

## **Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion**

### **DRAFT**

*The Roma people are disproportionately affected by social exclusion, discrimination and stigmatisation. Roma communities have been part of European societies for centuries, often marginalised and sometimes persecuted. Over the last two decades, it is apparent that the socio-economic situation of many Roma people has stagnated or even deteriorated in a number of EU Member States. Many Roma people experience extremely high unemployment, low income, reduced life expectancies and poor quality of life. This represents a human tragedy for the individuals concerned as well as an immense loss for society as a whole. Moreover, far-reaching exclusion entails social instability and represents a problem in economic terms.*

*Therefore, the issue of addressing the problems which affect the Roma people is increasingly recognised as being extremely urgent in both ethical and practical terms. The European Union recognises there is a need for more active and effective policies concerning Roma inclusion. The practical delivery of these policies rests above all with the Member States and, in particular, with regions and municipalities. Although the numbers and socio-economic conditions of the Roma in individual Member States vary greatly, there are several common denominators. Moreover, experience from several Member States shows that there are general policy approaches which have proved to be useful and can thus be recommended to others.*

*In this context, the following Common Basic Principles are adopted by the participants in the EU Platform for Roma Inclusion.:*

#### **Principle No 1: Constructive, pragmatic and non-discriminatory policies**

Policies aiming at the inclusion of Roma people respect and realise the core values of the European Union, which include human rights and dignity, non-discrimination and equality of opportunity as well as economic development. Roma inclusion policies are integrated with mainstream policies, particularly in the fields of education, employment, social affairs, housing, health and security. It is not the aim of these policies to punish or discipline the Roma, but to provide them with effective access to equal opportunities in Member State societies.

#### **Principle No 2: Focus on key policy areas**

While it is the responsibility of Member States to establish their own policy priorities, some key policy areas relevant to Roma inclusion are common to Member States. These include (1) education, (2) employment, (3) housing and (4) health and social services. Given the demographic profile of Roma communities, particular attention is given to investment in early childhood programs.

#### **Principle No 3: Explicit but not exclusive targeting**

Inclusion policy initiatives adopt an approach of explicit but not exclusive targeting, which provides for focusing on Roma as a target group but not to the exclusion of other people who share similar socio-economic circumstances. This approach does not separate Roma-focused interventions from mainstream policy initiatives. In addition, where relevant, consideration is

given to the likely impact of mainstream policies and decisions on the social inclusion of Roma people.

**Principle No 4: Inter-cultural approach**

The inter-cultural approach involves Roma people together with people from different ethnic backgrounds and regards different cultures in principle as providing added value to society. Where cultural differences do represent potential obstacles to effective policy and communication, emphasis is placed on inter-cultural learning and skills of the Roma themselves as well as on combating prejudices and stereotypes among the majority populations.

**Principle No 5: Mainstreaming and desegregation**

While involving specific approaches, all Roma inclusion policies aim to insert the Roma in the mainstream of society (mainstream educational institutions, mainstream jobs, and mainstream housing). Where partially or entirely segregated education or housing have traditionally existed, Roma inclusion policies aim to overcome this legacy. They also avoid the development of artificial and separate "Roma" labour markets created by temporary projects or the application of conditions for the receipt of welfare assistance.

**Principle No 6: Awareness of the gender dimension**

Roma inclusion policy initiatives take account of the needs and circumstances of Roma women. They address issues such as multiple discrimination, health care and child support, but also domestic violence and trafficking.

**Principle No 7: Transfer of evidence-based policies between Member States**

Member States learn from their own experiences of developing Roma inclusion initiatives and share their experiences with other Member States. Peer review and the transfer of good practice are facilitated on the expert level by the EU Roma Network and on the political level by the EU Platform for Roma Inclusion. Member States and the Community actively use the ongoing Open Methods of Coordination in the fields of education, employment, and social inclusion and social protection for addressing the specific situation of Roma people. It is recognised that the development, implementation and monitoring of Roma inclusion policies requires a good base of regularly collected socio-economic data. Where relevant, the examples and experiences of social inclusion policies concerning other vulnerable groups, both from inside and from outside the EU, are also taken into account.

**Principle No 8: Use of Community instruments**

In the development and implementation of their policies aiming at Roma inclusion, the Member States make full use of Community instruments, including legal instruments (Race Equality Directive, Framework Decision on Racism and Xenophobia), financial instruments (European Social Fund, European Regional Development Fund, European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, Instrument for Pre-Accession) and coordination instruments (Open Methods of Coordination). Member States ensure that use of financial instruments accords with these Common Basic Principles, and make use of the expertise within the European Commission, in respect of the evaluation of policies and projects.

**Principle No 9: Involvement of regional and local authorities**

Member States design, develop, implement and evaluate Roma inclusion policy initiatives in close cooperation with regional and local authorities. These authorities play a key role in the real-life delivery of policies.

**Principle No 10: Involvement of civil society**

Member States design, develop, implement and evaluate Roma inclusion policy initiatives in close cooperation with civil society actors such as non-governmental organisations, social partners and academics/researchers. The involvement of civil society is recognised as vital both for the mobilisation of expertise and the dissemination of knowledge required to develop public debate and accountability throughout the policy process.

**Principle No 11: Active participation of the Roma**

The effectiveness of policies is enhanced with the involvement of Roma people at every stage of the process. Roma involvement takes place at both national and European levels through the input of expertise from Roma experts and civil servants, as well as by consultation with a range of Roma stakeholders in the design, implementation and evaluation of policy initiatives. Inclusion policies are based on openness and transparency and tackle difficult or taboo subjects in an appropriate and effective manner. Member States support the full participation of Roma people in public life and, aim to stimulate active citizenship of the Roma as well as to develop their human resources.

**Principle No 12: Taking into account the non-EU dimension**

Roma inclusion policies also take account, where relevant, of the needs and circumstances of Roma who are third-country nationals in EU Member States. Conditions in the countries of origin are taken into account when decisions are taken in respect of Roma asylum seekers or immigrants. Member States seek to find solutions for persons living without documents on their territory. Policies concerning Roma inclusion in particular non-EU countries are coordinated with those in several EU Member States through the Decade of Roma Inclusion.