



COORDINATION AND FOLLOW UP MECHANISMS OF ACTIONS AIMED AT THE ROMA POPULATION SUPPORTED BY STRUCTURAL FUNDS

Discussion Note

Introduction

The objective of this document is to present a first overview of the existing institutional set ups in the countries participating in the network in regards to the social inclusion of Roma and inter-departmental coordination mechanisms with a special focus on the relationship between these and the implementation mechanisms of the EU Structural Funds.

The current document presents the information gathered through questionnaires completed voluntarily by representatives of the institutions which are part of EURoma network. There were two questionnaires addressed to national Roma-related bodies on the one hand, and EU Structural Funds relevant Managing Authorities on the other. The questionnaire requested: i) basic descriptions of the body or administrative units primarily responsible on the social inclusion of the Roma in each country; ii) institutional mechanisms of coordination between ministries in relation to Roma issues; iii) formal or informal relations between the central government and regional and local bodies in relation to Roma issues; iv) relation between the EU Structural Funds Managing Authorities and the key institutions responsible for the social inclusion of Roma.

This first exercise has not involved an assessment of the effectiveness of these mechanisms, and the first results shown in this document just summarise the information gathered and point to some indicative observations that may stimulate discussion between the network members. In this sense the document is open for further joint reflection and development and the issue of effectiveness of the mechanisms could also be interesting for a future exercise.

10 countries submitted any of the two questionnaires filled and five of these (i.e. Spain, Czech Republic, Sweden, Poland and Greece) submitted both.

Administrative units responsible for the social inclusion of Roma and specialised Roma-related bodies and horizontal coordination mechanisms with other ministries

The majority of the countries examined have recently established institutional mechanisms for addressing Roma issues. Part of them were set during the pre-accession period in the pre-accession countries, while others have been more recently established in many times with a view to a better implementation of Structural Funds. Only Italy has not a department specifically concerned with the social inclusion of Roma distinguished from other vulnerable groups.



Structural Funds: Investing in Roma

Some different basic types of units and coordination mechanisms are found:

- Administrative departments, secretariats, offices, or specialised bodies agencies.
- Interdepartmental coordination mechanism and/or consultative mechanisms with mixed representation of line ministries and Roma representatives.
- Ad hoc working groups.

Sometimes several of these structures coexist and there is a participatory body mainly with coordinating or consultative functions whereas an administrative department holds administrative responsibilities.

- In **Spain**, since 1989 there is a *Roma Development Programme Unit*, at present under the DG. Social Policy, Family and Children in the Ministry of Health and Social Policy. This unit manages the Roma Development Programme which mainly consists in economic transfers to regions, municipalities and NGOs for doing projects in favor of Roma. It is noteworthy that autonomous communities must match central government funds (45%), something which in practice stimulates the allocation of funds for Roma at regional and local level. In 2005 a consultative inter-ministerial structure was created under the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (since April 2009 belonging to the Ministry of Health and Social Policy), to institutionalize the collaboration and cooperation between the Roma organisations and the government at national level. The *State Council of Roma Community* is consultative and aims at fostering the integration of Roma by counselling in development plans, drawing up reports in domains affecting the Roma people and elaborating studies and analysis on the impact of projects and programmes targeted at this population. Forty members compose it: Twenty representatives of the General Administration of the State and twenty representatives of the Roma NGO. Its functions are to propose and advise on the issues affecting Roma, in order to achieve their integral participation in the society. As a participative body, the Council has set up *five working groups*: Employment and social action, education, culture, health, and housing.
- In the **Czech Republic**, the *Government Council for Roma Community Affairs* is a consultative and representative body to the Government which deals specifically with issues related to policy on integration of members of the Roma communities. It is also a mixed Council where ministries and Roma representatives are present. It is supported by *Office of Roma Community Affairs* which has also other tasks such as coordination of and financial support to the “Regional Coordinators of Roma Advisors”, Granting schemes for municipalities and NGOs to finance field workers, Coordination of Roma affairs to achieve synergy between relevant ministries and Roma related projects, and elaborating government documents among which the “Concept of Roma Inclusion” and the “Report on the Situation in Roma Communities” are fundamental for the Government approach to Roma issues. At the central level, also other line ministries such as the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Education, Youth and Sports and Ministry of Interior have their own expert units devoted to Roma issues. The office of the Council is involved in committees and commissions, which deal with Roma issues at ministry of education, sport and youth; ministry of labour and social affairs; ministry of regional development and ministry of interior.



Structural Funds: Investing in Roma

- In **Hungary** there also exist a body at present called *Council of Roma integration* chaired by the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs comprised by high - ranking government officials (e.g. Secretaries of State of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Justice and Law Enforcement, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Prime Minister's Office, and the Head of Department for National and Ethnic Minorities at the Prime Minister's Office) the President of the Roma National Self-government and representatives of the Roma community. The mandate of this *Council of Roma Integration* is mainly consultative.
- In **Greece** there is an *inter-ministerial Committee for Roma* chaired by the Minister of the Interior which provides with guidelines with regards to policies concerning Roma, which in turn each Ministry adopts according to its responsibilities. The Committee's main responsibilities are planning and coordinating national policies that affect the Roma community as well as elaborating on and promoting legislative, administrative and financial measures in the fields of health, housing, education, employment and cultural events. The function is also monitoring of actions under the Plan for the Roma Inclusion.

In other countries there is the case of departments of a specific minority policy undertaking diverse tasks and responsibilities as to the Roma. This is particularly visible in countries with a structured minority policy such as Sweden or Poland.

- In **Sweden**, the the responsible government body of minority policy is the *Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality*. Mainstreaming issues regarding the Roma is the principal line of action of the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality. This includes surveying how these issues are handled by other Ministries. A special working group for coordination of minority policy is made up of representatives from the relevant ministries related to educational, cultural and anti-discrimination, gender equality issues, etc. Connected to this department in 2006 it was established the *Delegation for Roma Issues* appointed to play a proactive role at national level in work to improve the situation of the Roma in Sweden. The Delegation works in a dialogue with Romani representatives and also consults with relevant actors such as the Office of the Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination, the Office of the Children's Ombudsman, the National Agency for Education, the Living History Forum, the Delegation for Human Rights in Sweden, the Language Council of Sweden, the National Board of Health and Welfare and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions. Tasks of the Delegation are, inter alia, investigating the situation of the Roma in Sweden by collecting, compiling, analysing and reporting the experience and knowledge available in the area; presenting proposals for how to improve the living conditions of the Roma in society; or promoting and supporting municipal projects and services intended to improve the situation of the Roma. The Delegation has a temporary mandate that will result in a report setting out proposals for the conduct of work to improve the living conditions of the Roma; the Delegation's report will be presented to the Government in December 2009.
- In the case of **Poland** the responsible structure for Roma issues is the *Department of Religions and National and Ethnic Minorities* under the Ministry of Interior and Administration with responsibilities on amongst others, developing proposals for state policy, technical support and secretariat of the *Joint Commission of Government and National and Ethnic Minorities*, cooperation with other bodies,



Structural Funds: Investing in Roma

analysis and publications and developing specific programmes, one of which is the Programme for the Roma Community. The *Joint Commission of Government and National and Ethnic Minorities* was established in 2005 as a consultative and advisory body of the Prime Minister. The Joint Commission members include the representatives of relevant ministries, of the Central Statistical Office, other public institutions and representatives of national and ethnic minorities including the Roma. In 2008 under the Joint Commission it was established the *Group for Roma Community*. The Group comprises representatives of the competent ministers in charge of public administration, education, labour, justice, social insurance and 22 representatives of the Roma NGOs from Poland. The Group activities mainly focused on: expressing opinions on the exercise of Roma rights and needs, taking measures to counteract discrimination against persons belonging to the Roma minority, and voicing opinions on the Government programmes for the Roma community in Poland and the 'Roma component' in the Human Resources Operational Programme.

- Last, in the case of **Portugal** where there is not a minority policy as such, Roma issues are also part of the portfolio on a specialised institution addressing immigration and diversity issues: The *High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue* (ACIDI), set out by Decree-Law no.167/2007 as a public institute. Integrated in the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, its mission is collaborating in the conception, implementation and evaluation of sector, crosscutting and public policies concerned with the integration of immigrants and the ethnic minorities (namely Roma), as well as promoting the dialogue between the various cultures, ethnic groups and religions. With a view to address specifically Roma issues the High Commission established in 2007 the *Roma Community Support Cabinet* (GACI). This ad hoc structure acts at various levels: It participates in specific projects in cooperation with other organisations (e.g. Ministry of Education, social inclusion, employment); capacity building of Roma associations; and disseminates information about the Roma communities in Portugal through a website and publications. Participation of Roma is channelled through an informal working group of Roma mediators.

Horizontal Coordination mechanisms between Specialised Roma-related bodies and units and EU Structural Funds Implementation mechanisms

One form of coordination and dialogue in several countries is through participation of Specialised Roma-related bodies in the Operational Programmes Monitoring Committees.

- In **Romania**, the Government *National Agency for Roma* is part of both the monitoring committee and the evaluation steering committee of the OP "Human Resources Development" the MA of which is under the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection.
- In the **Czech Republic**, the *Office of the Government Council for Roma Community Affairs* is represented also at various management commissions of EU operational programs, which directly or indirectly target Roma (such as the Operational Program Human resources and employment, or the integrated operational program).



On the other hand, sometimes the EU Structural Funds relevant mechanisms participate in the inter-ministerial structures for Roma seen in the previous section or have a direct cooperation with the Specialised Roma-related bodies.

- In **Hungary** the National Development Agency is a government body tasked with ensuring the successful use of EU funds. It is noteworthy that the National Development Agency participates in the *Council of Roma Integration*. Moreover, the Managing Authority works in bilateral structures with Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice and Law Enforcement, Ministry of National Development and Economy. Coordination on Roma issues flows through a *Roma Integration Department* under the Ministry of Labour. The MA cooperates reportedly with other Managing Authorities too.
- In the case of **Slovakia**, a member of the MA is present in working, evaluation and monitoring groups established at the level of the Coordinating Unit (responsible for the implementation of whole National Strategic Framework) and cooperates with the *Office of plenipotentiary for Roma communities*, who coordinates the horizontal priority 'Marginalized Roma groups'.

In other countries the cooperation appears to be more occasional and for example in **Greece** the ESF Managing authority reports formally to the Inter-Ministerial committee.

In two countries it was commented that the relationship between MAs and specialized Roma bodies or departments responsible of social inclusion of Roma was mainly through the EURoma network. This was the case of **Spain** and **Sweden**. In **Portugal** there is not either formal mechanism of cooperation between the ACIDI and the MAs, although ACIDI takes part in some projects financed by the European Social Fund like, for example, the *Choices Programme*, which promotes the social inclusion of children and young people with immigrant and Roma background through 120 projects throughout the country. This Programme is funded by the Institute for Social Security, by the Institute for Employment and Professional Training and by the ESF OP for Human Potential. In **Italy** where there is not Specialised Roma-related body or structure, there are occasionally inter-departmental debates reported on Roma inclusion especially during the programming period of the Structural Funds 2007-2013. At present there are actions managed by the *National Office against Racial Discrimination* (UNAR), under the National Operational Programme on Governance and Systemic Actions, Axis D Equal Opportunities and Non-discrimination: Promotion of the governance of policies and tools of social inclusion and of contrast to the discrimination of the Roma, Sinti and Camminanti communities; and Identification, analysis and transfer of good practices relating to non-discrimination with a *benchmarking* approach. Other actions were proposed by the UNAR for ESF and ERDF funding and agreed by the relevant Managing Authorities.

As a good practice template, although as said elsewhere no assessment of effectiveness is done at this stage it is noteworthy the case of the **Czech Republic** where there is a *Roma Working Group* which brings together representatives of different Operational Programmes plus other relevant bodies such as the *Office of the Council of Roma Community Affairs*. This ad hoc working group has been established within the Monitoring Committee of the Human Resources Operational Programme the MA of which is the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. This working group is formed



Structural Funds: Investing in Roma

by representatives of other OPs with agenda on Roma Issues (i.e. OP Human Resources and Employment, Integrated Operational Programme, OP Prague Adaptability), Government Office of the Council on Roma community affairs, representatives of Regional Roma Coordinators, and Ministry of Education and Sport and Ministry of Interior etc. This working group makes recommendations to monitoring committees of involved OPs and assists the allocation of Structural Funds for Roma.

In a similar direction, in **Slovakia** there is also a *Working Group for the horizontal priority Marginalised Roma group* and holds regular meetings. The formal (and informal) communication is realised also in the frame of a new element (period 2007-2013) *Local strategy of comprehensive approach* based on the cooperation among six ministries, responsible for relevant OPs, i.e. Ministry of Labour, Soc. Affairs and Family, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Construction and Regional Development, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Environment.

Another example of apparent synergy between responsible units for the social inclusion of Roma and the Managing Authorities is found in **Poland**, where there is an agreement of cooperation signed between the responsible body for the social inclusion of Roma (i.e. *Department of Religion and National and Ethnic Minorities* under the Ministry of Interior and Administration) mentioned elsewhere in this report and the Implementing Authority for European Programmes, intermediary body under the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy with general responsibility for social inclusion. It is noteworthy that the *State programme for the Roma community* which is coordinated by the Department of Religion and Ethnic Minorities uses both state and EU structural funds which appears to be an interesting synergy and it was not found in other countries.

Vertical coordination between the Specialised Roma-related bodies and regional and local administrations

In various countries there are representatives appointed at regional or local level for addressing Roma issues or more generally minority issues.

- In **Czech Republic**, regional and local authorities have the so-called Roma counsels or Coordinators of Roma affairs. All of these bodies are connected through various channels of communication with the Government Council for Roma Community Affairs. The *Office of the Government Council for Roma Community Affairs* financially supports and coordinates the Regional Coordinators of Roma Advisors, and stimulates municipalities to employ social workers for Roma by providing funds for it.
- In **Romania**, a network of BRJ (County Offices for Roma) was established by the Government Strategy for improving the living conditions of Roma and are subordinated to the Ministry of Interior. Furthermore, the National Agency for Roma has a network of eight regional offices. On a different venue, the mechanism for the promotion of social inclusion establishes a National Commission for Social Inclusion made by representatives of ministries, authorities, agencies led by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection. At the county level there are also county commission on social inclusion formed by local authorities and NGOs.



Structural Funds: Investing in Roma

- In **Poland**, The Act on National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Language enabled Voivodes to appoint representatives for national and ethnic minorities affairs. In some voivodeships (16 provinces) representatives for national and ethnic minorities were appointed, whereas in others the tasks related to minorities are fulfilled by selected employees in the Office of the Voivode.
- In **Portugal** the *Roma Community Support Cabinet* has launched this year a pilot project for establishing partnerships with local authorities and insert a Roma mediator in 15 municipalities.

Other examples of vertical coordination are:

- **Greece**, where a “Rom network” is comprised by all the local municipalities that have Roma settlements within their territories. This network acts predominantly as consultative body.
- **Spain**, where in a context of high level of decentralization of powers in the field of social policy, the relationship between the *Roma Development Programme Unit* and regions and municipalities is administrative in relation to the management of covenants for the implementation of the *Roma Development Programme* actions. There are also other mechanisms where Roma issues are occasionally addressed in relation to social inclusion generally: The *Joint meeting of the special commission for the NPAi and the commissions for the follow up of the covenants* and the *Inter-ministerial meeting for the National Action Plan for social inclusion – NAPI*.

Vertical coordination in relation to the implementation of EU Structural Funds for Roma

- In **Romania**, the MA relates with regions and municipalities by means of the so-called Regional Pacts and Local Partnerships on Employment and Social Inclusion made up with representatives of public institutions, unions and NGOs and which are financially supported by the Operational Programme on Human Resources Development for the maintenance of technical secretariats. Nevertheless it was not reported in the questionnaire how Roma issues are addressed in these mechanisms.
- In **Spain** the MA coordinates mainly with intermediary bodies at regional level one of which is a non-state non-profit organisation specialised on working with Roma (i.e Fundación Secretariado Gitano) and which is responsible of the Roma-targeted actions of the OP “Fighting against Discrimination”. Besides this, the MA acknowledges that the coordination on Roma issues is limited since “there is still a lack of information at the local and regional level, where the information data systems and indicators are not designed to visualize the Roma specifics, mostly included in ‘Other vulnerable groups’”. Some actions have been however recently to have to improve this. The MA has distributed a questionnaire among regional Intermediary Bodies with a view to obtaining specific information on budget and activities benefiting Roma population.



Structural Funds: Investing in Roma

- In **Italy**, also a decentralized structure where 21 out of 22 OPs are regional OPs, each Regional OP Monitoring Committee foresees the analysis of the initiatives undertaken for the social inclusion of the Roma and Sinti minorities.
- In **Slovakia**, there is a platform established by the *Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma communities* where the regional self-government bodies are represented. At the same time these regional bodies are also members of the Monitoring Committee of the Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion. In addition, local bodies are linked with MA mainly as beneficiaries and thus the MA gets an overview on proposals for demand-driven projects and feed-back from local level during on-the-spot checks.
- In **Hungary**, the Managing Authority coordinates vertically with lower levels through the intermediary bodies and an Expert Network of Micro Regions. The beneficiaries at local level receive technical guidance on the implementation from mentors on the field during the full cycle of the project. The intermediary bodies, regional development agencies and final beneficiaries at local level must use the guidelines on horizontal equal opportunity issued by the Managing Authority.
- It is important to remark also in the **Czech Republic** the recently established Government pilot project of the *Agency for Social Inclusion of Roma* in socially excluded localities. This agency acts at local level assisting the preparation and implementation of projects which target socially excluded Roma communities and providing services. This Agency is connected to the Structural Funds since one of its tasks is to assist in the project identification and implementation of the EU funds for the benefit of socially excluded Roma at the local level.

Concluding Remarks

The majority of countries have succeeded in establishing functional structures dealing with Roma issues. Most of the models explored are recent and still are assuming new functions and new modus operandi since it is not an easy task to cope with the different dimensions Roma social inclusion includes.

It is underlined by several questionnaires that the interministerial coordination structures in which Roma representatives are often present provide an opportunity for Roma to be involved in a high political discussion on policies.

Although there are evident efforts to connect more effectively the Structural Funds implementation structures and the mechanisms in place for addressing Roma issues, a question remains on whether the synergy between implementation of the Structural Funds and the government strategies for Roma could improve in the future.

The degree to what the specialised Roma units and coordination mechanisms are participating in the management of the Structural Funds vary between countries. The main roles seen are: i) participation in occasional consultations; ii) participation in the monitoring and evaluation committees of the relevant operational programmes; iii) In the case of the Plenipotentiary for Roma communities in Slovakia this body undertakes a role of coordinating the horizontal priority on Marginalised Roma groups.



The cooperation between ESF Managing Authorities and the Specialised Roma units and Roma-related coordination structures varies but in some cases appears to be limited to, for example, exchange of information and data on Roma-related projects. Yet, in most cases it is reported a certain degree of dialogue and contact between Managing Authorities, relevant line ministries and consultative bodies at various levels. When there is a relation within the ESF implementation mechanisms (e.g. intermediary bodies, co-funders) the relationship is obviously more structured whereas in other cases the picture seems to be more administratively dispersed. In this sense, one of the questionnaires remarked the “lack of an administrative unit that could undertake the overall monitoring and coordination of the implementation of actions in order to bring together the individual policies into a single operational plan, allowing unified management of resources from different sources...”. A question for further thought is whether this alleged dispersion is perceived as such in other countries and to what extent the coordination mechanisms in place are overcoming this obstacle.

The questionnaires suggest also that there appears to be a limited vertical cooperation around Roma issues between the central government (including ESF MAs) and regional and local authorities responsible of implementation of actions for the social inclusion of Roma.

Nonetheless, various elements specific to certain countries may deserve attention for inspiring discussions in the network: the existence in some countries of mechanisms for stimulating the effective use of Structural Funds for Roma at the local level providing guidance to do so; and the existence of mechanisms for cooperation between different Operational Programmes on Roma issues.

Besides the coordination mechanisms, it was remarked in one questionnaire something which is indispensable to progress in coordinating efforts, i.e. “the need of much better monitoring data”.