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Roma and HIV/AIDS in Central East Europe

UNDP and the Center for Health Policies and Services (CHPS) with financial support from Open Society Foundation have successfully conducted the study “**Social Assessment of Roma and HIV/AIDS in Central East Europe**”.



*From left: Mr. Dan Dionisie, Head of Governance Section, UNDP, Ms. Soknan Han Jung, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, Mr. Cristian Jura, State Secretary, Department for Inter-Ethnic Relations, Mr. Alexandru Rafila, General Director, Ministry of Health, and Mr. Cristian Vlădescu, Executive President, CHPS.*

Launched on 9 June at the UN House in Bucharest, the assessment was carried out over the past two years by a team of national experts in Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia, under the coordination of international experts MJ Kittredge (USA) and Lasse Christian Nielsen (Denmark). A section prepared by the United Nations Theme Group on HIV/AIDS, Republic of Moldova, has also been included in the study.

Even though the assessment confirmed that the present HIV/AIDS prevalence in Roma is not significantly different from the population at large, the study offers recommendations on stepping-up national responses to HIV/AIDS in a way that takes into account and responds to the specific situation of Roma communities. It provides a deeper understanding of root causes of poverty and marginalization of the Roma, of consequences on different aspects of social life, and on actual or potential patterns of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Increasingly severe poverty and social exclusion of Roma in Central Eastern Europe (CEE) is one of the most striking developments in the region since the transition began in 1989. While Roma have

historically been among the poorest people in Europe, over the past 1-2 decades the extent of the collapse of their living conditions in the CEE is unprecedented, thereby potentially making them a highly vulnerable population group with respect to HIV/AIDS. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has instituted the fight against HIV/AIDS as a corporate priority, and has taken a lead role in the region in addressing the social and human development challenges faced by the Roma.

The study is the first of its kind and has encountered problems of scarcity of data and lack of previous analysis on the issue. Therefore, significant research has been carried out and extensive consultations have been conducted – at the national, regional and international level – during the process of formulation and finalization of the study. Successive drafts have been submitted for consultation with a variety of stakeholders – Roma associations, national authorities, international organizations, civil society, and independent experts.

Journalists as well as representatives of government, civil society, Roma NGOs and other partners attended the launch followed by a lively debate on the issues raised in the report.

Other UNDP publications extensively covering these topics are:

- the landmark Regional Human Development Report “Roma in Central and Eastern Europe: Avoiding the Dependency Trap”;
- the “White Book on Assistance to Roma Communities in Romania” which draws an inventory and review of past donor-supported interventions, and makes recommendations for achieving stronger impact with future initiatives;
- Regional Human Development Report on HIV/AIDS in Eastern Europe and the CIS “Reversing the Epidemic – Facts and Policy Options”.



*UN House Conference Room hosted the event*

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