

World Bank: Achieving Roma Inclusion is Smart Economics for Romania

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BUCHAREST, April 7, 2014 ? A new World Bank report The Diagnostics and Policy Advice for Supporting Roma Inclusion in Romania examines the social and economic barriers most Roma in Romania face throughout their entire lives. This comprehensive study was prepared at the request of the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection, and the Elderly, and financed through the European Union (EU) structural funds in order to assist the Government of Romania develop national policies and identify cost-effective programs for the integration of Roma. It provides diagnostics and policy options related to poverty, social safety nets, employment, education, housing, health, combating discrimination, local service delivery, and options to better use the EU financial instruments.
The report points out that Roma exclusion is perpetuated over generations. Inadequate education, lack of skills, and poor health hamper the Roma populations access to earning opportunities. This, in turn, results in insufficient resources to support the Roma childrens continued education and secure living conditions conducive to good health. That is why a life-cycle approach to devise policy interventions is important to break the intergenerational cycle of Roma exclusion.
When a Roma girl is born in Romania, she is three times more likely to be born into poverty. This child faces a higher chance to suffer from early malnutrition or diseases that jeopardize her healthy development in the crucial first years of life, said Elisabeth Huybens, World Bank Sector Manager for Social Development. "That same girl is more likely to grow up in an overcrowded dwelling. She can expect to miss out on crucial preschool education and to drop out from school before age 16. She will face a one in five chances to succeed in finding employment through adulthood, and by age 55 she has a 60% chance of reporting a long-standing illness or health problem.
The report argues that adequate development for Roma children in the first 1,000 days of life, better access to quality of education, investments in skills development for Roma out of the education system, improving living conditions, and combating negative stereotypes will provide equal opportunities for the next generation of Roma and will boost the wellbeing of their families. The report recommends a set of targeted interventions, such as investments in programs for maternal and child nutrition, health, and pre-school education, skills development through quality basic education, and measures to facilitate insertion in the labor market. Improving the housing conditions and ensuring access to basic infrastructure will improve Roma families welfare and create the appropriate environment for childhood development.
Negative stereotypes of Roma can be decreased by projects that involve Roma and non-Roma collaboration. A stronger enforcement of the law against discrimination is also called for. According to the study, the capacity of service providers could be strengthened by introducing Roma mediators and use of cultural competency trainings. It is also critical to empower Roma communities by ensuring they participate in the design and implementation of future intervention.
"We all need to support the Roma population to fully participate in Romanias development and further convergence to the EU, said Elisabetta Capannelli, World Bank Country Manager for Romania. "Recent estimates show that there are between 1,200,000 and 2,500,000 Roma in Romania. The Roma are poor, vulnerable and socially excluded, and this is severely limiting their opportunities to contribute to the countrys economic growth.
The study serves as a comprehensive reference to understand both the challenges faced by Roma and the options the Government of Romania has in order to improve the lives of Roma in Romania.
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