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## THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, GOVERNMENTAL OFFICIALS AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS CONFER TO TACKLE EDUCATIONAL AND LABOR MARKET INCLUSION OF ROMA

### ***THE REGIONAL SEMINAR INVOLVES WESTERN BALKAN COUNTRIES AND TURKEY***

Roma Education Fund (REF) organizes a regional seminar on “Roma Youth: from Education to Employment” on 19 June 2019, Skopje, North Macedonia under the regional project “Increased Education Opportunities for Roma Students and Roma Youth in Western Balkans and Turkey”. The project is funded by the European Union and co-funded by REF.

*“Government agencies should be aware of the responsibilities deriving from the National Action Plan for Roma and Egyptian minority and proactively follow on-going developments at the central and local level.”*

Emiliano ALIU, Executive Director of Roma Versitas Albania

The event provides a discussion forum for governmental authorities, civil society organizations, international organizations and other relevant stakeholders in the context of Roma inclusion, to share their experience and lessons-learned from education and employment policy reforms in their countries. The event also offers the opportunity to identify the core challenges for closing the equity gaps for Roma children and smooth transition from education to employment.

The opening remarks will be delivered by Muzafer Bajram, Minister without portfolio responsible for the implementation of the Strategy for Improving of the Situation of Roma and H.E. Samuel Žbogar, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of North Macedonia. The participants will be welcomed by Andrzej Mirga, Chair of the REF Board. The seminar will gather more than 50 governmental officials from ministries of education, of human rights promotion and of labor and social policies; civil society representatives, the European Commission, international organizations and students and alumni-beneficiaries of REF (*see agenda attached*).

The agenda of the gathering consists of three main sessions:

1. Access to Quality Education for Roma Children: Perspective from the Ground
2. Roma Youth Employment: Human Capital Investment Agenda for the Next Decade
3. Structural and Policy Changes for Roma in Western Balkans: Scaling up Collaboration at the Regional Level

The €3,8 million project runs in partnership with local civil society organisations and in cooperation with national and local education and employment institutions. In order to ensure a sustainable change in education systems, the project implementers put efforts to elevate the capacities of central and local institutions, such as ministries of education, local authorities, and school principals and teachers.

*“Reaching the real estimate of Roma communities in each of the target countries through collaboration of the national statistics and the grassroots organizations for the purposes of needs assessment is a must.”*

Saliha ĐUDERIJA, National Roma Contact Point, Assistant Minister, Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina

So far, national policy events have taken place in five of the project countries, in relation to boosting educational and employment opportunities of the Roma youth.



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Eight of the key recommendations, which have derived from the policy discussions, are the following:

1. Guaranteeing high quality education and employment to Roma is not of Roma interest, but of societies at large.
2. It is high time to identify and promote Roma talents in political, economic and social spheres and discuss how their potential will contribute to social development.
3. Social, educational and economic inclusion should be an integral part of governmental long-term agendas, and should be addressed through sustainable, comprehensive and feasible strategies and supported by effective and functional human and financial resources.
4. The Roma inclusion should take place with the active consultation and participation of the Roma communities.
5. Civil society organizations and national structures for Roma inclusion should keep the governments accountable and contribute to the coordination of different short-term projects.
6. Positive educational models and employment measures shall be adopted by the respective governments as long-term solutions and shall be supported by adequate professional structure and financial resources.
7. The trust of the Roma community in governmental institutions should be raised through meeting the needs of beneficiaries, including community in the actions, achieving tangible results and making positive change in overall community lives.
8. Timely adoption of the action plans for Roma inclusion

*“State agencies in close partnership with Roma and non-Roma organizations should address specific needs of Roma girls and women to ensure adequate and equal access to education, employment, housing, health care and public life.”*

Leonetta PAJER, Head of Operations, Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia

The country-specific recommendations will be disseminated during the event.

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