



PROPOSALS FOR THE IDENTIFICATION OF PRIORITIES FOR A PAN-EUROPEAN CO-OPERATION ON ROMA AND TRAVELLERS

From the Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG) to the Council of Europe on occasion of the High Level Meeting on Roma and Travellers

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What are the priorities for concerted pan-European action?

There is no need to discuss on the urgent need to have a European Framework guiding national strategies on Roma and Travellers. Promoting the social inclusion of Roma and Travellers across Europe is a fundamental issue that needs to be tackled by diverse actors: The European Institutions and the Members states, along with regional and local administrations. Each one of these actors needs to play a role in tackling the inequality and the discrimination that these European citizens are suffering across Europe. What are the key areas where policies should focus in order to achieve impact on Roma inclusion? It has been widely acknowledged how the focus on education, employment, housing and health cause real impact in the living conditions of many Roma people. These policies need to be separated and differentiated of those aiming at promoting at the political representation of Roma and Travellers. They need to be tackled from different angles and with different tools.

- **Education.** Education is a necessary condition for social cohesion. Increasing the rate of young Roma who finish at least the mandatory secondary education should be a priority for public administrations and Roma families. Initiatives should focus on promoting and facilitating the enrolment of Roma children in pre-school, assuring attendance both in primary and secondary education (compulsory education) and promoting post-compulsory education.
- **Employment.** Employment is the best form of inclusion. Initiatives should focus on increasing the presence of Roma people in the labour market, particularly, in salaried employments.
- **Combating discrimination** and eliminating stereotypes and prejudices regarding Roma social image and promoting social recognition of Roma culture.
- **Avoiding and eliminating segregation** as a way to promote social cohesion. It is necessary to create common spaces of cohabitation which translate into more and better opportunities for all. There should be a definite eradication of shantytowns and any segregated zones and slums en Europe.

Once defined the main areas of intervention for social policies aimed at Roma and Travellers, it is necessary to identify the approach and the existing instruments that need to be put in place.

What approach has proved to be effective and therefore should be included in a pan-European framework?

The European institutions and Member States have recently reached an agreement on the guiding principles on social policy for Roma: the **10 Common Basic Principles for Roma Inclusion** reflect the accumulated experiences through various projects, programmes and policies taking place in various Member States and the analysis of what strategies and approaches have created added value and positive impact on the Roma communities. These 10 Basic Principles have been agreed as guiding elements for Member States and the European Commission (invited by the Council) to take them into account in the design and implementation of all relevant policies and to develop orientation and support to facilitate their practical implementation.

10 Common Basic Principles for Roma Inclusion

1. Constructive, pragmatic and non-discriminatory policies.
2. Explicit but not exclusive targeting.
3. Inter-cultural approach.
4. Aiming for the mainstream.
5. Awareness of the gender dimension.
6. Transfer of evidence-based policies.
7. Use of Community Instruments.
8. Involvement of regional and local authorities.
9. Involvement of civil society.
10. Active participation of the Roma.

Out of these 10 principles there are some of them that become especially relevant.

- **Aiming for the Mainstream and explicit targeting.** Experience has demonstrated how mainstreamed measures by themselves do not reach most socially excluded groups such as the Roma community. On the other hand, there is also evidence of how targeted measures exclusively aimed at the Roma population in some cases may lead to segregation and have had limited impact in terms of improving the living conditions of the beneficiaries. The most successful option to address social inclusion of Roma comes hand in hand with the combined use of mainstream and targeted actions: balance is reached by combining social policies inclusive with the Roma population with targeted measures to compensate greater inequalities, allowing for a slow but sustained social inclusion process. To achieve this balance Roma issues need to be considered a crosscut issue not linked exclusively to social services but also to employment, education, housing, equal treatment, etc. Explicit mention to Roma as beneficiaries of mainstream policies should be included and monitored. At the same time, it should be avoided to exclude other social disadvantaged groups with similar socio-economic conditions when designing and implementing social inclusion policies.
- **Integrated approach.** Exclusion is not a one-sided problem but rather an interrelation between various aspects. In fact, there is a need to adapt the interventions to the heterogeneity of situations encountered. The approach should avoid designing one single strategy "one size fits all" but rather to develop differentiated approaches that take into consideration geographical, economic, social, cultural and legal contexts.
- **The use of EU financial instruments. In particular the Structural Funds** have increasingly become a pivotal financial and political instrument to tackle the disadvantages encountered by Roma in an effective and practical way. In fact, if to the full, they constitute a powerful mechanism for the articulation and alignment of national

Roma policies. The European Network on Social Inclusion and Roma under the Structural Funds –EURoma¹) has acknowledged the multiple added value of these funds: they offer a long-term approach, extensive financial support, the opportunity for combining action levels (actions implemented concurrently at the national (policies) and local levels (grassroots) have a significant impact), they offer an opportunity for strong partnership (different levels of administration as well as public and private organisations), for capacity building, and most important, they are an opportunity to target the most excluded groups while mainstreaming Roma inclusion. This potential shows how EU funds should consolidate its role not only as financial resources but as political instruments.

In sum, if improvement on the Roma living conditions in Europe wants to be achieved there needs to be a focus on the Social Inclusion of the Roma and travellers as a core aspect where all three, the European Commission, Member states and regional/local administrations need to work in synergy; making the best use of the Structural Funds as financial and political instruments (focusing on key areas promoting real social impact), aligning EU overarching Strategy EU2020 with national, regional and local policies and programmes; and assuring the application of the existing anti-discrimination legal framework. Specific goals and indicators need to be put in place in mainstream policies and programmes at the same time that targeted interventions are developed as counteract of situations of social inequality. Member States should be made accountable for results of impacts of their policies aiming at the social inclusion of Roma and Travellers.

¹ European Network on Social Inclusion and Roma under the Structural Funds (www.euromanet.eu)

Specific proposals o good practices and initiatives

The ACCEDER programme is an example of Best Practices acknowledged by the European Commission, UN-Habitat and various Member States.

The initiatives taken with the Roma population managed by the Fundación Secretariado Gitano within the framework of the European Social Fund's (ESF) Multi-Regional Operational Programme "Fight Against Discrimination" – known as the ACCEDER Programme – have comprised the fundamental instrument employed by this organisation since the year 2000 and up to now, to give impetus to a line of action aimed at improving the living standards of this community through measures favouring their access to salaried employment in the labour market.

In the setting up of the ACCEDER programme certain assumptions were made:

- The labour market situation as an opportunity in terms of potential employment demands (of low qualified workers);
- The focus on salaried employment as:
 - The most efficient way of getting to more Roma people into the labour market (in terms of the investment/outcomes ratio of such a strategy compared to others focusing on self-employment, for example);
 - As a way to provoke multicultural gathering and get-together between Roma and non-Roma and change mentalities in both sides: salaried employment as the centre for intercultural dialogue and prejudices breakdown.
 - As the missing step towards full social inclusion of Roma people into mainstream society (once education and housing is already fulfilled somehow).
- Making the most out of the cultural internal change of the Roma community as regards openness to new economic alternatives for the new generations (and lack of perspective in the traditional economic activities);
- To base the strategy on an intercultural / multicultural approach: working ACCEDER teams mixed with Roma and non-Roma professionals. Programme aimed mainly at Roma beneficiaries but not only, that is, facilitating contact with non-Roma job seekers, both at guidance and counselling sessions but also at training courses, etc.
- The ACCEDER programme to be set on a voluntarily bases, meaning that Roma beneficiaries would come to the programme without existing any link to social services obligations.

The main priority of the ACCEDER Programme is for Roma people to access the labour market, thus achieving equal opportunities for the Community. Roma access to the labour market is processed mainly through labour insertion actions such as individual employment itineraries and the development and improvement of human resources.

In general terms, the ACCEDER programme focus on two complementary axes: a) the development of grassroots intervention and actions regarding employment of Roma and b) the promotion of pro-active policies for the Roma. Under the grassroots intervention the programme develops a whole range of actions, which are the core of the programme: Individualised comprehensive pathways to employment; Guidance, training and labour insertion; Actions implementing vocational prelabour-training and training activities specifically tailored to the

Roma population; Labour market study and mediation. As regards fostering pro-active policies aimed at the Roma population, the programme centres on promoting strong partnership structures at local, regional and national level for the better development of the programme itself by joining efforts and creating synergies, as well as by promoting a better understanding of the complexity and umbrella of needs of the Roma. These efforts contribute to multiply and reinforce public programmes aimed at improving social conditions of the Roma population in Spain.

In order to implement the Programme, 48 integrated employment centres were set up throughout Spain. These units are located in accessible places for the Roma community and they are fully equipped with the necessary tools. Each centre has an average staff team made out of professionals in charge of the Programme implementation at local level (1 coordinator, 2 labour counsellors, 1 enterprise intermediary and 1 intercultural mediator).

During the course of the Programme a total of 35,304 people were served at the integrated centres and approximately 70% of these were Roma. These figures are well above the original forecast of 20,000 people. More than 26,000 work contracts have been signed and 13,902 people have taken part in training activities.

Major programme funding has been furnished by the ESF and ERDF. Together they account for 67.76% of the economic resources and the rest is through a co-funding effort involving national public administrations (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs - MTAS 7.09%), regional (Department of Employment and Social Welfare 12.30%) and local (10.37%). Private funding has also recently been increasing in importance.

What can be learnt from the ACCEDER experience?

There are some aspects in the ACCEDER programme that could be identified as key elements for the success of initiatives aimed at the labour inclusion of the Roma community.

- **Focusing on employment as a missing part within global social inclusion processes.** Complementing employment processes with social actions around it.
- **Combination of a bottom up - top down grassroots intervention with awareness policy strategy.**
- **Individual comprehensive employment pathways** within the framework of an integral community approach. Integrated and individualised approach to actions developing a wide range of actions enhancing the employability of beneficiaries. Fostering of Roma autonomy in the labour world taking action not only with direct beneficiaries but also with the family surroundings.
- **Methodological approach combining social and economic dimension.** Development of integral and integrating intervention incorporating the Roma socio-cultural perspective as the basis for the diagnosis preceding the socio-labour insertion processes, viewing employment and the latter's economic component as a key integration factor while at the same time meeting the needs and requirements of the labour market in the planning of actions
- **Intercultural approach** and intercultural and multidisciplinary teams, stressing the professionalism of the working teams. All work teams are comprised of Roma and non-Roma as well as diverse and complementary professional profiles. The active involvement of Roma professionals is the best way to attract new beneficiaries and generate credibility and to foster positive expectations.

- **Strong partnership ties:** close link with the business sector and a suitable system to channel public-private relations. The aim is to cooperate with all of the main actors: public administrations, businesses, the media, politicians, etc.
- **Long term approach** for achieving greater impact.
- **Mainstreaming while targeting.** The development of specific actions while promoting access to general resources for all citizens as a way to compensate disadvantage of the Roma people while avoiding segregation. Depending on the characteristics of the beneficiaries, either tailored actions (targeting) or others supporting access to external resources (mainstreaming) are used. The ultimate goal of counselling is to foster the Roma population's access to existing resources in each territory on an equal footing with all other citizens. It is about tailoring but not segregating.
- **A success-oriented approach,** seeking for positive results, "betting on the best prepared" and creating multiplier effect on the rest.
- **National dimensions for local actions.** The combination of a generic national approach and adaptation to local idiosyncrasies within the Programme contributes to the greater efficacy and efficiency of intervention. A national perspective approach allows learning taking place in one location to be transferred to others thus capitalising on knowledge.
- **Centralised management and coordination system for a national programme:**
 - Creation and standardisation of working tools for all ACCEDER teams at national level.
 - Dissemination and continuous exchange of know how (internally and externally).
- **Flexibility** and adaptation to the individual circumstances of each person means adapting to each person's process and pace and to providing the most appropriate support at all times. It is important to stress that this flexibility means understanding that if these people are to become integrated into working life, many obstacles need to be removed and therefore major efforts have been put into preliminary social work and accompaniment without which access to employment is simply not feasible.
- **Capacity for innovation** in terms of formulae adapted to the labour market itself and the needs of Programme beneficiaries and innovation in the creation of working tools and adapted training schemes.

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