



*Structural Funds: Investing in Roma*

***Added value of the local and regional dimension in the social inclusion of the Roma***

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It has long been the contention of anti-poverty Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that the structural funds *could* be a formidable instrument in the struggle against social exclusion - but it has long been our experience that they have fallen far short of what they might achieve. Here I explore the value of the structural funds in promoting inclusion for Roma people; look at ways in which they have already been successful, especially at the local level; and examine ways in which they could be more effective - both in the current programming period (2007-2013) and the next one (2014-2020). I also would like to focus on the gap between the potential of the structural funds for Roma people and its actual performance - and see how in the future that gap could be closed, both by Roma organizations and local authorities.



## **1. The potential of the structural funds**

At first sight, the potential of the structural funds for Roma people is huge. If we look at the both the size of the structural funds and their scope, they make provision for a broad range of activity. In the first instance, the structural funds offer considerable advantages compared to traditional national, regional or local funds:

- The amount of money involved is considerable (€347bn, even if spread over seven years and 27 states). For both NGOs and local authorities, structural funds offer the opportunity to attack a social issue on a scale that has not proved possible before;
- The structural funds are multi-annual, a feature which enables a problem to be tackled over a lengthy period of time, normally seven years. Hitherto, many social interventions are far too short to be effective (a year at a time). You will not address the deep poverty of the Roma people in projects of one, two or three years - but there is the chance of making a meaningful impact and developing learning in seven;
- The structural funds are highly systematized. They are designed over a lengthy period; they have carefully elaborated objectives; they require sophisticated systems of management, delivery, monitoring, accounting and evaluation, with attendant disciplines;
- The structural funds embody, in §11 of the present regulations, the principle of partnership, which involves the participation of Non Government Organizations (NGOs) and civil society;
- They are open to new entrants, new participants, new organizations who can compete for the funds, enabling fresh groups working with the Roma to come to the fore. They can be innovative;
- They state new priorities. The European Social Fund, for example, identifies target groups to be considered, including minorities. Gender mainstreaming is expected.

Some of this may be to state the obvious, but it may also explain why the structural funds have proved to be problematical in some countries. Many national, regional and local administrations have experienced real problems in operating structural funds. Some have not been good at, to use a phrase from computer terminology adapted by political science, 'downloading' a European system into quite different national, regional and local systems of administration. Some examples:

- The larger sums of money available for larger projects are a management challenge to local administrations and NGOs used to much smaller projects;



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- A seven-year funding period is unsettling for national, local and regional governments who run their budgets year by year and whose horizon is the next election, probably within a four or five-year time frame;
- The high level of systematization of the structural funds has a big impact on administrations used to much simpler, informal systems of management with close links to the local political élites and constituencies;
- Some national, regional and local authorities are not used to partnership and working with NGOs and civil society, especially Roma ones. Some do not want to do so, or have a very limited view of the extent and scope of that partnership;
- Open competitions for structural fund resources mean that new providers and players emerge, disturbing stable, long-established relationships between government and existing services;
- The priorities of the structural funds disrupt existing understandings of social need. The European Commission, in our case, has identified the Roma community as the single group most at risk of poverty in all of Europe - at a time when not all national, regional or local administrations share such an analysis.<sup>1</sup>

Our analyses have generally failed to appreciate the degree to which the structural funds are a shock to existing, well-established administrative and arrangements. National and local authorities are now expected to do their business differently, with changed groups, methods, partners, systems, management and values. This 'clash of administrative cultures' may hold the key to understanding why the funds fall far short of their potential and it is an issue to which we shall return. Studies have shown that some national administrations, while happy to take structural fund money, successfully resist, obstruct and subvert the disciplines, intentions and objectives of the structural funds, making them less effective - not out of malice or perversity, but because of the difficulty they experience in adjusting to unfamiliar systems.<sup>2</sup> But it does suggest that we have a role to help them past these obstacles.

To return to the potential, the structural fund regulations state, in the case of the European Social Fund, that the funds be used for purposes of improving employment and job opportunities for disadvantaged people and for social inclusion (§1), increasing the participation of inactive people, combating social exclusion for disadvantaged groups such as people with disabilities, promoting equality between men and women and non-discrimination (§2), preventing unemployment, providing personalized training, attacking gender inequality, assisting migrants, offering pathways to integration, promoting diversity, involving local communities, promoting partnerships with NGOs, investment in human capital especially education, strengthening the capacity of public administration and NGOs, building the capacity of socio-economic actors (§3) and innovation

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission: *The situation of Roma people in the enlarged European Union*, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> See this author and Walsh, Kathy: *Downloading European agendas into Irish public administration - the case of social inclusion indicators in the structural funds*. *Administration*, vol. 57, §10, 2009.



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(§7). Target groups identified include (§3) minorities, early school leavers, people with disabilities and carers. This is just a summary designed to illustrate how permissive is the scope of the ESF regulation. The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) regulation includes funding for local development initiatives and neighbourhood services (§4.8), education and vocational training facilities (§4.10), investments in health and social infrastructure which contribute to regional and local development and the quality of life (§4.11) and, in the section on urban development, measures for community development (§8). The regulations, in other words, provide broad scope for action and projects by NGOs and local authorities, more so than some may be aware.

There are abundant examples of the main structural funds working with Roma people, drawn from the *Compendium* of the Open Society Institute:<sup>3</sup>

- Training programmes for long-term unemployed Roma men and women, which combined research, carefully designed training and subsequent mentoring (Barcs, Hungary);
- Tailor-made, personalized vocational training, accompanied by work placement services (Szirak, Hungary);
- The integration of vocational training with citizenship training for Roma people with other disadvantaged groups (Jyvaskla, Finland);
- The development of traditional Roma economy skills in recycling into new areas (e.g. waste management, environmental education, organic waste) (Raslavice, Slovakia);
- New skills to replace obsolete skills in the Roma economy (e.g. culture, health and education), with individualization of the training process (ACCEDER, Spain);
- The prevention of early school leaving by programmes of primary school completion combined with vocational training and work opportunities (Markusovce, Slovakia);
- Improved quality of teaching of Roma children, with curriculum reform (all these were European Social Fund projects) (Nova Ves, Slovakia);
- From the European Regional Development Fund, funding for new school facilities, cultural centres, medical services, information, social centres and social service facilities (Slovakia).

Many of these successfully involved local authorities such as labour offices, vocational schools and local educational authorities. The best examples were documented in Hungary, Slovakia, Spain and Finland. There are probably examples from other coun-

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<sup>3</sup> *Making the most of EU funds - a compendium of good practice of EU projects for Roma*. Brussels, Open Society Institute, Brussels, 2006. [http://www.romadecade.org/making\\_the\\_most\\_of\\_eu\\_funds\\_2008](http://www.romadecade.org/making_the_most_of_eu_funds_2008)



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tries, but they have not been well documented, which is of itself an issue. In addition, the EQUAL programme, which funded 2,200 projects over 2000-6, included numerous projects for Roma people. Examples are:

- *Roma Vision*, a project in Hungary for Roma broadcasting;
- *Bridge* project in Hungary, a specialized training project in metal work, wood stoves, carpentry and stone masonry, growing into a domestic energy efficiency programme;
- The two 'Long Road' projects: *Il Lungo cammino* project, Italy, an information - contact - assessment - training - placement programme for Roma a living in camps in Bologna, Parma, Piacenza and Reggio Emilia; and in Spain the *Lingo Drom* (Catalonia, Valencia and Andalusia), an outreach project for Roma migrants coming from eastern and central Europe, offering pre-vocational training (literacy, numeracy, communications, social skills), language training, counselling; with creche facilities for their children;
- The *Diversidade* or diversity management project in Lisbon, Portugal, which provided training for company management in managing diversity through training in legal standards, affirmative action, understanding minority cultures, improved human resource management and for Roma people, training in conflict resolution in industrial relations and participation in decision-making;
- *Living and working together*, Linz, Austria, which trained minorities, including Roma, for participation in workers councils;
- The Roma Cultural Mediation Project, which employed Roma cultural mediators to work with the Romanian Roma community in Dublin, Ireland, to assist them to gain access to health, social and education services; and similarly the *Following our dream* project in Lisbon, Portugal, to provide training for Roma women on the one hand and on the other, the public services on how to meet the needs of minority communities;
- Two centre-based projects in Slovenia, in Pomurska and Obsina Skocjan of €355,000 and €438,000 respectively, to provide all-in-one services in the areas of information, research-based training, job placement and action against discrimination;
- The Pavee Feens Hawken project, another in Dublin, Ireland, which aimed to up-skill mainly Traveller men for self-employment in building work, driving licences, horticultural skills, teleworking and computers, with the development of a quality mark;
- The only Polish EQUAL project for Roma, which aimed to preserve traditional Roma economic skills, but in institutionalized form in four social economy organizations where they could develop business plans, offer additional training and find new business opportunities;



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- The employment of Roma as school assistants in southern Finland, both to work with individual students and to work the schools to improve their knowledge and understanding of Roma culture.

Here, the *Compendium* commented that one of the pre-conditions for success in the EQUAL projects was 'sympathetic support from local authorities, who had hitherto been much distrusted'. In a moment, we will look at those features of projects that make them work well. These lists provide a solid basis for future projects both by local authorities and NGOs.

### 2. Adjacent funds

Having said that, many of the successes of European Commission funded work for Roma have been not in structural funded programmes, but in adjacent funding programmes. These are cited here, for several of these approaches could be adapted for future structural fund projects and have similar inspirational value:

- The Social Exclusion Programme, where one of the 65 transnational projects was the Hungarian Autonomia *Strengthening local partnerships* project to document successful local partnership action against Roma poverty;
- The Community Programme against Discrimination which funded six Roma projects to improve teacher education, challenge discrimination through the legal system, improve primary education, combat discrimination by public services, raise the standard of vocational training and end segregation in education;
- The Culture programme, which has funded Roma cultural facilities and the documenting of the history of Roma people (Greece, Ireland);
- The Health programme, which has funded research into the determinants of ill-health among Roma people, the problem of low take-up of health services and how through training and other initiatives it can be improved (Spain);
- The *Leonardo* programme, which has funded culturally-specific vocational training projects, our knowledge of the educational features of the Roma community and a better match skills with local labour markets (Spain, Czech Rep, France);
- The PHARE programme, which has funded programmes for Roma municipal waste disposal projects, the building of NGO capacity, the modernization of housing (water, gas, electricity, sanitation), job search and job shops (Romania, Bulgaria);
- The CARDS programme, where projects have supported the involvement of the Roma community in consensual local authority decision-making; the improvement of the law affecting Roma people; youth tolerance; improving representation in public administration; access to official information; skills in new technologies; participation in theatre; participation in political life and the building of Roma representative councils; improved knowledge of history (Macedonia, Albania);



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- The Democracy and Human Rights programme, with micro-projects for civic education, media imaging, women's rights and the training of human rights activists (Macedonia),

From these combined lists, we can see that European funding programmes in general and the structural funds in particular have funded a range of projects for Roma people. One of the learning points from these projects is that, while every project has a lead player or promoter, normally an NGO, those that work best are those that involve local authorities. In most of the European Union, local authorities are the deliverers of a key range of services - health, education, vocational education, housing, sanitation and waste. While these services may seem ordinary, even banal, they are key determinants of the quality of life for Roma people.

The idea of involving local authorities in action against poverty is not new, for the construction of such institutional partnerships was one of the key features of the *Poverty 3* programme (1989-94) and this lesson has now been well integrated into the structural funds. In several countries, this process has had to overcome a legacy of distrust because local authorities have not always treated Roma communities fairly (and in some countries they still do not). Very few projects, though, have actually been *initiated* by local authorities as part of their responsibilities toward the Roma, but they have been generally willing participants once approached. One of the projects in the CARDS programme actually attempted to tackle this issue head-on, by looking at new win-win approaches to involve Roma people in local authority decision-making, budget allocations and the distribution of posts in such a way as to build consensus, avoid conflict and promote tolerance.

From our analysis, we know that social inclusion projects work best when:

- They involve a broad range of players, including local authorities as deliverers of services of key interest to Roma people (multi-institutionality);
- Multi-dimensionality - tackling poverty in a number of related fields, not just one. Single sector approaches (e.g. health), while valuable, work best when they tackle other aspects of poverty that affect the group, like education, incomes and training;
- They seek to empower the Roma community, support Roma-led organizations, take a bottom-up, community development approach and invest concretely in building a good relationship with the Roma community;
- They deal with 'hard' issues of discrimination, rights, culture, political representation, the interface with the political system, political power. They work best when they are connected to the political system and state institutions and policies for Roma people. Local projects work best when linked to well-executed and properly funded national policies backed by government commitment, connecting the local to the national;
- They are innovative or imaginative (for example in the area of waste management, energy efficiency, the media) or attempt to tackle persistent or intractable problems through fresh methods (e.g. improving teacher education).





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- They are on a sufficient scale and of a sufficient duration (at least five years) to make an impact.

One interesting observation is that in countries where you have good Roma NGO projects, you tend to have good local authority projects. Where you do not have Roma NGO projects, you do not have local authority projects. That is why, in this paper, we should give a lot of attention to the importance of developing the Roma NGO sector.

### 3. Performance

Despite these abundant and promising examples, their overall impact has been disappointing. The evidence of shortcomings comes from evaluation of structural fund programmes and other programmes for NGOs and from the survey work of the European Anti Poverty Network. Indeed, the *Compendium* documented a long series of consistently, repetitively critical evaluations. These shortcomings come at several levels: project, programme and design. At project level:

- The level and standard of evaluation and dissemination is weak. We know a lot about some projects, where there has been a commitment to evaluation and dissemination, but many projects working with the Roma have produced remarkably little documentation of their outcomes, which limits the learning available. The availability of evaluation seems to depend very much on the commitment of individuals in a few projects - indeed in a few countries too.
- Very few projects aim to leave a legacy behind or do so. Some of the CARDS projects did - for example, monitoring systems, students with human rights knowledge, a Roma women's forum (Macedonia, Albania) - but that is unusual. There were few examples of projects being handed over to the Roma community once they are concluded, the exceptions being some workshops (Hungary) and a waste disposal project (Hungary). Few, though, were sustainable, leaving groups and communities to revert to the situation in which they found themselves before their project.
- Few projects aimed to build the capacity of Roma - led NGOs, develop their future capacity for leadership or social entrepreneurship, strengthen their skills or abilities through training or systematized learning. They were no further developed in their organizational trajectory once the project was over.
- Many were top-down, isolated interventions, on too small a scale to be effective, unstrategic, diffuse, unconnected to other programmes and policies, achieving short-term gains, doing little for Roma integration and ultimately under-achieving. Many projects were of too short duration (two years when they could be seven). Top-down projects were often inappropriate (e.g. offering computers, when metal-work was needed) or at the wrong level (vocational training, when pre-vocational training was required). They were under-researched and under-prepared.



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- Projects tended to focus overmuch on 'soft' issues, such as training, not giving sufficient attention to difficult issues such as political inequality, rights and discrimination. The classic case is of training programmes which provide good qualifications - but discrimination then prevents Roma people then taking up jobs. Projects must deal with these 'harder' issues.

The importance of local authority involvement was highlighted in several commentaries, such as the PHARE Bulgaria evaluation, which noted they were not adequately involved as partners or as part of the organizing committee.

At programme level in the structural funds, these evaluations noted:

- Although the partnership principle is an integral part of the structural fund regulation, many member states failed to include NGOs and civil society as full partners. Consultation was often very limited in time, place and method, with little evidence that the views of NGOs were taken on board. Only two member states made NGOs a full partner in the structural funds. As a result, the kind of issues they represent, like the needs of Roma people, are invisible;
- Although the structural funds had overall objectives of social inclusion, in practice only small parts of the funds were devoted for this purpose, some actually contributed to social exclusion and the balance of financial allocations went to financially advantaged rather than disadvantaged groups. The proportion of funds actually finding their way to Roma communities could very small. Only two member states made social inclusion and over-arching priority. One third of member states did not allow NGOs access to the structural funds for work against poverty. In several states, key groups experiencing poverty were missed and little provision was made for projects in the social economy. This is not a supportive environment for Roma projects, either guided by NGOs or local authorities;
- Combating poverty and social exclusion was seen - both at European and national level - as exclusively the preserve of the European Social Fund. The regulations governing the European Regional Development Fund show clearly its potential for providing community infrastructure in support of disadvantaged communities in general and the Roma community in particular, but this is rarely used. NGOs and civil society were rebuffed if they attempted to contribute their views on the spending and allocations of the European Regional Development Fund. Local authorities might be better placed to do so;
- NGOs and civil society had a only a limited presence on monitoring bodies and in evaluation systems;
- Particular features of the structural funds that were designed both to reach the most excluded were often little used. Three examples are capacity building (which was normally only applied to government), technical assistance (normally seized by



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member state governments exclusively for themselves) and global grants.<sup>4</sup> Only four member states use global grants, only four member states provide technical assistance to NGOs for capacity building;

- The 'bureaucratic' requirements built around the structural funds remain a serious impediment to small and medium size promoters - be they local authority or NGO. My general impression is that the over-zealous and often pedantic application of rules and procedures owes more to member states than to the requirement of European regulations, but it is the single largest problem and grievance for the NGO community. The application of current procedures puts a premium on organizations able to provide single-shot, technically compliant proposals, who value financial compliance as the ultimate administrative virtue, who can meet the requirements for quantitative monitoring and who have financial and personal reserves to withstand problems of cash-flow, delay and uncertainty. This is an approach which drives out many good projects and proposals and which tilts projects toward achieving less, rather than more. This must be rectified, either by reducing the current weight of compliance requirements, or by equipping NGOs or local authorities with substantial extra administrative capacity.

Resolving these problems, all of which inhibit good Roma projects as much as any other, is a mountain to climb. Ultimately, though, there was a close connection between good *programme* design and good *project* design. One of the reasons why EQUAL, CARDS and the human rights programme featured strongly in the examples above, more so than the structural funds, was because of this connection, for they combined principles and practices at both programme and project level of preparation, partnership, empowerment, scale, duration, focus, policy connection, innovation, evaluation, transnationality, dissemination and institutional linkage. Good design guidelines were included both in the *Compendium* and the European Anti Poverty Network (EAPN) manual on the structural funds and for convenience they are repeated here in the annex.<sup>5</sup>

One of the most important lessons arising during the introduction of the present programming period was the need for Roma NGOs to be closely involved in following the roll-out of the structural fund programmes and to be prepared to intervene to ensure good practice and challenge bad practice. The EAPN manual especially draws attention to the work of the Amalipe Foundation in Bulgaria, whose timely intervention ensured that the Roma community was prioritized in the 2007-2013 structural funds, funding was allocated to NGOs and Roma NGOs had places on the monitoring committees.

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<sup>4</sup> Global grants are provided for under §42 of the general regulation which permit funds to be distributed by intermediary bodies working closely with target groups. These have enabled the delivery of community development programmes guided by civil society organizations, foundations and experts.

<sup>5</sup> European Anti Poverty Network: *Manual on the structural funds*. 3rd edition, Brussels, 2009.  
[www.eapn.eu](http://www.eapn.eu)



#### **4. Future programming period 2014-2020**

Granted that a new Commission is taking office, now is a good time to look forward to the next round of the structural funds. At this stage, with three years to go, we do not have a clear idea as to what approach the Commission intends to take for the next programming period, but some important issues have already been flagged. The present programming period, 2007-2013 saw a number of welcome trends both in structural fund programming and in other programmes, principally the formal introduction of the partnership principle. It also saw a number of changes which made our job more difficult:

- The current programming period saw the elimination, without replacement, of the EQUAL Community Initiative Programme, which had provided some of our best examples of good practice programme and project design. Although the regulations required the mainstreaming of the EQUAL principles, including transnationality, this was ignored by many member states (only eight are known to have developed transnational programmes). The loss of EQUAL means that there are much fewer structural fund projects combating social exclusion or discrimination than there were five years ago.
- Simplification of the structural funds and other programmes has also led to negative consequences. The 1990s saw the development by the Commission of a broad range of experimental social programmes (e.g. the Local Social Capital programme). While these programmes may have presented an untidy picture, they did enable a range of pioneering work to be undertaken in the field of social inclusion and assisting disadvantaged groups and communities. In the name of 'simplification', these have not only been consolidated but largely governmentalized. The present PROGRESS programme, which vacuumed up several distinct programmes, is used largely by governments for a series of inter-governmental events and activities and, apart from some European networks, appears to have only limited access by the NGO community.
- Diminished Commission supervision of the current round of the structural funds means that some member states pay minimal attention to many of the requirements of the structural funds for social inclusion and partnership. When NGOs draw the attention of the Commission to the failure of member states to operate the partnership principle, or to apply the horizontal principle of inclusion, the Commission has generally been unable or unwilling to intervene to challenge or even interrogate member states. There were a couple of honourable exceptions (e.g. Bulgaria) but the Commission signed off on numerous operational programmes that did not treat seriously social inclusion or the involvement of social inclusion NGOs.
- Despite many representations by NGOs and civil society groups, there has been no alleviation of the 'bureaucratic' problems around the operation of the structural funds. Although many worthy reports have been presented about how this can be done, the administrative issues surrounding structural fund projects remain as problematic as ever and the chorus of NGO complaints unabated. This problem has



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been identified for over ten years now and remains unattended to.<sup>6</sup> Good projects continue to be driven out.

Now is a good time to be discussing these issues, for we are at a formative stage in the debate on the next programming period, 2014-2020. So far, discussion on the structural funds has focused, with dreary predictability, on how much money will be allocated to the structural funds, how much each country will get and the issue of the nationalization or re-nationalization of the structural funds. The one bright spark in this darkness was the report of Fabrizio Barca.<sup>7</sup> He attempted to raise the quality of this debate in two ways, first through his analysis of regional policy and second through his fresh proposals for the new programming period.

Barca's report was extraordinarily critical of the structural funds. Starting as a genuine instrument for developing *regions*, he identified the way in which they had been transmuted into a fund for poor *countries*, with allocations captured by local political élites. No wonder social inclusion was so unimportant in the structural funds and he quoted a figure of 2.9% of the structural funds going to social inclusion. He argued for a re-orientation of regional policy around regional (not national) spatial development, in effect a socialization of regional policy, one which would address poverty in the richer member states too. He described the management and supervision of the structural funds as incompetent, with no meaningful targets, indicators, monitoring, evaluation or measurement of outcomes. Very little was now known about what actually worked and what did not, in contrast to programmes against poverty long ago in the 1970s. Barca proposed that social inclusion be a headline objective of cohesion policy, thereby raising the level of investment in programmes and projects to combat poverty and exclusion; that strategies be designed around regions, rather than member states (a 'place-based strategy'); a return to the supervisory role of the Commission; the use of arm's length agencies (like those used for global grants) and a culture of evaluation and performance to rebalance the focus on financial accounting.

The most disappointing feature of Barca is the poor response which it received at European level. Barca provided a very real opportunity to lift the quality of debate, to inspire a broader and deeper discussion on cohesion and inclusion, to reconsider the role of the institutions and to set new and ambitious objectives that would connect to European citizens and civil society. It is also disappointing the space afforded to NGOs and civil society organizations in the debate on the future of cohesion policy is so small - but it remains a challenge for them to find a place and a space to present the case for a more enlightened policy, approach and method. To compound our misery, the only pledge on cohesion policy from the new regional affairs commissioner Johannes Hahn is for even stricter financial controls.

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<sup>6</sup> FM Partners: *Striking a balance - efficiency, effectiveness and accountability*. Brussels, author, 2005.

<sup>7</sup> Fabrizio Barca: *An agenda for a reformed cohesion policy - a place based approach to meeting European Union challenges and expectations*. European Commission, Brussels, 2009.



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Responsibility for effective projects for Roma inclusion actually depends less on project promoters than on programme designers. It is too easy to blame under-performance on bad projects, but they are ultimately the outcome of a funding environment and the régime that approves them. There is a sense in which 'programmes get the projects they deserve'. Funders and programme designers are more important than they may realize in setting the tone, values and requirements of their programmes and this is crucial in attracting quality effective projects - or driving them away. For the structural funds, there is an onus on both the European and national programme designers to:

- Reduce the entry and subsequent participation barriers for community development organizations working with Roma people.
- Devise pre-project procedures which value consultation, preparation and the bottom-up approach - which can mean a lengthy preparatory phase - more than technical compliance.
- Value quality control, evaluation and dissemination more and the currently obsessive levels of financial compliance less.
- Make *policy* demands on applicants - that projects address root causes, analyze, report and bring the outcomes into the heart of the political system, including projects that address 'harder' issues as well as softer ones.
- Set requirements for multidimensionality, partnership, multi - institutionality, links to government and institutional frameworks.
- Have a supervisory system to ensure that project outcomes are, in practice, recorded and disseminated.

In particular, there is a need for the Commission to outline to the member states its expectation of their cooperation with Roma policy, Roma actors and Roma projects by putting in place institutional mechanisms so that the issues arising from these projects can be uploaded into the political and administrative system. In effect, the road to effective local projects for Roma people - be they NGO or local authority - goes through Brussels and the European and national programme designers.

### 5. Ways forward

We have seen here that there are examples of the structural funds (and other funds) working successfully for Roma inclusion, both by the NGO community and local authorities, but that there is much room for them to be improved. In summary:

- The structural funds can offer considerable scope to combat the exclusion and poverty of Roma people;
- Local and regional authorities are an indispensable part of future structural funds projects for and with Roma people and for 2014-2020, Roma organizations should involve them in partnership in projects. With the new funds less than three years



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away, now is the time to begin these preparations. The *Compendium* guidelines suggest the basis on which those projects could be proposed;

- Building up local authority Roma projects is closely connected to having a strong, vibrant, Roma NGO sector;
- Local and regional authorities should not wait for invitations from NGOs to participate in structural funds, but should pro-actively prepare projects in cooperation with Roma - led organizations. They should, nevertheless, respond quickly to invitations from Roma - led NGOs;
- We have to help local authorities to address the 'clash of administrative cultures' and assist them in the process of good project design;
- Despite all this, the real issue is not where or how local authorities are involved in structural fund projects or not. Local authority involvement is *an* issue, but it is not *the* issue. It is possible to have poor projects that involve local authorities and some good ones that do not. Simply involving more local authorities in more Roma projects is not of itself a solution - unless the underlying problem of programme and project design are attended to. To get more, under-performing projects, but run by the local authorities instead, is not progress. The real question is the quality of both project and programme design, from European level down to the local. The objective is not to get Roma projects, or even local authority Roma projects, but to get good, effective, impactful ones that make a difference.
- There is a very real need to improve programme design at European level, well ahead of 2014 and a challenge for groups like the EURoma network to bring these issues to the European level now.

**Annexe: Design guidelines for structural fund programmes and projects**

<b>Programme design</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social inclusion as over-arching principle of funds, operational programmes</li> <li>• Significant budgetary allocation for social inclusion: both ESF and ERDF</li> <li>• Effective targeting of named groups, including Roma people</li> <li>• Partnership principle, with social inclusion and Roma NGOs consulted in programme design, monitoring, evaluation</li> <li>• Access to the funds by social inclusion and Roma NGOs</li> <li>• Use of global grants to ensure grants reach the most excluded</li> <li>• Use of technical assistance to build capacity, leadership of social inclusion, Roma NGOs</li> <li>• Social inclusion and Roma NGOs present on monitoring committees and in the evaluation process</li> <li>• A strategic approach to evaluation</li> <li>• Simple and proportionate accounting procedures</li> <li>• Commission supervision to ensure that member states comply with regulations</li> <li>• Room for fresh thinking</li> </ul>
<b>Project design</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The bottom-up approach, one of empowering disadvantaged groups including the Roma community, making them stakeholders in the project</li> <li>• Multidimensionality, attacking several forms of poverty together</li> <li>• Multi-institutionality, involving a range of partners, including social inclusion and Roma NGOs as well as local authorities and other actors</li> <li>• Sufficient size, scale and duration (5 to 7 years)</li> <li>• Linked to national strategies for Roma people that have government commitment</li> <li>• Institutional linkages</li> <li>• Tackling 'hard' issues as well as 'soft' issues, addressing root causes and inequalities, taking a rights-based approach, bringing issues into the heart of the political system</li> <li>• Policy focus and themes</li> <li>• Innovation</li> <li>• Systems for evaluation of impact and dissemination of results including transnationally</li> <li>• Aiming to leave a legacy behind</li> </ul>