Working together for Roma inclusion
The EU Framework explained

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Introduction

Joining forces across Europe for Roma inclusion

The adoption of the **EU Framework for national Roma integration strategies** on 5 April 2011 marks an unprecedented commitment by EU Member States to promoting the inclusion of their Roma communities.

This ambitious yet realistic proposal from the European Commission has been welcomed by all Member States who have called for its rapid implementation. This reaction sends a **strong political signal** that Member States are dedicated to changing the situation of the Roma people.

The EU Framework provides a new approach to addressing the problem of deep **social and economic exclusion** experienced by Roma people living in Europe.

It seeks to improve the lives of Roma people by presenting a **European structure** to support the work of Member States. It is the EU's response to the current situation, but does not replace Member States' primary responsibility for their Roma communities.

The EU Framework is based on a simple observation: the only way to successfully integrate the Roma people is by **joining forces**. And it's crucial that all actors are involved: the EU Institutions, national, regional and local authorities, civil society and, of course, Roma people themselves.

This publication is designed to be used by **national and local decision makers**. It provides guidance on the key elements of the EU Framework and also highlights existing good practices and tools that can provide support and help orientate policymaking.

Protecting fundamental rights and promoting social inclusion

The EU Framework for national Roma integration strategies [1] provides a basis for the social and economic inclusion of Roma people while also taking into account their human rights. It constitutes a political commitment from the EU Member States, but is not a legally binding document. Instead, it complements the legal protection which already exists in the EU, namely:

- the **Lisbon Treaty** which ensures that the Roma people have the right to be treated like any other EU citizens;
- the **Racial Equality Directive (2000/43/EC)** which outlaws discrimination in the workplace and in other areas of life, such as education, healthcare and access to goods and services for Roma people; and
- the **Directive on the right to move and reside freely (2004/38/EC)** within the EU which enables Roma people who hold EU citizenship to move without restrictions throughout the 27 EU Member States.

However, fighting discrimination alone is not enough to overcome the problems facing the Roma people in Europe today. As social and economic exclusion can also be a source of the prejudice experienced by Roma people, the EU Framework promotes policies that aim to ensure that Roma and non-Roma people have equal access to **employment, education, healthcare, and housing** (including essential services). In this way, it strives to break the vicious circle of poverty and exclusion experienced by the most disadvantaged Roma communities.

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1   EU Framework for national Roma integration strategies
     http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0173:FIN:EN:PDF

Setting European goals

Huge gaps exist between Roma people and the rest of the population concerning **education, health, employment, and access to decent housing and essential services**. Closing these gaps is crucial to improving the lives of Roma people.

To meet these challenges, the EU Framework sets four European goals.

▪ Education: Making sure all Roma children complete at least primary school

Only 42 % of Roma children complete primary school in some EU Member States [2]. This is often the result of discrimination or segregated education.

▪ Employment: Closing the gap

Employment rates for Roma people are much lower than for the rest of the population [3]. This is often due to discrimination in the labour market, which makes it difficult for Roma people to find or keep jobs.

▪ Healthcare: Reducing inequalities

Life expectancy for Roma people is, on average, 10 years less than the EU average [4]. High levels of infant mortality also exist in many Roma communities. These inequalities are linked to the poor living conditions of disadvantaged Roma people and their limited access to quality healthcare.

▪ Housing and essential services: Closing the gap

Roma people often live in poor housing with inadequate access to services, such as water, electricity and gas. These conditions have a major impact on the health of Roma communities. They are also often the result of segregated living areas, which create further barriers between Roma people and the rest of the population.

EU Member States are expected to translate these EU goals into national goals, which should be achieved by 2020.

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2   Open Society Institute, *International Comparative Data Set on Roma Education*, 2008.

3   World Bank, *Roma Inclusion: An Economic Opportunity for Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Romania and Serbia*, 2010.

4   European Commission, *Solidarity in Health: Reducing Health Inequalities in the EU*, 2009.

Producing national strategies

The EU Framework asks all EU Member States, taking into account their different starting points, to produce **a comprehensive strategy for Roma inclusion** by the end of 2011. This could mean preparing a completely new strategy or adapting an existing one.

National strategies should focus on the goals set out in the EU Framework and explain how these are to be achieved, in the context of each country, by outlining **specific measures**.

The EU Framework stresses the importance of strategies using a **wide-ranging approach** to address the problems faced by the Roma people. This means that any initiative targeting one of the four goals, such as education, should be launched in combination with actions targeting other goals, for example, healthcare or housing, as they are interrelated. Strategies that take into account the complexity and interrelated nature of the issues facing the Roma people today have the best chance of being effective.

Strategies can include a variety of methods, but should be in line with the **Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion** developed by the European Platform for Roma Inclusion.

Common Basic Principles on 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 European Union instruments
8. Involvement of regional and local authorities
9. Involvement of civil society
10. Active participation of the Roma

In order to be effective, national strategies need to include adequate **financial and human resources**, set out **mechanisms for their implementation,** and ensure that the **institutions involved have the capacity** to play an active role.

The role of the **National Roma Contact Points** – the bodies in charge of the implementation of national strategies in each Member State – will be crucial when addressing these points. In particular, the ability of National Roma Contact Points to engage not only with **stakeholders** who are already familiar with Roma issues, but also with those dealing with education, health, employment and housing questions will be essential. In addition, it's vital that national strategies are linked to Member States' overall social inclusion policies so that Roma inclusion is **mainstreamed** and not kept separate from other policy measures.

To be certain that once in place national strategies are effective, the European Commission will regularly **assess the progress made**. This will be done by gathering data in cooperation with bodies including the European Fundamental Rights Agency, the World Bank and the United Nations, as well as from Member States and stakeholders. These findings will be reported annually to the **European Parliament** and the **Council of the European Union**.

Involving local and regional authorities

The EU Framework states that the national strategies should be prepared, implemented and monitored in 'close cooperation and continuous dialogue' with **regional and local authorities**.

This is because it is at local level where Roma inclusion or exclusion takes place, where different communities meet, and where mutual trust can be built on a daily basis.

While of course concerted action at every level is needed, the close involvement of local and regional authorities in **every stage of the process** is key to their overall success.

- The close contact of local and regional authorities with Roma communities can provide valuable insights during the **drawing up** of national strategies. As the public administrations directly involved in delivering services to Roma people, regional and local authorities are well placed to offer feedback based on their experiences. This input can help make sure that strategies are adapted to the needs of the Roma people and build on the lessons learnt at local and regional level.

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- Once the national strategies are finalised, regional and local authorities have an important role to play in **putting them into practice**. The action plans included in the national strategies should be translated into local policies, especially as it is local and regional authorities who often have the capacity to develop projects that receive EU funding.

- By providing information to the European Commission on the evolution of the situation of Roma people on the ground, regional and local authorities can also help **monitor the progress** of national strategies.

Supporting Roma with EU funding

Allocating **sufficient funds** and using them effectively so they have **maximum impact** is essential to addressing the problems faced by Roma people today.

EU funding is available through several financial tools that cover a range of different areas.

▪ The European Social Fund

The European Social Fund (ESF) is one of the EU's Structural Funds, set up to reduce differences in prosperity and living standards across EU Member States and regions and, in this way, to promote economic and social cohesion. It supports employment and the improvement of living standards, and helps people enhance their education and skills. It works to improve the situation of disadvantaged Roma people through funding various projects that help Roma communities, for example, access healthcare and counselling, benefit from education and training, or receive guidance on becoming self-employed. ESF funding is available through national or regional authorities.

▪ The European Regional Development Fund

Another Structural Fund, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) supports regional development, economic change, enhanced competitiveness and territorial cooperation throughout the EU. In 2010 a new regulation was adopted that allows ERDF funding to be extended to housing projects aimed at extremely poor and marginalised communities, which includes many Roma communities. ERDF funding is available through regional authorities.

▪ The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) aims to improve the competitiveness of the EU's agriculture and forestry, develop the EU's environment and countryside, boost the quality of life in rural areas, and encourage the diversification of economic activities. The EAFRD can be used to help Roma communities through its funding of the socio-economic development of rural areas with the objective of preventing poverty and eliminating social exclusion. EAFRD funding is available through national authorities.

- ### The Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme

Part of the General Programme 'Fundamental Rights and Justice', the Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme aims to help protect children's rights and combat racism. The Programme supports actions that can benefit Roma people, such as projects that increase mutual understanding between Roma and non-Roma people in order to breakdown stereotypes. Funding is available through the European Commission, via direct calls for proposals.

- ### Other sources

Funding can also come from other EU programmes such as PROGRESS, the EU's employment and solidarity programme; Daphne III, a programme to combat violence against children, young people and women, and to protect victims and groups at risk; the Lifelong Learning Programme; the Youth in Action Programme; the Culture Programme; and the Health Programme. More details are available in the Resources section.

Colorful but Colorblind: Roma Beyond Stereotypes Project

Co-funded by the EU's Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme, this innovative project brought together Roma and non-Roma journalists to produce a series of 25 short films telling the stories of Roma communities living in Central and Eastern Europe.

Its aim was to encourage a more nuanced coverage of Roma issues and increase the participation of Roma journalists in mainstream media operations. In this way, the project helped to challenge stereotypes that influence media reporting on Roma people, which in turn impact on public perceptions. Through organising multimedia training for Roma and non-Roma journalists as part of the filmmaking, the project also built links and enhanced mutual understanding between media professionals.

The project, which received an international journalism award, was run by Transitions in the Czech Republic and four partner organisations: the Center for Independent Journalism (CIJ) in Hungary, the Center for Independent Journalism (CJI) in Romania, the Media Development Center (MDC) in Bulgaria, and MEMO 98 in Slovakia.

http://roma.glocalstories.org/

Maximising the impact of funding

The EU Framework sets out a number of measures that national authorities can take to ensure that **funding for the period 2007-2013** makes a tangible difference to Roma communities.

Member States are encouraged to **adapt their existing operational programmes**, which are co-financed by the EU's Structural Funds and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), so that they better support projects targeted at disadvantaged Roma people, and are fully in line with their respective national strategies for Roma inclusion.

When designing their national strategies, Member States should make the most of the **EU technical assistance** available through the Structural Funds. This specific component of Structural Funds can be used to improve how projects targeted at Roma people are managed, monitored and evaluated.

Where Member States lack the know-how or capacity to manage projects effectively, the EU Framework suggests that the management and implementation of part of their national programmes could be entrusted to **intermediary bodies**. These actors, who should have proven experience in Roma inclusion on the ground, could include international organisations, regional development bodies or non-governmental organisations.

The EU's commitment to Roma inclusion will continue after 2013 as the issue will also be given high priority in the next funding period for the Structural Funds, which will begin in **2014** and continue until **2020**.

Exchanging experiences and good practice

Policies and strategies may be drawn up at national level but it is usually at local level that they are implemented as this is where public services are delivered to citizens.

Good practices from around the EU include using mediators in schools and in health and employment services; offering language classes (both in Romanès and in the language of the host country where Roma people live outside their country of origin); organising specific initiatives for Roma women and children, for example, health prevention campaigns, supporting early childhood education and providing childcare for Roma children; setting up mechanisms to facilitate dialogue between authorities and Roma communities and their representatives; and establishing well-equipped sites for non-sedentary Roma people.

Sharing experiences can provide practical solutions and help local actors. Networks like Eurocities or the URBACT Roma-Net gather together local authorities, helping them to pool efforts, identify good practices, and find common solutions to encourage Roma inclusion. Twinning programmes between cities, for example uniting the home and host cities of Roma communities, have also proved successful.

Kavarna, Bulgaria

Roma people have been living in Kavarna for over a century. Today there are around 4 000 Roma in Kavarna, a town with around 16 500 inhabitants in total.

For the authorities in Kavarna it is essential to tackle head-on the problems facing Roma people. This is done through a specific department that coordinates action in the town, for example, to reduce school drop out rates among Roma children.

One key issue identified in Kavarna is housing as Roma people often live in irregular situations without secure tenancy agreements. This problem, like many of those facing the Roma people, is interlinked to others and so needs to be resolved before other issues can be adequately addressed.

The local authorities are also committed to playing their part in changing public perceptions by working with the media to present an accurate image of Roma people, as just one of the different communities that make up the town's diverse population.

Montreuil, France

While some Roma people have been in Montreuil since the start of the nineteenth century, the most recent arrivals include Roma people from the former Yugoslavia in the 1970s and Romania in the 1990s. This diversity makes estimating the number of Roma people in Montreuil and developing strategies for their inclusion a complex challenge.

The authorities in Montreuil have adopted a global approach that strives to address in a holistic way the difficulties faced by the Roma people. This includes:
- offering language lessons to enable Roma people to learn French, in this way helping them to access services such as healthcare and education;
- providing support where necessary to Roma families leaving caravans to live in new social housing developments alongside non-Roma;
- organising activities to help non-Roma people learn about Roma culture and encouraging the participation of Roma people at city events with the aim of building mutual understanding and facilitating dialogue; and
- ensuring that Roma people are represented in all activities targeted at them by electing and systematically involving representatives, including women and children, from Roma communities.

Ghent, Belgium

There are around 8 000 Roma people currently living in Ghent. The majority come from the north east of Bulgaria and the Kosicé region of Slovakia. The numbers of Roma people arriving has rapidly increased during the last five years.

Ghent has a general policy to address the unsustainable influx of immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe, which is now higher than can be absorbed by the city. This policy takes into account the specific needs of the Roma people.

City authorities take a humane approach towards the immigrants who have already arrived while, at the same time, strictly applying the law and advocating their voluntary return to their place of origin.

Actions include:
- organising consultations between city services to coordinate their work (for example, to tackle the abuse of social benefits);
- introducing mediators in neighbourhoods to address and advise on cohabitation issues and to intervene when problems occur, such as illegal dumping or squatting (evictions); and
- combating fraudulent practices in the areas of housing and employment.

Creating synergies between local and regional authorities

There are initiatives taking place around Europe that build on the **knowledge and experiences** of local and regional authorities and their **commitment** to promoting Roma inclusion.

▪ The Committee of the Regions

The Committee of the Regions (CoR) is the EU's assembly of local and regional representatives. By providing their opinion on policy proposals, these representatives have a direct voice in shaping EU policy development and legislation. The CoR has published two opinions on the issue of Roma inclusion. In addition, it is working with the EU-Roma Network, a group of 12 EU Member States that cooperate on Roma issues, on a guide for local decision makers on how to develop programmes for Roma inclusion using the EU Structural Funds, which is due to be published in autumn 2011.

▪ The Council of Europe, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

The Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities organised a Summit of Mayors on Roma on 22 September 2011 on the theme of 'Building mutual trust at the grassroots' in Strasbourg, France. Participants adopted a declaration in which they stress their determination to take sustained action on Roma inclusion by establishing a European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma inclusion. A group including six European cities and regions will now work together to launch this initiative.

▪ Eurocities

Eurocities is a network of European cities that brings together the local authorities of more than 140 large cities in over 30 European countries. To contribute to the EU Framework's implementation, a task force on Roma inclusion has been established that involves various cities. The task force provides expertise and data on local situations, policy developments, and information on successful policies to help tackle the problems facing Roma people.

- ## URBACT Roma-Net project

The URBACT Roma-Net project comprises 10 partner cities from different EU Member States that come together to share expertise and spread good practices with the aim of improving the development of local policy and building stronger links between Roma people and the other communities they live with in Europe's cities. An over-arching objective of the project is to inform and support the development of local action plans for Roma inclusion.

The European Commission is also developing **model approaches,** which aim to draw lessons from effective existing Roma inclusion policies and practices in order to help national and local policymakers develop their own policies. Model approaches will be tailored to four main types of Roma communities and each will be made up of a selection of policy initiatives that can inspire national and local decision makers. The results of this work will be published during 2012.

EU and Roma
http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma/index_en.htm

'For Diversity. Against Discrimination.' campaign
http://ec.europa.eu/stop-discrimination

The European Social Fund (ESF)
http://ec.europa.eu/esf/

The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)
http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/thefunds/regional/index_en.cfm

The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)
http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/index_en.htm

The Fundamental Rights and Citizenship programme (FRAC)
http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamental-rights/programme/
fundamental-rights-programme/index_en.htm

PROGRESS
http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=987&langId=en

The Lifelong Learning Programme
http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc78_en.htm

The Youth in Action Programme
http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-in-action-programme/overview_en.htm

The Culture Programme
http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/
culture-programme-(2007-2013)_en.htm

The Health Programme
http://ec.europa.eu/health/programme/policy/index_en.htm

Committee of the Regions
http://www.cor.europa.eu/

Council of Europe
http://www.coe.int/

Eurocities
http://www.eurocities.eu/

URBACT Roma-Net project
http://urbact.eu/en/projects/active-inclusion/roma-net/homepage/

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