

## The Inclusion of the Roma Minority in Albanian Society

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### Abstract

Albania has been undergoing through radical structural reforms over the last two decades as a consequence of the changes trajectories of the democratization process, economic transition, administrative reforms, changing dynamics of social groups as well as the country integration process to the European Union. European Union has issued a number of recommendations surpass the transition period and consolidate a democratic system but also gain the statute of an EU candidate country and afterwards a member state. In this line, one of most persistent recommendations of the European Commission is the respect of fundamental rights and, in particular, the social inclusion of the minorities (in particular the Roma minority) in the Albanian society.

Institutional interventions to support the rights of minorities, with particular focus on Roma community, have been constant subject of Albanian governments' policy since 2009, when the Stabilization and Association Agreement between Albania and the EU entered into force. Notwithstanding the amelioration of the legal framework as well as the policy initiatives undertaken in this regard, the results achieved so far show that there is a lot more to be done in order to guarantee, in practical terms, the respect of rights, social integration and inclusion of minorities residing in our country.

The aim of this research paper is to introduce the recent debate initiated in Albania for the promotion of suitable policy mechanisms which guarantee effective protection of Roma minority rights in the country, in line with the recommendations of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI).

This study has concluded in a number of recommendations directed to public administration bodies, both locally and centrally, such as a wider inclusion of members from the Roma minority into vocational training and employment programs; amendments in the normative legal basis for definition of criteria, procedures and economic assistance action, focusing on Roma community; amendments in the existing legislation concerning housing of residents in urban areas; facilitation of enrolment and school attendance for Roma minority children as well as development of actions which would permit a better access to education for these children etc.

**KEYWORDS:** Roma minority, Albania, employment housing, education, etc.

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### 1. Introduction. Ethnic minorities in Albania.

Ethnic minorities in Albania represent a historic and modern-day reality. Minorities deserve special attention in order to materialize a good relationship with the majority of the population, relied upon the principles of tolerance, coexistence and good understanding. Existence of minorities in Albania is a historical as well as an actual reality, which has been paid special attention in order to enable a good relationship, where tolerance, co-existence and understanding between members of the respective minorities

and the rest of the population are clearly expressed. This attention cultivated in the mentality of the Albanian society, bearing diversity elements as important parts of cultural heritage, has reflected a harmonious and tolerant co-existence, without any presence of ethnical, racial or religious conflicts. Upon establishment of democracy in the country, the addressing of minority issues has acquired a new dimension, which is clearly seen in engagements undertaken by the Albanian state in this respect.

After the fall of the communist regime, the treatment of minorities by the state has reached a new dimension. This fact can be proven by the commitments that the Albanian state has undertaken for this purpose. The principles of equality and non-discrimination before the law, regardless of the ethnicity of the individual, as provided in the Constitution of the Republic of Albania, full equality before the law, rights and freedoms, guaranteeing the right to learn and to be taught in their mother tongue, as well as the right to found organizations and associations for the protection of their interests and identity, are clear signs in favor of this commitment. Albania's membership in a number of international organizations and organisms whose scope of activity is the protection of human rights, as well as ratification, or signing of a series of international acts aiming at affirmation and protection of human rights, especially referring to minority groups, ratification of the Frame Convention "On Protection of Minorities", confirm the serious institutional engagement in this respect. Positive development has been identified in the framework of fulfillment of requirements from the Stabilization-Association Agreement, while another significant institutional step is the establishment of the State Committee of Minorities, as a central institution of a consultative nature, subordinate to the Prime Minister.

Such a commitment is also the membership of Albania in a series of international organizations, which are focused on the protection of human rights and the ratification or the signature of a number of international acts related to the protection of minorities and especially the ratification without any reservations of the Convention "On protection of minorities".

Nowadays, the Albanian society has effectively established a positive balance in terms of this issue and respect towards the minorities' rights, being ranked among the states which have been engaged in fulfillment of international standards in this area. Implementation into practice of what has been envisaged in fundamental acts, but, also implementation of international acts and especially of definitions of the Frame Convention of the Council of Europe "On protection of minorities", have a direct impact on the improvement of the minorities' rights. But despite legal forecasts we are all aware that there is a lot more to be done in order to guarantee in practice the respect of rights, social integration and inclusion for the minorities residing in our country.

## **2. The Methodology**

From the methodological point of view, the study includes quantitative and qualitative methods. This research was conducted during July, August, September 2013, using three different methodological approaches. The first stage includes the desk research.

During this stage, researchers have examined three types of sets of materials, such as: a) laws issued by the Assembly, decisions of the Council of Ministers, decisions of the Constitutional Court (taken in this regard), etc. b) reports and documents issued by non-state actors and/or (inter)national organization that operate in this field (OSCE, UNDP, NDI, SOROS, EU, etc.)

The second stage of the research will involve in-depth interviews as a method of collecting original primary research. Researchers have prepared the questionnaire using a topic guide. The questionnaire has included open ended questions in order to gather wide, and when necessary detailed information on the objectives of the research. The research is focused in three areas of study: education, housing and employment. Regardless of the high frequency of mobility in all Roma dwelling places and sites having the highest concentration of Roma population in Albania, the working group visited the Roma sites in Tirana, Lezha, Fushë-Kruja, Nishtullë in Durrës, Rrogozhina, Peqin, Cërrik, Elbasan, Pogradec, Korça, Levan, Roma village in Fier etc.

The third stage provides an analyzes and recommendations of researchers, directed to public administration bodies, both in local and central level, that work on Roma minority issues. The main topics included in the recommendation are: inclusion of members of Roma minority into vocational training and employment programs; amendments of legal framework so that it better defines the criteria, procedures and economic assistance provided, housing of residents in urban areas; facilitation of enrolment and school attendance for Roma minority children, etc.

### 3. Legal framework

For the definition of legal basis related to Roma minority rights in Albania, we shall refer to the basic normative acts which generally regulate and position minorities in our country, specifically to acts which address the Roma minority issue. More concretely, the legal basis includes the following main acts: a) Constitution of the Republic of Albania, b) *International Conventions* (Universal Declaration on Human Rights of United Nations, 1948; International Convention on Civil and Political Rights; International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; European Convention of Human Rights; Law no. 8496 dated 3.06.1999 “On ratification of “The Frame Convention of the Council of Europe on Protection of Minorities”. International Convention on Elimination of all forms of racial discrimination (1969); International Convention on Civil and Political Rights ( 1966); International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976); International Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination towards Women (1980); Convention on Children’s Rights (1989); Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960); Charter on Fundamental Rights of the European Union); c) *Legal acts for national minorities* (Decision of the Council of Ministers, no.127 dated 11.03.2004 “On establishment of the State Committee on Minorities”, amended; National Plan of ASA - Minority rights and protection of minorities, approved by DCM no. 463, dated 5.07.2006, amended by DCM no. 577, dated 5.9.2007: DCM no. 396 dated 22.08.1994 “On education in mother tongue of minority people” d) *Legal acts for the Roma Minority* (National Strategy on improvement of living conditions for the Roma minority; Decade for inclusion of Roma people - National Action Plan, 2010-2015; Decision of the Council of Ministers no.51 dated 2.02.2012 “On transference of administration responsibility from the Ministry of Defence to the Ministry of Labour,

Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities of some objects and functional land, with a total of 45 000 m<sup>2</sup> surface area, part of property no. 117 named “Kompania e zbulimit, raketaveKt, të BRRSH”, located in Sharraarea in Tirana, and on an amendment of the Decision of the Council of Ministers no. 515, dated 18.07.2003 "On endorsement of the list of inventory of stately real estate properties, which are transferred under administration responsibility of the Ministry of Defence", amended.

The Constitution of the Republic of Albania has sanctioned the principle of equity to law and non-discrimination, regardless of the individual's membership to the respective minority group. Furthermore, in its Law no. 20, it is explicitly envisaged that people who belong to a national minority can exercise their rights and freedoms in complete equity to the law. They enjoy the right of expressing their ethnical, cultural, religious and linguistic belonging freely as well as the right to preserve and develop them further, without being banned or obliged. The Constitution has also recognized their right to learn and be taught in their native language, as well as to join organizations and associations to protect their interests and identity.

#### 4. What do Roma community represents in Albania?

The Roma people are a unique ethnical group, settled in Albanian territories for years and who have succeeded in preserving their language and culture. According to historical and linguistic sources, they emigrated from the northern areas of India from the IX century to the XIV century. Several historical documents explain that the Roma came to Southern Europe through Persia, Caucasus and the Byzantine Empire. In some of the sources, it is said that the Roma could have arrived in the Balkans around the XIV century (Kolsti, 1991) and settled in the Albanian territories around the XV century (Koinova, 2000). Even though the term “Roma” was decided in the first Congress of Roma in 1971, nowadays in Albania they are recognized by different names<sup>1</sup>. In the north of the country they are recognized as “gabelë”, in the south as “arixhinj” and in south-east as “kurbatë”<sup>2</sup>. Depending on the way Roma entered Albania, as well as on their socio-economic situation, language dialects, living style, profession, skills, customs, etc. they are organized into tribes<sup>3</sup> which, in Albania are known as: *meçkar*, *çergar*, *arlinj*, *bamillë* and *kurtofë*. **Meçkars** are the biggest and the oldest Roma tribe in Albania. They live in cities such as: Tirana, Durrës, Lushnja, Fier and Vlora and have traditionally worked in agriculture and cultivation in farms. **Çergars** arrived in Albania from two directions: one group from the present-day Macedonia, who first settled in Korça city, and later on in Peqin where the majority of them are still found to-date; the other group came from Montenegro and Serbia who settled in Shkodra city around the year 1920. In the central areas of Albania, çergars were engaged in horse trading, and production of artisan goods (such as: raki stills/containers, copper kettles, or sieves), which afterwards were sold in the surrounding villages. **Arinjs** emigrated from Turkey to Greece, and afterwards to Albania, during immigration of the population in the '20s. Initially they settled in Korça

<sup>1</sup> Terms “gabel”, “arixhi”, “evgjit”, “jevq” have historically been used to refer to respectively Roma and Egyptians as inferior communities and this is the reason why, even today, in the general meaning, these names are considered offensive for the above-mentioned communities and, as a result their use must be avoided. (Taho 2002).

<sup>2</sup> According to Marsel Courthiade-s, “gabel” means “stranger/foreigner” whereas “kurbat” is connected the Turkish word “kurbet” (e.g. migration).

<sup>3</sup> Study on the origin of Roma people, Marsel Kurthiade.

city and later migrated to Pogradec, Elbasan, Durrës, Tirana and Fushë-Kruja. Arlinjs were small tradesmen, and their traditional skills included horse trading, artisan work and basketweaving. **Bamills** are another tribe, who came from Çamëria territories together with çam people and it is also thought that they came from some Greek cities, too. Nowadays, they can be found in Gjirokastra city, partly in Levan and in the Roma village in Fier<sup>4</sup>. The majority of Bamill families are distinguished for their musical heritage. **Kurtofs** came to the city of Fier from today's Macedonian territory about 60 years ago. Now they are found in a neighborhood called Zinxhiraj, in the city of Gjirokastra, but in different periods they immigrated to the neighboring state of Greece for seasonal employment. Their occupations included small-scale trade and artisan work. The Roma have traditionally led a nomadic life, but since the '30s the majority of Roma tribes have become semi-nomadic or totally stable.

Others settled in permanent locations during the socialist period.

In Albania there has never been conducted an official registration of the number of population with membership to Roma community, except for self-declaration in 2011, which generated contestable results. In the Strategy for improvement of conditions of the Roma community, endorsed in 2003, the Albanian government quotes various sources which estimate the Roma population to be around 60,000 to 120,002<sup>5</sup>. Although the Roma people have traditionally been known as nomadic, starting from the '30s of XX century, most of their tribes gradually turned into semi-nomadic, or totally sedentary (Hasluck, 1938). This nomadism and their pluricentennial mobility had an economic function, and they were partly structural and closely linked to their culture (Liegeois, 2009). Finally, they settled in permanent residences during the time period 1960-1970. During the post-socialist transition period, due to collapse and closure of state enterprises and because of their character and skills, their low level of education, not excluding prejudices and discrimination, the Roma have passed from a relatively good situation into extreme poverty. At the moment, they can be regarded as the poorest and the most excluded/isolated ethnical group in Albania. It is worth mentioning that the history of Roma is mainly introduced through perceptions of non-Roma researchers. Due to socio economic conditions and discriminating attitudes, the Roma were obliged to lead a nomadic life for a much longer time than other ethnical groups, thus not allowing for the state administration to document the history of their population<sup>6</sup>. This is why part of the Roma history was written by non-Roma people, based on their image and perception of the Roma people, other than on historical research work. For centuries, historians copied each other sharing the same perception for Romas as a population with no culture and nomadic, until the recent years when some researchers analysed and rejected the centennial historical hypothesis and provided new explanations on the Roma's history, explanations which confirmed the thesis launched by linguists a few decades ago. The previous hypothesis according to which the Roma were nomads who came in successive groups do not stand to the analysis based on historical facts which proves that the Roma were forcefully moved from India and arrived in the Balkans as one single group. In any

<sup>4</sup>Otherwise known as Driza.

<sup>5</sup>National Strategy for Improvement of Roma Living Conditions, 2003.

<sup>6</sup>In 1995, the International Group for Minority Rights estimated the number of Roma population in Albania between 90,000 to 100,000. Also in 1995, the Maryland University estimated that there were 120,000 Roma residing in Albania.

case, this situation shows the power of images and stereotypes in the public opinion, to the extent of dominating history for centuries. Both their history and image are built and used by the majority, but also by the Roma population<sup>7</sup>.

### **5. Problems identified by the inspections in Roma settlements**

Identification of problems was accomplished through contacts in the field, in almost all places where Roma live. During July-September 2013, the working group conducted individual meetings with representatives of civil society at the local level and with specific groups. A special aid for the gathering of all required data, was given by a group of coordinators of Roma organizations, which through the forms prepared for this objective, gave a detailed overview for the living conditions, the situation of health, education, infrastructure etc.

In the majority of cases, the Roma population do not exist in the register of the Registrar' Office, a phenomenon which has been widespread for people born after the '90s.

#### **i) Education**

School dropouts represent an issue, in particular dropouts at the eight and nine grade; this situation is worrying for the following reasons: In cases of female children, parents remove their child from school, because they believe that she is mature and in several cases they got married in this age. There are about eight of such cases of children dropouts that get married at a young age. In cases of male children, parents remove their children from school to help them in collecting recyclable waste and other materials. This has an impact on the further continuation of studies, when the number of student enrolling in high school is small (Lezhe). There are children who attend the 9-year school, but not all of them continue beyond the ninth grade. There were obstacles concerning the required documentation (Cerrik). During 2012-2013 there were cases when children were forced to drop out of school due to extreme poverty (Kurbini District). Many Roma children don't attend school in Fier-Vlore, since it is located 2.5 kilometres away from the residential areas, in the national road (Fier-Vlora) so, usually, school in these communities is attended up to the fourth grade.

In the Capital (Tirana) most part of the Roma children dropout of school after they have completed the fourth or fifth grade. The main reason for dropping out of school is poverty faced by the Roma families. Many Roma children are obliged to work and to beg in the streets in order to provide some daily income for their families. The conservative attitude of their parents, fear that their daughters might be taken away and in a few cases early marriages, make Roma girls dropout of school. In some cases Roma face obstacles in registering their children in schools located near their residencies. With the justification that there are no available places, Roma children are sent to "Gjergj Fishta" school, which has started to be called as "School of Gipsies". Non-Roma parents refuse to register their children in this school.

#### **ii) Housing**

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<sup>7</sup>During World War II, almost half a million Roma from different countries in Europe were executed, or killed in Nazi concentration camps (Ringold et al., 2003). In Albania, they are treated better than in the neighboring countries, where besides exile in Nazi camps, Roma had to cope with ethnical extermination.

The Roma community lives in very bad conditions; they live in barracks, warehouses (former state storage), amortized buildings, very old houses, and moreover these houses/apartments are over populated. At the housing office within the Municipality of Korça are registered over 200 Roma families, of which over 120 families where living in the houses of former owners. All these families are registered as homeless, but only five of them have benefited from social housing. In Cerrik there are many problems regarding Roma community. Continuous requests for social housing were done during the recent years, but still no answer was given in response: there are about 200 homeless families. The housing situation of the Roma community in Kurbin district, remains difficult. These problems are presented to the municipality, but the allocated funds are insufficient to buy houses. a) Housing: In the town of Pogradec, Roma families have problems related to housing; this mainly in the two areas where a significant number of Roma families lives: at the former military site and Guri i Kuq. Due to financial difficulties, those buildings are not adequate for housing. On the other hand there is the issue of the Roma families that cannot meet the application criteria to obtain a loan from the second level banks. In the city of Rrogozhina there are many new Roma families living under the same roof that need urgent solutions regarding their housing. Due to family growth, many new family members will become soon or later homeless.

In Fier the Roma community faces with housing problems and there are many people without shelter. People are living in barracks while others don't have their dwellings legalized (Tirana). The area of Laprake (near Tirana) is inhabited by 200 Roma families. They are mainly located in the areas of Treshi, Breg Lumi, near "Kolë Jakova" school and Breg Lumas. Around 50% of these families have built their homes by themselves, but many of their dwellings remain not legalized, because of lack of information and due to the fact that some of the owners are not properly educated and therefore cannot fully understand the legal procedures associated to the legalization process. Some members of the Roma community in this area have the right to legalize their dwellings, but the value of the property on which they have built, is very high and many of them cannot afford paying it. There are also families living in public buildings, in very difficult conditions and there are also families living in barracks near the river or the railway. The families living near the railway, are especially endangered by different accidents caused by the train. Most families located in this area, have been living there for a long time. They are generally registered in the civil registry and have applied for housing, but until now nobody has benefitted.

The community of Fushe-Kruja has many problems with housing, because many families live under one roof, facing difficult conditions. Moreover, for the area where houses are located, there are problems related to land ownership. This community of 30 families continues to live in a warehouse and has no minimal living conditions. Out of the 250 families in the Roma neighborhood, 87 houses are not legalized. In Peqin there are 24 homeless Roma families. Even though they have done the application as homeless people, due to the criteria it is unlikely for them to benefit, since the Roma are unemployed. Nish-Tulle (Durrës) is an area that consists of about 130 houses, 50% of these are new houses, but no one has an ownership certificate, all are in the process of legalization. While 40% of them are old houses that were built in the 60s, but these are also owned from the cadastral of Durrës, and families must apply to the municipality to pass the ownership, but few people have done this application. While, 10% live in barracks.

In Elbasan, despite the interest of the local authorities to find a proper accommodation for the Roma community, the problem still remains unsolved because of the not fulfillment of the criteria needed to benefit housing.

### iii) **Employment**

Members of the Roma community are trained and have benefited from vocational training programs, but still they are not employed by private/public entities due to racial/ethnic discrimination. In this context, it is suggested to state authorities to not make investments in undertaking professional training, but to invest in self-employment opportunities for the young Roma. There are community members' involved in specific projects and professional training courses; however they face problems in finding a job. Employment rate is almost 0 and self-employment rate is about 5% (Cerrik). In Kurbin District employment opportunities are almost zero. There is no evident and direct racial discrimination, but the large number of unemployed people from this community indicates otherwise.

In Tirana there are members of the local Roma community who have completed vocational trainings certified by the Ministry of Labor, but the labor market doesn't provide them with any employment possibilities. In some cases, Roma people were not hired due to racial discrimination. When Roma people register themselves as job-seekers at the local employment offices, very often they are not provided with an adequate services by the relevant authorities due to discriminatory grounds. There have been initiatives by various organizations that support young people, girls and boys to pursue various vocational courses, but after their completion nobody has been employed so far. This has discouraged other members of the Roma community to be part of such courses, although they are free of charge. Employment is a major problem that troubles Roma families of this area. Almost 99% of them are unemployed. Roma people are not employed directly or indirectly because of their ethnic background and the prejudices that Non-Roma people have against them.

## **6. Conclusions and Recommendations**

In this paper we highlight the fact that, since solution of problems for this community is neither easy or simple, nor quick, but an integral part, inextricably linked with the general development of Albania and as a consequence with the continuous strengthening of economy, we need to have clear strategies which shall guarantee improvement of the living conditions for this community.

The key elements to solve the Roma problematic shall be found with constructive and continuous dialogue, intercultural cooperation between state institutions, civil society and citizens in order to address, analyze and provide a solution to these problems in a more comprehensive way and accepted by all. Institutional coordination is needed to provide a solution to the challenges faces by the Roma community, so that they could have equal rights as all other Albanian citizens.

Based on the observed situation of the Roma minority in the country, it is necessary to amend and improve the Albanian legislation, in terms of meeting the criteria to benefit from the opportunities offered by the central and local entities such as housing, education, health, employment etc.

It is necessary to simplify application procedures in state administration offices, so that the Roma community could have broader access and facilitations in completing the

necessary documentation for housing, education, health care, economic aid etc. State structures as provided by the law, shall act responsibly and in time, for all cases when members of the Roma community are discriminated on racial grounds at the workplace, schools and public spaces or in cases when their land/houses are unlawfully occupied and violated by various physical and legal entities. For all these cases and also for cases of violence, state authorities shall intervene in protecting their rights. Increase the access of this minority to the educational system by increasing their participation and inclusion in the labor market and the state administration.

Specifically we recommend:

**- Amendment in law 9232/2004 “On social programs for housing of residents in urban areas” (amended), to provide clearer and more accurate regulations for Roma community families. Furthermore, we suggest their inclusion as a priority category within the social condition of housing benefit.** Law 9232/2004 “On social programs for housing of residents in urban areas” (amended) defines rules and administrative procedures for provision, distribution, administration and planning of social programs for housing, in order to allow for suitable and affordable housing, based on financial ability of families in need for shelter and state assistance. In years this law has had minimal changes, while amendment made in 2012 brought fundamental changes in its content. According to point 1, article 4 of this law, housing beneficiaries can be individuals who have already turned 18 or families which have registered with the Registrar’s Office in the local government units. At the moment of application, they need to fulfill the following criteria:

- a) no ownership on a dwelling place;
- b) own living surface area smaller than established housing norms for that social and economic category or live in places which don’t meet the approved standards;
- c) are homeless because of natural disasters.

Whereas, according to point 2 of this article, only families with insufficient income as defined in articles 6 and 19 of this law, are included in one of the letters “a”, “b” and “c” of point 1. Article 5 of law 9232/2004 (amended) defines the selection criteria for families, foreseeing a number of conditions, social conditions among others. Letter “c”, which addresses priority categories based on this condition, does not include Roma community families. Meanwhile, as regards the “economic situation” condition, the law has foreseen no priority categories. Also, according to article 6, point 1, of law 9232/2004 (amended) on income level, it is emphasized that no less than 80 per cent of families accommodated in rented social buildings must have income of up to 100 per cent of the average income of families administered by the respective local government unit, and the rest can be selected within the interval of 100-120 per cent of the average income level. The latter category, by law, pays higher rent than other categories, but no more than 30 per cent of monthly income. Article 24 of the law foresees that when the rent of the social building constitutes more than 25 per cent of the family net income, according to letter “a” of article 5 of this law, the family benefits subsidy of the rent. Roma families have priority as far as rent subsidy and shelter bonus are concerned. Nevertheless, in our opinion, what the law foresees cannot practically guarantee housing of Roma community families. Our estimation is based on the following arguments:

- a) The problematic part of Roma community families cannot prove a monthly income level (as they are mostly working in informaleconomy);
- b) Even though they are able to prove their income (from salary if they are employed, or whatever form of economic assistance),this level might not reach the required percentage of the averageincome received by families in the respective local governmentunit;

**- Continuation of attempts for well-functioning of preparatory Albanian language classes for pre-school education aiming at participation of Roma children in all education levels and coordination of work with Regional Education Directorates to raise awareness among Roma community members so as they do not remove their children from school (to the Minister of Education and Science).** The low education level is a serious problem whichhinders the social integration of this community. The majority of Romachildren are illiterate because of language difficulties found since thefirst class, because of the extremely hard economic conditions of theirfamilies, distance of their home to school institutions as well as becauseof their parents' wrong mentality.The characteristics of the Roma family way of living affect childrenconsiderably. Because of absence of the right education, they are notable to adapt themselves to the labor market requirements, becauseopportunities are more limited for this category and as a result, it leadsto economic impossibility to cope with life and to a number of socialproblems.

Law no.7952 dated 21.06.1995 “*On Pre-university Education in theRepublic of Albania*” amended, in its article 3, sanctions the equal rightof citizens in the Republic of Albania to be educated in all levels ofpre-university education, regardless of their social condition, nationality,language, sex, religion, race, political beliefs, health or economic level.

The Ministry of Education andScience have a detailed action plan in placefor priority inclusion of Roma and Egyptian children in nurseries andschools. The “Action Plan for education of Roma children” has alreadybeen reviewed and budgeted and Regional Education Directoratesreport their work to MoES periodically.

**- Actions on continuous priority inclusion of Roma minority members of working age in vocational training and employment programs, aiming at their integration in social life and improvement of their socio-economic conditions so as they do not feel discriminated (To the Minister of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities).** A great part of the working age Roma population areunemployed. Some of them mainly do odd jobs, but even this way of income earning for survival can be temporary. An immediate issue which has arisen during implementation of the National Strategy for improvement of Roma minority living conditions and of the National Action Plan 2010-2015 is employment of Roma minority members to adapt to contemporary requirements of the labour market. It would lead to improvement of economic situation of families and their integration inthe society, thus guaranteeing equal opportunities. As a consequence, Law no. 7795 dated 20.09.1995 “*On Employment Promotion*”, amended, in alinea“20” of article 2, foresees the obligation of Roma minority inclusion in employment promotion programs, like specific jobseeker groups, and also DCM no.48 dated 16.1.2008 “*On actions and criteria for inclusion in employment promotion programs of vulnerable unemployed jobseekers*”, in point 3, letter “e”, has defined the Roma community

members as vulnerable unemployed jobseekers, and in order to fulfill one of the social objectives of the Albanian state, sanctioned in letter “a” of article 59 of the Constitution of the Republic of Albania: employment in suitable conditions of all people able to work, are on the basis of this recommendation. In response to this recommendation we were informed that the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities has undertaken concrete initiatives in order to develop and encourage facilitating policies for Roma community, aiming at their employment promotion as well as their qualification, training and integration in the labour market. In 2011 as compared to 2010, the number of unemployed jobseekers from this community has increased by 10 per cent, a figure which demonstrates their awareness to present themselves to employment offices and benefit from different services provided especially for specific groups, including the Roma community. Currently, 2 programs, which have as priority unemployed jobseekers from vulnerable groups, are being implemented: DCM no.48 dated 16.01.2008 “Program for employment promotion of vulnerable unemployed jobseekers”. According to this program, employers who hire unemployed jobseekers in difficulty on a one year-long contract, can benefit funding for one year to the extent of 100 per cent of the compulsory social security of the employer’s contribution; funding for 4 months to the extent of 100 per cent of the minimum wage in national scale. According to this program, Roma community people are considered to be vulnerable unemployed jobseekers

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