

Speech delivered at the 2nd Roma Summit

Everything that has been said during the past day and a half underlines the importance of the subject and the event itself is a proof that the Trio Presidency considers the issue of Roma inclusion a priority.

It is important to mention that the Commission has participated in the preparatory activities, as a result of which a communication was issued on the social and economic inclusion of the Roma. All these steps contribute to enhancing a dialogue on Roma issues and also promote cooperation on a professional basis.

Hungary would also like to play an important role in tackling this important topic both at national and European level. As the 3rd member of the Trio Presidency, approximately within a year's time, we would like to host a European Platform on the situation of the Roma in the labour-market. At the same time, we also consider important to make use of international scenes, because the inclusion of the Roma is not merely an EU issue, so in order to be able to manage it we need a wider cooperation. This is why we support and encourage all the regional initiatives both inside and outside the EU, and also the implementation of the Roma Strategy adopted by the Visegrad countries, as well as the Programme of the Decade of Roma Integration, because these can help to achieve the inclusion of the Roma in Europe.

From among the ethnic minorities, the Roma people are those who – except some cases – belong to the most excluded groups in Europe and are in the most deprived situation.

It is the joint responsibility of the EU member states and the institutions to take all the decisions that are necessary to integrate the Roma economically and socially. This is why, both at member state and at EU level the following criteria should be taken into consideration by all means:

1. In all horizontal policies it is essential to prove the principle of equal opportunities and equal access, only this can help the rights of the Roma predominate. The integration of the Roma and the social cohesion can only become a reality if the development programmes manage to reach out the Roma in order to improve their situation. Therefore, it is essential that
 - apart from the targeted horizontal development programmes, the principle of equal opportunities should prevail, should be monitored and measured by predetermined indicators.
 - we should prevent the creation of geographical segregation, or in schools, and if such structures already exist, they should be dismantled.
2. The measures should be global and coordinated among the different horizontal policies, both in terms of financing and the implementation.

3. It is important to design and launch complex, coherent development plans for the microregions: in Hungary the disparities are not only among the regions. Many times within one region there can be enormous inequalities, so during regional planning these should be regarded.
4. It is important to make a distinction between the social and the ethnic dimension of the problem. When programmes are prepared, we should define the targets aiming at diminishing the social and the ethnic factors of the disadvantages, because the first one should be tackled with socio-political measures, whereas the latter one with anti-discriminatory tools.
 - The initial measures should be defined according to the geographical criteria (deprived regions and settlements, etc.) and according to social aspects (long-lasting unemployment, low level of education, etc.), because these are essential in order to achieve the social and economic integration of the Roma in the long run.
 - In the area of antidiscrimination and culture, the Roma can be defined as a target group explicitly.
5. The principle of positive actions. In order to create the conditions of equal opportunities, it is important to implement the government measures, and encourage the local governments to implement regional measures too, in order to compensate the social and economic disadvantages of the Roma. In Hungary there are several hundreds of civil servants of Roma origin employed in the public sector in order to enhance equal opportunities.
6. During the implementation of horizontal policies it is important to ensure sustainability and also to create the possibility of measuring their outcome.

Discrimination should not be tolerated at any level. Problems though should be solved at the level of the Member States and not at EU level. The EU should provide a strategic framework for it. It is the task of the member states to prepare suggestions, to map the situation and to implement programmes.

The strategy of Europe 2020 hopefully places social cohesion, poverty and the employment of low skilled people in the forefront. These are the focal points according to which the member states can prepare and implement their own measures aiming at the Roma population.

Although Roma issues should be solved at the level of the member states, we should not permit that these become only domestic affairs. It is our mutual interest to prevent problems arising in one country to cross over to another, we should not export problems to each other, but rather we should try to handle and solve them.

When making use of European funds, we should consider what is happening to the vulnerable groups in our countries, especially with the Roma.

We have to make sure that the development programmes reach the poorest, and have to make sure that disparity if not diminished, at least should not be

increased. Programmes should encourage the solving of the most urgent problems of equality detected locally.

This is especially important, when

- governments and EU institutions are taking restrictive measures affecting wide layers of the society in order to manage the economic crisis. Under such circumstances it is very important to protect those in need. Both the Commission and the member states have to assume the responsibility to prevent social disparities from becoming bigger. Governmental and non-governmental forces alike have a serious responsibility in this regard.
- anti-Roma voices have become stronger in public speech, which was strengthened by some political actors and the media. It has become a more or less generalised view to consider the Roma the scapegoat for everything.

We have to reckon that the Roma issue is complex; therefore it requires a global, comprehensive approach. Since this problem has become more and more serious during the past years, it may take years or even decades to handle it. For a fast and efficient solution we need common actions, because we can only achieve real results by mutual learning.

Judit SZENTIRMAI
State secretary responsible for coordination
Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour
Hungary