**Questionnaire of the special Rapporteur on minority issues to Member States**

***In answering the question below please consider that the term "Roma" refers to Roma, Sinti Kale and Travellers and aims at covering the wide diversity of groups concerned including groups that identify themselves as "Gypsies" in line with the definition provided by Human Rights Council resolution 26/4 (attached)***

1. **Please provide specific information about the Roma communities living in your country. What is the estimated size of the Roma population? Please attach any relevant data.**

While the 2011 census identified only 8,300 Roma and 3,368 Egyptians, other official reports estimate between 18,276[[1]](#footnote-1) and 120,000 Roma[[2]](#footnote-2) and presumably over 200,000 Egyptians[[3]](#footnote-3).

Roma and Egyptians face direct and indirect barriers in accessing public services, stemming from eligibility criteria they cannot comply with, lack of information or understanding of administrative procedures, as well as stigma and frequent discriminatory attitude from the majority population. Long-term exclusion has affected Roma living conditions, treatment by the majority population and relationship with government institutions. Studies show that the level of poverty among Roma is twice as high as the majority population, while their unemployment rate is three times higher than average[[4]](#footnote-4). Thirty nine per cent of dwellings inhabited by Roma and 21 per cent of those inhabited by Egyptians do not have access to potable water[[5]](#footnote-5). Roma die on average at least ten years younger than non-Roma and have higher rates of infant mortality[[6]](#footnote-6). Roma and Egyptians on average complete 5-6 years of education, compared to the national average of 10 years[[7]](#footnote-7).

1. **Does your state collect socio-economic data such as poverty and unemployment rates, healthcare data, living conditions, educational levels, income levels or rates of economic participation disaggregated by different population groups including Roma? What does such data reveal in regard to the situation of Roma? Please, attach relevant data if available. In the absence of such data what is the source of information your state relies upon to develop various measures and programs for Roma inclusion?**

The government of Albania, currently does partly collect officially disaggregated socio-economic data by ethnic origin, in only a limited number of sectors, such as on education and social protection. The main official source of information on Roma is Population and Housing CENSUS 2011[[8]](#footnote-8), which in reality is contested for non accurate results by Roma and Egyptian civil society organizations. However, an online system for the *National Action Plan for Roma and Egyptian Integration,* monitoring and progress reporting, known as RomALB, has been developed and piloted by the government. In the period of 2015-2020, the government will update this online system with new monitoring information from the Action Plan implementation and will continue to raise capacities for its use.

In the absence of updated official governmental data in all sectors, to develop various measures and programs for Roma inclusion, the government of Albania relies on a combination of data collected by governmental institutions (where possible) and civil society and international organizations.

1. **Is there any ongoing national policy\ strategy\ action plan to ensure Roma inclusion in the political, social, economic and cultural life of your country? If, so please explain how these measures are developed, designed, implemented, monitored, and evaluated in consultation with, and with the effective participation of Roma, including Roma women. If your State has already reported on similar issues other international or regional organizations, please share existing relevant reports and\or documentation.**

The *Action Plan* *for Integration of Roma and Egyptians* *in the Republic of Albania, 2015-2020* is a document developed recently by the Government of Albania and coordinated by the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth. This document is to be adopted by the government by the end of March 2015. The Action Plan was developed in close consultation with and owned by the respective line ministries, local government units, related governmental institutions, representatives of Roma and Egyptian communities and civil society organizations, experts, international organizations and other stakeholders. The Action Plan reflects a scaling up of measures already being implemented and also initiates new activities for promoting the integration of Roma and Egyptians, with committed funding from the State budget and funding gaps identified for the 2015-2020 period.

Following the achievement of the EU candidate country status in 2014, the Government of Albania intensified the reform processes necessary for its accession, including the promotion of equal access to services and rights to all citizens. In this context, special attention is paid to actions that can eliminate barriers that Roma and Egyptians face in accessing services; improve their living conditions and promote intercultural dialogue.

The principles guiding the *National Action Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptians[[9]](#footnote-9)* are:

1. *Promoting social inclusion* – Action Plan activities aim to foster the inclusion of Roma and Egyptians in mainstream society, rather than creating parallel systems for these communities to use.
2. *Using a targeted approach to address specific exclusion issues* – the Action Plan also proposes targeted measures to respond to emergency situations that cannot be addressed through mainstream resources. Targeted interventions will not create segregation (i.e. through separate housing or classes for Roma and Egyptians) but aim to connect Roma and Egyptians with the mainstream system and improve their access to the existing public services.
3. *Respecting differences* – the Action Plan respects the differences between Roma and Egyptian communities, as well as within these communities. The Action Plan addresses the vulnerable members of these communities, recognizing that some Roma and Egyptians are already integrated into society.
4. *Emphasizing the engagement of Roma and Egyptians* – the Action Plan includes mechanisms for engagement of Roma and Egyptians with the line ministries in the design, implementation and monitoring of public policies.
5. *Fostering cooperation between different stakeholders* – the Action Plan development and implementation relies on cooperation between the central, regional and local government, civil society and the international community.
6. *Promoting inter-sectoral links* – the Action Plan addresses needs in a number of key areas, with the aim of fostering integration in a comprehensive and sustainable way.
7. *Measuring progress* – the Action Plan is equipped with indicators for measuring progress in implementation and a baseline measurement wherever possible.
8. *Awareness of the gender dimension* – the Action Plan recognizes that Roma and Egyptian women are more likely to suffer social exclusion and discrimination. It also calls for collection of gender disaggregated data for every relevant indicator.
9. *Budgeting for implementation* – the line ministries identified a budget for the implementation of every activity. In cases when public funding is insufficient, the ministries also identified funding gaps where donor and civil society assistance may be sought.

The methodology for Action Plan development consisted of:

1. The *preparatory phase* started with introductory meetings aiming to present the Action Plan development process to key stakeholders and seek their inputs. At the same time, an analysis of relevant strategies, policy documents and reports was also undertaken in order to collect information about the results of past activities, draw on good practice examples and lessons learned, and ensure that the Action Plan is well situated within the government’s overall development agenda.
2. *Sectoral workshops* with the ministries and civil society representatives, including members of Roma and Egyptian associations and international organizations.
3. *Focus groups* with representatives of Roma and Egyptians, local governments, international organizations and gender equality specialists.
4. *Follow up individual meetings* with the line ministries (with special focus on collecting baseline data and budgeting the Action Plan measures).
5. *Field visits* to the municipality of Berat and the Transitory Centre in Tirana.
6. *Public presentation* of the draft Action Plan document, discussion and finalization.

The Action Plan matrix defined the goals, objectives and activities, implementation deadlines, authorities responsible for implementation and monitoring, indicators and baseline values, sources of information, related strategic documents, and the funds necessary for Action Plan implementation. The matrix was divided into six sectors, namely: civil registration, education and promoting intercultural dialogue, employment and vocational education and training (VET), healthcare, housing and urban integration, and social protection.

1. **How strategies or policy measures for inclusion take into systematic consideration the specific conditions, situations and needs of Roma women, including in the areas of access to adequate education, healthcare and reproductive rights? Please attach the most relevant information including, if applicable, specific measures taken to combat segregation and\or multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination faced by Roma women as well as the main measurable achievement in these areas.**

The national policy background that considers the situation and needs of Roma women is made of the *National Strategy for Gender Equality and Reduction of Gender Based and Domestic Violence, 2011-2015, the National Action Plan on Integration of Roma and Egyptians, 2015-2020, National Education Strategy, Strategy on Public Health Policy and Health Promotion,* and *the* *National Strategy for Employment and Skills 2014-2020.*

*As related to the National Action Plan on Integration of Roma and Egyptians, 2015-2020, please do refer to the above elaborated reply to question no. 3.*

*The National Strategy for Gender Equality and Reduction of Gender Based and Domestic Violence* is highly relevant for the integration of Roma and Egyptian communities as it outlined measures for promoting “equal participation of women and girls, and men and boys in the social, economic, and political life of the country, as well as equal opportunities for them to enjoy all their rights and to place their individual potential at the service of the society”[[10]](#footnote-10). It also defined a framework for protection of victims of domestic violence. *Inter alia*¸ the Strategy recognized the position of Roma and Egyptian women who are unemployed and seek new opportunities, possibly in the form of social enterprise or vocational education programs.

While the *National Strategy for Employment and Skills 2014-2020* enables the government to foster decent job opportunities, offer quality vocational education and training, promote social inclusion and territorial cohesion, and strengthen the governance of labour market and qualification systems[[11]](#footnote-11).

*Support to unemployed women* is one of the most important employment promotion programmes.Under this programme, employers providing employment to marginalized female job seekers for at least one year receive 100 per cent of the minimum wage for four months and 70 per cent of their part of social insurance contributions. In the case of two-year contracts, employers received the minimum wage for six months and 85 per cent of their part of social insurance contributions. Similarly, in the case of three-year contracts, employers received the minimum wage for four months and 100 per cent of their part of social insurance contributions. The financing of this programme by the state budget ended in 2010. After that, the Ministry specified that the target groups included in the “marginalized women” would be previously trafficked women, women over 35-year-old, Roma women, disabled women and divorced women. In 2012, the government extended the number of target groups to include long-term unemployed women, women over 50 years old and women returned from emigration.

Based on official statistics of the National Employment Service, in 2014 there were **9.469 Roma persons registered as unemployed job-seekers, of which 4.773 are women.** Annually, some 220 Roma are employed through the employment promotion programmes[[12]](#footnote-12)

In 2014, the government tripled the Employment Fund which covers the employment promotion programmes to USD 2.7 million, so outreach to Roma and Egyptian communities, especially women will be essential to ensure that they benefit from the available active labour market programmes.

As related to *health care and reproductive rights*, during October-November 2014 the government continued to work for changes in the health care package of health care services which was adopted by DCM no. 101, dated 04.02.2015. The new package contains instructions and recommendations for prenatal care right after birth for women, newborn baby, for baby and child care.

Ministry of Health in 2014 completed the national program: For decreasing malnutrition of Albanian children" (implementation period 2011-2013) primarily focused in those regions where people are facing more socio-economic difficulties and to access quality care services for mothers and children.

1. **Is there any available information and data about violence against Roma population, especially women and children? If yes, what are the different forms of violence they experience and what measures have been taken to assist, protect, and compensate the victims?**

The government licenses service providers who work on child protection, support victims of violence and trafficking, offer psycho-social support for children with disabilities and other services at the local level. These services are of high importance for Roma and Egyptians, especially for addressing the needs of street children, human trafficking and domestic violence victims, people living in isolated informal settlements and other vulnerable groups.

The child protection system is new and still under development. The Law on Protection of Children’s Rights stipulated the establishment of an agency to provide co-ordination and the introduction of specialized workers at the local government level. The child protection workers are currently being trained according to the standards prescribed by the Agency.

Vulnerable groups of children include those who migrate, live on the street and children who are forced to work or suffer other types of exploitation. A pilot initiative for protecting these groups of children is being implemented in Tirana by the Agency for Protection of Children’s Rights, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, the Social Services Agency, National Employment Service, the Regional Directorate of the Ministry of Education and civil society organizations. A study on profiling street children showed that 70 per cent come from Roma and Egyptian communities. The case management approach is being followed, to be combined with greater outreach to the communities in the future.

About 100 children are placed into institutions of social care each year and approximately 30-40 per cent comes from Roma and Egyptian communities. This is an immediate solution of the government to respond to the emerging concern of the high number of children in street situation. And other alternative ways that has as focus the best interest of the child are being explored with the De-institutionalization process which is in progress.

Prevention and intervention in cases of domestic violence is a key priority for the Government of Albania. During the years 2013 - 2014, from 826 cases registered in the on-line system of cases of domestic violence, 10 are Roma and 77 Egyptian victims. Victims of violence should be integrated into social protection programs and central and local authorities have undertaken measures to ensure that the needs of Roma and Egyptian communities are referred and followed appropriately.

1. **Has your Government identified the main priority areas for Roma inclusion? If yes, what are the main goals? Please provide relevant details in this respect as well as an estimate of funds allocated on measures relating to national strategies and policies for Roma inclusion.**

The government of Albania has identified six (6) priority areas for Roma inclusion, namely: (a) civil registration, (b) education and promoting intercultural dialogue, (c) employment and vocational education and training (VET), (d) healthcare, (e) housing and urban integration, and (f) social protection.

The Action Plan for Roma and Egyptian Integration in the Republic of Albania defines the goals, objectives and activities, implementation deadlines, authorities responsible for implementation and monitoring, indicators and baseline values, sources of information, related strategic documents, and the funds necessary for inclusion of Roma and Egyptians in these six sectors.

Table 1: Estimated budget for Roma inclusion in six priority sectors during 2015-2020

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Sector/ priority area** | **Total budget (ALL)** | **State budget (ALL)** | **Donor’s budget (ALL)** |
| **Civil registration and access to the justice system** | 309,266,460 | 69,786,460 | 239,480,000 |
| **Education and promotion of intercultural dialogue** | 2,974,769,959 | 1,790,477,098 | 1,184,292,861 |
| **Employment and vocational education and training** | 1,086,456,899 | 380,506,899 | 705,950,000 |
| **Health care** | 584,232,400 | 428,432,400 | 155,800,000 |
| **Housing and urban integration** | 1,533,046,979 | 1,163,946,979 | 370,100,000 |
| **Social care** | 1,250,585,551 | 486,215,551 | 794,370,000 |
| **Coordination and monitoring of Roma related polities** | 54,256,920 | 19,856,920 | 34,400,000 |
| **TOTAL** | **7,792,615,168** | **4,339,222,307** | **3,484,392,861** |

1. **Does your Government monitor progress made in the area of Roma inclusion in the political, social economic, and culture life of the State? If so, what the visible measurable achievements of various efforts undertaken for Roma inclusion? Please provide details.**

The Albanian Constitution guarantees political rights and freedoms to all citizens, but does not mention minorities. Albania lacks provisions for the representation of minorities in mainstreamed elected bodies. Roma participation in decision-making at the central level is limited to the appointment of a Roma person to the State Committee on Minorities, an advisory body to the Government.

School curriculum reform and changes in attitude are important for promoting social inclusion. Roma and Egyptians should be present in professions that encourage integration, including as teachers. Schools are working to promote the Roma culture through events and engage Roma and Egyptian parents as school board representatives. The Action Plan also foresees training of teachers and the creation of auxiliary positions in pre-school and primary education, to be filled by Roma and Egyptians, with the aim of supporting the students’ integration.

In order to promote intercultural dialogue, the Ministry of Culture awards grants to civil society organizations for events and exhibits in this field every year. In 2014, 68 projects were selected out of 247 submissions[[13]](#footnote-13), but only one project was implemented by a Roma organization and none by an Egyptian organization. The main topics were “Art and Culture” and “Cultural Inheritance”. The aim of these projects is to raise awareness about the diversity of cultures and traditions in Albania, promote tolerance and prevent discrimination, so Roma and Egyptian content should be included.

As part of the *Education for Culture* *Strategy*, the Ministry of Culture supported the initiative “Show your Culture” which started on 8 April, the International Roma Day, and ended on 21 May 2014, the Day of Cultural Diversity. Community representatives created videos about their culture and the video submitted by a Roma organization won the competition. The purpose of these activities is to present the cultural diversity in Albania in a positive way and promote tolerance.

1. **In the Government’s view, if there are still persistent disparities among Roma and other population groups, what were the failures and what are the ongoing challenges to close the gap and achieve full inclusion of Roma? In which areas is there the biggest need to step up efforts?**

The government of Albania evaluates there are still disparities and gaps among Roma and the other population groups as related to access to quality services in general. The areas that need more efforts are those six identified by the government and Roma communities in the action plan, namely: civil registration, education and promoting intercultural dialogue, employment and vocational education and training (VET), healthcare, housing and urban integration, and social protection.

1. **Is Roma history and culture part of the national curriculum? Is the international Roma day celebrated and if yes, how?**

International Roma Day is celebrated every year in Tirana, the capital and in other locations where Roma live. Usually organization of these events are supported by the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, Ministry of Culture, mayors, international and civil society organizations and highlight the cultural values, challenges faced by Roma and Egyptian communities and urge for their greater inclusion in the development mainstream. Usually an Intercultural Artisans Fair is organied in the capital which brings together Roma artists and handcrafts across the country.

Since 2011 *Roma Culture and Traditions* is elective education subject in primary schools (during extracurricular classes). The Ministry of Education and Sports is working on making Roma history and culture part of the national curriculum.

1. **What channels for articulating, aggregating, and representing the interests of Roma, including through body\ institution \unit or other establishments do exist in your country? If applicable, please indicate how such initiatives include staff or representatives from Roma communities**.

Through a decision of the Prime Minister’s Office, an Inter-ministerial Committee was established to monitor the implementation of the National Strategy and Action Plan for Integration of Roma Egyptians[[14]](#footnote-14). The committee is chaired by the Deputy Minister of Social Welfare and Youth and composed of Deputy Ministers from other line ministries.

The Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth coordinates the development and implementation of the *National Action Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptians*. Upon joining the Decade of Roma Inclusion in 2008, the government appointed the Minister of Social Welfare and Youth as the National Co-ordinatorfor this initiative. As part of the EU accession process, the government held two seminars on Roma inclusion (in December 2011 and February 2014) and formed an inter-ministerial committee at the Deputy Minister level to monitor progress.

The Technical Secretariat for Roma at the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth was dissolved after the new government took office in 2013, but the same functions now rest with the Social Inclusion and Gender Equality Department at the Ministry. The option of establishing an agency for social inclusion issues, with potentially a sub-unit focusing on Roma and Egyptians, has been suggested and will be further discussed.

Line ministries in charge of education, healthcare, housing and urban integration, employment and labour rights, local government, justice, culture and interior have appointed focal points for Roma. Their role is to provide inputs for the National Action Plans, monitor and report on progress in implementation. Independent and technical bodies, such as the National Employment Service, National Housing Agency, National Legalization Agency, INSTAT and the National Agency for the Protection of Child Rights, also play an important role in the implementation of policies, data collection and identification of any issues with regards to barriers faced by Roma, Egyptians or other marginalized groups.

Some municipalities with large or particularly marginalized Roma and Egyptian populations have also introduced focal points for resolving the difficulties faced by these groups. The focal points collect data, promote anti-discrimination mechanisms, seek housing assistance, ensure children attend school, etc. The overall aim of this system, at national and local levels, is that Roma and Egyptians should have access to the same services and be able to realize their rights like any other citizen of Albania.

1. Open Society Foundation in Albania (OSFA), *Roma Census Study of Albania Communities*, April 2014, <http://soros.al/2010/foto/uploads/File/Dritan/Censusi%20Rome/roma%20census%20total.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Estimate provided by the Roma Association “Amarodrom” quoted in the World Bank report *Roma and Egyptians in Albania: From Social Exclusion to Social Inclusion*, prepared by Hermine De Soto, Sabine Beddies and Ilir Gedeshi, 2005, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/7313/32181.pdf?sequence=1>, p. xxiv. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Ibid*, estimate provided by the Egyptian Association “Vëllazërimi”. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation, *Civil Society Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategy and Decade Action Plan in 2012 in Albania*, prepared by a group of authors (Bajrami, Ivia; Cabiri, Ylli; Hasantari, Adriatik; Kazanxhiu, Latif; Koci, Renart; Mustafaj, Enver; Myrteli, Laver; Nuredin, Albana; Pegini, Hafize; Rama, Lindita; Rushiti, Selvie; Xega, Gerta; Ziu, Dritan), published in May 2013, <http://www.issuelab.org/click/download2/civil_society_monitoring_report_on_the_implementation_of_the_national_roma_integration_strategy_and_decade_action_plan_in_2012_in_albania>, p. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Data from the UNDP/WB/EC 2011 Socio-economic Survey quoted in the UNDP’s *Needs Assessment Study on Roma and Egyptian Communities in Albania*, February 2012, <http://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/library/poverty/roma-needs-assessment-report/>, pp. 24-25. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. European Commission, *Roma Health Report: Health Status of the Roma Population and Monitoring of Data Collection in the Member States of the European Union*, April 2014, <http://ec.europa.eu/health/social_determinants/docs/2014_roma_health_report_en.pdf>, p. 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Statistics for Roma and Egyptians come from the 2011 *Roma and Egyptian Social Economic Survey*, while the national average is taken from the INSTAT’s 2011 census report on *Population of Albania*. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. http://www.instat.gov.al/media/178070/rezultatet\_kryesore\_t\_\_censusit\_t\_\_popullsis\_\_dhe\_banesave\_2011\_n\_\_shqip\_ri.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. These principles were strongly inspired by the EU’s *Common Basic Principles for Roma Inclusion*, 2009, available at <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Resources/Documents/2011_10_Common_Basic_Principles_Roma_Inclusion.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Government of Albania, *National Strategy on Gender Equality and Domestic Violence 2011-2015*, p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Government of Albania, *National Strategy and Action Plan for Employment and Skills 2014-2020*, Strategic Objectives A-D. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. National Employment Service, data provided in September 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Ministry of Culture, 15 January 2014, <http://www.kultura.gov.al/al/newsroom/njoftime/thirrja-per-projekt-propozime-15-janar-14-shkurt-projektet-e-perzgjedhura-per-mbeshtetje-te-pjesshme-ose-te-plote&page=6>. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. The Inter-ministerial committee was established through the decision of the Prime Minister's Office no. 37 dated 9 March 2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)