

# **Strategy of Roma Pastoral Work in Slovakia 2020-2022**

on behalf of the Slovak Bishops' Conference  
and the Strategy Working Group

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## Summary

This strategy paper on Roma Pastoral in Slovakia work, in the first chapter describes its mission and briefly the situation of Roma People in Slovakia, its organisational structures, and indicates the first evidence-based results of Roma Pastoral Work as achievement of the previous years' efforts.

The second chapter outlines the process of strategy including baseline, involvement of various stakeholders and external expertise. The third chapter describes the overall objectives of the strategies that will get worked out in more details in the fourth chapter. The overall objectives are: 1./ Establishing the Diocesan Roma Pastoral Centres, 2./ Building capabilities on Roma Pastoral work, e.g. clergy, lay professionals and Roma Pastoral Assistants. 3./ Promoting fundraising activities to cope with shortage of finance and to sustainably increase local capacities 4./ Raising awareness and gaining recognition. The fifth chapter provides the implementation plan 2020 to 2022.

The monitoring and evaluation process will be established to steer and assess the strategy's implementation during the following years.

## 1. About Roma Pastoral Work in Slovakia

### 1.1. Mission

Pastoral Work, in general always consists of four key dimensions that complement and interpenetrate one another:

- Kerygma – Telling about the Gospel
- Liturgy – Celebration the Holy Communion
- Diakonia – Mercy and grace of charity
- Koinonia – Community life and participation in the parishes

Hereby, Pastoral Work is directly addressed to every single person highlighting her/his human dignity, and to their families and local communities they live in.

Roma Pastoral Work in Slovakia combines two main targets of its mission:

- a) **Evangelisation**
- b) **Social Work** based on the virtue of charity and applying professional tools for single, street and community work as well as offering formal and informal education to promote sustainable social changes.

The **parish life** is the place where both targets get linked: through the gospel Roma may find their way to God, celebrate together the Holy Communion, take part in various parish activities (active participation or leadership) and support each other (self-help principle).

## **1.2 Roma Minority in Slovakia**

In Slovakia, Roma ethnicity is the second most common minority (shortly after the Hungarian minority). According to the Atlas of Roma Communities published by Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government for Roma Communities in 2019, around 440,000 Roma live in Slovakia. Most of the Roma live in Eastern Slovakia, one of the most economically backward areas in the country, where overall unemployment and poverty are high. Roma are often the most affected by this social disadvantage because of their lower level of education.

In the Dioceses of Rožňava and Banská Bystrica there live Roma people who speak Roma and Hungary, but they don't speak Slovak at all. This is another problem within the Roma Pastoral Care in the South of Slovakia. Except this, in the area of Rožňava Diocese are active Protestant Churches.

However, here are significant differences in the situation of Roma communities in Slovakia depending on the individual city and municipality. The situation mainly differs due to the historical local context when in some locations the Roma were forced to move to places without sufficient resources and no existing infrastructure. In these places the harm and injuries the Roma experienced is the big barrier to overcome when building a good relationship with the Slovak majority – and that anyway is not easy because some Slovak communities due to experience e. g. with squalidness or begging behaviours but mainly due to nonbreaking stereotypes also nowadays would better wish to determine the social exclusion of the Roma minority.

### **1.3. Organisational Structures**

Chaired by the President, Metropolitan Archbishop Stanislav Zvolenský the Catholic Bishops Conference in Slovakia represents the Roman Catholic and the Greek Catholic Church in the country. Within the Bishops Conference the Vice-president, Metropolitan Archbishop Bernard Bober is responsible for the Roma Pastoral including the Roma and Greek Catholic Roma Missions.

Dr. Renáta Ocilková is Coordinator for Roma Pastoral Care at the Bishops Conference, and as professional in charge of enhancing the frame work conditions with internal and external stakeholders.

In 2019 the Roma Pastoral Care in Slovakia served about 100 Roman Catholic and 30 Greek Catholic parishes with in total 1303 Roman Catholics and 278 Greek Catholics, and with 150 priests in the Roma Pastoral Work with in total 3046 priests, 4 deacons (or students of theology) in the Roma Pastoral Work from 18 deacons in the parish service.

Organisational structure of the Roma Pastoral Work can be described as:

- 1) Institutionalised pastoral work
- 2) Operational pastoral work in parishes.

Roma Pastoral Care is going on in 20 Pastoral Works (as an institutionalized pastoral work) and in 100 parishes (in more informal way).

The Roma Pastoral Care is supported by about 150 clergy, including members of religious orders, 35 lay professionals and over 200 volunteers, mainly Roma Pastoral Assistants. Further there are up to 10 NGOs in the field of Roma Pastoral Work. The SAVORE network was founded for enhancing exchange and collaboration and comprises over 100 persons as members.

### **1.4. Evidence-based Social Changes**

As described many Roma families suffer from unemployment, poverty and no future perspective due to low education standards. The research<sup>1</sup> by Dr. Tomáš Hrustič of the

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<sup>1</sup> Social Inclusion of the Roma by the Religious Path-way (by Institute of Ethnology, Slovak Academy of Sciences) SIRONA 2010

Institute for Ethnology and Social Anthropology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences reviewed the long years' experience of Roma Pastoral Work at the Roma settlements. As a result the author described high potential for positive social changes made in three phases for the enhancement of personal development and self-determination; acceptance of education, active participation in the Slovak society.

1. The initial phase of social change comes along with the evangelization, meaning know about the gospel, the development of personal belief and building a personal relation with God. As many testimonials show the strong experience to be loved by God gives the Roma hope and security so that they will become willing and able to change their lives. In terms of social changes, research shows the higher problem awareness, acceptance of external impulses, step by step the change of mind-sets and increase of taking active responsibility for their families.

2. In the mid-term, the further development of social change reflects the experience of Roma getting involved into the parish work, experiencing spirituality and worship with respect to their specific cultural background, as well as a functioning community where everybody cares for one another. In this phase a lot of social changes can be indicated, especially positive changes of behaviours, like relinquishing of dependencies and violent behaviours, coping with consequences of poverty, changing work attitudes, changing mind-sets towards Slovak majority. They enhance communication, organizational and leadership skills through voluntary services in the parishes. Summarizing one can state that the Roma often are leaving hopelessness and passivity behind, become much more active taking their lives into their own hands, and start actively participating as well in the parishes and the local communities as in the entire Slovak society.

3. In the long term, the social changes have to sustainable break previous behaviours. Aim is to reach social inclusion of Roma people, in particular by their acceptance and acknowledgement of education to overcome unemployment and to break the inheritance of generation poverty.

The best essence of this change, which is going on during pastoral and social activity, is expressed by the term **integral development**, which was developed by the Church in her social doctrine. The term **integral development** follows from the principle of the common good, which according to pastoral theology requires all individuals and social

institutions to act in such way as to enable and assist the integral development of their personalities and all institutions to fulfil their goal.

## **2. Strategy Development**

For the strategy development, the working group collected and analysed inputs from various stakeholders. Open Europe Consulting accompanied the entire process with Ms. Andrea Mewaldt as facilitator during the events and her support in areas such as capacity building, knowledge transfer, empowerment and application process. The strategy development of the Roma Pastoral Care can be summarized in three main points: 1) Working group on Roma Pastoral Strategy; 2) Baseline study; 3) Stakeholder involvement.

### **2.1. Working Group on Roma Pastoral Strategy**

On behalf of the Slovak Bishops Conference in May 2019 a working group was established in charge of developing the Roma Pastoral Strategy - Members of the group were priests of the Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic Churches, one nun and laymen; all highly committed and having long-years' field experience of Roma Pastoral Work – member of the working group - see annex 1.

The first time experience to develop a Strategic Plan on Roma Pastoral Works– further on shortly named “Strategy” – was facilitated by Andrea Mewaldt, consultant of Open Europe Consulting in Munich who is the author of this strategy document summarizing the results of the entire working group and all stakeholders involved. The working group held four internal face-to-face meetings, framed the baseline studies, organised the first International Expert Conference on Roma Pastoral Work in Slovakia and abroad in September 2019 and held several stakeholder meeting to discuss and reflect their interim results.

### **2.2. Baseline Studies –Evaluation of Field Work**

Complementary to the 2018 results of the countrywide survey conducted by Ms. Renáta Ocilková, Coordinator for Roma Pastoral at the Bishops Conference the second major baseline input to the strategy development was provided in form of the evaluation report about the small projects' grant programme funded by Renovabis e.V. (“Support of Roma Pastoral in Slovakia” – period: 2016 – 2018).



The evaluation was conducted by Ms. Edita Bednarova between August and November 2019. The evaluator visited 18 Roma settlements including 3 of them not having been funded as a small control group, and holding interviews with leaders and participants of the locally implemented small projects. For the development of the strategy, the evaluation report provides essential information about results and impact achieved, describes best practice examples, and identifies gaps to be taken as a challenge without generalising. Differences with regard to the confession and local situation have been respected.

## **2.3. Stakeholders' Involvement**

### **2.3.1 Active Participation in Strategy in Development**

a.) Key stakeholders of the Roma Pastoral Work were asked to actively participate in the Pastoral Strategy Development to hold a discussion on main strategies identified by the working group a workshop as its interim results –compare tables of potential strategies which have been in a sequent step have been reviewed by the working group applying the SWOT analysis (S-strengths; W-weaknesses, C-chances, T-threats) to better understand internal and external framework conditions to implement these strategies and finally to choose those with highest potential and little risk.

Interims result have been discussed in the SAVORE network of people, who are working in Roma Pastoral Work in Slovakia as well as in two focus groups with teachers from Catholic schools and with representatives of Roma Pastoral Work in Ukraine and Hungary to integrate international experiences of the neighbouring countries.

b.) The first international conference on Roma Pastoral Work in Slovakia was organised on behalf of the Bishops' Conference in September 2019 in Bratislava to involve expert discussions with representatives from Slovak public administration, research and formal education system and civil society organisations.

c.) In Oktober 2019, during the meeting of Slovak Bishops' Conference as process owner a presentation on the status quo of Roma Pastoral Work and discussion on its strategic based on the working group's interim result took place in Donovaly.

### **2.3.2 Involvement of Stakeholders for Strategy Implementation**

The stakeholder analysis was framed within the Quadruple Helix Model. The interconnection between government, business, academia and community was complemented with the role of both the Roman Catholic and the Greek Catholic Churches. For discussing how in future to involve more stakeholders, the working group reflected on the purpose of Roma Pastoral Work in terms of evangelisation and informal and formal education enhancing changes in religious practices and social behaviours.

Hereby, the involvement of stakeholders depending on their interest and power to promote Roma Pastoral Work in Slovakia has been discussed.

## **3. Overall Objectives**

Referring to the challenges of framework conditions three main overall objectives that are directly contributing to the further development, promotion and sustainability of Roma Pastoral Work in Slovakia I have been defined: 1. Establishment of Diocesan Roma Pastoral Centres 2./ Building capacities and capabilities 3./ Promotion of fundraising activities 4./ Raising Awareness and Gaining Recognition

### **3.1 Establishment of Diocesan Roma Pastoral Centres**

During this strategy period the establishment of Roma Pastoral Centres will start-up with the Centres in the Greek Catholic Diocese Prešov and the Roman Catholic Diocese Košice; and perhaps also the Centres in the Roman Catholic Diocese Spiš and Greek Catholic Diocese in Košice. Later on, the Centres of the religious orders and the Centre of the Roman Catholic Diocese Rožňava will be taken into consideration.

The coordination position will be established at the Slovak Catholic Bishop Conference with its seat in Bratislava.

### **3.2. Building Capabilities**

Roma Pastoral Work is organised and led by a proportionally rather small group of clergy and laymen, some teachers and the increasing number Roma Pastoral Assistants. As an aim much more people need to be engaged in the field.

Professionals as well as volunteers need to get a profound informal initial education to be better prepared for their roles, and during engagement they need networking and mutual exchanges of experience.

The Coordinator for Roma Pastoral Work at the Slovak Catholic Bishop Conference is e.g. responsible for coordinating and in close cooperation with leaders of the Diocesan Roma Pastoral Centres organising the training activities for Roma Pastoral Assistants, fundraisers, project managers and other volunteers, creating materials, supporting local activities and project development, promoting networking and initiating partnerships between parishes with Slovak and Roma majorities.

### **3.3. Promotion of Fundraising Activities**

Funding of Roma Pastoral Work by international church organisations stepwise will decrease during the up-coming years. Thus, e.g. salaries of professionals, pastoral activities in Roma settlements, education programmes for Roma Pastoral Assistants and compensation honoraria of volunteers have to be co-funded by public sources.

To cover this need trainings on strategic planning, application management, project management cycles and project as well as monitoring and evaluation needs to be offered. And upon knowledge transfer often cooperation with other stakeholders as civil society organisations and academia have to be established as the prerequisite for common participation in public tenders.

### **3.4. Raising Awareness and Gaining Recognition**

The stakeholders of Roma Pastoral Work in the field are missing more awareness, recognition and support from side of the Catholic church, from governmental organisations and the Slovak society.

The regular communication about action taking, results and impacts need to be established. With regard to previous achievements the International Conference on Roma Pastoral Works and the presentation at the Slovak Catholic Bishops Conference in autumn 2019 have been the important steps to change for better the internal and external awareness.

Concerning the need to public funding the further promotion of good relations to the public administration in Slovakia is another supportive measure.

## **4. Strategies 2020-2022**

The working group defined strategies to be implemented in the next decade. The following strategies have been selected to be implemented in the period 2020-2022 – compare implementation plan under point 5.

### **4.1. Monitoring and Evaluation**

In the beginning 2020 the Strategy Monitoring Group will be established on behalf of the Slovak Bishop Conference. Result and impact indicators will be defined to all strategies defined. The members of the monitoring group will be trained to monitor the strategy's implementation plan.

In 2022 the monitoring group defines the terms of references for the final external evaluation.

### **4.2. Establishment of the Regional Roma Pastoral Centres**

#### **4.2.1. Infrastructure**

The Diocesan Centres for Roma Pastoral Work will be established for informal education and coordination purposes under the roof of the Slovak Bishop Conference in favour of both Catholic Roma Missions. The centres need the office, training and meeting rooms.

For the establishment, the Bishops Conference is suggested to make use of existing infrastructure or such already under construction, and eventually plan some necessary extensions.

#### **4.2.2. Employment of Training and Program Coordinator**

On behalf of the Slovak Bishop's Conference a priest or lay professional will be employed to develop informal education programmes on Roma Pastoral, create materials, support local activities and project development, promote networking and initiate partnerships between parishes with Slovak and Roma majorities.

### **4.3. Trainings and Support to Local Activities Development**

#### **4.3.1. Education of Priests and Church Professionals**

In the curricula of the priests' seminars Roma Pastoral Work will become a compulsory part of studies. In future almost all priests in the East of Slovakia will be prepared to work with Roma people when leaving the seminar. The courses should be also open for other members of the clergy including religious orders, lay professionals and teachers working in Catholic institutions or schools of the both churches.

#### **4.3.2 Animators' School – Training of Roma Pastoral Assistants<sup>2</sup>**

The preparation of animators (volunteers) that grow into the role of Roma Pastoral Assistants is the core success factor to Roma Pastoral Work. Animators will be trained to acquire communication, organisation and leadership skills. The peer-consultation between animators will be enhanced.

#### **4.3.3. Support of Local Activities and Project Development**

The Coordinator at the Slovak Catholic Bishop conference consults the development of local activities in Roma parishes and communities, content wise and also with regard to fundraising.

Hereby the cooperation and networking, also beyond own set boundaries, are gaining importance.

#### **4.3.4. Partnerships between Slovak and Roma Parishes**

Partnerships between parishes with Slovak and Roma majorities will be initiated. The initiation of such partnerships is expected to produce high impact with regard to break invisible boundaries like mutual prejudices and fears or simply having no opportunities for encounter.

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<sup>2</sup> For more sustainability in undertaking the role independent from single activities the evaluation of the Small Project Programme funded by Renovabis e. V. suggests to allow also some compensating and rewarding honoraria for Roma Pastoral Assistants as the eligible costs in the application.

## **4.4. Fundraising**

The promotion of fundraising activities will insure the implementation of all strategy measures. Fundraising is understood as comprehensive and continuous process.

The Coordinator at the Slovak Catholic Bishop Conference is supporting the application procedures in the various calls of proposals of public authorities, on EU, state and regional levels as well as of private donors.

### **4.4.1. Trainings on Fundraising**

Professionals and volunteers of Roma Pastoral Works will get trained in application management including risk management, building partners consortia and donors' relationship management.

### **4.4.2 Trainings on Project Management**

Professionals and volunteers of Roma Pastoral Works will get trained in project management, including project cycle management, project monitoring (definition of indicators, content and budget monitoring) and project evaluation.

### **4.4.3. Participation in Public Tenders**

Besides international donors of the Catholic Church and other private donors, under this strategic period fundraising in particular takes focus on public funding in Slovakia and EU level. To be successful the relations with governmental organisations on all level will get intensified.

### **4.4.4. Lobbying for Institutional Funding**

The biggest need and challenge is the lobbying for institutional funding to insure HR salaries, public utilities and maintenance of infrastructure.

## **4.5. Communication and Public Relation**

### **4.5.1 Internal Communication**

Communication within Catholic Church of Roma Pastoral Work is essential for more internal awareness and recognition.

Annually the internal communication plan in line with strategy implementation measures will be defined and implemented. This implies e.g. presentations in Catholic

parishes, organisations and institutions as well as the involvement of Catholic press media and Catholic groups in social media.

Once per year the progress of strategy implementation will be presented to the Slovak Bishops Conference.

#### **4.5.2. External Communication**

Public relation is essential for more awareness and recognition of Roma Pastoral Work in the Slovak society.

Annually the public relation communication plan in line with strategy implementation measures will be defined and implemented. This implies e.g. presentations in public events, at governmental and non-governmental organisations and institutions as well as the involvement of public press, media and social media.

#### **4.5.3 Expert Conference**

As the instrument of internal and external communication in 2022 the results and impacts achieved in the field of Roma Pastoral Works will be presented in the expert conference at the end of the strategy's period.

## 5. Strategy Implementation Plan

The strategy implementation plan is indicated in half years sections in the period 2020 to 2022.

	2020		2021		2022	
<b>Strategy Monitoring and Evaluation</b>						
Definition of Strategy Indicators						
Training of Monitoring Group						
Monitoring Process						
Evaluation						
<b>Establishment of the Diocesan Roma Pastoral Centres and Employment of Personnel</b>						
Construction Works /Equipment						
Contracting of Professionals (priests or laymen)						
Contracting of Coordinator (laymen)						
Support of Local Activities and Project Development						
Overall Coordination Activities						
Establishment of Partnerships between Slovak and Roma Catholic Parishes						
<b>Roma Pastoral Trainings</b>						
Priests Education Conception and Materials						
Animator School Conception and Materials						
Conducting Priests' Education						
Conducting Trainings of Animator School						
<b>Fundraising (supported by external exerts)</b>						
Trainings on Fundraising /Writing Applications						
Trainings on Project Management						
Participation in Public Project Tenders						
Lobbying for Institutional Public Funding						
<b>Internal Communication</b>						
Annual Internal Communication Plan and Implementation	Plan		Plan		Plan	
<b>External Communication</b>						
Annual External Communication Plan and Implementation	Plan		Plan		Plan	
Public Conference on Results of Strategy Implementation						



## **Annex 1: List of Working Group Members**

### **Working Group:**

**Martin Mekel**, Greek Catholic Priest from East of Slovakia, Member of the Council for Roma and minorities

**Peter Bešenyei**, Roman Catholic Priest from East of Slovakia, Secretary of the Council for Roma and minorities

**Dr. Renáta Ocilková**, Roma Pastoral Work Coordinator at Slovak Catholic Bishops Conference

**Sr. Silvia Zábavová**, Order Sister (nun), Member of the Council for Roma and minorities

**Tomáš Torkoš**, volunteer working in the West of Slovakia

**Marián Cipár**, Director of KANET, NGO (Project Center by Slovak Catholic Bishops Conference)

**Ján Gyulai**, Member of projects' approval committee

### **Experts:**

**Andrea Mewaldt**, Open Europe Consulting – Strategy Management Expert

**Edita Bednarova** – Evaluation Expert

## **Annex 2: List of Roma Pastoral Organisations**

### **Pastoral Werke**

1. GRM Vranov nad Topľou
2. GRM Stará Ľubovňa
3. GRM Bardejov
4. Šarišské Jastrabie
5. Lomnička
6. Jarovnice
7. Luník IX
8. Smižany
9. Bardejov Poštárka

10. Orechov Dvor
11. Plavecký Štvrtok
12. Krížová Ves
13. Hanušovce
14. Letanovce, Strelník
15. Slivník
16. Veľký Blh
17. Veľká Lomnica
18. Spišské Podhradie
19. Stará Ľubovňa
20. Bystrany

### **Annex 3: List of Members of SAVORE Network**

The SAVORE has got over 100 members that are individual persons from the following areas. They do not represent an organisation.

SAVORE Network works in 5 areas:

- 1) Pastoral Work
- 2) Youth Work
- 3) Entrepreneurship and Engagement in the Society
- 4) Social Work
- 5) Education