

Narrative report on the use of funding for conference „Access of Roma to housing: Housing First vs Housing Ready“

SPOT – Center for Social Issues was granted 9 000 EUR by CoE through EANRS for the organization of a conference and a seminar (together with a site visit) in Prague on October 21 and 22. This report details the use of funding from the CoE.

The grant allowed us to organize two events – an intensive workshop on Housing first approach with Volker Busch-Geertsema, and a conference. The workshop took place on October 21st, and was attended by 16 social scientists, social workers, and people in housing need. There were no local politicians as planned originally, because the event came just after the local elections in the CR, and it was impossible to make them come. On the evening of 21st we organized a working diner/consultation attended by the conference speakers, Vladimir Spidla and his colleague, where we discussed concrete topics at stake in the preparation of Czech social housing system and finance from EU, namely measures for non-segregation, and state aid rules for social housing. The conference on 22nd took place in government palace, and was attended by high-level politicians, Roma leaders, social scientists, social workers, housing stock owners, charities, ministerial officers, NGOs, and others. The total number of registered participants was 84, out of them nine speakers. From the policy makers we had chief advisor to prime minister, minister of labour and social affairs, deputy minister of human rights and high level officers.

Prior to the meeting a background policy paper “NEEDS AND OPTIONS FOR DESIGNING HOUSING-LED PROGRAMS FOR MARGINALIZED ROMA HOUSEHOLDS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC” was prepared by Nora Teller and Stepan Ripka, as well as a position document “System of social housing in the Czech Republic”. The main outputs of the conference are videotaped contributions published on youtube (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6NB_Rh4dVuk&list=PLqFtB07Zce3R9jbSDh81pkN4MJgdqkPYI), conference proceedings with transcripts of the papers which will be published electronically, and conference webpages where all the materials, videos from the conference and presentations will be published. The website will also serve as 1) web for a similar conference next year, 2) it will be regularly updated with recent materials and debates on housing of Roma, housing first and housing ready in the CR. It is a first web of this kind in the CR. The main outcome up to date is direct incorporation of Housing first vs Housing ready debate and arguments presented at the conference in the draft Czech government Social housing concept prepared by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Housing-led approach is clearly indicated as the preferred one in the government concept. The event was covered by national press agency, the main policy attendant Vladimir Spidla told them in an interview that he preferred housing-led approach. One interview with the main academic expert – Geertsema, was already published in Czech national media, and shortened versions of selected papers will be published as well.

The event was organized in co-operation with the Minister of Human Rights. Pictures from the event are available on:

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.714822888600179.1073741838.456724527743351&type=3>