



The Roma in the European Social Fund 2007-2013

In order to foster growth, competitiveness and employment, the European Union should fully use its labour and enterprise potential. Considering that more than 10 million Roma in Europe are particularly exposed to high rates of unemployment or are largely functioning in the informal economy, supporting Roma integration can have an important impact on the Lisbon targets and on cohesion.

1. ROMA, LISBON TARGETS AND COHESION POLICY

The Brussels European Council of 23-24 March 2006 recommended as a specific area for priority action, to increase the labour market participation, especially of young people, women, and older workers, persons with disabilities, legal migrants and **minorities**. This is also important in terms of entrepreneurship.

The new Regulations, and particularly the Community Strategic Guidelines (CSG), emphasise the possibilities. For example, without being exhaustive, ethnic minority communities are mentioned as a specific target group under CSG section 4.2 *"tailored support should be made available to specific categories of business or entrepreneurs [e.g. those from ethnic minority communities]";* and 4.3 *"to ensure inclusive labour markets for people at a disadvantage or at risk of social exclusion... including minorities";* [and in relation to better education and skills] *"particular attention should be given to addressing the needs of disadvantaged groups"*.

Structural Funds (SF) interventions should support this, identifying objectives and priorities for action to address Roma issues. They should bridge existing social gaps, and advance the overall integration of Roma. The programmes for countries where the Roma issue is most pressing must reflect the importance attached to this problem by both the European Commission and the partner Member State.

Many possible interventions in favour of Roma are classic European Social Fund (ESF) interventions. The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) can also support a wide range of actions, including aid for entrepreneurs, micro-credits and infrastructure support.

The objective of this document is therefore to serve as an aide-mémoire when addressing Roma in the context of Structural Funds programming for 2007-13. It sets out key points and a checklist of questions to consider. While the Regulations and the CSG of course take precedence in any



matter of definition or interpretation, it is hoped it will be useful in making assistance on Roma issues more focused and more effective.

2. KEY POINTS AND A CHECKLIST OF QUESTIONS

Good governance and partnerships

Q: Are Roma participating in NSRF and OP discussions and in project design?

The experience gained in implementing other funding arrangements has shown that participation of Roma is a critical factor in ensuring success. Roma participation should be ensured and reinforced in all stages from programming through planning implementation to monitoring.

If Roma are not involved in the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) and Operational Programmes (OP) discussions then it is likely that all other aspects will suffer. This involvement in programming is particularly important. It should be facilitated, for example, by participation of Roma civil society organisations in these discussions.

In addition project design should also specifically facilitate Roma and non-Roma working together (e.g. priority to projects bridging the divide, support for the “process”, example of PEACE). Organisations that already involve co-operating Roma and non-Roma stakeholders are considered particularly valuable partners. Roma women play a key role in addressing the problems of Roma communities.

Q: Are partnerships bringing together Roma and non-Roma being encouraged, especially for project design and implementation?

As well as involving Roma, there is a need for partnership at all levels. Effective partnerships should include authorities at national, regional and local level, as well as representatives of business, civil society and Roma communities. Suitable mechanisms and a step-by-step approach are needed to form and bind partnerships and encourage broad participation. Workshops for partnership members are seen as essential for fostering cooperative working methods and addressing diversity.

Q: Are municipalities and mayors involved? Is technical assistance being used for capacity-building?

Mayors and Roma representatives are important partners. Mayors can often mediate between different interests in local communities, particularly in the planning and implementation stages. Their capacity and sensitivity to Roma issues is often crucial to the success of interventions on the ground. Technical assistance for implementing institutions and financial incentives (e.g. zero co-financing requirements) at local level (as well as other mainstream funding) could be used as a way to inspire and stimulate mayors and local government to develop and implement projects.

Q: Is there a good balance between the big-picture strategy and addressing immediate and local Roma needs?

The blending of top-down and bottom-up approaches is important and enhances mutual understanding and cooperation. One idea could be the use of a liaison officer who would carry through guidance and ensure inter-ministerial cooperation in achieving the package approach.



Good planning

Q: Is a “package” or “comprehensive” approach in place, as opposed to ad hoc interventions?

Because of multiple deprivation within Roma communities, a multi-dimensional “package” approach which seeks synergies between different aspects of Roma issues (also referred to as “synergy approach”) is the best way of tackling the problem in a comprehensive way. The package approach (i.e. the blend of physical improvements and soft measures) would ideally combine actions in e.g. education, employment, health, fight against crime, housing, settlement legalisation and fight against all forms of discrimination.

Q: Is an overall plan in place?

This package approach should be operationalised via a comprehensive analysis and response, which should be transformed into an overall plan (at municipal level, at regional level, at national level). For example, each relevant municipality or group of municipalities could draw up a long-term regeneration plan to address the elimination of Roma segregation. Institution-building can support the preparation of such plans.

Q: Are the local, regional, national and EU levels acting together? In particular is the national Roma Decade plan closely supported?

Coordination and complementarity should then be established between all available sources of funding (EU, national, regional, local, international institutions, NGOs, etc.). This should be linked to the framework of the Roma Decade, as well as existing local, regional and national plans.

Q: Is there a sufficient mix of short-term and long-term actions, and are they coherent?

There is a general consensus that any short-term interventions focused on Roma should be planned within the framework of long-term plans. Short-term actions bring credibility and political benefits. However, there should be consistency of the individual intervention with long-term development goals and other policies. Structural Funds programming, Roma Decade and Lisbon national reform programmes encourage development of long-term plans on Roma issues and their integration into the national strategic reference frameworks for cohesion policy.

Q: Is sufficient attention paid to ensuring Roma are facilitated in accessing activities?

The established mainstreaming approach to the Structural Funds deployment needs attention in addressing Roma issues. Mainstreaming prevents “ghettoisation” and supports the goal of integrating Roma into the broader society. At the same time it does not exclude targeting in specific situations. The specific situation of Roma (e.g. low attendance rate at primary schools, high level of school drop-outs, high mortality rates and difficult living conditions generally) must be taken into account.

Q: Is enough attention being paid to making funding effective?

Funding is available, but needs to be made much more effective. The Structural Funds, international donors and national sources provide a considerable amount of funding. The challenge is effective use of the funds resulting in real and lasting improvement of



living conditions of Roma. Objectives must be clearly set, indicators established and progress closely monitored.

Q: Do Roma project promoters have satisfactory Structural Funds cash flow?

Adequate up-front money flow to Roma organisations needs particular attention.

While this is a more general problem, NGOs etc. dealing with this issue are often particularly vulnerable to inadequate capital, lack of access to loans, etc. Arrangements must be put in place to make sure these (and other similar) obstacles are removed.

Q: Is good practice, especially in relation to broader social inclusion work, being utilised?

Previous experience should be built upon, with good practice reproduced and mistakes avoided.

Activity funded under the PHARE programme in relation to the Roma community was a test bed for future implementation of the Structural Funds. In particular the thematic evaluation – *Review of the European Union PHARE Assistance to Roma Minorities* – contains clear conclusions on sustainability and profiles the lessons learned.

Q: Have micro-credit and other schemes been considered?

Innovative forms of financing may be of particular interest to Roma communities.

Micro-credits for individual or collective entrepreneurship may be especially useful, particularly within e.g. the **Joint European Support for Sustainable Investment in City Areas** (JESSICA) initiative.

Specific issues

Q: Are barriers outside the funding being addressed?

Further barriers that hamper Roma development and implementation of Structural Funds interventions include, among others, illegal settlements and the related issue of residence registration.

Regularisation of property ownership and registration is a precondition for housing and infrastructure projects that could improve conditions in Roma settlements as well as allow Roma to participate in the mainstream system for social benefits and training.

Q: Are negative attitudes in wider society being addressed?

The underlying problem of negative attitudes in the wider community should also be tackled with the highest urgency.

Anti-discrimination campaigns aimed at the general population should draw attention to discriminatory practices and prejudices. This is a long-term process and is of the utmost importance. Awareness raising activities among Roma should illustrate the benefits of education and training in encouraging integration and inform Roma of their rights and responsibilities. This is particularly the case concerning gender discrimination inside Roma communities.

Monitoring and follow-up

Q: Are specific monitoring structures in place to follow Roma issues transparently?

A Roma sub-committee or similar in the Structural Funds management structures may be a valuable tool in ensuring that



all actors cooperate, that actions are facilitated, and that there is adequate monitoring and follow-up. This is particularly important (when assistance under an operational programme is significantly addressed to Roma) in the context of a mainstreamed approach, where there is a need for improvement of monitoring and reporting on the impact of the Structural Funds on Roma. Efficient monitoring starts with the definition of appropriate objectives and selection criteria for projects. Proper indicators and benchmarks should be set.

Q: Is extra attention being paid to monitoring and are lessons learned from previous experience being utilised?

The established approach to the Structural Funds is mainstreaming, but in this case it requires an extra effort in monitoring and follow-up to ensure that funds reach the target group. Mechanisms for monitoring and interim evaluations must therefore be planned from the very start. Project fiches should provide for this. They should also include sections on “lessons learned” and adequate logical frameworks (logframes) with indicators.

Q: Are Roma represented sufficiently in the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms?

Active participation of Roma in monitoring and evaluation should be encouraged. Self-evaluation must be developed. Communication must be improved. This implies that reporting should be fully transparent with progress reports to Monitoring Committees required specifically to report on developments in relation to Roma/social inclusion projects. Membership of the monitoring committees must include Roma.

Q: Is this issue clarified with the monitors?

A particular problem related to monitoring perceived by managing authorities is restriction on collection of data on Roma.

It has been clarified that the Directive on Protection of Personal Data does not forbid collection of anonymous statistical data, which should be sufficient for effective monitoring and evaluation. Further options include the use of proxy indicators. This should be explored further in national contexts, but should not be a blockage.

3. SPECIFIC ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED

The following issues are specifically mentioned, since they are among the most pressing for Roma communities. The list is not exhaustive, but is useful in raising concrete examples.

Education

In Eastern Europe about 50% of the Roma population is under 20 and this proportion is increasing. Persistent disadvantages in education, including low school attendance and overrepresentation in ‘special schools’ intended for physically and mentally disabled children, make it highly probable that without strong policy interventions supported by large programmes of capacity building and investment, the next generation of Roma will remain in deep poverty and will be increasingly marginalised and excluded. Across countries, 70-80% of the Roma population has less than a primary school education, while very few Roma have completed primary and secondary education.



The Structural Funds can normally support:

- school infrastructure
- pre-school facilities and materials
- training of teachers / assistants
- after-school clubs
- post-secondary etc.

They can thus be used to complement national, regional and other international programmes.

To be considered: *full integration of Roma students in all schools*. The solution of this problem requires a long-term strategy for the abolition of segregated schools in the Roma neighbourhoods; efficient measures for providing free access of Roma children to 'normal schools'; and prevention of the segregation of Roma children into separated classes.

In the short term, the following actions could be undertaken when not already addressed:

- financing of studies to assess the current educational situation, and to propose appropriate measures
- support and stimulation to the introduction of preparatory classes for Roma children who do not speak the national language
- mentoring, including for families (this is particularly important)
- after-hours support (e.g. homework groups)
- stimulation of the employment of teachers with adequate qualification and specialisation
- cultural sensitivity and diversity awareness

- introduction of "Assistant teachers" from the Roma communities, who will help in the process of teaching of Roma children (within mainstream education)
- abolition of early vocational and labour education

Employment

The high unemployment rate among Roma is one of the most serious factors contributing to the social isolation of the group. Urgent actions are necessary to provide training and employment programmes that meet the needs of the labour market. It is to be noted that the provision of social services for children and the elderly is a basis for the employability of women.

Emphasis on self-employment or setting up cooperatives or firms also better reflect the working culture and practices of the Roma (micro-credits may be particularly useful). This could be built upon important existing cooperatives or firms of Roma entrepreneurs, which are already present in Eastern Europe.

The Structural Funds can normally assist with all aspects of the above.

Housing and habitat

Separated Roma neighbourhoods, which are not part of city planning and do not have adequate infrastructure, are one of the most serious socio-economic problems of Roma communities.

- Roma housing should be part of the housing system of society as a whole – ghettoisation must be avoided;
- Solving the housing problem should be in line with other programmes;



- Legalising illegal Roma living environments should be a priority – taking due account of particular situation of each settlement;
- Full participation of the Roma in the improvement process is required;
- Housing projects should be affordable;
- To keep in mind: the period of carrying out a housing project is relatively long.

Related to housing is the whole issue of habitat. This includes provision of services such as water, heating, electricity, waste disposal etc. It should be consulted and planned with full Roma participation. The Structural Funds can normally assist with all aspects of this, including (for the first time) “social housing” for the period 2007-13.

Health

In order to achieve a satisfactory level of health in Roma communities, it is necessary to increase sanitary standards and to intensify programmes of health education. Roma must be especially involved in these initiatives, since these are cultural aspects. Again, the Structural Funds may be of assistance.

Roma women

A culture of equality must be promoted among Roma women, to achieve their adequate individual, social, economic and political participation in public life. E.g.:

- it is necessary to increase the direct participation of Roma women in educational projects in order to overcome discrimination;
- it is necessary to facilitate the access of Roma women to higher education;

- it is useful to implement programmes for Roma women who are entrepreneurs, etc.
- it is worthwhile to promote awareness raising campaigns among Roma men to overcome the gender discrimination inside Roma communities.

The Structural Funds can contribute significantly.

Access to services

Recruiting Roma to act as mediators or intercultural agents has proved to be effective in ensuring that Roma are aware of, and can use a variety of different local agencies including healthcare, social services and legal services. The Structural Funds can assist in training these mediators. A structure for mediators could also be established to ensure their sustainability.

Protection of the ethnic specifics and culture of Roma

Roma culture may be encouraged both as a specific ethnic culture and as a part of the national culture. For example:

- cultural or historic centres in Roma neighbourhoods may be restored;
- infrastructure, training on materials for Roma academic or cultural actions may be supported.

Participation of Roma in political life

The problem of the persistent under-representation of Roma in political life and the decision making process should be widely recognised. Structural Funds implementation



presents opportunities (membership of committees, membership of partnerships etc.) and may facilitate identifying and removing barriers, both internal and external, thereby improving Roma political participation and developing political leadership. Identity papers and voter registration are particular issues to be tackled.

Presence of the Roma in national media

Participation of Roma in nationwide television and radio is also important. This participation should include both the transmission of Roma programmes and the participation of Roma journalists. Again, the Structural Funds may be able to assist with training or materials.

Racial equality

In implementing Structural Funds support, consideration must always be given to the Racial Equality Directive (2000/43/EC): *Implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial and ethnic origin*. This bans direct and indirect discrimination on grounds of racial and ethnic origin and protects Roma and other ethnic groups against discrimination in employment, training, social security, healthcare, housing and access to goods and services.

Social inclusion (more generally)

In addition to the points raised above, many of which are classic social inclusion issues, it is useful to consider social inclusion globally. As well as actions to support education and employment, the provision of social services more generally should be supported. These services should be tailored to be fully accessible to (and used by) Roma.

Complementarity with other programmes

Assisting Roma under the Structural Funds should be done as far as possible in mutual complementarity with other programmes and action plans. The **Roma Decade Action** Plans are obvious examples. Another programme to be considered is **PROGRESS** (Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity) covering the integration of migrants, vulnerable groups and third country nationals. The Integration Fund for the Integration of Third-country Nationals may also be relevant.

The full version of the above text is available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/esf/fields/discrimination_en.htm



For more information:

Information service of DG Employment, Social Affairs & Equal Opportunities

Communication Unit

B-1049 Brussels

Fax.: +32 2 296 23 93

E-mail: empl-info@ec.europa.eu

<http://ec.europa.eu/esf>