Conference Report

Monitoring and evaluation of Roma projects and Policies

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Introduction

This summary report provides an overview of the conference ‘Monitoring and Evaluation of Roma projects and policies’ organised by the Directorate-General for Regional Policy of the European Commission on 30th November 2010 in Brussels. The objective of the conference was to raise awareness about the necessity of having adequate evaluation and monitoring mechanisms in place and to present various evaluation/monitoring methods and good practices in the field of Roma inclusion.

The conference took place in four session touching different related topics:

• Introduction to Monitoring and Evaluation of Roma projects and policies – European Perspective on ethnic data collection, Positions of the Roma NGOs on the issue

• Monitoring/Evaluation of Roma projects – case in point the Roma Pilot Project (DG REGIO)

• Monitoring and Evaluation of Roma Policies – good practices: The Roma Decade, reports

• Monitoring and evaluation of Operational Programmes – horizontal aspects, ethnic indicators

Each of the four sessions consisted of a set of presentations, followed by Q&A slots with time for discussion to ensure that participants have the chance to articulate their ideas/suggestions. For more details on the substance of the programme and the corresponding presentations, please consult the conference programme.
Session I: Introduction to Monitoring and Evaluation of Roma projects and policies

This session looked at monitoring and evaluation from a more general viewpoint, and addressed the European perspective on ethnic data collection as well as the position of Roma NGOs on this particular issue.

Mr Dirk Reinermann (World Bank in Brussels) emphasized World Bank’s involvement in the Roma Pilot project. Since it was designed as a policy learning tool, it will soon be bringing results relevant for the European and national policy makers. The pilot projects are expected to test the policies and approaches and whether they can be be scaled up and implemented in other countries, using Structural Funds. He recalled that the World Bank’s engagement goes many years back, when the former president James Wolfensohn and George Soros saw the living conditions of Roma together in the Western Balkans. The World Bank and the Soros Foundation co-established and co-sponsor the Decade of Roma Inclusion and the Roma Education Fund. As a partner of the UNDP and the Commission the World Bank brings its experience and expertise in rigorous monitoring and evaluation techniques. In conclusion Mr Reinermann said that the World Bank can assist countries in an advisory role (Member States and candidates) on the strategy/policy development level, on project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

A European perspective on ethnic data collection was articulated by Ms. Eva Sobotka (Fundamental Rights Agency), who shared the results from the EU-MIDIS survey on Minorities & Discrimination. In her presentation Ms Sobotka stressed on the growing need to collect reliable and comparable data in the field of Roma inclusion, touching upon the fact that accurate documentation on the situation of minority groups is a necessary prerequisite for policy development, thus it should be available in every stage of the decision making and implementation processed. She also pointed out that based on the European legal environment ethnic data collection is perfectly plausible, still we should take into careful consideration the data protection requirements.

Referring to the report produced by the Open Society Institute 'No Data – No Progress', Mr Bernard Rorke (Open Society Institute) highlighted that one of the major obstacle for reducing inequality and eliminating the discrimination is the ethnic data deficit. Ethnic data are crucial for measuring the progress and effectiveness of the policies for minority groups, which can identify the inequalities. According to the presenter "if we don't have reliable data about the Roma population in each of the countries, it would not be possible to devise credible, adequately budgeted policies for Roma Inclusion". B. Rorke also pointed out that the collection of ethnic data is perfectly plausible, as long as there are adequate procedural safeguards in place which can give assurance that personal data is not put in improper use. In his opinion the role of the European Commission could be essential in terms of guiding and coordinating the efforts of national governments when it comes to ethic data collection.

The Position of Roma NGOs on data collection was voiced by Mr Ivan Ivanov (European Roma Information Office). Mr Ivanov highlighted that ethnic data collection is a valuable tool for fighting the discrimination against Roma. Moreover, it is a necessary tool for the implementation of anti-discrimination law, and it could also be useful in raising awareness about discriminatory practices. In this regard he also referred to the following reasons, when it comes to the lack of ethnic data about the Roma:

- The misconception that personal data protection laws prohibit gathering of ethnic data is still very much present;
- There is a failure to understand the strategic importance of ethnic monitoring for the fight against discrimination;
- People still fear that ethnic statistics can be misused to harm the respondents;
- The political will of governments drafting programs for Roma integration is very weak;
- Government still fear that they may be embarrassed if statistics reveal 'ugly corners' in their societies.
In this respect, ERIO conducted a survey in 2008, which aimed at observing the attitude toward ethnic data collection within the network in Europe and tried to identify the fears, concerns and the degree of trust regarding such data. The result of the survey showed that there is a broad misunderstanding of the concept of ethnic data and its purpose among the respondents. Therefore, if the governments want to make use of data collection they need to accurately inform people about the concept and how the data will be used and stored, in order to avoid misinterpretation and consequently lack of trust of such data collection.

Another observation of this survey was that a large number of informants expressed their fear that ethnic data can lead to even further discrimination of Roma. The survey also points to difference between Roma from the Western European countries and Central and Eastern European Countries. The respondants from Central and Eastern Europe were positive toward data collection (Bulgaria and Macedonia), while Roma from the Western European countries were generally more sceptical toward ethnic data and its use by the state institutions. It was also observed that the Roma involved at national and European level appears to have a better understanding of the use of data collection than those working at the grassroots level. He emphasised that cooperation with NGOs in relation to ethnic data can be a help in avoiding the mistrust among the Roma and that it is crucial for the NGOs to be accurately informed about data collection.

Session II: Monitoring/Evaluation of Roma projects

This session was devoted to project monitoring and discussed how particular projects, and in particular the European Parliament Pilot Projects for Roma inclusion managed by DG REGIO, could become demonstrate a more result-oriented approach and contribute to policy learning.

Mr. Mihai Surdu (Roma Education Fund), presented 'The Good Start' project. The project will support 5,000 children from ages 0 to 6 to access early childhood education and care services in 16 locations across four different countries (Hungary, Macedonia, Romania and Slovakia). The project is expected to provide an important start to long-term, effective support for Roma children across a range of their developmental needs, which is a key element of breaking the cycle of poverty. The project was designed by the REF led-consortium based on their data and knowledge of the communities concerned.

When it comes to the role of monitoring and evaluation in the project, the project has anticipated the following:

- Informing the policy makers through policy papers and reports;
- Raising standards in monitoring and evaluation of Roma education projects in early child care;
- Facilitating a broader scale survey (to be prepared by UNDP and WB), which will evaluate the effects on beneficiaries and their satisfaction with the project. In this regards the following evaluation tools will be used:
  - Household surveys (measuring the change in attitudes of all beneficiaries – students, parents)
  - Database of children who benefit - Based on attendance registers, school and kindergartens reports, monitoring visits reports, monthly progress reports sent by the country facilitators.

Mr Gyorgy Molnar (KIUT programme, Hungary) emphasized that the most important aim of the project (literal translation: Way-out) is to support Roma to work in the "legal" economy by starting up a business. The microcredit programme intends to lend money for start-up, small business to generate enough revenue to service the loan and to produce additional income for Roma families. The clients are entitled to receive continuous administrative, financial and business advice and assistance from Kiut Programme. An explicit and important aim of the programme is to encourage the participation of women (at least 50% of the groups should have female members). In terms of monitoring and Evaluation tools, the project intends to use:
- Demographic profile of the household members
- Detailed income survey
- Living standard assessment (housing, assets, etc.)

Mr Mathias Verhelst (ERGO network) presented the project “Come with us and be the change”, which aims at improving the image of Roma across Europe and advocates for their inclusion into mainstream society on different levels, in four different countries (Italy, Romania, Bulgaria and Albania). The campaign will consist of a set of activities and messages, focusing on the changes in attitude and behavior. The project will firstly focus on attracting attention and raising awareness through national anti-racism campaigns in the countries mentioned above. In terms of outcome assessment and data collection the projects intends to generate studies (“Roma in the Media in Italy and Romania”), media footprints, reports - which will reflect the change of attitudes and the intended impacts of the projects.

Mr Jaroslav Kling (United Nations Development Program) pointed out that, as part of the EP Pilot project, the European Commission signed a cooperation agreement with the United Nations Development Program along with the World Bank to advise on the evaluation methods and on the data to be collected. That was the first phase of a larger and more ambitious project to be complemented with a second phase which will cover the data collection and evaluation of the two thematic modules (early childhood development and care, self-employment and microcredit) of the pilot project. Phase II is funded by DG REGIO from technical assistance. DG REGIO acknowledged that the evaluation effort was particularly large in financial terms and that this was largely because, as part of the overall EP Pilot project, it has been envisaged to formulate replicable lessons learnt and also to try to demystify ethnic data collection and monitoring.

Session III: Monitoring and Evaluation of Roma Policies – good practice

The session focused on the good practices that have been applied in the area of monitoring of Roma policies, and gave the chance to several experts from international organizations to present their views on how to operationalise the existing framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion Programme.

The first presentation was made by Mr Martin Kahanec (IZA Institute for the Study of Labor, Bonn), who had been asked to design various methods of monitoring and evaluating Roma targeted initiatives under the Decade of Roma Inclusion Programmes. The models elaborated by Mr Kahanec provide mechanism to allow the Decade countries to track and report on the results of Roma inclusion policies with a target date of in 2015. he presented and discussed three solutions to data collection mechanisms by using a set of indicators covering education, employment, health and housing.

- ethnic data collection in the regularly collected data (1st best),
- Data on segregated neighborhoods (2nd best),
- and the use of specific generic indicators (long-term unemployment, extreme poverty, lack of education, etc.) – all of which correlate to ethnicity (3d best).

The next presentation was made by Mr Joost de Laat (World Bank). His presentation was dealt with the policy implications of the study prepared by the World Bank ‘Roma Inclusion: an Economic Opportunity” (2010). During his presentation, he underlined the importance of the systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, which will support Roma inclusion. Apart from this, he also recommended that the monitoring and evaluation partnerships should be strengthened, involving international and Roma organizations.

Mr Mihai Surdu (Roma Education Fund) highlighted the outcomes from the study ‘Expected long-term budgetary benefits to Roma education in Hungary’ prepared by Gabor Kertesi and Gabor Kezdi. The main message of the study is that the rationalisation of improved public education will have direct
impact on several fields of public policy: social welfare, taxation, employment and health. Segregation and drop-out from the public education of Roma children would to exclusion and further marginalisation, including unemployment and poverty. On the other hand, increased graduation rates in secondary school or in the vocational school education will produce budgetary benefits for the governments. This explains why it is highly recommended that education be one of the priorities of governments when tackling Roma exclusion.

Session IV: Monitoring and evaluation of Operational Programmes – horizontal aspects, ethnic indicators

The evaluation of EU co-funded Operational Programmes was the main focus of the 4th session, where ex-ante and ex-post evaluations of the OPs were presented from the point of view of Roma inclusion.

The first speaker was Mr Vitt Kettner (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Czech Republic), who explained the development of Roma policies in Czech Republic. Both in the previous and in the present ESF Operational Programmes the Roma people have been a specific target group. In this regard the objectives of the evaluation of the ESF OP 2004-2006 were effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the projects and project support systems targeting Roma inclusion. The interventions (support systems) were set-up according to the various needs of the target groups. The findings of the evaluation indicated that without intervention the target group's exclusion would have deepened even further and its problems would have accumulated and worsened. He recommended that the monitoring system should be further developed (i.e. better use of indicators).

Ms. Anikó Bernát (TARKI Social Research Institute, Budapest, Hungary) spoke about the ex-ante evaluation of the Hungarian National Strategic Reference Programme (NFRP) focusing on the equal opportunity component of the programme. Ms Bernat proposed several measures to be taken into consideration concerning the NSRP:

- reinforce the effectiveness of the measures;
- introduce proper indicators and data source;
- design multidimensional approach;
- target segregated neighbourhoods;
- improve the reach of Roma communities by measures, which do no target them directly.

The evaluation of ESF programmes in the Ops for 2000-06, in 2007-13 OPs, as well as the EQUAL Programme in 15 Member States was presented by Ms. Agnieszka Sternik (DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities). She underlined that ESF interventions targeting Roma contributed to improving individual skills, qualification and motivation of Roma participants. Yet, there are still persistent disparities in employment and educational attainment between the majority population and Roma. The reports of this evaluation suggests that we need to ensure reliable monitoring of the ESF interventions targeting Roma, and better involvement of Roma organizations at all stages of the programming and implementation.

The last presentation was given by Ms. Belen Sánchez-Rubio (Fundacion Secretariado Gitano, Spain), who focused on the evaluation of the ACCEDER programme in Spain. The main objective of the programme is to facilitate the Roma population's access to mainstream training and employment in equal terms. In this regard, the evaluation component of the ACCEDER programme (Permanent Observatory) provides information on developments in the employment situation of Roma beneficiaries from 50 ACCEDER offices. The results of the comparative study 'Employment situation of Spanish Roma' indicate that activity rate is higher among Roma than among the Spanish population, however it should also be noted that when employed Roma tend to be temporarily/part-time employed predominantly.
Conclusions

Identifying the successes and the failures of Roma inclusion (and broader social inclusion) policies and projects through proper monitoring and data collection methods, will help us to better understand and design more effective policies in the future.

- A fundamental need in monitoring and evaluation methods of Roma related activities is the preparation of the data collection mechanisms.
- Ethnic data collection can be valuable tool for combating discrimination against Roma, if safeguards are provided in place to avoid misuse of data. It can help monitoring discrimination and implementation of anti-discrimination law.
- The European legal provisions allow the collection (and protection) of ethnic data.
- However, ethic data collection is particularly sensitive and complicated.

Attitudes to ethic data collection amongst the Roma vary.

- There is a difference between Central/Eastern and Western-Europe concerning the acceptance of ethnic data collection. Roma from Central/Eastern-Europe are more positive towards data collection (especially in Bulgaria and Macedonia). Roma in Western European countries are generally more skeptical towards ethnic data and its use by state institutions.
- Many Roma would lack the confidence to self-ascribe their ethnicity, fearing that this in turn would lead to further disadvantage and discrimination. Specifically these fears are
  - Linked to historical memories of the Holocaust and the fact that ethnic data was used to identify and send Roma to concentration camps;
  - That ethnic data can lead to even further discrimination of Roma, i.e. in education, the labour market, etc.;
  - Of misuse of the data by police and local authorities (ethnic profiling).
- Resulting from the (often justified) lack of trust of Roma communities in public institutions and local authorities, it is clear that there is generally an under representation of the situation of Roma communities. This makes sound policy making much more difficult.

Also, public authorities in most of the EU Member States do not fully use the opportunities to collect ethnic data.

- Many Member States believe that ethnic data collection is contrary to EU non discrimination legislation.
- Some Member States have limitations in national legislation and practices on the collection of such data. Such policies are probably also influenced by the lack of capacity and resources in many cases.
- Suspicions have also been expressed that many public authorities are reluctant to implement data collection mechanism because
  - of the fear that data will reveal uncomfortable facts;
  - that it would reflect badly on the official policies;
  - that more accurate data would put pressure on governments to improve the situation and require the allocation of financial resources.

Basic principles for the collection of ethnic data was suggested by different interventions.

- Data collection would need to be carried out sensitively involving members of Roma communities or trusted third parties in the steering and implementation process;
- The official uses of the data should be clearly established and explained;
• Full procedural and legal protection of sensitive data should be ensured in particular for ethnic data on individuals.

• We should differentiate ethnic data collection at the institutional level and for research purposes (the collection of ethnic data at the institutional level is limited because of the mistrust by Roma, and underrepresents the number of people served).

• The full benefits of monitoring would need to be explained and demonstrated in practice for any system to be workable and supported;

• Different ways of collecting ethnic relevant data should be explored
  o Collection of information on the command of languages;
  o Allowing self declaration of dual or multiple ethnic identities (i.e. in Census forms allow multiple responses).

**Ethnic data collection is necessary for monitoring and evaluation purposes, but that does not mean that social inclusion policies should be exclusively targeted on an ethnic basis.**

• The social inclusion policy towards Roma inclusion should focus on marginalization and exclusion (education, employment, health, housing, etc.). These phenomena are not primarily determined or influenced by ethnicity.

• Hostility to Roma inclusion policies in the majority populations will be influenced, partially, be any suggestion that such Rome communities are given exclusive treatment.

**Evaluations of existing and on going programmes and projects are showing us where improvement should and can be made in evaluation inclusion activities.**

• The Roma Pilot project promises to be an effective tool for testing the design, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of the Roma inclusion projects.

• All findings and policy learning from the roma Pilot project will be disseminated for Member States and for all relevant stakeholders.

• There are several monitoring mechanisms, elaborated in the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion Programme, but not fully implemented by countries. These mechanisms provide different options for launching the monitoring and evaluation of Roma-related policies.

• The ex-ante evaluation of the National Strategic Framework Programmes and/or OPs from the point of view inequalities, equal opportunities and Roma participation would help to adjust the measures, aiming to improve the effectiveness of the activities at the beginning of the implementation period.

• Evaluation of the OPs from the point of view of Roma involvement and measures for enhancing Roma inclusion would identify the bottlenecks and success factors. This information (clear Roma involvement, improved needs assessment, sustainability of Roma-related projects, etc.) are crucially important in designing the next generation of the operational programmes.