

Joint report on the use of the Structural Funds for Roma inclusion based on country-by-country meetings

EURoma+ Report

*Reinforcing Policy Learning for Roma Inclusion
ESF Learning Network*



About the report

- The report is based on the information gathered in the context of country-by-country meetings organised in each of the **8 countries participating in the Network**: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Slovak Republic and Spain.
- The country-by-country meetings, **held between mid-September and end October 2013**, gathered a reduced number of key actors in the planning and implementation of Structural Funds and in the development of Roma policies at national level.

Aim of the report

The report aims to **identify the lessons learnt** in the 2007-2013 programming period in order to transform them into **policy messages** to be transferred to the 2014-2020 period:

- **Take stock about the use made of Structural Funds for Roma inclusion during the 2007-2013 programming period.**
- **Make proposals and recommendations for the 2014-2020 programming period both for the planning process and the implementation, based on mutual learning and previous experiences**

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Managing model

2007-2013: **Generalised prevalence of a public, centralised managing model.** Risks:

- Centralised model: Potential risk of **widening the existing distance** between the national and the local level as regards the implementation
- Decentralised model: Potential risk of **failing to achieve the full alignment** between regional OPs and national strategies and priorities

2014-2020: Minor changes. Challenges:

- Centralised model: **Reinforcing communication and coordination channels at vertical level**
- Decentralised model: **Increasing the monitoring role of the NRCP** who, together with **Managing Authorities**, ensure that Roma priorities are considered not only in the national OPs but also in the regional ones

Approach to Roma inclusion

2007-2013: Most countries have opted for including actions related to Roma **within general OPs** instead of developing a specific OP (or a part of it) targeting Roma.

2014-2020: Higher attention given to Roma issues in general OPs, commonly perceived as an effective way of **promoting mainstreaming** of Roma issues in different areas.

Approach to Roma inclusion

2007-2013: Rather than one single model, countries seem to follow a **combination of targeted, mainstreaming and, only in some cases, territorial approaches.**

2014-2020: No major changes are foreseen in this regard. Positive trend towards a model in which Roma issues are considered with an ***explicit but not exclusive approach.***

While targeted actions are easy to identify, in many cases it is difficult to recognise whether and to what extent mainstreaming and territorial approaches are benefiting Roma in practice.

Further efforts are needed to **ensure that Roma issues are really mainstreamed in the general programmes,** and effective achievements in Roma inclusion can and should be **monitored and evaluated.**

Managing model and approach to Roma inclusion

2007-2013 : **Generalised use of ESF** aiming at the promotion of Roma inclusion. **ERDF** have only been used to a limited extent . **EAFRD** has not been used for Roma inclusion in this programming period. The **multi-fund option** has not been considered in any case.

2014-2020: Countries recognise the importance of using the whole potential offered by European Structural and Investment Funds and clearly envisage a **wider use of all funds**.

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Areas of intervention

2007-2013: Three predominant areas of intervention, notably employment, education (more recently) and community-level social integration

2014-2020: **There is a need for a wider scope** (housing, child poverty, Roma migrants...)

2007-2013: Particular attention has been given to initiatives aimed at addressing the existing basic needs of the Roma and ensuring the **provision of necessary social services** (“palliative measures”)

2014-2020: ESI Funds should be used as a strategic tool to promote **structural and ambitious social changes**.

Areas of intervention

2007-2013: **Horizontal principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination.** No substantial or tangible achievements have occurred in these areas.

2014-2020: Particular attention should be given to **monitoring how these principles are translated into practice.**

2007-2013: Decisions taken on key priority areas of intervention are increasingly based on **research and analysis**, understood as a key for implementing more effective, results-oriented and targeted measures and interventions responding to the real needs of Roma

2014-2020: Research and analysis should become a **regular source of information** in the planning and implementation process of the future OPs even making use of **Technical Assistance** to finance this research, as made by some countries.

Implementation mechanisms and major difficulties

Potential role of main actors

2007-2013: Most countries have opted for **public and generalist IBs**.

2014-2020: Certain programmes may require **a degree of specialisation**.

Regardless of the nature of the IB, it is important to identify the best placed to fulfil the role assigned, taking into account **proven capacity and experience in managing and implementing ESIF operations (good knowledge of the field covered is a plus)**.

Implementation mechanisms and major difficulties

Potential role of main actors:

2007-2013: Most countries analysed have opted for **opening up the participation of beneficiaries to as many stakeholders as possible**. Large number of interventions but with small scale and short-medium term. **Fragmentation of resources, limited impact.**

2014-2020: efforts to strike the **right balance between achieving a real impact and ensuring a wide access.**

Implementation mechanisms and major difficulties

Institutional capacity:

2007-2013: **Lack of the necessary skills** for an effective involvement of many beneficiaries, especially those who are in a better position to reach Roma (this is the case of local authorities and civil society organisations). Some initiatives.

2014-2020: Further initiatives to address this challenge, but two relevant instruments at the disposal of all Member States to promote access to ESIF and the capacity-building (**global grants and Technical Assistance**) still remain underused.

Implementation mechanisms and major difficulties

Mechanism for allocation of funds:

2007-2013: Most commonly used, **calls for proposals**

2014-2020: **Exploring other options: mixed system.** Regulations are open to the combination of different models and mechanisms.

Type, duration and dimensions of projects:

2007-2013: A general trend to implement **small, short/medium-term projects**, ranging from 6 months to 3 years is observed.

2014-2020: There is a positive clear **trend to move towards projects with an increased length and financial allocation**, which in principle should have a **higher potential to achieve a real social change.**

Implementation mechanisms and major difficulties

2007-2013: A few countries have valued the option of testing new approaches through the **implementation of pilot projects**, with a view to scaling them up if they achieve positive results.

The scale up and generalisation of projects has not taken place in general terms, mainly due to the lack of the necessary mechanisms (as a result of the lack of resources or of measures to evaluate the results).

2014-2020: **Setting up the necessary mechanisms for the continuation and scale up of successful projects**, providing the necessary resources and enabling the evaluation of projects and the introduction of adaptations where appropriate.

Implementation mechanisms and major difficulties

2007-2013: There was a general awareness about the importance of **applying an integrated approach (both in terms of interventions and of combination of funds)** .

The key challenge was the **implementation**, arguably due to the lack of experience and knowledge on how to implement such an approach in practice and, in some cases, the weaknesses in the design of the approach.

2014-2020: Most countries are considering the use of an integrated approach as a key priority but its practical management remains a challenge. The Regulations propose **new mechanisms for implementation** and strengthen some of the existing ones in order to facilitate the integrated territorial approach and to support local actions.

Implementation mechanisms and major difficulties

Global grants:

2007-2013: Member States have been extraordinarily cautious in using this mechanism arguably due to a lack of awareness on this instrument, a lack of understanding on how to use it in practice and/or because it was, in many cases, **perceived as a complex tool**.

2014-2020: Countries are aware about the relevance of using all available instruments, including global grants, but they feel that **they lack further guidance** on how to use it correctly in practice.

Implementation mechanisms and major difficulties

2007-2013: **Technical Assistance** budgets at the disposal of countries have not been fully used. In addition, countries have not used its total potential by limiting the use of these funds to certain beneficiaries and certain activities.

2014-2020: Technical Assistance is still mainly considered for the **use of MAs and IBs** for activities such as training, evaluations, analysis and reports.

2007-2013: **Transnational cooperation** seems to be underused.

2014-2020: The potential of the transnational cooperation for Roma inclusion should be further explored.

Alignment between policies and funds

2007-2013: Little alignment between policies (EU2020) and funds.

2014-2020: There is a clear progress as regards the alignment. OPs of relevance for Roma mainly follow the Thematic Objective 9 “promoting social inclusion and combating poverty”, which should contribute to achieving some of the **Europe 2020** targets.

It is highly recommended to target Roma social inclusion and equality from different perspectives, not only as one of the most excluded groups but also in the context of mainstream policies and programmes

The **inclusion of Roma issues under different priorities (8, 10, and also 11)**, going beyond the consideration of Roma from the point of view of extreme exclusion, would certainly contribute further to the achievement of the objectives in the Europe 2020 Strategy.

Alignment between policies and funds

2007-2013: Little alignment between Structural Funds and the **NRIS**. The approval of the NRIS has implied a step forward for some countries in terms of policy design. Nevertheless, in most countries, although there seems to be a political commitment to comply with the objectives set in the Strategies, their adoption has not led to any revision of the OPs or at least to major changes.

2014-2020: **Interventions focused on employment and education**, two of the four main fields of action proposed for the NRIS. However, investments in the other two fields, healthcare and housing, are quite vague or considered to a lesser extent. On the other hand, **interventions to address the cross-cutting issues of equal treatment and non-discrimination**, even if claimed to be prioritised, continue to be clearly undefined.

It is the role of the **European Commission** to monitor that the planning and implementation of the ESIF are fully aligned with the NRIS. At national level, this responsibility should be assumed by the **NRCP**.

Coordination mechanisms

2007-2013: Setting up of **institutional mechanisms to tackle the inclusion of the Roma community** (e.g. specific bodies, agencies); while progress is more evident in the coordination at horizontal level, there are still remaining challenges and areas of improvement, notably as regards vertical cooperation, which countries have started to address in this programming period and plan to address further in the upcoming one.

2014-2020: The challenge now is to find **ways to link these institutional mechanisms to tackle Roma inclusion with the Structural Funds**. Adequate structures is a precondition for a proper coordination, but countries should also reflect on the quality and content of the working process:

- **the structure:** The combination of mechanisms at political and technical level seems to be the most valuable formula
- clear formal **framework for cooperation**

Participation of stakeholders in the programme cycle

2007-2013: There have been certain improvements as regards stakeholders' participation, **moving towards a more structured and coordinated involvement.** However, there is still room for improvement

2014-2020: Need for **including elements and processes to make progress**, including extending the participation to the whole project/programme cycle , advancing towards structured mechanisms for involvement of stakeholders, establishing a process and methods that allow for an active and quality partnership, promoting Roma participation, while involving other stakeholders, and further investing in fostering the capacity of potential partners (using, for example, available instruments, such as global grants and Technical Assistance).

Monitoring, results and impact

2007-2013: There has been a general concern and open debate on how to improve the methods to identify where and how the SF interventions are taking place and to what extent they are benefiting Roma.

For the **monitoring of the implementation of programmes and projects**, the setting up of indicators for data collection (ethnic data collection) is required. Some countries are already including indicators on Roma participation, mainly using the optional self-identification and focusing on those programmes in which Roma are expected to be beneficiaries.

Evaluations: Some countries have limited the evaluations to the compulsory ones; others have decided to undertake specific evaluations on Roma-related measures.

Analysis of context and impact on the ground, this practice is considered to be very positive as it allows designing more oriented actions based on real needs as well as legitimate to undertake new policies.

Monitoring, results and impact

2014-2020: Advancing towards a model combining different options:

Setting indicators in programmes disaggregated by ethnic origin, establishing the appropriate indicators from the very beginning of the process. The ESF Regulation 2014-2020 proposes a number of minimum quality standards and a set of compulsory common indicators for monitoring and evaluation.

More regular **evaluations**.

Analysis of context: Planning studies, reports or maps to guide programmes and interventions. These initiatives might be financed by Technical Assistance.

Reinforcing transnational cooperation in this field and by considering the support and guidance of the European Commission or specialised bodies, such as the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA).

Key Issues

- Key changes
- ESI and NRIS
- Approach: mainstream, territorial, target
- Local level / Integrated approach
- Partnership / Stakeholders / Roma participation
- Desegregation / Housing
- Multifunds

