bln in support, used to organise 379 projects that offered shorter or longer-term jobs or employment to 162,430 people including 37,000 Roma.

In co-ordination with the medium term package, the NEF established a separate employment programme for Roma in harmony with the objectives of the National Employment Strategy.

The reception given to this programme is illustrated by the fact that in Phase One, 22 Roma organisations submitted draft employment projects designed to create jobs for 586 people at a cost of HUF 361mn (Overall available funding: HUF 80mn.) The NEF board's project management selected 13 organisations for training.

Based on training experience, the Public Foundation Bureau is forecasting that 8-10 projects will take off successfully. Through them it appears realistic to expect that 150-180 unemployed Roma will find long-term employment each year, totalling 450-540 in all for the three years the project is scheduled to run. In 2000, four organisations received HUF 69mn in support and a financial decision on three additional -organisations is expected in early 2001.

The Regional Labour Development and Training Centres are paying special attention to expanding gap-reduction training and other programmes connected to public work projects.

The training centres have built a close relationship with representatives of local and regional Roma organisations and of county and national minority self-governments. In 1999 a total of HUF 106.3mn was devoted to training programmes, which offered training to 4,000-5,000 jobless people, 30% of whom were Roma. A similar sized programme was run in 2000.

According to questionnaire follow-ups of people involved in this type of training, 80% subsequently found jobs.

Under a project initiated in 1998 in nine counties to train Roma as community development assistants, HUF 45mn in funding made it possible to train 171 people. In 2000, HUF 20-30mn was available for this. The Roma mentors, work organisers, and co-ordinators (there are over 180 of them) thus trained, are playing a steadily growing role in drawing the Roma population into labour market services.

In 1999, HUF 40mn was invested in trade training programmes run in corrections institutions to improve chances of finding jobs. With it, 653 people received job training, 50% of whom were Roma. The programme was continued in 2000, with HUF 36mn in funding, and is expected to expand to comply with demand in 2001, with funding amounting to HUF 80mn. 'Social Crisis Management Programmes, Active Social Welfare Policy Means' is a programme set within the budget of the Ministry of Social and Family Affairs that provides funding for the Welfare Land Programme, through which HUF 670mn was available in 1999. In 2000, it had HUF 570mn at its disposal. Empirical investigations showed that 40-50% of the funding supported the welfare land programme.

That programme makes it possible for local village governments and local minority Roma self-governments to co-operate with, and participate in, the subsistence, free seed, and business support programmes of the Public Foundation for the Roma of Hungary. The Roma population is a major beneficiary of this support.

These support programmes are open to people in multiply disadvantaged small settlements, who are invited to submit bids. There is a significantly higher-than-average ratio of Roma in these regions. About one third of the families enjoying the benefits of the welfare land programmes are Roma.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Regional Development, more land, needed to expand the welfare land programme, only -will become available once- a National Land Foundation is established.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Regional Development designed a briefing on the extent to which projects supported by regional development councils had promoted an improvement in the lives of the Roma population. The decisive majority of infrastructural development took the form of road building and modernisation, and providing drinking water, and run-offs and canals for precipitation water.

We can give only an estimate of the ensuing changes because of shortcomings in the monitoring system, though we can conclude that in most counties, the poorer settlements inhabited by Roma received a comparatively favourable portion of the available funds.

It is necessary to improve the monitoring system to get a clear picture of how the supports were used. (The Ministry of Justice and Office of National and Ethnic Minorities have already taken the measures needed to do this.)

In 1999, the national budget set-aside for regional development, used to supplement local funding, was HUF 100mn. In 2000, it amounted to HUF 200mn used in accordance with a contract concluded between the Ministry of Agriculture and Regional Development and the National Roma Self-Government.

HUF 40mn was used to support farming communities to promote welfare farming production.

d) Welfare, Health, and Housing Programmes

In 1999, the Ministry of Health provided HUF 14.3mn for health improvement programmes, and made HUF 43mn available in 2000, to cover tasks set forth in the medium term package.

In order to expand its screening and continuing care services that contribute to the important public health task of prevention, the Ministry of Health worked with the National Health Insurance Fund to jointly determine which screening and continuing (extended) care services are unavailable to members of the Roma minority, or though available, are very difficult for them to access, and which are the ones medical research finds truly necessary.

In 2000, the National Public Health and Medical Officer's Service organised extension training for health visitors (mother and child health nurses) and primary health care staff.

In co-operation with the Research Institute for Roma Studies in Szekszard, a study entitled 'Pregnancy, Birth, and Childcare in Cultures in Hungary' was published.

After evaluating the preparation level of six Roma applicants for the, College of Health and Nursing of the Debrecen University of Medicine, the College Faculty organised a preparatory course after which five of the six passed the entrance exam and began college level studies there.

The National Institute of Health Promotion is continuing its training and employment of Roma as -outreach social workers and home nurse-caregivers. They include Roma youth in their other programmes (children's camps, clubs, etc.), as well.

Within the health improvement working group programme set up by the Economics Cabinet, the ministry prepared a comprehensive briefing based on the Action Plan for 2000, called 'Health Improvement Programme for Disadvantaged Strata Among Ethnic Minorities.'

The forest camp competition set up for children in the first four grades of elementary school by the Public Foundation for the Roma of Hungary, is connected to the health promotion tasks set forth by the Ministry of Health. Schools may apply for this support (camp) if their student population is over 60% Roma, and may send groups of 30 students in the first four grades of elementary school to the camp, but the majority of the children selected for the school connected respite also must be Roma.

Participation in the forest camp is free of charge, and the Public Foundation covers the costs of accommodations, five meals a day, and local guides. The camp is held every year at the Youth and Children's Holiday Centre at Környebanya. The Public Foundation has offered support to schools in 99 settlements for 2001.

PLANS AND TASKS TO IMPROVE THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF HUNGARY'S ROMA

1. The Long-Term Strategy of Social and Minority Policy

Paragraph Four of Government Decree 10471/1999 (V. 5) setting forth a medium-term package of measures to improve the living conditions and social position of the Roma population calls for the Interdepartmental Committee on Roma Affairs to work together with the National Roma Self-Government to elaborate a comprehensive, scientifically based long-term strategy of social and minority policy to promote the social integration of the Roma population, and to improve their living conditions and social position.

There is an absence of complete consensus in current Hungarian society regarding the types of measures to take to improve the lot of the Roma. One basic goal of the long-term strategy is to evolve and maintain the broadest possible consensus following society-wide debate.

The long-term strategy is not intended to replace the medium-term programme package or to delay implementation of medium-term tasks, but on the contrary, to offer long-term guarantees of their proper execution.

The discussion paper sets strategic priorities stressing ways to encourage families, including Roma families, to become self-supporting, in conformity with the centrist government's platform. Two sectorial priorities of the long-term Roma strategy serve to do this:

- Education,
- Improving their position on the labour market.

In addition to the sectorial priorities, it also has become necessary to define more comprehensive, horizontal priorities which cut across the sectorial ones, to reinforce social cohesion:

- Preventing and/or averting the social isolation of the Roma,
- Strengthening the role the Roma play in public life.

It is important to stress that this process, likely to trigger major debates, as well as efforts to promote this strategy, is unique in Europe. This means that the long-term strategy affecting the Roma is not only of major significance domestically but has extremely important international implications, too.

2. National Legislation to Prevent and Ban Discrimination

Democracy in Hungary has a firm institutional foundation; it guarantees rule of law, human rights, and respect for and protection of minority rights. No minority in Hungary, and that includes the Roma, is persecuted.

The Minority Act was adopted in 1993, and a system of minority self-governments was brought about pursuant to this law starting in 1994, as was a parliamentary commissioner for the rights of national and ethnic minorities (minority ombudsman) who began working in 1995. The combination has resulted in an organically interrelated system of minority protection ranging through parliament, responsible government bodies and the civil sphere, unique by international comparison, and fully recognised and admired by all.

If any person or group from any minority feels that her/his rights have been violated, s/he can freely access an entire series of opportunities for domestic-legal remedy. Opportunities for redress range from public administration and police authorities, through the prosecutor's office, the courts, the parliamentary standing committee for minority affairs, the minority ombudsman, on to the Constitutional Court. In addition, in the course of the past decade a series of organisations defending the rights of minorities have begun to operate with government support. All of these domestic forums are available, and together with a free press, they assist injured parties in exercising their rights and in reducing prejudice.

The government is making continuous efforts above and beyond application of existing law to prevent, and to apply sanctions against, discrimination occurring in day-to-day life, which also occurs against the Roma.

On June 29, the Council of the European Union adopted guidelines on the application of the principle of equal treatment for all people irrespective of their racial or ethnic origins. Since Hungary is among the nations waiting to join the EU, it has begun adopting legislation in harmony with these guidelines.

In Decision No. 4512000 (XII. 8) AB [Constitutional Court], the Constitutional Court rejected submissions claiming that parliament had created an unconstitutional situation by not passing a comprehensive law banning discrimination; and rejected submissions claiming that by neglecting to pass such a comprehensive anti-discrimination law, parliament had violated an obligation derived from international accords.

The Parliamentary Commissioner for National and Ethnic Minority Rights designed an anti-discrimination bill and presented it to the Human Rights, Minority, and Religious Affairs Committee of Parliament. The Ministry of Justice agreed with the review of anti-discrimination legislation, and is setting up a comprehensive professional co-ordinating working group for the project. The committee, which included the parliamentary commissioner, and a government and an opposition MP from the Parliamentary Human Rights, Minority, and Religious Affairs Committee, held its first session on March 29, 2001, setting up the following plan of action: 'The ministries shall examine the legislation affecting their sectors by April 30, 2001. Following this survey, the committee shall debate, then summarise and present -opinions -on the conclusions drawn by the ministries. The deadline for completing this work is June 15, 2001. After this, a decision can be made on whether there is a need to enact a comprehensive anti-discrimination law; or whether it is sufficient to amend and regulate the given legislative area so that it becomes compliant with the requirements of the European Union.

A question becoming increasingly prominent in recent years is whether general laws on minority rights are sufficient to protect the Roma minority, or whether they require increased or different forms of protection.

The portion of the European Union country report on Hungary published on November 8, 2000 dealing with -human rights testifies to increased efforts in the administration of justice. It says that 'in the interim, the legal system slowly began addressing complaints of discrimination, and Hungary's courts began hearing cases of discrimination, of overzealous police actions and of preventing people from entering places of entertainment.' (The most recent such example was a legally binding decision by the Court of Szabolcs-Szatmar-Bereg County, fining the operator of a disco at Dombrod HUF 200,000 for refusing access to Roma youth.)

3. Resources

The medium term package of measures is scheduled for amendment by the government in April, to improve the consistency of implementation and significantly expand its resources.

The various line ministries and nation-wide authorities have upped funding within their own budgets by over HUF 1bln to implement the task segment of the medium-term package scheduled for 2001. The final budget will be adopted at a meeting of the Interdepartmental Committee for Roma Affairs, set for April 12, 2001.

4. Within the Concrete Programme Points there are Significant Advances Anticipated in 2001 in the Following Areas:

a) Education

Scholarship support for Roma youth is to come primarily from public foundations and a special set-aside of the Ministry of Justice.

Within the two-year budget that has been adopted, the funding going to the Ministry of Justice and earmarked for scholarships has been increased substantially. In 2001 it was increased to HUF 200mn double the HUF 100mn available in 2000, and in 2002 it will have HUF 250mn available, to use to increase the number of scholarships for Roma youth who continue their education. The increased funding makes it possible not only to increase the number of students but also to improve the quality of scholarship assistance (e.g.: to advance the tutorial system).

b) Housing Programme

Starting in 2000, it has become more possible to construct low-income rental housing within the National Housing Construction Programme. The National Roma Self-Government, in cooperation with the Ministry of Economics, has undertaken to build 200-233 apartment units with support valued at-HUF 300mn

Under an agreement concluded between the Ministry of Social and Family Affairs and the National Savings Bank (OTP), HUF 1.4bln will be made available to assist people who have been unable to repay loans.

c) The National Public Health Programme's Affect on the Roma Population

Within its National Public Health Programme, the Ministry of Health has set aside HUF 2.5bln to survey the state of health of the Roma population and will use the information to set

up healthcare centres, and train and employ Roma health monitors to improve on the current situation.

d) Employment

Co-operation agreements will be concluded between the County Employment Centres and offices, and Roma local self-governments and civil organisations to promote employment for the Roma population.

Programmes designed to employ jobless Roma have got underway in Budapest and in Békés, Győr-Moson-Sopron, Hajdu-Bihar, Heves, Jasz-Nagykun-Szolnok Somogy, and Pest Counties. Programmes to assist people in disadvantaged situations have been organised in Bacs-Kiskun, Borsod-Abauj-Zemplén, Csongrad, Fejér, Komárom-Esztergom, Nógrád, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg Vas, and Zala Counties.

The National Employment Public Foundation supports programmes designed to find jobs for the Roma population and return them to the labour market. The NEF would like to increase the employment of jobless Roma and promote the social re-integration of Roma who have been jobless on long term by supporting comprehensive employment projects run by the Roma organisations. In 2001 it has HUF 300mn available for this project.

Public and community projects co-ordinated with regional -development programmes have been organised to improve job opportunities for people who have been unemployed on long term. Estimated data suggest that Roma make up 40% of the people participating in these public work projects. In 2001 there are HUF 3bln available for these projects.

Using experience with business programmes as a point of departure, starting in 2001 the Public Foundation for the Roma of Hungary has put out a call for business bids on an experimental basis with a focus on labour market re-integration. It is aimed at promoting the setting up of businesses by Roma who have been unemployed on long term, and at promoting work for them as employees.

5 Restoring Homes Damaged or Destroyed by Floods

An Interdepartmental Committee for Restoration and Reconstruction was set up to handle reconstruction operations in flood-stricken parts of Eastern Hungary, of which the National Roma Self-Government is a part. The government has undertaken to restore at least 100% of the damaged structures once damage has been assessed in the disaster area. This means that when justified, it will build higher quality homes in better locations. Many Roma live in adobe homes along the upper section of the Tisza River, which overstepped its banks this spring causing many families to lose their homes to the ensuing floods. The government has resolved to replace these homes with healthier, brick structures, and will not require any reimbursement. Roma men will be hired to work on the construction, as a public work project, and will be paid for their work.

Budapest, April 2001

LONG-TERM GOVERNMENT STRATEGY GUIDELINES FOR ROMANY SOCIETY AND MINORITY POLICY

(Discussion paper)

Abbreviated Version

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Preamble

In order to promote the integration of the Romany population of Hungary into society, the government of the Republic of Hungary has resolved to elaborate a long-term strategy.

The future fate of the Romany population in Central Eastern Europe and in Hungary is, and will continue to be, one of the most critical social and minority issues of coming decades.

There is currently no consensus in society regarding the measures needed to improve the situation of the Gypsies.

A fundamental objective of long-term strategy is to establish and maintain the broadest possible consensus.

To achieve this, a broad-based society-wide debate must be organized to set down the strategic guidelines of a long-term strategy that will promote the social integration of Hungary's Gypsy population. That societal debate must be able to trigger a candid, substantive, and creative dialogue.

The legitimate representative bodies of the Gypsies must play a primary role in the society-wide debate. Nevertheless, the process of democratisation will have to be even broader based and must not be narrowed down to cooperation between government institutions and the Roma but must extend to all of society.

All points of contact must be sought out to participate in the debate. This principally includes Members of Parliament, the National Gypsy Administration, county assemblies, settlement administrations and local minority administrations of the ethnic Roma, and representatives of social organizations. If the strategy is to be implemented successfully, majority society also must be won over, for without that we cannot hope to reduce mutual prejudices. It must be made possible for everyone to play a true creative role in shaping the strategy, but every single person, organization and public institution must also be made to realize the responsibility that this entails.

Once the society-wide debate is concluded, the government must adopt the finalized long-term strategy through Parliament, as a way of declaring that solutions to the problems affecting the Roma only can be resolved through acceptance of joint responsibility that rests on society wide consensus.

Following the change in political system, the tasks of the government changed significantly, in parallel with the evolution of a democratic nation based on rule of law and a market economy. The decline in the paternalistic role of the government was followed by the building of a system of democratic institutions, which guaranteed the rights of citizens and minorities. To assist the evolution of middle-class values, the government has attempted to provide the conditions for individualized initiatives by its citizens. Despite the decreased role of the government, the government of the Republic of Hungary does not wish to give up its influence over social flows affecting the Gypsy population, or its obligations derived from its government role. Measures taken and organized at the top cannot resolve the centuries old disadvantaged position of the Roma; it will take long-term efforts resting upon a policy of consensus and partnership to do this.

A long-term effort is required to achieve significant change in the situation of the Romany population and during this time the government and representatives of public authority must accept most of the responsibility. To successfully implement the strategy, government responsibility must be augmented with a vested interest and sense of responsibility on the part of the Gypsy population and the whole of society. The responsibility of the various players is asymmetric and differs in degree. Stronger social solidarity and an expansion of real opportunity are absolutely essential to increasing the responsibility of Romany communities and of representatives of the Roma. With the growth in solidarity they will acquire the conditions and competencies to control their own destinies.

With its decision to establish the strategy, the Hungarian government has undertaken management of phenomena in which discrimination and injustices against the Romany population are manifest.

As it evolves, this policy will objectively require course corrections and amendment; implementation will clearly come up against obstacles and resistance; impatience and criticism are likely, and overall policy fulfilment will be made difficult by financial constraints and political and election considerations. Nevertheless, thanks to social development over the past decade, conditions do exist for the strategy to work, with the joint participation and sense of responsibility of public administration and Romany and non-Romany social players. In implementing its strategy, Hungarian democracy needs the firm support of the nations and institutions of Europe to integrate the Roma as citizens of Europe of full stature.

1. Why a long-term strategy is needed

1.1 The socially marginalised, outcast position of the Romany population

The disadvantaged living conditions and social standing of Hungary's Gypsy population are well known, and have been well researched and analysed in Hungary. The social indices of the Romany population are significantly below the national mean, and a vast majority of them live in uncertainty and vulnerability, below the minimum subsistence level.

The Romany population was hardest hit by the wave of unemployment that swept through Hungary in 1989 and 1990. They were the largest group forced off the labour market and are the ones who have found it most difficult to adjust to market conditions.

The proportion of Romany children finishing the eight grades of elementary school has increased, but as far as high school and college education are concerned, there is still a major gap between them and the non-Romany population.

The disadvantages faced by Hungary's Gypsy population are complex. Institutionally, low levels of education, large families, a poorer-than-average state of health, and prejudice limit their social mobility. Most live in settlements where the infrastructure is poorly developed and in regions that have been hardest hit by economic crisis and depression. The settlements themselves have worse-than-average living conditions. Most often, the disadvantages are cumulative, and combine to contribute to the increasing marginalisation of the Romany population. The cumulative, combined nature of the adverse factors makes the situation of the Romany minority even more critical.

According to interest representatives of the Romany minority, in past years a number of government measures that were adopted have indirectly disadvantaged the Romany population.

These regulations affected all citizens in keeping with the principle of equality before the law, such as the opportunity to evict people who occupy homes in an arbitrary manner without having to wait for a court ruling.

The measures, which affected all people alike on the surface, actually diminished equal opportunity. In addition, they are not in harmony with legal regulations guaranteeing to protect, and provide social security for, children. Future efforts must be aimed at increased consideration of factors that guarantee harmony between measures and legislation targeted at the Romany minority and more general government measures.

Mixing together the management of social issues and minority policy measures affecting the Romany population often leads to the separation, segregation of the Gypsy minority and to the ethnicization of social problems. The dire social problems of the Romany population must be managed within the general framework of welfare policy. Long-term endeavours must be aimed at clearly separating welfare, and minority policy issues in measures affecting the Romany minority.

In addition, there must be a stop to the growth of the blame-the-victim viewpoint that places responsibility for their poverty on the Roma, themselves, claiming that it is their own fault because of their differences as a minority.

If the flows outlined above are not halted by a coherent and firm policy, the gap between the Roma and the rest of society will continue to grow. On long term that situation can lead to a rise in social tension and a decline in social solidarity, resulting in the destabilization of all of society. One objective of the long-term strategy is to avert and prevent these negative social phenomena.

1.2 The emergence of Romany representation

In parallel with the marginalisation of the Romany population, there has also been a democratisation process underway in society, which has had an encouraging influence on the Romany population. Opportunities to voice, and to act in, the interests of the Roma have increased significantly in recent years, and the National Gypsy Administration and local minority administrations of ethnic Roma and their social organizations have played a major role here.

As minority rights became institutionalised, and as various government measures have come into force, a stratum of Romany intellectuals and others who have taken on the role of interest representation has evolved in Hungary. These interest groups have undertaken an active role in shaping central and local policies, and in the activity of public institutions and social organizations.

As occurs in all processes of democratisation, there is competition and rivalry among the organizations and individuals representing Roma interests. On local level this hinders cooperation and communication among the various players, for instance, when organizations representing the Romany population are unwilling to debate local issues together in an objective manner. On nation-wide level, a primary source of tension is that the government organizations' legitimate negotiation partner, the National Gypsy Administration has more influence and funding than the rest of the national social organizations.

The over-divisiveness also hurts the Romany communities. Disagreements, which often become personal, tend to increase prejudice against the Romany people on the one hand. On the other it often happens that specific organizational or individual interests manifest in the debates reduce the chances of the communities to have their interests heard, in other words, to use the "power of one voice" to state their needs and get action.

Another questionable issue is the extent to which the local minority administration system of the ethnic Roma is fitted to manage the complex problems of the Romany minority. We need to ask whether the Romany population is either able or willing to take advantage of its right to a minority culture and language when most of the problems it faces are social and economic in nature.

Despite these problems, the social foundations for Roma participation in, and commitment to evolving and implementing a long-term strategy do exist. The representatives of the Romany communities have a right guaranteed by law as well as a growing desire to actively participate in the various levels of decision-making that affect the Romany minority.

The strategy could never be implemented without their support and cooperation, but with their participation and involvement joint long-term thinking and action become possible.

1.3 Continuous, professional implementation and enhancement of current medium-term government measures and related plans of action

Gov't Decree 1047/1999 (May 5), which set up a medium-term program-package of measures to improve the living conditions and social status of the Gypsies, was adopted in 1999. In doing this, the administration was voicing its readiness to change the situation of the Romany population, and its view that promoting their social integration was an important task.

To guarantee that the tasks set forth in the medium-term-program-package of measures were completed on schedule, the professional portfolios put forward annual plans of action to promote concrete implementation of the tasks. The professional ministries must set aside funding from their own budgets under separate headings to implement the annual tasks.

The government has designed a coherent building-block system of measures to promote the social integration of the Romany population. As part of the medium-term program-package of measures, an Interdepartmental Committee of Gypsy Affairs has been set up to help implement the tasks set forth in the annual action plans of the professional portfolios. The Public Foundation for the Gypsies of Hungary, which has its own board of supervisors and a separate support system, has been assisting the Romany population to improve its living conditions and social status since 1996.

When evaluating implementation to date of the medium and short-term programs, it has to be concluded that despite positive results, they have not been sufficiently effective and the marginalisation and exclusion of the Romany population has continued.

Problems with the implementation of the medium-term program-package of measures are essentially the result of three factors:

- a) the dire living- conditions of the Roma,
- b) Hungary's limited and restricted financial opportunities, and
- c) the newness of a government policy toward the Gypsies and the resulting shortcomings and difficulties, such as the absence of a comprehensive, detailed monitoring system.

Despite continuing economic growth, it is likely that there will still be financial limits to implementing the long-term Romany strategy, so it must be revisited to define the most rational way to use existing monies with a mind to need.

This requires a long-term strategy of Romany advancement that is carefully considered, scientifically rooted, consensus-based and can continue to operate despite changes in government administrations.

The long-term strategy is not intended to replace the medium-term program-package of measures, or to postpone implementation of medium-term tasks, but on the contrary, to offer a long-term guarantee that they will be successfully implemented.

In elaborating, debating, and adopting a long-term strategy, the administration and parliament are declaring that improving the social stature of the largest minority group in Hungary, the Gypsies, is a priority government and society-wide task.

In addition to declaring political responsibility, if the long-term strategy is to be successful, the competencies and abilities of the Romany minority to take responsibility must be increased. The existing system of institutions must also be reinforced for more effective operation, and the competency of the central body of public administration managing Romany minority affairs must be enhanced. A monitoring system to regularly supervise and evaluate programs must be put into place, and new and concentrated resources must be ensured to meet the tasks.

2. The principles of the long-term strategy

2.1 Social solidarity, fairness

Hungarian residents would like to live in a country in which everyone, even the most vulnerable, have a chance to live decently and improve their lot. They want a country where the general atmosphere is pro-minority, and where a stable, legally sanctioned framework prevents all manifestations of discrimination, and where social solidarity offers new opportunity to generations, strata, and minorities that were significantly marginalised in past decades.

That solidarity has to take shape in the form of specific measures that offer real equal opportunity. Without strong and lasting solidarity, the Roma would be unable to improve their own lot, while consciously adopted, long-lasting solidarity that includes the provision of finances can be a basis to increase their sense of responsibility.

Solidarity can exist only if the target is acceptance of responsibility. Aid that is not aimed at increasing competence, and does not seek structural causes underlying the exclusion of the Roma, will perpetuate the marginalisation of the Romany minority instead of promoting integration.

2.2 Partnership, responsibility

The problems belong to all of us, so all of us must seek the solution. We must continue to dismantle the paternalist outlook existing in both majority and minority groups and must create the real conditions that will enable Romany society and its own leaders to become the increasingly responsible and primary shapers of its own destiny.

The principle of partnership must be equally present on central and decentralized levels when elaborating and implementing the strategy. Cookie-cutter measures coming from above do not consider the diversity and complexity of the various situations, and this reduces their effectiveness.

The Roma and their representatives must be involved in common thought-processes and actions related to all sections of the strategy. The make-or-break factor of all measures touching upon the Gypsy community is the commitment of all players to their success.

2.3 Subsidiaries, decentralization, and local-level development

Local-level programs must dominate on long term, to improve the situation of the Romany population, in keeping with general trends. The, for the most part, central initiatives and model programs will only have the desired mass influence if the principles of decentralization and delegation to local-level are employed down to settlement and sub-regional level though backed with sufficient central financing. This is where thinking in terms of the program and a demand for action need to occur.

The basic principle to be followed is that, for the most part, solving local problems is in the interests of, and the task and the responsibility of the local community.

This means that a grass-roots based system of institutions, operating on the principle of local subsidiaries, is needed to effectively respond to regional and local demand and need.

2.4 Protecting and nurturing Romany cultural values

Cultural diversity has been a centuries-long characteristic of Hungary. There is a both deliberate and clear intention to enable minorities to maintain complete cultural autonomy. An important common task is to protect minority values, including the values and languages of Romany culture - the sector within minority culture where there have been fewest opportunities to date - so that they can be passed on to future generations. This activity must not be limited to the Gypsy population. As majority society becomes acquainted with Romany culture and Gypsy community values in general, prejudices within some social groups- can be significantly reduced, and the overall level of social solidarity and tolerance increased.

2.5 Respect for human rights and banning discrimination

The government is principally responsible for implementing the respect of human rights by its own self and by others. To meet that task it is necessary to increasingly advance the government protection of minorities and, as a part of this, to improve its legal anti-discrimination framework to guarantee equal rights, through coercion if need be.

Relying on its experience and positive practices, Hungary must continue to play an initiative role in shaping international norms that protect minorities.

2.6 Openness, transparency

The social integration of the Romany population, and programs and projects involved in the process must be completely transparent, public and open. The print and electronic media, along with the other parts of modern information society's arsenal, have played and will continue to play an outstanding role in achieving this end. It is important that a steadily rising number of highly qualified professionals from the Romany community, who know and understanding the traditions and culture of the Roma, agree to work in this, as well as many other areas.

2.7 Complexity, program coordination

Management of the differentiated and complex problems of the Romany population requires a complex, multidimensional approach. Therefore, a set of complex, coordinated measures are needed to set priorities for the medium-term program-package of measures and define and implement the tasks in the annual action plans for education, employment, farming, regional development, health, welfare, anti-discrimination, and communication.

2.8 Concentration of resources, financing that guarantees program sustainability

More than once it has happened that programs already in operation and bearing fruit must be suspended or interrupted because of a lack of funding. At other times an absence of available funding leads to continuous uncertainty, for funding has to be sought month-to-month.

Development resources must be used in a more concentrated way to cover the tasks promising the greatest return and the closest approach to the complex targets, managing problems that arise, and guaranteeing the sustainability of successful projects.

To successfully implement and advance the programs a separate and larger concentration of-resources are needed in addition to those of the various ministries. It would be used primarily to supplement decentralized support systems by providing or augmenting the matching funds needed to win bids, as well as to make it possible, to start up development projects affecting other Romany minorities.

3. The goal of the long-term strategy

The general goal of the long-term strategy is to promote the social and economic integration of the Romany population of Hungary, while simultaneously providing the conditions to maintain their minority identity.

- What do we mean by integration? We view it as stable job opportunities on the primary labour market, positions within the market economy, chances to become tax-paying citizens, emancipated social status, opportunities to play equal roles in public life, rights and conditions to safeguard the values of Romany culture, and reinforcement of a freely chosen minority identity.

As the outcome of social integration the social indices of the Romany population must approach and if possible, become identical with the mean social indices of majority society. The significant differences affecting living conditions and social status must be substantially reduced.

Realization of the goals set forth in the long-term strategy only can be measured in terms of a multigenerational time frame. But, the maximum time frame for which a long-term Romany strategy can be planned is 20 years. The long-term approach is proper, since it would be illusionary to believe that the situation of the Roma will improve rapidly.

Nevertheless, it is essential that tangible advances be made on both short and medium term. References to only the distant future as the time of an assumed improvement in the situation is impermissible. A long-term strategy and a society-wide debate to design it would lose credibility if the Romany population felt that the programs were being delayed and promises were not being kept. Therefore, the fundamental prerequisite to the success of the long-term strategy is consistent implementation of the short and medium-term programs.

4. Strategic priorities

To implement the general objectives of the strategy, several priorities will be defined and finalized following the society-wide debate.

Reinforcement of the ability of families to support themselves is part of the platform of the centrist government, and is of essential significance to the Romany population, too. As part of the long-term Romany strategy, priorities of two economic sectors, calling for the improvement of education and labour market status, aim at meeting that goal.

While these two economic sector priorities are the basis for defining and implementing the measures of the medium-term-program-package, to improve societal cohesion it is also necessary to define horizontal priorities that are comprehensive in nature and cut across the sector priorities. These include preventing and averting the social exclusion of the Roma, and strengthening the Romany role in public life.

These priorities are definitive for the entire time the strategy is implemented, they are simultaneously and concurrently valid, and in being so, they service the implementation of the strategic goals.

4.1 Sector priorities in strengthening families' self-supporting abilities

4.1.1. Education

What is the reason for the special priority given to education?

Hungary's national economic flows of the 21st century are being decisively influenced by preparations for the economic and social conditions of information society. In a modern knowledge economy the prerequisite to maintaining competitiveness is innovative behaviour and an advanced level of knowledge and technological information.

Educational and training policy must prepare the citizens to be able to respond to these challenges and remain in competition through the roles they play in the social division of labour.

Attaining a higher educational level is the channel for social mobility through which the social status of an individual/group/community can change.

The current social, including the educational, indices of the Gypsy minority are well below the society-wide mean. A significant change in living conditions can be effected through special handling of education and training. This is the reason why education appears as a priority in the long-term strategy.

Clear separation of measures to compensate for social disadvantage and to reinforce minority identity in order to prevent and avert segregation processes

Measures must be taken together with the education and training of Gypsy youth to promote reduction of the social gap and to maintain, nurture and develop the cultural identity of the Roma. There must be a clear and distinct separation of compensation for disadvantages stemming from poverty, through the implementation of an educational program initiated for the Gypsy minority under the Minority and the Public Education Acts.

It is necessary to design a monitoring system to gauge the effectiveness and quality of normative supports supplementing Gypsy minority education. An investigation must be conducted to determine the extent to which the supplementary support is suitable for implementing the goals set forth in the Minority and the Public Education acts, and the extent to which it promotes the prevention of segregation processes and the social integration of Romany youth.

Conditions for native language education of the Gypsy population must be ensured throughout pre-school and regular school education

Turning three years of pre-school attendance into a generally accepted norm

One point among the long-term tasks is turning three years of pre-school into a generally accepted norm for Gypsy children, to be done in close cooperation with families, and to include minority teaching programs adjusted to local need.

Eliminating discrimination which has been taking the form of transferring children to special schools

According to a report by the Parliament Commissioner for National and Ethnic Minority Rights, a legal procedure which transfers children out of the mainstream, to schools with different curricula or with special education facilities, is a way of discriminating against Gypsy children. Everything possible must be done to prevent and eliminate this type of event, which leads to legal disadvantages and is a violation of the law when it occurs in practice. Procedures that initiate such transfers and the activity of the institutions involved in such operations must be monitored to prevent repeated- violations of the law from occurring.

Increasing chances of continuing studies in vocational and college-prep. secondary schools

Only a limited stratum of high school aged Gypsy youth were affected by the expansion in secondary schools. In this area efforts have to be made to bring their ratios up to the ones typical for majority society. To do this, a live-in system has to be expanded, live-in facilities that pay special attention to talented youth have to be started up, and new minority school centres need to be started up on demand.

Creating the conditions to teach Romany youth marketable skills

The basic principles already defined regarding the education and training of Gypsy youth are equally valid for trade training. Romany youth must be ensured the opportunity to access avenues of trade training that guarantee them marketable trades.

Promoting the evolvement of a stronger Romany intellectual community, increasing and supporting their participation in higher education

The growth rate of Gypsy intellectuals and professionals is far below the majority mean. The social integration of Romany communities would receive a tremendous boost if far more young people were to attend institutes of higher education, and upon graduation, were to maintain their identities while joining the social division of labour and Romany public life.

Advancing teacher training and extension training to reduce discrimination and prejudice against the Roma

Teacher training and extension training must be continued with the goal of promoting achievement by Gypsy youth in all areas of education and training. The system of teacher training and extension training must include information on the Hungarian Gypsy community on the one hand, and on the other, current and future teachers must be taught about the forms and content of discrimination, ways to remedy it, and how to recognize and avoid prejudice.

It would be expedient to work towards introducing systems in which teachers could give personalized attention to Romany youth, and to work with small groups to mainstream those who need special attention and help bring out the special abilities in those with extra talent.

Quality control and guaranteeing an identical quality education for Romany and non-Roman students

Within education, all children must be given the attention required by their abilities so that the principle of equal opportunity to study becomes implemented in all fields of education. Romany- children must be guaranteed an education of the same value and quality as the non-Romany young people.

Quality control must be introduced into the entire educational system. Efforts devoted to education yield returns on long term, so it is necessary to evaluate this area on a continuous basis.

Alternative educational projects, educational institutions of value as models, a system of government and foundation-sponsored scholarships to support primary and secondary education for Romany youth, as well as initiatives to promote continuing study in the higher educational system are important achievements of the educational system of the past decade. Research must be continued into the achievements and failures of the various projects. A system in which they are monitored and regularly evaluated and advanced must be introduced.

4.1.2 Improving the labour market situation

What justifies placing priority on improving the labour market situation?

A larger proportion of the Romany people than the overall population has been driven off the labour market, and a larger ratio of them are among the people registered as jobless on long-term. Among the Gypsy minority a good portion of the unemployed and the economically inactive have been without work for longer than one year. and have little chance of finding jobs even if economic growth continues.

The high ratio of long-term unemployment the Romany population is struggling with has five basic causes: too little education, residence in disadvantaged regions, the transformation in the country's economic pattern which has disadvantaged the Roma, discrimination, and the not sufficiently effective operation of active employment policy measures among the Roma.

Setting up the goal of improving their position on the labour market, as a long-term priority is a basic condition for the social integration of the Romany population. Reinforcing their ability to support their families also promotes the success of the education tasks.

Reducing school drop-outs, types of training

While improving the labour market situation, it is necessary to consider keeping Romany youth in school until the age of 18, to require unemployed young people between the ages of 15 and 18 to register, and to connect public service work and training programmes, with the cooperation of local settlement administrations and training centres.

In training for the labour market it is necessary to increase the ratio of study that fills in general educational gaps.

In secondary level education for Romany youth, it is necessary to expand and increase the use of career orientation methods, to assist them in becoming trainable in various specializations. The educational, social, economic, and other portfolios will have to put special effort into making it possible for far more Romany youth to participate in various trade training and higher educational programs.

Reintegrating the long-term unemployed into the labour market

Comprehensive programs of reintegration are needed for people who have become unemployed on long term. These programs should connect the tasks of establishing decent living conditions, providing sustenance, filling in gaps in general education, providing trade training, and employment and through all these should result in social rehabilitation.

It would be expedient for local governments to design programs that connect training and public service work for people who are jobless on long term, relying on cooperation between labour and training centres.

To eliminate long-term unemployment, it would be very important for the labour centres to expand their scope and not only assist Roma who are registered as unemployed, but also contact those who are not registered.

Considering the alarmingly low employment level of the Gypsy population, it is necessary to maintain employment programs targeted at the Roma on long term in addition to the projects available to traditional disadvantaged strata. Specific programs adjusted to the actual needs of the Roma (as they, themselves, describe them) must be elaborated and launched to increase the number of Roma with jobs. To help start programs targeted toward the Roma, financial benefits must be offered to support companies that employ and train Romany labour.

Business development programs supporting the Romany population

A long-term change in the quality of Romany employment can be expected when they have the chance of become competitive under market conditions.

Their entrepreneurial spirit can be strengthened primarily through discovery of local-level opportunities for job creation, through increasing (community level) micro and small business capacities in areas left unsatisfied by the market, and through developing community public service ventures.

It is necessary to increase the sphere of interest-free loan support and grants to Romany businesses available from resources aimed at equalising opportunity and levelling regional differences, and through the Public Foundation for the Gypsies of Hungary, after examining business plans and deciding that the venture has a realistic chance.

Support to employers providing jobs to Roma, through financial preferences

Affirmative action measures are needed to grant preferences to employers (e.g.: by having the national budget cover part or all of the employer share of contributions on wages [social security, healthcare] and/or by granting tax concessions) to give employers an incentive to employ Romany labour.

Increasing the number of Roma employed in central and local government jobs

There are many jobs and competencies within local government authority, primarily in social services, which do not necessarily require high qualification levels. Currently, there are few Roma employed even in these positions. It should be possible to increase Romany employment in these jobs and train them, should this be necessary.

It also appears necessary to establish a local government work organization manager position to develop the current institution of public service work, which would be able to increase Roma employment through job opportunities connected to regional development projects.

Regional development policy could offer jobs to the unemployed or economically inactive Romany population of disadvantaged regions.

Special attention must be devoted to promoting Romany intellectuals and professionals, who have proper educations, to the widest possible range of public employee and civil service jobs.

4.2 Reinforcing social cohesion - horizontal priorities

4.2.1 Preventing and averting the social isolation of the Roma (inclusion of majority society, communication, influencing public thinking)

What justifies the reinforcement of social cohesion?

Majority society is not aware, and has had no opportunity to become aware, of Roma culture, or the rules governing their way of life. As societies become increasingly uniform, chances to appreciate uniqueness, or differences, steadily decline. The prejudices and stereotypes that make up the core of the overall beliefs permeate society.

Resolving prejudice in majority society and evolvement of a tolerant, accepting social atmosphere that promotes integration is therefore, at least as important as the real inclusion, integration of the Romany community into society through education, employment and improved housing.

The government must use all means at its disposal to support the evolvement of a harmonious relationship between the various groups of society. These means should not employ restrictions, bans, or sanctions to approximate their goals.

The role of the media in reducing prejudice and evolving a realistic picture of the Roma

The media has a key role in changing stereotypical images of the Roma and shaping a realistic picture. The print and electronic media need incentives to present successful local initiatives and processes that promote the social integration of the Roma. The media needs to include news on the participation of Romany communities and their organizations in the life and development of their localities. Space should be devoted to information on Romany leaders, businesspeople, and intellectuals reflecting a commitment to their own communities and to all of society.

Romany artists and professionals, and how they create value

Majority society must become aware of the values created by Romany professionals, authors, poets, musicians, and visual artists, and how they contribute to national and universal culture. Overall-society must be presented with the values of Romany culture, and of their cultural and social customs and traditions.

Dialogue and cooperation to reduce prejudice

Attention needs to be paid to seeing that central, regional, and local authorities become more open to dialogue with Romany organizations and families. Examples set by public institutions could also promote a positive change in public opinion.

Young people are particularly susceptible to stereotypes and prejudice. Therefore, education programs and other opportunities such as joint programs, celebrations, and sporting opportunities, to mention only some, must be used to promote an approach of young people from Romany and non-Romany communities, offering them as many opportunities as possible to get to know one another better.

Reducing and preventing discrimination in day-to-day life

To reduce -the number of cases of discrimination in day-to-day life, in addition to documenting and investigating violations of rights, increasing scope must be given to evolving feelings of solidarity with the Roma in the public media and in other tools that shape public opinion.

It must be made clear to majority society that marginalising the Roma is not in anyone's interests. It is necessary to consistently advance the change in outlook that is beginning to evolve in the often-criticised relationship between law enforcement agencies and the Romany minority.

Increasing the role of the churches

The non-Romany population must be won over to condemning discrimination against the Roma, to understanding the educational and housing problems of families living under extremely difficult conditions with many children, and to evolving institutional forms of social assistance and charity. Local representatives of various religious communities can play an outstanding role in this activity and in shaping better and more effective communication.

Any Romany strategic program can fail because of a single factor: indifference or rejection by majority society. Therefore, winning the support of public opinion is a primary condition for the success of all long, medium, and short-term programs.

4.2.2. Strengthening the role of the Roma in public life

Why is strengthening the role of the Roma in public life a priority?

Experience over the past decade has proven that measures to improve the lot of the Romany minority can only hope to be successful if they have the cooperation and active participation, in other words the collaboration of the Romany community in both the preparation and implementation phases.

This is why it is a top priority to increase the participation of the Roma in social processes, in preparing, making and implementing decisions that affect them on local, county, and nation-wide level.

Continuing to advance Gypsy minority local authorities

The operation and development of the system of minority authorities brought about under the Minority Act must be monitored.

The enormous demand for social supports is a tremendous weight on Roma minority local authorities, for they have neither the authority nor the means to meet it.

More research is needed to determine how suited the minority local authority system is to manage the complex problems of the Roma and promote social integration.

In addition to increasing the number of Roma representatives it continues to be important to improve the effectiveness of their participation in decision-making. The semblance of

participation, that is a decision-making role without the real authority to make decisions, must be avoided.

To ensure this, when amending the Minority Act, the role of the minority local authorities must gradually be increased and given a concrete circumscribable set of tasks. Cooperation between the minority local authority and the local government of the settlement must be promoted, the legal operation of the minority local authority must be improved, and effective forms of control need to be evolved.

Practical experience proves that minority local authorities are more successful when they are brought about on a foundation of activity conducted by social organizations that have been operating well. In these settlements, the communities have chosen the people best able to do the job, who then continue to represent the interests of local Roma within the framework of the local authority. These minority local authorities have an interest in continuous and effective cooperation with the non-government/social sphere.

Training Roma local authority representatives

The low educational levels and inexperience in public life of local authority representatives is a significant problem, and for this reason the Roma are not always able to successfully negotiate with central government authorities or institutions. Everything possible must be done to increase Romany expertise, particularly among the people working in local governments and local minority authorities, to give them a stronger voice and increased success in representing the interests of their communities.

To do this, a more systematic training regime has to be set up with the participation of adult education specialists. Representatives and officials of local governments should be included in the training together with the representatives of local governments and social organizations.

In addition, a network of experts designed by the Roma themselves has to be brought about, which should be made accessible at all times through Internet.

Including Romany interest organizations in operations of regional development centres, and in implementation of sub-regional and local projects

Future plans call for regional and rural development projects to be implemented within the framework of medium-term regional plans, similarly to the system used in the European Union, with the participation of Regional Development Councils. A framework for cooperation between the Regional Development Councils and the county Romany minority local authorities expected to be established, needs to be devised. The county Romany minority authorities must have the chance to participate directly in the work of the Regional Development Councils as well as in the implementation of sub-regional and local projects, either organizationally or within the framework of the decision-making process.

Shaping and implementing the government Romany policy together with representatives, as a partnership

The complex of Romany programs includes the active participation of Hungary's half a million Roma in shaping their own destiny.

A significant change only can be achieved if government continues to pay special attention to them on long term keeping them constantly on the agenda, and if they create the conditions for the complete equality of the Roma, and the elimination of the economic gap.

All Hungarian governments will have to agree to provide the budgetary funding needed to implement the tasks as defined. They will have to work continuously to create consensus among the political parties represented in parliament around the Roma issue to implement the programs.

Current ways of coming to agreement will have to be rethought in harmony with the partnership principle. The Interdepartmental Committee on Gypsy Affairs must act as a forum of coordination and build up a transparent partnership based on discussion. It is necessary that its meetings be used to list and report on the programs of the different portfolios and to organize detail-oriented professional debates.

In keeping with the principle of partnership, ministries must coordinate decisions within their own authority with Romany representatives if such decisions will affect the Roma. When more than one ministry is involved with a measure, representatives of all involved ministries should participate in the coordination discussions.

Increasing the role of Romany interest groups in the process of European integration

In the process of integrating the Romany population, Hungary -Should take advantage of opportunities that will soon become available through EU integration. Based on experience to date with PHARE programmes and regional cooperation ventures already underway, representatives of the Romany communities should be prepared to take immediate and effective advantage of the opportunities offered by EU membership.

5. Methods and procedures of elaborating and implementing a long-term strategy

5.1 Background

The draft guidelines for a long-term strategy of Romany social and minority policy presented in this discussion paper are the result of several years of professional work. With the support of the Council of Europe, in the autumn of 1998 several experts presented a review of their research on the Romany minority, which set the foundation for the long-term strategy. A conference was held on the basis of the expert studies, and a publication was issued following that.

In preparation for the elaboration of a long-term strategy, the Office of National and Ethnic Minorities called on approximately one-hundred professionals with roles in public life (researchers, political officials, representatives of local minority authorities, local governments, social organizations, etc.) to ask them to participate in preparations for designing a long-term Romany strategy. Most of them set forth their strategic concepts, which were used in putting together the discussion paper.

An international expert commissioned by the Council of Europe assisted the Office of National and Ethnic Minorities in this work in 1999 and 2000.

In 1999 and 2000, the Interdepartmental Committee for Gypsy Affairs discussed preparation of the long-term strategy on three occasions. In July of 2000 the Interdepartmental Committee for Gypsy Affairs set up a Subcommittee of the Interdepartmental Committee for Gypsy Affairs to elaborate the guidelines of the long-term strategy and organize the necessary society-wide debate.

In preparing the discussion paper, the Office of National and Ethnic Minorities relied on Gypsy-related research, proposals by political officials, national and local minority authorities, local governments and social organizations, on long-term strategy guidelines and priorities set by the professional portfolios, on Council of Europe expert studies, and on scientific theses of the Minority Research Workshop of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

The discussion paper on the guidelines for a long-term strategy was debated by the Subcommittee of the Interdepartmental Committee for Gypsy Affairs in August of 2000, and the comments of the committee members were included in it.

5.2 Holding the society-wide debate on the strategic guidelines and priorities, and the summary and systematisation of proposals and expectations that evolve from the society-wide debate

As commissioned by the government, the Office of National and Ethnic Minorities is conducting a broad-scale society-wide debate on the discussion paper, which includes the guidelines and priorities of the long-term strategy.

All players in Romany affairs, representatives of the Roma, representatives of the public authorities, and of the societal majority are being included in the society-wide debate.

To promote the broadest possible level of coordination, the discussion paper adopted by the government is being sent to all persons and organizations whose opinions on or interest in shaping the strategy helped develop it.

In addition to requests for written opinions, regional conferences will also be organized.

Following the society-wide debate the redesigned paper, which will include a draft of the parliamentary decision, will again be submitted for coordination within the framework of the Interdepartmental Committee for Gypsy Affairs. This committee will hold an expanded session to which it will invite experts, political officials, and important personalities in Romany public life.

5.3 Decision by Parliament gives the seal of legitimacy

The finalized decision on the long-term strategy will be a parliamentary resolution, based on the decision of Members of Parliament. Implementation of the strategy will require a government body reinforced to play the role of coordinator that will operate in harmony with the professional tasks of the professional ministries.

5.3.1 Elements of content of the parliamentary decision defining the long-term strategy

Within the framework of the basic principles and priorities specified, the long-term strategy will confirm and set down the government's intention to act on the Roma issue on medium and short term, and to complete the tasks related to adopting, amending and implementing its program.

Within this framework it will define:

- > the goals and priorities of the strategy;
- > the time-lines of strategy implementation (e.g.: 2 x 10 years);
- > the relationship between the long-term and medium-term, and the system of connections;
- > the role, responsibility, and supervisory authority of the legitimate representatives of the Roma, the Interdepartmental Committee on Gypsy Affairs, and the Office of National and Ethnic Minorities in implementation of the medium and short-term Roma programs;
- > the form of the financing system coordinated with economic policy strategy needed to implement the government programs of action;
- > the evolvement of a system of quality assurance for the government, regional, sub regional and local programs being implemented with-the government programs of action;
- > and/or the building of a monitoring system to cover the government program-packages.

5.4 Monitoring, evaluation

It is necessary to evaluate implementation of the long-term strategy. It is recommended that it be evaluated every five years. Evaluation requires measurable and comparable indices and data, which make it possible to continuously monitor changes. The best ways to supervise the long-term strategy and forecast the need for corrections as they occur are through research that uses scientific methodology and monitoring investigations.

The Minority Research Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences is the independent institution most suited to complete this task in a professional manner.

Regarding implementation of the medium-term program-package of measures, there is no precise method of evaluation with which the success of the individual programs could be compared. As a result it may happen that projects with limited effectiveness could enjoy support while programs with encouraging results could be stopped. A serious and regular evaluation of the strategy can be ensured in the following way. - A monitoring committee connected to the Interdepartmental Committee on Gypsy Affairs will have to be established, and would include representatives of the National Gypsy Administration as well as professionals. - It would be expedient to organize a Romany strategic forum annually, in which the partners involved in the various programs would report on the progress they have made toward their goals.

Following the evaluation and monitoring, programmes with unsatisfactory results would have to be eliminated, and replaced by new initiatives, which would get the support-money. When projects yield positive results, the necessary conclusions should be drawn and these programs should be expanded to include the entire nation.

An essential condition for the success of the entire long-term strategy is continuous supervision and evaluation of the implementation of the priorities set forth in it, and amendment of them as necessary based on the feedback.

Budapest, November 2000