

‘Social integration of the Roma population in Belarus: providing the right for equality’

(September–November 2014)

The project is a socio-expert initiative with participation of public associations ‘Belarusian Roma diaspora’, ‘Ašmyany Roma diaspora’, academic expert communities, and the Republican Centre for National Cultures.

The basis for empiric and analytic materials of the project are the materials of focus groups, interviews, questionnaires, round-table discussions, which took place in 8 localities of the republic – Minsk, Hrodna, Ašmyany, Homel, Žodzina, Sluck, Baranavičy, Babruisk – and involved Roma leaders and activists, and the representatives of local administration as respondents.

1. About the project

The aim of the project is to create a mechanism for social integration of the Roma population in the whole Belarus and in Hrodna region in particular, in the format of recommendations for the all-republican programme of social integration of Roma-population. The programme of social integration of the Roma population in Belarus is aimed at creating equal possibilities for the Roma population to participate in social life of the republic, developing the feeling of both civil and cultural-ethnic adherence. The scope of this programme is education, job placement, social maintenance, and culture.

Tasks for the project:

1. Empirical research.

1.1. Questionnaire survey in Roma communities, interviews with leaders of Roma communities, focus groups in format of round-table discussions involving local officials and Roma activists.

1.2. Monitoring of the Roma-phobia (the language of enmity) in the materials of the printed mass media in Hrodna region.

2. Theoretical and analytical research.

2.1. Constructing the strategy of education, professional employment, social maintenance and preservation of cultural originality of the Roma population of Belarus as a condition for overcoming social isolation and discrimination.

2.2. Disclosing partnership experience of the Roma communities and state authorities, on the example of Ašmyany district of Hrodna region.

3. Practical recommendations.

3.1. Recommendations for developing the programmes of Roma’ social integration in Belarus.

Constructing recommendations for Roma’ social integration the team of authors of the project was guided by the international standards on maintaining the rights of the minorities:

– UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992);

– Lund recommendations of the OSCE Senior Commissar for national minorities

on the effective participation of the national minorities in social and political life (September 1999);

– Ljubljana recommendations of the OSCE Senior Commissar for national minorities on integration of the various communities (November 2012), in which the concept of politics of integration and inclusion are widened.

Basic principles of the programme of social integration of the Roma in Belarus are:

- maintaining equality in all spheres of social life;
- keeping cultural, ethnical, and social peculiarities of the Roma population;
- inclusion is a maximum involvement of the Roma population into spheres of social life in Belarus;
- elimination of all forms of discrimination, segregation, ethnic profiling.

2. Empirical research

2.1. Questionnaire survey and interview results

The aim of the research is to discover current problematic issues faced by the Roma population in the spheres of education, job placement, social maintenance and culture, as well as the ways of solving them.

Simultaneous questionnaire survey and interviewing was held in 8 localities—Minsk, Hrodna, Ašmyany, Homeĺ, Sluck, Źodzina, Baranavičy, Babrujsk. The total amount of questionnaires is 53.

The research was conducted among 5 age groups of 14–18 years, 18–25 years, 25–35 years, 35–45 years, and 45 years and older.

60 % of the respondents are members of Roma organisations. Speaking about the perspectives for the Roma culture development, they note a huge role played by the Roma organisations in this process. All the respondents from this group take part in the life of local Roma communities.

75 % of the respondents stated that they wait nothing from the State and count only on themselves. The respondents do not command the services of kindergarten, healthcare institutions, placement service, and law-enforcement agencies. No problems with receiving medical care were spotted. Ambulance is called only in priority cases. The respondents note that medical care is always received in time and ably. They see no point in addressing the placement service because ‘the benefit is scanty and it’s impossible to live on it’.

All 100 % of the respondents showed the will to work officially, but at the same time 70% underlined that they wait nothing from the State, the State ‘does not see them’.

Basic problems stated by the majority of the respondents

1. ‘Complicated’ relations with law-enforcement agencies (the language of enmity, forced dactylography, random arrests, and cases of insults in relation to the elder age group).

2. Discrimination during job placement (Roma are denied to take a job while

there are vacancies available).

3. The lack of available educational programmes for adult population.
4. Low level of service by the territory-administrative districts of the Roma settlements (the lack of landscaping, stores, pharmacies, gas supply, etc.).
5. Problems with legalisation (the lack of passports, birth certificates, etc.).

All the named problems were discussed at the round tables with the representatives of local authorities and activists of the Roma organisations.

Babrujsk and Homel' were named as the most 'problematic' regions and Ašmyany as the less 'problematic'.

The following trend was discovered during discussion.

Solving the problems depends on cooperation of the Roma communities and state authorities: the most 'problematic' regions are those where Roma organisations do not exist or do not work in favour of the Roma population interests.

Roma population is both settled and wandering; there are also migrating Roma families from Ukraine in the territory of the republic (Homel' region). Roma organisations are the ones that play the key role in socialising the wandering and migrating Roma communities.

During the round-table discussions, the respondents showed solidarity in their opinion on the tasks for the officials and Roma leaders and activists.

Tasks for the officials:

- 1) Facilitate the reopening of the inter-ethnic public councils at the local authorities;
- 2) Facilitate including Roma leaders and activists into the process of public discussion of the regional problems;
- 3) Contribute to solving current problems of the Roma population in the spheres of job settlement, legalisation (filing the necessary documents), service by the territory-administrative districts of the Roma settlements.

Tasks for Roma leaders and activists:

- 1) Elevate the level of effectiveness in working with the Roma communities;
- 2) Articulate current problems of the Roma population and providing the representatives of the local authorities with this information;
- 3) Activating their own potential (organisational, financial, etc.) for participation in solving social problems.

2.2. Monitoring of the Roma-phobia (the language of enmity) expressions in the materials of the printed mass media of the Hrodna region

In the materials of the printed and Internet mass media of the Hrodna region, as well as on the official web-sites of the authorities and Regional Department of Internal Affairs, Roma-phobia is noticed though is not of overall systematic nature.

This monitoring shows the following trends.

1. The majority of materials containing Roma-phobia statements were published in regional printed mass media, as well as in informational materials of the Department of Internal Affairs.

2. The majority of Roma-phobia materials are in texts of news items, though negative headlines were noticed, too: ‘The fraud Roma was caught’, ‘Where there are Gypsies there is trouble’.

3. Language aid of expressing Roma-phobia.

3.1. Using the line of concepts with negative connotations leading to spread of negative stereotypes in the public opinion and creating negative image of an ethnic group as a whole:

‘Astraveckaja praŭda’

25.08.2014 19.00

<http://www.ostrovets.by/?p=40754>

Criminal militia warns the citizens:

‘Be very attentive in your communication with the Roma, don’t hand them your belongings, money’

‘Don’t let the Roma into your house’

‘To all the residents of the district: if you meet Roma, fortune-tellers and beggars, please try to remember their features, car licence plates, and immediately report to militia on the phone 102’

‘Astraveckaja praŭda’

18.04.2014 15.00

Heading: Incidents

<http://www.ostrovets.by/?p=37475>

‘Workers of law-enforcement institutions have several times warned that relations with Roma nationals usually have sad endings’

‘Asmyanski vesnik’

5500 copies

19.04.2014 No. 30

In the article ‘A good bargain for a thief’ Andrei Matulevich, deputy head of Ašmyany Regional Department of Internal Affairs, lieutenant colonel, advices: ‘...not to make bargains with persons of Roma nationality...’.

On the web-site of the newspaper this article is dismissed.

‘Berestovickaja gazeta’

Berestovica

2930 copies

15.04.2014 No. 27

Criminal chronicle

O. Tsumarev, head of Criminal Intelligence Service at Berestovica Regional Department of Internal Affairs, reports that ‘...there are robberies and fraud conducted by the people of Roma nationality... do not initiate any trade relations with them...’

On the web-site of the newspaper this information is dismissed.

3.2. Logic aid: a) illegal generalisations when mentioning ethnic affiliation

connected to the conducted criminal act (all Roma are ‘drug dealers, fraud’ etc.) which is followed by extrapolation of features of single criminals on the whole ethnic group; b) resonant way of giving information when the main information is disclosed partially but contains hints to the object which the negative reaction will be directed at in the comments.

‘Zara nad Niomanam’

Masty

4300 copies

03.05.2014 No. 34

Heading ‘Take into consideration’

‘If the Roma visited you...’

‘Several times we have turned your attention to robberies conducted by the people of Roma nationality. Nevertheless, these robberies continue... **When you see people of Roma nationality, call 102**’

On the web-site of the newspaper, this article is dismissed.

‘Lidskaja gazeta’

23.06.2014 11.20

Heading ‘Details’

<http://lidanews.by/news/r1/so1/3080-o-chem-govorjat-itogi-izuchenija-%20obschestvennogo-mnenija-o-rabote-milicii>

‘What the results of studying public opinion on the work of militia show’

Author—Denis Zhinko, head of Regional Department of Internal Affairs main office.

‘Workers of the Regional Department of Internal Affairs have daily trainings and receive instructions with special attention to the issues of preventive work with the people of Roma nationality and the algorithm of actions for the case of their detection. In Bjarozauka region, preventive booklets on the topic are distributed. In speeches in front of the working collectives, the attention of the citizens is driven to immediately call the Department of Internal Affairs on 102 of 52-02-02 and report people of Roma nationality seen in Bjarozauka and other localities of Lida region’.

Web-site of the Department of Internal Affairs of Hrodna region Executive Committee

Criminal news

31 March 2014 14.34

http://uvd.grodno.by/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2903:2014-03-31-08-37-44&catid=15:lastnews&Itemid=106

Author Mikhail Kuznetsov

‘Ran into a burglar at the door’

‘In folklore, Roma people are usually associated with freedom, telling fortune by cards, and heartfelt songs near the fire’. Though in our time, these people are thought to be connected with criminal, fraud, and burglary’.

Masty Regional Department of Internal Affairs issued a poster

‘ATTENTION the Roma do not only tell fortune’ <http://mosty.grodno-region.by/ru/document/ROVD>

Web-site of the Department of Internal Affairs of Hrodna, in the heading ‘Useful information’, in an instruction booklet, recommends (<http://aor.by/ovd/12.html>):

‘MILITIA WARNS

Lately, the number of robberies and fraud has grown conducted by the people of Roma nationality. The success of their criminal actions is at much due to your trust, compassion and sometimes the lack of necessary attention’.

The web-site of Berestovica Regional Executive Committee

19.05.2014

http://berestovitsa.grodno-region.by/ru/novosti_raion/?id=8618

A DECADE AGAINST THE GYPSIES

‘In order to detect and stop criminal intentions in relation to the elderly, from May, 19 to May, 30, 2014, in Berestovica and Berestovicki region, educational work with the population is done on the necessity of immediate informing the Internal Affairs Agencies about the presence of the people of Roma ethnic diaspora... If you know something about the named facts, please report to your neighbourhood militia inspector or on the phone 102’.

Many commentaries to the described items contained the call to violence in relation to the Roma: ‘Roma to Siberia!’, ‘Roma are parasites’, ‘bell out (Roma) to their Indostan’, etc.

In the whole republic, the monitoring of the language of enmity was held in relation to ethnic groups in 2012–2013. The Roma-phobia prevails among the materials containing negative statements addressing ethnic groups.

Cases of Roma-phobia in mass media are explained by the insufficient preparation of the journalists and the Ministry of Internal Affairs press service. Earlier, there was a practice of holding awareness-rising lectures for a range of categories of the officials and other specialists and journalists writing in the ethnic topic. Unfortunately, now the practice of such lectures and skill improvement is minimal, and therefore the rise of the language of enmity cases takes place in Belarusian media.

3. Roma ethnic group in Belarus: regional presentation in the national contents of the population and relation to education and professional employment

In Belarus, according to the data of the 1999 census, 9.927 people officially declared themselves Roma, among them 77 % named Roma language as their native. According to the 2009 census, the Roma population sank to 7.079 people. But the Roma community says about 60.000 Roma live in Belarus today. The inaccuracy of the statistic data is due to the legalisation problems—many Roma have no documents so there are no statistical data.

Belarusian Roma are irregularly represented in the ethnic composition of the

regions of the republic¹.

The most numerous Roma diaspora is in Viciebsk, Homel', and Minsk regions, and the less numerous is in Hrodna, Brest, and Mahilioŭ regions.

So, according to the latest census, 715 people of Roma nationality live in Brest region; among them 385 people live in the city and 330 in villages; 420 people stated Roma language as their native, 130 Belarusian, 100 Russian, 1 person named Ukrainian, 48 people stated 'other', and 15 people did not mention any at all. According to the Department of Internal Affairs data, 1833 Roma live in Brest region, the majority of them refuse to apply for the passport of the citizen of the Republic of Belarus.

1186 people of the Roma nationality, according to the latest census, live in Viciebsk region; among them 877 people live in cities and 309 in villages; 687 people named Roma language their native, 68 people stated Belarusian, 347 people Russian, 1 person Ukrainian, 49 people stated 'other', and 19 people did not mention any at all.

Homel' region, according to the latest census, is a home for 2501 people of Roma nationality; among them 1547 people live in cities and 954 in villages; 1815 people named Roma language their native, 126 people Belarusian, 217 people Russian, 3 people Ukrainian, 167 people stated 'other', and 87 people did not mention any at all.

In Hrodna region, according to the latest census, 372 people of Roma nationality live; among them 227 people live in cities and 145 in villages; 249 people named Roma language their native, 46 people Belarusian, 33 people Russian, 1 person named Ukrainian, 48 people stated 'other', and 15 people did not mention any at all.

In Minsk region, according to the latest census, 1.002 people of Roma nationality live; among them 515 people live in cities and 487 in villages; 628 people named Roma language their native, 103 people Belarusian, 154 people Russian, 2 persons named Ukrainian, 84 people stated 'other', and 16 people did not mention any at all.

Mahilioŭ region, according to the latest census, is a home for 730 people of Roma nationality; among them 676 people live in cities and 54 in villages; 459 people named Roma language their native, 34 people Belarusian, 189 people Russian, 4 persons named Ukrainian, 30 people stated 'other', and 8 people did not mention any at all. According to the unofficial data, there are 1.100–1.200 Roma living in the region.

In Minsk, according to the census, 573 people of the Roma nationality live; among the, 299 people named Roma language their native, 43 people Belarusian, 149 people Russian, 37 people stated 'other' and 13 people did not mention any at all.

About 70 % consider Roma language as their native and use it at home. Belarusian and Russian were also named among native.

The Roma population of Belarus is mostly urban—70 % live in towns and town-like localities.

Only 80 % of the Roma children have basic and secondary education, although the majority of them only finished the course of basic education. 12 % of the Roma at the age of 10 and older can't read and write. According to the unofficial data, 55 % of underage Roma in Brest region do not receive any education.

¹ Ethnic composition of the population, citizenship // National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus [Electronic resource]. — Mode of access : <http://belstat.gov.by/perepis-naseleniya/perepis-naseleniya-2009-goda/vyhodnye-reglamentnye-tablitsy/natsionalnyi-sostav-naseleniya-grazhdanstvo>. — Date of access : 07.11.2014.

No more than 2 % have higher education. About 17 % have secondary, professional-technical or specialised secondary education.

Only 9 % of all Belarusian Roma are officially employed. The level of unemployment is about 31.5 %. Social problems in the spheres of education, job placement, availability of goods and services, and the lack of perspectives in solving them lead to criminalisation of the Roma communities². So, according to the data by the Department of Internal Affairs of Mahilioŭ region, the illegal drug trafficking involves up to 20 % of people at the age of 19 to 60. According to the data by the Department of Internal Affairs of Brest region, 87 % of the of age Roma don't study or work anywhere.

During the life in the USSR, the Roma created unique strategies of life support adapted to the Soviet reality. It was due to long-time stable schemes of life-sustaining activity and economic stability inherent for planned economics. Although, new unstable economic and social reality at the post-Soviet territory turned for many Roma a pronounced marginalisation. After 1991, many Roma in Belarus appeared below the poverty line.

The many-century isolation of the Roma as a social and ethnic group has a range of interrelated reasons of the all-cultural nature. The inherent for the Roma society way of life and the system of values, voluntary or forced self-isolation, mistrust to the official education and the lack of full-time employment support high level of vigilance to the Gypsies from the surrounding people. That's why the ethnic minority of Roma is, compared to other ethnic minorities, the only one under a real threat of social isolation.

Low level of education has direct impact on the lack of corresponding professional skills and qualifications demanded at the contemporary labour market. This, therefore, determines low level of life conditions and health of the representatives of Roma community.

The lack of fully experienced pre-school and school education among the elder generations of the Roma determines that the following generations inherit not only poverty, but also the patterns of behaviour and thought which weakly reflect the values of education and professional employment, which leads to reproduction and further increase of social isolation.

The foremost condition of complex changes to such situation of 'vicious circle' is the elevation of the level of education of the Roma nationality representatives, followed by the drastic change of their position in the labour market. Without improving these two factors, improvement of education and making search of job and employment easier, any accompanying measures would inevitably be ineffective.

Today, it is possible to distinguish a range of key obstacles to overcoming the reproducing low educational level of children and youth in the Roma community.

First, it is full lack or sporadic nature of pre-school education in specialised institutions (kindergartens, centres for early and pre-school development) contributing to effective integration of a child into communicative-educational environment. This matter is often connected with the language barrier among many representatives of Roma nationality.

Second, a serious obstacle is personal insufficient motivation to learning and

² Roma in the Republic of Belarus // Information portal 'All Belarus' [Electronic resource]. — Mode of access : <http://allby.tv/article/1179/tsyigane-v-respublike-belarus>. — Date of access : 07.11.2014.

weak support from parents. This determines an unproductive practice of unfinished school education, especially actual for girls. Besides, a huge role is played by regular skipping classes, migration processes usual for a range of Roma families causing long pauses in education or full refusal of continuing it.

The reproduction of low educational level among children and youth of Roma nationality may be caused by the lack of specialised information and educational programmes on the issues of cultural-mental peculiarities of the Roma environment aimed at teachers of all stages of education. The intolerant attitude of children and youth and teachers to the Roma ethnic group should be considered. The significant retarding factor is also a not always good material and social conditions in Roma families for successful studying.

4. Problems of social maintenance for the Roma population

During visits of the expert groups to the regions of compact living of the Romani people, their questioning and interviewing was conducted, and talks to the bodies of state management on the topic of the situation with social protection of the Romani people (the possibility to receive and the ability to use social guarantees provided by the state to its citizens), participation in cultural life in the regions of living, and other urgent topics.

In the majority of regions of the republic, the Romani people due to their poor literacy are weakly informed about social maintenance. According to the local authorities' estimations, the Romani address social services for support and direct help less often than the representatives of other population groups.

The following difficulties are a retarding factor: the lack of juridical and sometimes general literacy; fear of 'complex' in their opinion official procedures of registration, filing letters, applications, etc.; the lack of trusted contact with state structures; the lack of passports and registration.

As the local authorities declare, the Romani people sometimes deliberately refuse to receive a passport of citizen and have no permanent registration which is an obstacle for social support from the state and is itself a violation of law. The same problem is stated by the Roma as an unsolvable due to the vicious circle of several other problems: 'no birth certificate—no passport—no registration—no job placement—forced to lead anti-social life and move from one place to another...'

The experience of partnership formed in some regions (in Ašmyany, for example) shows situations when local authorities and leaders of Romani population try to understand and hear one another, and the problematic situations are reduced to minimum.

The initiative of Homel regional public association 'Social projects' on realisation of the project 'Reliable future for all' seems to be interesting. The main idea of the project is to improve the conditions of life for the Roma through building regular social help for them, developing tolerant attitude of the local population to the community.

In all the described cases, both sides have come to agreement that the existing problems can be solved only by joint efforts; the role of the Roma leaders is very significant in that case, they are able to be a 'deputy' who would raise problematic

issues in relations of Roma and local authorities, and at the same time a ‘responsible checker’ in part of meeting the commitments by the Roma (for example, good work of the employed, attending school regularly, putting end to criminal, etc.). The leaders of the Roma communities, having corresponding education, may be the mediators for solving problems in the spheres of social maintenance, legalisation, providing accommodation, job placement, etc.

5. Keeping the cultural originality of the Roma in Belarus

A significant role in socio-cultural adaptation of the Romani population can be played by the public organisations of the Romani in Belarus. They are the ones able to form a positive image of the Roma through realisation of cultural projects.

In Belarus, seven Roma public organisations are registered by republican and regional bodies of justice.

Name	General information
Public association ‘Belarusian Roma Diaspora’	Registered 07.05.1998 Chairman Oleg Kozlovsky Deputy chairman Arthur Gomonov
Viciebsk city department of the public association ‘Belarusian Roma Diaspora’	Registered 11.05.2006 Head Liudmila Bankovskaya
Public association ‘Homel Inter-regional Romani Community’	Registered 02.03.2005 Heads Vladimir Vasiliev, Marine Kalbaya
Homel public association ‘Romano Drom’	Recently created Curatoe of the community Nickolai Anufriev
District public association ‘Ašmyany Roma Community’	Registered 17.10.2003 Chairman Arthur Egorov
Belarusian Roma association ‘Roma’	Created in 1998 Chairman Alexander Bosiatsky
International Roma public organisation ‘Revival’	Created in 2000

Organisations act with different degree of activity, which directly depends on activity of its leader, maintain contacts with local authorities, cultural institutions, foreign public associations of the Romani, and are parts of the International unions of the Roma associations. The organisations most actively realise cultural projects, less often appear in social sphere.

The most known and authoritative public association in Belarus is Public Association ‘Belarusian Roma Diaspora’. Its main goals are revival of folk and household traditions, folklore art, traditional crafts, songs and dancing of the Roma.

From December 2004 to 2006 a bulletin of PA ‘Belarusian Roma Diaspora’ ‘Romano Love’ was issued with financial support of the Commissioner for religions and nationalities office. It was the first printed edition in the history of the Roma in Belarus. It was represented at the annual International exhibitions ‘Mass Media in Belarus’ at the

stall 'Mass Media of the national communities of Belarus'. It has now stopped its existence due to economic reasons.

By the initiative of Roma and Jewish public associations and with the support from local authorities, in stow 'Haj' (near Baranavičy) a monument was raised in memory of the Roma shot dead by the Nazi during World War II. 'Ašmyany Roma Community' maintains the place of mass burial of the peaceful citizens (of Roma nationality) who died in the years of war in village Navasiady of Ašmyany district.

'Brentstar' enterprise, in cooperation with the leaders of the Roma diaspora, the Commissioner for religions and nationalities office, Republican centre of national cultures, and Ašmyany district Executive Committee, created a film 'Roma'. The film is a part of a cycle of documentary films 'Inflorescence' about national communities in Belarus, created on the grant for cultural projects of the USA Embassy in the Republic of Belarus.

At Ašmyany District House of Culture a Roma ensemble 'Jana Roma' works, which, by decision of the Commission of the Ministry of culture of the Republic of Belarus, was in 2000 granted a title 'People's' for its high level of performance and active work on propaganda of Roma folk songs, and in 2013 it proved its title. 'Jana Roma' leads active concert activity and performs at district, regional and republican stages. The collective of the ensemble in July 2010 became a laureate of the 8th Republican Festival of National Cultures.

6. The experience of partnership of the Roma communities and officials on the example of Ašmyany district of Hrodna region

According to the 2009 census, 79 people of Roma nationality lived in Ašmyany district which is 0.3 % of all district population (nowadays, as Romani leaders state, their population has doubled).

In October 2003 district public association 'Ašmyany Roma community' was registered. After its creation, many problems of the Gypsies started to be solved.

The Chairman of the Roma community, Arthur Egorov, constantly participates in the events organised by the District Executive Committee.

District administration settled close cooperation with the Community Council in solving problems of job placement, meeting the needs and requests of the people of Roma nationality, general education of the Roma kids, keeping and developing Roma culture, etc.

District authorities pay special attention to the issues of life-sustaining activity of the people of Roma nationality. There are 15 people in the list of those in need of housing improvement—3 Roma families and two orphans waiting to receive social accommodation.

In 2014, one family of 4 people was provided with a credit for building an individual house. In 2010, a large family of A. I. Levickaya was provided with a concessional credit for buying a house.

People of Roma nationality also receive material and humanitarian help provided by the territorial centre for social service of Ašmyany district and by the district organisation of the Belarusian Red Cross Society. Thus, in December 2013 humanitarian help equal 8.803.105 BYR was received.

In 2013, 20 families (70 people) received humanitarian help, in 2014, 6 families (23 people). In the described period, 3 families received humanitarian help in frames of action 'Prepare children for school'.

In 2013, direct state social help was received by 20 recipients, its total amount equal 27.962.700 BYR, for 10 month of 2014 29 recipients for the amount of 45.103.800 BYR.

The department for labour, employment and social maintenance of Ašmyany District Executive Committee provided material help to 3 retired and disabled from the Foundation for Social Protection of the Population for 850.000 Byr.

The work on employment of the people of Roma nationality is done. The employment service of the department for labour, employment and social maintenance of the District Executive Committee helped 17 people with job placement in 2013, 12 people of Roma nationality in 2014.

Although there is no mechanism for cooperation of Ašmyany District Executive Committee and 'Ašmyany Roma Diaspora', the leader of the Roma organisation bears the functions of a mediator detecting current problems among the Roma population, informing the specialised structures of District Executive Committee and taking part in solving those problems.

During the round-table discussions held in 8 localities, such practice was acknowledged the best for now. The only significant vice of such practice is personalism in relations which influence is ambivalent:

- 1) The best situation is good relations between the members of the Roma organisation and its leader, and between the Roma leader and officials;
- 2) The worst is the lack of such relations.

At the round-table discussions the representatives of authorities asked the question about legitimacy of the leaders in Roma communities and stated the will to work with those leaders who are honest and law-abiding citizens. However, almost all the participants of the round-table discussions spoke in favour of activation of inter-ethnic councils, as well as creating a mechanism of partnership in format of the system of mediation aimed at articulating and further solving the Roma population's problems.

7. Recommendations on the development of the programme for social integration of the Roma in Belarus

The project results in recommendations on the development of the programme for social integration of the Roma in Belarus.

Social integrations of the Roma population can be achieved through simultaneous realisation of systematic measures in the spheres of education, social maintenance, job placement, cultural activity. Central element of the programme for social integration is **the system of mediation** between Roma communities and state bodies. The functions of the mediators, with corresponding education, are planned to be placed upon the leaders of Roma communities or the persons authorised by the community. Mediator's main obligations are identifying specialised needs of the Roma population in social services (health care, availability of social infrastructure), job placement, and other spheres, and informing specialised bodies of local management, as well as informing the Roma population about the norms of law of the republic, of state

policy in various spheres, etc.

The system of mediation in spheres of social maintenance, job placement, legalisation, etc. may be created only in partnership with the Roma organisations. Its specific features may be:

- a) Maximum closeness to the local Roma settlements;
- b) Participation of the leader of Roma organisation (of the authorised person) in the events organised by the local authorities, including field oriented, which are connected with life-sustaining activity of the Roma population;
- c) Participation of the Roma leader or activists in the work of the inter-ethnic (public, consultative) councils working at the authority bodies, especially regional;
- d) Interaction and coordination of the mediators with partner NGO of service profile;
- e) Coordination of the system of Roma mediators with state system of social order.

Education

A. Measures on elimination of illiteracy among adult Roma population through activation of the programmes of external studies, as well as creating special evening schools (weekend schools) which, besides school knowledge, would provide socially useful and practice oriented knowledge and skills (law, elementary medical, financial, knowledge on housing policy, social maintenance, etc.).

B. In order to elevate motivation to study among children and youth, scholarship programmes for individual and collective encouraging should be introduced.

C. Roma leaders and activists should control attendance of educational establishments and studying results.

D. Realisation of principle 'Education throughout the whole life' in frames of which in the next five years in Belarus it is planned to create a flexible system of preparation, additional and further training employees in accordance with the needs of innovative development of the country.

Job placement

A. In frames of the mediation system consultation centres on job placement should be created to collect information about various variants of official employment (vacancies) and about labour needs and professional qualification of the Roma communities' representatives.

B. Construct a programme for further training for the workers of employment centres dedicated to the peculiarities of labour needs of the Roma population.

C. Introduce topics dedicated to International law standards in maintaining the rights of minorities, securing rights and no discrimination in social and labour spheres, into the programmes for further training managing workers of various levels.

Culture

Keeping cultural originality is one of the main factors for the development of national minorities. The most important elements of cultural originality of the Roma population are language, history, some traditional activities (traditional magic), art (songs and dances), etc. in order to maintain cultural originality of the Roma population,

it is recommended:

a) To take measures for keeping and possibly widening the spheres of public use of the Roma language as a language of national minority despite the lack of its written version;

b) To encourage representation of the Roma as leaders of artistic and other collectives;

c) To include materials on history and culture of the Roma population into handbooks with special attention to the period of World War II and Holocaust.

Mass media

A. Encourage mass media to cover positive sides of the Roma' life allowing no creation of stereotype understanding and provocations of enmity in inter-ethnic relations.

B. Include topics dedicated to discrimination and the language of enmity, as well as the ways of delivering information items free of Roma-phobia, into the programmes for further training journalists.

Using practical recommendations of this programme would allow: *Roma population* to feel more confident and protected, get an impulse for further effective social development; *society as a whole* to understand the richness of cultural variety of the peoples of Belarus, educate real skills of tolerant behaviour; *Belarusian state* to share a valuable experience of maintaining inter-ethnic diversity with the European countries, demonstrate the ability to solve social problems of the vulnerable population groups, readiness to partnership with the non-governmental sector, and thus strengthen its international image of socially oriented and socially responsible democratic state.