

EUROPEAN YEAR OF COMBATING POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Proposal of activities implementation program

1. NATIONAL BACKGROUND: CHALLENGES TO BE ADDRESSED

1.1 Challenges and the national strategy to combat poverty

2010 – The European year of combating poverty and social exclusion is an important instrument that will contribute to the reiteration in the public awareness of the importance of the actions regarding the fight against poverty. The European and national initiatives and actions that will mark the year 2010 may contribute to an increased degree of involvement from all the actors in the system, including from the citizens, fact that will lead to finding new solutions to initiate and develop real measures to combat poverty.

Poverty in Romania: characteristics and evolutions

During 2000-2007, the evolution of the rate of relative poverty in Romania was a sinuous one, with an upward trend during 2003-2006, reaching a maximum level for the entire period considered in 2006 (18,6%). In 2007, about 18, 5% of the Romanian citizens were poor (18, 3% men, respectively 18, 8% women). From the point of view of the **residence area**, the rural areas are still confronting with a higher incidence of poverty and severe poverty, the poverty rate in the rural areas being in 2006 of 29,6%, compared to 9,6% in urban areas.

From the comparative analysis 2007 to 2006, it can be seen that the poverty rate in the rural areas went from 29, 6% to 29, and 9% in 2007.

By using the indicator to measure relative poverty, the following groups were identified as being exposed to a high poverty risk in 2007

- children (between 0-15 years old) with 24,7%;
- rural population (29, 9%);
- freelancers (including farmers) with 39,9% and the unemployed, with 37,9%;
- Households with two adults and 3 or more children (40%).

In the view of analyzing poverty, Romania developed its own methodology by which the consumption is taken into consideration, thus adapting to the national specificity. Therefore 2 indicators are calculated, namely the rate of absolute poverty and the rate of extreme poverty.

As a consequence of the economical-social policies between 2000-2007, favourable to the economic growth and of the population's living conditions, it was determined a **substantial decrease of absolute poverty**, from 35, 9% in 2000 to 9, 8% in 2007, the latter year showing the lowest level after 1995 (the first year when there are comparable survey data). At the same time, the indicator of **relative poverty** shows an increase of inequality between 2000 and 2006 and an insignificant decrease (of 0, 1%) in 2007 compared to 2006.

By calculating these indicators, for 2007 it was seen that one of the minorities groups most affected by the poverty phenomenon is the Roma group, with an absolute poverty rate of almost five times higher than the value registered at national level. With regard to extreme poverty, 17, 8% of the Roma people were poor. However, one can see a substantial decrease of the rate of poor Roma people: if in 2003 about 76, 8% of the Roma people were poor, this weight lowered at 48, 5% in 2007.

1.2 The current administrative structure

The Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection (MLFSP) was designated as National Implementation Body having as responsibility the organization of implementing the activities undertaken by Romania, from the technical and financial management point of view.

When choosing MLFSP as responsible body, it was taken into account its experience in drafting social inclusion policies and development of measures aiming at preventing poverty and combating social exclusion, through the specialised directorates from its own structure.

Also, the organisational structure of the ministry shall allow for an efficient administration of the implementation of the European Year actions, from a financial point of view.

The national mechanism concerning the promotion of social inclusion, developed by Romania, by establishing the National Committee for the Promotion of Social Inclusion, as well as the territorial agencies comes as a guarantee that the activities undertaken shall benefit from an important support coming from the authorities.

2. THE NATIONAL PROGRAM, INCLUDING THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

2.1. Activities of the European year 2010:

The plan of activities drafted by Romania for the implementation of the European Year comes to meet the overall objectives presented by the European Commission in the Strategic Framework Document for the implementation of the year. In accordance with the reference document, the actions to which the National Implementation Bodies aim at refer to the following:

- Organization of events and reunions debating the problems related to poverty and social exclusion;
- Organization of information and education campaigns to raise the citizens' awareness on the rights they have, but also on the phenomenon;
- Draft of studies and surveys to lead to the formulation of conclusions regarding topics related to poverty and social exclusion.

The activities Romania proposed within the National Implementation program shall contribute to a better **knowledge of the rights** the Romanian citizens have regarding the social benefits granted to them. By means of video materials, containing clear and easy to remember messages, that will be sent through communication channels with high rating in vulnerable areas, there will be created the premises for facilitating the citizens' access to the social assistance system.

The debates and events organized shall try to bring together a wide spectrum of persons and professionals in the field, to contribute – by means of the debates organized and the speeches presented – in making everyone responsible when it comes to fighting against poverty and social exclusion.

The way the events are organised shall try to **promote everyone's participation** to the decision making process. The reunions are meant to pass beyond the declarative nature and to lead to the achievement of some real results that may contribute to taking real and efficient measures to increase the quality of life of the vulnerable persons.

These reunions, even if they are at the beginning and at the end of the activities of the year 2010, are also addressed to the Romanian political class, the business environment, professionals, authorities and the intention is to launch a Final Statement regarding the promotion of social inclusion in Romania, in December 2010.

During the Year of combating poverty and social exclusion, there are not left aside the important events celebrated at European and international level. Thus, the **01st of June 2010 – The International Children’s day** is marked by the organization of an important event, namely awarding the winners of the Children's Olympics.

The target group to which the program activities address:

The activities proposed to be achieved within the program address to some well-defined groups: the public opinion in general, persons exposed to the poverty risk, the civil society, central and local public authorities, media, and schools.

The impact of these activities on the target groups will be a major one, taking into account that the main messages meant to be sent refer to the increase of the citizens’ degree of awareness and information regarding their rights and the modalities by which they can be involved in the decision making process, as well as their acknowledgment as active members of society.

2.2. Communication strategy

1. The national kick-off conference of the European Year of combating poverty and social exclusion - 2010

The conference shall be held in Bucharest, in February 2010 for a number of about 200 persons and it will bring together representatives from Romania and other Member States, from all fields and domains. The conference objective aims both at the awareness raising of the political class, of the professionals in the field, and to the civil society with respect to the principles of the Year, as well as with respect to the importance of approaching such an event. A special attention shall be paid to the active participation to this event of some of the persons affected by poverty, as well as of the representatives of the socially excluded groups.

2. Information campaign regarding the European Year 2010

The information campaign shall run for the entire period of the year and the main activities proposed are: the elaboration and dissemination of information materials (brochures, leaflets, flyers, and banners), editing audio-visual materials, press conferences, press releases etc.

Altogether, a visual identity of the Year will be created for Romania, integrated in the visual concept adopted by the European Commission. This image shall be used in all the promotional materials (written or visual) drafted, as well as in all the events taking place during the year.

In order to facilitate the sending of the messages related to the events to be organised, during the entire period of implementation of the year press releases will be elaborated and press conferences will be organised to promote some relevant actions at national or local level.

3. Internet page to promote the activities of the Year

The official site of the year in Romania shall ensure the transparency of the actions, shall contain general information about the objectives and activities performed under the European Year, promoted both at local and at European level. The structure of the page will encourage interactivity and the participation of more and more persons to the discussions proposed.

On this internet page, complementary with the official pages for the publication of all procurement processes: there will be published all the calls for projects to be launched within the project, in such a way as to ensure an open competition, transparency and non-discrimination in selecting the candidates.

4. Children's Olympics "For the future"

One of Romania's major objectives in the field of preventing and combating social exclusion refers to eradicating child poverty. In order to make efficient the effort of the actions achieved, it is necessary to make large investments both in family and especially in the valorisation of the children's intellectual and social potential. Thus, we will create the grounds for these children to become adults with increased professional competences by means of which to overcome the poverty that their families face.

In 2008, the Romanian Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation initiated the setting up of some special classes in the excellence schools from the county capitals, classes to include children with very good results, but who come from families with no resources or who learn in isolated communes, where there are no optimum conditions for study. One of the most important events of the European Year in Romania addresses these children. The event proposed shall consist of a skills contest (not one of school knowledge), for the children/pupils from the excellence classes with ages ranging from 10-14, with a precarious family situation and with exceptional school results. The contest shall be coordinated through county work cells, consisting of representatives of the county school inspectorates, of the general directorates of social assistance and child protection and of the county labour and social protection directorates and it shall promote the children's involvement in all the related activities of organisation. The jury may consist of Romanian personalities, who can be joined by children with special skills. The papers and proposals of the children taking part to the competition shall be published on an especially dedicated page on the internet site of the year.

Through this contest the ideas of diversity and access to opportunities will be promoted and, thus, the children will be given the possibility to get involved in various activities: dancing, music, developing local projects and of social participation.

It is taken into consideration the selection of a number of about 10 children from each county. At national level about 400 children will compete. Depending on the number of papers received, it is taken into consideration also the possibility to organise two semi-finals. The winners are to be designated based on certain selection criteria focusing on creativity, spirit of initiative and active social participation in the origin community.

The prizes will take into account a long term support for the children, as some means to help them improve their social skills and performances, such as computers and other electronic means of learning, internet connection, handbooks, encyclopaedias etc.

The awarding ceremony shall be held on June 01st, 2010, with the occasion of the International Children's Day.

The 400 children participating to the contest shall be invited and all of them shall receive consolation prizes and participation certificates.

Within the event there will be organized a show by the children from various schools, as well as from the child protection system.

5. „The journalist – social actor”

The action foreseen has in view a contest for the best social survey journalist. The contest will be launched in February 2010 and will last for about 10 months, during which the journalist's role will be not only of presenting an established number of social cases, but also to write about them and to get involved in solving the cases.

The journalists shall register in the contest with a number of articles that will be grouped on three major subjects in the field of social exclusion. The solving of at least one of the cases presented in the articles selected by a specialty jury will have to be monitored over the entire period of the contest.

Also, the competitors will write two more articles on this topic presenting the situation of the case at 6 and at 10 months.

This exercise will manage to raise the media awareness on the importance of everyone's involvement in combating poverty and social exclusion.

On the other hand, by the approach proposed, it will raise the public awareness that the persons affected by poverty and socially excluded it confronting with long term problems that do not solve by short term interventions. The "follow-up" action of the cases and subjects that the participating journalists must take can help them understand better the causes of poverty and social exclusions and the life of the families affected by these phenomena.

6. Social Rights Promotion Campaign

One of the objectives of the information activities is the acknowledgement of the social rights.

By increasing the knowledge degree of the social rights available there should be increased the access to resources and intensified the social participation of the excluded groups.

By means of this activity it is intended the implementation at national level of a public information campaign with regard to the social benefits offered in Romania to the persons at risk of social exclusion. The main objectives of the campaign are:

- To disseminate, among the possible beneficiaries, information related to the current legislation and to the social rights in Romania;
- To assist and to guide the possible beneficiaries in asking for their rights;
- To improve the communication between the structures of the administration and the citizens, with respect to the social field;
- To change the citizens' attitude and mentality with regard to the social rights.

The national information campaign shall consist of the elaboration of information materials as a "**Collection regarding the social rights**". Thus, it is taken into account the drafting of brochures with information on the access to the benefits that have an impact on reducing poverty (e.g. the guaranteed minimum income, family allowances etc.).

The national campaign shall include also the elaboration of radio spots that will be broadcasted on *Radio Romania Actualitati (the National News Broadcasting Channel)*, a radio station with a high rating at national level and especially in the rural areas. The spots shall contain short messages regarding the social rights of the persons in difficulty.

7. The national final conference of the European Year of combating poverty and social exclusion - 2010

In the framework of this event all the activities developed over the Year will be presented, as well as the impact of the activities achieved. During this event, the winner of the contest "The journalist – social actor" shall be awarded. All the participants to the actions developed during the Year shall be invited to this conference and the approach within the event will be an interactive one.

The Year will end by adopting a **Final Statement on promoting social inclusion in Romania**, document that will be the basis of developing future real actions in the field.

2.3. Equal opportunities: how they shall be approached in each chapter and activity:

In Romania, the principle of equal opportunities is recognized as fundamental principle in elaborating national policies and programs. Altogether, it must be mentioned that the National Implementation Body designated by Romania for this Program is the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection that is responsible, beside the other field, with the coordination and initiation of programs in the view of promoting the principle of equal opportunities.

Subordinated to the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection is the national Agency for Equal Opportunities between Men and Women, body of the central public administration responsible with the monitoring of applying the principle of equal opportunities at national level.

The program, as it was conceived, aims at increasing the awareness of the public opinion related to the problem of poverty and social exclusion, in order to facilitate the subsequent development of the programs that will contribute to the increase of the quality of life of the vulnerable groups (children, families in difficulty, single persons, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities etc.) One of the social inclusion's basic principles is that of ensuring equal opportunities for everybody.

When identifying the proposed activities, it was sought the way to ensure a participation of all the vulnerable groups irrespective of sex, race, citizenship, etc. Thus, during the work groups, seminars and reunions organised there will be discussed and identified measures to promote equal opportunities, as well as the elimination of discrimination from the society. Participation to the activities identified shall be made taking into account the compliance with the principle of equal opportunities, therefore, equally there will be invited to participate women, men, persons with disabilities etc.

2.4. Accessibility to actions:

The participation to the actions taken into account is open for all those interested either representatives of the political class, or representatives of the authorities, professionals in the field, simple citizens.

What is especially desired refers to the favouring and a large involvement of the persons from the vulnerable groups, of the persons and groups exposed to the social exclusion risk.

The persons with disabilities represent such a group, and, taking into account their special needs, over the entire period of implementation of the activities foreseen and it shall be taken into consideration that the spaces where the reunions/seminars take place to have the necessary facilities for disabled people access so as to allow for the free circulation of these persons.

The conditions regarding the disabled people access shall be mentioned in all the awarding documents that will be the basis of the selection of the economic operator responsible with the logistical organization of the events.

Another concern regarding the facilitation of the access of all the persons to the information related to the activities and the results of the year implementation refers to the disabled friendly layout and language of the internet page. This one will be clear, with an easy access to information, attractive for consultation and, as much as possible, friendly/accessible for the persons with low incomes or for the persons with disabilities. Taking into account the fact that the project is centred on understanding the phenomenon of social exclusion and on promoting social inclusion, when creating the web page there will be taken into account the multiple aspects related to accessibility, keeping in mind that many users may be in one of the following situations:

- May have a visual, or speech, or locomotion handicap etc.,
- They cannot use the keyboard or the mouse,
- They can have text-only screen, small size screen or a slow internet connection,
- They may have an early version of browser, a different browser, a voice browser, a different operation system.

3. CONSULTATION WITH THE CIVIL SOCIETY AND WITH THE PARTNERS

3.1 Consulting the partners

The national Intermediate Body co-worked in the elaboration of the National Implementation Program with a series of representative actors in the field of social inclusion: representatives of the central and local public authorities, civil society etc.

There were organized a number of joint or bilateral reunions with different organizations, public or private, that expressed their points of view, positive or negative, with respect to the program proposed.

The points of view mutually accepted were inserted and reflect in the presented document.

The National Implementation Body continued the process of consultation making use of the electronic means, namely electronic mail, but also by publishing the draft program on the official site of the ministry.

3.2 The consulting process, its results and continuation

A number of the project activities will develop in partnership with various institutions, partnerships that have started to be negotiated and will be concluded during 2009. Involving the media as active actor, in the process of preventing poverty and social exclusion is one of the elements to be focused on. Therefore, the media must become an active partner in identifying and solving social cases, and not just to be a simple observer and critic of the system.

The promotion of the National Implementation Program of the Year 2010 will go on for the entire period of 2009, by presenting it during the national and regional conferences to be organized by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection, as of June 2009. The discussions and debates during these reunions shall contribute to the elaboration of the application that will be sent to the European Commission in the view of financing, as well as to the finalization of the award documentation related to the organization of various events.

4. IMPLEMENTATION CONDITIONS

4.1 Calls for proposals, selection criteria, selection procedures etc...

In order to award grants and to procure services, the National Implementation Body has the obligation to comply with the provisions of the community legislation in the field of public procurements, as well as with the obligation of taking all the necessary measures to fit into the project activities implementation schedule.

The award documentation shall be elaborated by the National Implementation Body and shall contain all the documents presenting the formal, technical and financial requirements that allow for an objective description of the object of the public procurement contract and based on which the possible applicants may draft their offer.

The award documentation shall contain:

- The terms of reference;
- The compulsory contractual terms;
- The procurement data sheet;
- Forms and templates;
- Justification notes or, as the case may be, other information on taxation, environment protection and labour protection.

The terms of reference shall describe in an objective manner all the product/services/works (requirements, technical characteristics etc.) related to the implementation needs of the activities tendered. When elaborating the terms of reference, it shall be taken into account the compliance with the provisions related to competition and to the conflict of interests.

The terms of reference describe all the products or services required, by generally defining some:

- Characteristics related to the quality, technical and performance level;
- Requirements regarding the impact on the environment;
- Sizes, terminology, symbols, tests and testing methods, packaging, labelling, marking and product use instructions;
- Quality assurance systems and conditions for the certification of conformity with the relevant standards, or others alike;
- Costs design and calculation guidelines;
- Acceptance conditions.

The National Implementation Body has the obligation to comply with the legal provisions on the minimum periods that must be ensured between the date of sending for publishing of the intent, participation announcements/the date when the participation invitations are sent and the deadline for offers/candidatures submission.

4.2 The estimative implementation schedule

No.	Activities	Year 2010											
		Jan.	Feb.	Marsh	April	May	June	July	August	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
1.	Kick-off conference												
1.1.	Launching the selection procedure to choose the economic operator that will ensure the organization of the event/choosing the economic operator	x											
1.2.	Establishing the list of participants	x											
1.3.	Preparing the agenda and the invitation letters	x	x										
1.4.	Sending the invitations, confirming the participants		x										
1.5.	Selecting the speakers		x										
1.6.	Organizing/developing the conference			x									
1.7.	Drafting the Conference Report			x									
2.	The Year information campaign												
2.1.	Launching the selection procedure to choose the economic operator that will draft the information materials / choosing the economic operator	X	X										
2.2.	Drafting the content of the promotion materials		X										
2.3.	Choosing the visual identity of the materials		X										
2.4.	Elaborating/printing the materials		X	X									
2.5.	Distributing/disseminating the materials			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
3.	Making the official internet page												
3.1.	Launching the selection procedure to choose the economic operator that will draft the information materials / choosing the	X	X										

	economic operator												
3.2.	Choosing the graphics and elaborating the system structure		X	X									
3.3.	Elaborating the materials to be posted on internet			X									
3.4.	Permanent update of the information			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4.	Children's Olympics – "For the future"												
4.1.	Concluding the partnership with the Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation (to be achieved even from 2009)												
4.2.	Elaborating the Rules of participation and organization of the contest	X											
4.3.	Establishing the selection criteria of the children that will take part to the contest		X										
4.4.	Choosing the jury		X										
4.5.	Establishing the jury criteria			X									
4.6.	Launching the competition at national level				X								
4.7.	Running the competition				X	X							
4.8.	The awarding ceremony						X						
5.	„The journalist – social actor“												
5.1.	Concluding the partnership with the National Agency of the Romanian Journalists (even from 2009)												
5.2.	Elaborating the Rules of participation and organization of the contest			X									
5.3.	Setting up the selection criteria of the children that will take part to the contest			X									
5.4.	Choosing the jury			X									
5.5.	Setting up the jury criteria			X									
5.6.	Launching the competition at national level				X								
5.7.	Running the competition				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
5.8.	The awarding ceremony												X
6.	The information campaign on the social rights												
6.1.	Launching the selection procedure to choose the economic operator that will draft the information materials / choosing the economic operator				X								
6.2.	Drafting the content of the promotion materials				X	X							
6.3.	Choosing the visual identity of the materials				X	X							
6.4.	Elaborating/printing the materials					X							
6.5.	Elaborating the audio-visual spots and other						X						

	audio-visual materials												
6.6.	Radio broadcasting the spots							x	x	x	x	x	x
6.7.	Distributing the promotion materials						x	x	x	x	x	x	x
7.	Final conference												
7.1.	Launching the selection procedure to choose the economic operator that will ensure the organization of the event/choosing the economic operator									x	x		
7.2.	Establishing the list of participants										x		
7.3.	Preparing the agenda and the invitation letters										x		
7.4.	Sending out the invitations, confirming the participants											x	
7.5.	Selecting the speakers											x	
7.6.	Organising/developing the conference												x
7.7.	Drafting the Conference Report												x

5. ESTIMATIVE BUDGET:

No.	Activities	Estimative Budget (Euro)
1.	Kick-off conference	30.000
2.	Information campaign on the activities of the Year	15.000
3.	The official internet page	9.000
4.	Children's Olympics "For the future"	300.000
5.	„The journalist –social actor"	35.000
6.	Information campaign regarding the social rights	300.000
7.	Project final conference	30.000
TOTAL		719.000

6. MONITORING AND IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISMS

In order to ensure a permanent monitoring of the national program implementation, over the entire period of preparation of the year 2010, there will be organized consultation sessions with the representatives of the national Commission for Social Inclusion. To these consultation sessions will also be invited representatives of the civil society, of the trade union organizations, as well as with the representatives of local authorities. The coordination of activities implementation of the year 2010 shall be provided by the National Commission for Social Inclusion, which will act as a coordination committee.

The permanent monitoring of the implementation of the communication strategy will offer relevant information on the impact of the actions undergone among the target group, as well as the satisfaction degree of those taking part to events. The monitoring shall be done based on a well-defined system, which will include quality and quantity indicators.

Each activity achieved shall be evaluated, both in a preliminary stage, and at the end of the activity. This evaluation process that will be made based on a methodology and on specific evaluation instruments (questionnaires, evaluation grids), shall contribute to an early identification of the possible problems and risks that might appear during the implementation period, in order to take the necessary measures to solve these problems. Also, the use efficiency of the funds shall be analyzed, as well as the effectiveness and sustainability of each activity achieved. At the same time, the evaluation shall have as analysis the way the objectives proposed at European level for the year 2010 were achieved, through the actions achieved by Romania.

The National Implementation Body will draft a Final Report. This will include an overview of all the achieved activities, of the resources used for each and every activity, a summary of all the results obtained and of the indicators achieved, problems encountered, “lessons learnt” and a chapter on the project sustainability.

Also, the Final report shall contain the Financial Report, where all the expenses incurred are presented in detail.

The audit shall be provided by the internal audit of the organization, as it is foreseen by the national legislation, but also by an external audit. The National Implementation Body shall put at the auditors’ disposal all the necessary documents and shall ensure the auditors’ access to all the information and documents related to the activities of the year.

The original accountancy documents, supporting all the expenses incurred, shall be kept by the National Implementation Body for a period of at least 5 years, in the latter’s archive.