



PROMOTING THE USE OF ESI FUNDS FOR ROMA INCLUSION

A glance at EUroma's eight years of work and how Roma inclusion is considered in the 2014-2020 programming period

Summary report

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Introduction

This report is the final publication of the **'European Network on Social Inclusion and Roma under the Structural Funds' (EURoma Network)**¹ in the 2007-2013 programming period. **Launched in 2007 by the Spanish European Social Fund Managing Authority in cooperation with the Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG)**, which has led the Technical Secretariat, the Network worked throughout the whole programming period **to promote the use of Structural Funds for Roma inclusion.**

The final EURoma report has a **twofold objective:**

- ➔ **To provide a glance at EURoma's trajectory, main products and overall added value and impact during its eight years of operation.**

- ➔ **To review how fourteen countries currently involved in the EURoma Network (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden) consider Roma inclusion in the Operational Programmes adopted for the 2014-2020 European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds programming period, focusing on the scope, the funds and approaches planned, the thematic objectives and investment priorities selected as well as the areas of intervention and the application of the partnership principle.**

The report also aims to **reflect the advancement as regards the consideration of Roma issues within the framework of ESI Funds.** Overall, it pretends to **provide a general picture of how Roma inclusion is incorporated in the programming documents** of the 2014-2020 programming period, **identifying the most relevant trends as well as the key challenges for the implementation phase** that has already started in Member States.

1. www.euromanet.eu

It is expected that this common reflection and analysis will **serve for the future work of EURoma Network as well as for other stakeholders** involved in promoting a better use of ESI Funds for Roma inclusion in the 2014-2020 programming period.

The **data gathering process was carried out in 2015**, during the final phase of the drafting and adoption of the Operational Programmes for the 2014-2020 ESI Funds programming period. It is **based on the information gathered from representatives from the National Roma Contact Points (NRCPs) and the Managing Authorities (MAs) (or delegated Intermediate Bodies/Implementing Authorities) from fourteen countries currently involved in the EURoma Network, complemented with desk research** (using public sources and the programming documents) **and input from other relevant stakeholders.**

Executive summary

EURoma: Eight years promoting the use of Structural Funds for Roma inclusion in the European Union

The ‘European Network on Social Inclusion and Roma under the Structural Funds’ (EURoma Network) is an initiative **launched in 2007 by the Spanish Government** (Spanish European Social Fund (ESF) Managing Authority) **in cooperation with the Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG)**, building upon the Spanish experience in the management of Structural Funds for Roma inclusion, notably within the Operational Programme ‘Fight against Discrimination’. It aims to **promote the use of Structural Funds for the inclusion of the Roma population** and as a result enhancing the effectiveness of policies targeting them.

To this end, it **gathers**, under the leadership of the Spanish ESF Managing Authority, **public bodies responsible for Structural Funds** (notably ESF Managing Authorities or delegated Intermediate Bodies/Implementing Authorities) **and for the policies targeting the Roma population** (notably the National Roma Contact Points) **from fifteen Member States:** Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Slovakia and Sweden. The Network also counts on the **participation of the European Commission**. The Fundación Secretariado Gitano holds the Technical Secretariat of the Network. In addition, a number of European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Managing Authorities from participating countries are also involved in Network activities.

EURoma was **created in the context of the 2007-2013 Structural Funds programming period**, which increased the scope of transnational cooperation between public authorities and civil society actors, and in light of:

- ➔ The **need to guarantee the fundamental rights of the Roma population;**
- ➔ The **enlargement of the European Union** through the incorporation of the countries with the highest concentration of Roma populations;

- The fact that **Structural Funds**, and particularly the ESF, were **identified as the main financial instruments for the implementation**, by Member States, **of policies fostering social inclusion, cohesion and employment opportunities**;
- The **limited impact of the Structural Funds on Roma** (e.g. scarce knowledge on how to address Roma inclusion in the Operational Programmes and how to actually reach Roma in the implementation);
- The **Spanish experience of effectively using the ESF for the inclusion of the Roma**.

To achieve its goal, the Network develops activities revolving around **three main lines of action**:

- **Mutual learning among Network partners.** Encouraging and facilitating the exchange of information and experiences on topics of relevance and/or common interest for Network partners as regards the use of Structural Funds for Roma inclusion (e.g. strategies and approaches, (un)successful practices, lessons learned, challenges, thematic areas...). Over the last years, particular attention has been paid to the preparation of the 2014-2020 programming period of the European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds. Management Committee meetings, gathering Network partners, are one of the key instruments used for this end.
- **Knowledge generation based on experience.** Generating knowledge on key aspects related to the use of Structural Funds for Roma inclusion building upon the experience and shared approaches of Network partners and the work and debate within the Network. A wide variety of resources are produced including position papers and recommendations, analysis of the situation, information and guidance materials, guides and reports...All documents produced by the Network are available on the EURoma website www.euromanet.eu (Resource Center).

- **Visibility and dissemination.** Making the Network, its activities and products visible with a view to raise awareness among relevant stakeholders on the importance of Structural Funds for Roma inclusion and on relevant aspects to achieve a more efficient use of these funds. Different channels are used: EURoma Network website (www.euromanet.eu), regular newsletters (available in English and Spanish) regarding relevant developments about Structural Funds and Roma inclusion at EU level and in the Network partner countries, presence in relevant fora, initiatives, decision-making spaces and expert/consultative groups.

Active throughout the whole 2007-2013 programming period, **EURoma has become a fundamental actor at European level as regards the inclusion of Roma population and Structural Funds.** The Network has been not only highly valued by relevant actors, including the Network partners and the European Commission, but also one of the most active transnational networks over its eight years of operation. A number of factors demonstrate the value and impact of EURoma including its composition and large scope (currently involving fifteen Western and Eastern Member States); its capacity to bring together the bodies that decide on Roma policies (National Roma Contact Points) and those that allocate the financial resources (Managing Authorities), aligning policies and financial resources; its role in boosting the idea that Structural Funds are a key financial and political tool to promote policies for Roma inclusion and in including Roma issues in the agenda of ESF Managing Authorities; and its contribution to a more effective use of these funds to promote Roma inclusion in the 2007-2013 and the 2014-2020 programming periods, including through the incorporation of an explicit investment priority on Roma.

Roma inclusion in the Operational Programmes of the 2014-2020 programming period

It is encouraging to observe that in the programming documents for the 2014-2020 European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds programming period **increased attention is paid to Roma inclusion, with Roma people and Roma communities targeted to a large extent and in a broad number of Operational Programmes (OPs).**

While countries analysed use a wide variety of options in terms of scope, funds, approaches, thematic objectives, investment priorities and fields of intervention, **a number of general trends are observed** (some of them similar to the ones in the 2007-2013 period).

Roma inclusion is commonly considered, even in the countries with high percentages of Roma population, **in general Operational Programmes**, instead of specific Operational Programmes (or part of them) targeting Roma.

National and regional management

- There is a **general trend to address Roma inclusion in OPs at national level**, opting for a centralised management not only of national lines of intervention but also of regional and local ones.
- In some countries **Roma inclusion is also incorporated in the OPs at regional level. However**, it appears that, except in certain cases, Roma feature **to a minor extent** in regional OPs **compared to national OPs**, despite the attempts made by some countries (by increasing the number of regional OPs addressing Roma inclusion or giving them more capacity). In general terms, **there is little information on the extent and how Roma inclusion is considered in regional programmes** in many countries, which makes it difficult to assess the state-of-play and the progress made.
- While some advancements regarding the inclusion of Roma in regional OPs have been achieved, there are **still challenges that need to be addressed**, namely, the assumption of Roma priorities in the regional agendas, the increased coordination and information flow between the national and regional administrative levels, etc... These aspects, which are closely linked to the absence of adequate communication channels and the lack of mandate from the national bodies to collect information from the regional level, seem crucial in order to change this trend.

Use of funds

- An **increased awareness about the importance of using ESI Funds other than the European Social Fund (ESF), notably the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), is perceived.** In the 2014-2020 programming period, **most countries foresee the use of both ESF and ERDF to address Roma inclusion.** Moreover, there are plans to use other funding sources and instruments –including the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Territorial Cooperation programmes- in certain countries.
- **While in some cases the use of ESF and ERDF is planned separately, a complementary use of both funds is foreseen in a large number of OPs,** which represents a step forward towards a more integrated approach. Three options are used:
 - › A single-fund OP (ESF/ERDF) supporting actions eligible under the other fund according to Article 98 of the Common Provisions Regulations
 - › Including both funds within the same OP (multi-fund OP)
 - › Complementing actions from different OPs (mostly single-fund) using ESF and/or ERDF funds

It remains to be seen how the complementarity of funds is applied in practice and how the main problems faced in this area in the 2007-2013 programming period (such as the difficulties in harmonising the calls for proposals from different funds) or new aspects (such as co-investing resources from different funds into one single intervention) are addressed.

- Unfortunately, the **potential of the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) to support the employment of Roma,** a population significantly younger than the overall population and experiencing higher unemployment rates than the rest of society, **is largely missed.** In general terms, Roma youngsters are not specifically considered in the Plans and OPs adopted by Member States to implement the YEI at national level, assuming that they will benefit from the measures simply because they are young and they are unemployed. However, experience shows that, if specific measures are not adopted to take into account the profiles and needs of the groups furthest from the labour market such as Roma (with limited educational background to comply with the procedures

established and to access the training schemes and the labour market offers) and to effectively reach them, the potential of this type of initiatives will be missed.

- Whereas certain progress is acknowledged, **further efforts are needed to ensure that the needs of the Roma population are considered in all ESI Funds and that full advantage is taken of all the opportunities offered** to achieve a more effective use of these funds such as the combination of funds.

Approaches used

- **Different ways to address Roma inclusion are observed**, mainly related to the reference made to Roma/Roma communities within the Operational Programmes:
 - › **Explicit mention:** dedicated lines focusing specifically on Roma/Roma communities. This approach is largely used in certain ESF investment priorities, notably under ESF IP 9.2. (Socio-economic integration of marginalised communities such as the Roma), but also under other ESF IPs and TOs and to a lesser extent under ERDF IP 9.b. (Providing support for physical, economic and social regeneration of deprived communities in urban and rural areas).
 - › **Explicit but not exclusive mention:** general lines of intervention focusing explicitly on Roma/Roma communities but as part of a larger group (e.g. disadvantaged group) or geographical area (e.g. disadvantaged area). In this category a distinction should be made between those OPs that merely mention Roma/Roma communities as one of the many target groups/geographical areas of the OP and those that pay particular attention to them by having a limited number of target groups/areas, one of them Roma/Roma communities. 'Explicit but not exclusive' Roma targeting, if implemented properly, has proven to be one of the best ways of tackling the socio-economic inclusion of Roma.
 - › **No explicit mention to Roma/Roma communities** but considered as part of a larger group /geographical area.

Finally, the **territorial approach**, which can be applied in any of the previous three cases. This approach aims at covering specifically the needs of geographical areas, sometimes micro-territories, in many cases at greatest risk of poverty and, as a consequence, tackle the needs of groups at risk of exclusion and discrimination living in these areas, as it is the case of the Roma.

- In general terms **countries combine different approaches to address Roma inclusion** (both within the same OP or in the different OPs) **and target Roma explicitly**. The only exception to this general trend is Sweden, which opts for not using an explicit approach (Roma are considered as part of the ‘minorities’ target group).

- There are also **differences as regards the hierarchical level at which the interventions targeting specifically Roma/Roma communities are planned** (from the maximum level of relevance when defined as a priority axis to a specific objective or an action/type of intervention). Out of the OPs that include targeted interventions, only the Slovak ESF/ERDF *Human Resources OP* foresees dedicated priority axes, one under ESF (Priority Axis 5 ‘Integration of marginalised Roma communities’) and one under ERDF (Priority Axis 6 ‘Technical facilities in municipalities with presence of marginalised Roma communities’). The rest of countries foresee dedicated lines of intervention at the level of specific objectives or actions/types of interventions. The most common trend is to use specific objectives, whether several ones (Romanian ESF *Human Capital OP* with five) or one only (Belgian ESF *Flanders OP*, Bulgarian ESF *Human Resources Development OP*, ESF/ERDF *Science and Education for Smart Growth OP* and ERDF *Regions in Growth OP*, Czech ESF/ERDF *Research, Development and Education OP*, Italian ESF *Social Inclusion OP*, ESF/ERDF *Metropolitan Cities OP* and ESF/ERDF *Legality OP*, and Spanish *Social Inclusion and Social Economy OP*). The rest plan Roma inclusion under actions/types of interventions (Austrian ESF *Employment OP*, Croatian ESF *Efficient Human Resources OP*, Greek ESF *Human Resources Development, Education and Lifelong Learning OP*, Hungarian ESF/ERDF *Human Resources Development OP*, *Territorial and Settlement Development OP*, Polish ESF *Knowledge, Education, Development OP*, Portuguese ESF *Social Inclusion and Employment OP*). Indeed Roma/Roma communities can also benefit from other priority axes, specific objectives and actions/types of interventions that are not targeting them specifically (whether they are mentioned as one of the target groups or not).

- Experience shows that there is **no single right or better approach, what is important is that planning is translated into actions that actually reach Roma/Roma communities.** Particular attention should be paid to those actions that do not target Roma explicitly to avoid programmes disregarding them. The necessary guarantees should also be taken as regards the ‘explicit but not exclusive’ approaches, notably when there is a large number of target groups, to prevent the risk that Roma become blurred among the many other groups. To this end, it is crucial to count on strong and continuous monitoring processes.
- It is also important to bear in mind that **there is still much scope to reach Roma/Roma communities in the implementation phase even if the adopted programming documents do not feature specific measures or do not explicitly mention them** (e.g. Roma can be mentioned as potential target groups of the calls for proposals or in the priorities of the projects...).

Thematic objectives (TOs) and investment priorities (IPs)

- Luckily most countries have understood that **the fact that there is a dedicated investment priority to address Roma inclusion within ESF (IP 9.2.) does not prevent them from planning interventions under other ESF IPs and TOs as well as under other funds (ERDF).**
- The most **common trend within the ESF** is to address Roma inclusion under **Thematic Objective 9** (Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination), followed by **Thematic Objective 8** (Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility) and **Thematic Objective 10** (Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and life-long learning).
- As it could be expected, **the OPs addressing Roma inclusion under IP 9.2. are the ones that include the most targeted actions**, including dedicated priority axes, thematic objectives and/or actions/type of interventions. **But** it is worth noting that **a number of OPs that address Roma inclusion under IPs other than 9.2. also pay particular attention to Roma, even with dedicated actions targeting Roma.**

- With respect to the **ERDF, Roma inclusion is mainly addressed under Thematic Objective 9** (Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination) **and Thematic Objective 10** (Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning by developing education and training infrastructure).
- The **most explicit and targeted approaches to Roma/Roma communities under ERDF are found under IP 9.b.** (Providing support for physical, economic and social regeneration of deprived communities in urban and rural areas). However, in ERDF interventions it is more common to use 'explicit but not exclusive approaches' or even not mentioning Roma explicitly (considering them as part of larger groups), a trend that is to some extent related to the wide use of territorial approaches.
- **The consideration of Roma inclusion** in a large number of ESF and ERDF thematic objectives and investment priorities, **beyond the specific IP 9.2. implies substantial progress in terms of Roma policies and opens a lot of opportunities to achieve impact** if it is appropriately implemented.
- **The use of other thematic objectives which could have potential to reach Roma people** (e.g. 2, 5 and 6) **could be considered as merely anecdotal.**

Fields of intervention

- It is positive to observe that in the adopted Operational Programmes **countries incorporate actions addressing the four key fields of intervention identified by the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies (employment, education, healthcare and housing), together in some cases with** interventions in other areas such as the **fight against discrimination or social inclusion/community-level social integration** (i.e. community-centres, field social work, intercultural mediation, access to social services...).
- Despite the wider scope in terms of fields of intervention, and similarly to the 2007-2013 programming period, **interventions are mainly focused on employment and education while healthcare and housing are considered to a lesser extent**, although housing issues are acquiring increased importance, with specific lines of support. The area of **healthcare** is however primarily included in general lines of support and considered from a global approach (initiatives covering different areas).

- One of the main challenges perceived in the previous programming period was the design and actual implementation of an **integrated and multidimensional approach** (both in terms of foreseen interventions and funds). In the 2014-2020 period, **despite the fact that it is widely recognised as a crucial element** to address complex situations for Roma inclusion, it is **still not broadly considered** and when it is the case, it is often not clear how it will be implemented in practice.
- While these approaches are of particular relevance in areas with relatively widespread geographical segregation and marginalisation or where Roma are overrepresented, it is **important to go further and apply them in all types of interventions targeting Roma, emphasising** links between the different fields.
- It seems that further efforts are also needed as regards the **use of integrated approaches in micro-territorial interventions**. Integrated actions in these cases should entail investment in education, employment generation and access to healthcare with the pivotal development of basic infrastructure, including the rebuilding and renovation of housing. Other key areas to be considered as regards housing interventions are infrastructural (including sanitation) and environmental improvements in Roma communities, integrated actions for improving physical and housing conditions in neighbourhoods with a high concentration of Roma as well as desegregation and urban planning.

Partnership principle

- In line with the general **acknowledgement of the importance of involving relevant stakeholders for Roma inclusion** (Roma individuals, Roma NGOs and organisations working to promote Roma inclusion) **in the ESI Funds cycle**, certain **progress is observed in terms of the mechanisms, processes and methods for involvement**.
- **However, there is still room for progress**. Firstly, the extent to which these stakeholders are involved in practice and whether their proposals are reflected in the adopted documents and the decisions taken remains in many cases unclear as there is **no systematic monitoring or evaluation of stakeholder involvement**.

- Secondly, **major differences are perceived between the countries regarding the degree and quality of stakeholder participation and the forms it takes.** In addition, in many cases the mechanisms and processes for involvement are weak (e.g. informal), only happen in specific moments and in specific phases and are not linked to capacity-building processes of relevant stakeholders and beneficiaries.
- The **challenge** for the 2014-2020 programming period is to **extend quality participation of stakeholders to all phases of the programming period, from planning, to implementation, monitoring and evaluation, in line with the European Code of Conduct on Partnership.** To this end it is important to advance towards structured mechanisms to involve stakeholders and establish processes and methods that allow for an active and quality partnership (going beyond informative sessions and moving towards real consultation and partnership), to develop mechanisms that allow the systematic monitoring and evaluation of stakeholder involvement and to foster the capacity of stakeholders to get involved not only to merely participate.

Operational Programmes of relevance for Roma inclusion

The table below provides a global overview of all Operational Programmes identified as relevant for Roma inclusion in the fourteen countries analysed, both at regional and national level and funded by European Social Fund (ESF) and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

Table I: Operational Programmes relevant for Roma inclusion per country

Country	Operational Programmes*
Austria	Employment OP (ESF)
Belgium	<i>Flanders OP</i> (ESF)
Bulgaria	Human Resources Development OP (ESF) Science and Education for Smart Growth OP (ESF+ERDF) Regions in Growth OP (ERDF)
Croatia	Efficient Human Resources OP (ESF) Competitiveness and Cohesion OP (ERDF)
Czech Republic	Employment OP (ESF) Integrated Regional OP (ERDF) Research, Development and Education OP (ESF+ERDF) <i>Prague-Growth Pole OP</i> (ESF+ERDF)
Greece	Human Resources Development, Education and Lifelong Learning OP (ESF) <i>Regional OPs</i> (OPs from 13 regions, ESF+ERDF)
Hungary	Human Resources Development OP (ESF+ERDF) Territorial and Settlement Development OP (ESF+ERDF) Economic Development and Innovation OP (ESF+ERDF) <i>Competitive Central-Hungary OP</i> (ESF+ERDF)

Italy	<p>Social Inclusion OP (ESF) Metropolitan Cities OP (ESF+ERDF) Systems of Active Policies for Employment OP (ESF) Legality OP (ESF+ERDF) <i>Regional OPs</i> (no information about exact number of relevant OPs)</p>
Poland	<p>Knowledge, Education, Development OP (ESF) <i>Regional OPs</i> (OPs from 16 regions, ESF+ERDF)</p>
Portugal	<p>Social Inclusion and Employment OP (ESF)</p>
Romania	<p>Human Capital OP (ESF) Regional OP (ERDF)</p>
Slovakia	<p>Human Resources OP (ESF + ERDF) Integrated Regional OP (ERDF)</p>
Spain	<p>Social Inclusion and Social Economy OP (ESF) Employment, Education and Training OP (ESF) Youth Employment OP (ESF) Sustainable Growth OP (ERDF) <i>Cantabria OP</i> (ESF) <i>Castilla-La Mancha OP</i> (ESF) <i>Extremadura OP</i> (ESF) <i>Madrid OP</i> (ERDF) <i>Murcia OPs</i> (ESF and ERDF)</p>
Sweden	<p>Investments in Growth and Employment OP (ESF)</p>

*Italics: regional OPs

The way forward

The **ESI Funds Regulations for the 2014-2020 programming period open up a wide range of possibilities for promoting the social inclusion and non-discrimination of Roma** across the European Union. Elements such as the specific European Social Fund (ESF) Investment Priority 'Socio-economic integration of marginalised communities such as the Roma' (IP 9.2.), the ex-ante conditionalities (e.g. a national Roma inclusion strategic policy framework in place...) and the stronger linkages with the political priorities identified in the country-specific recommendations are new instruments that, if properly used, could contribute to achieve substantial progress in the use of ESI Funds for Roma inclusion.

The findings of the analysis carried out by the EURoma Network show **a positive picture as regards the consideration of Roma inclusion in the Operational Programmes adopted for the 2014-2020 programming period**. Roma are considered in a broad number of OPs, going beyond the use of the ESF and in particular the specific Investment Priority 9.2. In addition, progress is observed as regards the plans to use some of the tools included in the new Regulations to advance Roma inclusion, such as the combination of funds.

Now it remains to be seen how this positive framework and the different options selected by countries in terms of scope (national or regional OPs), **funds** (European Social Fund, European Regional Development Fund or others), **thematic objectives and investment priorities** (9.2. or others), **approaches** (explicit mention, no mention and territorial approaches), **hierarchical importance given to actions targeting Roma** (at the level of priority axes, specific objectives or actions) **and fields of intervention are translated into practice**. The main goal should be to ensure that the interventions planned in the programming documents are actually and effectively implemented and that they contribute to improving the socio-economic situation, equal opportunities and fight against discrimination of Roma people.

Building upon the analysis made and the experience from the 2007-2013 programming period, **the following aspects should be considered during the implementation phase:**

- **The effective implementation of the actions planned in the programming documents, ensuring that they actually reach Roma.** Particular attention should be paid to those actions that do not target Roma explicitly to avoid that they are disregarded. The necessary guarantees should also be taken as regards the 'explicit but not exclusive' approaches, notably when there is a large number of target groups, to prevent the risk that Roma become blurred among the many other groups. To this end, **it is crucial to count on strong and continuous monitoring processes.**
- **The use of opportunities to promote Roma inclusion beyond those foreseen in the programming documents.** There is still much scope to promote Roma inclusion in the implementation phase even if the adopted programming documents do not feature specific measures or do not explicitly mention Roma (e.g. mentioning Roma as potential targets of the calls for proposals or in the priorities of the projects, establishing indicators related to Roma as final beneficiaries...). This could also apply to the consideration of the gender dimension in the programmes. As far as the funds are concerned, ESF and ERDF but also other funding sources and instruments -including the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Territorial Cooperation programmes- offer many opportunities.
- **The maximisation of the instruments available within the new Regulations for a more efficient use of ESI Funds.** Among them the combined use of different funds, whether within the same OP or between OPs with different funds, or the integrated and multi-dimensional approaches, both in terms of fields of interventions and funds. While these approaches are of particular relevance in areas with relatively widespread geographical segregation and marginalisation, or where Roma are overrepresented, it is important to go further and apply them in all types of interventions targeting Roma, emphasising the links between the different fields and funds.

In general, it seems important to widen the fields of interventions beyond the four key fields identified by the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) (employment, education, healthcare and housing) including also other areas of relevance, particularly non-discrimination. In this sense, further efforts are deemed necessary in those areas that up to now received less attention, such as healthcare.

- ➔ **The alignment, complementarity and coordination between the national, regional and local levels**, including between the OPs acting at the different levels and the financial and policy instruments (i.e. OPs and relevant policies on Roma inclusion at national and regional level such as the NRIS, among others).
- ➔ **The role of the National Roma Contact Points (NRCs)** in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases and the need to improve the coordination and alignment between the National Roma Contact Points and the Managing Authorities.
- ➔ **The promotion of a quality participation, involvement and performance of relevant stakeholders** for Roma inclusion (including Roma NGOs and organisations working to promote Roma inclusion as well as Roma communities themselves) throughout the whole ESI Funds cycle (from planning, to implementation, monitoring and evaluation) in line with the European Code of Conduct on Partnership. To this end it is important:
 - › **To advance towards structured mechanisms to involve stakeholders and establish processes and methods that allow for an active and quality partnership** (going beyond mere informative sessions and moving towards real consultation and partnership), to develop mechanisms for the systematic monitoring and evaluation of stakeholder involvement and to foster the capacity of stakeholders to get involved.

- › **To promote a quality performance of intermediate bodies and final beneficiaries** as regards core aspects **for the effective implementation** of Roma inclusion programmes (selection criteria based on proven experience and professional competences; assuring adequate resources for effectively implementing the programmes....)
- › To promote the **capacity-building of all relevant stakeholders**, including Managing Authorities, Intermediate Bodies and also final beneficiaries and other crucial actors as a core element to enhance their important role in ensuring the effective use of the funds.

In order to assure the effective incorporation of Roma within ESI Funds, it is **essential that all these elements are assumed not only by national Operational Programmes but also by regional ones**, which should fully develop their potential in this programming period.

The 2014-2020 programming period should serve to take the definite step forward in promoting a real change in the lives of the many European Roma that still today suffer from poverty, exclusion and discrimination. It is the responsibility of all relevant actors not to miss the opportunities offered by these political and financial instruments to address once for all the inequalities and injustice that European Roma citizens face in their daily lives.

The framework for transnational cooperation established for the 2014-2020 programming period and initiatives such as the EURoma Network can largely contribute to this goal by encouraging mutual learning, knowledge generation, capacity-building of relevant actors and provision of support to address crucial aspects for an effective use of ESI Funds for Roma inclusion.

The full content of the report is available at:

<http://www.empleo.gob.es/uafse/es/coopTransInter/transnacional/index.html>

http://www.gitanos.org/publications/Euroma.Final.Report.2007_2013.Programming.Period.pdf

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