

# **Promoting social inclusion of children in a disadvantaged rural environment – the micro-region of Szécsény**

Discussion Paper

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This paper has been drafted for the discussions during the Peer Review to be held in Hungary on “Promoting social inclusion of Roma children in a disadvantaged rural environment”. In the first part we will look at the policy debate at the European Level with regards to child poverty and Roma inclusion while the second is focused on the description of the main elements of the policy to be analyzed based on the experience of the micro-region of Szécsény. Finally, the third part introduces key issues that could be debated at the Peer Review meeting.

## **PART A: The policy debate at European level (relating to child poverty and Roma inclusion)**

### **A.1 The policy framework at the European level**

#### **Child poverty**

Reducing poverty and promoting social inclusion has been a European Union (EU) policy priority since the Lisbon European Council in March 2000 with the aim to make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty and social exclusion by 2010. The EU Social Inclusion Process has made substantial progress in the framework of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) on poverty and social exclusion; common objectives and detailed implementation arrangements for the process were subsequently elaborated at the Nice European Council in December 2000 and focused on five main elements: a set of common EU objectives, two-year National Action Plans on poverty and social exclusion (NAPs/inclusion), an agreed set of common indicators, a process of regular monitoring and reporting on progress and a Community Action Programme to underpin and reinforce the process.

The issue of the poverty and social exclusion experienced by children has emerged as an increasingly important issue in the EU Social Inclusion Process since 2001. Different reasons have contributed to this such as the high percentage of children in poverty, the EU’s demographic deficit, a growing awareness regarding the need to guarantee children rights and the work done by relevant agencies such as UNICEF and EUROCHILD, among others. The conclusions of the European Council in spring 2006 asked “the Member States to take necessary measures to rapidly and significantly reduce child poverty, giving all children equal opportunities, regardless of their social background”.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Council of the European Union, Brussels European Council 23/24 March 2006, Presidency Conclusions.

At the same time, children's rights have also become more prominent at EU level. In the *EU Guidelines for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child*,<sup>2</sup> the EU stresses the importance of key international and European legal human rights instruments, norms and standards as well as political commitments relevant to the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, in particular the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Declaration of the Rights of the Child, the International Covenants on Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, as well as other instruments and standards relevant to the rights of the child (see annex I). These declarations state that children's rights are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights and that all rights recognised by the Convention on the Rights of the Child have an equal importance, although actions to ensure their realisation need to be prioritised in the light of specific national contexts. In July 2006, the European Commission stressed that "respecting and promoting the rights of all children should go hand in hand with the necessary action to address their basic needs".<sup>3</sup> This Communication was a new step in the process of linking children rights to the EU's Social Inclusion Process and to the reduction of child poverty.

According to the last available data from Eurostat,<sup>4</sup> across the EU27 and in the majority of the Member States, children were at a greater risk of poverty than the average rate for the total population (20% compared with 17%). Children most at-risk-of-poverty tended to come from two types of household in 2007: single parent households with dependent children and households with two parents and three or more children. Across the EU27, the risk of poverty among children from single parent households was almost double the average risk of poverty for all households with dependent children in 2007 (34% compared with 18%). The risk of poverty for children from large families (with three children or more) in the EU27 was also much higher than the average for all households with dependent children (25% compared with 18%). Living in a household where none of the adults work is likely to have a significant effect on a child's current and future living conditions and their poverty risk. Slightly less than one in every ten children (9.4%) in the EU27 lived in a jobless household in 2007<sup>5</sup>.

Policy interventions and the automatic stabilisers embedded in European welfare systems have limited the economic and social impact of the worst recession in decades. Nonetheless, the current crisis generates new problems and aggravates existing ones for socially disadvantaged groups. The impact on employment has been particularly severe, considering that it affects all countries and particularly those groups less qualified for the labour market. The human cost of the crisis is still difficult to fully evaluate. The impact on labour markets and on the population, notably the most vulnerable, is still unfolding. However renewed attention shall be paid to old and new forms of poverty and exclusion as well as to ageing and rapidly changing societies, opened to globalisation and population flows. Preventing and tackling poverty, child poverty in particular,

<sup>2</sup> EU Guidelines for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/16031.07.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Communication from the Commission: Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, European Commission, July 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Eurostat, Combating poverty and social exclusion: A statistical portrait of the EU 2010 edition: [http://www.eurochild.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Thematic\\_Priorities/Child\\_Poverty/EU/Eurostat%20-%20Combating%20poverty%20and%20social%20exclusion%20-%20A%20statistical%20portrait%20of%20the%20European%20Union%202010.pdf](http://www.eurochild.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Thematic_Priorities/Child_Poverty/EU/Eurostat%20-%20Combating%20poverty%20and%20social%20exclusion%20-%20A%20statistical%20portrait%20of%20the%20European%20Union%202010.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Jobless households are defined as those in which no one has worked during four weeks preceding the Labour Force Survey.

is crucial to prepare Europe for the future, avoiding a waste of the human potential of both women and men<sup>6</sup>.

The Draft Commission proposal for the EU's strategy "Europe 2020"<sup>7</sup> insists that Europe must act to fight against poverty as 80 million people were at risk of poverty before the crisis (including 19 million children). Among the five principal objectives proposed for 2020, two are related with the reduction of child poverty: "the share of early school leavers should be under 10% and at least 40% of the younger generation should have a tertiary degree: 20 million less people should be at risk of poverty". With reference to one of the seven flagship initiatives, the European Platform against Poverty asserted that "Member States will need to define and implement measures addressing the specific circumstances of groups at particular risk (such as one-parent families, elderly women, minorities, Roma, people with a disability and the homeless)".

### The inclusion of the Roma

The Roma population is one of the largest ethnic minorities in the EU (between 10 and 12 million citizens). This minority is spread throughout the European continent but is highly concentrated in Central and Eastern Europe. Some EU countries like Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary or the Slovak Republic have more than 5% Roma among their population with high birth rates. Demographic reasons but also the pressing need to achieve social cohesion justify the growing concern for Europe's Roma community. A big percentage of Roma population is highly excluded and the living standards of a high proportion of Roma remain characterised by extreme poverty, social exclusion and general rejection by the majority of the population.<sup>8</sup> The percentage of Roma population under 18 is estimated to reach 50% in some countries.

In the last two decades and especially in the last ten years, there has been an increasing involvement of international organisations in Roma-related issues, including the Council of Europe,<sup>9</sup> the OSCE (through its Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights [ODIHR]),<sup>10</sup> the World Bank<sup>11</sup> and the United Nations<sup>12</sup>. At the same time, some national administrations, in collaboration with private organisations increasingly placed Roma inclusion on their social agenda. In 2005, the World Bank and the Open Society Institute established the Decade for the

<sup>6</sup> Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Proposal for the Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Europe 2020: A European Strategy for Smart, sustainable and inclusive growth: <http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/COMPLET%20EN%20BARROSO%20%20%2007%20-%20Europe%202020%20-%20EN%20version.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> World Bank (2005) *Roma in an expanding Europe: breaking the poverty cycle*: [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTROMA/Resources/roma\\_in\\_expanding\\_europe.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTROMA/Resources/roma_in_expanding_europe.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> The Council of Europe's Committee of Experts on Roma and Travelers was established in 1995: [http://www.coe.int/T/DG3/RomaTravelers/Default\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/T/DG3/RomaTravelers/Default_en.asp).

<sup>10</sup> See the 2003 OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma within the OSCE Area: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/18149.html>

<sup>11</sup> World Bank (2005) *Roma in an expanding Europe: breaking the poverty cycle*: [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTROMA/Resources/roma\\_in\\_expanding\\_europe.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTROMA/Resources/roma_in_expanding_europe.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> UNDP (2006) *At Risk: Roma and the Displaced in Southern Europe*: [http://hdr.undp.org/es/informes/regionalreports/europacei/name\\_3460.es.html](http://hdr.undp.org/es/informes/regionalreports/europacei/name_3460.es.html)

Roma Inclusion, involving initially ten countries with the aim of increasing the Roma inclusion by developing comprehensive policies focused on education, employment, housing and health.<sup>13</sup> The recent EU enlargements, which have been accompanied by migratory processes, have stimulated public and private initiatives designed to facilitate the integration of the Roma community and to reduce social inequalities experienced by Roma persons. In addition to various resolutions by the European Parliament, the Council has included it in its agenda, the Commission has taken not only a number of measures but new political instruments and institutional mechanisms have also been developed, including:

- The Integrated Platform for Roma Inclusion adopted by the Council in 2008: an open mechanism of cooperation between Member States, civil society actors and European institutions with the purpose of supporting initiatives, mutual learning and better understanding of Roma issues.
- The “10 Common Basic Principles for Roma Inclusion” established within the framework of the Platform with the intention to guide public policies and projects for Roma. (see annex II).

The Roma population continues to face a number of problems, including poor health and inadequate access to healthcare, housing and educational segregation, and marginalisation from the labour market. It is disproportionately affected by discrimination and stereotypes. In many countries this situation has been worsening significantly in the past two decades.

Educational levels, affected by housing segregation, among other factors, are also profoundly deficient and determine Roma’s limited access to the labour market. According to recent comparative study of 7 EU Member States, 43.6% of surveyed Roma had not completed primary education, while only 23.7% had completed secondary studies and an insignificant minority had a university degree<sup>14</sup>.

Segregated education and special-needs schools documented in several central and Eastern European states by the Roma Education Fund and the UNDP have perpetuated the educational inequities affecting the Roma. In Central and Eastern European states, according to respondents of a UNDP survey carried out in 2004, approx. 14% of the children attend classes comprised mostly of Roma, in so-called ‘Gypsy schools’ or ‘special schools for the mentally disabled’<sup>15</sup>. However, desegregation efforts such as the Czech government’s abolishment of special education schools targeting Roma and the Hungarian government’s substantial investments in integrated schooling, supported by the European Union institutions and the Roma Education Fund<sup>16</sup>, are beginning to show results, despite the practical difficulties of overcoming *de facto* spatial segregation.

<sup>13</sup> Twelve countries belong today to the Decade: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Spain.

<sup>14</sup> FSG (2009), p.21.

<sup>15</sup> 2.5% percent in Bulgaria, 4.7% percent in Romania, 12% in the Czech Republic, 16% in Hungary, 19% in Slovakia, and 27% in the Czech Republic. UNDP (2004: 92).

<sup>16</sup> Roma Education Fund (2007) *Advancing Education of Roma in the Czech Republic: Country Assessment and the Roma Education Fund’s Strategic Directions* (Budapest: REF), p.10; Roma Education Fund (2007) *Advancing Education of Roma in Hungary: Country Assessment and the Roma Education Fund’s Strategic Directions* (Budapest: REF), p.10.

Although there is still no available information, it is likely that the economic downturn is contributing towards an acceleration of already deteriorating living conditions for many Roma. It must be remembered that many Roma with previously low income and very low educational levels will probably be affected more the impact of the crisis. Problems related to health, quality of life or housing conditions (overcrowding, forced evictions, etc.) have also worsened. Furthermore, faced with scarce resources, the climate of tension grows and tends to cause a feeling of rejection, particularly for Roma. According to the latest Eurobarometer results, the feeling of rejection that people perceive has substantially increased<sup>17</sup>.

Working towards the promotion of the Roma population requires the systematic integration of a gender perspective by all actors, which takes into account the fact that problems are more acute among Roma women<sup>18</sup>, which suffer a double discrimination: firstly for being women, and secondly for being Roma. As women, they are affected by the discrimination and the difficulties for work insertion and promotion, just as most other women in the EU. However, they also face a series of disadvantages as they belong to an ethnic minority disregarded by the majority society and because their feminine identity continues to be constructed within a patriarchal society. In order to address this multiple discrimination, any policy aimed at reducing inequalities should focus particularly on the specific conditions and needs of Roma women, as emphasised in principle 5 of the Ten Common Basic Principles for Roma Inclusion<sup>19</sup>.

## A.2 Related policy debate at European level

The Commission report on “Eradicating child poverty: from analysis to targeted policies and implementation”<sup>20</sup>, highlights the importance of a holistic approach to the material security and wellbeing of children, based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCHRC) child rights-centred perspective, so that families, and especially large families, can benefit from sufficient income levels to give their children adequate housing and an adequate diet, as well as access to high quality health, social and education services, with a view to secure their harmonious development in both physical and personality terms, and recognises that children's fundamental needs should take priority over Member States' financial considerations.

Many of its recommendation insist on the need of a comprehensive approach, by addressing not only legal measures, but also policies and specific action in the areas where families are living so as to break the vicious circle of poverty, vulnerability, discrimination and social exclusion. It also points out the need to address multiple deprivation and to endorse an EU joint effort to stop child trafficking and prostitution, child drug addiction, violence against children and juvenile delinquency; it also stresses the need to consider child poverty and social exclusion in a broader context of EU policy making, including issues such as immigration, disability, discrimination,

<sup>17</sup> European Commission (2009) *Discrimination in the EU in 2009. Special Eurobarometer 317*. November.

<sup>18</sup> *European Parliament resolution on the situation of Roma women in the European Union* (2005/2164(INI). P6\_TA(2006)0244. (1 June 2006). Available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&language=EN&reference=P6-TA-2006-0244>. Accessed 15 September 2009.

<sup>19</sup> *10 Common Basic Principles* annexed to Council Conclusions 8 June 2009. Available at: [http://www.euromanet.eu/upload/21/69/EU\\_Council\\_conclusions\\_on\\_Roma\\_inclusion\\_-\\_June\\_2009.pdf](http://www.euromanet.eu/upload/21/69/EU_Council_conclusions_on_Roma_inclusion_-_June_2009.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Report on promoting social inclusion and combating poverty, including child poverty in the EU (2008/2034(INI)) <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+REPORT+A6-2008-0364+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN&language=EN>

protection of children from all forms of maltreatment and abuse, child and adult carers, equality between men and women, family support, active social inclusion, early-years care and education, life-long learning and the reconciliation of working life, non-working life and family life.

In 2006, the European Council invited Member States “to take necessary measures to rapidly and significantly reduce child poverty, giving all children equal opportunities, regardless of their social background” by tackling and preventing child poverty and social exclusion of children,<sup>21</sup> insisting that child poverty and social exclusion may also have a damaging effect on the future life opportunities of children and on their future capacity to contribute to tomorrow's society. In line with these conclusions in their strategic reports for 2006-2008, Member States responded with commitments to breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty and exclusion. Almost all identified the need to develop an integrated and long-term approach to preventing and addressing poverty and social exclusion among children as a priority.

Some European lobbies such as Eurochild have insisted on the need of EU leadership to eradicate child poverty.<sup>22</sup> To make this possible, it is essential to have both EU and national targets. Eurochild has urged the European Commission to propose an overall EU target for the eradication of poverty, including a specific target related to child poverty, in line with the European Parliament recommendation to reduce child poverty by 50% by 2012. At the same time, it insists that Member States should set their own targets to trigger progress at the national level and respond to the reality of each country and the specific needs of most vulnerable groups. This will be possible if parallel progress is made on the monitoring process by a broader set of EU-wide indicators and by strengthening the OMC also at the local level. On the other hand, a better horizontal and vertical coordination of policies affecting children should also be stressed to render more effective the legal framework, especially the UNCHRC. It also highlights the need to empower children participation and to pay special attention to the most excluded groups of children.

Tackling child poverty and breaking the inter-generational transmission of poverty and exclusion is an urgent matter, as reported by UNICEF<sup>23</sup>. Exclusion affects children directly and indirectly even prior to their birth because their community, family and mother suffer exclusion. Children require special attention to ensure adequate nutrition and stimulation during the first, and most sensitive, years of their life. Prohibitive costs, lack of support for parents, registration inefficiencies, physical inaccessibility of services, lack of outreach services and discrimination mean that poor, especially Roma children are in many cases left out. Short, medium and long-term targets should be set so as to ensure that excluded children get the best possible health, nutrition, care and stimulation, seeking immediate results.

As a result of increasing political attention, there is today more know-how and consensus among stakeholders that it is essential to tackle child poverty to promote their well-being and prevent their exclusion as adults in the future. But this is a long-term investment that requires to:

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<sup>21</sup> Joint report on social protection and social inclusion 2008. Social inclusion, pensions, healthcare and long-term care. European Commission.

<sup>22</sup> Ending Child poverty within the EU? A review of the 2008 – 2010 National Strategy reports on social protection and social inclusion  
[http://www.eurochild.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/files/NAP\\_2008\\_-\\_2010/Ending\\_child\\_poverty.pdf](http://www.eurochild.org/fileadmin/user_upload/files/NAP_2008_-_2010/Ending_child_poverty.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> UNICEF 2007 Breaking the cycle of exclusion: Roma children in South East Europe  
[http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/070305-Subregional\\_Study\\_Roma\\_Children.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/070305-Subregional_Study_Roma_Children.pdf)

- Follow a broad approach in accordance with the UNCHRC's perspective of the rights and integral well-being of the child, and which positions the elimination of child poverty and social exclusion as a priority in all concerned government departments. Political leadership must ensure that the multi-dimensional nature of child poverty and social exclusion is coordinated across all policy domains which affect children's lives.
- Engage all relevant actors at the European, national, regional and local levels, both public and private, including NGOs, and children and parents in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes. It is also important to promote children's ability to make their voices heard and to encourage their social participation.
- Effective prevention and protection is only possible through effective and universal policies for all children, complemented when needed by targeted policies to address problems where they already exist and focus in particular on children in very vulnerable situations. Increasing families' income and developing adequate systems of income support for children, access to essential services (e.g. health, housing, education, child care, effective social services), especially with regards to the protection of children and the support of families in vulnerable situations, but also guaranteeing equal opportunities to participate in sport, recreation, social and cultural life are priorities.
- The strategic approach must be based on good information, proper analysis of the problem, quantitative objectives for reducing child poverty and social exclusion, good quality and timely data and analysis, etc.
- Policies must be primarily delivered in an effective manner at the local level by providing sufficient resources and support. This must be undertaken in a coordinated and integrated way that is responsive to individual needs and situations and that ensures early intervention and support to children and families; tailored responses must be developed so that they mobilise and involve all relevant actors, especially children themselves without forgetting to adopt a community development approach which stresses empowerment and independence.

Education systems in Central and South Eastern Europe have often failed Roma minorities, resulting in the widespread poverty and exclusion experienced by most Roma today. Rather than creating opportunities, public services and education have played a major role in excluding these children and in perpetuating inequality and discrimination. Roma children start their educational careers with already significant disadvantages, which increase as they get older, resulting in the enormous differences that exist between Roma and non-Roma in educational achievement throughout the region. Educational systems fail to acknowledge the values and culture of Roma and to educate children on the basis of intercultural understanding and respect. Instead, Roma children face prejudice and discrimination when they enter school and many are forced to learn in segregated environments that provide low quality education. As a result, the participation of Roma in most primary education is extremely low and few are able to acquire the skills and qualifications necessary to participate effectively in society and in the labour market.

The environment of Roma children is one of marginalization, poverty and exclusion. Poor housing and poor infrastructure are exacerbated by residential segregation. Residents of slums suffer legal insecurity and often lack property rights and cannot register their home at a permanent



address. Because of this situation, many are unable to access basic services: they are in fact “invisible”, living on the margins of societies that do not care about them. This limits their possibilities to actively participate in mainstream social, economic and political life and leaves them vulnerable to exploitation, unemployment, poverty and abuse. This disadvantage increases over the years.

Conscious of the very specific situation faced by the Roma across the Union, the Council invited the Member States and the Union to use all the means to improve their inclusion and invited the Commission to examine all the existing policies and instruments<sup>24</sup>. The challenge today for the EU is to gain effectiveness on the existing instruments and tools when addressing Roma issues, concretely:

- Mainstreaming Roma issues into European and national policies by mobilising existing EU strategies, policies and instruments for targeted action in favour of the socio-economic inclusion of Roma, especially within the framework of the Europe 2020 Strategy. Mainstreaming should be undertaken in the fields of fundamental rights and the fight against discrimination, poverty and social exclusion, public security, regional cohesion and economic development, and in those fields that are key to the active inclusion of Roma, such as ensuring access to education, housing, health, employment, social services, justice, sports and culture, and also in the EU's relations with third countries.
- Ensuring that EU financial instruments have a real impact on the Roma needs and that Structural Funds are particularly accessible to the Roma. The recent amendment of Article 7(2) of Regulation 1080/2006/EC on the European Regional Development Fund<sup>25</sup> extends the eligibility for financial support for housing interventions in favour of marginalised communities and reinforces the role of the Structural Funds in housing policies by tackling cases of severe socio-economic exclusion and marginalization through an integrated approach.
- Developing the work of the Integrated Platform for Roma inclusion by identifying clear targets, a working plan and engaging all the relevant actors in its work. In this framework, it is important to develop a set of guidelines that would describe in a practical manner what the meaning and implications of the ten common basic principles are.

The Second European Roma Summit, which took place in Cordoba on 8 and 9 April 2010, demonstrated the determination of all stakeholders to promote policies in favour of Roma inclusion, building on the outcomes of the first and second meetings of the Integrated Platform, and progressing on the Ten Common Basic Principles, by developing guidance to facilitate their practical implementation. It was stressed by the participants that acting with Roma requires a multidimensional approach including a Fundamental Rights perspective, a socioeconomic perspective and a cultural diversity approach.

The Commission Staff Working Document "Roma in Europe: The Implementation of European Union Instruments and Policies for Roma Inclusion – Progress Report 2008-2010"<sup>26</sup>, confirmed

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<sup>24</sup> Presidency Conclusions of the European Council. 14 December 2007:

[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/97669.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/97669.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> Docs. 6536/10, 12281/09.

<sup>26</sup> Doc. 8439/10 ADD 1.



the positive developments taking place at the European level as well as the progress that is being made in the Member States. The Commission's Communication on "The Social and economic integration of the Roma in Europe"<sup>27</sup>, has identified the challenges ahead, highlighting the importance of improving cooperation between European, national and international players and representatives of the Roma community; of translating commitments and cooperation into positive changes at the local level; of communicating the benefits of Roma inclusion for local and national economic and social development more effectively; of promoting the integrated use of EU funds; of developing explicit desegregation policies; of the need to focus on the most disadvantaged micro-regions; and of mainstreaming Roma inclusion issues into broad policy areas (see annex III).

### A.3 European and international comparative aspects

There are 19 million children living under the poverty threshold in the EU-27<sup>28</sup>. In one third of the countries (MT, IE, BG, IT, ES, EE, LV, PL), the intensity of poverty is 3 to 6 percentage points higher for children than for the overall population and the poverty gap ranges from 20% to more than 30%. In contrast, the intensity of child poverty is lower than for the overall population in FI, AT, FR, CY, SI, SE, DE, and the UK. It is therefore in the countries with the highest child poverty rates that the intensity of poverty is most severe.

Half of poor children live either in a single-parent household or in a large family; in the EU, 21% of children live in large families (with 3 children or more) and face an average risk of poverty of 25%. The shares of children living in large families are lowest in Southern countries (15% or less in EL, ES, IT, PT) and in CZ, the Baltic States and SI (14 to 18%) where on the other hand they face the highest risks of poverty (30% or more except in CZ, EE and SI). By contrast, the number of children in large families is highest in the Nordic countries (26% to 33%) and in IE and Benelux (31% to 33%) where they face the lowest risks of poverty (9 to 15% in the Nordic Countries).

The countries with the lowest child poverty rates are those that spend most on social benefits (excluding pensions), with the notable exception of the Republic of Cyprus and – to a lesser extent – Slovenia. In the EU-25, social transfers alleviate the risk of poverty for children to varying degree. On average the EU social transfers, other than pensions, reduce the risk of poverty for children by 44%, which is more than for the overall population (38%). The impact of social transfers is higher on child poverty than on overall poverty in most EU countries, except in PL, SK, BE, NL and CZ, where it is slightly smaller. In DK, FI and SE, social transfers (other than pensions) reduce the risk-of-poverty for children by more than 60% against 44% on average in the EU. Only FR and AT approach this level. In BG, EL and ES, this reduction is less than 20% (also for the overall population).

Benefits specifically targeting children have the strongest impact on child poverty. Countries where social transfers have the greatest impact on child poverty are also those where family benefits reduce child poverty the most. In HU, AT, SI, FI and SE family benefits reduce the risk of poverty among children by 36% or more (up to 49% in AT), and by 26% to 32% in CZ, DE, EE, FR, HU, and LU. In these countries, the differences in final child poverty outcomes are partly due to the very different levels of pre-transfers risk-of poverty.

<sup>27</sup> Doc. 8439/10.

<sup>28</sup> [Eurostat -Combating poverty and social exclusion - A statistical portrait of the European Union 2010](#)

According to Eurostat, child poverty outcomes result from complex interactions between these main factors; the countries achieving the best outcomes are those that perform well on all fronts, notably by combining strategies facilitating access to employment with enabling services (childcare, etc.) and income support. We can classify EU countries into four groups:

- Group A comprises the three Nordic countries (DK, FI, and SE) as well as AT, CY, NL, and SI. These countries achieve relatively good child poverty outcomes by performing well on all three fronts. They combine a relatively good labour market performance among parents (low levels of joblessness and of in-work poverty among households with children) with relatively effective social transfers.
- Group B comprises BE, CZ, DE, EE, FR and IE which achieve relatively good to below average poverty outcomes. The main matter of concern in these countries is the high number of children living in jobless households. Policies aimed at enhancing access to quality jobs for those parents furthest away from the labour market may contribute to reducing child poverty in these countries.
- Group C comprises HU, MT, SK, and the UK which have average or just below average child poverty outcomes, despite a combination of high levels of joblessness and in-work poverty among parents either thanks to relatively efficient transfers or because parents are still able to rely on strong family structures.
- Group D comprises EL, ES, IT, LT, LU, LV, PL, and PT. These countries have average (EL, LU) or relatively high levels of child poverty. While they have low shares of children living in jobless households, they are characterised by very high levels of in-work poverty among families. These countries may need to adopt comprehensive strategies to provide better support for family income and to facilitate access to quality jobs.

Universal benefits seems to be a prerequisite but it is not enough and needs to be complemented with targeted benefits to support the most vulnerable families (low-income, lone parents, large families, families with disabled children, etc.). In addition, it is necessary to enhance the supply and quality of childcare by a greater variety of childcare solutions. In Hungary, the National Strategy "Making things better for children" and the Government Action Plan 2007-2010 support the creation of integrated institutions (nursery and kindergarten groups in the same institution) in small villages where nurseries are not affordable and kindergartens are not viable due to the decline in the number of children.

The importance of early intervention for supporting the development of the child is very strongly emphasised by the Member States, in particular the role of pre-schooling. In addition, special attention is being given to children in deprived areas and to children from disadvantaged families. A number of Member States are increasing the national budget devoted to pre-school education (IE, UK, IT) in order to increase the supply of education services in deprived areas. The assessment of Member States' policies seems to indicate that more efforts are needed in order to address the risk of social exclusion faced by children suffering from multiple disadvantages, such as Roma children, children with disabilities, children without parental care or at risk of losing it, and children of migrant background who tend to be particularly marginalised.

#### A.4 Lessons from previous Peer Reviews

In the Greek Peer Review on the “Integrated Programme for the Social Inclusion of Roma”<sup>29</sup>, education had been regarded as crucial for the social inclusion of future generations. Early intervention and early education were widely regarded as a way of preventing the transmission of Roma impoverishment from generation to generation. Support for pupils in encouraging school enrolment and preventing dropouts is important and several positive practices exist in Germany, Finland and Spain. There is also evidence that a comprehensive support system — comprising teachers, mediators, Roma school assistants and social auxiliaries — could improve Roma school attendance. One of the main educational issues is the problem of ensuring integrated education rather than separate schools or classes.

The UK Peer Review on “The City Strategy for Tackling Unemployment and Child Poverty”<sup>30</sup> stressed the importance of decentralisation of delivery of social and employment services. The development of partnerships and synergies at local level, the activation of local stakeholders, the empowerment of local institutions and the development of integrated local employment strategies have proved particularly useful to this end. But transferring responsibilities from central to local level implies financial means. Building partnership at local level is not easy and needs to be based on how local partners “can achieve more together than separately”. Involving stakeholders from different levels, encouraging cooperation among local partners and involving the hard-to-help directly in projects may be useful although this must be both at political and practical level, by making more effective existing resources, reporting an using evaluation and monitoring mechanisms.

In Spain, the Peer Review on the “Municipal Programme of Shanty Towns Eradication”<sup>31</sup> identified some policy approaches and working methods that favour the impact of policies and programmes when addressing to Roma:

- Institutional framework: the collaboration between different administrations was seen as essential, including civil society and Roma representatives.
  - Broad-based participation and socio-political consensus: encouraging participation and dialogue with the different stakeholders.
  - Clear leadership: proper coordination and responsibility sharing; the absence of a clear leader has rendered projects unviable.
  - Permanent solutions leading to normalisation: permanent solutions must be sought rather than transitory measures which simply shift the problem or postpone its solution, often making it worse.
  - Global action schemes and integrated services including target projects in the framework of global policies at local and national level.

<sup>29</sup> Peer Review in social protection and social inclusion, 2009 Greece. Synthesis report <http://www.peer-review-social-inclusion.eu/peer-reviews/2009/integrated-programme-for-the-social-inclusion-of-roma>

<sup>30</sup> Peer Review in social protection and social exclusion, 2009 UK. Synthesis report <http://www.peer-review-social-inclusion.eu/peer-reviews/2009/city-strategy-for-tackling-unemployment-and-child-poverty>

<sup>31</sup> Peer Review in social protection and social exclusion, 2006 Spain. Synthesis report <http://www.peer-review-social-inclusion.eu/peer-reviews/2006/social-integration-of-roma-people-municipal-programme-of-shanty-towns-eradication-in-aviles>

- Commitment and long-term approach recognising that significant change will only be perceived over the long-term.
- Client-based services and pathway approach recognising that not all Roma share the same needs nor do they all require the same responses.
- Monitoring, evaluating and establishing control mechanisms so as to provide accurate and up-to-date information and demonstrate short-term progress.
- Participation, involvement and commitment of the beneficiaries: making them protagonists of the activities.
- Positive expectations and ongoing checks: avoiding the scepticism and the negative expectations about Roma and their willingness to change.

#### **A.5 Contribution of the good practice to the European policy debate, its potential transferability and learning value**

##### **The good practice in the framework of the European policy debate**

According to EU and international official documents,<sup>32</sup> a good policy for fighting child poverty requires a holistic approach covering the material security and wellbeing of children; this implies the provision of sufficient income levels to the families, especially to large families, as well as an access to adequate housing and an adequate diet or access to high quality health, social and education services, with a view to their harmonious development in both physical and personality terms (UNCHRC's perspective). The comprehensive approach of the Pilot Project in the micro-region of Szécsény gives a lot of information, know-how and added value when addressing specific actions in the rural areas and tackling stream child poverty, including people belonging to excluded ethnic minorities as it is the case of the Roma.

The strengths of the project are related, on the one hand, to a bottom-up approach; on the other, to the adaptation of the programme not only to the circumstances of the micro-region but also to the particular realities of each settlement; and finally to the delivering of policies at local level, the active involvement of the stakeholders, the partnership building as well as the active engagement of the partners concerned. This project builds on previous Peer Review Learning (Greek Peer Review 2009), which insisted on the importance of early intervention and early education as the best way to break the transmission of poverty from generation to generation and on progress on comprehensive support systems for improving Roma school attendance and the compensation of child disadvantages as early as possible as a key to success.

The project also provide good information and learning on the decentralisation of the delivery of social services as well as on the development of partnerships and synergies at local level, the activation of local stakeholders, the empowerment of local institutions and the development of integrated local strategies by tackling specific needs (UK Peer Review 2009), and how to transfer responsibilities from central to local level.

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<sup>32</sup> Communication from the Commission: Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, European Commission, July 2006.

<sup>32</sup> Eurostat, Combating poverty and social exclusion: A statistical portrait of the EU 2010.

The pilot project also fed the debate on some of the conclusions and learning from the Spanish Peer Review (Aviles 2006) that have proved particularly useful to this end; among others, it drew attention on how to create an institutional framework by collaboration between different concerned bodies, the broad-based participation and socio-political consensus and the involvement and commitment of the beneficiaries by making themselves protagonists of the activities. It is important to remark the leading role that the Child Programme Office of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences had since the beginning, providing not only a good diagnostic and proper monitoring system but also the link between the local action and the National Strategy, taking into account that the strategic approach was based in this case on good information and proper analysis of the problem.

Given that the pilot project was developed in a rural area where there is a high concentration of Roma people, in many cases living segregated, it can also provide good input to the debate related to some of the policy principles developed in the framework of the European Roma Platform. Among other important learning, it is worth drawing the attention to the work carried out in practice on explicit but not exclusive targeting (principle two), the intercultural approach (principle three) or the active involvement of local authorities and to some extent the civil society (principles eight and nine).

Despite of all this added value, due to the short life of the project and the local circumstances, we cannot get contributions from the project to the European debate in other substantial areas such as breaking the vicious circle of poverty, vulnerability, discrimination and social exclusion or the importance of improving the income levels by providing social benefices, or the measures related to the employment, housing policies closely related to the quality of live or desegregation in the school by providing integrated education. We are aware of the difficult circumstances in these areas and that this type of structural policies requires not only transferring policies at local level but also providing sufficient resources and support.

### **Transferability and learning values for other Member States**

When looking at the Hungarian case not only from the pilot project's point of view developed in the micro-region of Szécsény, but also from the prospective of the 'Making Things Better for our Children' National Strategy, we can find many elements of learning in terms of policy and working methods that could be transferable to other Member States.

From the pilot project, we can find five areas where there is existing experience and know-how that could be useful for other similar experiences:

- The adaptation from the National Strategy at the local level: this project was promoted as a pilot experience in the framework of a wide long-term National Strategy (at 25 years).
- The territorial approach, not only identifying a micro-region with similar characteristics but also adapting activities with a bottom-up approach to the different circumstances and needs of each one of the settlements.
- The way the project tackled special needs and identified the key problems to be solved through permanent and in progress measures.

- The system of governance and the role that different public and private bodies are having in the process.
- The way of working with the Roma minority, with high percentage of beneficiaries (in fact the most excluded) and special needs.

Taking the National Strategy, we can also find in this National Policy important issues that could add value for other Member States:

- The three objectives (especially the third one) that have been identified: first to reduce the poverty rate of children and their families, second to eliminate the extreme forms of child exclusion, and third to reform the operational method and approach of institutions and services.
- The comprehensive approach by identifying five working areas stabilised as a priority (parent's work, education of children, social benefices and care services, better held and housing improvement) together with transversal priorities as minorities, social services system etc.
- The planning process of the National Strategy including some elements as: the involvement of the Research Centre (Hungarian Academy of Sciences), the long term approach (25 years, generational approach) and the progressive implementation (first a pilot in Szécsény micro-region and later an adaptation to ten new regions).
- The use made by the financial instruments and in concrete the ESF Social Renewals Operational Programme.

### **Measuring results and impact**

Although the Pilot Project is very precise in the planning process and accountable on the services provided, activities, number of beneficiaries, frequency of the services, staff working on each service, etc, from the available information, it is not possible to provide data on the results of the project, according to the action lines and the horizontal criteria. It would be very useful for peer countries as well as for the European policies to know how the project identifies not only result indicators, but what is more important impact indicators according to the objectives of the National Strategy.

## **PART B: Description of the main elements of the policy**

### **B.1 Background: The fight against child poverty in Hungary**

In Hungary, the key social factors leading to poverty are the low activity rate and educational attainment, the lack of vocational qualifications, poor living conditions, living in a depressed region, poor health and belonging to the Roma population<sup>33</sup>. At the same time, the family and the school are crucial in the reproduction of social exclusion. Since the middle of the nineties, poverty

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<sup>33</sup> Host Country Report.



has increased in certain neighbourhoods of the cities and even more in the villages. In fact 60% of poor children live in villages or small settlements. This situation has been aggravated due to a lack of comprehensive anti-segregation policy in the past. In some areas such as Szécsény, Roma segregation in schools and housing is a reality in the majority of the settlements. Prejudices and stereotypes aggravate these circumstances.

The National Programme for Combating Child Poverty was commissioned by mandate of the Government in March 2006 (the document was drafted by the Child Programme Office – ‘GYEP’ – of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, which started its operation as an *ad hoc* research group at the end of 2005). This document focussed in three axes: the reduction of child poverty and the prevention of its reproduction; a long-term programme (for 25 years, from 2007 to 2032) covering at least a generation; and a detailed description of the actions to be taken in the first three years. Based on this document the Government proposed the National Strategy for 2007-2032 ‘Making Things Better for our Children’ which was adopted by the Parliament<sup>34</sup> on 2007.

This strategy includes three objectives: reduce the poverty rate of children and their families to a significant degree, while approximating children’s chances for continuing studies and their life prospects; eliminate the extreme forms of child exclusion, segregation and deep poverty; and reform the operational method and approach of institutions and services, which currently contribute to the reproduction of poverty and social exclusion. Furthermore the Strategy includes horizontal priorities having direct impact on deep poverty and the reduction of poverty with the enforcement of rights and increased democratic participation. Some of them refer to the improvement of the situation of the Roma minority by eliminating their segregation and social exclusion, revealing development opportunities in disadvantaged settlements and regions; improving the enabling work of the public service system (school, healthcare, cash benefits, community spaces, etc.); strengthening the rights and legal approaches; improving cooperation among stakeholders, increasing the participation, and improving information.

A National Strategy Evaluation Committee, integrated by experts of nine non-governmental organisations was established by the Government with the aim of (i) monitoring and evaluating social processes relating to the objectives and priorities of the Strategy; (ii) providing their opinions on current issues concerning the situation of children and ensuring the extensive dissemination of information on the implementation of the Strategy towards the society; and (iii) taking an active part in the implementation of the Strategy by formulating opinions and recommendations.

The National Strategy has been recently strengthened by the Social Renewal Operational Programme 2007-2013 (ESF).<sup>35</sup> Thanks to these funds 10 more micro-regions are starting the pilot project in 2009 and 2010. The objectives of this programme are aligned with the National Strategy, including targets such as decreasing the segregation of severely disadvantaged and Roma pupils by promoting their equal opportunities in public education or supporting the education of groups with different educational needs, and the integration of pupils with special educational needs or intercultural education or developing the human capacities of the most disadvantaged territories.

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<sup>34</sup> Resolution no. 41/2007 (V. 31.), 31st May 2007.

<sup>35</sup> Social Renewal Operational Programme 2007-2013, CCI number: 2007hu05upo001, Commission decision no c(2007)4306, 13 September 2007, [www.nfu.hu/download/2737/tamop\\_adopted\\_en.pdf](http://www.nfu.hu/download/2737/tamop_adopted_en.pdf)

The Hungarian National Strategy Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion comprises several measures to fight against child poverty<sup>36</sup> covering four areas:

- *Employment*: reiterating that the most efficient way to fight against child poverty is to improve the income position of families and for that purpose to promote the employment of parents.
- *Development of child welfare and child protection services*: insisting that daytime care for children under 3 years of age (day nursery, family day care centre, home childcare service) are of crucial importance not only for mothers with small children in their returning to work, but also in the early development of children and the impact on their future school career.
- *Equal opportunities in education*: creating opportunities and compensating the family disadvantages of vulnerable children and young people will be of crucial importance in the educational system in the following period.
- *Health protection, support of spare-time programmes*: the self-reinforcing process of the accumulation of disadvantages is entwined with health impairments since early childhood.

The European experience supported by data from Eurostat shows that the countries achieving the best outcomes on combating child poverty are those that perform well on all fronts, notably by combining strategies facilitating access to employment with enabling services (child care, etc.) and income support; several recommendations insist on the need of a comprehensive approach, by addressing not only legal measures, but also policies and specific action in the areas where families are living for breaking the vicious circle of poverty, vulnerability, discrimination and social exclusion. Looking at the Hungarian National Strategy and according to the UNCHRC, we could say that it is suggested to follow a broad approach perspective of the rights and engage all relevant actors concerned and planning to deliver primary at the local level.

Effective prevention and protection against child poverty is only possible through effective and universal policies for all children, complemented, when needed, by targeted policies to address problems where they already exist and especially with the focus on children in very vulnerable situations. The Hungarian experience is particularly interesting with regards to specific situations of vulnerable groups such as the Roma. Despite the increase of allocated resources, to what extent it is improving universal policies or if there are sufficient resources are a question that still remains.

## **B.2 The goals, objectives and target groups of the pilot programme in the micro-region of Szécsény**

The Szécsény micro-region is located in the deprived north-eastern part of the country and is characterised by high unemployment, a high percentage of Roma population settlements and social disadvantages. The micro-region consists of 13 settlements (one town and 12 small

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<sup>36</sup> National Strategy Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion, 2008-2010. Hungary. <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catid=757&langid=en>

villages), all of them independent local governments. At the end of 2005, a total number of 20,446 people lived in the thirteen settlements, including 4,288 children below the age of 18. The ratio of the Roma population is currently increasing. At present, about 13% of elementary school students are Roma, with a total number of approximately 700 children. In ten out of the 13 settlements of the micro-region, the proportion of Roma students in schools, exceeds 50%. The individual settlements segregation appears in different depths: ranging from full segregation to integrated schools applying the open-approach method.

The project emphasises the comprehensive approach covering the different dimension and perspectives, and developing activities not only with the children but also with their facilities. The programme has taken a substantial increase of human and economic resources in the region for developing different projects, and is supposed to be an experimental model in order to obtain lessons for scaling up the experience in other regions of the country. The active involvement of the Academy of Sciences in the projects facilitates its action/research approach. The project is financed by the Child Programme Office as well as other small grants from the Government and the Norwegian Fund.

The project not only intended to allocate more resources to children's needs, but also to experiment new working methods and approaches, by changing the traditional perceptions as well as strengthening the role of the public administration and private bodies based in the region. The active involvement and interaction with the leaders, experts and increasingly citizens of the micro-region is one of the main characteristics. Starting from common principles and action axes established in the National Strategy, the interventions have been adapted to the reality of the micro-region.

When designing the pilot programme it was taken into account that – while operating within the broad framework of the National Programme – each community had to set its own local priorities. Joint targets included in the strategy had to be designed in cooperation with members of the community. The different local projects agreed that for making the existing institutions more accessible and workable all residents needed to receive the information about those services they required.

The Programme included actions in different fields and areas:

- Fields of action:
  - Early development of skills (setting up Sure Start children houses);
  - Youth development;
  - Development of public education;
  - Improvement of the nutrition and health care for children;
  - Development of the information society;
  - Improvement and modernisation of social and children's services;
  - Improvement of housing conditions;
  - Employment opportunities for parents.
  
- Areas of action:
  - Early skills development (Sure Start Children Houses) which have been appointed as centres for employment.
  - Integration in public education and development of public education.
  - Youth development assistance to early school-leavers based on individual plans, youth clubs and youth programmes.

- Social and community work strengthening of individual and community social work in settlements.
- Encouraging the employment of parents' better day care of children, the preparation of job-creating projects, feasibility studies and business plans mostly relying on the cooperative.
- Improving housing conditions preparation of preparatory actions.
- Social economy sub-programme: improvement of the social cooperative for the purpose of developing new forms of sustainability and creating jobs.

After two years working, this experience was transferred to other 10 micro-regions in 2009-2010. The new projects are supported by the ESF "Social Renewal Operational Programme".

The pilot project in the micro-region of Szécsény had a comprehensive approach and intended to cover the priority development areas established in the National Strategy. Nevertheless, it seemed to focus on two of them: development of education of children and better health and to some extent on care services. Despite the activities related to parents' work, labour market counselling and the initiatives related to cooperatives were intensified; although the later seems to be still in an initial phase (120 job seekers with one staff assigned to this project). The difficulties for finding jobs and the investments required to seriously tackle this need in the region are high. With regards to housing conditions improvement, some initial preparatory activities have been carried out, but the lack of funds hinders the approval of systematic plans for the improvement of sub-standard, comfortless houses and the rehabilitation of the deteriorated parts of settlements.

The horizontal priorities of the National Plan were fully taken into account in the programme and Roma children, reducing settlement disadvantages, cooperation among sectors and institutions, participation of citizen, and access to information were set as its priorities. In this sense the project has demonstrated to be very positive, enhancing the supply and quality of childcare, giving a greater variety of childcare solutions, adapted not only to the micro-region but to the circumstances of the different settlements and their inhabitants.

Regarding the provision of services for children and their families, the Programme is having important results on child poverty, in line to the results demonstrated by Eurostat in other countries. Despite of that, the weakness of the project is related to the other two fronts, notably access to the employment and income support.

## PART C: Key issues for debate at the Peer Review meeting

The experience of the Pilot Project in the micro-region of Szécsény and the Hungarian National Programme to Combat Child Poverty provides substantial information for debate. We suggest key issues that could be addressed, with the understanding that the discussions will have to focus on a selection of these over the two working days:

1. The relation between National Plans, Strategies or Policies designed to combat child poverty and the grass-root projects developed at the local level.  
Several issues appear in the previous analysis:
  - a. How to adapt national legislation to local circumstances and to make them more flexible.
  - b. Sinergies and feedback between the national and the local levels.
  - c. Leadership in the policy process at the local level.
  - d. Policy conditions for scaling up projects at the local level or replicating them in other areas.
  - e. The territorial approach: criteria for adequate categorisations and divisions: 'micro-region' or 'region'?
  - f. Coherence between national plans with broader approach and local plans limited in terms of resources.
  
2. The pilot project shows that it is difficult to have a comprehensive approach when operating in adverse circumstances, especially if there are structural problems related to housing conditions, lack of employment for parents or poor incomes. In those circumstances some questions can be addressed:
  - a. What kind of intermediary result can be achieved when there are no conditions for structural change?
  - b. Is it possible to break the intergenerational exclusion of children under those circumstances?
  - c. What should be the priority objectives in those situations?
  
3. One of the priorities in the Hungarian plan, when dealing with child poverty and minority issues, was to promote a cultural change within public authorities. Taking this into account, we suggest a few questions for discussion:
  - a. To what extent can the organisational culture of institutions and public services contribute to the reproduction of poverty and social exclusion?
  - b. What changes are needed?
  - c. What kind of training may be needed by civil servants and other providers of services to better understand the particularities of ethnic minorities?
  - d. What kind of mediation services are needed to make more accessible child services to excluded groups?
  - e. To what extent are specific services suitable for the Roma minority and under what circumstances?

4. The pilot project has up to now been financed by the Norwegian Fund and the Hungarian government. There is a risk of lack of sustainability in the future. In this sense some issues could be discussed:
  - a. The coherence between global plans (long-term, comprehensive approach and ambitious objectives) and financial tools (short-term, lack of continuity).
  - b. The difficulty of planning over the long-term when there is a lack of continuity in terms of financial resources.
  - c. The added value of multifunds projects and the constraints of following different criteria (in terms of eligible actions, timing and rules for each financial source).
  
5. How to measure result and impact indicators. Investments in health have to be measured by progress indicators as well as by impact indicators. One of the common criticisms directed at many project is that they report on quantitative indicators but do not measure impact results. Some key issues can be discussed in this context:
  - a. The role of the Academy of Sciences and Research Centres in identifying indicators and collecting accurate information, etc.
  - b. The role of the monitoring committees.
  - c. The differentiation between result indicators and impact indicators.
  - d. What kind of indicators can demonstrate that the vicious circle of exclusion has been broken?
  
6. The European Council endorsed in 2009 the Ten Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion. Some questions could be debated in relation to the ways for these principles to be translated into practice under difficult circumstances, and especially in the context of Roma segregation:
  - a. What does desegregation mean in a village where almost every child in school is Roma?
  - b. What can we learn from the project on how the principle explicit but not exclusive targeting is implemented?
  - c. How is the intercultural approach developed in circumstances where most of the beneficiaries are Roma themselves?
  - d. What is the added value of the Sure Start Houses providing early development services for disadvantaged small children (0-5 years of age) and their parents?
  
7. The principle number ten refers to the *Active Participation of the Roma*. The active involvement of the Roma is of vital importance at every stage of the process; it has been said many times that it is not a question of addressing projects to the Roma but to develop projects and programmes with the Roma by supporting their full participation. Several questions could be addressed in relation to Roma participation and involvement, for example:
  - a. How can Roma participation in the decision making-process be facilitated when Roma are not organised by themselves?
  - b. How can Roma civil society be stimulated when there are no Roma organisations, as is the case of the micro-region of Szécsény?
  - c. What is the added value of the Roma staff (Roma workers) in the projects and which profiles are most suitable for such involvement (Roma mediators, women)?
  - d. To what extent projects providing specific services are able to support the full participation of the Roma in civil life, their active citizenship and the development of their human resources?



## ANNEX I: European Human Rights Instruments

- European Charter of Fundamental Rights (in particular Art. 24, referring to the rights of the child).
- Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, 1950.
- European Social Charter, 1961.
- European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights, 1996.
- European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 1987.
- Treaty on the European Union (Article 11), 1992.
- European Consensus on Development:  
*Part I – EU (esp. paras 5, 7);*  
*Part II – EC (esp. paras 97, 101, 103).*

### Community instruments and other measures:

- July 2006: Adoption of the EU Commission Communication “Towards an EU strategy on the rights of the child” as part of a wider, long-term EU “Pact for the Child” to promote children’s rights within the Union and in its external action.
- June 2007: Establishment of the “European Forum for the Rights of the Child”.
- Upcoming Commission’s Action Plan for Children’s Rights in the European Union’s External Action.
- 2007: Commission Communication – *Towards a European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid.*

## **ANNEX II: The Ten Common Basic Principles on Roma inclusion**

(as discussed at the 1st meeting of the integrated European Platform for Roma Inclusion, April 2009)

Roma people are disproportionately affected by social exclusion, prejudice and discrimination. Roma communities have been part of European societies for centuries, often marginalised and sometimes persecuted. Over the last two decades, it is apparent that the socio-economic situation of many Roma people has stagnated or even deteriorated in a number of EU Member States. Many Roma people experience unemployment, low income, reduced life expectancy and poor quality of life. This represents a human tragedy for the individuals concerned as well as an immense loss for society as a whole. Moreover, far-reaching exclusion entails social instability and represents a problem in economic terms.

Therefore, the issue of addressing the problems which affect Roma people is increasingly recognised as being extremely urgent in both ethical and practical terms. The European Union recognises there is a need for more active and effective policies concerning Roma inclusion. The practical delivery of these policies rests above all with the Member States and, in particular, with regions and municipalities. Although the numbers and socio-economic conditions of the Roma in individual Member States vary greatly, there are several common denominators. Moreover, experience from several Member States shows that there are general policy approaches which have proved to be useful and can thus be recommended to others.

### **Principle 1: Constructive, pragmatic and non-discriminatory policies**

Policies aiming at the inclusion of Roma people respect and realise the core values of the European Union, which include human rights and dignity, non-discrimination and equality of opportunity as well as economic development. Roma inclusion policies are integrated with mainstream policies, particularly in the fields of education, employment, social affairs, housing, health and security. The aim of these policies is to provide the Roma with effective access to equal opportunities in Member State societies.

### **Principle 2: Explicit but not exclusive targeting**

Explicit but not exclusive targeting of the Roma is essential for inclusion policy initiatives. It implies focusing on Roma people as a target group but not to the exclusion of other people who share similar socio-economic circumstances. This approach does not separate Roma-focused interventions from broader policy initiatives. In addition, where relevant, consideration must be given to the likely impact of broader policies and decisions on the social inclusion of Roma people.

### **Principle 3: Inter-cultural approach**

There is a need for an inter-cultural approach which involves Roma people together with people from different ethnic backgrounds. Essential for effective communication and policy, inter-cultural learning and skills deserve to be promoted alongside combating prejudices and stereotypes.

### **Principle 4: Aiming for the mainstream**

All inclusion policies aim to insert the Roma in the mainstream of society (mainstream educational institutions, mainstream jobs, and mainstream housing). Where partially or entirely segregated education or housing still exist, Roma inclusion policies must aim to overcome this legacy. The development of artificial and separate "Roma" labour markets is to be avoided.

### **Principle 5: Awareness of the gender dimension**

Roma inclusion policy initiatives need to take account of the needs and circumstances of Roma women. They address issues such as multiple discrimination and problems of access to health care and child support, but also domestic violence and exploitation.

### **Principle 6: Transfer of evidence-based policies**

It is essential that Member States learn from their own experiences of developing Roma inclusion initiatives and share their experiences with other Member States. It is recognised that the development, implementation and monitoring of Roma inclusion policies requires a good base of regularly collected socio-economic data. Where relevant, the examples and experiences of social inclusion policies concerning other vulnerable groups, both from inside and from outside the EU, are also taken into account.

### **Principle 7: Use of Community instruments**

In the development and implementation of their policies aiming at Roma inclusion, it is crucial that the Member States make full use of Community instruments, including legal instruments (Race Equality Directive, Framework Decision on Racism and Xenophobia), financial instruments (European Social Fund, European Regional Development Fund, European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, Instrument for Pre-Accession) and coordination instruments (Open Methods of Coordination). Member States must ensure that use of financial instruments accords with these Common Basic Principles, and make use of the expertise within the European Commission, in respect of the evaluation of policies and projects. Peer review and the transfer of good practices are also facilitated on the expert level by EURoma (European Network on Social Inclusion and Roma under the Structural Funds).

**Principle 8: Involvement of regional and local authorities**

Member States need to design, develop, implement and evaluate Roma inclusion policy initiatives in close cooperation with regional and local authorities. These authorities play a key role in the practical implementation of policies.

**Principle 9: Involvement of civil society**

Member States also need to design, develop, implement and evaluate Roma inclusion policy initiatives in close cooperation with civil society actors such as non-governmental organisations, social partners and academics/researchers. The involvement of civil society is recognised as vital both for the mobilisation of expertise and the dissemination of knowledge required to develop public debate and accountability throughout the policy process.

**Principle 10: Active participation of the Roma**

The effectiveness of policies is enhanced with the involvement of Roma people at every stage of the process. Roma involvement must take place at both national and European levels through the input of expertise from Roma experts and civil servants, as well as by consultation with a range of Roma stakeholders in the design, implementation and evaluation of policy initiatives. It is of vital importance that inclusion policies are based on openness and transparency and tackle difficult or taboo subjects in an appropriate and effective manner. Support for the full participation of Roma people in public life, stimulation of their active citizenship and development of their human resources are also essential.

## **ANNEX III: Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions**

### **The social and economic integration of the Roma (Brussels April 2010)**

#### **Context**

The EU and its Member States have a special responsibility towards the Roma, who live in all Member States, candidate countries and potential candidates. The Charter of Fundamental Rights sets out the values on which the EU is based. These values need to be translated into practice in order to improve the situation of the Roma people, who form the largest ethnic minority in the EU. Roma inclusion is in line too with the Inclusive Growth priority of the EU 2020 strategy and especially its Flagship Initiative of a European Platform against Poverty. The full integration of Roma will have important economic benefits for our societies, especially for those countries with a shrinking population which cannot afford to exclude a large part of their potential labour force. Yet a significant part of the 10-12 million Roma in Europe live in extreme marginalisation in both rural and urban areas and in very poor socio-economic conditions. The discrimination, social exclusion and segregation which Roma face are mutually reinforcing. They face limited access to high quality education, difficulties in integration into the labour market, correspondingly low income levels, and poor health which in turn results in higher mortality rates and lower life expectancy compared with non-Roma. Roma exclusion entails not only significant human suffering but also significant direct costs for public budgets as well as indirect costs through losses in productivity.

The complexity and interdependence of the problems calls for sustainable responses which tackle all aspects of Roma deprivation through an integrated approach. Low educational attainment, labour market barriers, segregation in housing and other areas, and poor health outcomes need to be addressed simultaneously. Since December 2007, in a series of Council conclusions, the EU has endorsed the Commission's assessment that there is a powerful EU framework of legislative, financial and policy coordination tools already available to support Roma inclusion, but that more can be done to make them work more effectively.<sup>37</sup> The Council affirmed that it is a joint responsibility of the Member States and the European Union to address the challenge of Roma inclusion, within the scope of their respective and complementary competences, and has firmly embedded Roma inclusion into EU policy making.<sup>38</sup> The current Trio Presidency has identified the social and economic integration of the Roma as one of their priorities.<sup>39</sup>

Measures to overcome Roma exclusion need to be set within the wider framework of European equality, inclusion, and growth policies and to optimise the use of the legal and financial instruments available also to mainstream society. The overall objective is an inclusive society, not

<sup>37</sup> Pursuant to the Communication 'Non-discrimination and equal opportunities: A renewed commitment', COM(2008)420.

<sup>38</sup> European Councils: Council documents 16616/1/07 and 11018/1/08 REV1; General Affairs Council: Council document 15976/1/08 REV 1, Employment, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Affairs Council: Council documents 9721/2/09 REV2 and 10394/09.

<sup>39</sup> Council document 16771/09.

a new form of ethnic segregation: any progress which can be achieved in the area of Roma inclusion represents progress too in the inclusion of all ethnic minorities in the EU and vice-versa. The aim of this Communication, ahead of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Roma Summit, is to indicate how the European Union will develop its contribution to the full social and economic integration of the Roma, on the basis of the progress achieved.

### Progress Achieved

Since 2008 progress has been made in the Member States and at EU level, as the accompanying report demonstrates<sup>40</sup>. The focus shifted in the EU in 2009 from an analysis of the problems to an exploration of how existing instruments could be made more effective and how the situation of the Roma could be addressed more explicitly across a broad range of policies, including employment, social inclusion, health, education, housing, youth and culture. The enforcement and further development of EU legislation in the areas of non-discrimination, freedom of movement, data protection and anti-racism has continued. The Commission also monitored the transposition of the relevant *acquis* in candidate countries and potential candidates. This was complemented by including a specific Roma perspective in the work of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, the network of specialised Equality Bodies (EQUINET), training for legal practitioners and the European Commission's 'For Diversity — Against Discrimination' information campaign.

The European Platform for Roma inclusion — composed of key players in Roma inclusion from EU institutions, international organisations, Member States governments and civil society — was launched in April 2009 to exchange good practice and experience and to stimulate cooperation among its participants. Its objective is to increase the coherence and effectiveness of the parallel policy processes at national, European and international level with a view to creating synergies. The Common Basic Principles for Roma inclusion, drawn up under the Platform process and distilled from the experiences of successful Roma inclusion initiatives, provides a practical framework for public policy makers at all levels on how to design and implement successful initiatives.<sup>41</sup> For example, the second of the ten Principles was used to justify the Commission proposal in 2009 to modify the European Regional Development Fund Regulation. The aim is to benefit extremely marginalised communities – explicitly but not exclusively addressing Roma communities – in the 27 EU Member States by co-funding interventions, together with the European Social Fund, in new and renovated housing in urban and rural areas, as part of an integrated approach that includes education, employment, social care, and healthcare actions. Most Member States report a stronger focus on internal coordination and on involving the Roma communities. Some Member States have begun to use the opportunities of complex programming and combined cohesion policy instruments. Member States report that they want to mainstream Roma issues and to use mutual learning and of peer reviews to explore how to improve their initiatives on desegregation and on access to education, employment and basic social services. A forum for such exchanges is the European Network on Social Inclusion and Roma under the Structural Funds (EURoma), which aims at exchanging information and experience, sharing strategies and approaches and generating knowledge.

<sup>40</sup> SEC(2010) 400.

<sup>41</sup> Council Document 10394/09, annex.



The forthcoming report of a study for the Commission in 2009 and 2010 on ‘Activities to improve the impact of policies, programmes and projects aimed at the social inclusion and non-discrimination of Roma people in the EU’ will identify success factors and good practice. Many of these actions have been supported by the EU Structural Funds, and in particular the ESF<sup>42</sup>. In line with the conclusions of the December 2008 General Affairs Council and the March 2009 Resolution of the European Parliament, the Commission increased its efforts to harness the full potential of these instruments. In particular, the Commission has engaged bilaterally with Member States’ governments to support them in making greater use of the EU Structural Funds to support Roma inclusion. Moreover, the effectiveness of the ESF has been enhanced by stepping up the monitoring and evaluation of Roma projects and disseminating throughout Europe those measures which were found to be particularly effective. The European Commission is also implementing a pilot project on Roma inclusion (€ 5 million 2010-2012), initiated by the European Parliament, addressing early childhood education, self-employment through micro-credit, and public awareness particularly in countries with high Roma populations. The pilot project will also explore methods for data collection and counterfactual evaluation to assess the impact of the interventions in these three fields.

### Challenges Ahead

The earlier analysis of the EU instruments and policies<sup>43</sup> and the progress report 2008-2010<sup>44</sup> confirm that these instruments and policies are generally apt to support Roma inclusion, even on a large scale. The issue is how to ensure their potential is realised. Several European and international players are currently pursuing parallel policy processes aimed at including Roma. Among them are the EU policies relevant for Roma inclusion, the OSCE Action Plan on the participation of Roma and Sinti in public and political life (adopted in 2003 and signed by 55 States),<sup>45</sup> the Council of Europe’s Recommendations and Resolutions of the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly,<sup>46</sup> and the national action plans adopted and implemented by the 12 countries participating in the Decade for Roma Inclusion 2005-2015.<sup>47</sup> The outcomes of these activities vary, depending on their legal bases, the instruments, the resources and the stakeholder involvement. Moreover, they are only loosely coordinated through the Informal Contact Group of International Organisations on Roma, Sinti and Travellers.<sup>48</sup> The challenges ahead include:

<sup>42</sup> European Social Fund (ESF) and European Fund for Regional Development (ERDF).

<sup>43</sup> SEC(2008)2172.

<sup>44</sup> SEC(2010)400.

<sup>45</sup> OSCE Decision no. 3/30, Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area (MC.DEC/3/03).

<sup>46</sup> In particular: Recommendations of the Committee of Ministers 2006/10 (access to health care); 2005/4 (housing conditions); 2004/14 (movement and encampment of Travellers); 2001/17 (economic and employment situation); 2000/4 (education of Roma/Gypsy children); 1983/1 (stateless nomads and nomads of undetermined nationality); 1975/13 (social situation of nomads).

<sup>47</sup> [http://www.romadecade.org/decade\\_action\\_plans](http://www.romadecade.org/decade_action_plans).

<sup>48</sup> The Informal Contact Group (ICG) is co-organised by the Presidency of the Council and the Council of Europe. It comprises representatives of the EU institutions, international organisations and multilateral initiatives (UN organisations, World Bank, OSCE, Decade for Roma inclusion 2005-2015), Member States (represented by the former, current and future Presidency), as well as civil society. The ICG is a forum for mutual information about ongoing activities within the remit of the participating organisations.

- Improved cooperation between European, national and international players and representatives of the Roma communities, building on the commitment to Roma inclusion that has materialised in the last 5-10 years;
- A translation of this commitment and cooperation into positive changes at the local level. This needs to be complemented by improved ownership and a strengthened capacity on the part of local administrations, civil society and the Roma themselves to initiate and implement projects, programmes and policies;
- More effective communication of the benefits of Roma inclusion for local and national economic and social development.<sup>49</sup> The social and economic integration of Roma is a 2-way process which requires a change of mindsets of the majority as well as of members of the Roma communities and their leaders;
- The promotion of the integrated use of EU Funds in order to tackle the multi-dimensional challenges of Roma exclusion;
- The development of explicit desegregation policies, notably in education and in housing and supported by the Structural Funds;
- Achieving a special focus on the most disadvantaged micro-regions;
- Mainstreaming Roma inclusion issues into the broad policy areas of education, employment, public health, infrastructure and urban planning, and economic and territorial development, rather than treating it as a separate policy. Good practices and successful models from projects need to be better disseminated and to become an integral part of policy.

Accordingly, the Commission, Member States and other key players need to concentrate their efforts on meeting these challenges by enhancing the effectiveness of policies in terms of both content and process.

## **Policy Measures for Effective Roma Inclusion**

### *Financial instruments*

The EU Structural Funds and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) as well as the Instrument for pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) represent nearly half of the annual budget of the European Union and are important levers for change. Information on the implementation of these instruments shows that, generally speaking, there is no lack of available funds to underpin promising policies and programmes. There are, however, a number of obstacles which prevent some Member States from using them for actions targeted at Roma inclusion which comprise shortcomings in planning and programming as well as administrative burden. As successful examples now demonstrate, integrated Roma strategies which address the complexity of the problems that underly the marginalisation of Roma communities are much more effective than isolated projects which address only one or two issues. Obstacles also include

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<sup>49</sup> The Commission uses the key message 'Roma in Europe: Support inclusion for everyone's benefit' for specific print and audiovisual materials.

reticence at the local level and a lack of political awareness and capacity among local administrations, as well as among Roma communities. These difficulties can be tackled by incentives or by the provision of appropriate support and expertise, including through technical assistance under the EU Structural Funds. The Commission welcomes NGO initiatives in support of capacity building (e.g. the OSI initiative "Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma"). Moreover, Roma empowerment and in particular participation in the decision-making process by Roma women, who act as a link between the family and society, have proved to be an important factor for the success of any measure.

To support Member States to implement policies with a visible impact on the ground, in 2009 the Commission began a series of High Level bilateral events in the Member States to bring together political decision makers and the highest level of administrations and stakeholders at both European and national levels along with representatives of Roma communities. These events prepare the ground for agreeing targets for a greater use of EU Funds for Roma inclusion by setting specific and established milestones. The Commission has encouraged larger-scale integrated programming which combines actions under several Operational Programmes in support of interventions which take an inter-sectoral approach to tackling the problems of Roma communities. It welcomes initiatives by Member States to make desegregation measures a condition of access to Structural Funding and considers this is fully in line with the requirement to avoid any discrimination in the implementation of the Funds.<sup>50</sup> The Commission also encourages Member States to involve the Roma community in planning the use of the Funds through the practical implementation of the partnership principle, so as to involve Roma at every stage of the process from programme design to evaluation, as well as to support capacity building within Roma civil society and within local administrations. It welcomes too efforts to simplify application procedures and the more systematic provision of pre-financing to successful applicants.

#### *An integrated approach alongside mainstreaming*

Although the living conditions of many Roma communities are characterised by multiple, mutually reinforcing problems, measures to address these problems are too often disconnected from general policies on education, employment, public health or urban rehabilitation. There is still a tendency to focus on single-strand solutions, such as the promotion of Roma employment or the refurbishment of Roma settlements, implemented through short-term projects and programmes which are not sustainable. As underlined by the European Economic and Social Committee in 2008,<sup>51</sup> the mainstreaming of Roma issues into all relevant European and national policies is the most promising way to achieve inclusion. The joint work on health inequalities under the Social Protection and Social Inclusion strategy and the EU Health Strategy is a specific example of such an approach.<sup>52</sup> In 2009, the Commission put specific focus on Roma in the context of the Lisbon Strategy. National performance levels and policy responses concerning the inclusion of Roma in the labour market were analysed on the basis of National Reform Programmes in the Member States and fed into the Joint Employment Report 2008/2009. Mainstreaming does not invalidate the promotion of integrated and tailor-made approaches that take the specific situation of Roma communities in the Member States into consideration.

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<sup>50</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 notably Article 16.

<sup>51</sup> Exploratory Opinion, The Integration of Ethnic Minorities/Roma, SOC(263), EESC 1207/2008, paragraph 5.3.

<sup>52</sup> Communication 'Solidarity in Health: Reducing Health Inequalities in the EU', COM(2009)567.

The increasing exchanges of experience among national administrations about successful Roma-targeted programmes can be developed through the participation of Member States in the European Network on Social Inclusion and Roma under the Structural Funds (EURoma). An academic network on Roma studies, supported by the Commission and the Council of Europe, will improve the evidence base for Roma initiatives and create a stronger bridge with policy.

The structured cooperation of Member States in the existing Open Methods of Coordination is of utmost importance in the central areas of education, employment and social inclusion to mainstream Roma issues into national policies. As the facilitator of the exchange of experience and good practices, the Commission can influence this process.

#### **Making policy measures more effective**

*The Commission will:*

- continue organising high-level bilateral events in the Member States and to follow up subsequent developments. It will take stock of the results of these visits by the end of 2013;
- urge Member States to take action to ensure that interventions financed by Structural Funds promote equal opportunities and tackle segregation;
- encourage Member States to use the EURoma network to exchange best practices;
- support a network on Roma studies to better link research and policy;
- encourage Member States to develop appropriate tools and methods for evaluation as a prerequisite for designing evidence based policies for Roma inclusion, on the basis of lessons learned inter alia through the evaluation of the Pilot Project on Roma Inclusion;
- reinforce coordination between the ERDF, ESF and the EAFRD<sup>53</sup>, in particular at the regional and local level, when using the funds, for the purpose of promoting and facilitating an integrated approach in housing (in line with the provisions of the modified Art 7 (2) of the ERDF Regulation) or in other fields;
- provide information and technical support to Member States on the efficient use of the Structural Funds and of the Rural Development Fund in tackling socioeconomic exclusion of the Roma;
- take account of the results of the evaluation of the EU Structural Funds interventions for Roma, of the Pilot Project on Roma inclusion, and of the study on successful projects, programmes and policies for Roma inclusion when developing the next generation of European Union Structural Funds and programmes;
- address the inclusion of Roma when developing and implementing the 'European Platform against Poverty' Flagship Initiative, proposed by the Commission as part of the EU 2020 Strategy;

<sup>53</sup> Art. 9 of the General Regulation of the EU Structural Funds.

- invite Member States to address Roma issues when reporting on the implementation of national policies in all fields which are relevant for Roma inclusion (such as education, employment, social protection and social inclusion, and health) in the framework of the Open Method of Coordination and of the EU2020 Strategy. The Commission will integrate a specific employment-related focus on Roma into the Mutual Learning Programme 2010-2011;
- review its policy and programmes concerning Roma, in the context of enlargement, with a view to further developing and improving the relevant financial assistance under IPA.

### *Policy coherence*

Real change can only be based on effective policy implementation. Effective policies need coherent planning. Coherent planning needs the involvement of all relevant stakeholders, political support and the allocation of the necessary resources from the respective decision-making levels. These considerations and an analysis of the challenges ahead prove the need for stronger and more effective coordination and a concentration of forces. The European Platform for Roma inclusion offers a forum for cooperation in this area and the Common Basic Principles for Roma Inclusion, elaborated under the Platform, provide a common framework. The Principles emphasise that programmes and policies which target Roma must not exclude members of other groups who share similar socio-economic circumstances.<sup>54</sup> The Principles also stress that programmes and policies must aim for the mainstream in order to avoid the separation of Roma-focused interventions from broader policy initiatives.<sup>55</sup> Finally, the Principles put a strong focus on the creation of ownership, embracing local authorities, NGOs and Roma communities. The mainstreaming of Roma issues into all relevant national and European policies as well as the mobilisation of mainstream instruments for Roma inclusion require robust efforts and the necessary resources for monitoring the implementation and for designing future policies and instruments. Civil society organisations, notably Roma organisations, need to be involved in this process at all stages and at all levels.

#### **Making processes more effective**

*The Commission will:*

- support successive Council Presidencies in making the Platform more effective. The Commission will provide support to each Presidency in the organisation of a Platform meeting;
- support Presidencies with the organisation of future Roma summits;
- apply the Common Basic Principles for Roma Inclusion when designing, implementing and evaluating policies which are relevant to Roma inclusion;
- explore the most effective ways to ensure in its internal procedures that the mainstreaming of Roma issues in all relevant policies is guaranteed;
- enable the Roma themselves to influence policy processes, including through co-financing the operations of a European level network active in representing the Roma.

<sup>54</sup> Council Document 10394/09, annex: in particular Common Basic Principle no. 2.

<sup>55</sup> Council Document 10394/09, annex: in particular Common Basic Principle no. 4.

### *Developing model approaches*

There is a large and growing body of experience in the EU of which policy interventions work and which do not. However this knowledge is not yet easily accessible or digestible for public policy makers. Moreover it is not available in a form which is readily adapted to different situations. Roma communities in the EU27 as well as in candidate countries and potential candidates are not homogeneous groups. This heterogeneity means that there cannot be a single strategy: rather there is a need for differentiated approaches that take account of geographical, economic, social, cultural and legal contexts.

While each context is unique, four major types can be identified:

- Roma communities living in disadvantaged, highly concentrated (sub)urban districts, possibly close to other ethnic minorities and disadvantaged members of the majority;
- Roma communities living in disadvantaged parts of small cities/villages in rural regions and in segregated rural settlements isolated from majority cities/villages;
- mobile Roma communities with citizenship of the country or of another EU country;
- mobile and sedentary Roma communities who are third-country nationals, refugees, stateless persons or asylum seekers.

In many Member States several or even all of these types are present (although the number of mobile communities is generally relatively small compared to sedentary communities). Across the different Roma communities, women and children are exposed to particularly high risks. Core socio-economic issues, such as access to the labour market and to self employment, and to non-segregated quality education, housing and health services, are vital to ensure inclusion for all Roma (as for all other people). Other issues, however, such as the lack of documents proving land ownership or the lack of ID documents, are more relevant for some types of community than for others. Public policy interventions have to take into account, too, the features of the urban or rural environments in which the communities are living as well as the legal status of their members. For example, improvements with regard to the enrolment of Roma children in mainstream (early childhood education and care) schools might require in one case providing extra resources to individual schools, in others changing the admission procedures, the boundaries of school districts, the provision of public transport, the issuing of ID documents for the parents or the involvement of intercultural mediators.

The Commission therefore intends to assist policy makers by developing a set of model approaches. Building on best practice, each model would address the needs of the major types of Roma community, including their particularly vulnerable subgroups, and suggest the most appropriate targeted public-policy interventions. Each model would identify the key players and legal and financial instruments needed to implement a local, regional or national integration agenda and outline possible initiatives in order to improve Roma access to education, employment, health and housing. This would be completed by a list of initiatives to combat discrimination, to apply gender mainstreaming and to provide protection for particularly vulnerable subgroups. Guidance would be given on how to monitor implementation and how to communicate progress to the different categories of stakeholders. The application of these model approaches would not be mandatory but Member States would be encouraged to take one or more of them

into account when structuring their Roma inclusion policies. The Commission would discuss with Member States how the implementation and the monitoring of these model approaches could be integrated into the existing Open Methods of Coordination and the implementation of the European Platform against Poverty and could be supported by the EU financial instruments. The Commission will develop these model approaches with the help of internal and external expertise and of relevant fora, notably the European Platform for Roma Inclusion.

## Conclusion

The European Union needs to build on the strong mobilisation in the EU institutions, Member States and international organisations and within civil society in support of the better social and economic integration of Roma. Greater cooperation between national, European and international players can increase the effectiveness of the range of available instruments in achieving the inclusion of Roma communities. The European Platform for Roma inclusion and the Common Basic Principles provide a solid foundation for strengthening this cooperation. In line with these Principles, Roma issues should be systematically mainstreamed into all relevant European and national policies. Policies which maintain or promote the segregation of Roma communities or the provision of segregated housing, education or other services for Roma should be ended. This does not however preclude the provision of targeted or positive action measures as permitted in the relevant EU legislation. The specific task for the Commission in the mid-term (2010-2012) is to build on the experience gained from evaluating the impact of national and European instruments and policies. In addition to the commitments set out above, it will do this in particular by, firstly, developing a set of model approaches for the social and economic integration of Roma, and, secondly, ensuring that the preparation of measures to implement the EU 2020 Strategy as well as of programmes in the new financing period provide specific solutions to the problems of the different types of Roma communities.