

DRAFT THEMATIC GUIDANCE FICHE FOR DESK OFFICERS

ROMA AND MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES

VERSION 2 – 20/02/2014

RELEVANT PROVISIONS IN THE LEGISLATION

Regulation	Article
Common Provisions Regulation (CPR) (1303/2013)	Art. 15.2. (a)(iii): Integrated approach in the Partnership Agreement Art. 96. 4. (a): Integrated approach in the operational programme Common Strategic Framework (Annex I): 6.5.
ESF Regulation (1304/2013)	Art. 3. 1 b) (ii) Integration of marginalised communities such as the Roma
ERDF Regulation (1301/2013)	Art. 1. (d) Scope of support: investments in social and health infrastructure Art. 5. Investment priorities: Art. 5.9 a) "Investing in health and social infrastructure which contributes to national, regional and local development, reducing inequalities in terms of health status, promoting social inclusion through improved access to social, cultural and recreational services and the transition from institutional to community-based services" Art. 5.9 b) "Support for physical, economic and social regeneration of deprived communities in urban and rural areas" Art. 5.10 "Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning by developing education and training infrastructure"

This is a draft document based on the new ESIF Regulations published in OJ 347 of 20 December 2013 and on the most recent version of the relevant Commission's draft implementing and delegated acts. It may still require review to reflect the content of these draft legal acts once they are adopted.

1. Rationale for the policy and main objectives

The term Roma (used as an umbrella term similarly to political documents of the European Parliament and the European Council)¹ refers to a number of different groups of people who have more or less similar cultural characteristics whether sedentary or not (Roma, Sinti, Kale, Romanichels, Boyash, Ashkali, Egyptians, Yenish, Travellers, Dom, Lom, etc.) identified as such by the Council of Europe, by representatives of the aforementioned Roma groups in Europe and various international organisations (OSCE-ODIHR, European Commission, UNHCR and others).

Since 2010 the European Commission has continuously kept Roma integration high on the political agenda. The Commission put into place a comprehensive set of legal, policy and financial measures, to ensure that the fundamental rights of all EU citizens, including Roma, are effectively promoted and protected. The Commission first and foremost focuses on the effective implementation of these measures.

A primary element of the relevant legal framework is the Council Directive 2000/43/EC on the principle of equal treatment irrespective of racial or ethnic origin prohibiting discrimination in a number of areas, including employment, education, healthcare and housing. The Commission closely monitors its implementation and application by the Member States. The first Commission Communication on "The economic and social integration of the Roma in Europe" (2010) recalls earlier sectorial Council conclusions which have embedded Roma inclusion into EU policy making. It notifies that "any progress which can be achieved in the area of Roma inclusion represents progress too in the inclusion of all ethnic minorities in the EU and vice-versa"². The Communication refers to the Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion, elaborated by the European Platform for Roma Inclusion in 2009, which were included in the Council Conclusions on Inclusion of the Roma in the same year. It specifically emphasises the common basic principle on explicit but not exclusive targeting (no 2) and on "aiming for the mainstream" (no 4).

The Communication urged member states "to take action to ensure that interventions financed by Structural Funds promote equal opportunities and tackle segregation". This was complemented by the Council's call in 2010³ "to ensure that the Structural Funds are accessible to Roma, and that those funds tackling Roma needs have an effective impact, by, for instance, promoting the active involvement of local authorities and organisations dealing with Roma issues, as well as Roma themselves, in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation process".

Forthcoming EP resolutions, Commission communications and Council conclusions have created an EU framework for National Roma Integration Strategies⁴. The 2011 Communication called on MS to adopt or further develop a comprehensive approach to Roma integration and endorse a number of common goals with the aim of closing the gap between Roma and the rest of the society in access to

¹ (SEC(2010)400).

² See also the Common Basis Principles for Roma Inclusion emphasizing that programmes and policies which target Roma must not exclude members of other groups who share similar socio-economic circumstances.

³ Council conclusions on advancing Roma Inclusion 3019th Employment, Social Policy Health And Consumer Affairs Council meeting Luxembourg, 7 June 2010.

⁴ The EP Resolutions on the Situation of Roma people in Europe (September 2010) and on the EU Strategy on Roma inclusion (March 2011);

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 - COM/2011/0173;

Council Conclusions - An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020;

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions National Roma Integration Strategies: A first step in the implementation of the EU Framework - COM/2012/0226

education, employment, health and housing including those elements which are also expected by the relevant ex-ante conditionality set of the CPR.

The ex-ante conditionality on Roma inclusion set for the next programming period 2014-2020 is needed to ensure the efficiency of the ESF and ERDF investments in the field, allowing them to be better targeted to contribute more effectively to the implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategies.

Annual reports to the EP and the Council on progress in the implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategies, as well as under the framework of the Europe 2020 strategy are prepared by the Commission. The annual reporting is focused on EU Roma integration goals in the four crucial policy areas of access to education, employment, healthcare and housing which are detailed in the 2011 Communication and further on in the 2012 Communication. For 2013, the annual report⁵ assesses progress made by the Member States in setting the necessary preconditions for a successful implementation of the strategies and focuses on how to establish the structures for efficient implementation. These include a strong political commitment; working with local and regional authorities and civil society and supporting them to build the necessary administrative capacity; allocating proportionate financial resources – both conditions being particularly relevant for cohesion policy; monitoring and enabling policy adjustment; fighting discrimination convincingly; and establishing national contact points for Roma integration with the mandate and resources to coordinate the implementation of NRIS across sectors and governance levels.

Together with the 2013 Communication the Commission also adopted a **proposal for a Council recommendation** on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States. This notably states that Member States should ensure that appropriate measures are taken to include Roma integration as a priority in Partnership Agreements and identifies a series of specific measures where ESF and ESF co-financing is potentially relevant.

The Country Specific Recommendations (CSR) endorsed by the European Council in July 2013 include a total of eight Roma specific recommendations for 5 Member States (RO, BU, SK, CZ and HU) which are relevant for both ESF and ERDF. These references in CSRs (and corresponding recitals) addressed on the one hand the implementation of National Roma Integration Strategies, aiming to ensure their effective delivery, including via: better coordination between stakeholders (Romania), allocation of sufficient funding (Romania, Bulgaria), establishment of a monitoring mechanism for measuring the impact of actions (Bulgaria), and mainstreaming Roma inclusion goals in all policy fields (Hungary); and on the other hand referred to specific policy developments in the fields of education and employment. It is notable that in the field of education especially the need to ensure effective equal access to quality inclusive mainstream education was emphasised for all five countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania). In the field of employment: promoting activation measures and supporting transition to the labour market (Hungary and Slovakia) were highlighted in recitals accompanying CSRs.

Although the heterogeneity of the living conditions and habitats of the Roma may imply following different strategies, priorities and approaches, the experience has demonstrated that there are some general criteria that need to be followed when aiming at Roma integration; among others, a long-term approach, aiming at permanent solutions, leading to normalisation and avoiding segregation; empowerment of existing local organisations, and building on their experience⁶; improvement of the institutional capacity of local authorities and CSOs closer to the Roma communities, usually

⁵ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Steps forward in Implementing National Roma Integration Strategies

⁶ What Works for Roma Inclusion in the EU

characterised by their remoteness, in order to implement interventions more effectively and sustained in time; empowering the Roma community, involvement of stakeholders in all phases of the inclusion process, awareness raising (both towards majority society and Roma communities), focusing on effective access to rights, and supporting cultural development.

2. How to operationalize the policy theory with regard to the funds?

A high proportion of Roma persons experience extreme poverty and social exclusion. Roma are one of the most marginalised social groups in the EU, facing deep social problems related to low levels of education, high unemployment, inadequate housing, poor health, and wide-ranging discrimination, all of which are interrelated and create a vicious circle of social exclusion. Because of the complexity of the challenge, planning and programming effective interventions for Roma inclusion are most difficult. Nevertheless, there is common understanding on many difficulties and existing good practices.

Because of the gravity of the individual challenges in the single policy areas and the interdependence of the problems, a multi-dimensional integrated approach combining investments in employment, education, healthcare and housing is necessary. Consequently, Roma inclusion may be addressed through multiple thematic objectives and investment priorities by more funds in an integrated manner. The most relevant ESF investment priorities (IPs) are access to labour market, promoting entrepreneurship and self-employment, combating early school-leaving and access to early childhood education and care, active inclusion, access to services and in particular, integration of marginalised communities such as Roma. For ERDF the relevant IPs are those related to social, health and education infrastructure, as well as support for physical, economic and social regeneration of deprived communities in urban and rural areas. The last mentioned IP will be the basis for the continuation of housing investments started in the 2007-2013 period. As provided for in the Common Strategic Framework (Annex I to the CPR), synergies with other funds should also be sought as appropriate, in particular with any financing to be made available from EAFRD for the benefit of Roma communities in rural areas.

The integrated approach has to be ensured at all levels of planning, programming and implementation. Firstly, the Partnership Agreement (PA) has to identify the specific needs of the Roma and set out how the funds and programmes will address them (CPR Art. 15. 2. (a)(iii)). Thus the PA should present a clear understanding of the challenges and the intervention logic through coordinated action by the funds which will address the challenges. It should also specify objectives. Secondly, the operational programmes should set out their contribution to the approach presented in the PA (CPR Art. 96. 4. (a)). It is equally important to follow-up that complementary interventions of the integrated approach are implemented in synergy.

With the specification of the needs, the integrated approach serves the concentration of funds according to the specific needs. Moreover, it is also necessary that the intervention of the funds adds value. Because of the complexity of the challenges and the gravity of each of them, focus areas of the funds should be well identified and complemented by national funds. Although investment needs are enormous and possible interventions fields diverse, the funded actions should have a well identified specific objective with clear effect, including quantified and measurable targets, as well as a baseline against which to measure progress.

Careful consideration should be given to the selection and balance of the most appropriate and effective targeting approach, i.e. mainstreaming, general measures, explicit but not exclusive targeting or specific actions. The chosen approach should be adapted to the institutional background and the relevant policy framework of the planned intervention. In a number of aspects, there are important trade-offs between mainstreaming and specific actions, e.g. as regards unit costs and policy impact (in favour of mainstreaming) vs. outreach to the intended target group and monitoring of participation (in favour of specific targeting). These trade-offs and criteria for consideration are

analysed in detail in the EU Roma Network's guide⁷. It is important to keep in mind that, because of the complexity of the needs, different targeting approaches can be combined, and the strategy can foresee a gradual change in approach, e.g. moving from specific actions towards mainstreaming.

Nevertheless, two relevant common basic principles, namely on explicit but not exclusive targeting (No 2) and the one on "aiming for the mainstream" (No 4) have to be taken into account. These imply that specific targeting can only be a temporary solution. It also follows from these principles that targeting, ensuring a good outreach of the intervention should not result in any form of segregation, even temporarily⁸.

The targeting approach has to be considered also in light of the modality of the integrated approach as set out in the partnership agreement and of the IP selection. In case a country opts for the territorial approach for addressing the specific needs of the poorest geographical areas and would use poverty maps, the most relevant targeting method would be explicit but not exclusive targeting⁹. The selected investment priorities can be also relevant in the choice of the targeting approach. In case of investment priorities which are more closely linked to national institutions, carrying out mainstream policies – e.g. "access to employment for job-seekers..." (ALMPs); reducing early school-leaving and promoting equal access to good-quality early-childhood, primary and secondary education - and the specific objectives of which foresee systemic change in the functioning of the institution or the policy delivery, mainstreaming or general measures might be more relevant. On the other hand, in case of IPs with a specific target group-based approach, e.g. the integration of marginalised communities such as the Roma, explicit but not exclusive targeting or specific actions might be more relevant.

Equally, the targeted needs and the policy context influence the targeting approach too. A mainstreaming approach might be more appropriate when the interventions focus on fields where Roma are more in need or suffer special disadvantages (particularly in the areas of employment, education, vocational training, access to services and housing). This approach has the possible advantage of resulting in more inclusive systems, thus having a more long-term and more sustainable impact and of avoiding parallel structures and duplication of activities. At the same time its risk is not reaching the target group at all and a lack of adaptation in the systems and structures, thus little impact.¹⁰

On the other hand, explicit but not exclusive targeting as well as specific targeting can be justified as well. Often, the socio-economic gap between Roma and non-Roma are so huge that positive and affirmative measures are necessary to compensate disadvantages. In case general policies prove to be ineffective, specific working methods and explicit allocation of resources are required. Therefore, a targeted (explicit but not exclusive or specific targeting) is more recommendable for policies or projects taking place in areas with high Roma concentration and when intensive interventions are necessary to overcome negative trends. The possible advantages of this approach are stronger guarantees of reaching the Roma population, a better adaptability of the measures to the specific needs and thereby greater engagement by the beneficiaries. It is also easier to monitor outcomes

⁷ EURoma network: Tackling Roma needs in the 2014-2020 Structural Funds Programming Period. Guide to improve the planning process

⁸ E.g. specific "catching-up" schools or classes for Roma pupils, where they would benefit of specific, additional support, should not be created. There is also evidence that integrated classes provide better educational outcomes for pupils of both majority and minority background.

⁹ In case of a territorial approach is followed, the five model approaches presented in "What works for Roma inclusion in the EU" provide policy options and guidance on how the 10 common basic principles can be applied in different circumstances of Roma populations with specific characteristics.

¹⁰ EURoma network: "Tackling Roma needs in the 2014-2020 Structural Funds Programming Period. Guide to improve the planning process".

and results. Risks include segregation, parallel structures, duplication of activities and little sustainable impact in mainstream systems.¹¹

3. Interventions related to integration goals

In the four main policy fields of Roma inclusion, the following typical interventions can be suggested.

- **Employment:** promoting (re)entry into the open labour market: provide tailored job search assistance and employment services (such as qualified training), along with effective equal access to mainstream public employment services, support a first work experience and on-the-job training, life-long learning and skill development; eliminate the barriers, including discrimination to (re)enter the open labour market and lack of job opportunities, especially for youth and women; train and employ qualified Roma mediators for the provision of counselling and advice on career opportunities and promote the employment of qualified Roma civil servants; involve Roma youth in the Youth Initiative actions; support measures to transform informal or undeclared work into regular employment. If (re)entry into the open labour market is not possible: support self-employment and entrepreneurship, including through social microcredit programmes, as well as social and micro enterprises employing Roma or providing them with specific services, such as business support.

Note that public employment schemes should only be supported when they constitute a transitional measure for emergency situations and are systematically combined with activation elements (training and up-skilling for long-term unemployed, tailor-made trainings depending on skill needs) to ensure protection of human capital and effective (re)entry into the open labour market.

- **Education:** eliminate school segregation and misuse of special needs education; enrol all disadvantaged children, including Roma, in mainstream good-quality early childhood education and care, including with targeted support if necessary; enforce full compulsory education and promote vocational training; reduce early school leaving with a focus on secondary education; support second-chance education and the transition between educational levels and to the labour market; improve teacher training and school mediation; use inclusive, personalised teaching and learning methods, including learning support for struggling learners and fighting illiteracy; raise parents' awareness of the importance of education, support families and encourage greater parental involvement. Infrastructural investments should focus on improvement of access of marginalised children, including Roma, to mainstream quality childcare, pre-school, public education services (e.g. extension of capacities, if necessary, and taking sustainability into consideration).
- **Health:** extend health and basic social security coverage and services (also via addressing registration with local authorities); improve the access for Roma, alongside other people facing specific challenges, to primary, emergency and specialised services; launch awareness raising campaigns on regular medical checks, pre- and postnatal care, family planning and immunisation; ensure that preventive health measures reach out to Roma, in particular women and children; improve living conditions with focus on segregated settlements with the long-term aim of desegregation. In line with the specific reference of the corresponding ERDF investment priority to the reduction of inequalities in terms of health status, infrastructural investments should focus on closing the gap between Roma and other patients so as to improve access to prevention, primary, emergency and specialised healthcare services.
- Both education and health infrastructural investments should be part of the mainstreaming approach. In such cases marginalised groups such as the Roma are not the specific focus, but their needs should be taken account of in the relevant strategic frameworks. This is especially

¹¹ Ibid.

relevant for education infrastructure, given the need to eliminate school segregation, including ending inappropriate placement of Roma pupils in special needs schools. The thematic guidance fiches on early childhood education and care, early school leaving and on health are relevant in this context.

- **Housing:** promote desegregation; facilitate local integrated housing approaches with special attention to public utility and social service infrastructures; where applicable, improve the availability, affordability and quality of (as well as the effective equal access of Roma to) social housing and halting sites with access to affordable services as part of an integrated approach. Investments are suggested to focus on an appropriate number of municipalities, segregated neighbourhoods or micro-regions, taking into account the estimated funding for the 2014-2020 period and the targeting of support. When housing investments are envisaged within segregated neighbourhoods they should be in line with local integrated action plans aiming at tackling the spatial and social isolation of the marginalised community. These urban integrated action plans are supposed to foresee measures for the larger metropolitan area and surrounding rural communities, in particular as concerns access to services and to the local economy.
- Although not explicitly part of the Roma integration goals, social infrastructure can also be an important element, for example through support for social services in socially excluded Roma locations. Additionally, measures in favour of deinstitutionalisation can be relevant for Roma in certain Member States where the proportion of children in institutions is high.

4. Territorial issues

The reinforced territorial approach of the new programming period offers new possibilities for the design and implementation of integrated approaches. These include the potential use of Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI's) and Community-led local development provided for in the Common Provisions Regulation, as well as the strategies for sustainable urban development under ERDF. Such strategies should set out integrated actions to tackle the economic, environmental, climate and social challenges affecting urban areas. The proposal for a Council Recommendation states that Member States should ensure that applications from local authorities for urban regeneration projects shall include, whenever relevant, integrated housing interventions in favour of marginalised communities and promote Community-led Local Development and integrated territorial instruments supported by the European Structural and Investment funds.

In order to ensure an integrated and focused approach of the Roma inclusion interventions, poverty maps¹² can be a good practice. On the basis of small area estimation of high territorial concentration of people at-risk-of-poverty, the maps can help targeting the interventions on the disadvantaged areas and groups most affected by poverty, social exclusion or discrimination, such as the Roma, thus increasing the effectiveness of the funds utilised.

In their PA, Member States should present an integrated approach to address the specific needs of geographical areas most affected by poverty or of target groups at the highest risk of discrimination or social exclusion. Desk Officers are encouraged to screen the information provided by the Member State in the light of the results of the poverty mapping and utilise the latter wherever necessary and available.

In any event, the identification of disadvantaged micro-regions or segregated neighbourhoods, using already available socio-economic and territorial indicators, is a requirement of ex-ante conditionality.

¹² Poverty maps are elaborated by the World Bank in collaboration with national authorities for EU-12.

5. Implementation issues

Implementation is a critical issue, given that achieving progress on the ground has proved difficult to date. Furthermore, the recent Commission Communication focuses on the structural preconditions that are indispensable for successful implementation. A number of the features of the PA are critical in this respect:

- **Integrated approach:** MS should set out in their PA an integrated approach to address the specific needs of the above-mentioned areas or groups and should indicate which ESI Funds will be used, the main types of actions to be supported and the programme(s) involved.
- **Implementing structures:** relevant to this topic are the arrangements to ensure effective implementation to be described by MS, notably the identification of areas where ESI Funds will be used in a complementary manner, how local authorities will be involved, the mechanisms and structures to coordinate and support this usage, as well as the coordination mechanisms set up at national and regional levels between the bodies responsible for the implementation of national and regional programmes.
- **Partnership:** In line with the principles governing the ESI Funds, bodies representing civil society, NGOs and bodies responsible for promoting equality and non-discrimination should be among the partners involved in the partnership organised by the MS for preparation of the PA and subsequently all programming phases. In the PA the MS should indicate how they have applied this principle, and list the partners involved. Given that it will be necessary to foresee measures at the local level for the empowerment and effective participation of the target populations, it is important that representatives of marginalised groups are involved at an early stage.
- **Administrative capacity:** Member States should provide an assessment in their PA on the needs for the reinforcement of administrative capacity of the (national, regional and especially local) authorities and beneficiaries, taking into account the experience from the current programming period, including that identified by the Commission. In the case of marginalised groups, including Roma, there is a clear need in terms of reinforced administrative capacity at the local level, including capacity building for local authorities and grassroots civil society organisations. This point is crucial for effective participative planning, ownership, efficient and transparent management and sustainable implementation. There is evidence that involvement of academic institutions and of Regional Structural Fund Agencies, where they exist, constitute a particularly valuable asset in this process and are an important factor for the sustainability of the process.

As regards monitoring and evaluation, it is important to ensure that effective data collection mechanisms be in place¹³ which are able to measure the impact of the co-financed investments and reforms on marginalised communities, including Roma. For that, both technical assistance and interventions under Thematic Objective (TO) 11 can be relevant. On the one hand, Technical Assistance (TA) can be used to improve data collection in the co-financed measures, for instance,

¹³ The “Pan-European Coordination of Roma Integration Methods-Roma Inclusion” (the Roma Pilot Project) has identified putting in place effective data collection mechanisms as a development need.

base-line estimations, surveys, disaggregation of data according to target groups and target-group specific evaluations about the impact of the co-funded measures. On the other hand, support through TO 11 can be relevant to improve the capacity of social departments to follow-up the impact of (changes in) social policies on marginalised communities, including Roma. (More guidance can be found in the thematic guidance fiche on institutional capacity building.)

Guidance should be prepared for the benefit of Member States as follow-up to the COCOF note related to the implementation of integrated housing interventions in favour of marginalised communities under the ERDF (COCOF 10/0024/01 of 28/01/2011). The scope of the future guidance could be expanded to cover the integrated interventions of ESF and ERDF for each of the Roma integration goals and cover issues related to segregation (e.g. spatial and educational).

Linkage should be established with the ROMACT project. This is a recently launched initiative of the Council of Europe which benefits from financial support from the Commission and has as its aims the building up of political will and understanding of Roma inclusion at local and regional level as well as supporting the capacity to design and implement Roma inclusion measures. Although it is formally separate from Cohesion policy, it should be ensured that the results of this project are capitalised on in the implementation of the 2014-2020 programmes.

Member States should also utilise the results of all relevant assistance provided by international organisations, including the World Bank (e.g. on the poverty mapping exercise), the Council of Europe, the UNDP and other institutions and cooperate with them at national, regional and local level where relevant to achieve complementarity, synergies and efficient use of the available resources and expertise. This could mirror the on-going cooperation activities between the Commission and these institutions.

6. Lessons learnt

- Experience has shown that concentration of resources on the most needy is a critical issue, as dilution has occurred where municipalities have extended the concept of deprived zones in order to include other parts of the city. Targeting and poverty mapping are intended to redress this.
- In order to encourage mutual understanding and acceptance of projects there is a need to ensure wider civil participation at the stage of project preparation.
- Projects should not be ethnically exclusive but should be to the advantage of all deprived groups within a given area.
- The implementation of comprehensive local strategies involving financing from several programmes cannot succeed without a strong coordinator of the relevant managing authorities who is adequately empowered
- Involvement of NGOs, who closely work with the communities in project implementation, is an important factor.
- There is a need for long-term assistance to local authorities and stakeholders and reinforcement of their administrative capacity in this policy area.
- The funds may not be used for actions contributing to any form of segregation and discrimination.
- The funds should not be used to support services that do not lead to the integration of the Roma and that become parallel services.
- Desegregation in housing and education projects has in practice proved difficult to tackle and requires further methodological developments.

- Mainstream policy reforms should only be supported if they address the need of promoting effective equal access of disadvantaged such as Roma to quality mainstream education, employment, healthcare and housing.

Examples

Education

"A Good Start: Scaling-Up Access to Quality Services for Young Roma Children" (HU, SK, RO, FYROM)

The challenges that have been addressed: low school performance of Roma children and low access to quality early childhood education and care services.

Description: The "A Good Start (AGS)" project, which was run by the Roma Education Fund, proposes that it is possible to provide quality ECEC activities to disadvantaged communities through well-designed, community based services. AGS was designed to adapt to the specific needs of each community and to the particular barriers to ECEC activities each community faces. Starting in June 2010 and ending in June 2012, the project has intended to start a long-term support for Roma children across a range of their developmental needs, a key element to breaking the cycle of poverty.

The two school year long project was financed from a 2 million EUR budget by the European Commission, DG Regional and Urban Policy, and co-financed by the Roma Education Fund, operated in 16 localities in four countries – HU, FYROM, RO, and SK. The project directly targeted almost 4000 disadvantaged Roma and non-Roma children from birth to six/seven years old and their parents or care givers by offering pre-school, community, and home-based services.

Through an explicit but not exclusive targeting approach, AGS activities involved children, parents, local preschools, local government bodies, Roma communities in general, and – to a lesser extent – national governments. The different types of activities facilitated through AGS included community motivation events on education and health issues for parents, parenting education, home visits, and assistance to families in enrolling their children to preschools. These also included various forms of support for preschool attendance of children: material support such as clothes, shoes, school supplies and hygiene packages, the facilitation of transport to and from preschool, accompaniment of children to and from schools, and tutoring for pupils attending the first grade of primary schools. As such, AGS activities were targeted at a wide range of actors, with local partner NGOs having considerable flexibility in its local approach.

Results and impact: As the most important result after the project positive tendencies in the enrolment of children and regular attendance of pre-schools were indicated in the Household Survey results. Non-enrolment rate (share of children staying at home) was decreasing continuously with rising age of children in all countries, with different breakpoints when enrolment rates substantially increased. Improved relationships between pre-school facilities and Roma families were registered as well as close relations with local authorities, reinforced dialogue and awareness raising.

Weaknesses: cooperation with local authorities, kindergartens, schools was not always satisfactory; sustainability of the actions is not always ensured.

Employment

ACCEDER Project (Spain).

The challenge that has been addressed: lack of access of Roma to existing active training and employment policies. Description: The ACCEDER programme is co-funded by ESF and ERDF and managed by the Secretariado Gitano Foundation. The main priority of the ACCEDER Programme is for Roma people to access the labour market, thus achieving equal opportunities for the Community.

Roma access to the labour market is processed mainly through labour integration actions such as individual employment itineraries and the development and improvement of human resources. The beneficiaries are reached through explicit but not exclusive targeting.

The programme focuses on two main axes: a) the development of grassroots intervention and actions regarding employment of Roma and b) the promotion of pro-active policies for the Roma. The first type of intervention covers all individual insertion paths activities, from guidance to activities to facilitate insertion in the labour market while the second type of intervention aims at promoting strong partnership structures at local, regional and national level for the better development of the programme itself by joining efforts and creating synergies, as well as by promoting a better understanding of the complexity and umbrella of needs of the Roma.

Results and impact: (1) Spanish Government's positive response: the Roma issue has been placed in the political agenda; (2) increased levels of employability; (3) increased presence of Roma in mainstream services; (4) increased value of education/training as a means for labour inclusion; (5) in some cases, breaking down vicious circle of dependence on social benefits; (6) strong partnership ties.

Until July 2009 47,778 persons have been helped by the programme (started on 1999). 72% of them were of Roma origin. This result exceeds considerably the initial target of 20,000 beneficiaries. 33,827 persons have been placed in the labour market thanks to ACCEDER, 70% of them are Roma and 51.4% are women.

Healthcare

Health mediators (Romania)

The challenge that has been addressed: low access of Roma to medical services.

Description: In Romania, in order to increase the access of Roma people to public health services, the government employed approximately 450 health mediators by 2011. Their role is to facilitate the dialogue between the Roma and medical institutions and staff, thereby adapting mainstream services to the needs of the target group (mainstreaming). They actively support Roma people in the process of obtaining identification documents, health insurances, registering on the lists of family doctors and make mothers aware of various health issues.

Results and impact: (1) increased access of Roma people to public health services; (2) Romanian Government's positive response: the programme has been taken over by the Ministry of Health and the Roma health mediator has been introduced within the Romanian Classification of Occupations (has been institutionalized).

Since this has represented a positive practice, one Roma inclusion goal of the Romanian government is to increase the number of health mediators by 25% by 2020.

Housing

In Spain, **Madrid** has been carrying out a gradual slum eradication programme since 1998. This has targeted more than 10 Gitano shanties and provided social housing in mixed environments for about 10.000 people.

A major feature of the programme has been the provision of individualised and regular support for ensuring access to mainstream education, health services and employment both before and after the resettlement for an average of 5 years.

The existence of a strong coordinating mechanism (IRIS, Instituto de Realojamiento e Integración) constitutes another crucial success factor in ensuring complementarity of the different actions, smooth cooperation of the different administrative levels (municipal, regional, national) and services, involvement of stakeholders.

Success rate is reported as approaching 90% (at least before the crisis).

Such interventions can rightly be called good practice. Nevertheless, they are feasible in large, wealthy western European cities with important social housing stock, small (relatively to the size of the city) slums or settlements, strong administrative capacity and solid local civil society. Furthermore they concern exclusively interventions aiming at resettlement of the target groups. As such, they are not replicable in all Member States but the integrated methodology followed can be adapted to a number of situations.

4. Further reading

- Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2000:180:0022:0026:EN:PDF>
- Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - The social and economic integration of the Roma in Europe
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:0133:FIN:EN:PDF>
- Council Conclusions on Inclusion of the Roma - 2947th Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council meeting, Luxembourg, 8 June 2009
http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/lsa/108377.pdf
- Council conclusions on advancing Roma Inclusion - 3019th Employment, Social Policy Health and Consumer, Affairs Council meeting, Luxembourg, 7 June 2010
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=5578&langId=en>
- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0173:FIN:EN:PDF>
- Communication of 21 May 2012 on National Roma Integration Strategies: a first step in the implementation of the EU Framework
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52012DC0226:en:NOT>
- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Steps forward in Implementing National Roma Integration Strategies
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- Proposal for a Council Recommendation on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States
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- EC: "What works for Roma inclusion in the EU"

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