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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION
TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL,
THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE
AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

Non-discrimination and equal opportunities: A renewed commitment

Community Instruments and Policies for Roma Inclusion

{COM(2008) 420 final}

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Mandate

The Brussels European Council (14 December (2007), stated that:

(50) “The European Council, conscious of the very specific situation faced by the Roma across the Union, invites Member States and the Union to use all means to improve their inclusion. To this end it invites the Commission to examine existing policies and instruments and to report to the Council on progress achieved before the end of June 2008”.

Moreover, the European Parliament’s resolution of 31 January 2008 represents an urgent call for a comprehensive European framework strategy on Roma.¹ The launch of an EU Roma Policy Coalition of NGOs on 5 March 2008 reflects the will of civil society to join forces for a better inclusion of this major community, and for a long term and coherent common Roma strategy of main-stakeholders at the European level.

This staff working document sets out to list and examine the existing policies and instruments as a response to the European Council request. The Commission Communication on non-discrimination policy² draws conclusions from the thorough analysis of ongoing activities, opportunities and gaps identified in this document and lays down the framework and for further steps towards Roma inclusion. This is a necessary first step in designing better and more efficient policies and mechanism which to bring about a change in the life on European Roma.

1.2 The Challenge

Though the socio-economic conditions of Roma³ remain under-researched, it is clear that Roma are particularly exposed to high rates of poverty, unemployment or are largely operating in the informal economy. A recent EU-wide public opinion survey shows that a quarter of Europeans would feel uncomfortable to have a Roma as their neighbour. In some countries half of the respondents take this view.⁴ It has been highlighted by research and civil society that anti-Gypsyism is a specific form of racism which is based on de-legitimisation and moral exclusion.

The number of Roma in the European Union is subject to much speculation. It is not expected that this situation could change in the near future given the ethical and political limitations involved in gathering ethnically disaggregated data in a number of Member States (and the

¹ P6_TA(2008)0035

² Non-Discrimination and Equal Opportunities: A Renewed Commitment - COM(2008)420

³ For the purpose of this paper, the term “Roma” is used – similarly to other political documents of the European Council, European Parliament etc. – as an umbrella term including also other groups of people who share more or less similar cultural characteristics and a history of persistent marginalisation in European societies, such as the Sinti, Travellers, Ashkali etc. The European Commission is aware of the recurrent debate regarding the use of the term Roma, and it has no intention to “assimilate” the members of other groups to the Roma themselves in cultural terms. Nonetheless, it considers the use of “Roma” as an umbrella term practical and justifiable within the context of a policy document which is dealing above all with issues of social exclusion and discrimination, not with specific issues of cultural identity.

⁴ Eurobarometer 69.1 (02-02/2008)

fluid boundaries of who is or is not considered to be a “Roma” in particular contexts, see footnote 3). Nonetheless, it is clear that these are populations numbering millions of people and that the number of Roma on the territory of the European Union has increased considerably with the accession of the 12 new Member States.⁵

In demographic terms, the Roma populations appear to differ significantly from the overall development of European societies which are characterised by population ageing. Although there are few reliable sources in this respect (for the same methodological, ethical and political reasons as those mentioned above), it seems beyond reasonable doubt that life expectancies of the Roma are some 10-15 years lower than those of majority populations, while fertility rates remain much higher. Indeed, it has been estimated that about a half of the Roma population in Central and Eastern Europe is less than 20 years old, which would be comparable to some of the poorest African or Asian societies. The fact that the Roma populations include such a large proportion of young people and children increases the urgent need to break the vicious circle of inter-generational transmission of poverty and severe social exclusion.

Although the European institutions, Member States and candidate countries as well as civil society have addressed these problems since the beginning of the 1990s, there is a widely shared assumption that the living and working conditions of Roma have not much improved over the last two decades.

1.3 Instruments, Actors and Responsibilities

Core issues of Roma inclusion — education, employment, public health, housing and infrastructure and the fight against poverty — fall mainly under the responsibility of Member States. The EU plays, however, an important role in ensuring the principle of non-discrimination and in policy coordination. Moreover, the Structural Funds (and in particular the European Social Fund) are crucial instruments in supporting the Lisbon strategy at national, regional and local level.

It is clear that all work on Roma inclusion has to take into account this division of responsibilities. There are a number of pit-falls which the Commission has done its utmost to avoid in its work on Roma inclusion, i.e.:

- a purely horizontal ("ethnically neutral") approach to the problem which would risk losing sight of specific challenges that Roma face;
- a purely ethnically defined approach which forgoes the advantages of mainstreaming Roma issues in the main policy strands;
- a declaratory “Europeanisation” of the problem which could symbolically transfer the responsibility to European institutions without providing them with new instruments to deal with it and without sufficient commitments from Member States.

The European Commission established in 2004 an “Inter Service Group on Roma” (ISG) replacing a previous Commission external relations working group on Roma. This group is an

⁵ Surveys by the UNDP and the Roma Education Fund assess that in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia represent between 5 and 10% of the total population. In these four countries the number of Roma would amount to 3-4 million persons.

intra-institutional platform for the exchange of information with regard to instruments and policies which are relevant for Roma inclusion. It is currently analysing how the Structural Funds, and other financial and policy instruments can be mobilised during this programming period (2007-2013) directly or indirectly for this purpose. It is planned to use the ISG's analytical tools in order to follow up the development and implementation of the Structural Funds on the ground.

The EU has an advanced legal framework which provides for protection against discrimination on grounds of ethnic origin based on an individual-rights-based approach.⁶ For this legislation to be implemented on the ground, it must be accompanied by focused information on rights and obligations, clear orientation of national equality bodies and practical support for legal practitioners and NGOs (*e.g.* through training and capacity building).

The European Structural Funds (Fund for Regional Development, Social Fund and the former Community Initiative EQUAL) have supported a number of projects focused on education, (vocational) training, improvements in infrastructure, and also on different forms of counselling and social assistance for Roma. Experience, detailed in this report, shows that the key to success is the political will and capacity of Member State Governments to allocate budgets and support projects which are multidimensional (taking the whole reality of Roma life into consideration) and clearly targeted on the Roma (though not ethnically exclusive, *i.e.*, allowing for participation of other persons in similar situations regardless of their ethnicity). On the other hand potential beneficiaries —in particular at regional and local level or NGOs —need to have the capacity to apply successfully for financial support and implement their projects effectively. NGO capacity building in the case of Roma needs to take into account that these organisations usually have very limited resources; therefore a long term investment in this direction is needed. The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) can also provide support for the improvement of the living conditions of the Roma and possibilities for the inclusion of Roma into the preparation and monitoring of the implementation of the policy.

Policy coordination on education, employment and social inclusion addresses Roma (i) explicitly (mainly with regard to the situation of Roma children, educational issues/segregation of schools, the improvement of Roma health, or social assistance), and (ii) implicitly (as part of disadvantaged groups or people on the margins of the labour market). Policy coordination is particularly effective if there is a clear focus in reporting, country-specific recommendations and peer reviews on marginalised people who are disadvantaged because of their ethnicity.

Moreover, the incorporation of gender mainstreaming and specific actions to improve the situation of Roma women in all policies is an important step towards gender equality and social cohesion.

Real progress on the ground depends on the Roma themselves being directly involved at all levels of policy development, decision-making and programme implementation. This should be the case at the level of civil society, but also at the level of national, regional and local governments, private businesses and European institutions. There is obviously a will of civil society to join forces in this respect and the way in which this Staff Working Paper was drawn

⁶ Cf. Chapter 2 Legislation and Rights

up (involving civil society and in particular Roma NGOs) is a strong signal that Roma can play their role as participating subjects.

2. LEGISLATION AND RIGHTS

The European Union is founded on the principles of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, principles which are common to the Member States.

2.1 Non-Discrimination

Article 13 of the Treaty empowers the Community to combat discrimination on the grounds of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

2.1.1 *Directive 2000/43/EC and the individual-rights-based approach*

All persons — including Roma — are protected against discrimination on grounds of race or ethnic origin under Directive 2000/43/EC,⁷ regardless of their legal status. The scope of the legal protection includes the areas of employment, social protection, education as well as access to goods and services. However, the Directive does not provide protection from discrimination on the basis of nationality, which means that it does not deal with differential treatment between citizens and non-citizens of the European Union.

The Commission reported in 2006 on implementation of the Directive⁸. The report noted that while the legislation had had a major impact in raising the level of protection from discrimination throughout the EU, there had been delays in transposing the rules into national law in some Member States, and additional efforts were needed to ensure effective implementation and enforcement of the legislation. The Commission subsequently launched legal proceedings against a number of Member States.⁹

This Directive introduced in some parts of the EU the conceptual novelty of a legal approach which seeks to protect individuals against discrimination through strengthening his or her position for potential mediation or litigation without imposing penal sanctions on offenders. While some Member States had long-standing legislation based on these principles (*e.g.* the United Kingdom with its Race Relations Act of 1976), for others it was very different from their traditional policies and legal approaches.¹⁰

The fact that exercise of the rights under the Directive depends on direct action by individuals implies that it needs to be complemented by information on rights and obligations, competent Equality Bodies and practical support for legal practitioners and NGOs (*e.g.* through training).¹¹

⁷ Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, OJ L 180 (19.7.2000) p. 22.

⁸ See COM(2006) 643; see also European Network of Legal Experts in the Non-Discrimination Field, *Developing Anti-Discrimination Law in Europe (2006)*, 6 et seq.; 19 et seq.; 40 et seq.; and the Resolution of the European Parliament of 27 September 2007 A6-0278/2007

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<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/07/928&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

¹⁰ COM(2006) 643, p. 3 (EN)

¹¹ Cf. Chapter 4 Action against Discrimination and Cooperation with Civil Society

The transposition of the Directive into national legislation is still fairly recent so its full effect will be felt only in the years to come. So far, information provided by the Member States and Equality Bodies suggests that most complaints of discrimination involve employment, followed by the provision of goods and services and housing. In the majority of the new Member States, statistics showed that Roma were the group most represented in complaints. Complaints from the Travellers community were also numerous in Ireland. The increasing number of complaints by Roma confirms that the awareness of this legislation is now increasing and that the relevant actors are acquiring the capacity to support victims to make their voices heard.

The effectiveness of national legislation transposing Directive 2000/43/EC is limited if other parts of national legislation continue to exist which have direct or indirect discriminatory effects on Roma. Article 14(a) of the Directive requires Member States to abolish laws, regulations and administrative provisions contrary to the principle of equal treatment. As a result of the definition of indirect discrimination in Article 2(2) (b), this obligation extends to those laws that have a disproportionately negative impact on Roma.

Directive 2000/43/EC allows in Art. 5: “*With a view to ensuring full equality in practice, the principle of equal treatment shall not prevent any Member State from maintaining or adopting specific measures to prevent or compensate for disadvantages linked to racial or ethnic origin*”. A forward looking policy in this respect can build on the experience gathered in Member States with positive action, in particular in fields such as gender equality.

2.1.2 Litigation

Legal experts and litigators have identified factors that may in general hinder litigation/complaints, most of which are also relevant for Roma. These are on the one hand due to a lack of available public funding, and on the other due to the legislation/legal procedures in place and the treatment of victims of discrimination. The lack of funding not only has consequences in terms of legal assistance and legal aid for victims, but also on the capacity of Roma rights NGOs and/or Equality Bodies to take up relevant cases. Procedural barriers include the requirement for NGOs to authorise a lawyer to act in court, or additional requirements which must be fulfilled by NGOs to support or assist victims in court.

The number of cases taken up by Roma indicates that the Directive is being successfully used to challenge discrimination against that group. The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) is an important driver for application of non-discrimination laws through litigation in many new Member States. The European Network Against Racism (ENAR) has organised seminars on strategic litigation and the segregation of Roma children in education. Nevertheless, institutionalised cooperation and experience sharing among Roma rights NGOs is generally missing.

Beyond lawyers who may assist Roma victims under legal aid or strategic litigation schemes, the existence and commitment of specialised human rights, anti-discrimination or administrative bodies/inspectorates may also help to overcome difficulties.

When transposing Directive 2000/43/EC, Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary have granted to NGOs and Equality Bodies the right to bring *actio popularis* claims. Its characteristics —no need for an individual victim, and thus a minimal risk of victimisation, low costs —make *actio popularis* a unique and highly attractive tool which is ideal in tackling institutional, structural or *de facto* discrimination.

2.1.3 Equality Bodies

Article 13 of Directive 2000/43/EC requires that Member States designate an Equality Body and ensure that its competences include the provision of independent assistance to victims of discrimination, the conducting of independent surveys concerning discrimination, and the publication of independent reports and recommendations on any issue relating to discrimination.

Although a number of such Equality Bodies can investigate complaints, most conclude their procedures with non-binding recommendations. The extent to which Roma victims find these recommendations effective as a remedy is not yet known.

Adequate resources for Equality Bodies are crucial as financial independence is a precondition for political independence. The issue of cooperation between Equality Bodies and long-standing Roma rights NGOs is also relevant since Equality Bodies' strategies cannot work as effectively without engagement from Roma rights NGOs, which in turn need Equality Bodies' support.

Efforts are being made in some Member States to step up dissemination of information and cooperation with civil society. Positive examples come from Member States where Roma NGOs are consulted —*e.g.* in Denmark —and/or where the Equality Bodies maintain a specific Roma agenda, *e.g.* in France, Ireland, Romania and the UK.

2.2 Combating Racism and Xenophobia

The purpose of the draft Council Framework Decision on combating racism and xenophobia is to approximate Member States' legislation and to ensure that these phenomena are punishable under the same conditions across the EU by effective, proportionate and dissuasive criminal sanctions. The draft Framework Decision aims to criminalise intentional conduct, such as incitation to violence or hate towards a group of people, or persons belonging to a group, defined on the basis of race, colour, descent, religion or belief, national or ethnic origin, as well as the public condoning, denial or gross trivialisation of crimes against humanity and war crimes.

2.3 Children Rights

Roma children are at particular risk. The European Union is keen to protect and to promote the rights of the child in both internal and external policies. To this end, the European Commission adopted a Communication in July 2006 entitled "Towards an EU strategy on the Rights of the Child", which includes more than ten of the EU's policies.¹²

Children's rights form part of the human rights that the EU and the Member States are bound to respect under international and European Treaties, in particular the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The EU explicitly recognises the rights of children in Article 24 of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights. The EU's obligation to respect fundamental rights, including children's rights, implies not only a general duty to abstain from acts violating these rights, but also to take them into account whenever relevant in the conduct of its own policies under the various legal bases. Mainstreaming children's rights into relevant Community

¹² http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/fsj/children/fsj_children_intro_en.htm

legislative and non-legislative actions is an effective tool which is actively pursued by the Commission.

Problems faced by Roma children were specifically addressed during the Second European Forum on the Rights of the Child held on 4 March 2008 in Brussels.

2.4 Violence and Trafficking

The EU is committed to combating all forms of violence and human trafficking. Women are often the main victims of gender-based violence while trafficking is modern-day slavery to which poverty-stricken women and children, in particular girls, are more vulnerable. Violence and trafficking are breaches of fundamental rights and poverty-stricken Roma women are in particular vulnerable to these forms of exploitation.

Through the DAPHNE programme, the EU has financed targeted actions to fight violence against women and children and to protect victims and groups at risk.

The DAPHNE Programme

Since 1997, the DAPHNE Programme funded 412 projects to fight violence against women and children, of which 3 were targeted explicitly on Roma women and children.¹³

These projects were:

- Coalition for integration of Roma children in Europe: Corporal punishment and child labour (2001)
- Trilateral initiative to prevent and combat trafficking in women within Roma communities in CEE (2004)
- Prevention of forced removal of Roma children from their parents through support of families and dialogue with state institutions (2005)

The Commission has taken a number of initiatives to combat trafficking in human beings, and attention has been paid to mainstreaming the gender dimension in these initiatives.

2.5 Free Movement of Persons

As regards the free movement of persons, Roma people who either have the nationality of a Member State or are family members of EU citizens benefit from all the rights conferred by the EC Treaty upon EU citizens (with the exception of free access to the labour market where transitional measures apply).

The conditions and limitations applicable to the right of free movement are laid down in Directive 2004/38/EC on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States. Union citizens who consider that their rights under Directive 2004/38/EC have been violated may invoke the provisions of the Directive directly before the national courts, if it has not been transposed into national law

¹³ For an overview see the interactive database on www.daphne-toolkit.org.

within the required time. All organs of the State are obliged to refrain from applying provisions of national law where they would conflict with the Directive.

2.6 Compensation to Victims of Crime

Legislation prepared by the European Commission in the field of victims' rights is of particular interest with regard to racism as this is often linked to serious crimes. Directive 2004/80/EC on State compensation to crime victims mainly focuses on cross-border cooperation, but it obliges Member States to create an "adequate" system of compensation. The general objective of Framework Decision 2001/220/JHA on the standing of victims in criminal proceedings is to establish and guarantee a comparable high level of protection for victims throughout the European Union. Member States should approximate their laws and regulations to the extent necessary to attain this objective. The Framework Decision covers not only the provisions related to the rights of victims during criminal proceedings, but it also touches upon certain measures before and after the proceedings, which might mitigate the effects of a crime.

3. COHESION POLICY

The Cohesion Policy constitutes the European Union's commitment to supporting individuals and regions that need support in their development. In the current financial period (2007 to 2013) the European Union will spend some €347 bn across the 27 Member States, concentrating on people who have difficulty in accessing the labour market and on regions lagging behind. This is a very substantial commitment of resources and effort.

The programming process for the Funds starts with the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF), in which the Member States set out the major issues they propose to tackle using the Funds, and includes analyses demonstrating the importance of these challenges and the effectiveness of responses proposed. In the NSRFs of all Member States with substantial Roma populations, the issue of how best to respond to the challenges associated with the Roma is raised, and solutions proposed. The Operational Programmes adopted by the Commission during 2007 develop these strategies and provide the concrete basis on which Member States and regions can use the Funds for practical projects.

The Fund legislation provides that: "*equality between men and women and the integration of the gender perspective [shall be] promoted during the various stages of implementation of the Funds. The Member States and the Commission shall take appropriate steps to prevent any discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation ...*"¹⁴. This comprehensive anti-discrimination requirement is wider than the Roma as such, but it is important in the case of the Roma since their disadvantages are multi-sectoral; the very width of the requirement ensures that the availability of the Funds cannot be denied to Roma on any such grounds.

The programming of the Funds at European level is strategic. This has many benefits (not least the closer management of the Funds by those most directly concerned), but it means that it is not possible for the Commission to put a precise sum on the amounts that will be used in the current period for the Roma. In all countries with substantial Roma populations, some

¹⁴ Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006, Article 16

specific funds have been earmarked or are identifiable; but in the majority of cases it will only be possible to calculate total likely spending when more choices have been made at national and regional levels. This Chapter therefore seeks to identify some good and interesting cases where the Funds have been used to support the EU's overall integration and labour market policies as these apply to Roma.

It is important that, with the help of the Structural Funds, the Roma people are finally enabled to move out of the state of exclusion in which they have been confined over the years; the next few pages of this report give some flavour of the range and type of commitment to finance projects, infrastructure and activities that stands behind this objective.

3.1 Strategic Approach, Programming and Partnership

The Community Strategic Guidelines (CSG)¹⁵ on cohesion policy was adopted by the Council on 6 October 2006. Following their adoption each Member State presented a National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) fitted to its strategic guidelines, which has served as the benchmark for the programming of the Funds. The NSRF also includes a description of the chosen strategy, a list of Operational Programmes¹⁶ as well as an indication of the annual allocation from each Fund for each programme.

The Member States' Operational Programmes (OPs) cover the period of 1 January 2007 to 31 December 2013. The programmes are built around the Member States' priorities. Details concerning management (as well as project selection criteria) are defined at regional and national level.

The general Regulation¹⁷ specifies that the objectives of the Funds have to be pursued in close cooperation (partnership) with the competent regional, local, urban and other public authorities, with the economic and social partners as well as with any appropriate body representing civil society, environmental partners, non-governmental organisations, and bodies responsible for promoting equality between men and women. Furthermore, in accordance with the regulation, the partnership has to cover the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of Operational Programmes. This partnership process makes it possible to include NGOs/civil society. Roma organisations have already contributed in many countries via preparation of the NSRF and the subsequent development of Operational Programmes; a number are now represented on Monitoring Committees where major decisions are taken.

The Regulations and particularly the CSG emphasise the possibilities¹⁸ of increasing the participation of vulnerable groups in education and training and in the labour market.

¹⁵ Communication from the Commission Cohesion Policy in Support of Growth and Jobs: Community Strategic Guidelines, 2007-2013; 07.05.2005; COM(2005)0299; Council Decision 2006/702/EC

¹⁶ The NSRF contains the list of Operational Programmes for the convergence objective and the regional competitiveness and employment objective

¹⁷ Article 11 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 of July 2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999

¹⁸ For example ethnic minority communities are mentioned as a specific target group under section 4.2 "tailored support should be made available to specific categories of business or entrepreneurs [e.g. those from ethnic minority communities]"; and 4.3 "to ensure inclusive labour markets for people at a disadvantage or at risk of social exclusion...including minorities"; [and in relation to better education and skills] "particular attention should be given to addressing the needs of disadvantaged groups".

Structural Funds interventions should support this, identifying objectives and priorities for action to address Roma issues. The programmes for countries where the Roma issue is most pressing must reflect the importance attached to this problem by both the European Commission and the Member State.

The Commission repeatedly underlines that it is essential that the Structural Funds are used to support initiatives for Roma inclusion at national level, such as the action plans drawn up in connexion with the Decade for Roma Inclusion 2005–2015 and create synergies.

The participation of Roma NGOs in the monitoring of Structural Funds is crucial for empowering Roma communities to take an active part in improving their living and working conditions.

Slovakia

In the programming period 2004–2006, the Community Support Framework Working Group for the Development of Roma Communities was established. The group, which met twice a year, was chaired by the State Secretary of the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development. The members of the group were the representatives of the Ministries and the Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Roma Communities, including the civil sector and the NGOs. The civil sector and the representatives of the self-governments were among the members of the Monitoring Committee for the ESF Operational Programme Human Resources.

In the programming period 2007-2013, the Working Group for the Development of Roma Communities will continue its activities. The Monitoring Committee for the OP Employment and Social Inclusion has, according to its Statute, 31 members, four of them being NGOs (among which one representative of the local social inclusion partnership).

The elimination of discrimination begins with clear and target-oriented information on rights and obligations of both potential victims of discrimination and the general public. The ESF can support this kind of information and awareness-raising action at national level.

Hungary

The Government has established a general website on anti-discrimination,¹⁹ and the highest-level official body in Hungary is the Equal Treatment Authority.²⁰

One can find full and legally approved descriptions of more than a hundred discriminatory practices, and legal possibilities to fight against them at the website of the National Office for National and Ethnic Minorities.²¹ The national self-government of Roma in Hungary has also set up an official page.²²

¹⁹ www.antidiszko.hu

²⁰ www.egyenlobanasmod.hu

²¹ www.neki.hu

²² www.oco.hu

3.2 Impact of Structural Funds on Policy Priorities for Roma Inclusion

Many of the possible interventions in favour of Roma are typical European Social Fund (ESF) interventions. The ESF in combination with the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) can be mobilised to address some of the most pressing problems for Roma communities. The following sections highlight a number of examples to show how the Structural Funds can be used in order to improve the living and working conditions of Roma women and men as well as children. The examples are not exhaustive, but demonstrate the broad range of ways and means in which the Structural Funds can be used.

3.2.1 Education

The Roma constitute a young population with a high share of persons under the age of 20. Persistent disadvantages in education, including low school attendance and over-representation in “special schools” intended for children with physical and mental disabilities, make it highly probable that without strong policy interventions supported by extensive programmes of capacity building and investment the next generation of Roma will remain in deep poverty and will be increasingly marginalised and excluded.

The Structural Funds Regulations permit a wide range of interventions in this field. The ERDF and the ESF could support improvement in (pre-) school infrastructure, training for teachers or teaching assistants as well as measures focusing on the wider educational environment (counselling, information and support for students and their families).

Hungary

Hungary has a policy to ensure the social inclusion of the Roma population through specific measures (in particular through fighting discrimination). The Learning House (“Tanoda”) Programme, supported by the European Social Fund, addresses the need to encourage disadvantaged youth, in particular Roma, to complete elementary school and to increase their chances of attending secondary school and obtaining a school-leaving certificate. The “Learning Houses” offer after school care and tutoring, and pay dedicated attention to the family circumstances of the students.

The programme is supported by the ESF and financed by the Human Resources Development OP.

Czech Republic

A Working Group on Roma Community Affairs was created for all the ESF programmes of the 2004-2006 programming period. This Group will continue its work in the 2007-2013 programming period. Its aim is to monitor use of the ESF money for activities supporting the Roma communities. The Group is chaired by the director of the Governmental Council for Roma Community Affairs; the secretary is a representative of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and its Managing Authority for 3 ESF programmes. All relevant ministries and bodies are members, including the Roma representatives and the European Commission.

Slovakia

A project concerning the further education of teaching assistants and teachers, with the focus on marginalised groups, aims to improve the quality of education. 98 teachers and assistants

of primary schools, special primary schools, and kindergartens (with an indirect impact on some 1 200 pupils and 600 members of the teaching staff) receive training especially in the area of project management, the application of knowledge in multicultural education and education towards human rights. Slovakia uses the ESF to support the project with €51 533.

Under the Operational Programme Human Resources, Objective 1, the “second chance” programme in the Markušovce municipality supports the completion of basic education, the provision of courses for basic skills and of re-qualification courses for workers, thereby covering a total of 60 persons with a grant of €41 951. The project and associated publicity should improve the Roma community’s opinion about the importance of their children receiving education.

The full integration of Roma students in all schools requires a long-term strategy of course.

For practical improvements in the short term, the following actions can be undertaken with the support of the ESF:

- financing studies to assess the current educational situation and to propose appropriate measures;
- support and stimulation for introducing preparatory classes for Roma children who do not speak the national language;
- mentoring, including mentoring for families;
- after-hours support (e.g. homework groups);
- stimulation of employment of teachers with adequate qualification and specialisation;
- awareness-raising actions concerning cultural sensitivity and diversity;
- introduction of assistant teachers from the Roma communities, who will help in the process of teaching Roma children (within mainstream education).

3.2.2 *Employment*

The high unemployment rate among Roma is one of the most serious factors contributing to the group’s social isolation. There are, however, no precise data available for the ethnic unemployment gap between Roma and the majority. The EU regards the inclusion of people in the labour market as a major way of combating social exclusion, and the Employment Guidelines of the European Employment Strategy aim to facilitate access to employment. They pay special attention to groups which are disadvantaged on grounds of their ethnicity, including the Roma population.

Urgent actions are necessary to provide training and employment programmes that meet the needs of the labour market. In some programmes the ESF is funding targeted, but non-segregated projects to raise the employability of Roma women and men by offering them tailor-made vocational training, culturally sensitive job centres or accompanying measures after getting a job. It has to be noted that the provision of social services for children and the elderly is a basis for the employability of parents.

Spain

*ACCEDER*²³

In Spain the ESF was mobilised in the programming period 2000–2006 to support the ACCEDER Programme which aimed at promoting access to quality employment for Roma. It has been carried out by the Fundación Secretariado Gitano. The Programme has achieved over 20 000 contracts.

The Spanish Roma community totals around 650 000 people (out of an approximate total of 42 million inhabitants). Although its situation has improved over the last 30 years, the Roma community continues to suffer the greatest degree of rejection in Spanish society today and is also one of the most socially and economically excluded groups. A significant number of Roma are currently experiencing serious difficulties in accessing employment and vocational training — a problem which is one of the main causes of their inequality and social exclusion.

The decline of their traditional professions and activities (itinerant trading, paper collection, etc.), together with their lack of qualifications have contributed to their expulsion from the labour market. Prejudices and stereotypes that have led to stigmatisation of Roma by the majority of society have also contributed to this situation.

ACCEDER was implemented through 45 integrated employment centres set up throughout Spain. The main objective —Roma access to the labour market —is tackled mainly through labour insertion actions such as individual employment itineraries and the development and improvement of human resources. To this end an integrated, multidimensional and individualised approach was chosen. The programme was built around tailor-made vocational training, the setting up of a direct link between Roma job seekers and employment service providers, awareness-raising in respect of prejudices and discriminatory practices and the development of new jobs within the educational, healthcare and cultural social services. ACCEDER also aimed at pursuing more pro-active policies focusing on the Roma population with a view to effectively improving their living standards and guaranteeing equal opportunities in gaining access to public goods and services.

A number of factors for the success of ACCEDER have been identified. The most important among them are: an integrated long-term approach which involves and empowers the Roma community and which aims to provide targeted but non-segregated services. Success needs strong partnership with all relevant actors and the mobilisation of national, regional and local resources. Finally, it is crucial to create role models and visible success stories to keep up momentum.

Emphasis on self-employment or setting up cooperatives or firms often reflects the preferences of some Roma as well as the difficulties which they encounter in the labour market. To this end micro-credits may be particularly useful. The Regulation on the European Social Fund (Article 11) explicitly mentions the eligibility of micro-credits²⁴ as a form of

²³ Cf. report of the High Level Advisory Group of Experts on the social integration of ethnic minorities and their full participation in the labour market (2007), Chapter 9 Public Policy; cf. also <http://www.gitanos.org/acceder>. In the current programming period a number of projects have been launched, e.g. in Romania, which built on the experience gathered with ACCEDER

²⁴ Regulation (EC) No 1081/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the European Social Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1784/1999

assistance. The present budget period also provides an interesting opportunity for fund-raising focusing on micro-businesses and SME creation. This new initiative, called JEREMIE, is part of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

The Commission adopted on 13 November 2007 an initiative for the development of micro-credit in Europe, which focuses particularly on disadvantaged persons (unemployed or inactive people, those receiving social assistance, immigrants, ethnic minorities as is the case in central Europe, etc.) who wish to enter self-employment but do not have access to traditional banking services. The Commission is setting up with the European Investment Bank-Group adequate instruments to provide mentoring support, technical assistance and funding to selected non-bank Micro-Finance Institutions (MFI) that, in turn, will disburse loans, equity or guarantees to disadvantaged persons with a view to helping them start businesses. Provided it complies with established selection criteria (still to be drafted), a non-bank MFI specialised in Roma could qualify to receive funds to start micro-lending operations with Roma-people.

In terms of support and assistance for socially excluded persons the European Social Fund (ESF) was and continues to be the major funding opportunity in the present budget period (2007–2013). The EQUAL initiative, which was the ESF laboratory for experimenting with new approaches in the fight against discrimination and exclusion, was absorbed by the ESF in 2007, thus becoming one of the “mainstreamed” objectives of the current Operational Programme.

A central point with regard to the sustainability of projects funded under the European Social Fund (or other programmes and Community initiatives) is to have a long-term perspective beyond the point where Community funding ends.²⁵

Czech Republic

ESF CIP EQUAL, allocation: CZK 27 727 716 (€1.1 million), period: 2.3 – 16.9.2005–30.8.2008, place of implementation: Brno, South Moravian Region

The *IQ Roma Servis (IQ Roma Service Civic Group)* has been active in Brno since 1997.

The group began working on a new profile in 2003 with the aim of building a modern, functional, flexible and fully professional non-governmental, non-profit-organisation that would become a credible partner for the citizens and public administration in Brno, the entire region of South Moravia, the Czech Republic, and the European Union.

The aim of the project “*System for successful use of Roma on the labour market*” is to cooperate in order to find solutions for the multidimensional problem of Roma unemployment in the Czech Republic. The project aims to develop a comprehensive network of educational, qualification, occupational, anti-discriminatory and activating community and individual services which will result in better employability and a higher level of employment of both young and adult members of the Roma community.

²⁵ The High-Level Advisory Group on the social integration of ethnic minorities and their full participation in the labour market issued a recommendation: “(4) *Establish a sustainable long-term policy for promoting inclusive labour markets, using a targeted, but not ethnically segregated approach*”

The methodology of the project involves the whole Roma family. The activities of the project are divided into four basic parts: Centre for Motivation and Stimulation, Educational Centre, Centre for Employment and Prevention Centre. Each centre offers a wide range of activities for a specific target group.

Hungary

In the small town of Szigetvár (in a multiple-disadvantaged region in the South-West part of the country), a group of 36 Roma people has successfully finished a “complex” (i.e. integrated) training programme, financed under the Human Resources Development OP. From this group, 26 people have been successfully integrated into the labour market.²⁶

3.2.3 Health

In order to achieve a satisfactory level of health in Roma communities, it is necessary to increase sanitary standards and to intensify programmes of health literacy. The involvement of Roma in the design and implementation of these programmes as well as cultural sensitiveness towards their needs is an important factor.

Recruiting Roma to act as mediators or intercultural agents has proved to be effective in ensuring that Roma are aware of, and can use a variety of services including healthcare, social services, and legal services; The ESF can assist in training these mediators. A structure for mediators could also be established to ensure their sustainability.²⁷

Romania

Romania has developed a Health Mediator Programme for citizens of Roma ethnic origin. It is a Government programme established in 2002 and sustained by the Ministry of Public Health. Health mediators visit Roma families and help families that face social and health difficulties. For the moment, there are already 500 active health mediators. Each mediator serves 750 beneficiaries and the main target group consists of mothers and children. Building on the experience of health mediators, a training programme was set up for new mediators. The mediators are organised in the “Order of Health Mediators of Romania” which is supported by the Romanian Ministry of Public Health and the Roma National Agency.

The independent Decade Watch assessed the Health Mediator Programme as an example of good practice and one of the best initiatives to improve the health situation of Roma.

Greece

Regional Operational Programme of Attica 2000-2006: cost €1 million; selected districts: Megara, Aspropyrgos, Ano Liosia, Zefyri and Menidi

Establishment of five Medical and Social Centres targeting Roma situated in Western Attica, which is the area with the biggest social needs.

²⁶ <http://www.kultureszoldzona.hu/hefop2311.html>

²⁷ Cf. Chapter 8 Public Health Policy

3.2.4 Gender Equality

In accordance with the General Regulation for the Structural Funds, a culture of equality must be promoted among Roma women and men so that Roma women can achieve an appropriate level of individual, social, economic and political participation in public life.

The Structural Funds, and more specifically the ESF, can contribute significantly in the following areas; for example by providing support to:

- increase direct participation of Roma girls and women in educational projects;
- facilitate the access of Roma women to higher education and lifelong learning;
- facilitate the access of Roma women to active labour market policies, including through the provision of care services;
- implement programmes for Roma women entrepreneurs;
- promote awareness raising campaigns among Roma men to overcome gender discrimination and stereotypes;
- promote awareness-raising among Roma women and girls concerning their rights.

3.2.5 Improvement of the Regional Infrastructure, Urban Areas and Housing

The Structural Funds can contribute to improving the social and economic infrastructure of countries and regions—an important issue for Roma, many of whom live in poorer districts where deprivation has reduced the quality and availability of infrastructure. The ERDF contributes in the area of urban rehabilitation, for example, bringing together a range of interventions which increase the quality of life. Similarly, and within certain limits²⁸, it can support measures to improve housing stock—another fundamental issue for Roma communities. The examples below show a number of ways in which this capacity to improve infrastructure is being used to the advantage of Roma people.

Czech Republic

One priority axis of the Integrated Operational Programme (IOP) focuses on the revitalisation of problematic housing estates, to reduce social exclusion and community polarisation. The IOP will specifically co-finance up to 10 pilot projects of social housing for the socially excluded Roma community (the ERDF allocation amounts to €13.5 million). These projects

²⁸ Article 47 of the Regulation lists ten criteria of which two listed under (a) to (h) must be fulfilled:

- (a) a high level of poverty and exclusion;
- (b) a high level of long-term unemployment;
- (c) precarious demographic trends;
- (d) a low level of education, significant skills deficiencies and high dropout rates from school;
- (e) a high level of criminality and delinquency;
- (f) a particularly rundown environment;
- (g) a low level of economic activity;
- (h) a high number of immigrants, ethnic and minority groups, or refugees;
- (i) a comparatively low level of housing value;
- (j) a low level of energy performance in buildings.

will be linked to activities targeting social exclusion supported under another priority axis of the IOP (“Services in the area of social integration”) or with other activities co-financed by the ESF.

Hungary

The Operational Programme for Regional Development for 2004–2006 addressed the Roma through the following measures: urban rehabilitation (actions led by the local government including Roma-inhabited areas); infrastructure development in pre-school institutions and primary schools (particularly in settlements with a large proportion of disadvantaged population of Roma origin). The amount allocated is €49 460 000.

For the period 2007–2013, special attention is to be paid to reducing and attenuating the multiple disadvantages of Roma people and their communities. These investments will complement the activities undertaken in the framework of the Decade for Roma Inclusion 2005–2015.

In addition, what are known as “complex programmes” have been drawn up, which are based on an inter-sectoral approach and are to be implemented by several Operational Programmes. The complex programme most clearly benefiting the Roma community is the one supporting the 24 most disadvantaged micro-regions which have a high proportion of Roma population.

A network of advisors of Roma origin has been set up to assist Roma applicants in project preparation and throughout all stages of the project cycle (contracting, monitoring, and reporting).

Italy

In the programming period 2007-2013, the City of Venice is leading the MILE project, funded under the URBACT II Pilot Fast Track Networks projects. The project seeks to establish a thematic partnership network of 10 Cities and Managing Authorities. It is based on the need to develop an integrated exchange programme, relating to the theme of “Managing Migration and Integration at Local Level – Cities and Regions (MILE) ”. The Fast Track Network Managing Migration and Integration at Local level (MILE) has opened a MILE website displaying a wealth of information (presentation, partnership, events and expected outcomes).²⁹ The project intends to develop and deliver an Action Learning Set (ALS) for over 100 actors from 10 cities and their 10 “sister regions”. The ALS will focus on three sub-themes over 14 months, focusing particularly on young adults, single parents and Roma.

Romania

Projects to improve health, education, and social institutions infrastructure will increase their chances of support from the Structural Funds via the Regional Operational Programme, if they can show that Roma and other disadvantaged minorities will benefit from them. Nearly 650 million € are available for these sectors and the published selection criteria give considerable additional weight for projects with a high impact on these groups.

Many cities will receive funding from the European Regional Development Fund to improve their poorest areas. The Commission and the Managing Authority for the Regional

²⁹ <http://urbact.eu/projects/mile/project-presentation.html>

Operational Programme have established rules to ensure that inhabitants of the areas to be developed – often Roma – are fully consulted and involved in the renovation and improvement of their local areas.

3.2.6 *Participation of Roma in Political, Social and Cultural Life*

In many Member States, Roma culture is both a specific ethnic culture and a part of the national culture.

Participation of the Roma in nationwide television and radio is important (such as transmission of Roma programmes and the participation of Roma journalists). In this respect the Structural Funds can support training or assist with material.

Moreover, the persistent under-representation of Roma in political life and the decision making process is a widely recognised problem. Structural Funds implementation presents opportunities to foster the involvement of Roma women and men (*e.g.* through membership in committees, the establishment of partnerships with Roma civil society etc.).

Hungary

There is a large number of good examples of representativeness of the Roma minority in the national media.

There is a dedicated radio, (Rádió C)³⁰ as well as a large thematic page on the internet³¹ and a newspaper.³² Furthermore, a news agency offers news exclusively on the Roma minority.³³ A Green Paper (published in 2005) describes the general picture of the Hungarian Roma in the media.³⁴

The Structural Funds can support, for example:

- the restoration of cultural or historic centres in Roma neighbourhoods;
- infrastructure and training on materials for Roma academic or cultural actions.

3.2.7 *Horizontal Issues – Plans and Strategies – Involvement of Roma Civil Society*

Regional and local authorities play a central role with regard to the social inclusion of Roma. The key to success thus lies in the commitment and motivation to promote effective inclusion strategies and in the allocation of sufficient resources for implementing them over a sufficiently long time span. Structural Funds have a strong supporting role in this, since a long-term perspective features in the programming of the Funds.

Furthermore, only comprehensive plans and coordinated policies at all levels (regional, national and European), including all aspects of social inclusion can be successful in overcoming disadvantages experienced by local communities. It is not sufficient to address

³⁰ www.radioc.hu with an online programme

³¹ <http://cigany.lap.hu>

³² www.amarodrom.hu

³³ www.c-press.hu

³⁴ www.romaweb.hu

the most visible problem. A sustainable solution requires consideration of all relevant aspects governing the living and working conditions of Roma; following from their complex approach the Structural Funds can also make valuable contributions in this respect.

The ESF can finance for example:

- creation of regional and local plans for social inclusion and labour market participation;
- creation of a system of social services for social inclusion and labour market participation.

Czech Republic

ESF OP Human Resource Development; allocation: CZK 13 699 302 (approximately €548 000), period: April 2006–March 2008, places of implementation: Ostrava, Brno.

The civic association Společné Soužití (“Mutual Life Together”) is a registered Roma-Czech non-governmental non-profit organisation which has been active in Ostrava since 1997. The organisation is trying to deal with the social exclusion of members of the Roma community in Ostrava and Brno region, and to create a platform for interaction between Roma and non-Roma citizens.

Through the community work method, Mutual Life Together tries to improve the social and living conditions of poor families in need. The association’s activities are focused on social and legal counselling, education, and the issues of housing, employment, conflict resolution and human rights.

The project “Key to the change” provides Roma police assistance, social services and community work. The innovative method of Roma police assistance was based on the necessity to deal with usury within the Roma community that causes serious problems for Roma families and is deepening their social deprivation. Police assistants are chosen from the local Roma community and they are educated through an accredited course. Along with the course, they are provided with a wide range of services and counselling in close cooperation with the police of the Czech Republic.

Hungary

In the programming period 2004–2006, at programme level, the Human Resources Development OP and the EQUAL Community Initiative Programme (CIP) have supported 225 organisations which had the expression “Roma or Gipsy” in their official names. These organisations received more than HUF 7 billion (approximately €28 million) from the ESF and Hungarian funds. According to estimates, the total Roma population affected by these programmes was around 36 000.

In the new programming period, the Roma minority is also strongly targeted both directly and indirectly under the different priority axes of the Social Renewal OP.

In order to enhance the level of knowledge on horizontal issues at the level of project promoters, a manual is available on the National Development Agency’s website. Furthermore, there is what is known as rapporteurs for horizontal issues. In order to enhance Roma organisations’ access to the projects, it is planned to set up a network of Roma experts in each sector.

In certain cases, access to resources can be made subject to the elimination of segregation in the living and school environment.

Romania

In the new programming period 2007-2013, the Roma minority is targeted both directly and indirectly in the different priority axes of the ESF OP “Human Resources Development”. The total programme budget will be €3 476 million.

The Priority Axis “Promoting Social Inclusion” lists Roma as the first target group. The planned activities refer to increasing their access to the labour market (through re/training, social services, personalised support, awareness raising activities, developing partnerships and new methods to combat discrimination). This Priority Axis sets the target of training 150 000 people, 65 000 of which will be of Roma ethnic origin. The Roma number is indicative and may be increased during programme implementation.

Others OP priorities will include preventive and corrective activities, aimed at increasing access to initial/continuing education and training for the Roma minority. These activities will consist of integrated packages such as: counselling and guidance, “second chance” programmes, awareness-raising activities. The ESF OP “Human Resources Development” also envisaged activities that will focus on institutional development for Roma re/integration into education, through support for school mentors, mediators and tutors coming from the Roma communities.

Slovakia

In the programming period 2007–2013, the indicative allocation stated in the NSRF for the implementation of complex projects intended exclusively for Roma marginalised communities for both ESF and ERDF programmes is €200 million. Outside of this allocation, marginalised Roma communities will be supported through regular national and demand-driven projects (also in the framework of long-term unemployed or disadvantaged groups).

The Slovak NSRF recognises four horizontal priorities to be tackled in all the Operational Programmes, one of them being marginalised Roma communities (MRC). The purpose of this horizontal priority is to strengthen cooperation and increase efficiency of coordination of activities and financial resources aimed at improving the living conditions of MRC. Support is concentrated on four priority areas: education, employment, health care and housing, and three inter-related topics: poverty, discrimination and gender equality.

The comprehensive approach will link several activities and projects (health care, housing, education, employment, and infrastructure) into an overall development strategy for a particular location, with emphasis on interaction between activities and active involvement by the local community in project implementation.

3.2.8 Concentrated Action at Local Level (Article 4(2) of the ESF Regulation)

Spain

Global Grant —ESF Regional Operational Programme Objective 3 —Catalonia and Community Initiative URBAN

The Barrio de la Mina district was built in the 1970s onwards to absorb people coming from the shantytowns of Barcelona. It is located in the municipality of San Adrià de Besòs (Barcelona). Around 30% of the inhabitants are Roma.

The social situation is alarming: an excessive population density (512 per/ha), a low level of education (more than 10% illiteracy rate), unemployment (three times higher than the Catalonian average), and poverty much higher than the Catalonian average. All these data show the high level of social exclusion in this district and the need to promote a general socio-economic transformation.

The global grant managed by the Consorci del Barrio de la Mina provides small grants to NGOs carrying out activities such as guidance, pre-training, counselling and accompanying measures for labour market integration to fight social exclusion of the district inhabitants, taking into account their training and vocational needs through labour insertion itineraries.

Consorcio del Barrio de la Mina is a consortium made up of the Catalonian Government, Sant Adrià del Besòs and Barcelona Town Councils and Barcelona County Council.

Between 2000 and 2007 more than 2 700 persons, including more than 1 200 Roma took part in guidance and training actions, pathways to employment, etc. and as a result more than 1 200 people found a job.

In this neighbourhood the ESF intervention is fully coordinated with an urban renovation plan under the Community Initiative URBAN, which includes actions such as a centre with internet access, support for small businesses and for regularisation of street vending in order to create employment.

3.2.9 *Transnational Cooperation*

Based on the valuable lessons learnt from EQUAL, transnational cooperation has become an integral part of the new ESF. This new promotional option encourages Member States to share information, experiences, results and good practices, and to promote joint development of approaches, tools and joint actions such as twinning between institutions and organisations.

Transnational cooperation 2007–2013: European Network on Roma Community and Social Inclusion

In June 2007 a transnational initiative was launched for more effective use of Structural Funds to the benefit of social inclusion of the Roma population. The rationale behind the network is based on the:

- General Regulation governing Structural Funds³⁵
- ESF Regulation³⁶

³⁵ Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 of July 2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999

³⁶ Regulation (EC) No 1081/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the European Social Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1784/1999

- Social Agenda 2005-2010

All of them promote social cohesion, in particular, by supporting the inclusion of disadvantaged groups and fighting against any kind of discrimination based on ethnic origin. The launching seminar organised by Spain was attended by participants from another eleven Member States: Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Portugal, Greece, Italy, Poland, Finland, and Sweden.

The overarching objective of this European Network is to promote the use of Structural Funds to enhance the effectiveness of policies targeting the Roma community and promote social inclusion by developing a common work approach and creating a forum for debate. The sharing of strategies, initiatives and approaches, learning based on experience and best practices and the dissemination and standardisation of that knowledge are also major aims.

In order to enhance the impact of the Structural Funds, the two different areas within the Government administration, *i.e.* those responsible for programming and management of the Structural Funds and those responsible for policies targeting the Roma community in each Member State must be brought together under the same network. Therefore the Network will bring together for each of the participating countries:

- the European Social Fund Managing Authority or the administrative body to which the latter delegates its authority;

- the body of State administration responsible for policies targeting the Roma community or the body to which it delegates its authority;

- the European Commission.

3.3 Lessons Learned

In spite of a number of successful and promising examples as those listed above, the commitment and the firm will of all public actors to use the existing Structural Funds for improving Roma inclusion remains the main challenge. The full involvement of civil society—and in particular—Roma NGOs in drawing up plans, implementing and monitoring their impact is a factor for success which needs further investments of main stakeholders including the European Union in capacity building and operational functioning.

Initiatives such as the Open Society Institute (OSI) project “Making the most of EU funding for Roma”, focusing on creating projects as well as capacity building of Roma civil society and local authorities in the Member States participating in the Decade for Roma Inclusion 2005-2015, can usefully complement Community initiatives and render them more effective.

Building on successful examples as well as the assessment and in-depth analyse of the reasons for failures are essential elements in creating sustainable measures with a positive impact on Roma inclusion. Under the last programming period 2000-2006 a number of successful projects were launched, such as ACCEDER in Spain which now serves as the inspiration for transnational cooperation and exchange as explained above.

The move from individual projects to a wider policy building, and through that to a situation in which the elements of discrimination themselves diminish, is a step which many countries still have to make. Within the powers granted by the Treaties and the relevant legislation, the

Commission intends to take up a leading role in making sure that this step is effectively taken. It welcomes and intends to support the respective efforts of Member States.

The following factors have been identified as essential elements for successful Roma inclusion measures and projects:

Effective Monitoring

- It is necessary to be able to assess accurately to which degree Roma communities benefit from ESF. An obstacle often mentioned is the protection of personal data. Anonymous information which is collected in compliance with data protection rules is needed to detect policy gaps and achieve improvements.
- Beyond data collection, it is crucial to evaluate policy actions. The evaluations under Article 48 of Council Regulation (EC) No.1083/2006 are an opportunity for Member States to evaluate the success of ESF programmes in fostering labour insertion and social inclusion of Roma. These evaluations could provide information on the effectiveness of the actions and on whether the necessary resources have been allocated, and support the analysis for the Strategic Reports that Member States will submit in 2009 and 2012.
- It is necessary to involve the Roma community in all the stages of the programmes, and implement administrative capacity actions to facilitate programme monitoring and access to ESF funding.

Effective Cooperation

- It is necessary to pursue a dual approach encompassing both mainstreaming of Roma inclusion, as well as targeted actions to tackle specific difficulties faced by the Roma communities.
- It is necessary to mobilise all relevant civil society actors, particularly (Roma) NGOs, social partners and the third sector. Roma women and men need to be involved and have to take ownership of plans and strategies as well as specific project proposals affecting them.
- It is paramount to ensure adequate Structural Funds cash flow for grass-roots Roma NGOs, to enable them to fully participate in the programmes.
- Transnational cooperation is an opportunity to combine efforts and mainstream best practices.

Effective Inclusion (Comprehensive and Holistic Approaches)

- The specific problems concerning Roma recently arrived in a Member State need to be considered, including phenomena such as discrimination, ghettoisation, human trafficking and precarious working conditions.
- A priority should be given to supporting for the self-activation of the Roma communities instead of depending on passive acceptance of social benefits and other aid.
- Education will remain a crucial area which is decisive for the future successful inclusion of Roma. Schools and other educational institutions need, thus, to be motivated and supported

(especially through additional financial resources) to pay special attention to the specific needs of children, both boys and girls, from Roma communities. In this context the support of pre-school education and out-of-school activities is absolutely necessary. Moreover, individualised approaches and systems of schools assistants for Roma children and mentoring schemes (by the Roma themselves) targeting the family background of the students need to be supported.

- “Field” social services are required in the disadvantaged areas to build up pathways into society and the labour market.
- Without the provision of social services for children and the elderly, increasing the employment rates of Roma women will be very difficult or impossible.

4. ACTION AGAINST DISCRIMINATION AND COOPERATION WITH CIVIL SOCIETY

4.1 Information and Awareness Raising Actions and the Community Programmes

Roma issues have been regularly addressed *e.g.* in the “For Diversity – Against Discrimination” campaign, in national awareness raising initiatives financed under both programmes or in transnational projects (2004–2006) under the Community Action Programme to Combat Discrimination (2001-2006) as continued by the non-discrimination strand of the current PROGRESS programme (2007-2013).

4.1.1 Roma Focus

An external evaluation of the Community Action Programme highlighted that ethnic discrimination has become more visible due to public attention concerning Roma in the enlarged EU.³⁷

Examples of a Roma focus in the initiatives financed under the Community Action Programme and PROGRESS are:

- a relatively high percentage (28%) of transnational training, networking and awareness raising projects (2004-2006) focused on the discrimination and exclusion of Roma;
- the articles of the 2nd-placed winner of the 2006 EU Journalist Award – a central element in the “For Diversity – Against Discrimination” campaign – and of the 3rd-placed winner of the 2007 Award dealt with Roma issues;
- initiatives run by Member States, with a specific focus on Roma, such as the 2007 project of the Hungarian Ministry for Social Affairs and Labour aimed at improving the social situation of Roma and implementing non-discrimination at regional level (with an estimated total budget of €110 595.20 and 80% of EU co-funding).

³⁷ Ernst & Young, Evaluation du programme d'action communautaire de lutte contre la discrimination (2001-2006) (2006), pp. 11, 14 et seq., 19, 43

4.1.2 *Lessons Learned*

Although Roma projects accounted for a relatively high share of the activities funded between 2004 and 2006, their added value would have been considerably higher if more emphasis had been placed on transferability and dissemination of results. These two elements were added in subsequent calls for funding currently ongoing.

A training-of-trainers project promoted by the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) produced very interesting results in terms of multiplying effects. 75 trainers could reach approximately 750 people at both regional and national level and act as multipliers to help change attitudes towards Roma children.³⁸

Again, as concluded with regard to Structural Fund implementation, direct involvement of Roma in the both the design and implementation of the projects is another important factor for sustainable results.

Beyond individual projects, the PROGRESS anti-discrimination strand finances awareness-raising actions. The campaign “For Diversity – Against Discrimination” addresses persistent stereotypes regarding Roma. This issue will be continued and strengthened during implementation of the 2008-2013 campaign notably through the production of a film on the Roma summer 2008, a focus on the Roma on the tour of the European “Truck for Diversity” as well as the Journalist Award and other horizontal activities. Under PROGRESS a Video News Release on Roma inclusion will also be produced in 2008.

The media play a central role in creating, but also overcoming stereotypes. Possible future action which targets the media could build on the expertise collected by a study on media and diversity launched by DG EMPL at the end of 2007.

4.2 Training in Non-Discrimination

An important element of changing discriminatory practices is the training of relevant professionals. Since 2003, training for legal practitioners (judges, prosecutors and other legal professionals who handle discrimination cases) has been financially supported by the Commission under the Community Action Programme and PROGRESS. Other training actions focused on NGOs, trade unions and employers, but also included youth organisations, teachers, healthcare professionals, the police and media.

The training-of-trainers approach in the new sessions (2007-2008) for NGOs, trade unions and businesses has proven to be useful reaching a larger audience across a wider geographic area. The existence of these training schemes will be better promoted and made known to Roma actors.

4.3 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All

Among the most important effects of the 2007 European Year was the requirement for national Governments to adopt a national strategy on non-discrimination and involve stakeholders’ organisations in the process. The national strategies have in most cases a

³⁸ Project “Developing non-discriminatory quality education for Roma children”, promoted by the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE), cf. http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/fundamental_rights/policy/capac/prodet2/etuce_en.htm

perspective which goes beyond 2007. It is thus likely that the Roma aspects in national strategies will be pursued in the future as well.

In the framework of the 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All a total of 19 actions (with an estimated total budget of around €1 million), which focused mainly or exclusively on Roma issues, were carried out in 12 of the 30 participating countries. The actions often addressed more than one priority and mostly aimed at changing negative attitudes among the general public towards Roma people. All projects are subject to self-evaluations from both the National Implementing Bodies and the Action Leaders. These evaluations will provide information on the effectiveness of the projects and their expected impact.

Eurobarometer surveys³⁹ carried out in 2006 and at the beginning of 2008 provided useful guidance to the EU and the Member States on the challenges to be tackled, including a very high perception of discrimination of Roma as well as persistent stereotypes. The 2008 study also demonstrated a high level of awareness of the activities undertaken as part of the European Year. Additionally the external evaluation of the 2007 European Year will deliver a thematic report on the ethnic/racial origin ground of discrimination, with special emphasis on these 19 Roma-focused actions.

4.3.1 Lessons Learned

The 2007 European Year has highlighted clearly the need to have better data on discrimination and on measuring progress. In accordance with the 2008-2013 Community Statistical Programme possibilities will be explored in the European Statistical System (ESS) for the development of a common methodology to obtain or to improve statistical data on the extent and impact of discrimination and this on all grounds of discrimination, including on grounds of racial and ethnic origin.

4.4 Cooperation with Civil Society

The effective implementation and monitoring of policies on Roma inclusion require close and open cooperation with civil society. Civil society means in this context Roma NGOs as well as human rights NGOs and NGOs working against racism and ethnic exclusion. In the mid-term perspective the social partners would need also to be involved in respect labour-market-related questions.

The European Commission has supported the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) since 2001 with a Community grant to cover a major part of the running costs for the Network's operations. Since the end of 2006 such a grant is also given to a Network of NGOs representing Roma and defending their rights. In December 2007, a three-year partnership agreement (2008-2010) was signed with the European Roma Information Office (ERIO).

Moreover, there is close cooperation with the European Economic and Social Committee, in particular with regard to the upcoming exploratory opinion on the integration of minorities/Roma (adoption planned for 9 July 2008).

³⁹ Special Eurobarometer 263 (06-07/2006); Eurobarometer 69.1 (02-02/2008).

4.4.1 *The Actors*

The emergence of a Roma Policy Coalition in March 2008 indicates that civil society —Roma NGOs and NGOs active in the field of human rights and anti-racism —is willing to join forces to advocate Roma inclusion more effectively with the European institutions; civil society organisations request to this end a European Framework Strategy. The European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF) is currently not a member of the Roma Coalition. Due to its broad basis of member organisations, it is an important actor in Roma civil society.

Roma NGOs and NGOs working on Roma issues organised at EU level play a central role as lobbying and advocacy organisations with the EU institutions. Moreover, they contribute actively to capacity building of national and local NGOs.

In preparing this report, the Commission services cooperated with civil society. This cooperation proved very useful and provided much insight into the existing challenges for fully using the potential of Community action in this area.

4.4.2 *Lessons Learned*

Civil society should continue to be involved closely in implementing and monitoring EU policy. This can be achieved *i.a.* by giving for fully using civil society organisations an active role in implementing Community action, for example by participation in steering groups for specific activities. Civil society will, for example, be closely involved in preparing the high-level Roma Summit to take place on 16 September 2008.

A specific issue is the involvement of civil society in implementing the European Structural Funds at national level. Significant progress can be made, if representatives of civil society are regularly involved in the Monitoring Committees and if there is a reinforced focus on capacity building among NGOs in order to facilitate their access to funding.

5. EMPLOYMENT POLICY

5.1 European Employment Strategy and the Lisbon Strategy

The European Employment Strategy, since its establishment in 1997, has been a crucial tool at the EU level to address employment issues. Its overarching objectives are to increase employment, improve productivity and quality of work and strengthen social and territorial cohesion. Since the establishment of the Lisbon Strategy in 2000, and even more so after the revision of the Lisbon Strategy in 2005, the Employment Strategy is central to the Lisbon Strategy and its overall focus on growth and jobs. The Employment Guidelines are part of the current Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs.

5.2 Ethnic Minorities and Roma within the European Employment Strategy and the Lisbon Strategy

The Lisbon Strategy underlines the need to attract more people into employment in order to increase labour supply. Recent figures on employment in the EU show that despite an increase in the employment rate and a decrease in the unemployment rate, the situation of people on the margins of the labour market has not improved substantially. Some people have difficulties in accessing the labour market, others are moving in and out. Increasing the employment opportunities for priority categories is one of the four priority actions identified

by the Spring European Council in 2006. The objective is a general increase in labour market participation and particularly in the low rates of participation of all people of working age, including immigrants and minorities. Employment and social policies are critical for successful integration of immigrants and minorities in the labour market and in society. Integration needs an approach which is based on three strands which have to be addressed at the same time: non-discrimination, equal opportunities (bridging the gap between formal and real equality) and diversity management.

Precise policies are therefore needed to address the barriers to labour market inclusion for ethnic minorities (in the most inclusive sense, including Roma, national minorities, recent and established immigrants, stateless persons and asylum seekers) as identified by the High-Level Advisory Group of Experts on the social integration of minorities and their full participation in the labour market.

There are no EU-wide statistics that specifically measure the labour market situation for Roma. It should also be noted that Roma might have EU citizenship or a citizenship from a country outside the EU. Recent figures on employment in the EU show that the situation of migrants, based on citizenship, in the labour market remains a challenge for most of the Member States. The gap between the total unemployment rate and the rate for non-EU nationals in the total working-age population (15–64 years old) is high in most Member States; in a number of Member States it remains at or above 10%.

5.3 Mutual Learning

Within the Open Method of Coordination, commonly agreed targets, guidelines and country specific recommendations are important for peer pressure and for keeping up the pace of reforms. Mutual learning is a way for Member States to learn from each other and highlight good examples. The current Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs consist of 24 Guidelines, of which eight are the Employment Guidelines. Every year Member States report on national progress regarding growth and jobs. On the basis of the reports and the progress, the Commission can propose country-specific recommendations to Member States.

5.3.1 The Integrated Guidelines

Immigrants and ethnic minorities, including Roma, are an important labour supply reserve in many Member States. Notwithstanding the lack of reliable statistics, it is clear that Roma are underrepresented in employment and in life long learning and over represented in unemployment and low quality jobs. Therefore the Employment Guidelines concerning these issues could be important for a large proportion of such groups.

The introduction to the Guidelines states that “*Equal opportunities and combating discrimination are essential for progress*” directly after the overarching targets of full employment, improving quality and productivity at work and strengthening social and territorial cohesion.

Ethnic minorities, including Roma, are covered by areas which refer to “low-skilled”, “unemployed” or other disadvantaged groups. Moreover, Guideline 19 refers explicitly to the need to: “*Ensure inclusive labour markets, enhance work attractiveness, and make work pay for job-seekers, including disadvantaged people and the inactive*”. The comments accompanying the Guidelines say that “*combating discrimination, promoting access to employment for disabled people and integrating immigrants and minorities are particularly essential*”.

5.3.2 *Country Specific Recommendations and Points to Watch*

Since the revision of the Lisbon Strategy in 2005 the integrated nature of the country-specific recommendations covers the macro- and microeconomic as well as the employment strand. There are up to four recommendations per country, of which one or two focus on employment. Specific groups with problems on the labour market are not mentioned. The recommendations and points to watch concern areas where the Member State faces challenges.

The Commission proposed in December 2007 an updated set of country-specific recommendations and points to watch which were adopted by the Council in February 2008. They result from a country-specific assessment by the Commission of areas where progress needs to be stepped up in order to increase jobs and growth in the Member State.

Half of the Member States received country-specific recommendations or points to watch concerning vulnerable groups or disadvantaged groups. Roma or ethnic minorities were not mentioned explicitly, although in some cases Roma were implicitly targeted. Roma were mentioned in the analysis preceding the recommendations in the case of BG, CR, HU, RO and SK. In seven Member States, immigrants or migrants are the targeted group mentioned; in some cases Roma could be a part of this group.

5.3.3 *Joint Employment Report*

The Commission and Member States agree on an annual Joint Employment Report aimed at describing the employment situation in Member States. It reports on action on all the Employment Guidelines. The report itself is obligatory under the Treaty, but the format is not. In recent years, it has been structured around the three employment priorities, in short; attracting more people into the labour market, improving adaptability and increasing investments in human capital. The report is based on the National Reform Programmes, in which Member States report on actions taken and planned in order to respond to their challenges and recommendations.

The report analyses the situation of disadvantaged groups at several points. The latest report (adopted by the Council in February 2008) states i.a.: *“Efforts have increased in integrating people at the margins of the labour market and in an “active inclusion” approach. Low-skilled job seekers are subject to specific activation measures or support for placement from the employment services (MT, UK), while financial incentives are created for employers to hire them (BG, DE) and train them (BG, NL). Some measures aim at providing specific training opportunities, organised either through public employment services or on-the-job (AT, LT, BG, EE, BE). A number of Member States have taken steps to develop and improve the programmes for basic literacy and numeracy of adults (FR, DK).”*⁴⁰

5.3.4 *Mutual Learning Programme*

The objectives of the Mutual Learning Programme are to encourage mutual learning at all levels, enhance transferability as regards the most effective policies within central areas of the European Employment Strategy, and foster wider and more effective dissemination of knowledge to stakeholders about the European Employment Strategy and its implementation.

⁴⁰ Joint Employment Report 2007/2008, 7169/08, p. 10 (EN).

The themes are decided by the Employment Committee on a voluntary basis and for 2008 the priority theme is “Increasing labour supply by focusing on people at the margins of the labour market and youth, linked with the development of flexicurity policies”.

Thematic one-day seminars held at EU level involve presentations from keynote speakers and discussion. Examples of themes covered have been measuring, improving and promoting effects of lifelong learning; plus modernising and activating benefit and social protection systems to promote employment. In smaller and more frequent peer reviews held in individual Member States, other Member States facing the same challenges are free to participate and engage in an in-depth discussion on a particular policy area, for example youth, immigrants, vocational training, etc.

The peer reviews and thematic review seminar in the first half of 2008 will give priority to questions concerning migration and minorities. For example, people from the Roma ethnic minority are part of the “JOBS project”, which was presented in Bulgaria, and therefore given special attention here.

5.4 Gender Mainstreaming

The promotion of gender equality has been a vital element of the European Employment Strategy since its establishment in 1997. Though progress on the employment rate of women has been visible over the years, it is still much lower than that of men, and women continue to work in less well-paid and less valued professions. The situation of Roma women is emblematic, as they often suffer from double discrimination on account of their ethnicity and gender, and are more often victims of discrimination than both women of the majority society and men of the Roma community.

Roma women are most often employed in auxiliary, unskilled, physically demanding work and in seasonal and occasional labour in services in the black or grey economy, which provide very low wages and prevent them from accessing social security benefits. Field monitoring, however, also indicates that Roma women are in many instances the primary breadwinner in a family, often working in three or four jobs in the grey economy in order to support families.⁴¹ In addition, the existence of traditional gender roles and stereotypes within the family and society is particularly present in Roma communities, which make the reconciliation of work and family life and the achievement of economic independence particularly arduous for Roma women.

Successful programmes, supported primarily by Community financial instruments, such as the Structural Funds, usually combine different measures: training, job mediation, assistance services, empowerment and micro-credit, etc.

Czech Republic

ESF CIP EQUAL, allocation: CZK 27 727 716, period: 2.3 – 16.9.2005 – 30.8.2008, place of implementation: Brno, Jihomoravský Region.

The project, described in greater detail under section 3.2.2., entails a specific focus on offering motivation courses for unemployed Roma women and women on maternity leave.

⁴¹ The situation of the Roma in an enlarged European Union (2004 http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/fundamental_rights/pdf/pubst/stud/roma04_en.pdf)

The Commission presented in July 2007 a Manual for Gender Mainstreaming of Employment Policies ⁴², which underlines that “*while measures to increase the participation rate might, for example, be effective for women from the dominant group, women from ethnic minority groups, and this includes Roma women as well, may require specific measures.*”

5.5 Lessons Learned

The European Employment Strategy has a number of tools (mentioned above) which could be used to put a stronger focus on Roma under the existing Strategy. The development and implementation of policies to better integrate Roma lie in the hands of the Member States and the existing tools, including ESF, are already there to support action in this direction. The Commission encourages and monitors the actions through these instruments and through mutual learning.

5.5.1 Integrated Guidelines

The Integrated Guidelines are stable for the period 2008-2010. The European Council invited the Commission, the Council and the National Lisbon coordinators to start reflecting on the future of the Lisbon Strategy in the post-2010 Period, in the Spring European Council Conclusions 2008”.

5.5.2 Country Specific Recommendations and Points to Watch

The situation of Roma could be better highlighted in the future in the internal analysis and in the methodology for assessing Member States. It needs to be ensured that the situation of Roma is dealt with in the Country Chapters of the Strategic Report in countries where the situation of Roma continues to be a challenge. Moreover, the Recommendations — while not mentioning Roma explicitly — could refer to groups who are at risk of social exclusion on grounds of their ethnic origin.

5.5.3 Joint Employment Report

The Council and Commission could report more fully in the Joint Employment Report on the progress made in measures to improve the situation of Roma and on the way Roma are treated in the National Reform Programmes.

5.5.4 Mutual Learning Programme

It would be possible to mainstream the situation of Roma into thematic review seminars to stimulate mutual learning. The Commission should encourage Member States to hold undertake a peer review on Roma showing good practices and with the aim of learning from each other. The Commission should also encourage the Member States to develop cross-boarder projects focusing on the situation for the Roma through the Mutual learning programmes call for proposal.

⁴² Manual for Gender Mainstreaming Employment Policies:
http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/gender_equality/docs/2007/manual_gend_mainstr_en.pdf

6. SOCIAL INCLUSION POLICY

6.1 Social Inclusion Process and the Roma

Through the EU Social Protection and Social Inclusion Process, the European Union coordinates and encourages Member State actions to combat poverty and social exclusion, and to reform their social protection systems on the basis of policy exchanges and mutual learning⁴³. On 29 February 2008 the EPSCO (Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs) Council and the Commission jointly adopted the 2008 Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion. In the Supporting Document to the 2008 Joint Social Protection and Social Inclusion Report⁴⁴ and the Member States' National Strategic Reports⁴⁵ contain explicit references on how the Member States promote the social inclusion of Roma.

6.2 Impact of Social Inclusion Process on Policy Priorities for Roma Inclusion

6.2.1 Education

Most Member States with a significant proportion of Roma, as well as Portugal and Spain, report measures to improve the situation of Roma children, with the focus on educational support. Among the Member States that have experienced a recent influx of Roma from Eastern Europe, only Italy reports some measures to support Roma children who have come from another country.

Hungary runs its "Tanoda" (Learning House) programme.⁴⁶ In addition, the situation of the Roma is also addressed by more universal policies to tackle problem situations where there is a larger than average number of Roma inhabitants.

However, the multi-dimensional disadvantages faced by Roma children are rarely covered, for instance the number of Roma children in "special" or segregated schools is unknown.

6.2.2 Health

As is evident from the 2006 National Strategy Reports, in some countries ethnic minority groups, in particular the Roma, and immigrants have a much lower health status than the population as a whole.

Bulgaria

In Bulgaria, mobile medical teams versed in intercultural communication have been established to reach Roma families. Mediators from minorities have been appointed within service provider organisations. Part of their work is to counsel the parents of children from particularly vulnerable groups.

Romania

⁴³ http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/the_process_en.htm

⁴⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/docs/social_inclusion/2008/sec_2008_91_en.pdf

⁴⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/strategy_reports_en.htm

⁴⁶ Cf. Chapter 3 Cohesion Policy

Romania has set up a programme of health mediators⁴⁷. Moreover, the country is taking measures to address the problem that many Roma do not have identity cards, hampering their access to services.

6.2.3 *Comprehensive Social Support*

Public authorities can significantly facilitate the inclusion of Roma — as of other socially disadvantaged groups — by providing social support in order to solve practical problems. This is in particular important with a view to promoting active inclusion and supporting Roma in improving their living conditions.

In most countries the lack of identity documents — which is a problem in particular for Roma who have fled from (civil) war or who are stateless persons — is a major obstacle to obtaining access to basic services and benefits. Another frequent problem is the lack of documentation concerning the ownership of the land occupied by houses and settlements of Roma.

Ireland has a specific policy for the social inclusion of travellers. A traveller accommodation programme (2005-2008) provides funding for local authorities to reduce the number of traveller families on unauthorised sites.

Czech Republic

The Czech government finances community social work which is provided by the NGO People in Need. Field social workers operate in socially excluded localities. Social workers offer social counselling and assistance services free of charge, *i.a.* in the area of education or employment. The services include help with administrative tasks, negotiations with public institutions, escort to meetings, gratuitous legal advice, help with securing regular income, housing, regular school attendance of their children, etc.

Slovakia

The programme in support of the development of community social work in municipalities favours a comprehensive multidimensional approach, designed to develop social work to assist groups most at risk of social exclusion.

The programme targets the Roma community in particular. It aims to support the socially excluded in the field of employment, living conditions and housing, education, healthcare and social integration, and on specific problems experienced by individuals.

Community social workers operate in 176 municipalities, in cooperation with local authorities which, for example, are obliged to provide office facilities for the administration of social work, and to provide a certain amount of co-financing. By 2006, 600 social work related posts had been created, with spin-off as regards employment rates.

Hungary

Under the promotion of 'Active Inclusion', Hungary reports on a broad programme targeting Roma and other disadvantaged groups and fostering measures to enhance entrepreneurship amongst these groups.

⁴⁷ Cf. Chapter 38 Public Health Policy

6.3 Gender Mainstreaming

The promotion of equality between women and men is one of the overarching objectives of the Open Method of Coordination in Social Protection and Social Inclusion.⁴⁸ It has been part of the social inclusion process since its establishment in 2000. As reflected in the 2006 round of National Strategy Reports in this domain, Member States are incorporating gender concerns more effectively and data are more often broken down by sex, though there is still considerable room for ensuring that policy measures are better informed by gender considerations.⁴⁹

While women in the EU tend to face higher risk of poverty than men in general, Roma women are particularly vulnerable. Working often in the grey economy, they are very frequently excluded from a range of protections such as maternity benefits, pensions and medical leave, and they are very vulnerable to exploitation⁵⁰. The social costs of the absence of secure jobs are particularly relevant for the most vulnerable among Roma women: single mothers, widowed women and victims of domestic violence, as well as those engaged in prostitution and victims of trafficking.

Romania

The national strategy for Roma inclusion includes a specific focus on stimulating Roma women's involvement in information and sensitising campaigns, to improve their access to public services. The strategy also aims to increase the employment of Roma women.

Bulgaria

The national programme targeting Roma inclusion includes the organisation of seminars in settlements with compact Roma population to promote the social role of Roma women.

In February 2008 the Commission presented a Manual for Gender Mainstreaming Social Inclusion and Social Protection Policies⁵¹, with a view to the 2008 reporting cycle on National Strategies for Social Inclusion and Social Protection. This manual includes a specific emphasis on the situation of women who are members of ethnic minorities, including Roma women.

6.4 Lessons Learned

Many of the specific programmes in the Member States can be characterised as pilot actions. It is not yet clear if and how they will be transformed into policies intended to be implemented in the form of large-scale mainstream programmes. It is, however, important to address the social exclusion of Roma in a holistic way and put across their positive impact for society as a whole.

⁴⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/docs/social_inclusion/2006/objectives_en.pdf

⁴⁹ 2007 Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion:

<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st06/st06694.en07.pdf>

⁵⁰ The Situation of the Roma in an Enlarged European Union (November 2004):

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/fundamental_rights/pdf/pubst/stud/roma04_en.pdf

⁵¹ Manual for gender mainstreaming social inclusion and social protection policies:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/docs/social_inclusion/2008/manual_mainstreaming_gender_guidance_en.pdf

Demographic change combined with higher mobility will be a major driver supporting such an approach. In countries where e.g. many qualified care workers make use of their right to mobility, the training of Roma must become a priority in the interest not just of the Roma, but of general social cohesion and of quality social services in ageing societies.

6.4.1 Reporting Process

The National Strategy Reports on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2008–2010 have to be submitted in September 2008. Member States that acknowledged in the Conclusions of the 2007 European Council the specific problems of Roma can take this opportunity to highlight their commitment to fighting Roma poverty and promoting their social inclusion.

6.4.2 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion

The 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion provides a major opportunity to highlight the material and social deprivation of Roma and could, thus, have a thematic focus on this group. Moreover, it could highlight successful strategies leading out of poverty, such as micro-credit systems and support schemes to foster Roma entrepreneurship.

7. EDUCATION, CULTURE AND YOUTH POLICY

Education is the key to successful integration for all people, representing the most effective way of breaking the cycle of intergenerational deprivation suffered by many citizens. In the case of the Roma, improvements in access to and the quality of education constitute a significant opportunity to overcome the current situation of exclusion. In the context of increasing competition in the global economy and the deepening of the knowledge component of all professions, education is the *sine qua non* for access to decent work and thus to social inclusion.

However, even though there have been improvements in the average education level of Roma people in absolute terms, the qualifications gap in relation to majority populations is still huge. Moreover, the transition to knowledge societies means that the socioeconomic impact of this educational gap continues to grow.

As shown by studies conducted by the former European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), by the Open Society Institute and by the Roma Education Fund, Roma in many countries have very low enrolment rates in pre-primary education. Also, they often find themselves in schools which are de facto segregated either in geographical terms (nominally mainstream schools in predominantly Roma neighbourhoods) or even in terms of their curricula (“special” schools for children with learning difficulties). This in turn limits the range of options available to them at secondary level and leads to lower levels of qualification. The Roma tend to have very high rates of early school leaving and very low enrolment in higher education. The EUMC published a comparative report on Roma in public education which examines the situation of Roma in the public education systems of all European Union Member States.⁵² Further to this report the EUMC issued an exhaustive list of recommendations which covers not only the participation of students and the skills of teachers, but highlights also the importance of considering the role of parents, the need for

⁵² EUMC, Roma and Travellers in Public Education (2006)

desegregation and the importance of taking intercultural aspects of Roma education into account.

The organisation of education systems is the responsibility of Member States. Improving access to quality education for Roma people is therefore first of all a national responsibility. Nevertheless, this responsibility must be exercised with due regard to Community rules concerning discrimination on grounds of race or ethnic origin. Directive 2000/43/EC⁵³ also covers education. In the framework of the Council of Europe, a landmark judgment was reached by the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) issued on 13 November 2007 in the “Ostrava case”.⁵⁴ The Court ruled that segregating Roma students into special schools is a form of unlawful discrimination that violates fundamental human rights. The EUMC report mentioned above was cited in the judgment of the ECtHR.

Member States have made clear efforts toward improving access and decreasing segregation for Roma pupils. Some interesting measures – often supported by the Structural Funds⁵⁵ – focus on preparatory pre-school classes, after-school support, the appointment of Roma teaching assistants or mediators, targeted scholarship programmes, and the development of equity indicators for the allocation of Structural Funds. Moreover, it is a hopeful sign that that support for Roma education is central in most Operational Programmes of countries with a large Roma native population.

Since 2005, the European Commission has adopted a more systematic approach to disseminating and harnessing of outcomes of programmes and initiatives in these fields of activity. A range of initiatives has been put in place by all programmes to ensure better quality and longer lasting effects, including when dealing with socially disadvantaged groups.

7.1 European Policy Coordination in Education

European policy cooperation can also support Member States in such efforts. The Education and Training 2010 Work Programme, based on the Open Method of Coordination (OMC), focuses *i.a.* on issues of access to education for socio-economically disadvantaged groups. Since May 2006, a peer learning cluster of Member States representatives has been working on issues of access and social inclusion in education. The issue of segregation in education is being examined in that context.

Policy cooperation is also accompanied by support for transnational cooperation of organisations and stakeholders working in the education and training field. The Lifelong Learning Programme (mainly through “Comenius“, “Grundtvig” and “Leonardo da Vinci“) and the Youth Programme have already supported a large number of transnational projects in the field of intercultural education, Roma education and inclusion of disadvantaged youth.

In general, it is too early to assess the impact of policy cooperation through peer learning, as well as the consequences of the ECtHR judgment on the use of special schools for Roma. Along with the programme activities, however, policy work has contributed to raising awareness of the issues related to segregated education.

⁵³ Cf. Chapter 2 Legislation and Rights

⁵⁴ ECHR, Grand Chamber Judgement, D.H. and others v. The Czech Republic (no. 57325/00) of 13 November 2007

⁵⁵ Cf. Chapter 3 Cohesion Policy

7.2 Education and Training Programmes

The “Lifelong Learning” programme (mainly through “Comenius” for school education, “Grundtvig” for adult education and “Leonardo da Vinci” for vocational training) has already supported a large number of transnational projects in the field of intercultural education, Roma education and social inclusion. In particular, a specific strand in “Comenius“, in the period 1995-1999, focused on the education of children of migrant workers, Roma and travellers. Since 2000, these actions have been mainstreamed into a more general horizontal priority on addressing disadvantaged groups.

Transnational co-operation, through the programmes in the field of education and training, has contributed to raising awareness and to developing tools to address educational issues for the Roma. More recently, the mainstreaming of the specific priority on Roma and migrants into more general priorities, while allowing for a better integration of Roma issues, has reduced the specific visibility of these efforts.

7.3 Multilingualism (Education and Training Programmes)

Whereas the former “Socrates” Programme covered only the official languages of participant countries, all languages are eligible for support under the “Lifelong Learning” Programme (2007-2013). This means that there are now new opportunities to support EU projects aimed at the teaching and learning of the Romani Language. The Call for Proposals 2009 for the “Languages” Key Activity therefore provides possibilities to support both multilateral projects to reinforce the acquisition of competence in and/or raising awareness of the less-used European languages, including Romani, especially with a view to improving intercultural dialogue in Europe; and networks to identify, develop and disseminate information on good practices to improve intercultural dialogue in Europe through language learning and teaching.

7.4 Youth Policies

A specific topic of the European Youth Pact is the focus on disadvantaged young people. A peer-learning exercise between Member States was launched in July 2007 concerning participation in public life of young people with fewer opportunities. It was followed in March 2008 by a conference directed at public authorities and civil society organisations at different levels involving young people with fewer opportunities and youth workers active at grass-roots level. The Conference provided an opportunity to showcase projects involving young people from ethnic minorities, including Roma.

As part of the Youth Partnership Agreement between the European Commission and the Council of Europe, support was given to the 2007 European Youth Campaign for Diversity, Human rights and Participation “All Different – All Equal”, and to research seminars and training for youth workers and young people from the EU and Council of Europe countries as well as from third countries (in particular from the EuroMed region, the Balkans, Eastern and Central Europe).

Under the structured dialogue between the Union and youth organisations, young people at all levels – local, regional, national and European – have the opportunity to express their views on intercultural dialogue, especially during the European Year 2008 of Intercultural Dialogue. The most recent example was the youth event organised by the Slovenian Presidency at the end of April 2008, open to young people from EU/EFTA countries, candidate countries as

well as from the Western Balkans. One workshop of this youth event addresses the issue of intercultural dialogue (*“The role of intercultural dialogue for the social inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities”*).

Intercultural dialogue will be also one of the main themes of the Youth Event to be organised by the French Presidency in July 2008 in Marseille (open to young people from EU/EFTA and Mediterranean perimeter countries) and during the European Youth Week being held in November 2008.

7.5 Youth in Action Programme

The “Youth in Action” Programme supports the policy processes of the OMC on youth. Therefore promoting diversity, and in particular reducing all forms of racism and discrimination, is an essential element of the programme. The participation of young people from cultural or ethnic minorities, including Roma youth, is encouraged and supported through all the Programme actions as a transversal priority.

“Youth in Action” provides support for projects involving Roma youth as well as other ethnic or migrant groups in order to foster intercultural dialogue, respect for cultural diversity and social inclusion. Various examples exist, with a certain concentration in some countries where the Roma communities are quite large, such as Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Romania. The reinforced focus on intercultural dialogue and the respect for cultural diversity in connection with the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue has contributed to fostering this type of initiative in 2007 and 2008.

Greater attention to this topic is also being paid by the Programme's National Agencies (NAs). Some NAs in the most concerned countries have started focusing on a more targeted involvement of young Roma and Roma youth leaders through their Training and Cooperation Plans.

The SALTO Resource Centre on Cultural Diversity also recently started working more specifically on this topic, and is planning to organise (together with the Hungarian NA) a Round Table of youth leaders, NGOs, volunteers and activists connected to Roma projects in order to see how the programme can help with the inclusion of young Roma. This Round Table will aim to obtain an overview of the connection between Roma youth work and the Youth in Action Programme, to explore national Roma inclusion strategies and to explain the programme possibilities for participation, inclusion, diversity and citizenship. Furthermore, in order to reinforce the work done on Roma issues, SALTO will have additional human resources to work specifically on this topic during 2008. The follow-up of suggestions and outcomes from the Round Table could take the form of a campaign, a training strategy, or a promotional approach for National Agency staff, etc.

Furthermore, the reporting and monitoring tools of the “Programme” have been substantially improved since 2007. It is now possible, on the one hand, to identify projects that focus on intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity, and on the other, to identify the number of young people with fewer opportunities participating in projects (including the kinds of obstacles they face, that could be linked to minority origin).

The involvement of Roma participants in the “Youth in Action” Programme is addressed as part of the inclusion strategy and of broader priority themes such as European citizenship, active participation, social exclusion, etc. It is therefore difficult to estimate the quantity and

impact of projects supported through “Youth in Action” involving Roma participants or with a specific focus on Roma issues at this stage.

7.6 Culture Policies and Intercultural Dialogue

The European Agenda for Culture establishes a new framework for the implementation and further development of cultural policies in the EU by setting commonly-shared strategic objectives and new working methods based on the Open Method of Coordination (OMC). The promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue is one of the three strategic objectives and targets, among other, the promotion of intercultural dialogue as a sustainable process contributing to European identity, citizenship and social cohesion, including the development of the intercultural competences of citizens.

The Agenda also provides for a structured dialogue with cultural stakeholders at all levels. The civil society platform on intercultural dialogue – one of the three different platforms for cultural dialogue – includes the European Roma Information Office among its members.

The work to be undertaken in the OMC framework, as well as the structured dialogue with the cultural sector through the thematic platforms and the civil society, will provide a political context in which questions relating to Roma culture may be addressed.

The 2008 European Year of Intercultural Dialogue aims at assisting European citizens, and all those living in the EU, to acquire the knowledge and the abilities to deal with a more open and complex cultural environment. Within the overall budget of 10 million € for all activities, 7 European flagship projects and 27 national projects were financed. Among the first category, one project, “I – you – we share the world”, targeting primary school students through interactive work of artists and story-tellers, is co-organised by the Roma Education Fund. National level projects also concern minorities, including Roma. Lastly, Roma are represented among the Year’s ambassadors; these are nominated by the Member States in the context of the awareness-raising campaign for the Year.

7.7 Culture Programme

Community support for annual and multi-annual cultural cooperation projects addressing Roma culture has been granted under the “Culture” programmes since 2000.

The programme “Culture 2000-2006“ (total budget: 236.5 million €) had the overarching objective to promote cultural diversity and a shared cultural heritage. It co-financed a total of nine cultural cooperation projects showcasing Roma culture through theatre, music, dance, and story-telling.

The current programme “Culture 2007-2013” (total budget: 400 million €) is articulated around three main objectives – including fostering intercultural dialogue. In 2007, Community support with an amount of 400,000 € was granted to two cultural cooperation projects addressing Roma culture. The interdisciplinary focus of the “Culture” programme has allowed financing projects beyond sectoral boundaries. An example is the “European Roma Mapping”; this project over 20-months focuses on issues of Roma housing issues and public space. It draws on expertise from domains such as architecture, sociology and human rights.

7.8 Gender Mainstreaming

In the Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men 2006-2010, the Commission has committed itself to eliminating gender stereotypes in society and promoting gender mainstreaming in EU education and culture programmes, including lifelong learning.

Although young women in the EU tend to have better success rates at school and university than men, by contrast young Roma girls have a poorer educational performance than Roma boys. Young Roma girls tend to have a high rate of early school leaving and irregular participation in education. This is particularly due to the emphasis on women's domestic roles in Roma culture, accompanied by the widely held view that education is not important for young girls⁵⁶.

There are only a few programmes that directly address the specific situation of Roma girls and women in the Member States. Their benefit is crucial not only in terms of the girls and women themselves who participate, but for future Roma generations as well.

Romania

The training programme for school mediators includes emphasis on reinforcing the right of education for Roma girls. It includes actions to support Roma girls and women through education and human rights, exercise of free choice and personal development and building self-confidence, with emphasis on the importance of education for girls. School mediators promote parent-school relations and also sensitise teachers on gender dynamics in the local Roma community, with the aim of eliminating prejudices and stereotypes.

Poland

The Government issues 50 scholarships on a yearly basis to Roma youth who successfully finished secondary education in order to enable them to enter tertiary education. Although the programme has no specific gender focus, it is more popular among Roma girls than boys.

7.9 Lessons Learned

7.9.1 Education and Training Programmes

As part of the drive to tie the use of the Structural Funds to support for policy objectives agreed at EU level, emphasis has been placed on Roma issues, including Roma education, in the Operational Programmes of a number of countries. This strategic use of the Funds could make a major contribution to improving the Roma education situation. Its effectiveness will depend on the quality of investment and on the type of measures to which Member States will give priority. The example of Hungary, where indicators of equity in education have been developed as criteria for allocation of funds to educational projects, is promising.

The "Lifelong Learning" Programme for 2007-2013 will continue to support intercultural education and the fight against racism and xenophobia as transversal priorities. As noted above, there are now new opportunities for supporting projects aimed at the teaching and

⁵⁶ Gender inequalities in the risks of poverty and social exclusion for disadvantaged groups in thirty European countries: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/publications/2006/ke7606201_en.pdf

learning of Romani. New tools allowing better identification, monitoring and therefore visibility of projects addressing the Roma issue also will be developed.

In agreement with the Member States, transnational cooperation at policy level on social inclusion in education could be developed within the peer-learning cluster, including through the development of indicators and benchmarks. Cooperation with the Fundamental Rights Agency will be important to support more inclusive education for Roma students. The compliance of national education systems with the principles of Directive 2000/43/EC should also be part of the Commission's next report to the Council and the European Parliament on application of the Directive.

In the context of the "Lifelong Learning" Programme, the Commission services will examine the effectiveness of the mainstreaming approach and the possible need for more targeted priorities.

7.9.2 Youth in Action Programme

In the "Youth in Action" Programme, the Commission is implementing an inclusion strategy which has the purpose of facilitating access to the programme for young people with fewer opportunities. In this context, the particular situation of young Roma will be taken into account, raising awareness among the stakeholders involved in such kinds of projects (National Agencies, youth workers, youth NGOs etc.)

7.9.3 2008 European Year of Intercultural Dialogue

The follow-up to the 2008 European Year of Intercultural Dialogue will take place through the Open Method of Coordination on culture (notably Member State expert working groups and civil society stakeholder dialogue platforms) and through cooperation in other DG EAC policy fields, notably education, youth, multilingualism and citizenship.

7.9.4 Visibility

In order to extract the maximum value from the activities promoted by the programmes managed by DG Education and Culture, new efforts will be devoted to identifying and raising the visibility of individual initiatives. A new dissemination and exploitation platform (EVE) is currently under construction, which will facilitate the identification of projects and results touching the Roma issue (among others).

8. PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY

8.1 Health Situation of Roma in Europe

There is a lack of comprehensive and comparable data on Roma health in Europe. However many studies have shown the health status of Roma communities to be far below the average for the country where they live.

Higher levels of mortality amongst Roma result in estimates for average life expectancy at birth which is typically of the order of 10 years less than the general population. The incidence of environment-related illnesses is higher for Roma than for the general population. Amongst children there is also a prominent lack of vaccination (in some Member States) as well as a high rate of nutritional deficiencies. Roma also frequently experience a higher

incidence of accidents and involuntary injuries and a greater risk of drug and alcohol dependency. There appears also to be increased vulnerability to sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.⁵⁷

Difficulties for Roma in accessing health services appropriate to their needs are a frequently reported issue. Inequalities in health regarding Roma are compounded by social exclusion and discrimination inside and outside the healthcare system. In real terms, poor health condition results also from multiple effects such as forced evictions, homelessness, residential segregation, unemployment and lack of access to social assistance, lack of identity documents etc.

8.2 Public Health Action

While Member States are primarily responsible for the delivery of health services, Community initiatives add value to Member States action particularly in the area of health promotion and prevention of illnesses. Action to reduce inequities in health is foreseen in the Commission White Paper “Together for Health, a strategic approach for the EU 2008-2013”. Roma health is a specific aspect of some actions; for example through projects funded through the EU Public Health Programme 2002-2008. In other areas relevant issues for Roma may be addressed implicitly. Examples are work on combating inequities in health and on equal opportunity for access to health and preventive care services without discrimination on grounds of race and ethnicity.

8.3. EU Health Policy

On 23 October 2007 the European Commission adopted a new Health Strategy, “Together for Health: A Strategic Approach for the EU 2008-2013”. It aims to provide an overarching strategic framework across core issues in health and address health aspects of other policies. Equity in health is a core principle of the Strategy. Reducing inequities in health (defined as inequalities in health which are avoidable and unfair) related to socio-economic and other inequalities are identified as a fundamental challenge. The Strategy states the Commission’s intention to propose actions aimed at supporting the efforts of Member States and other organizations to reduce inequities in health. The health needs of Roma communities will clearly need to be an important consideration for such measures and will need to be fed into the decision-making process.

8.4 EU Health Programmes

A number of projects addressing Roma health have been and are currently being funded under the EU Public Health Programme 2002-2008. The EU supported the European network “SASTIPEN” project “Reduction of Health Inequalities in the Roma Community”, led by Fundación Secretariado Gitano,⁵⁸ from 2005 to 2007. The project’s main aim was to promote health and prevent disease through addressing health determinants across policies and activities relating to the socio-economic determinants of health within nine European countries. The project formed national working groups in each country, held seminars for

⁵⁷ <http://www.gitanos.org/publichealth/presentation.htm>

⁵⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_projects/2004/action3/action3_2004_01_en.htm

dissemination of gathered information, and developed a guide on adapting health services to the needs of Roma which was published in nine languages.⁵⁹

Another project is “Monitoring the Health Status of Migrants within Europe: Development of Indicators”⁶⁰ which is led by the Institute of Public Policy and Management in the Netherlands. It is working to establish a European Network of Epidemiological Observatories on Migrants Health. In Central and Eastern Europe the network focuses on the Roma population. Critical health areas which have been identified are the need for data on: mortality, cardiovascular diseases and diabetes, infectious diseases, cancer and self-perceived health. In addition, an epidemiological overview will be provided based on regular epidemiological measures for each critical area, adjusted for differences in age, sex and if possible socio-economic status. Based on this overview, at least three indicators will be developed that assess relative differences for each critical area between specific ethnic minority and indigenous population.

The EU Health Programme 2008-2013 has replaced the EU Public Health Programme. Action to reduce health inequalities is a core objective which will enable further support for activities addressing Roma health inequalities in the future.

8.5 Health Aspects of other EU Policies

An important goal of public health at EU level is a high level of human health protection in the definition and implementation of all Community policies and activities. The new EU Health Strategy also considers the impact of health in other policy areas as a core principle. Public health issues can be therefore actively addressed through mechanisms for policy coordination within the Commission such as the Interservice Group on Roma. Roma health issues also form part of policy initiatives described elsewhere in this paper – particularly on equal rights and antidiscrimination and the use of the EU Structural Funds.

Greece

Under the OP Health mobile units offering health services and providing vaccination etc. have been set-up to support a total of 37 health and social services centres in areas where there are Roma settlements.

These centres provide services for prevention, basic primary health and social care, and social inclusion. This will be achieved by maintaining records of the target group and their needs, informing them about public health matters, linking these population groups with social welfare programmes, familiarising them with new housing modes, and by providing counselling services for inclusion of the family and especially children in Greek mainstream society.

The cost of the operation is estimated at €100 000 per year; it is supported by the ERDF.

⁵⁹ <http://www.gitanos.org/publichealth/default.htm>

⁶⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_projects/2005/action1/action1_2005_20_en.htm

8.6 Gender Mainstreaming

The Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men 2006-2010⁶¹ has underlined the need to modernise social, health and care services with a view to improving their accessibility, quality and responsiveness to the specific needs of women and men.

While there are inequalities in women and men's access to, use of, and participation in health and long-term care, these are accumulated for Roma women due to a multiplicity of factors, notably discriminatory practices, but also lack of information and poverty. In addition, Roma women have particular health risks connected to early and repeated pregnancies, compounded by their poor access to healthcare services, which contributes to reducing their life expectancy.⁶²

Roma women, however, play a crucial role in being the primary care providers within their families and communities, and also, the main liaison persons between their families/communities and health care services. For this reason, successful programmes implemented in Member States involve Roma women as cultural mediators.

Romania

Most of the approximately 500 health mediators are Roma women, whose role is to identify health problems and associated social problems, prepare registration with family doctors, prepare vaccination campaigns and disseminate information regarding the health system, hygiene, contraception and family planning. They also deal with issues related to the lack of birth certificates or identity papers and signal social problems to the local authorities.

The Commission's Manual for Gender Mainstreaming Social Inclusion and Social Protection Policies provides guidance for Member States to integrate gender mainstreaming into health policies.⁶³ A specific question to guide Member States "*in assessing the gender impact of their ongoing or future health and long-term care reforms*" concerns the existence of specific measures for ethnic minority women, and this is therefore relevant for Roma women as well.

9. RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY

The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) contributes to the promotion of sustainable rural development throughout the Community in a complementary manner to the market and income support policies of the common agricultural policy, to cohesion policy and to the common fisheries policy.

Like the Structural Funds, the EAFRD operates in respect of the non-discrimination principle.⁶⁴ Member States have to describe in their rural development programmes how any

⁶¹ Cf. Chapter 10 Gender Equality Policy

⁶² Gender inequalities in the risks of poverty and social exclusion for disadvantaged groups in thirty European countries: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/publications/2006/ke7606201_en.pdf

⁶³ Cf. Chapter 6 Social Inclusion Policy

⁶⁴ Art. 8 of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1698/2005 on support for rural development by the EAFRD provides that "*Member States and the Commission shall ensure that any discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation is prevented during the various stages of programme implementation. This includes the stages of design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.*"

discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation is prevented during the various stages of programme implementation. The respect of this provision has been verified by the Commission services during the assessment of the rural development programmes for the period 2007-2013.

In some Member States, the situation of Roma is specifically addressed.

Hungary

The Rural Development Programme (RDP) contains specific provisions for Roma in the context of vocational training and information actions. Moreover, within the project selection for investment measures, applicants employing disadvantaged people (women, persons with disabilities, Roma) are given priority. Roma interest organisations have been involved in the partnership consultations during the programming exercise for the 2007-2013 RDP as well as in the monitoring of the assistance and as members of the Monitoring Committee.

Bulgaria

In the Rural Development Programme, it is indicated that the involvement of less active and isolated social groups including minorities will be encouraged under the measure for Acquisition of Skills for developing the Leader (local development) approach in rural Bulgaria. Furthermore, special efforts will be made to provide information and guidance for particularly isolated groups, such as Roma communities, on the RDP support opportunities. Organisations representing the Roma were included in the consultative process for RDP preparation and representatives nominated by Roma NGOs have been designated to participate in the Programme Monitoring Committee work (within Working group on axis 1 and 3). NGOs and organizations working with isolated groups such as Roma are also identified as potential participants in the National Rural Network to be set-up under the RDP and which can serve as a platform to seek ways to facilitate access to support for Roma under the RDP.

Romania

The representation of ethnic minorities has been included as a selection criterion for the composition of Leader groups. Organisations of minorities are to be involved in the RD Network in a direct manner and an information campaign targeting minorities and especially Roma will be envisaged. Within the framework of the evaluation of the RDP, a study shall be carried out to determine the programme's impact upon less advantaged groups. The managing authority will also pay particular attention to the less favoured groups through the measure 341 "animation and skills acquisition for preparing and implementing the local development strategy" which will be implemented as of 2010.

10. ENLARGEMENT POLICY

10.1 Introduction

EU enlargement policy provides a significant lever for raising awareness and focusing attention on the discrimination and social exclusion faced by Roma communities in candidate countries (Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey) and potential candidate countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Kosovo under UNSCR 1244 and

Montenegro). The situation of the Roma is closely examined as part of the strict monitoring of political criteria and *acquis* adoption and implementation. In this connection, candidate countries need to identify actions to be carried out towards the Roma *i.a.* in the fields of employment policy strategy and social inclusion with a view to improve and expand employment opportunities for Roma individuals, build human capital through better education and health, as well as strengthen social capital and community development to underpin the process. Financial assistance, linked to the pre-accession strategy, supports *i.a.* regional, national, international and European programmes aiming to improve the living conditions and social integration of the Roma.⁶⁵ As from the start of the new Financial Perspectives 2007-2013, pre-accession assistance has been streamlined under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) and dedicated financial assistance is foreseen for programmes targeting the Roma population.

10.2 EU assistance for Roma in the enlargement countries

As is the case in old and new Member States, Roma in Turkey and the Western Balkan countries experience widespread economic, social and cultural discrimination despite substantial efforts to improve their situation. The collapse of the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s aggravated the vulnerability of minorities in general, and Roma in particular. The violent conflicts produced streams of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), among them also Roma. They are affected by lack of social inclusion, by poverty and segregation. Major difficulties exist with regard to lack of identity papers, access to jobs (up to 90% unemployment rate in some areas), education (segregated schools), housing (settlements, forced evictions), healthcare and social services as well as the stereotyping and prejudices. Roma women and children are particularly vulnerable in this respect.

Addressing the needs of Roma communities as well as other vulnerable groups is critically important for maintaining social cohesion in South East Europe. Much of the responsibility for addressing these challenges lies at national, regional and local level. Nevertheless, the EU as well as other international organisations, Member States and numerous civil society organisations provide substantial support in both political and financial terms.

Protection of minorities, in particular support for the social inclusion of Roma, are among the key priorities set by the 2008 Accession Partnerships with Croatia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey, and the European Partnerships with the other countries of the Western Balkan region. In addition, reference to protection of minority rights is also made in the IPA Multiannual Indicative Planning Instruments 2007-2009 for these countries. Furthermore, minority and vulnerable groups' concerns will be reflected in all activities programmes under IPA, in particular when it concerns public services, legislative matters and socio-economic development.

The EU has been and continues to be the main international donor on Roma related projects in Turkey and the Western Balkans. Thus, the Commission has launched a wide range of projects in this field, running in the Western Balkans under various Community instruments, from which Roma in the region benefit both directly and indirectly. The projects mainly aim at improving the human rights conditions of the Roma community, promoting non-discrimination and equal treatment, improving their access to employment and fostering

⁶⁵ Until 2006 financial assistance under CARDS for Roma projects in the Western Balkan countries was relatively limited. This is about to change as part of strengthening the stability and association process.

sustainable return and reintegration in their pre-war settlements. Also, special attention is given to Roma children and ensuring their equal access to education.

Western Balkan region

A regional EU project “Social Inclusion and Access to Human Rights of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians Communities in the Western Balkans” was recently launched in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Kosovo under UNSCR 1244 and Montenegro). The project, which is funded with 1 million € under IPA 2007, is implemented by UNHCR in partnership with NGOs and in cooperation with public authorities and Roma Information Centres. It addresses the documentation and registration gap of Roma. Lack of personal documents is a key concern of the Roma population which undermines their full integration into society and access to basic civil, social and economic rights, such as health care, education and work.

Croatia

Currently a Roma project funded with more than 1,3 million € from PHARE 2006 is being implemented in Croatia. It aims at facilitating the inclusion of the Roma community in Croatia’s economy, education and culture, while maintaining their identity, culture and tradition. The first component of the project specifically targets infrastructure improvements in 10 illegal Roma settlements in 2 cities and 8 municipalities in the Međimurje County. The second component of the project addresses education, in particular access to education for the Roma national minority in Croatia, notably in the counties of Međimurje, Baranja, Rijeka, Sisak and the capital of Zagreb.

10.3 Achievements, Lessons learned and Good practice of Roma Programmes under PHARE

The EU policy and financial assistance with regard to minorities, particularly Roma, are documented since 1998 in the annual progress reports on enlargement countries but also in a number of special reports, brochures and studies published by DG Enlargement and other services of the Commission, such as:

- EU Support for Roma Communities in Central and Eastern Europe (2003)⁶⁶
- The Situation of Roma in an Enlarged European Union (2004)⁶⁷
- Thematic evaluation: Review of the EU PHARE Assistance to Roma Minorities (2005)

There has been substantial EU financial assistance to fund Roma inclusion. Under PHARE, more than €100 million has been spent since 1998, targeting primarily education, infrastructure and other fundamental challenges for Roma communities. Substantial support continued for both Bulgaria and Romania until 2006, with more than € 20 million being allocated to minority issues for Bulgaria (2004-2005) and € 35 million for Romania. Under CARDS, assistance is provided at the regional level supporting a harmonised approach in the civil registration process. This support will continue under IPA.

⁶⁶ http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/docs/pdf/brochure_roma_oct2003_en.pdf

⁶⁷ http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/fundamental_rights/pdf/pubst/roma04_en.pdf

Bulgaria

The PHARE programme supported the project “Improvement of the living standard and inclusion of disadvantaged ethnic minorities with special focus on the Roma population”. The project includes four components:

- (1) Institutional capacity building of the Directorate for Ethnic and Demographic Issues and the respective units at the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health;
- (2) Improvement of integrated kindergartens and schools infrastructure (investments);
- (3) Improvement of health conditions for mothers and children;
- (4) Improvement of living conditions of vulnerable ethnic minorities.

The municipalities in Bulgaria were able to participate with projects covering one of the four components. The selection criteria included the number of Roma children and the municipality’s commitment to integrate Roma children. Overall project budget: €36 702 000 over three years (2004–2006).

Bulgaria

*“Roma Women Win”, EU-PHARE Programme –Development of Civil Society – 2004, period 12.2006-02.2008*⁶⁸

The aim of the project was to assist, encourage and strengthen Roma women’s participation in public and political life in Bulgaria as activists and members of local civil organisations and political parties, and also in local State administration. A total of 131 Roma women were trained at seminars held in the five participating towns, and three of the project trainees were elected as town councillors. The project thereby aimed to convey “a present-day image of Roma women as educated and publicly active citizens who can act as the internal driving force for the advancement and development of their community”. The project was implemented by the Gender Project for Bulgaria Foundation, an independent non-governmental organisation.

Romania

Between 2004 and 2006 the PHARE programme supported the “Multiannual programme on Minorities” with a budget of around 30 million €. The project was comprised of:

- (1) Support for the development of institutional capacity to implement the Roma strategy at the national and local level. This component also includes development of local partnerships to solve the problem of identity documents for a significant number of Roma, which prevents them to benefit of political and social rights.
- (2) Continuation of the PHARE Partnership Programme aimed at funding community development projects through partnership of local authorities and Roma representatives/NGOs

⁶⁸ <http://www.gender-bg.org/docs/BOOK%20EN.pdf>

- (3) A large public awareness campaign to highlight Roma issues.
- (4) Continuation of the programme to improve access and quality of education for disadvantaged groups, with a special focus on Roma.

It is useful to recall the main findings and recommendations of the thematic evaluation on PHARE programmes which aimed to draw lessons learned and highlight good practice. The study covered 26 programmes targeted at Roma issues in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and the Slovak Republic (€95.77 million assistance, of which €64.54 million PHARE and €31.23 million national co-financing), allocated in 1999-2002 and implemented as from 2001 – 2003.

Overview of recommendations and lessons learned:

Area	Lessons Learned	Recommendation
Education	Education projects cannot, on their own, integrate Roma into the mainstream education system unless they are underpinned by a strong and long-term Government commitment to systemic change and education reform.	Governments must lead in ensuring that social inclusion policies for Roma are translated into practice. Social inclusion must be underpinned by serious commitment to bring about systemic change, particularly in the education sector.
Unemployment	Not enough is being done to tackle long term unemployment that is endemic in many Roma communities	More should be spent to tackle Roma unemployment. Government active labour market policies and ESF should include Roma as a priority group, and the measures should be oriented to overcome the barriers that exclude Roma from the labour market.
Infrastructure Development	Top-down interventions, related to upgrading of infrastructure, do not bring the goal of social inclusion of Roma any closer unless they are part of a comprehensive regeneration strategy.	Interventions that relate to infrastructure upgrading should be closely scrutinised to ensure that they are an extension of previous community planning and development activities, before PHARE or other funds are committed.

The review concludes that the social inclusion of disadvantaged and marginalised groups is a prerequisite for the social cohesion of each country and for society as a whole. The accession process and the PHARE programmes have been instrumental in ensuring that the issue of social inclusion (or integration) of Roma has been on the policy agenda more than ever before. With the support of PHARE, policies have been adopted; legislation has been put in place, and a number of ground-breaking initiatives have been successfully launched. A growing 'critical mass' of stakeholders motivated to achieve progress in Roma affairs has been encouraged. That this has been achieved in the face of deep-seated, very long-standing and pervasive negative attitudes is a remarkable and praiseworthy achievement.

Projects were also funded under other financial instruments, such as CARDS and the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights.

Dosta! Go beyond the prejudice, discover the Roma!

The European Union and European Commission launched a two-year programme in the Balkans. The objective is stated as “Ensuring equality, tolerance and peace: equal rights and treatment to the Roma. The programme comprises the elements of awareness and information building. The word “Dosta” was used specifically in the campaign to fight discrimination against Roma and to build a bridge between Roma and the rest of the society. The organisation also combats discriminatory policies against the Roma. In November 2006 a video contest on the issue was organised.⁶⁹

Turkey

The European Roma Rights Center (ERRC) implemented a two-year project (2006-2008) aimed at promoting Roma rights in Turkey. The project was funded by the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights of the European Commission and implemented in partnership with the Istanbul-based Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly (hCA), Bilgi University’s Human Rights Law Research Centre (HRLRC) and Centre for Migration Research (CMR), and the Edirne-based Romani Cultural Research, Solidarity and Development Association (EDÇINKAY).

The action proposed by the ERRC seeks to build capacity of Roma and other civil society actors to engage in effective advocacy for the rights of Roma and to raise awareness in Turkish society about the human rights problems facing the Romani population. The ERRC conducted human rights training of Roma activists aimed at capacitating rights advocates to seek promotion of Roma rights through a range of actions including legal defense, advocacy for governmental social inclusion policies and international advocacy.

10.4 Gender Mainstreaming

Countries joining the EU must fully embrace the fundamental principle of equality between women and men, and ensure strict enforcement of legislation and the putting in place of adequate administrative and judicial systems.

The Roadmap for Equality Between Women and Men 2006-2010 in particular underlies that the Commission will monitor and raise awareness of the transposition, implementation and effective enforcement of the Community acquis on gender equality. Support for promotion of equality between women and men is also provided through financial instruments. As regards the latter, there have been a number of projects that target the inclusion of Roma women in particular.

Serbia

A project was launched in 2007 in Southern Serbia aiming at providing Roma women with access to sexual and reproductive health care (with a budget of 1.1 million €).

⁶⁹ <http://www.dosta.org/>

11. GENDER EQUALITY

The European Commission's framework for promoting equality between women and men in the period 2006–2010 is the Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men.⁷⁰ The Roadmap underlines six priority areas for action in the coming years, which are:

- achieving equal economic independence for women and men
- enhancing reconciliation of work, private and family life
- promoting equal participation of women and men in decision-making
- eradicating gender-based violence and trafficking
- eliminating gender stereotypes in society
- promoting gender equality outside the EU

The Roadmap places specific emphasis on the need to combat the multiple discrimination faced by ethnic minority women under the priority of achieving equal economic independence. It is to be noted, however, that all priority areas bear relevance for the inclusion of ethnic minority women, and this includes Roma women as well, in order to ensure their rights and civic participation, to fully use their employment potential and to improve their access to education and lifelong-learning, as well as to healthcare and other services.

11.1 Gender Mainstreaming

Further to the principle of gender mainstreaming the sections describing policy action aimed at ensuring for equality between women and men are included in the preceding thematic Chapters.

11.2 Lessons Learned

So far most national strategies for Roma inclusion have tended to be silent on the specific obstacles faced by Roma women. While action to develop and implement policy initiatives for Roma inclusion lie in the hands of Member States, it is however important that these integrate the dual approach of gender mainstreaming and specific actions, in order to ensure that the issues faced by Roma women are not left behind and are properly addressed. This can be facilitated by making full use of the potential of the existing Community financial instruments and policy coordination mechanisms, in particular those described in this document, and by involving Roma women in the formulation and implementation of policies affecting their communities.

Those Member States that will report on the particular situation faced by Roma in their 2008 National Reform Programmes and 2008 National Strategy Reports on Social Inclusion and Social Protection can in particular use this opportunity to include gender mainstreaming and specific measures to improve the situation of Roma women in their commitment towards Roma inclusion.

⁷⁰ COM(2006)92

12. THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AGENCY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

The Fundamental Rights Agency is a body of the European Union established through Council Regulation (EC) No 168/2007 of 15 February 2007. It is based in Vienna and its predecessor was the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia.⁷¹ Its objective is to provide the relevant institutions and authorities of the Community and its Member States, when implementing Community law, with assistance and expertise relating to fundamental rights in order to support them in fully respecting fundamental rights when they take measures or formulate courses of action within their respective spheres of competence. The Agency carries out its tasks independently. It cooperates with national and international bodies and organisations, in particular with the Council of Europe.

The work of the EUMC/FRA (hereinafter “the Agency”) has been an important component of the European Union’s measures and actions to understand the phenomena of racism, xenophobia and related intolerance. As an independent expert body of the EU, the Agency has conducted a wide range of activities to improve collection, recording and reporting activities concerning racism and to raise awareness of measures to prevent and protect against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Roma have been targeted within the Agency’s general work approach through the Multiannual Strategy on Roma, further integrated in annual Work Programmes and detailed in activities regarding:

- research and data collection;
- communication and cooperation with EU institutions and intergovernmental organisations, in particular the Council of Europe;
- dialogue and consultation with civil society;
- awareness raising.

12.1 Research and Data Collection

The Agency has collected data on racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and related intolerances in order to document manifestations of these phenomena, explore their causes and effects, identify good practices in dealing with these phenomena and draft opinions and conclusions for the EU institutions and the Member State in order to inform the policy making process. The Agency works on the thematic areas of employment, education, housing, racial violence and crime, health and social affairs. Where relevant, the Agency also drew attention to any legislative or policy developments which impact on Roma.

Two specific areas of research were prioritised in the Agency’s’ work:

- Health and its gender dimension (“Breaking the Barriers – Romani Women and Access to Public Health Care”)⁷²

⁷¹ For further information on the mandate and activities of FRA and its predecessor, the EUMC, please refer to: http://fra.europa.eu/fra/index.php?fuseaction=content.dsp_cat_content&catid=2

⁷² Published in 2003 as a result of joint effort by the Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities and Council of Europe’s Migration and Roma/Gypsies Division http://fra.europa.eu/fra/index.php?fuseaction=content.dsp_cat_content&catid=3fb38ad3e22bb&contentid=403231a31521f

- Education (“Special Studies on Roma, Sinti, Gypsies and Travellers in Public Education in EU 25” and “Comparative report on Roma, Sinti, Gypsies and Travellers in Public Education in EU 25”).⁷³

The comparative reports on “migrants, minorities and education” that the Agency produced in 2005 (on the basis of analytical country studies) provided a wealth of material and analyses regarding the Roma on education, employment, housing, legislation and racist violence and crime.⁷⁴

12.2 Communication and Cooperation with EU Institutions, Intergovernmental Organisations, in particular the Council of Europe

The Agency has worked to enhance regional coordination on activities addressing the situation of Roma and to this end has collaborated with relevant intergovernmental organisations, the Council of Europe’s, Roma and Travellers Division in particular, the OSCE’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)/Contact Point for Roma and Traveller Issues, and the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. Such cooperation has been guided by the need to reinforce mutual action, avoid duplication, draw on each other’s areas of expertise and ensure added value at European level.

In 2005 the Agency was a co-signatory to the Joint International Conference on the Implementation of Policies/Action plans for Roma, Sinti and Travellers and Measures Against the Anti-Gypsyism Phenomenon in Europe.⁷⁵ In 2006 the Agency was a co-signatory to the International Conference on the Implementation and Harmonisation of National Policies on Roma, Sinti and Travellers: Guidelines for a Common Vision.

The Agency - in cooperation with the Council of Europe’s Roma and Travellers Division and OSCE’s Contact Point on Roma, Sinti and Travellers drafted a questionnaire on the implementation of policies on Roma. The questionnaire was introduced at the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting of the OSCE in October 2007.

The Agency has concluded that, in general, there is a lack of collection of data and information on the impact of Roma related programmes/projects. Where Roma specific

⁷³ Roma and Travellers in Public Education http://fra.europa.eu/fra/index.php?fuseaction=content.dsp_cat_content&catid=43d8bc25bc89d&content_id=448ee6612aa4c

⁷⁴ Comparative Report: Migrants, Minorities and Education: Exclusion, Discrimination and anti-Discrimination in 15 Member States of the European Union http://fra.europa.eu/fra/index.php?fuseaction=content.dsp_cat_content&catid=43c54e7e0156d ; Comparative report: Migrants, Minorities and Employment: Exclusion, Discrimination and anti-Discrimination in 15 Member States of the European Union http://fra.europa.eu/fra/index.php?fuseaction=content.dsp_cat_content&catid=43c54e6cbac33 ; Comparative Report: Migrants, Minorities and Housing Exclusion, Discrimination and anti-Discrimination in 15 Member States of the European Union http://fra.europa.eu/fra/index.php?fuseaction=content.dsp_cat_content&catid=43c54ec8e9d01; Comparative Report: Migrants, minorities and legislation: Documenting legal measures and remedies against discrimination in 15 Member States of the European Union <http://eumc.eu.int/eumc/material/pub/comparativestudy/CS-Legislation-en.pdf>; Analytical country reports on Housing, Employment, Education, Racist Violence, Legislation http://fra.europa.eu/fra/index.php?fuseaction=content.dsp_cat_content&catid=43c54e8e52058

⁷⁵ The conference report is available at <http://fra.europa.eu/fra/material/pub/general/Conf-report-Warsaw-21-Oct05.pdf>

policies exist, they often do not receive sufficient funding or are in a very preliminary stage of implementation and there also appears to be significant deficiencies in terms of targets for assessing the impact of the existing policies, thus making it difficult to see to what standards policy-makers aspire in implementation of many Roma-related policies. While isolated initiatives to assess the impact of projects, programmes and policies do exist, there is a need for an increased effort to assess impact of policies at European, national and local level, in order to be in a better position to see if there is a need for further policy development or fine tuning in terms of funding and combining of targeted and mainstreaming approaches.

12.3 Awareness Raising

In connexion of the 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All and the 2008 European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, the Agency issued the “S’cool Agenda”, which aims to raise awareness among young people about racism, xenophobia, and other forms of discrimination, give examples of good practice and highlight issues of cultural diversity”⁷⁶.

The Agency has also published a “Diversity Toolkit”, developed through a series of workshops financed by the European Social Fund Sweden. The Toolkit contains a wealth of background information on how to promote the principles of cultural diversity in broadcast organisations and TV programmes.⁷⁷

12.4 Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Equality – Facilitating Work of Romani Women Networks

The FRA applies a gender mainstreaming approach in its activities on Roma. The Agency has facilitated the work of Romani women networks through the participation of Romani women at international conferences addressing the implementation of national policies on Roma, through training and roundtable discussions, which allowed the Agency to ensure that the perspective of Romani women was integrated in its wider work. A conference “Amare Glasura Ashunde – Our Voices Heard” which was co-organised by the Swedish Government, the Council of Europe and the FRA in December 2007, focused on the issues of women’s rights, combating trafficking, reproductive rights and access to public healthcare for Romani women. It was an opportunity to share information and good practices between policymakers and Romani Women’s networks across Europe.⁷⁸

12.5 Evaluation of the FRA’s Work and Future Work on Roma Issues

In 2008, the FRA will conduct a consultation with the main stakeholders in order to define its priorities for the upcoming period.

13. CONCLUSIONS

The inventory and analysis of policies and instruments presented show that a framework exists at EU level for promoting Roma inclusion. It also demonstrates that the different tools

⁷⁶ The S’cool Agenda is available at http://fra.europa.eu/fra/material/pub/dday/agenda_en.pdf

⁷⁷ For more see

http://www.fra.europa.eu/fra/index.php?fuseaction=content.dsp_cat_content&contentid=478de35bcd41&catid=3eddba5601ad4&lang=EN

⁷⁸ The conference report is available at

http://fra.europa.eu/fra/material/pub/general/report_romaconf_sweden_031207_en.pdf

available are being increasingly used by Member States, regional and local authorities, NGOs, social partners and individuals to promote inclusion and combat discrimination. At the same time many lessons can be learned from the experience to date and generate improvements across the board.

This paper shows that the following elements will be essential for progress on Roma inclusion:

- The realisation at all levels of the extent and consequences of the deeply entrenched exclusion and discrimination which Roma face inside and outside the EU followed by a strong commitment by Member States to work closely with the EU institutions to:
 - Fully use of the enormous potential offered by the Structural Funds and pre-accession instruments and to create synergies with other processes such as the Roma Decade. This political commitment has to be accompanied by a number of specific measures, such as capacity building, monitoring and participation as set out in Chapters 3 and 9. Identifying best practice and developing transnational exchanges to learn from past experience is necessary to produce sustainable results.
 - Include targeted analysis and action as well as mainstreaming of Roma inclusion within all the ongoing policy cooperation mechanisms at EU and national level notably with regard to social inclusion, employment, education and health as outlined in Chapters 5 to 8. This should systematically include a gender mainstreaming approach.
- The development of a supporting context around the rights and obligations as laid down at national level implementing the relevant EU legislation, notably Directive 2000/43/EC as set out in Chapter 2. This entails raising awareness about existing rights, establishment of well functioning equality bodies working closely with Roma civil society as well as capacity building among NGOs and legal practitioners.
- Consistent combating of negative stereotypes of Roma at all levels which can be supported by both Structural Funds and specific programmes such as PROGRESS and initiatives such as the ongoing 2008 European Year of Intercultural Dialogue and the forthcoming 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion as indicated throughout the document and notably in Chapter 4.
- Close and sustainable support for and involvement of Roma civil society in both the design and implementation of policies and projects, most importantly within the Structural Funds Monitoring Committees, but also in a number of other specific processes.
- Continuous research and monitoring of the situation of the Roma and the measures taken, including by the Fundamental Rights Agency as presented in Chapter 11 and within the structural funds evaluation processes.

The policy Communication⁷⁹ which this Staff Working Paper accompanies sets out a number of horizontal policy measures strengthening the Community's action across Article 13 of the Treaty as well as targeted action and subsequent steps towards a stronger commitment on Roma inclusion by all actors.

⁷⁹ Non-Discrimination and Equal Opportunities: A Renewed Commitment - COM(2008) ...