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“Reinforcing Policy Learning for Roma Inclusion”

Country-by-country meetings

As agreed at the launch meeting of this ESF Learning Network, “Reinforcing policy learning for Roma inclusion” (*EURoma +*), that took place on the 28th May 2013 in Brussels, we are in the process of organising the next Network action: the country-by-country meetings. This document aims to help prepare the meetings by providing further details on the organisation and content.

Aim of the meetings

- ▶ To draft a baseline analysis regarding the current Structural Funds programming period in each of the participating countries to learn relevant lessons for the next programming period.
- ▶ To deepen the discussion on the subjects addressed at the launch event (explicit but not exclusive targeting, national-local coordination and implementation mechanisms, integrated approach, partnerships, alignment between policies and funds, Roma involvement, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, etc.).
- ▶ To understand the Roma issues, adjust and concretise EU principles and messages.

Working method

- ▶ Working guidelines (template) will be provided in advance in order to harmonise the country meetings contents so as to be able to compare results.
- ▶ Technical Secretariat will contact individually each of the partners to agree on a date and on conditions for the organisation of the one-day meeting in the respective countries (expected to take place between mid-September and mid-October).



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Participants' profile

- ▶ Key agents in the planning and implementation of Structural Funds and in the development of Roma policies (a small group of participants).
- ▶ The Technical Secretariat will also participate in the meeting in order to facilitate the meeting, gather main messages raised and draft the report.
- ▶ Suggested number of participants: 5 or 6 agents from ESF, ERDF, NRCP, and other relevant actors: Intermediate Bodies / local and/or regional administrations / civil society representatives...

Expected output

- ▶ Joint report based on country-by-country meetings. The report will include:
 - ▶ An analysis of the main advances as well as existing difficulties during the current programming period as regards the use of the Structural Funds for Roma inclusion and how the latter are being addressed
 - ▶ The state-of-play in each country, including the key aspects which should be addressed during the next programming period, and the types of actions that shall be undertaken to improve the situation of the Roma population.
 - ▶ Proposals and recommendations for Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes based on mutual learning and lessons learnt.

Calendar

- ▶ Second part of 2013 :
 - ▶ The country-by-country visits will take place in Sept-Oct
 - ▶ The elaboration of the report will take place between Oct and November



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Template for the preparation of country meetings

Rationale

Significant progress has been made in recent years in terms of raising Roma issues on the political agenda of the European Union (EU) and member states (MS), and in terms of explicitly addressing Roma inclusion issues in Structural Funds. In fact, while in 2007 the question was how to include Roma in Structural Funds, by 2013 stakeholders are focusing on how to achieve real impact through Structural Funds on the living conditions of the Roma population, especially in a context of crisis. The emergence of a favourable political context for Roma inclusion is taking place with the recent development of an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS). Today, the challenge is to reduce the gap between this positive policy framework and its implementation on the ground, and to link the NRIS to Partnership Agreements (PAs) and National Reform Programmes (NRPs).

The recent EC Proposal for a Council “Recommendation on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States” (26.6.2013) insists on the need for “*Member States [to] ensure that appropriate measures are taken to include Roma integration as a priority in the Partnership Agreements on the use of European Structural and Investment Funds for the period 2014–2020, taking into account the size and poverty rates of the Roma communities and the gap between Roma and non-Roma, as well as the challenges identified by the European Semester for most concerned Member States*”.¹

We are at a critical juncture, as the decisions taken this year regarding Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes (OPs) will have long-term implications (2014-2020). The planning process must be based on the lessons learned during the current programming period and should concentrate objectives with a view to achieving a more effective use of Structural Funds for the inclusion of vulnerable groups, including Roma in the next programming period.

PART 1. Taking stock of the current programming period 2007-2013

There is no single managing model or implementation mechanism across the EU, but rather a combination of systems and approaches among different countries, adapted to different national and local circumstances. In some MS, Roma inclusion needs are tackled through different OPs: as mainstream social inclusion measures, including specific axes targeting Roma explicitly, or as part of programmes/measures aimed at vulnerable communities and groups. Some MS have developed specific OPs, measures and actions for Roma, or a territorial approach focusing on areas where Roma are concentrated.

¹ Art. 2(10). Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/com_2013_460_en.pdf.



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In fact, there is no single 'right' approach, and it was observed that a combination of mainstream and targeted interventions may be the most appropriate approach to Roma inclusion through SF.

Furthermore, a trend towards more interconnected and comprehensive measures targeting the multidimensionality of Roma exclusion and poverty is taking place, as well as the development of complementary actions in different fields and with different EU funds. Improvements have taken place in relation to institutional coordination mechanisms both vertically and horizontally.

Taking stock of these advances, participants at the meeting highlighted a series of **challenges and lessons learned in four areas** in the launch meeting of the *EURoma+* network, specifically in relation to:

1. **Policy approach.** Several participants emphasised the fragmentation of policies in most countries, both at horizontal and vertical levels.
2. **Management system.** Participants underlined the need for integrated operations, for a partnership approach involving more actors, for long-term approach, and for the complementarity of projects.
3. **Implementation mechanisms.** Participants highlighted the need for a simplification of cost options, for the adaptation of measures to different circumstances, and to resolve the delays affecting the initiation of the projects' implementation.
4. Specific issues and problems related to **gathering information and collecting ethnic data for evaluation and monitoring purposes.** The scarcity of indicators and limited ethnic data collection in many MS add to the difficulty of reporting on results. Hence the importance of transferring knowledge among MS.

The **following questionnaire** has been designed to build on the discussions of the launch meeting of *EURoma+*, with a view to fine tuning our understanding of the obstacles to the effective use of Structural Funds for Roma inclusion and to identify possible ways to overcome them.

Managing model and approach to Roma inclusion in OPs

- ▶ Approach:
 - ▶ How was the managing model for SF interventions with Roma foreseen? Eg.
 - ▶ Centralised public management;
 - ▶ Decentralised public management;
 - ▶ Private centralised management within the context of national public-private partnerships;
 - ▶ Private decentralised/local management within the context of national public-private partnerships;
 - ▶ Did you foresee Roma as direct or indirect (as part of vulnerable groups) beneficiaries of the OPs?
 - ▶ Did Roma feature in national OPs and/or rather regional OPs? Why?



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- ▶ Did Roma feature only in the ESF OPs, or also in ERDF and/or EAFRD OPs?
- ▶ Did you design specific Roma OPs or specific actions for Roma inclusion within Social Inclusion or other OPs? Why?
- ▶ What approach (es) to Roma inclusion was (were) most favoured in the design of the OPs (explicit targeting, mainstreaming approach, territorial approach...)? Why?
- ▶ Areas of intervention
 - ▶ What were the priority areas of investment and why? Employment, education, housing, healthcare, access to services? What informed these decisions (any specific report/analysis...)?
 - ▶ Were equal treatment and anti-discrimination mainstreamed into OPs, i.e. included as cross-cutting measures in different sectors of intervention (employment, housing...)?
 - ▶ What budget was foreseen for measures explicitly benefitting Roma under OPs?
 - ▶ If no explicit measure was foreseen in the planning process, did you create a specific line of investment or OP for explicit targeting?

Implementation mechanisms of the OPs and difficulties encountered in the implementation process

- ▶ Implementation mechanisms:
 - ▶ How was the implementation of measures aimed at Roma inclusion foreseen? E.g.
 - ▶ Short-term/annual calls for proposals or other tendering process;
 - ▶ Direct designation;
 - ▶ Long-term contracts;
 - ▶ ...
 - ▶ Have changes in implementation mechanisms taken place during the programming period?
 - ▶ What potential intermediate bodies were identified and what informed your choice of intermediate bodies? Did you involve private intermediate bodies? Why? How did it work?
 - ▶ Were beneficiaries of Roma projects rather municipalities, Roma associations, pro-Roma NGOs...? What are the main state and private organisations that implemented SF-cofinanced projects for Roma inclusion?
 - ▶ Did you make use of global grants? Why? How did it work?



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- ▶ Did you prioritise long-term or short-term projects? Why? Do you think this was the right choice/would you make the same choice if you had to choose again?
- ▶ Difficulties encountered:
 - ▶ What have been the main obstacles and shortcomings you have encountered when implementing the Structural Funds for Roma inclusion? Please provide details on the issues that you consider key. How did you address them?
 - ▶ Did the obstacles referred to above cause a revision of OPs or of the implementation mechanisms? If so, what specific measures did you take?
 - ▶ Did you change some of the measures and operations relevant to Roma inclusion during the programming period? What changes did you make and why?

Coordination mechanisms and alignment between policies and funds

- ▶ Coordination mechanisms between actors:
 - ▶ How were they foreseen in the planning process? What were the contending views on how to coordinate the actions both at horizontal and at vertical level? Who were involved? Why did you choose such coordination mechanism(s)?
 - ▶ Did coordination mechanisms evolve or change over time during the programming period? What measures did you take to improve them? Why?
- ▶ Alignment between policies and funds:
 - ▶ Did the NRIS inspire any revision of the OPs relevant to Roma inclusion, in relation to:
 - ▶ coordination mechanisms;
 - ▶ implementation mechanisms;
 - ▶ monitoring and evaluation systems?
 - ▶ Did the NRIS inspire a revision of axes, measures and operations and explicit budget allocations for Roma in OPs?
 - ▶ Did the Europe 2020 Strategy and the Semester process inspire any revision of the OPs relevant to Roma inclusion, in relation to coordination and implementation mechanisms, to monitoring and evaluation systems?
 - ▶ Are Regional OPs aligned with national priorities for Roma inclusion?



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Monitoring, results and impact

- ▶ Planning of the monitoring and evaluation system:
 - ▶ How did you foresee the monitoring and evaluation systems for OPs?
 - ▶ How did you obtain information on whether Roma participated in OPs?
 - ▶ Did you foresee the disaggregation of information collected on beneficiaries by ethnicity, age and gender?
 - ▶ Were measurable indicators for results established?
 - ▶ What information systems and what frequency of evaluations did you foresee?
- ▶ Results and impact:
 - ▶ Do you have an impact assessment of OPs based on a set of measurable indicators?
 - ▶ What are the main results of the monitoring and evaluations undertaken?
 - ▶ On the basis of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms established, and on the indicators established, how do you assess the impact of programmes co-financed with Structural Funds on the living conditions of the Roma?
 - ▶ Did evaluations encourage an overhaul of coordination and implementation mechanisms? Were the latter revised accordingly?

Participation of stakeholders in the programme cycle

- ▶ Partnerships and consultation mechanisms:
 - ▶ Were consultation mechanisms established in the planning of OPs?
 - ▶ What actors were involved in the programme cycle?
 - ▶ Were regional and local authorities involved, for example through networks or platforms? How did it work?
 - ▶ Were civil society organisations, including Roma representatives, Roma associations, or NGOs working with Roma involved? How did it work?



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- ▶ Have other actors (regional and local authorities, civil society organisations) been involved in the monitoring and evaluation of OPs? When and how were they involved?

General assessment: taking stock of the current programming period

- ▶ In your experience, what have been the key lessons learned of the current programming period regarding interventions with Roma under Structural Funds?
- ▶ What have been the strengths and weaknesses of:
 - ▶ the planning process
 - ▶ the coordination mechanisms established in the OPs
 - ▶ the implementation mechanisms established in the OPs
 - ▶ the monitoring and evaluation systems established in the OPs
- ▶ What are the elements that should be maintained and what elements should be changed?

PART 2. Opportunities in the preparation of the next programming period

We are in a key moment in the conception and the planning process of the next programming period. Policy decisions and political commitment are crucial to achieve an appropriate connection between the NRIS (policy tool) and the SF (financial tool). However, it is not only matter of willingness; it also requires a proper understanding of the subject, through shared analysis and diagnosis, and the creation of appropriate conditions for actions. We need to take stock of previous lessons and to incorporate them in the planning process of the PAs and OPs. However, we need to demonstrate impact through development of indicators, thematic concentration and integrated approach.

In the on-going process of preparing the PAs and the related OPs for 2014-2020, member states have an opportunity to better design effective interventions and to allocate the necessary financial resources for improving the living conditions of Roma people across Europe.

Structural Funds are the EU's main instrument to contribute to achieving Europe 2020 goals. These goals will not be achieved without investments in Roma inclusion (eg. ESF labour market integration, fighting early school leaving, improving access to public services, infrastructure including social infrastructure, etc.). The ESF and ERDF have a key role to play in Roma inclusion efforts in the context of tight national budgets.



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In relation to the Common Provisions and ESF regulation, questions of quantity and quality currently promoted by the EC are being debated by the Council and Parliament: in relation to quantity, more funding for investment into people and employment and social policy reforms, with an ESF minimum share; more funding on social inclusion with 20% earmarking of the ESF budget for this purpose, and a specific investment priority “Comprehensive socio-economic integration of marginalised communities such as the Roma”. With regard to quality, the main provisions focus on the development of effective partnerships, on improving the access to funds, and on the development of integrated approaches to address the specific needs of target groups at highest risk of exclusion by all relevant EU funds.

The launch meeting of *EURoma+* highlighted the following key issues to take into account in the preparation of the next programming period:

- **Firstly, in relation to the reference to Roma in PAs.** Roma are mentioned in almost all National Strategic Frameworks. This constitutes important progress, because only one country referred to Roma in 2000. But we cannot limit ourselves to a reference. MS must detail the kinds of measures foreseen and how they will be developed.
- **Secondly, with regard to different investment priorities and entry points.** It is possible to tackle Roma needs from different objectives and investment priorities in mainstream programmes – by dealing with social inclusion issues MS will deal with Roma needs or by developing specific measures for Roma. The key question is: how do we guarantee that Roma will be effectively tackled in programmes? This implies addressing issues of disaggregated, ethnic data collection.
- **Thirdly, concerning the combination of funds, for instance for integrated operations.** Stakeholders are looking for synergies between different funds, but it is not easy to make progress on multi-fund programmes due in part to technicalities.
- **Fourthly, in regard of integrated operations.** There are different ways to follow an integrated approach. For some MS, this is mainly based on a territorial approach, when Roma are concentrated in specific areas. In other cases, the focus is to tackle housing issues – there is an opportunity under ERDF regulation but little has been done about using the opportunity of integrated operations based on housing. The approach must be more holistic to work with communities, and in this light, thematic concentration and integrated approach are key to achieve results on the ground.
- **Fifth, in relation to National Roma Contact Points (NRCP),** there are different options and situations. In some countries the information provided is that the NRCP is consulted in the development of the PA and OPs. However, this only constitutes one step in cooperation processes. In other countries, manifest progress is taking place towards coordination, which moves towards bridging policies with economic resources and tools. Participation of NRCP in policy design is uneven.

In light of aforementioned lessons learned and key issues to take into account, **the following questionnaire seeks to inform a reflection and debate on ways to achieve a more effective use of SF for Roma inclusion purposes in the next programming period.**



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Preparing the next programming period

- ▶ What stage are you at in the negotiation and planning process of the Partnership Agreement (PA) and Operational Programmes (OPs)?
- ▶ Approach:
 - ▶ How do you conceive the next programming period in relation to Roma inclusion in terms of managing models? How is the structure? How do you foresee the interventions with Roma in the OPs? Eg.
 - ▶ Explicit Roma OP,
 - ▶ Social Inclusion OP including explicit measures with Roma
 - ▶ Explicit measures for vulnerable groups, including Roma
 - ▶ National or regional OPs
 - ▶ ESF and/or other funds?
 - ▶ Multifund options?
- ▶ Alignment between policies and funds:
 - ▶ How are the PA and OPs aligned with the Europe 2020 Strategy, the Semester process and the NRIS respectively?
 - ▶ Are you taking into consideration the priority areas and the main objectives of the National Roma Integration Strategy when planning the next programming period?
 - ▶ What is the expected contribution of Structural Funds to the National Roma Integration Strategy in your country?
- ▶ Partnership:
 - ▶ How are the Partnership principle expected to be incorporated into the PA and OPs? What partners are you consulting in this planning stage? How is the process?
 - ▶ To what extent are you involving the National Roma Contact Point and other Roma-related stakeholders in the planning process of the Partnership Agreement?
 - ▶ How do you foresee partnership during the OPs implementation stage?
- ▶ Management system and coordination mechanisms:
 - ▶ How do you foresee the managing model as regards Roma inclusion? What kind of Intermediate Bodies and beneficiary bodies do you plan to involve in the implementation?
 - ▶ How do you foresee the coordination mechanism for the next programming period? Do you foresee any changes as regards the current coordination mechanisms? If so, why and what are they?



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▶ Implementation mechanisms:

- ▶ Do you plan using integrated interventions or following a territorial approach? Why? How is it conceived?
- ▶ Have multi-fund options or complementarity of funds been included in the PA and OPs for the purpose of integrated interventions?
- ▶ Do you foresee the use of Global Grants?
- ▶ Do you intend to adopt a long term approach in funded projects and programmes to ensure the sustainability of actions?
- ▶ How do you intend to resolve implementation bottlenecks?
- ▶ Do you foresee the simplification of some administrative procedures, for instance in accessing national funds?
- ▶ Do you foresee the use of simplified management mechanisms as proposed in the Regulations, e.g. for small-scale operations?
- ▶ Do you foresee the use of Technical assistance to reinforce actions with Roma (research, mutual exchange, etc.)?
- ▶ Has funding been earmarked for Roma inclusion measures under Structural Funds? Have budget lines and investment priorities been defined? If so, what are they?

▶ Monitoring and evaluation:

- ▶ How do you plan to monitor results and evaluate the impact of the interventions including information disaggregated by ethnicity for Roma inclusion? How do you intend to improve monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in the next programming period?