Distinguished Chair, Honourable Members of the Committee, Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for the invitation and for the opportunity to take part in this great dialogue.

I am Máté Solymosi, Representative of the Government Commissioner for social policy. I am responsible for Social Inclusion at the Prime Minister's Office of Hungary, focusing on Roma inclusion and cross-sectoral government coordination.

I am speaking on behalf of the Cabinet of Government Commissioner Kriszta Bódis. Our mandate is to develop a national social policy strategy and to facilitate coordination across education, social services, and healthcare.

In the spring of 2026, Hungary experienced a change of government after sixteen years.

This was not simply the end of an other electoral cycle. It marked the fall of a political system built over sixteen years - a system that deliberately kept Roma communities trapped in dependency and poverty, through networks of corrupt Roma leaders.

We did not start with a clean slate.

We inherited a system in which substantial public funds and European Union resources were spent in the name of improving the lives of Roma people, while segregation, territorial inequalities, and unequal access to public services persisted.

And we are not simply talking about ineffective programmes. Under the previous system, the allocation of funding was influenced by political interests and networks of patronage. In some cases, resources intended to address social disadvantage were associated with serious financial irregularities and failures of institutional oversight.

That is why one of our first tasks following the change of government is to review how these funds were used, establish institutional accountability, and ensure that the competent authorities investigate suspected networks of corruption and abuse.

We are still in the process of clearing away the wreckage and at the same time, we must already begin laying the foundations for a new approach to social policy.

Our starting points are equal access to public services, greater social mobility, fairness in institutional practices, and cooperation across policy sectors.

The first major challenge is the selectivity of the education system and the institutional reproduction of social inequalities.

According to research, the education system is highly selective, with students' socioeconomic backgrounds having a particularly strong influence on educational outcomes.

For Roma children, these inequalities are further reinforced by widespread school segregation. As a result, many Roma students face structural barriers to accessing quality education and equal opportunities from an early age.

Educational selection is not solely a consequence of differences in children's family backgrounds. It is also linked to the way institutions operate. Primary schools, when they have the opportunity, make use of selection mechanisms and attempt to create a more homogeneous student population.

School segregation cannot be separated from inequalities in housing and territorial development. Adequate transport, accessible educational institutions and the quality of locally available services all influence the educational opportunities that children can actually access.

Alongside desegregation, creating the pedagogical conditions for inclusive education is also a necessary task. Successfully educating children with different needs together requires differentiated teaching methods, adequate professional support and cooperation between teachers and other supporting professionals.

Early school leaving remains a major challenge for Roma young people in Hungary.

A significant proportion are also neither in employment nor in education or training, highlighting the structural barriers they face in moving from education into the labour market.

Despite relatively strong employment outcomes, vocational education in Hungary still faces serious challenges, particularly weak basic skills and limited opportunities for further education.

A further structural problem arises in adult education and training.

In Hungary, those who are already in a more favourable position in terms of their labour market status and existing skills are more likely to participate in training. Meaning that training opportunities often fail to reach those who need them most.

Inequalities in access to adult education and training are also influenced by practical conditions. The cost and scheduling of training, family responsibilities and transport difficulties all represent barriers to participation.

The labour market situation of Roma women requires particular attention. Roma women have significantly lower employment rates than Roma men, reflecting the cumulative impact of these structural barriers.

The previous government loudly promoted the campaign slogan: **“If you've got job, you've got everything.”**

In reality, employment outcomes cannot be measured solely by the number of people who have jobs. The type of employment, income, job security and opportunities for sustainable labour market advancement are equally important.

Hungary's public works programme illustrates this complex problem particularly clearly, and it also disproportionately affects the Roma population.

According to a 2026 analysis by the Hungarian State Audit Office, the system has increasingly shifted away from its original objective of facilitating transitions into the open labour market, placing greater emphasis on long-term public employment and the performance of municipal functions. Moreover, the “results” achieved in labour market integration have declined over time.

A further problem with the functioning of the system is that the relationship between the allocation of public employment resources and political support. Under certain circumstances, access to employment opportunities has therefore also contributed to the development of relationships of political dependency.

At the same time, barriers to labour market access are not solely related to workers' qualifications. Place of residence, transport connections, the availability of local jobs and employers' recruitment practices also determine employment opportunities.

Public employment must be neither an instrument of political pressure nor a permanent dead end in the labour market.

We must ensure both that access to employment opportunities is transparent, predictable and independent of political loyalty, and that public employment provides a genuine pathway into the open labour market.

As I started:

The change of government after sixteen years gives us an opportunity to fundamentally renew social policy in Hungary.

But political change alone will not end segregation, nor will it automatically make our institutions more equitable.

This requires confronting the legacy of the previous system, strengthening mainstream public services, improving cooperation between policy sectors, and ensuring meaningful participation by the communities concerned.

Our long-term objective, therefore, is to develop a public service system capable of responding to people’s different needs in a coordinated manner, substantially reducing social disadvantage, and making equal access a feature of how institutions operate every day — rather than something dependent on separate programmes.

This is not only a question of equal opportunities for Roma communities.

It is a question of how the Hungarian state functions, and of the quality of our public institutions.