Republic of Serbia

Ministry of Human and Minority Rights

and Social Dialogue

Human Rights Department

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**Information for the report of the UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing**

**on the topic of discrimination and segregation**

The Republic of Serbia continues to pursue an integration policy to combat ethnic, social, and economic segregation. Public policy measures, which are designed and implemented to provide housing support to Roma, primarily relate to improving the housing conditions of Roma in Roma settlements, provided by the Law on Housing and Building Maintenance and the Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2016 -2025. A draft National Housing Strategy has been prepared.

The legislative framework has been improved with the adoption of the *Law on Amendments to the Law and Prohibition of Discrimination[[1]](#footnote-1)*, which, in addition to regulating and defining segregation as a more severe form of discrimination, also introduces discrimination in the field of housing.
Pursuant to the provision of Article 27A of this Law, discrimination in the field of housing exists if access to housing support programs is denied or hindered on the basis of personal characteristics of a person or group of persons, denial of housing rights, set to other persons or a group of persons, ie if another person or group of persons is unjustifiably given priority in access to housing support programs. Discrimination in the field of housing also exists when a legal or natural person on the basis of actual or presumed personal property referred to in Article 2, paragraph 1, item 1) of this Law refuses to conclude a lease agreement, ie use a housing unit.

Based on the Law on Housing and Building Maintenance[[2]](#footnote-2) which has been implemented since 2017, several bylaws have been passed, rulebooks that have been harmonised with international human rights treaties, in respect of appropriate housing and protection during forced evictions. In addition, in order to bring the Law closer to citizens and target groups, a guide was developed - the Law in Pictures (5,000 copies were printed).

Eviction from informal settlements is carried out in compliance with the highest international human rights standards. The Law on Housing and Building Maintenance prescribes when and under what conditions the eviction procedure is carried out, legal protection in that procedure, as well as the possibility of moving to appropriate accommodation, if they do not own other real estate for housing or funds to provide other accommodation. On the territory of the City of Belgrade, displaced residents are provided with access to education (enrollment in schools and kindergartens, transportation to school, free textbooks, additional classes in the settlement), and all costs for the above are borne by the City of Belgrade. In order to improve the overall quality of life in the newly formed settlements, administrative, commercial services, social protection services (financial social assistance, one-time assistance, free meals for all socially disadvantaged citizens, presence of social services, etc.), personal identification documents, public transport, waste disposal, maintenance of settlements and their surroundings (disinsection, disinfection, deratisation), arrangement of settlements (setting up children's playgrounds, arranging green areas) are provided. Working-age tenants in social housing and newly formed settlements were offered a number of jobs - both in city utility companies and in private companies. Motivational workshops were also organised for them, where they received practical advice for employment, the opportunity to finish primary school, vocational training, courses, etc. The Belgrade City Center for Social Entrepreneurship, in cooperation with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), awarded self-employment grants in equipment for 50 unemployed Roma people with the best business plans.

Within the largest housing programme in Serbia, *Let's build a home together*, which was implemented by the City of Belgrade with the EU and UNOPS from 2013-2020, 149 families or 701 persons were taken care of. The project included three housing models (housing in a nonprofit lease, purchase of rural houses and provision of construction materials for the reconstruction of houses). The General Plan of the City of Belgrade and the Development Strategy of the City of Belgrade until 2021 identify social housing as a special type of housing, and socially vulnerable Roma as one of the most vulnerable social groups in need of assistance in providing appropriate housing conditions.

ADEQUATE HOUSING AND THE MIGRANT AND REFUGEE CRISIS

The Republic of Serbia is a country that has in the past three decades experienced a large influx of migrants, who have been forced to leave their homes as a consequence of armed conflicts. Within the territory of the Republic of Serbia, there are 25,794 refugees who sought refuge after the breakup of the SFRY (17,670 from Croatia and 8,124 from Bosnia and Herzegovina), more than 400,000 former refugees who took citizenship, most of whom have achieved full social, economic and political integration, 196,995 internally displaced persons from Kosovo and Metohija, as well as more than 16,000 returnees under readmission agreements who have various needs in the process of reintegrating into society. In addition, the Republic of Serbia also provides support in integrating to a small number of refugees from countries outside the Western Balkans region (in the period 2008-2020, 194 persons received international protection).

The Commissariat for Refugees and Migration is a special organization within the framework of the public administration system that, according to the Law on Refugees (“Official Gazette of the RS”, No. 18/92, “Official Gazette of the FRY”, No. 42/2002- FCC decision, “Official Gazette of the RS”, No. 30/2010), is in charge of performing professional and other tasks related to care, return and integration of persons from the former Yugoslav republics. According to the Law on Migration Management (“Official Gazette of the RS”, No. 107/2012), the Commissariat performs activities that involve taking measures for returnee reintegration based on readmission agreements, improving living conditions for internally displaced persons while in displacement, as well as integrating asylum seekers. Within its competencies, and in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia (“Official Gazette of the RS”, No. 98/2006), as well as the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination (“Official Gazette of the RS”, No. 22/2009), the Commissariat implements affirmative action measures that prevent discrimination and segregation and contribute to improving the position of end users.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia has adopted the National Strategy for Resolving the Issues of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons for the period 2015-2020 (“Official Gazette of the RS”, No. 62/2015) (the previous one referred to the period 2011-2014), which envisages as a special strategic goal the improvement of the system dealing with resolving housing needs, in particular as regards the most endangered categories, that is based on clearly defined criteria and priorities, as well as coordinated cooperation between national, local and international entities. Furthermore, as special strategic objectives, the Strategy also envisages provision of necessary conditions for achieving equality of refugees who have decided to live in Serbia and integrating them into the local community, hence improving the living conditions of the most vulnerable categories of internally displaced persons, individuals and families, so that they have access to rights, services and resources, in accordance with the law, as well as of other citizens in the resolution of their basic life issues.

Recognizing the fact that almost 6% of the population has specific needs relating to their refugee status, the Republic of Serbia has adopted the Law on Refugees, which in more than 20 of its Articles regulates the right to housing, the manner and procedures for exercising this right and also provides measures that facilitate easier access to housing. According to the Law, for the purpose of integration, the Republic of Serbia solves the housing needs of refugees in accordance with their needs, namely by allocating construction materials to complete the construction of property, purchasing country houses with a garden through grants, as well as giving state-owned real estate for use for a fixed or indefinite time with the possibility of repurchase.

In accordance with the Law, rent per square meter of property is determined by multiplying the market value of a square meter of real estate from a solution determining property tax by a coefficient of 0.00121. The purchase price of real estate is determined when the value of the property that solves the housing needs of a refugee is reduced by 50%. For immovable property built up to the grey phase, the purchase price is reduced by an additional 40%. Please note that in addition to the existing reduction of 50%, the law also prescribes a reduction of up to 10% for a family household member with a disability or bodily injury and a reduction of 5% for a family household whose family household member died or was declared dead as a missing person as a result of armed conflicts after 17 August 1990. In addition to the above, the users of housing units that are the subject of a sales contract are provided with the possibility to pay the purchase price in full or in several annual instalments up to a maximum of 25 years, without interest. The sum of part of the funds invested in the purchase of a rural house with a garden for which there is an obligation to return the aforementioned may not exceed 50% of the contract price.

When choosing a location for construction or purchase of property, precise mandatory criteria that are defined and prescribed must be met, as well as additional criteria that are used as an aid in determining the most adequate housing solution in accordance with the identified needs of selected beneficiaries. Mandatory criteria determine the availability of health, preschool and school facilities, grocery stores and public transport at a certain and acceptable distance. Furthermore, as regards to infrastructure, a connection to the electricity network, water supply and sewerage is mandatory. All selected locations must have adequate and accessible road infrastructure and access to public transport.

When the Commissariat resolves the housing needs of refugees and internally displaced persons who are spouses during the process of their integration by allocating housing units to ones’ ownership on the basis of contracts granting property rights, the right of ownership is registered in the cadastre as the joint property of the spouses. In this manner, *the spouse’s equal right to real estate is realized and thus the rights of women* are protected as one of the most vulnerable categories among refugees and internally displaced persons. Moreover, criteria are also used for the selection of users, namely the order of priority of selecting beneficiaries, where priority is given to single-parent families, single mothers, families with three or more children, and so-forth. Men and women have equal rights when applying for housing-related competitions.

The Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, in cooperation with the Ministry in charge of social protection and local self-governments, has developed a *model of social housing in sheltered conditions* in accordance with the National Strategy for Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons and the Law on Social Protection (“Official Gazette”, No. 24/2011) with the aim of providing adequate accommodation for the most socially endangered families among refugees and internally displaced persons who, in addition to housing, also need other types of support in the field of social protection. The basis for this manner of providing housing is a decision adopted by a local self-government on the establishment of this right, but it does not imply the acquisition of ownership over built housing units, but a form of social protection. These apartments are used based on the solution adopted by a social work centre and can be used as long as a family has needs. No rent is paid for these apartments, while users are frequently exempt from utility costs.

In 1996, approximately 700 collective centres that accommodated refugees and displaced persons existed within the territory of the Republic of Serbia. By implementing the plan for the gradual closure of collective centres, more than 20,000 people have been provided with housing or economic support. Presently, only one collective centre still remains, where a total of 69 IDPs have been accommodated for whom permanent housing solutions are being sought. There are 4 centres left within the territory of Kosovo and Metohija, where 117 people are still accommodated, of which 18 are refugees and 99 are internally displaced persons. Furthermore, returnees under readmission agreements, who need urgent support, are provided with urgent accommodation in intervention centres run by the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, as well transportation to their place of residence (through a social work centre) and support in obtaining personal documents.

There are about 620 people accommodated in **informal collective centres**, of which 21 are within the territory of Serbia. Most of them are former workers of companies that once owned these facilities. The largest number among them are internally displaced persons from the territory of Kosovo and Metohija, of which a smaller number belong to the Roma national minority (about 15%). Out of this number, 17 informal collective centres are in the City of Belgrade. Within the annual Programme of the Commissariat, funds are regularly provided for resolving issues relating to informal collective centres. Over the course of 2020, RSD 15 million was allocated for these purposes. As these centres are mostly the property of companies that have gone bankrupt or have been partially privatized, unresolved ownership relations, the absence of property owners, and the lack of a legal basis for managing facilities makes it difficult to resolve this problem. In cooperation with the Secretariat for Children’s Welfare and Social Protection of the City of Belgrade, as well as with implementing partners, permanent housing solutions have been provided for persons residing in informal collective centres in Belgrade.

Resolving the complex problem of **unhygienic Roma settlements** is very challenging, not only in terms of financial resources, but also in terms of coordinating a large number of institutions that are in charge of this issue. In view of the fact that a part of the population living in this type of settlement consists of internally displaced Roma, the Commissariat for Refugees actively participates in the implementation of projects aimed at resolving the issue of these settlements when internally displaced Roma also live in them. So far, the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration has managed to provide adequate housing solutions for persons residing in 5 unhygienic Roma settlements where most IDPs lived, thus enabling their complete resettlement.

The Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Team, in cooperation with the UN Human Rights Unit and the Association of Coordinators for Roma Issues, in the period March-September 2020, conducted a “*Mapping of Substandard Roma Settlements According to Risks and Access to Rights in the Republic Of Serbia with Particular Attention to the COVID-19 Pandemic*”. The mapping covers a total of 702 substandard Roma settlements located within the territory of 94 local self-government units where 167,975 people live. The criteria according to which data was collected included access of male and female residents in mapped substandard Roma settlements to clean drinking water, sewage and electricity[[3]](#footnote-3). The mapping also included the predominant activities of the inhabitants of these settlements, in particular in the context of the occurrence of additional or increase in existing health risks due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Data on substandard Roma settlements, the number of inhabitants and risks involved were obtained from established institutional mechanisms for inclusion of Roma men and women at the level of local self-government units. The mapping demonstrated that: 1) 159 substandard Roma settlements located within the territory of 51 local self-government units where 32,843 people live do not have access to clean drinking water or that access is illegal; 2) 457 substandard Roma settlements located within the territory of 82 local self-government units where 93,050 people live do not have access to the sewerage network or that access is illegal; 3) 64 substandard Roma settlements located within the territory of 35 local self-government units where 24,104 people live do not have access to electricity or that access is illegal; 4) 44 substandard Roma settlements located within the territory of 13 local self-government units where 14,000 people live do not have access to clean drinking water, a sewage network and electricity, or that access is illegal.[[4]](#footnote-4)

OVERCOMING SPATIAL AND HOUSING SEGREGATION

The Commissariat adopts and implements a number of by-laws and strategic acts in order to create an efficient and accountable institutional framework and implementation mechanisms that provide end users with adequate solutions in the process of integration and reintegration, as well as access to rights.

The determination of the Republic of Serbia to provide appropriate living conditions and find lasting solutions for the most vulnerable families among the population of refugees and displaced persons is reflected in the allocation of significant funds, both from the budget and from donor funds. Support services are diverse and, as far as possible, tailored to the individual needs of beneficiaries. If a person for any reason does not wish to live in a certain location where construction of apartments has been envisaged, he/she can freely choose another type of housing in a location of his/her choice. In that sense, the Commissariat provides support through the allocation of construction materials, the purchase of prefabricated houses and rural households.

Having in mind that beneficiaries have been living in the Republic of Serbia for many years, housing solutions are provided primarily in those locations where the users have previously commenced with integration. These places are, as a rule, locations of their long-term residence with existing social networks of friends and family that contribute to achievement of social and cultural integration, but also economic security. In order to facilitate the process of their social inclusion and ensure their social, cultural and economic sustainability, special attention is paid to avoiding “ghettoization” by concentrating vulnerable individuals in one location.

As regards to asylum seekers, the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, as well as the Ministry of Interior, does not oblige persons to temporarily stay in asylum centres, but if the applicant has his/her own funds, he/she can stay outside the accommodation facilities of the Commissariat. A person who has been granted asylum is provided with accommodation according to the possibilities of the Republic of Serbia, in the form of financial assistance for renting an apartment in a location that the person chooses independently.

MEASURES AND GOOD PRACTICES FOR ELIMINATING DISCRIMINATION AND REDUCING SEGREGATION

In order to effectively implement national policies in the field of housing refugees, internally displaced persons and returnees on the basis of readmission agreements, in addition to mechanisms at the national level, mechanisms at the local level for the implementation of various housing programmes have been designed. Thanks to the system of **local action planning**, local self-governments have been actively involved in solving the needs of this population since 2008. Furthermore, in the past period, numerous programmes have been implemented that have been envisaged by the strategic framework and financed by the EU, UN agencies, the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the governments of foreign countries. Local Action Plans (LAPs) aimed at addressing issues relating to refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees according to readmission agreements and other migrant groups are strategic and action documents drafted by local self-governments that identify the needs of these categories of persons and envisage measures and activities, as well as funds that local self-government units allocate in order to improve their position. LAPs provide medium-term insight and planning in terms of resolving problems relating to this population in addition to the measures and activities that are tailored to their real needs, whereby the basic needs are employment and housing. The Commissariat continuously provides active support to local self-government units in the development of LAPs.

The *training and support for the development of LAPs* has so far covered 164 municipalities/ cities, 156 municipalities/ cities have successfully adopted local action plans (of which 12 are from Kosovo and Metohija), while approximately 80% of the municipalities/ cities have formed a special budget line.

Every year, the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration allocates around RSD 500 million from the budget for the *permanent housing of refugees and internally displaced persons*. Permanent care programmes are implemented through the Regulation on establishing incentive programmes for the implementation of measures and activities necessary to achieve identified objectives in the field of migration management and the Regulation on establishing programmes for the use of funds to address housing needs and other refugee integration programmes. The programmes include incentives, measures and activities necessary for the implementation of established plans, the amount of funds for the implementation of measures and activities within local self-government units, as well as criteria for their distribution and participation in the Programme. Programmes for solving housing needs envisage the allocation of construction material packages, the purchase of rural houses with a garden, the acquisition of real estate for rent for a certain period of time with the possibility of purchase, as well as the purchase of prefabricated houses.

 *Refugees*

In the period 2017-2020, over RSD 810 million was allocated from the budget of the Republic of Serbia to provide permanent housing solutions for refugees. In this manner, 1,336 families were supported, as follows: 1,135 by allocating a package of construction materials for the completion and adaptation of houses, 201 by purchasing a house with a garden.

The **Regional Housing Programme (RHP)** is a joint multi-annual programme launched by four countries - Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Croatia, Montenegro and the Republic of Serbia, which aims to provide permanent housing solutions for the 27,000 most vulnerable refugee families (74,000 individuals) in the region, of which 16,780 families (45,000 individuals) in Serbia. The implementation of activities envisaged by the Regional Programme in the Republic of Serbia is implemented with the coordinated participation of competent organizations, state administration bodies and local self-government units, with the support of an external Project Implementation Unit. In addition to funds from the trust fund, funds for housing projects are provided partly from the national budget, and partly from the budgets of municipalities and cities where programmes involving permanent integration of refugees have been implemented. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) are international organizations that monitor the refugee housing programme and assess project proposals in relation to the number and type of housing solutions and needs. They also provide a special assessment of aspects concerning the sustainability of plots on which the construction of residential buildings has been envisaged. The Republic of Serbia continues to implement approved sub-projects within the RHP, which provides 7,550 housing solutions for refugees. So far, a total of 5,420 housing solutions have been delivered within the RHP, including the allocation of housing units for a fixed term with the possibility of purchase, purchase of rural houses with a garden, purchase of prefabricated houses, allocation of construction materials in order to complete construction, as well as provision of social housing in protected conditions.

Special attention is paid to the maintenance of locations for the construction of buildings for multi-family housing. The precondition for the selection of a municipality/ city in which a building should be constructed is the existence of families interested in this type of housing solution in the Commissariat’s records. In order to ensure the sustainability of constructed facilities, it is necessary that all elements of key significance for its use be in accordance with urban development plans that are applied at a certain location. This also ensures that the risk of natural disasters is kept to a minimum. Before a decision is adopted on the choice of a specific site for construction, the relevant utility institutions must provide necessary information regarding the ability to efficiently connect the building to the existing electricity and utility network. All locations must be located in urban areas and must have access to local health care providers, general merchandise stores, primary schools and public transport, as well as the public road network. To ensure technical and environmental sustainability, which is a key element for building maintenance, the durability of physical infrastructure and relevant environmental aspects are considered during design preparation as well as during the construction period. Relevant regulations and standards, including an appropriate energy efficiency rate, must be applied during the design and preparation period. All materials used must meet required technical standards, including applicable environmental requirements. In order to ensure uniform application of the Law on Refugees, the Commissariat has prepared Guidelines for the transfer of ownership in order to provide all the necessary information, among others, on procedures that must be followed, as well as forms of documents that are used in the process of renting and buying apartments. This approach provides conditions for full and equal integration.

Bearing in mind that all RHP beneficiaries have acquired or are in the process of acquiring citizenship, full access to political, social, economic and cultural rights is implied. Refugees have access to the labour and employment market as much as any other citizen. The National Employment Strategy recognizes refugees as a category of hard-to-employ persons among the unemployed and envisages affirmative action measures. With this in mind, the RHP beneficiaries are already integrated into the labour market and have access to active measures aimed at reducing unemployment.

To assess the sustainability of the RHP, with the support of the OSCE and UNHCR, a survey was conducted among programme beneficiaries. According to the report **“*Sustainability of Housing Solutions - Regional Housing Programme Serbia”*** (2020), with regard to the infrastructural equipment of RHP solutions, there are still remaining issues, but they are sporadic. Almost all households, namely 98%, have running water, 99% have sewerage and septic tanks, 99% have electricity supply. 50% of the respondents have Internet access.

 *Internally displaced persons*

In the period 2017-2020, RSD 950 million was allocated from the budget of the Republic of Serbia to provide permanent housing solutions for IDPs. By doing so, 1,236 families were supported, as follows: 828 by allocating construction materials for the completion and adaptation of houses, 408 by purchasing a house with a garden.

In addition to funds provided from the national budget, projects aimed at solving the housing problems of displaced persons are also proposed for financing from development aid.

In the period from 2018-2020, within the IPA 2014, the project “Improvement of living conditions of IDPs and returnees under the Readmission Agreement in Serbia and support for sustainable return to Kosovo and Metohija” was implemented. This project is funded by the EUD and implemented by the beneficiaries of the grant scheme in 21 LSGUs. A total of 236 housing solutions and 151 income packages were provided for IDPs.

An important component of the project was the external evaluation of the programme by beneficiaries, which was conducted after its completion. The evaluation confirmed the relevance and significant impact on resolving housing issues involving internally displaced persons, as well as certain recommendations that shall contribute to the more efficient implementation of similar projects.

 *Returnees under a readmission agreement*

In the period from 2016 to the end of 2020, 16,364 citizens were returned to the Republic of Serbia via readmission processes, mostly from European Union countries. According to data collected by the Commissariat at Belgrade's Nikola Tesla Airport, 75% of returnees belong to the Roma community.

Within the project implemented in the Republic of Serbia by GIZ German Organization for International Cooperation, a research was conducted on the position and needs of returnees based on readmission agreements. The survey showed a significant improvement in a large number of indicators compared to a similar survey conducted in 2011. Assistance in employment and economic independence proved to be the most desirable type of support, followed by assistance in solving housing problems.

Every year, the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration allocates about RSD 20 million for the implementation of programmes, incentives and measures for returnees based on readmission agreements, based on the Regulation on establishing incentive programmes for the implementation of measures and activities necessary to achieve identified objectives in the field of migration management. Incentive programmes are implemented through the allocation of assistance for the purchase of rural houses with a garden; the allocation of assistance intended for the completion or adaptation of residential buildings by purchase of construction materials; the purchase of prefabricated houses; as well as through the allocation of funds intended for procurement and allocation of goods and materials intended for initiating, developing and improving income-generating activities in agriculture, crafts, services or other areas for returnees

Since 2011, local self-government units that have a significant number of returnees within their territories have included returnees as a beneficiary category in their plans for the implementation of migration policy measures. Funds intended to support these activities are covered by the annual Commissariat’s Programme.

The Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Team provided mentoring and advisory support to the cities/ municipalities of Ruma, Žitište, Raška, Surčin, Negotin and Novi Sad in the process of drafting Local Action Plans for Social Inclusion of Roma for the period 2021-2022. The six aforementioned LSGUs were selected through a public invitation, whereby local action plans cover the areas of housing, education, employment, health and social care. By the end of April, a public hearing process is expected to be opened in all local self-governments units that have been provided with mentor and advisory support.

DATA ON DISCRIMINATION IN TERMS OF HOUSING AND SPATIAL / HOUSING SEGREGATION

In order to monitor the situation in the area of ​​housing and to observe obstacles in terms of reaching a permanent adequate housing solution, the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, together with the municipal commissioners for refugees, regularly collects relevant data.

In accordance with its competencies, the Commissariat has established a database of *refugee households* in need of a housing solution. The records were compiled on the basis of data collected by municipal commissioners through a survey conducted in accordance with the UNHCR Vulnerability Criteria and they contain basic data on households and their members, social vulnerability and the expressed need to improve one’s living conditions. Currently, according to data from the database, there are still about 6,000 families who had or still have refugee status and who have needs in the sense that they have not solved their housing issues and are not able to resolve them on their own.

In order to assess the housing needs of IDPs, the Commissariat regularly conducts a survey covering the needs of internally displaced persons according to a methodology developed with the UNHCR Joint IDP Profiling Service and the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia. Based on the last survey conducted over the course of 2018, it is estimated that out of 196,995 IDPs in the Republic of Serbia, about 60 thousand people, or 15,667 families are in need of adequate housing (they do not have adequate housing and do not have sufficient and regular resources to solve this existential problem independently).

Data on the housing situation of readmission returnees and asylum seekers are regularly collected. The research also monitors the conditions and characteristics of the current housing situation in terms of these sensitive social categories.

Promoting tolerance and multiculturalism

Under the framework of the annual work programme, the Commissariat provides incentives to local self-government units to promote and strengthen tolerance towards migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, as well as funds for citizens' associations that conduct activities crucial for the realization of human rights that belong to these categories of the population. So far, only one complaint has been filed with the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality due to discrimination in resolving a housing issue.

OTHER PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Through EU programmes worth about EUR 40 million, intended for the inclusion of Roma men and women, continuous support was provided with the aim of raising the capacity of local government units through the establishment and strengthening of mobile teams and their institutional sustainability, as well as developing the project documentation for improvement of infrastructural conditions,  standard of living and housing conditions. Projects worth about EUR 26.9 million are currently being implemented.

Through the IPA 2012 project *Here we are together - European support for Roma inclusion* for the first time established records on the number and place of informal settlements in the Republic of Serbia (583), which allowed funds to be directed to solving these problems. A Geographic Information System (GIS) has been created to monitor the situation in informal Roma settlements in Serbia. This database allows monitoring of key indicators of the situation in informal settlements. The data obtained by collecting data from this database are the starting point in creating a situation analysis in the implementation of programmes implemented through IPA 2013, 2014 and 2016.

Implementation of the IPA 2013 project *Technical Assistance for improving the living and housing conditions of the Roma population presently residing in informal settlements in the Republic of Serbia*, worth EUR 1,370,200, began in June 2017 and ended on 19 September 2019. Some of the most significant results achieved through this project are: infrastructure in informal Roma settlements was built that will improve living conditions for over 5,000 Roma men and women, a total of 185 housing units for about 800 persons were built and renovated; technical documentation was developed which was required for projects of improving the housing conditions for over 700 houses, 300 flats as well as for projects of infrastrusture improvement for over 4,000 beneficiaries, members of Roma population; 20 mobile teams for social inclusion of Roma men and women were established in 20 local self-government units in Serbia.

Through the grant scheme within this IPA 2013 project, worth EUR 6.5 million, a total of nine projects were implemented in 11 local self-government units. The projects referred to the improvement of infrastructure in Roma settlements and the construction of housing units for Roma men and women who lived in inappropriate conditions.

Through the project, the infrastructure of roads, sewerage and water supply was improved and individual houses and flats were built (114 houses and 12 flats were built, 62 houses were reconstructed). Also, 5.1 kilometers of roads, about 6.1 kilometers of sewerage and about 2.2 kilometers of water supply network were built, the rivers Straževica and Toplica in Prokuplje were regulated, 1 kilometer of gas pipeline was built, about 1 kilometer of street lighting, 800 meters of canals were restructured and 4 playgrounds for children were built. The implementation of activities has directly or indirectly improved the living conditions of about 2,100 members of the Roma population.

The IPA 2016 project *EU Support to Roma Inclusion - Empowering Local Communities for Roma Inclusion*, worth EUR 4.2 million, started in December 2017 and will last for 36 months. The overall goal of the project is to improve the position of Roma in local communities through the implementation of strategic measures defined in the Strategy for Roma Inclusion for the period 2016-2025. So far, the following activities have been implemented through the project: A Memorandum of Understanding was signed with 10 local self-government units (Arandjelovac, Bečej, Vršac, Doljevac, Lebane, Loznica, Mladenovac, Pirot, Smederevska Palanka and Surdulica) and local action plans were drafted; 10 mobile teams and 10 local multisectoral policy coordination bodies were formed, the Guide for preparation, budgeting and monitoring of the local action plan for Roma inclusion was developed and presented, 36 contracts were signed for projects to be financed from the grant scheme; contracts were signed with 11 selected local self-government units regarding development of urban plans for informal Roma settlements.

The IPA 2014 project *Technical Assistance for Improving the Socio-Economic Living Conditions of the Roma Population*, worth EUR 2.7 million, started on 4 March 2019 and will last for 24 months. The project consists of three components: 1. development of the necessary technical documentation for sustainable improvement of housing conditions in 100 informal Roma settlements in Serbia; 2. strengthening the capacity of local self-government units and relevant representatives of national institutions for the successful use of EU pre-accession funds and achieving the sustainability of project results; 3. providing support in building the capacity of mobile teams and improving local mechanisms for inclusion of Roma men and women. The following activities will be implemented through the project: updating data in 100 informal Roma settlements through cooperation with representatives of local self-government units and mobile teams, analysis and evaluation of needs; updating the national GIS database on informal Roma settlements; selection of 100 informal Roma settlements and preparation of urban and technical documentation necessary for the improvement of housing conditions and social inclusion of Roma men and women in local self-government units, which can be used for applying for funds from future funds; providing support to local self-government units for the preparation of concepts and projects for applying for future IPA grants and capacity building of local and national staff in achieving sustainability of project results, through training sessions, exchange of experience and presentation of good international and local practices; cooperation with local self-government units in which mobile teams have already been established, providing support for the establishment of new mobile teams, with further improvement of local mechanisms for inclusion of Roma men and women.

The IPA 2018 project *European Union Support to Social Housing and Active Inclusion*, worth EUR 20 million, started in December 2019 and will last for 36 months. The overall goal of the project is to contribute to strengthening social inclusion. The end users are 500 families from vulnerable groups in 20 LSGUs. Vulnerable groups covered by the project are: Roma, women victims of domestic violence, persons with disabilities, children and young people without parental care. The project will be funded through grants in 20 LSGUs.

1. *Official Gazette of the RS*, Nos. 52/21 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Official Gazette of the RS*, Nos. 104/2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For the purposes of this mapping, access to clean water, sewerage and electricity means the existence of a regular connection to the public water supply and sewerage network, as well as electricity distribution system. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The report is available at: [http://socijalnoukljucivanje.gov.rs/wp/content/uploads/2020/12/Mapiranje\_podstandar dnih\_romskih\_naselja\_prema\_rizicima\_i\_pristupu\_pravima\_sa\_narocitim\_osvrtom\_n a\_COVID-19.pdf](http://socijalnoukljucivanje.gov.rs/wp/content/uploads/2020/12/Mapiranje_podstandardnih_romskih_naselja_prema_rizicima_i_pristupu_pravima_sa_narocitim_osvrtom_na_COVID-19.pdf)  [↑](#footnote-ref-4)