

Monitoring Local Implementation of  
the Government Strategy for the  
Improvement of the Condition  
of Roma in Romania  
in Dolj County

## BACKGROUND

Dolj county is located in the south-west of Romania, close to the Danube that forms the border with Bulgaria. Dolj county is composed of three municipalities, two larger towns and 95 towns with 380 villages in an area of 7,414 square kilometres. According to the 2002 population census, Dolj county has a population of 734,231 people, of whom 31,544 people (or 4.3 per cent) identified themselves as Roma.<sup>1</sup> The estimates of the Dolj branch of the RSDP state that the real number of Roma is 40,000, while the estimates of the Roma Ethnic Community put the number at over 70,000 people.<sup>2</sup>

### 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Dolj prefecture has elaborated a County Strategy for Applying the Government Strategy,<sup>3</sup> which sets out 43 measures, 19 of which are related to education. However, the County Strategy was elaborated only after a delay and without consulting a range of Roma NGOs. It does not mention deadlines or the institutions responsible for carrying out the measures.

The Government Strategy has been poorly publicised in Dolj county. Although the institutions responsible for the implementation of the Strategy at local level are familiar with it, there are few who know its measures in detail or the methods of implementing them. The authorities' efforts to inform the Roma community on the Strategy content have been minimal and the only institutions making an effort were the County Office for Roma and some Roma NGOs.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the 2002 Census, Ethno-demographic structure of population

<sup>2</sup> Roma organisations have identified several causes for this situation: many Roma people are ashamed of their origin due to the "association of the word 'Roma' with the word 'criminal' (Roundtable, Craiova, 28 December 2003, Velcu Vasile Năzdrăvan, Executive President of Union of the Craiova Roma and prime vice-president of the Roma Ethnic Community from Romania); at least 50% of the Roma population is abroad (Roundtable, Craiova, 28 December 2003, Silvian Filoti Ilie – executive president of the Roma Ethnic Community from Romania); and the census commissions did not have any Roma members. (Roundtable, Craiova, 28 December 2003, Aurel Raicu vice-president of the Segarcea branch of the Roma Ethnic Community from Romania).

<sup>3</sup> The document was elaborated in February 2003 (without a registration number) by the Prefecture in collaboration with the County Office for Roma (hereafter, BJR) and the School Inspectorate for Minorities, within the County School Inspectorate.

The institutions involved in implementing the Strategy at the local level have consulted, in their limited activities, only one of the county Roma organisations (RSDP), although there are other Roma NGOs interested in collaborating in the implementation of the Strategy. Following pressure from other NGOs on the County Office for Roma and on the Prefecture, three local experts representing these NGOs were hired. However, these experts are facing difficulties because they are not members of the RSDP.<sup>4</sup>

Although there are qualified staff at the Dolj county level, they are not respected and due to insufficient financial resources, the efficiency of the County Office for Roma and of the other institutions responsible for implementing the Strategy is poor.

## **2. LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION**

### **2.1 Administrative bodies**

#### **2.1.1 The county office for Roma (BJR)**

The county office for Roma (hereafter, BJR) was established in November 2001. The BJR has three members: the Councillor for the Prefect on Roma Affairs (hereafter, Councillor), a Prefecture employee; a councillor within the Directorate Coordination for Local Public Services; and the assistant economic manager of Dolj County Council.

The Roma BJR member was nominated by the RSDP. The Councillor is a graduate of the College of Economic Sciences and has experience in the field of finance / accountancy. The contribution of the other two members is purely formal, due to the fact that they are employees of the Prefecture and have other current responsibilities. There is no job description for the BJR members, rather “the programme and responsibilities being established by the Prefect.”<sup>5</sup> No financial resources have been allocated to the BJR.

The BJR lacks administrative support staff and has no means of transportation for field activities. According to Roma NGOs the degree of involvement of the BJR in the resolution of relevant issues is inadequate. Their opinion is that the activity of the BJR

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with Ștefan Buzdugan, local expert from the Roma Ethnic Community at Segarcea Town Hall, 18 June 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Roundtable, Craiova, 28 December 2003, Florin Andronache, BJR member and the Prefect’s councillor on Roma issues.

is strongly influenced by the leader of the county branch of the RSDP.<sup>6</sup> Representatives of other institutions also share this opinion.<sup>7</sup>

### 2.1.2 Local experts on Roma affairs

As of autumn 2003, 36 local experts on Roma affairs had been appointed within the county mayoralties at the proposal of the RSDP; two at the proposal of the Roma Ethnic Community; and one representing the Union of Craiova Roma. All 39 local experts are Roma. Local Roma NGOs report that the high number of RSDP-affiliated experts is a result of numerous nominations sent by the Prefecture in the area.<sup>8</sup> Roma groups have requested that the local community should appoint the experts on the basis of certain criteria.<sup>9</sup> Only 14 of the local experts are paid for their services, due to the lack of funds.

The local experts designated by the RSDP communicate with the BJR during the weekly meetings of the RSDP, or when the need arises.

The activity of local experts generally consists of supporting the Roma in preparing applications to receive the minimum guaranteed income, obtaining identity papers, registration in the health insurance system, and obtaining construction lands for housing.<sup>10</sup>

### 2.1.3 Local joint working group

Although the Strategy calls for the establishment of county level Joint Working Groups, as of autumn 2003 this has not been accomplished in Dolj county. At present, there is a list of 20 representatives proposed as members of the group, drawn up at the initiative of the County Council, the Prefecture and the BJR.

Although the Strategy mentions that the Joint Working Group should have representatives of the local NGOs as members and representatives chosen from the

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with Velcu Vasile Năzdrăvan, Executive President of Union of the Craiova Roma and prime vice-president of the Roma Ethnic Community from Romania, 20 June 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Roundtable, Craiova, 28 December 2003.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Velcu Vasile Năzdrăvan, Executive President of Union of the Craiova Roma and prime vice-president of the Roma Ethnic Community from Romania, 20 June 2003.

<sup>9</sup> Roundtable, Craiova, December 28, 2003, Felix Costache, R.E.D member.

<sup>10</sup> Interviews with Zaharia Ionel, president of Union of the Roma, Amărăștii de Jos branch; Oiță Gheorghe local expert, Sadova.

Roma community, most of the people proposed are either members of the RSDP local branch, or local public administration employees; the BJR did not consult any other NGO when drawing up the list.<sup>11</sup> To date, the local council has not issued any decision to establish the working group.

Efforts have been made to improve collaboration between the local public administration and Roma communities. The County Council and the Prefecture periodically organise meetings with formal and informal Roma leaders from various localities of the county.<sup>12</sup> However, Roma have expressed concern about some mayors offices' lack of interest regarding the content of the Strategy.<sup>13</sup>

## 2.2 Housing

At the county level, there are few cases of Roma acquiring ownership of construction land. Forty Roma families from the village of Ocolna, in the area of Amărăștii de Jos, received half a hectare each from the Mayor's Office for housing.<sup>14</sup> The Mayor's Office intends to continue the allocation of land based on requests received and the available land.<sup>15</sup> In Ostroveni, eight Roma families also received land for housing by Decisions of the Local Councils.<sup>16</sup> The property registration was legalised within the framework of activities specifically targeting Roma. However, in several areas concerns have been raised regarding the local councils' failure to take action to legalise housing built by Roma without proper authorisation.<sup>17</sup>

The Office for Social Work of the Craiova Bishopric, in collaboration with the "Romano-Euro Drom" Association of Roma Students and Young People (hereafter, RED) has initiated a project to improve the housing conditions of Roma from Lăpus-Barăci

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<sup>11</sup> Interviews with Velcu Vasile Năzdrăvan, Executive President of Union of the Craiova Roma and prime vice-president of the Roma Ethnic Community from Romania 20 June 2003; Sorina Popa, councillor within the Directorate for Culture, Denominations and National Cultural Patrimony Dolj, Roundtable, Craiova, 28 December 2003.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Ion Voiculescu, President of Dolj County Council 25 June 2003; Roundtable, Craiova, 28 December 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Roundtable, Craiova, 28 December 2003.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Zaharia Ionel, president of the Union of the Roma, Amărăștii de Jos branch, 22 June 2003.

<sup>15</sup> Phone interview with Sever Pisciă, vice mayor of Amărăștii de Jos.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Gheorghe Oprescu, mayor of Ostroveni, 28 June 2003.

<sup>17</sup> Roundtable, Craiova, 28 December 2003; Costel Matache – leader of the Roma from Malu Mare.

district, Craiova.<sup>18</sup> The same community received construction materials from the Mayor's Office for the rehabilitation of four of the most affected houses. The municipality intends to purchase these houses, which are presently the property of the Ion Țiriac Bank, in order to transform them into social housing for Roma from this district. The value of this acquisition is approximately ROL 3 billion.<sup>19</sup>

In 2002, Craiova City Hall transformed a hostel into social housing for 50 Roma families, 13 of which had been living in shacks in the livestock market.

## 2.3 Social protection

The County Directorate for Social Work was established in 2003 to increase access to social services for needy persons, including Roma. To date, however, the County Directorate for Social Work has only assumed the responsibilities of the Territorial State Inspectorate for Persons with Handicap.<sup>20</sup>

At present, there are no social work measures specifically targeting the Roma population. Most of the Roma population in Dolj are beneficiaries under the minimum guaranteed income act (Law no. 416/2001): of a total of 4,741 recipients in Dolj, 83 per cent are Roma.<sup>21</sup> Some concerns over access to social benefits have been reported: civil servants may over-estimate family incomes of Roma in drawing up applications,<sup>22</sup> and transportation to the place of employment is not guaranteed,<sup>23</sup> causing Roma to lose the right to benefits.

Discrimination remains an issue with regard to access to public facilities. Most reported discrimination cases are regarding access to pubs and discotheques in Craiova.<sup>24</sup> As the

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Sister Viruța Maxim, social worker within the Office for Social Work of Craiova Archbishopric, 3 July 2003.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Vasile Bulucea, Mayor of Craiova, 30 June 2003.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with George Vilă, manager of the County Directorate for Social Work, 24 June 2003.

<sup>21</sup> No. 124.225/29.07.2003 of the Social Work Service of Craiova City Hall.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Ștefan Buzdugan, local expert from the Roma Ethnic Community within Segarcea Town Hall, 18 June 2003.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Zaharia Ionel, President of the Union of the Roma, Amărăștii de Jos branch, 22 June 2003.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Velcu Vasile Năzdrăvan, Executive President of Union of the Craiova Roma and Vice-president of the Roma Ethnic Community from Romania, 20 June 2003; also see the local newspapers *Gazeta de Sud (South Gazette)* and *Ediție Specială de Oltenia (Oltenia Special Edition)* from 4 December 2002.

Executive Board of the National Council for Combating Discrimination was only established in July 2002, the Union of Roma from Craiova (hereafter, URC) were addressed to the police, Prefecture and City Hall in the meantime; the cases “were not solved and no measures were taken in this respect.”<sup>25</sup> The police report that there was no discrimination of Roma in these cases, because they were refused access in discotheques due to “prior violent behaviour”.<sup>26</sup>

Roma also report discrimination related to social housing; there were numerous protests, including a hunger strike outside Craiova City Hall.<sup>27</sup>

## 2.4 Health care

The implementation of the Strategy’s measure to develop a system of health mediators started late, in September-October 2002, reportedly because the Dolj branch of the RSDP did not submit nominations for these positions in time.<sup>28</sup> Once the proposals were made, four health mediators were selected; they are residents of the towns in which they work.<sup>29</sup> Only three of the mediators participated in the training course organised by Romani CRISS. They were hired for one year, with the possibility of extending the contract, and are subordinated to the municipal hospital Filantropia in Craiova.

At present, only three of the mediators are active, and one has resigned. The mediators facilitate communication between community members and medical personnel, they cultivate reciprocal trust between local public authorities and the community, and mobilise the community for vaccination, information and education campaigns. Some 2,500 people have benefited from the mediators’ services since the programme began, and demand for these services exceeds the current mediators’ capacity.

The activities of health mediators are concentrated mostly on informing and educating the Roma population on various subjects: family planning, increasing the number of periodical medical check-ups in the community, and the early identification and

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<sup>25</sup> Interview with Velcu Vasile Năzdrăvan, Executive President of Union of the Craiova Roma and Vice-president of the Roma Ethnic Community from Romania, 20 June 2003.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Constantin Petrescu, Second-in-command of the marshal of the Dolj County Police Inspectorate, 27 June 2003.

<sup>27</sup> See *Gazeta de Sud (South Gazette)*, 19 March 2003.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Dr. Beneduc Ionuț Adrian, specialty inspector within the Office for Mother and Child Assistance within the Dolj County Directorate for Public Healthcare.

<sup>29</sup> Health mediators were hired in Craiova and in Vârtop, Caraula, and Lipov.

treatment of tuberculosis.<sup>30</sup> The mediators report weekly to their medical supervisor, and monthly to the Directorate of Public Healthcare.

The intervention of health mediators in the Roma communities has helped to increase the Roma community's receptivity towards health services. Local general practitioners report that the Roma community accesses medical services more regularly in areas where the mediators are working. In general, the mediators have contributed to improving medical services and increasing the health and medical awareness of the Roma beneficiaries.<sup>31</sup>

Within Dolj county there are many localities that need health mediators to better disseminate information on medical issues in Roma communities; therefore, the Dolj Directorate for Public Healthcare has requested ten additional health mediators.<sup>32</sup>

Civil society has also been active in the field of health care; the Roma Students Association Eurodrom has developed two projects in this respect, one focusing on hygiene and health awareness among schoolchildren, and the other on HIV-AIDS awareness. The ARAS Association – Oltenia has established a project on reproductive health education in Sadova,<sup>33</sup> and the Alliance for Roma Unity is developing a project of sanitary education in the Băilesti schools and communities with a budget of €15,000.<sup>34</sup> Although the Directorate for Public Healthcare and local NGOs have developed informational-educational campaigns regarding health, there is an obvious need for the expansion of these programmes.

## 2.5 Economic initiatives

In the sphere of employment, the local institutions have not yet accomplished the objectives established by the Strategy. The measures for improving the practice and revival of traditional Roma handicrafts were not applied due to a lack of requests from the community. The same holds true for the development and implementation of

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<sup>30</sup> "Activity Plan for May 2003" of the health mediator from Vârtop.

<sup>31</sup> Phone interview with Dr. Nedelea Vanda Luiza, family doctor in Vârtop.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Dr. Beneduc Ionuț Adrian, specialty inspector within the Office for Mother and Child Assistance within the Dolj County Directorate for Public Healthcare.

<sup>33</sup> The project is financed by FRDSC with a budget of \$8,000. Interview with Oana Mateescu, programme coordinator at ARAS Oltenia.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Lucian Cherata, school inspector for minorities within the Dolj County School Inspectorate, 24 June 2003.

specific programmes for the financing of income generating activities and small businesses for Roma families/communities, including Roma women.<sup>35</sup>

The only initiative in the domain of qualification/re-qualification of the Roma at local level has been taken by the Together Community Development Agency, which has developed a project with Phare support. This project is developed in five municipalities, including Craiova; in Craiova city, ROMANO-EURO DROM Roma Students and Young People's Association implements the project, in partnership with the Dolj County Agency for Professional Training and Occupation. The objective of this project is to provide support for the integration of Roma on the labour market. After graduating from qualification courses in August 2003, 20 Roma were expected to receive diplomas as PC operators, 20 as bricklayers-painters and ten as barbers. The County Agency for Professional Training and Occupation Dolj (hereafter, CAPTO) has provided professional counselling and will certify the diplomas.

The first edition of the Job Fair for Roma was organised in May 2003 at the headquarters of the Dolj County Agency for Professional Training and Occupation. The BJR and the Together Community Development Agency cooperated in organising the fair; however, the RSDP branch in Dolj did not provide the support requested.<sup>36</sup> The Fair offered 190 places of employment, 159 for socially marginalised persons. One month after the fair, 45 Roma were employed. However, only 23.7 per cent of the job offers were filled, due to problems "caused by the elaboration of hiring documents by local town halls".<sup>37</sup>

The poor participation of Roma in the fair was due to the insufficient information disseminated in the Roma communities regarding this event. Roma who did participate in the Fair reported that the initiative of organising such an event was useful and would be more successful if held again.<sup>38</sup> Few Roma took advantage of an advantageous credit system, due to the fact that the Roma were not informed about this opportunity.

The newly created "County Commission for Applying the Government Decision no. 256/18.03.2003 for the approval of the Programme regarding the elaboration of normative documents necessary for the attribution in property of lands for Roma" will

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<sup>35</sup> Interview with Adriana Breazu, Executive Director of the Dolj County Agency for Professional Training and Occupation, 23 June 2003.

<sup>36</sup> Address no. 6147/05.05.2003 from the Dolj County Agency for Professional Training and Occupation to the National Agency for Professional Training and Occupation.

<sup>37</sup> Information of the Dolj CAPTO, June 2003.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Gheorghe Puşulache, informal leader of the Roma from Lăpus-Barăci district, participant in the Fair, 24 June 2003.

establish agricultural lands available for Roma, on the basis of information received from the local commissions.<sup>39</sup>

## 2.6 Justice and public order

There are no legal education and delinquency prevention programmes developed by public institutions or NGOs; the only activities in this respect are sporadic meetings of the representatives of the County Police Inspectorate with Roma leaders from the county, who then disseminate the information to the Roma communities.<sup>40</sup> NGOs have supported various programmes monitoring cases of discrimination and raising human rights awareness among Roma communities in Dolj.<sup>41</sup>

Conflicts are generally resolved at a local level between the authorities and Roma leaders.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, young Roma report that they experience discrimination, especially regarding access to public bars.<sup>43</sup> Long-standing tension between young Roma and members of a reportedly anti-Roma group known as “Frăția” (The brotherhood)<sup>44</sup> led to a riot among the Roma community in September 2003. To control the crowd, the police used rubber bullets, injuring seven of the 50-60 young Roma participating in the riot. After these events, 33 Roma were arrested on various charges.<sup>45</sup> Roma have alleged that they were discriminated against, as they were not called to the police headquarters for statements before their arrest.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> The commission was set up by Prefect’s Order no. 61/08.04.2003.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Costache Gheorghe, informal leader of the Roma from Craiova-Făcăi, “peace judge of the Roma” from Oltenia, 25 June 2003.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Marcel Costache, member of the implementation team of the programme “Defend your Rights” in Dolj county, 27 June 2003.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Constantin Petrescu, Second-in-command marshal of the County Police Inspectorate, Dolj, 27 June 2003.

<sup>43</sup> Roundtable, Craiova, 28 December 2003.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Velcu Vasile Năzdrăvan; see the publication “Aven Amentza”, September 2003.

<sup>45</sup> See the newspapers *Gazeta de Sud* (*South Gazette*) and *Ediție Specială de Oltenia* (*Oltenia Special Edition*) from 19 and 25 September, and 23 October 2003.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Ion Parnică – Vilifort, participant in the riot.

## 2.7 Child protection

The Dolj County Directorate for Child Protection monitors, assists and protects, by measures of temporary or final protection, including adoption, 1,009 children in difficulty. The majority of these children (80 per cent) are Roma,<sup>47</sup> though the Directorate does not develop specialised programmes to address the specific situation of Roma children.<sup>48</sup>

To prevent abandonment and improve reintegration of children within the family, the County Directorate for Child Protection collaborated with several local and international NGOs (ARAS, World Vision, Save the Children) and a Roma representative.<sup>49</sup>

The opportunities for Roma to become maternal assistants or to adopt institutionalised children are limited due to the low levels of education and low income among the community.<sup>50</sup>

## 2.8 Education

Although the County Strategy has 19 educational objectives, many of these remain in the proposal stage as there have been no concrete initiatives for implementation. The educational and professional qualification level of the Roma from Dolj county is generally low.

The structure of the school age population at the level of Dolj county is the following:<sup>51</sup>

- Pre-schoolers: 18,914, of whom three per cent are Roma;
- Elementary school: 33,272, of whom eight per cent are Roma;
- Secondary school: 37,017, of whom five per cent are Roma.

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<sup>47</sup> Interview with Victoria Croitoru, executive manager of Dolj County Directorate for Child Protection, 26 June 2003.

<sup>48</sup> Roundtable, Craiova, 28 December 2003, Maria Manolache vice manager of Dolj County Directorate for Child Protection.

<sup>49</sup> Member of the Commission is Dumitru Tatian, president of the RSDP Dolj.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Victoria Croitoru, executive of the Dolj County Directorate for Child Protection, 26 June 2003.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Lucian Cherata, inspector for minorities within the Dolj County School Inspectorate, 24 June 2003.

There are 265 schools in the county; 142 elementary and 123 secondary. The enrolment at four schools is almost exclusively Roma.

In addition to isolated cases of teachers who visit Roma communities to provide counselling for Roma parents and children, the County School Inspectorate and the schools themselves are also making efforts made to encourage school attendance among Roma children. These include:

- The appointment of a school inspector for minorities within the Dolj County School Inspectorate.
- Within the EU Socrates-Comenius 1 programme,<sup>52</sup> in partnership with schools from Spain and France, two of the Craiova schools with a majority of Roma pupils are developing activities to support the integration of Roma children in the educational system and improve their school results.
- The Providence foundation Bucharest is developing a project from 2002–2004, to provide after-school tutoring and snacks for 35 Roma children, in collaboration with the Dolj County School Inspectorate.
- Romano-Euro Drom Roma Students and Young People’s Association organised a campaign for supporting young Roma who want to go to college by providing information regarding the special places allocated for Roma by the University of Craiova.<sup>53</sup>
- Dolj County School Inspectorate, in partnership with the House of the Teaching Staff and with the Psychology Faculty of the University from Chieti (Italy), initiated the Virgilio Programme for Trans-national Cooperation to reduce school dropouts in disadvantaged communities (especially in Roma communities). The programme is in development for the period February 2003–2005.<sup>54</sup>
- The governmental “Milk and Doughnuts” programme and distribution of writing materials to low-income pupils (including Roma).

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<sup>52</sup> “The overall objectives of COMENIUS are to enhance the quality and reinforce the European dimension of school education, in particular by encouraging transnational cooperation between schools, contributing to the improved professional development of staff directly involved in the school education sector, and promoting the learning of languages and intercultural awareness.” See [http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/socrates/comenius/moreabout\\_en.html](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/socrates/comenius/moreabout_en.html).

<sup>53</sup> The University from Craiova has allocated 17 special places for Roma for the school year 2003–2004 – Order no. 4120/09.06.2003 of the Ministry of Education and Research.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Lucian Cherata, inspector for minorities within Dolj County School Inspectorate, 24 June 2003.

To improve teachers' knowledge and understanding of the special needs of Roma pupils, the Dolj County School Inspectorate drafted notifications to several schools containing excerpts from two important laws.<sup>55</sup> The Inspectorate also requested that directors of schools with Roma pupils submit the preliminary schedule for Romani language classes, as well as information regarding the requests for special places for Roma children in high schools and trade schools, according to the affirmative action measures taken by Ministry of Education and Research.<sup>56</sup> Approximately 30 per cent of the schools responded to this request.<sup>57</sup> For the places allocated to Roma for the school year 2003–2004, 25 pupils were registered in high schools; 65 in trade schools; and 14 for completing their high school studies. According to the school inspector, there is generally good cooperation with the school directorate, although some directors have spoken to Roma parents about the “uselessness of the Romani language”.<sup>58</sup>

During the school year 2002–2003, 13 substitute teachers were hired for teaching Romani language. In the school year 2003–2004 this number was increased to 22, of whom 13 are taking courses at CREDIS Bucharest and three graduated in 2003. Romani language teachers are also attending a course organised by the County School Inspectorate, in collaboration with the House of the Teaching Staff. After graduating from this course, the teachers will receive diplomas. In some schools, however, the directors have not cooperated in the establishment of Romani language departments.<sup>59</sup>

There are 65 students registered for the special places for Roma at Craiova University. For the school year 2003–2004, 17 special places for Roma were allocated, but the demand for these places proved even greater. However, there are concerns that given the high volume of applications, some Roma NGOs may have recommended non-Roma students for these places. According to one estimate, “90 per cent of the places for Roma are occupied by [ethnic] Romanians”.<sup>60</sup> There have been calls for a

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<sup>55</sup> Law no. 48/2002 regarding the prevention and sanction of all forms of discrimination, and Law no. 116/2002 regarding the prevention of and combat against social marginalisation. Address no. 2446/13.05.2003 of the Dolj County School Inspectorate for all schools with Roma pupils from Dolj county.

<sup>56</sup> Address no.1328/26.02.2003 of the Dolj County School Inspectorate for all schools with Roma pupils.

<sup>57</sup> Interview in with Lucian Cherata, inspector for minorities within Dolj County School Inspectorate, 24 June 2003.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Lucian Cherata, inspector for minorities within Dolj County School Inspectorate, 28 June 2003.

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Lucian Cherata, inspector for minorities within Dolj County School Inspectorate, 28 June 2003.

<sup>60</sup> Interview with Lucian Cherata, inspector for minorities within Dolj County School Inspectorate, 28 June 2003.

commission formed by representatives of all county NGOs to consider each application, to remove suspicion regarding the candidates' recommendations.<sup>61</sup>

## 2.9 Culture and denominations

The role of local government bodies in the implementation of cultural programmes for the affirmation of Roma identity mentioned by the Strategy is minimal.

The Ministry Commission on Roma affairs of the Ministry of Culture and Denominations in collaboration with the Roma Center for Public Policies Aven Amentza, with the Dolj County Directorate for Culture, Denominations and National Cultural Patrimony and with the support of the representatives of the National Council for Combating Discrimination organised a “Caravan for Intercultural Education and Revitalisation of the Roma Culture” in Craiova in February 2002 and April 2003. At a local level, this activity received support from “Romano-Euro Drom” Roma Students and Young People’s Association. During this event, collaboration for the Strategy implementation between the local Roma NGOs and the local structures of the ministries was established.

During the events organised on the 2002 Day of National Minorities (December 18), the Interethnic Forum Dolj in collaboration with Dolj County Directorate for Culture, Denominations and National Cultural Patrimony organised a round-table during which the Roma guests familiarised the other participants with aspects of Roma history and culture.

Starting in January 2001, Radio Horion (a private local radio station) allocated an hour a week for debates concerning Roma issues, with Roma leaders from the county; another seven hours were allocated for the broadcasting of Roma folk music. In May – September 2003, the executive board of the radio station financially conditioned the participation in debates.<sup>62</sup> Also, the local private TV station Oltenia TV offers a programme for minorities entitled “Ethnies”. The hour-long programme invites representatives of the minorities from Craiova each week; minority representatives take turns appearing on the show.

In contrast with these private initiatives, the public regional TV and radio stations have not scheduled any regular broadcasts with or about the Roma community specificity.

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<sup>61</sup> Interview with Lucian Cherata, inspector for minorities within Dolj County School Inspectorate, 28 June 2003.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Velcu Vasile Năzdrăvan, Executive President of Union of the Craiova Roma and Vice-president of the Roma Ethnic Community from Romania, 20 June 2003.

The lack of financial resources limits the initiative of local Roma NGOs in promoting Roma culture and traditions. On the International Roma Day (8 April), the Union of the Craiova Roma and the Dolj branch of the Roma Ethnic Community organised the festival “Miss Roma Oltenia”. The Craiova Union of the Roma and of the Roma Ethnic have recently set the foundation stones of a church that will be built in Ocolna.

The Faculty of History-Philosophy-Geography of Craiova University, in collaboration with the Dolj County School Inspectorate is elaborating a scientific study called “Ethno-socio-cartography of the Roma Population in the Area of Oltenia”.

## 2.10 Public participation

The lack of unity among Roma NGOs in Dolj county prevented the election of any Roma candidate at the municipal/county level.<sup>63</sup> There are 13 Roma town councillors in the county, elected on the lists of the Dolj RSDP.

The civic organisations of the Roma from Dolj county include the RSDP, the Union of the Craiova Roma; the Roma Ethnic Community; the Democrat Union of the Roma from Dolj-Sadova county; the Party of Bricklayers (“*caramizari*”, in Romanian) – Segarcea; and the Emancipation and Schooling of Roma Children Foundation – Dioști. Politically, the most active groups are the RSDP; the Union of the Craiova Roma; and the Roma Ethnic Community from Romania.

The lack of unity and solidarity of Roma NGOs led to a situation where the President of the RSDP Dolj organised a party meeting at the exact hour when the round-table organised for discussing the preliminary report on the local level implementation of the Strategy was held. Thus, the local RSDP members could not attend this roundtable.

From the data available, there appear to be no Roma hired in public administration at the county level, except in the offices created by the Strategy.

## 2.11 Communication and civic participation

In the absence of other programmes for informing and combating discrimination against Roma, the Prefecture of Dolj county mentions the “Project for Combating the Discrimination of Roma in the Media”,<sup>64</sup> in the County Strategy, a project that has not been elaborated as yet.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Ion Voiculescu, President of the Dolj County Council, 25 June 2003.

<sup>64</sup> *County Strategy*, point 37.

Cases of discrimination against Roma were brought to public attention by the media or addressed to the Mayor's office and to the Prefecture by the Union of the Craiova Roma.<sup>65</sup> The hiring of a Roma journalist at one of the local newspapers has increased the representation of Roma issues in the county.

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<sup>65</sup> Interview with Velcu Vasile Năzdrăvan, Executive President of Union of the Craiova Roma and Vice-president of the Roma Ethnic Community from Romania, 20 June 2003.