Peer Review
in Social Protection
and Social Inclusion
2009

Integrated Programme for the Social Inclusion of Roma

Greece, 27-28 May 2009

Synthesis Report

On behalf of the
European Commission
Employment, Social Affairs
and Equal Opportunities

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Will Guy
University of Bristol

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Summary

Held in Athens (Greece) on 27-28 May 2009, the Peer Review was hosted by the Greek Ministry of Employment and Social Protection and the Ministry of the Interior. Also taking part were the Greek Ministries of Justice, of Health and Social Solidarity, of National Education and Religious Affairs, and of Public Works. In addition to the host country, five peer countries were represented: Finland, France, Germany, Hungary and Spain. Greek Roma representatives and the European Roma Information Office also took part as well representatives of The Council of Europe and the Open Society Institute. Taking part for the European Commission were representatives of DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities and of the DG for Regional Policy.

The 2009 Greek Peer Review was a response to the European Council's call for better use of structural funds and further exchange of good practice and experience between Member States to promote fuller social inclusion of their vulnerable Roma populations, particularly in view of 2010 as the European Year for combating poverty and social exclusion. The main focus on housing acknowledged that homelessness and housing exclusion is a prioritised thematic area in 2009. The Peer Review also represented a more flexible use of this mechanism, as recommended by the Social Protection Committee, in examining practices that have not worked as expected. It took place in the context of the first Roma Summit and the inaugural Roma 'platform' meeting, both organised by the European Commission as means of further improving cooperation.

The heterogeneous Roma population living in Greece today consists of extremely long established communities and more recent migrants. However both the previous and proposed new Action Plans apply only to indigenous citizens. Peer Review participants were given the opportunity to visit socio-medical centres as well as a settlement on the outskirts of Athens where they were able to see living conditions and talk to residents about their problems. This visit provided a good illustration of the social gulf between integrated and more marginalised Roma, and the wide range of

dwellings to be found in settlements, commonly located on the periphery of Greek towns and cities.

Recognition of the unacceptable environments in which many Roma live and the associated problems had prompted the 2001-2006 Integrated Action Plan to improve their social inclusion but evaluation had revealed serious shortcomings. These flaws were in organisation, implementation and ensuring continuity in funding, especially in obtaining Structural Funds. Consequently it was hoped that the Peer Review would provide suggestions for improving the design of the proposed new long-term programme, envisaged as fitting within the framework of the fourth Community Structural Funds planning period and beyond. Particular experience was sought of policy design in the key areas of housing and infrastructure, education, employment, health and cultural issues, as well as sensitising of public opinion and Roma participation. Equally important were institutional structures, managerial mechanisms and funding. Although peer countries varied greatly, one thing they had in common was the social exclusion suffered by their Roma populations and despite many differences, participants had valuable advice for their hosts.

In view of declining nomadism among Greek Roma, the experience of Finland and Spain was instructive, where economic and other pressures had led former nomads to abandon even the desire to continue living in this way, unlike that of France, Belgium and the UK and Ireland, where a travelling way of life is still upheld as an ideal. In all Review partners, a major concern was the provision of adequate accommodation. Finland, Spain and Germany had made most progress in housing Roma among the general population — most dramatically in Finland where Roma had welcomed the 1976 law requiring municipalities to house them. Hungary and Greece both aim at integrated housing but realisation has been far slower, while French municipalities are required to provide stopping places and campsites for travellers.

In all peer countries Roma have lower levels of school attendance and educational performance than average but 100% of Spanish Roma children now attend primary school and 70% kindergarten. Hungary, too, has unproblematic primary school attendance but legal measures against educational segregation have not prevented an actual increase. Spain,

Finland and Germany all have integrated schools and, as elsewhere, have provided needs-based educational support. Initiatives such as record cards and mobile classrooms have proved effective in Greece and France for children who travel.

Employment has proved the most intractable problem area due to the decline of former occupations of Roma and their lack of qualifications for alternative work. Improved access to the labour market for Roma has been most marked in Spain through the *ACCEDER* programme. Less has been achieved in Finland and Germany, while in Hungary the main tool has been public work programmes which usually do not provide training or lead to jobs. Most problems have been experienced with travellers in Greece and France. The health status of most Roma is poor, due to poverty, inadequate diets and insanitary living conditions, but health and social welfare initiatives for Roma have been very limited throughout the EU. Access to public services is a frequent problem, although general and targeted interventions such as vaccination campaigns, screening and socio-medical centres and mobile units in Greece have brought improvements.

Most peer countries favour an integrated approach, given coherence by a national plan. The exception is Germany where the Constitution prevents the federal state imposing duties on regions but the highly devolved Spanish state had pioneered a nationwide policy. There, a well developed administrative structure had been established to coordinate and implement this plan and other countries had done likewise, apart from Germany and to a lesser degree France and Finland. Even within a national plan, actual projects were often proposed and implemented at local level. Consultation with Roma was practised in all peer countries — through advisory boards and committees or state-funded NGOs — but the extent varied. While mainstreamed provision is seen as the goal by all countries, it was agreed that targeted programmes were required as transitory measures. Funding provision usually consists of a mixture of state and local financing and in some cases EU funding, supplemented by charitable donations. In Germany, Finland and France most requirements were covered through mainstream provision but Spain offered the best example of a continuous, dedicated budget, plus effective use of structural funds, to finance its long-term Roma programme.

Wide-ranging discussions opened with agreement that Roma inclusion would be an extended process requiring long-term plans but also urgent action. A comparison of the Greek situation to that in Spain twenty years earlier, demonstrated that progress could be made. Applying the principle of integrated housing also meant taking Roma wishes into consideration and providing social support. This was illustrated by successful schemes in Germany and Finland. The issue of mortgage loans provoked disagreement whether loans had mainly benefited the better-off and if clientelism had been involved. Greek Roma were voluntarily abandoning nomadism for economic reasons. The same was true of French travellers who were often now semi-nomadic. From 2012 they would have a legal right to have housing needs met — a shift favoured for all EU citizens.

Poor school attendance and high drop-out rates in Greece were attributed to seasonal work, inaccessibility and low motivation but similar problems in Spain had been countered by paying compensatory allowances to Roma parents and by encouraging pre-school education, with the additional benefit that mothers could get jobs. In many states kindergartens are seen as vital for Roma education and the EU plans that 95% of all children will attend them by 2020. As with housing, integration is a key issue and while successful in Finland, Germany and Spain, is meeting resistance in Hungary in spite of recent legislative changes. Support from mediators and teaching assistants help promote integration and positive examples were cited. The need for adult education was emphasised, while France and Greece had adopted measures for travelling children. Responding to queries about Roma culture in the curriculum, Greek Roma participants insisted that this should not be taught as a separate topic but as an integral part of Greek history.

There was general agreement on adopting an integrated approach and case histories reinforced the point that, on its own, the provision of decent housing was insufficient. The demand for reliable data and indicators was received widespread support. It was suggested that Greece might join the Decade of Roma Inclusion where making Roma settlements part of the urban plan was seen as way to integrate complementary projects. Most participants also agreed that there should be a clearly defined administrative structure to ensure coordination and urged furthermore that committed municipal

involvement was essential, including local level sensitisation campaigns and support groups. Binding local-level pacts were advocated, as was full participation of Roma. In all Peer Counties, especially Spain, Roma and non-Roma NGOs assume a prominent role.

It was noted that the previous Greek Plan had lacked a continuous budget. However this had been a crucial factor underpinning steady progress in Spain, along with political consensus. Also important was municipal funding as a demonstration of local authority commitment. Doubts were expressed about whether Greece would be able to access the current round of Social Fund support as the new Roma programme was still under consideration. Attention was drawn to the EURoma network to encourage the wider use of structural funds. However most Roma NGOs lack staff and experience to apply for these, so capacity building is needed.

Lessons learned from the Review started with recognition that inclusion of Roma is a long-term process. Rehousing Roma among other people is preferable but support is necessary and individuals' wishes have to be considered. In the meantime existing settlements should be made part of the urban masterplan. While temporary housing may be needed in the short term it runs the risk of increasing exclusion. Loans can assist integration although they can present problems but all citizens should have a legal right to housing. Municipalities should be required to provide sites and stopping places for travellers and desist from carrying out forced evictions

As with housing, integrated education is desirable and desegregation measures may be required. To improve attendance and reduce drop-out rates, allowances to parents can help but free pre-school provision is essential, as is transport from remote locations. Record cards and mobile units are effective for travelling children. Mediators and teaching assistants improve outcomes, as does parental involvement, while second-chance initiatives give adults better job opportunities. Integrated vocational training linked to jobs is effective and validation of previous work experience can provide qualifications but public works schemes usually fail to offer training. Habitual discrimination requires prosecutions. Poor Roma health can be improved by vaccination, screening and health education campaigns but better access to mainstream services is needed, while the main causes

of ill-health are poverty, insanitary living conditions and deficient diets. In Greece mobile units serve remote communities and socio-medical centres are appreciated but links to mainstream services should be closer.

Most peer countries agree that a national policy helps place Roma integration on the political agenda and encourages coherent planning, particularly since multi-sectoral initiatives are more appropriate for complex, interlinked problems. However reliable data is vital for monitoring and evaluating such programmes. While inclusive policies are preferable, targeted interventions are also required although carrying a risk of majority backlash. In any case sensitisation of people and local support are indispensable for better social inclusion. To plan and coordinate integrated projects an inter-ministerial committee, supplemented by a dedicated administrative unit, is the preferred institutional and managerial structure. Advisory boards with Roma representation at national and regional level can offer guidance, while working parties composed of stakeholders, also at local level including Roma NGOs and beneficiaries, assist effective implementation. National financing must be continuous and secured by political consensus but municipal funding is also essential for local commitment. EU structural funds are available and should be utilised; the EURoma network encourages their use for Roma inclusion. However most Roma NGOs require capacity-building support to access them.

Everyone is responsible for achieving Roma social inclusion. Improvements in living conditions for Roma are improvements in everybody's living conditions.[1]

Alfred Stamos (Municipality of Zefiri, Greece)

A. Policy context at the European level

'The European Year 2010 for combating poverty and social exclusion marks a renewed political commitment at the EU level' (SPC-EMCO 2008: 5). This joint statement by the Social Protection Committee (SPC) and the Employment Committee on the Renewed Social Agenda in November 2008 followed the SPC's call for improved methodology and implementation 'in making the Social OMC more visible and more effective'. One priority identified was for ongoing reflection 'on a more strategic use and more flexible organisation of peer reviews and mutual learning' to be extended 'to allow a more focused and concrete sharing of national strategies and to contribute to the achievement of the common social objectives' (SPC 2008: 3).

This Greek Peer Review is an example of such greater flexibility where 'not only good practices are examined, but also practices that have not worked as expected, and an effort is made to seek solutions, together with other countries. The hosts asked for comments on their mixed experience of a long-term, national integrated programme to promote the social inclusion of Roma communities, the most marginalised segment of Greek society. Suggestions to improve a forthcoming programme were invited from peer countries, based on the results of their own practice in pursuing initiatives to integrate their varied Roma populations. To assist this exercise a Discussion Paper and Host Country Report were sent in advance to participants, detailed presentations of the proposed new programme were offered during the review and site visits were also made to Roma socio-medical centres and a nearby settlement.

The urgency of the review is particularly important in view of a deteriorating international situation. The recent eastwards expansion of the EU has resulted in up to an estimated six million mostly impoverished and marginalised

1 Alfred Stamos, Municipality of Zefiri, Greece and member of Greek Interministerial Committee.

people becoming European citizens. Their swiftly growing demographic profile is likely to pose increasingly severe problems if no effective solutions are found to improve their predicament and 'break the vicious circle of the intergenerational transmission of poverty'. Furthermore the wave of racist attacks on Roma communities in both older and newer Member States, referred to in the Discussion Paper, has continued with migration and economic recession as possible aggravating factors since Roma are often seen as undeserving beneficiaries of social support.[2]

In response to enlargement and its consequences and to a heightened appreciation throughout the European Community of Roma as among the most marginalised groups and therefore high-priority targets in the campaign for combating poverty and social exclusion, the European Council asked the European Commission for a progress report in December 2007 (European Council 2008a). Following its publication[3] and the subsequent first-ever Roma Summit in September 2008, the Council emphasised the importance for Roma, among other vulnerable groups, of the renewed Social Agenda package of July 2008.[4] It also called on the Commission and Member States 'to make better use of the Structural Funds' and other financial instruments and on the Commission 'to organise, initially, an exchange of good practice and experience between the Member States' and to 'stimulate cooperation between all parties ... in the context of an integrated European platform' (European Council 2008b).[5] The inaugural Roma 'platform' meeting was held in Prague under the auspices of the Czech Presidency on 24 April 2009 with the participation of many key actors including EU institutions, national governments, international organisations, NGOs and experts.[6]

This innovative Greek Peer Review represents a further important response to the call for on-going 'exchange of good practice and experience'. Its main

2 Attacks on shantytowns on the outskirts of Italian cities, largely directed against Romanian Roma immigrants, and anti-Roma violence in former Communist-ruled countries were discussed (Guy 2009: 3–4). More recently Romanian Roma fled home from Northern Ireland after assaults on their houses in Belfast (McDonald 2009, Moulton 2009).

3 European Commission (2008a).

4 European Commission (2008b).

5 This process of heightened institutional activity concerning Roma policy is discussed more fully in the Discussion Paper (Guy 2009: 3–4).

6 For information about participants and agenda of the platform meeting, see European Commission/Czech Government (2009).

focus on housing also takes account of homelessness and housing exclusion as a prioritised thematic area in 2009.[7] Furthermore the review offers an opportunity for peer countries to build on 'European policies [that] made a real push forward in the field of equal treatment, creating a legal framework that facilitates specific measures addressed to Roma and other vulnerable groups' (Cedrón 2009: 3).

7 This was for the Social Open Method of Coordination. See Social Protection Committee (SPC 2009: 3, §3.1).

B. Situation in the host and peer countries[8]

Roma in Greece

The heterogeneous Roma population living in Greece is characterised by its extreme diversity. Culturally there are groups whose ancestors might have been resident in Greek-speaking territories since Byzantine times and whose present-day representatives strongly affirm their identity as Greeks, while still retaining Romani cultural traits. Over the centuries these cultures have intermingled and among these long-established Roma are many who have enriched Greek artistic life, particularly as musicians and performers. While the great majority of indigenous Roma profess the Greek Orthodox faith, there is a smaller but significant Muslim population, some of whom are recognised in law as part of Greece's only acknowledged minority.[9]

At the same time there are non-Greek Roma living in Greece, many of whom migrated from neighbouring Balkan countries such as Bulgaria, former Yugoslavia and particularly Albania following the collapse of previous Communist regimes. Non-Roma, too, migrated from these and other states, turning Greece in the past two decades from a country of emigration into one of immigration, which has resulted in the emergence of new and unfamiliar multicultural patterns.[10] All of these newcomers, whether Roma or non-Roma, are officially categorised as immigrants but while foreign Roma are excluded from measures to improve the lives of Greek Roma, they are eligible for aid from projects designed to assist all immigrants.

8 Detailed accounts of the situation of Greek Roma and of the Integrated Action Plan are given in both the Discussion Paper (Guy 2009) and Host Country Report (Kalogirou 2009), therefore only a brief overall picture is given in this section for orientation purposes. More specific comparisons of the Greek situation to that in peer countries are given in the following section, which is mostly based on responses to the Discussion Paper and Host Country Report.

9 The sole minority recognised, as such, is the Muslim population of eastern Macedonia and Thrace. People in this category, including Turks, Pomaks and Roma, were protected by the provisions of the 1923 Lausanne Treaty and obtained citizenship in the 1920s (Ziomas *et al.* 2006: 13, Abdikeeva 2005: 13).

10 Ziomas et al. (2006: 14). Migration by Roma across European borders will continue to be an issue, and is likely to increase as South-Eastern Europe integrates into the common labour market.

Socially, too, there is a huge gulf between integrated and often relatively prosperous Greek Roma, some of whom run their own businesses, dwelling in standard accommodation among non-Roma and marginalised and impoverished shantytown dwellers, inhabiting settlements of tumbledown shacks or dilapidated housing often located on the urban periphery. Peer Review participants were given an opportunity to see for themselves the kinds of problems to be tackled by the Action Plan during a short visit to the Roma settlement in Acharnon on the outskirts of Athens. There they spoke with local residents and saw shacks and houses built illegally in hazardous surroundings, making impossible both legalisation of such accommodation and provision of necessary infrastructure. They heard of employment problems and poor school attendance, and issues surrounding the problematic criteria for housing loan eligibility.

Visits were also made to two socio-medical centres in outer Athens — in multicultural and diverse Ano Liosia, where the mayor stated his commitment to the goal of inclusion, and in the municipality of Acharnon. Similar centres are located in thirty Roma settlements in Greece and offer advice in the use of public services to nearby residents, not only Roma, in fields such as health, education, employment and housing. The full range of services provided includes information, medical treatment, counselling and psychological support, education and training, as well as awareness-raising and visiting participants appreciated the holistic approach adopted. However, while these centres collaborate with local and national institutions, participants felt there was a need to provide even better links to mainstream services and to improve integration of Roma, particularly in education.

Although Roma settlements can consist of a mixture of normal houses with amenities, prefabricated houses, shanties and even tents, many such sites amount to segregated ghettos located in polluted industrial areas where essential basic amenities are often absent.[11] These urban settlements have grown rapidly in recent years as shifts in the wider economy have made

11 A typology of basic settlement types was provided to peer group participants by the National Expert. This document pointed out that even where housing and amenities were adequate, there were often several social problems including delinquency.

the livelihoods of formerly nomadic Roma increasingly unviable.[12] However some still travel for part of the year to seek seasonal employment as agricultural workers. Others make a bare living as scrap collectors or in low-paid jobs, frequently in the grey economy without social insurance, and underemployment and subsequent impoverishment are widespread.

Such sub-standard living conditions lead to poor health and raised mortality rates and also bring about low participation of Roma children in the education system, where the remoteness of settlements from schools and the frequent absence of public transport also play their part. The danger is that these children will repeat the experience of their parents, where over half of adult Roma are illiterate and, on reaching adulthood without qualifications and faced with diminishing employment prospects, will be plunged into still deeper social exclusion.

This critical situation led the Greek government to announce in 1996 a National Policy Framework for Greek Gypsies, which aimed at improving their situation by 'well organised long term inclusion policies and within an integrated approach' (MESP 2009). However shortcomings in the design and implementation of the resulting Integrated Action Plan 2001–2006, which are outlined in both the Discussion Paper and Host Country Report, prompted the current Peer Review inviting suggestions for a revised version. A 2008 evaluation report had revealed that, in spite of the comprehensive scope and ambitious design of the previous programme, there had been considerable organisational and technical deficiencies as well as problems with continuity of funding, compounded by failure to draw sufficiently on available Community Structural Funds.

Consequently the proposed new, long-term Action Plan aimed to rectify earlier mistakes and is intended to be located within the framework of the fourth Community Structural Funds planning period and beyond. As in the previous plan, the first priority was provision of essential **housing and infrastructure**, where immediate interventions were envisaged as well as extended programmes. Once more, as earlier, a fully integrated approach was seen as indispensable, simultaneously addressing problems in the

12 These trends mirror the growing urbanisation of Greek society where over half the population now lives in Athens.

sectors of **education**, **employment and vocational training**, **health and social welfare**, **cultural issues including sport** and also **sensitising of public opinion** and **Roma participation**. Advice was sought from peer countries on **policy design** in all of these key areas as well as on all-important matters of **institutional structures**, **managerial mechanisms** and **funding**.

Roma in peer countries

If Roma throughout Europe are very diverse, so too are peer countries participating in the review. They differ from Greece and from each other in important ways: in policies adopted and initiatives introduced to integrate Roma populations in response to their particular ways of life and characteristics, in governmental and administrative structures, and also in legal systems. Nevertheless, in spite of these many differences, all had valuable and relevant experience and advice to share with the host country in the Athens Peer Review. Rather than summarise the situation of each peer country in turn, which is presented in their responses to the Discussion Paper, this section will highlight key thematic elements most relevant to circumstances in Greece. However what was similar in all peer countries was the social exclusion of most Roma when compared with the rest of the population.[13] This was reflected in problematic housing situations, low levels of educational participation and attainment, under-employment resulting in degrees of impoverishment, poor health and widespread experience of discrimination in all of these areas.

A basic factor influencing the approaches by partner countries was simply the variety of Roma living within their territory. Greece has already been characterised as aiming its integration programme primarily at improving living and other conditions of communities ranging from 'traditional' nomadic groups to those settled in unacceptable urban environments. Yet even though the continuing presence of nomadic groups may invite direct comparison with France, the increasing evident non-viability of this way of

13 The only country to measure the extent of this exclusion was Spain. In 2008 a comparative survey by the FOESSA foundation (FOESSA 2008) 'for the first time provide[d] disaggregated data on Roma', revealing that 12% of all those severely excluded were Roma while one in four Roma families suffered from exclusion (Cedrón 2009: 1).

life in Greece makes the situation in Spain and Finland more relevant where economic and other pressures had led former nomads to abandon even the desire to continue living in this way. In Spain nomadism declined gradually but in Finland a 1976 law required municipalities to provide housing for travelling Roma at a stroke. This legislation brought nomadism to a sudden end, apparently without many regrets from those newly housed for their former way of life.[14] This raises questions about the long-term prospects for Roma and travellers in Western Europe, as in France, Belgium and the UK and Ireland, where a travelling way of life is still upheld as an ideal but is increasingly under threat due to shrinking numbers of stopping places and caravan sites in spite of government policy initiatives to provide these. Corresponding to these developments the response from France notes 'a trend among travellers towards total or partial settlement' (Joubert 2009: 3).[15]

Another relevant aspect is the response of states to the presence on their territory of fairly recent Roma migrants — mainly arrivals since the collapse of former Communist regimes — which is a common experience of all peer countries. Greece's programme is specifically targeted only at Greek Roma 'as an integral part of the Greek population' (MESP 2008a: 1). Similarly Germany differentiates sharply between autochthonous Sinti and Roma, who are regarded as 'an inseparable part of the German people',[16] whereas 'Roma people from other countries and of other nationalities [who] live in Germany ... have the same rights and obligations as all foreigners' (Irlenkaeuser and Diedrichsen 2009: 3). In spite of this clear delineation some specific projects include both indigenous and foreign Roma in both

14 As part of their assimilationist approach towards Roma several Communist governments had earlier enforced the settlement of nomadic bands, e.g. in Romania, Czechoslovakia and Poland (see Barany 2002: 120, Guy 1998: 26–28 and Mróz 2001: 256–258) but in Poland at least the culturally traditional Polska Roma expressed their preference for their new housing while finding imaginative ways to make a different livelihood which preserved the spirit of their previous entrepreneurial occupations.

15 In the UK the designation 'Traveller' is capitalised but this is not done in the French peer review documents, so this French usage is followed in the Synthesis Report.

16 German Sinti and Roma have the status of a national minority and are protected by the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, which is regarded by the German Sinti and Roma as well as by the German government as an important step to more inclusion (Irlenkaeuser and Diedrichsen 2009: 5). Roma are also recognised as a national minority in Finland and Hungary but not in Spain and Greece, while in France 'there is no legal recognition of minorities' (Joubert 2009: 1).

Greece and Germany, as they also do in other countries which do not draw these boundaries so emphatically.

As regards the area of housing — the principal stated focus of the Greek Peer Review — the main variation between partners concerns the rate of integration. In Finland 'there are no separated housing areas, quarters or blockhouses for Roma people only' (Arrhenius and Friman-Korpela 2009: 2) and the same is increasingly true of Germany where, 'instead of creating separate settlements ... as ... in the past, the actual trend is to integrate the housing of Sinti and Roma into new settlements for all citizens' (Irlenkaeuser and Diedrichsen 2009: 4). Similarly in Spain, 'housing plans have changed from the relocation of Roma families in blocks of buildings for Roma to the distribution of families in normalised buildings' (Alonso Luzuriaga 2009: 7). '[O]ne of the clearest lessons' Spain had learnt from the previous 'erroneous housing policy' was that 'segregated housing construction has been demonstrated [as] clearly negative, hindering the [integration] process to produce additional problems' (Cedrón 2009: 4).

Hungary, too, has a policy goal and programme to achieve 'the dissolution of ... [residentially] segregated areas', seen as the only realistic way to 'radically reduce the number of persons with low social status in [these] segregated areas'. However, large numbers of Roma are involved and there are poor employment prospects where most Roma live (Vincze and Derdák 2009: 5, 3–4). Greece also espouses a principle that 'housing interventions should be realised in the context of a broader policy of spatial and social integration, the central element being the acquisition of a permanent home and as a consequence the organic integration of the population in local communities' (Kalogirou 2009: 17). As in the previous programme housing loans are proposed for the purchase or improvement of new and existing houses as a main instrument of achieving these goals (ibid.). In practice, however, progress in providing housing has been very slow and gradual integration is regarded as a more realistic, pragmatic approach.

The exception would appear to be France where the emphasis is on enforcing a law enacted in 2000 requiring municipalities (*communes*) 'to provide travellers' camps or temporary sites' but there, as in the UK, travellers have been buying or renting land. Also, since 2008, travellers have been legally

entitled to the right to normal housing, just as any other citizens facing severe housing problems (Joubert 2009: 3)

While Roma in all countries lag behind their non-Roma peers in educational participation and attainment, and particularly in adult literacy, all peer countries have made considerable efforts in this field. In recent years noticeable progress has been made in Spain and Hungary. In Spain 70% of Roma children now attend kindergarten and 100% primary school, while educational establishments are required to consider the diversity of students as a priority (Alonso Luzuriaga 2009: 9, 6). In Hungary all children are required to attend kindergarten for at least the year before starting primary school. 'Non-enrolment [of Roma] in primary schools has not been reported as a systemic or visible problem' but 'grade repetition is common' (EUMAP 2007: 196, 203, 205). Research in 2003 showed 82.5% of 20–24 year-olds having completed primary school but a year earlier only 5% had completed secondary school (Vincze and Derdák 2009: 1). In Spain, Finland and Germany Roma children are integrated with non-Roma but although a step has been taken to make segregation illegal in Hungarian schools, 'the separation of Roma children into segregated schools and classes has been on the rise over the past 15 years'.[17] Also, as elsewhere in certain new Member States, Roma children are overrepresented in 'special schools' for those with learning difficulties (EUMAP 2007: 196, 187).

Initiatives such as mediators or assistant teachers have been introduced in all peer countries and likewise various attempts have been made to involve and educate parents in most. The most severe educational problems, however, are found amongst those living in remote, segregated locations and/or still travelling, as in Greece and France, although the use of innovative methods (e.g. itinerant cards, reception centres, mobile classrooms and distance learning, etc.) has proved effective for groups more difficult to reach.

Employment is one of the most intractable and fundamental problem areas affecting Roma, linked to the decline of traditional occupations, lack of educational or vocational qualifications, difficulties in accessing potential workplaces and discrimination. In Hungary the former full employment

17 'Although Roma children represent less than 10% of the student population, almost half of Roma children go to classes where they are the majority!' (Vincze and Derdák 2009: 6).

of Roma in Communist times had dropped by 2003 to only a third of men having regular work and less than a third having any income from work as their primary source of subsistence, while for women both proportions were one sixth (Vincze and Derdák 2009: 1). There 'the most important active labour market measures in the employment of Roma are still public work programmes', plus subsidised wages and supported training. An estimated 12,000–15,000 Roma were taking part in public work programmes, although these were criticised for lacking a training element and not leading to jobs.[18] Now, however, various ways of improving educational qualifications and linking vocational training to real jobs are being pursued (ibid: 3, 2).

None of the other peer countries had similar experience in the past of full Roma employment and Roma with primary education. Elsewhere adult Roma had been largely excluded from formal education and had mostly made a livelihood on the periphery of the mainstream economy but now all countries face similar problems and adopt comparable solutions to help Roma find an alternative to benefit dependency. Spain has been the most active in this area where 'access to employment has been a key element for social inclusion' (Cedrón 2009: 1). This has been mainly through the nationwide *ACCEDER* programme, which since 2000 has aided over 35,000 Roma improve their access to the labour market and has created 25,000 jobs (FSG 2007a).[19] In Finland and Germany there have been some initiatives in adult education and vocational training but in spite of the transference of the 2000 EU anti-discrimination directives into national law, discrimination was reported in Finland in the field of employment. In Germany, however, the Act on Equal Treatment was reported to have helped satisfactorily resolve cases of discrimination by companies. Employment situations of travellers are the most problematic, especially of those in France and Greece whose former occupations have become barely viable.

In spite of a life expectancy widely accepted as at least ten years less than the general population, initiatives to improve Roma health have been very

18 For a critical account of activation and public works programmes in Slovakia, see Oravec and Bošelová (2006).

19 Recently this long-running programme has been suffering the effects of the economic crisis. [I]in the last six months of 2008, in comparison with the same period in 2007, the demand for services has increased by 20% while the recruitment ... [has] dropped by 25%. [This t]rend most likely will worsen in coming months' (Cedrón 2009: 1).

limited throughout the EU. Poor health results from poverty, inadequate diets and insanitary living conditions among other factors. The predominant official assumption is that Roma have equal access to mainstream health and social services, although research shows that, except in the case of integrated Roma, possibilities to utilise these are usually restricted. Use of health services by Roma in Finland was said to be unproblematic, although a proposed 2010 survey will examine a suspected failure to reach Roma with health information. Spain listed, among the positive results of the Roma Development Programme: 'Generalisation of ... access to [the] public health system', highlighting child vaccination, paediatric campaigns and health education, especially for women so that this information might be transferred to the whole family. At the same time access of Roma to the public social services network was also improved, including the right to pensions and a minimum income as safeguards against utter poverty (Alonso Luzuriaga 2009: 9). Spain is also notable for the high quality of its data about Roma health following an extensive, comparative survey.[20]

Most problems in accessing health services are encountered by travellers. In France there were difficulties in claiming the right to the universal health insurance cover and living conditions were often extremely precarious and dangerous. Changing sites, sometimes due to forced evictions, interrupted existing arrangements or on-going health care (Joubert 2009: 5–6). Greece tackled health problems of travelling Roma by introducing mobile health units, as in Bulgaria, and for isolated, settled Roma by establishing socio-medical centres, which also offered much appreciated counselling and advice about social services.

Peer countries differed in the period of time over which they had already been concerned about their Roma and travellers and in their overall approach in encouraging greater social inclusion of these populations. A relevant factor affecting the overall approach was the degree of governmental devolution, which had a bearing on the extent to which a national plan for Roma was viable or even possible. Yet even relatively centralised states tended to pass

20 This was carried out in 2006 by the Roma NGO, the Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG), using the same methodology as a national health survey, allowing the health status of Roma to be compared directly with that of the general population (Spanish Ministry of Health 2009).

responsibility for proposing and implementing projects to lower levels of government such as regions or even municipalities, so this variation could appear more significant in structural form than in practice.

Finland was an early example of a county-wide scheme where a National Advisory Board on Romani Affairs was established in 1956 and yet, in spite of this initial bold step, its first National Roma Policy was only prepared over fifty years later in June 2009. In the meantime, however, the important national legislation requiring municipalities to provide housing for Roma had been introduced in 1976. As in Spain, where in another early national initiative a Roma Development Programme had been adopted in 1985, initial action applying to the whole country laid a firm basis for long-term progress. In Spain a new Action Plan for Roma was discussed as part of the general National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2008–2010. Furthermore, in February 2009, Spain was first and to date only older Member State to participate in the Decade of Roma Inclusion of which Hungary is a founder member. In new Member States, like Hungary, the former, highly centralised systems imposed by Communist regimes have been replaced by state structures with powers devolved to regions. Nevertheless, and in spite of introducing since 1995 a self-government system for minorities,[21] Hungary has also pursued national policies towards Roma through medium-term programmes and the current Government Action Plan for 2008–2009 is closely related to the Strategic Plan of the Decade of Roma Inclusion.

Spain, as a highly devolved state,[22] provides an interesting contrast with Germany, which insists that its constitution and federal system expressly forbid the state from imposing duties on autonomous regions (Länder), so that 'national inclusion plans designed for German Sinti and Roma [would be] hardly … feasible'. Yet even if this were possible, the German report suggested that it would be hardly worthwhile since, although coordination was admitted to be useful, 'an integrated programme and comprehensive planning from national to the local level is often difficult, time-consuming, costly and

21 In spite of the title these bodies are mainly concerned with cultural and educational matters, not more fundamental mainstream functions, and have been criticised as peripheral structures (Kovats 1997, Ringold *et al.* 2003: 96–98).

22 Spain has seventeen regions (communities) and two cities with differing degrees of autonomy.

lengthy' (Irlenkaeuser and Diedrichsen 2009: 3). Although recognising no minorities, France had long pursued a system of regulating travellers, requiring them to carry 'anthropometric identity booklets imposed in 1912[, which in 1969] gave way to more enlightened circulation documents'. The 2000 law now 'makes it obligatory for *communes* with populations of over 5,000 to provide travellers' camps or temporary sites' (Joubert 2009: 1–2). Otherwise, however, mainstream laws and policies in France are intended to apply to all citizens including travellers.

In comparison with peer countries Greece perhaps appears closest to Spain, in intention if not in practice, in having declared over a decade ago a comprehensive programme for integrating its indigenous Roma. This plan concentrated primarily on improving housing conditions in usually marginal and often segregated locations but acknowledged the importance of a multi-sectoral, integrated approach where education, employment and health problems were recognised as interlinked and therefore needed to be tackled together. As in Spain initial implementation suffered delays but in Greece eventual progress was at a far slower rate.[23]

Most Member States with Roma populations now accept the necessity for such a broad approach but differ in the extent to which they think inclusion can be achieved by mainstream policies and services without major targeted interventions. For example, in the key areas of housing and education considerable progress towards integration has been made in Finland and Germany but other aspects are generally expected to be covered by instruments available to all citizens. However lack of data makes it unclear whether this is happening and certain difficulties still persist, e.g. in education and employment. In Finland a national plan for Roma has only just now been drawn up, whereas in Germany such a strategy is ruled out on constitutional grounds. In France, specific Roma policy is limited and mainly directed at site provision for travellers.

In contrast, in new Member States like Hungary, integrated Action Plans have been adopted targeting their overwhelmingly settled Roma populations. These plans seek to overcome the widespread and persistent problems of

23 The proposed new Greek approach is outlined in the Host Country Report (Kalogirou 2009: 11–15).

sub-standard and segregated housing, low levels of educational attainment, unemployment and poor health and are closely linked to the strategy of the Decade of Roma Inclusion of which all are members. While mainstreaming of provision is the goal, affirmative and Roma-aware action is seen as necessary to achieve this, although many initiatives are directed at broader constituencies of vulnerable social groups. Spain and Greece, although older Member States, resemble ex-Communist countries in the kind of problems they face and the strategies pursued. Spain was the first country in Europe to adopt and persevere in implementing an integrated Roma programme, no doubt assisted by sustained political will, a socially liberal political climate and a strengthening economic environment, and is seen as giving a positive lead encouraging others to follow. In the present economic crisis, where vulnerable groups including Roma are suffering most, the Spanish view is that action with 'an integrated approach ... is needed more than ever' (Cedrón 2009: 3).

As noted above, the differences in institutional and managerial structures between states pursuing a national policy and those adopting a decentralised approach are often more apparent than real when considering design and implementation of Roma programmes. Ultimately all concrete projects must be delivered at local level and will not succeed without the involvement and support of local authorities and even a certain critical mass of the non-Roma populace.[24] The other key players in this process are Roma themselves, whether through participation in advisory councils, by the agency of national and local Roma NGOs or by the active involvement of intended Roma beneficiaries of specific projects.

The important role of Roma is well illustrated by the experience of Germany where national and local Roma NGOs have taken a prominent part in initiating and sometimes funding projects, even before attracting support

24 A 2004 review of EU-funded PHARE programmes for Roma in five applicant countries (Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia and the Czech Republic) found that in the case of over-complex, top-down governmental schemes 'final outcomes of many projects fell short of their high expectation', whereas less ambitious efforts, adopting 'a "bottom-up" and participatory approach', were more likely to produce positive results (EMS 2004: III, II).

from municipalities.[25] Although there is no national social inclusion strategy for Roma in Germany, for reasons already stated, the Federal Government funds the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma[26] and the Documentation and Culture Centre, while regional governments support regional NGOs and they and municipalities initiate and fund local projects together with Roma groups (Irlenkaeuser and Diedrichsen 2009: 4, 3). Finland, although without a national plan, has a long-established National Advisory Board on Romani Affairs which cooperates with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and also with four Regional Advisory Boards, which since 2005 have all been funded from the state budget. These Regional Boards work together with corresponding State Provincial Offices and local authorities and can implement regional and local development projects, which has 'increased the participation of the Roma in decision-making at local level'. Twenty municipalities have set up cross-sectoral working groups with Roma members. In 2007 an umbrella organisation of Roma NGOs, the Finnish Roma Forum, was formed and Roma representatives are also members of the working group drafting the new National Policy (Arrhenius and Friman-Korpela 2009: 1–2, 4).

Spain, with a Roma Development Programme dating from 1985, has a well established administrative structure with the leading coordinating role now taken by the Ministry of Health and Social Policy.[27] To support the programme a central administrative unit (the Roma Development Programme Service Unit) was established to provide financial, technical and other assistance. Further coordination was carried out by three commissions — the first to carry out monitoring, the second — an inter-ministerial working group — to harmonise ministerial activities and the third, a consultative commission including Roma representatives, to ensure cooperation between government and NGOs. This last commission was replaced in 2005 by the State Council for the Roma People with six working groups concentrating on housing, education, employment and social affairs, health, culture and citizenship and

25 For example, the establishment of cultural centre in Weinheim was financed by a wealthy Sinti donor.

26 National Sinti and Roma organisations could also take part in a consultative council for minorities but choose not to participate 'for internal reasons' (Irlenkaeuser and Diedrichsen 2009: 4).

27 Since April 2007. Previously the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs had this coordinating function.

anti-discrimination.[28] Although a substantial central administrative unit was set up at the outset, its powers are limited because of regional autonomy. Regions initially propose projects, which are vetted for eligibility by the coordinating ministry and then submitted for joint national and regional approval. If accepted, regions then bear responsibility for implementation (Ringold *et al.* 2003: 115, Alonso Luzuriaga 2009: 3). Nevertheless, it is precisely because Spain is so decentralised that 'mechanisms of coordination and coherence should be very well set up in order to succeed, as highlighted in the Greek Integrated Action Plan' (Cedrón 2009: 3).

Roma are not recognised as a national minority in Spain but Roma NGOs are remarkable for their vigour and the active part they play in state bodies such as the State Council of Social Action NGOs and the Institute of Roma Culture, created in 2007 and attached to the Ministry of Culture. But the best known Roma NGO is the *Fundación Secretariado Gitano* (FSG), which has offices nationwide, manages the *ACCEDER* employment programme and also carries out major research studies such as a survey of Roma distribution and living conditions (FSG 2007b).

Although the system of governance in Greece is more centralised than in Spain, the structural scheme for the functioning of the Integrated Action Plan was not dissimilar, for regions and municipalities proposed projects which were then to be vetted and approved by a central coordinating body, the Inter-Ministerial Committee, charged with overseeing the entire programme and ensuring the cooperation of agencies involved in their implementation. But as already suggested, this body lacked the capacity to carry out its responsibilities effectively or the authority to monitor and control the actions of the implementing local authorities (Guy 2009: 16).[29]

A future structure for a proposed Greek Action Plan might include a 'mechanism for management and administration, with clear definition of roles and three levels of responsibility. a) The political level of responsibility, b) the civil service level of responsibility c) the level of responsibility of

28 Although established in 2005 this Council only began functioning in 2007 but is now participating in the design of the new Action Plan.

29 The realisation of the Action Plan suffered from 'lack of an integrated approach in regard to the design and implementation' of projects, 'lack of homogeneity of interventions' and 'insufficient promotion of regional and local partnerships' (MESP 2008b: 11–12).

the collective body for democratic planning'. While political responsibility would involve ministerial, regional and local government representatives, democratic planning would be ensured by a broad-based, representative body functioning as a monitoring committee, and civil service responsibility would be discharged by 'a permanent operating structure, ... supported by a Joint Ministerial Civil Service Committee'. Regional committees are also envisaged to encourage flexibility and the prioritising of local needs (Kalogirou 2009: 12–13).

While most Greek Roma were not even granted citizenship until the mid-1970s, changes in the approach of government led to Roma organisations being consulted during the course of the first Action Plan about projects at both central and local level. Main organisations included the Pan-Hellenic Federation of Greek Roma Associations as well as an inter-municipal Roma network (RomNet) established by local authorities with Roma inhabitants (MESP 2008a: 11).

Hungary's unique system of minority self-governments from 1995 has been mentioned above but responsibility for mainstream concerns lay with the Council for Gypsy Affairs, also established in 1995 'to harmonise the efforts of government ministries'. While Roma self-governments had a role in shaping the first 1997 Medium-Term Package[30] to integrate Roma, which included housing, education, employment, health and other measures, the task of coordinating implementation was entrusted to the Council. This body was replaced in 1999 by the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Gypsy Affairs. Three years later a new Office for Roma Affairs was established under the Office of the Prime Minister 'to coordinate Roma policy across the government'[31] but criticism of the shortcomings of the 1997 Package resemble those of the Greek Action Plan including weak coordination, inefficiency and poor results (Ringold *et al.* 2003: 94–96, EUMAP 2001: 216–8). Although a multi-sectoral approach was pursued in some EU–funded projects, outcomes could be disappointing (EMS 2002).

30 This was followed by a further medium-term package in 2004.

31 The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour now has the main role among ministries (Vincze and Derdák 2009: 1) and leads the Council of Roma Integration, which in 2006 replaced two earlier existing bodies.

Since 2002, however, more determined efforts have been made to expand integrated education, so that it is more than just an 'expressed goal',[32] and in 2005 specific steps were taken to integrate Roma from settlements 'for the first time since the political transition'. As in Spain, regions and municipalities are invited to propose projects (Vincze and Derdák 2009: 6, 4). Matching the considerable activity of their governments, Roma activists in Hungary have been more successful than elsewhere with Roma candidates adopted and elected in both main political parties and with two Roma MEPs. Meanwhile Roma NGOs are long-established and respected.

Although in France 'the goal is for … integration to take place within the ordinary legal framework and mainstreaming policies', nevertheless 'consultative committees representing travellers were set up at national and local level. In 1992 the National Travelling People's Consultative Committee was established with a membership drawn from government, elected officials, travellers and NGOs, as well as relevant experts'. Among its remits this committee is consulted on legislation, regulations and action plans and makes proposals to government.

Each administrative district (*département*) also has a corresponding consultative committee, with representatives of *communes*, travellers and NGOs, which prepares and implements plans for sites and stopping places as required by the 2000 law. The committee produces an annual evaluation report on the implementation of plans and can also appoint a mediator to resolve any problems (Joubert 2009: 2–3).

Funding provision and arrangements vary from country to country but consist of a mixture of state and local financing and in some cases EU funding, supplemented on occasions by charitable donations for specific projects. Other important aspects for continuity of policy initiatives are whether they have a dedicated budget or depend on indirect subsidies and whether financial support is sustained and predictable or liable to interruption. For candidate countries with substantial Roma populations, progress towards the integration of these marginalised minorities was a made a political criterion for EU membership. To help applicants meet this challenging requirement,

32 Especially following the 2003 legal amendment against segregation.

EU funds were made available, mainly through the PHARE programme, where co-financing was normally a condition for obtaining funding. Although most of this pre-accession financial support ceased on EU entry, these countries were then eligible as Members States for structural funds, mainly from the European Social Fund (ESF), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund. Other Members States are eligible for such funding, particularly for the inclusion of vulnerable groups but also on the basis of other criteria.[33]

Hungary was the first post-Communist country to apply for EU membership and drew more heavily on PHARE funding for Roma projects than other candidate countries, matching this pre-accession support with a higher proportion of co-funding (EMS 2004: 4). Another contributor was the Open Society Institute (OSI). In contrast to its neighbours Hungary concentrated on employment projects, followed by education[34] and the current Government Action Plan for 2008–2009 has continued to prioritise employment, although much of the funding is allocated to public work programmes.[35] Multi-sectoral projects aim to desegregate housing, improve employment prospects and promote educational integration in segregated urban areas and the most deprived regions drawing on national and EU funding (Vincze and Derdák 2009: 4–6).[36] The strength of Spain's progress in Roma inclusion derives not only from its early start but also from its solid financial base. At the outset in 1989 a fund was established in the national budget to 'assure the continuity of the Roma Development Programme'. At the same time some NGOs such as the FSG are centrally funded. A further source of general funding came from the 0.52% to 0.7% of personal tax which Spanish citizens can earmark for the church or NGOs (Alonso Luzuriaga 2009: 3–4).[37] Thereafter approved projects were jointly funded by central and regional governments, with the latter contributing at least 40% of the total. Municipalities, too, added their

33 The Cohesion Fund helps poorer Member States reduce economic and social disparities by funding 85% of environmental and transport projects. Among peer partners Hungary was eligible from EU entry in 2004 but Greece and Spain were also able to draw on this support mechanism (European Commission 2004, 2006).

34 Up till 2000 60% of all Roma expenditure was on employment and 28% on education (Ringold *et al.* 2003: 101).

35 See earlier comment.

36 See Government of Hungary (2006: 20–21).

37 See http://www.plataformaong.org/actualidad/noticias/archivo/34990.html

share ensuring their commitment. However grants to projects are made annually which can be destabilising for NGOs. At the same time Spain has made creative use of EU financial support, most noticeably in the case of the *ACCEDER* employment programme which since 2000 has continued to draw on ESF resources. As with Hungary, a significant share of projects is directed at access to the labour market.

Greece, like Spain, has sought to draw on EU structural funds, particularly the ERDF, to support its efforts to improve Roma housing conditions and infrastructure. As noted in the Discussion Paper the Integrated Action Plan for Greek Roma 'does not have a budget of its own but ... relies on funds from the CSF [Community Structural Funds] and other sources (national funds ... [and] other financial sources)' (MESP 2009).[38] Community financial support through the ESF was also used to assist vulnerable groups, including Roma, to enter the labour market under the EQUAL programme. However the effectiveness of the Action Plan was undermined by funding problems, which included 'vague financial criteria, failure to secure requisite public funding for projects and inadequate use of relevant Social Fund (ESF) resources' (Guy 2009: 13). Better access to the ESF should be a main feature of the new Plan and it should be noted that Greece is also eligible for Cohesion Funds.

In Finland financial provision for Roma is expected to be provided from general resources, which does not appear to be problematic since numbers are small and relatively dispersed. However assistance from the state budget was given to municipalities when they were required to provide houses for Roma in 1976. Also the National and Regional Advisory Boards are centrally funded and some financial support is available for schools with Roma children in certain circumstances, as well as for teaching in Romani. Funding for the Finnish Roma Forum 'is project-based, which makes long-term work difficult' (Arrhenius and Friman-Korpela 2009: 4). Likewise, in Germany, responsibility is devolved to regions and municipalities which also resource provision. However some central support offered in the form of on-going funding to the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma and the Documentation and Culture Centre. Particularly in the case of Germany,

38 A detailed breakdown of financing, showing the respective proportions contributed by structural funds (ERDF) and the national budget, is given in Annex 2 of the Discussion Paper.

more prosperous Sinti and Roma donors sometimes offer funds to NGOs. France, too, devolves responsibility to regions and municipalities. However, like Finland, state support was offered when a national law placed new obligations on municipalities to provide accommodation — in this case sites and stopping places. In addition mobile classrooms, reception centres and distance learning are supported centrally, while a national level Directorate General for Social Action subsidises local NGOs providing social and educational support.

C. Lessons learned

The discussions at the Peer Review focussed on five questions addressing housing, education, providing an integrated approach, institutional structure and funding. The previous section on the situation in host and peer countries is arranged in the same way to aid comparison with information in this section.

Housing: How can a Roma housing programme meet the accommodation needs of highly differentiated groups?

Topics include: Integration — a long-term process, respect for people's wishes, mediators, support, sensitisation, integrated housing, loans, nomadism, housing as a right

The challenge of providing adequate housing for Roma people currently living in unacceptable conditions is daunting, costly and raising many difficulties. To achieve progress in providing this basis for their integration, a long-term process would be required. Experience from other countries confirms this view and the present-day situation in Greece is comparable to that in Spain two decades earlier. The positive lesson from Spain was that a systematic, coordinated and resolute approach could result in a substantial reduction in the proportion of Roma settlements needing to be rebuilt. However, while in Spain the rapid growth of cities had actually helped promote Roma integration by the gradual enclosure of settlements on the outskirts within expanding suburban boundaries,[39] in Greece developers' need for land had led to forced evictions of Roma from urban shantytown sites (Kalogirou 2009: 1).

The Roma population in Greece, as elsewhere, is extremely diverse and to assist the effectiveness of rehousing initiatives people's own wishes have to be taken into consideration and respected. While some Roma would prefer to remain among their own kinsfolk, other families might wish to move to integrated housing among the majority population. Particularly in the latter case the involvement of mediators can help both Roma and non-Roma residents appreciate each other's perspectives and tolerate differences. Examples from Germany and Finland demonstrate that anti-Roma prejudices

39 Therefore encouraging their inclusion in the urban masterplan.

could be overcome if newcomers were given support before and after their relocation and the host population sensitised in advance. Indeed insufficient appreciation of the need for pro-Roma measures can be seen as a factor in the slow progress of Roma programmes elsewhere. Unless remedied, lack of popular support might jeopardise Greek plans. Although integrated housing is envisaged in the proposed, long-term Greek programme, the need for short-term, non-integrated accommodation was also accepted.

A principal way of rehousing Roma in the previous Greek Action Plan had been by offering them housing loans for mortgages. This was seen as an innovative way of tackling the accommodation problems of Roma, while at the same time encouraging their integration among non-Roma. Social criteria had been used to determine eligibility, prioritising women and the protection of minors, but as yet no statistics are available on the impact of loans on promoting inclusion. However one of the first loan projects[40] had illustrated the sort of problems that might arise with this scheme for although loan recipients had bought new houses, they reportedly then moved back to their old settlement thus preventing the local authority from demolishing it. The issue of loans proved controversial. There were allegations that these had been given to people higher in the Roma social pyramid and therefore had not solved the housing problems of the great mass of socially excluded Roma[41] and that clientelism had been involved in some instances but these claims were disputed.

Discussion of nomadism as a phenomenon supported the picture of this way of life dying out as a consequence of changing economic conditions rather than due to repressive measures. This is the case in both Greece and France where former nomads now tend to migrate only seasonally but return each year to a fixed base. In Finland the travelling lifestyle had persisted out of necessity rather than from choice and Roma had welcomed the provision of housing following the 1976 legislation. In France from 2012 onwards housing applicants, including travellers, will have the right to take court action to have

40 See Guy (2009: 13).

41 This repeated the point made in the Host Country Report that '[a]lthough the intention of the State was clear, in regard to the housing characteristics that were the goal of this policy [i.e. Roma living in tents and shacks], this intention did not translate into a criterion for the selection of beneficiaries' (Kalogirou 2009: 7).

their housing needs met. Eventually, the EU might come to view housing as a right.

Education: How should the main barriers to Roma educational integration be overcome?

Topics include: Reasons for low education participation, pre-school education, support for pupils, integrated education, adult education, measures for travellers, cultural identity

National research has given a stark picture of the educational situation of Greek Roma, revealing that over half of older people were functionally illiterate and had not attended school at all. And in spite of the previous Programme, which had included education initiatives to help improve school attendance, over half of parents still reported having children who had never attended school. Parents gave various reasons for non-attendance, especially the need for their children to work, but attending school did not appear to improve Roma employment prospects.

Education had been regarded as crucial for the social inclusion of future generations but the previous policy, although basically sound, suffered from uneven implementation and failure by schools to follow the recommendations. Other factors contributing to low levels of educational participation were the inaccessibility of schools from remote Roma settlements, the lack of public transport and the absence of pre-school education. Early intervention is widely regarded as a way of preventing the transmission of Roma impoverishment from generation to generation but faces the problem in Greece that compulsory education only starts at the age of six. As well as giving children a headstart, pre-school education also means that Roma women have more opportunities for seeking work outside their homes. EU education ministers have resolved that 95%of all European children should receive early childhood education by 2020.

Accompanying the Spanish success in rehousing Roma, similar advances had been made in education with almost 100% of Spanish Roma children now attending school up to the statutory leaving age of 16 and almost 70% of 3–5 year-olds currently receiving non-compulsory pre-school education. Similar

excuses had been given by Roma parents for their children's absence from school but consequently subsidies had been paid to families and although not ideal practice, this strategy had produced positive results.[42]

Support for pupils in encouraging school enrolment and preventing drop-outs is important and several positive practices exist in Germany, Finland and Spain. There is also evidence that a comprehensive support system — comprising teachers, mediators and social auxiliaries — could improve Roma school attendance. In this context the use of Roma school assistants can be seen as beneficial, although not exclusively to help Roma pupils. Greece, too, is proposing to adopt comparable measures.

A major educational issue is the problem of providing integrated education rather than separate schools or classes in a climate of widespread prejudice and faced with opposition from non-Roma parents. This is particularly problematic in transition countries where a common method of segregating Roma children has been to assign many of them to special schools for those with learning difficulties. Recent Hungarian legislation to counter school segregation had become necessary after the end of communism, when greater parental choice had led to *de facto* segregation. Now integrated schools are given significant additional funding if they have many pupils whose parents have very low educational attainments,[43] whilst legal action can be taken against municipalities continuing to segregate children. The law had achieved only a limited impact initially but recent court cases have improved the situation.

Experience in Germany demonstrates that new integrated schools could be established without the need for legislation against segregation provided that sufficient support was provided, in this case by a combination of mediators and volunteers. However local campaigns to counter prejudice were needed, as were broad-based, media programmes aimed at changing negative popular attitudes. While bussing Roma children to different districts had proved an effective means of desegregating schools in some circumstances, this was not always practicable and in any case did not necessarily guarantee

42 A similar system of allowances to parents for their children's school attendance had been introduced in Greece as part of the previous Programme (MESP 2008a: 7).

43 This criterion was adopted due to difficulties in defining Roma ethnicity.

raised educational levels. Therefore, given that desegregation is a very slow process, as a first step the standard of education in segregated schools should be improved.

However, discussions about education do not only concern children, who in Roma demographics account for around half of the population. Focus should also be on those who had missed the opportunity of formal education. In Greece and elsewhere the many older Roma in this situation would greatly benefit from adult education initiatives, particularly those who had followed a travelling lifestyle. In France measures for travellers include the requirement for schools to accept travellers' children for whatever length of time their parents were resident in the municipality and, as in some areas of Greece, mobile schools follow groups on their travels.

Research in Greece had found that many Roma parents believed that schools were hostile to their culture and dignity, although not that Roma avoided school to preserve their cultural identity. There is disagreement whether Romani culture and history should be taught as a distinct part of the Greek school curriculum. This is now being considered in consultation with the Council of Europe but some Roma representatives oppose separate textbooks, arguing that Roma were an integral part of Greek history and that their culture and customs were very similar to those of the rest of the Greek population. However there is widespread support for the idea that teachers and principals should receive training on how to work with different groups, and school curricula should give insights into minority cultures as well as majority ones.

Integrated approach: Does an integrated approach, linking housing and education initiatives with employment, health and welfare aspects, offer more sustainability?

Topics include: Integrated approach, social support, employment, health and welfare initiatives

The best way to tackle the interlinked problems afflicting Roma communities is by pursuing an integrated, multi-sectoral approach, where related initiatives are directed simultaneously at key areas. The whole process

should be viewed from a long-term perspective and carefully planned accordingly. However plans that appeared at first sight to be integrated programmes sometimes proved to have flaws which undermined the eventual aims and consequently their sustainability. In Croatia and transition countries for example essential elements such as employment schemes were missing and short-term measures served to prolong or even intensify housing segregation, thus proving counter-productive in their effects. An ever-present danger was that less than ideal projects, adopted to make an immediate impact and justified as an intermediate step, tended to become permanent and so formed a barrier to progress. In contrast, a French pilot project on housing but including many other aspects had been successful due to effective coordination between the State, local authorities and local responsible bodies and also to the social support offered to both Roma and the local community before, during and after the six-year programme. The scheme had also involved the employment of Roma men in building their new houses and a study had been made of the relationships between the different Roma families, so that friends were housed close to each other and enemies were kept apart.

There is a need to improve dissemination of such examples of good practice. Published materials produced by the Council of Europe can serve as a guide, presenting the basic elements of a viable, long-term Roma policy. The Council's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities can also be a valuable mechanism for measuring improvements. However such monitoring and evaluation activities require reliable data and indicators to assess effectiveness of interventions. In the context of international cooperation, the Greek government might want to consider becoming a member of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, which Spain had recently joined. The Decade can offer a simple solution to achieving an effective integrated approach, since one of the key points emerging from Decade debates was that once Roma housing had become part of the urban masterplan, all problems of access to schools, health and transport were automatically solved.

Employment is a fundamental element but one of the most difficult to incorporate into an integrated approach. This can be exemplified by the

common experience of Roma in Spain and Greece, where work was increasingly hard to find because modern society had less and less need of the Roma's traditional skills. Paying Roma to build their own houses had been utilised as part of integrated programmes in some countries but in itself provided only short-term employment. A more sustainable approach was to undertake local labour market studies and on the basis of these provide skills' assessments and related training, as in the Spanish *ACCEDER* programme. However another way of improving Roma qualifications would be by validating their previous professional experience, so that Roma with practical experience but no diploma could take relevant tests and receive official certification of their skills.

In spite of their known lower life expectancy and poorer health status, health programmes for Roma have been relatively few. Some of these can be criticised as stigmatising or inappropriate. Instead a positive action approach should be taken, as adopted by the European Commission in the racial equality directive. The Host Country Report had mentioned the welfare issues afflicting some Roma settlements and the considerable numbers of Roma inmates in Greek prisons, especially women and juveniles whose most common offence was selling drugs. A special action plan to help this group of prisoners should be advocated.

Institutional structure: What institutional and managerial structures are desirable for effective management and cooperation of participating bodies?

Topics include: Administrative structures, municipal participation, coordinating units, Roma NGOs

The experience of several peer countries confirms the importance of well organised and clearly defined administrative structures in planning and implementing effective Roma programmes. A comprehensive model presented in this respect is that of Spain where three factors had been crucial: An early commitment to put the Roma issue on the political agenda and to establish the legal framework to enable part of the national budget to be devoted to Roma inclusion projects had led to the creation of a special unit within the general state administration to ensure coordination. Close

involvement of municipalities as the implementing agencies for projects was crucial, as was ensuring that Spanish Roma had proper access to social services and to education. Mediators were vital to this process, as were social workers and Roma NGOs.

Furthermore, active municipal participation is essential, since it is at local level that concrete decisions are taken affecting specific Roma groups and their future integration into non-Roma communities. But local authorities also have to cooperate and coordinate their activities with broader-based agencies. At the same time there has to be effective communication with Roma people, so that they share ownership of initiatives taken on their behalf rather than remaining as passive and possibly reluctant beneficiaries.

In Finland, for example, there are currently both national and regional bodies for Roma affairs and within municipalities there are twenty cross-sectoral working groups dealing with Roma issues. Half of the representatives in these working groups are local Roma, and efforts are made to ensure diversity within that Roma representation by including those less likely to have their voices heard, such as women, people with disabilities, young people, NGOs and the like. Roma representatives in the local groups also pass useful information and ideas back up to the national-level representatives. France, too, has a national commission bringing together representatives from national and local government and relevant organisations and there are also similar structures at local level in which Roma participate.

In the first Greek programme similar structures had been put in place with the overall coordinating role assumed by an Inter-ministerial Committee, a pattern which had also been adopted in several transition countries during the accession process. Following the launch of the Decade of Roma Inclusion most member countries of the Decade now have inter-ministerial councils on Roma issues in place whilst a few, like Romania, have also established dedicated coordinating units to supervise day-to-day work. Municipal coordinating councils and local Roma coordinating offices exist in a number of Decade countries and a recent Decade study has been made of institutional arrangements.

Greece might establish such a coordinating unit, preferably linked to the Prime Minister's office to ensure that Roma issues continue to be given high priority. Also, in view of the centralised governance structures in Greece, binding local level pacts seem to be useful, which would also cover the monitoring and assessment of projects. However these latter functions would require the collection of more reliable data than that already available from limited surveys. Government officials' might not have sufficient knowledge of local structures to enable productive cooperation between the centre and periphery.

However, the focus should not be exclusively on structures and administrative arrangements, local support groups are also invaluable and all citizens have a part to play since improvements in living conditions for Roma represent improvements for everyone. Along the same lines international comparative research on social inclusion has offered convincing evidence in support of the counter-intuitive truth that unequal societies harm everyone, not just the poor.[44]

Greece has both Roma and pro-Roma NGOs with mixed memberships which address Roma issues. Furthermore there are Roma councillors in local authorities, while Roma candidates also contest national elections.

In Spain experience from the most prominent Roma NGO in that country, the Spanish *Fundación Secretariado Gitano* (FSG) has demonstrated the need for partnership too, not only between different levels of government but also with organisations working in the field, to help to prevent a duplication of effort. Coherent intervention across all the sectors was vital since, in its absence, employment initiatives were frequently not matched with education and training programmes. Therefore strategies had to be negotiated directly with those involved and in this NGO's experience the best means of finding the right pathway to Roma inclusion was sitting down and talking with families involved.

44 See Wilkinson and Pickett (2009).

Access to funding: What types of available funding are most appropriate for Roma integration initiatives?

Topics include: Stable budgets, municipal financial commitment, EU structural funds, Roma NGOs

A fundamental element in Spain's success had been the remarkable consensus achieved between rival political parties, preventing arguments over Roma policies and their cost becoming an electoral issue. In Greece evaluation had shown that one of the constraints had been the absence of a continuous budget. In contrast, a key feature of the Spanish programme had been the earmarking of a continuous, stable budget by central government, thus avoiding interruptions in funding for ongoing projects. Equally significant was the direct involvement of regions and municipalities, both as regards funding and staffing. The Spanish state funds Roma NGOs in three distinct ways. Firstly, the national budget finances the Roma National Development Programme. Secondly, citizens can donate a small portion of their personal taxes to NGOs. Finally, the state budget includes funds for social action by NGOs. Meanwhile state financial support for local-level initiatives was matched by local authority funding. This was important not only as an additional resource, provided by tax revenues raised at local level, but these authorities' own stake in projects which affected their electors was affirmed by municipal financial commitment. As an example of stable funding, somewhat analogous to the Spanish system, the case of Montenegro can be cited, where a fixed percentage of the national budget is allocated to Roma programmes each year.

While Spain and Greece can be seen as setting a good example for others in combining national financing with funds drawn from EU sources, the issue of EU funding raises the question why the recent evaluation had concluded that Greece's Roma programmes had made insufficient use of EU structural funds (ESF). This can be explained by the fact that housing interventions had drawn exclusively on national financing, even though EU resources could have been used in addition. Nevertheless resources from the European Social Fund had been utilised to a certain extent but unfortunately the national programme for Roma had been designed and approved after all the operational programmes and the National Strategic Reference Framework

had already been approved. Ominously future prospects for EU funding also do not seem to be promising for the new Greek strategy was only just starting to be discussed when the operational programmes of the fourth programming period had already closed. Therefore future attempts to draw on EU resources are likely to encounter the same difficulties as previously.

A good way of attracting EU funding is to create the conditions for a local partnership with NGOs, municipalities and enterprises. EU structural funding offers many opportunities for horizontal and vertical coordination, and exerting influence at local level. Some NGOs, such as the Spanish *FSG* have taken advantage of this, as well as subcontracting ESF projects. The EURoma network, whose twelve members include Greece, Spain and Hungary, aims to disseminate information about these funds and encourages their use to promote the social inclusion of Roma.[45]

However a familiar problem is that successful Roma NGOs like the *FSG*, with trained personnel and experience, are the exception and the more usual case is that Roma NGOs do not have sufficient trained staff to present credible applications for such funding. EU money is usually granted to state agencies or to professionals who know how to design fundable projects. Therefore Roma civil society organisations should be provided with capacity-building support in order to enable them to access EU funding more effectively and successfully.

45 EURoma http://www.euromanet.eu The Technical Secretariat is managed by the Spanish Roma NGO *FSG*.

D. Conclusions

Housing

- Providing adequate and decent housing for Roma will be a long-term, complex process.
- Integrated housing, where Roma and non-Roma populations live side by side, is preferable where Roma would wish this. Interim non-integrated housing may be necessary in the short-term.
- Interim measures tend to become permanent. These may serve to increase exclusion, e.g. social housing in marginal locations, far from work opportunities, schools and services. These risks should be carefully assessed.
- Roma themselves should be consulted in each case about moving and their wishes respected.
- Integration needs thorough preparation and support has to be available for all concerned, Roma and non-Roma alike, both before and after moving. Sensitive mediators can assist the process.
- Forced integration is counterproductive but resolution is needed in the face of opposition.
- Loans can assist integration and social criteria can be prioritised (e.g. women and children). However housing loans can be problematic with regard to eligibility and repayments.
- Municipalities should be legally required to provide sites and stopping places for travellers. They should desist from carrying out forced evictions.
- Existing or future Roma housing areas should be included in the urban masterplan, or at least be part of a broader development plan, rather than being treated in isolation.

- A legal right to housing, as in Finland and France, would be a positive move.

Education

- Integrated education is required as it promotes social inclusion. De-segregation measures, as in Hungary, may be necessary.
- Allowances to parents, though not ideal, can increase school attendance.
- Free pre-school education is crucial as the basis for future school attendance and attainment, and avoiding the inter-generational transmission of poverty.
- School transport, for remote or inaccessible settlements, should be provided.
- Support for pupils is needed at pre-school and primary levels, possibly from assistant teachers. Mentoring and scholarships are a stimulus at secondary and tertiary level.
- Parental involvement schemes improve children's school attendance and performance. Roma mediators should have a more significant role to raise parents' awareness.
- Second-chance initiatives can improve job opportunities for adults without education.
- Mobile units and educational record cards are effective for traveller children.
- Greek Roma participants want Roma culture in curriculum but taught as part of Greek culture.

Employment

- Employment problems lie at the heart of exclusion with widespread Roma underemployment throughout Europe leading to severe poverty and multiple related problems.
- Roma unemployment is difficult to solve due to their lack of qualifications and discrimination but benefit dependency is no solution and not welcomed by Roma.
- Roma now mainly work in the grey economy, excluding them from social insurance cover.
- Integrated vocation training linked to jobs (e.g. *ACCEDER*) is the most promising initiative.
- Validation of previous work experience to provide qualifications is a positive option.
- Public works schemes are ineffective since a training element or job prospects are rare.
- Employment on Roma housing construction, as in transition countries, can be a useful strategy.
- Provision of pre-school education helps Roma women seek and take up jobs outside the home.
- Anti-discrimination prosecutions, as against German employers, can be effective.

Health and Welfare

- Poor health among Roma is caused by poverty, insanitary living conditions and deficient diets.
- Lack of access to medical and social services is still a major problem in Greece and elsewhere.

- Vaccination and screening campaigns bring immediate improvements but need to be continued.
- Health education is important, particularly in relation to women, girls and children, but a patronising or stigmatising approach must be avoided.
- Socio-medical centres, offering counselling, are effective and popular but the role of mediators should be more important and links to mainstream services need to be strengthened.
- Mobile units are valuable for reaching remote communities.
- Delinquency in excluded settlements requires supportive remedial measures.
- Roma are often willing to work with the authorities to tackle social problems which are damaging their communities and such positive cooperation should be encouraged.

Integrated approach

- National plans are appropriate and desirable, even in states with devolved governance. Ultimately initiatives must be delivered locally, and can be, even without a national plan.
- National plans are effective in putting the issue of Roma inclusion on the political agenda.
- Complex, multi-sectoral initiatives are preferable, since tackling Roma social exclusion entails dealing with interlinked problems simultaneously (e.g. simply placing people in adequate housing without tackling employment and skills issues is likely to create benefit dependency).
- Broader, non-targeted policies that include Roma are desirable, as the ultimate aim is for Roma to receive mainstream services as

citizens. This approach can reduce critical backlash but risks Roma being forgotten in general strategies, so specific positive actions are also needed.

- Where possible non-Roma and Roma should benefit mutually from pro-Roma initiatives (e.g. in schemes for improved infrastructure, provision of kindergartens, vocational training, etc.).

- Inclusion on the basis of consensus is preferable but anti-discrimination legislation, including transposed EU directives, should also be used in combination with social inclusion policies.

- A two-way approach to integration should stress the mutual rights and obligations both of Roma and of the non-Roma population, among whom Roma live.

- Sensitisation of people to Roma issues and Roma rights, both nationally and locally, is essential for better social inclusion. Clear information can help to overcome fears and prejudices.

- Lack of ethnically disaggregated data, due to presumed legal restrictions, prevents reliable estimates of population sizes, accurate assessment of needs and monitoring of progress.

- The Decade of Roma Inclusion offers a means of sharing information and experience.

- Council of Europe resources can inform the design of long-term, integrated policies.

Institutional structure

- A comprehensive administrative structure should be established, including Roma representation, with overall responsibility for project design, implementation, monitoring and assessment. A dedicated budget should be set and priorities assigned, based on an integrated approach.

- An inter-ministerial committee, or its equivalent, should coordinate participation of ministries.
- A dedicated administrative unit, possibly linked to the Prime Minister's Office, can strengthen coordination of policies and projects and provision of technical support.
- A leading role in national Roma-related policy can be taken by one of several ministries.
- Advisory boards at national and regional level can offer important guidance and feedback.
- Working parties, particularly at regional and local levels, including officials, civil partners, NGOs, other stakeholders and beneficiaries' representatives, are valuable tools in implementing projects.
- Active municipal participation is essential since interventions are delivered at local level.
- Binding local-level pacts would help ensure that participants fulfil their obligations.
- Local non-Roma support groups should be established before starting integration projects.
- There should be Roma representation on all bodies and at every stage of planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating Roma-related initiatives.

Funding

- A continuous budget should be dedicated to Roma inclusion to ensure sustainability of policies and practical measures, as well as of associated structures and bodies.

- Attempts to reach political consensus should be made at every governmental level, particularly local, to prevent Roma policy or funding becoming contentious electoral or budgetary issues.

- Co-funding by municipalities from their own budgets is important for making them stakeholders in local projects rather than passive recipients.

- Grant funding, often on an annual basis, has the disadvantage that continuous funding is not necessarily secured, even in the case of rolling grants. Resulting insecurity can jeopardise advance planning, ordering materials and equipment and retention of key personnel.

- More use should be made of structural funds which the EU is ready to provide.

- Countries should join the EURoma network which disseminates information about structural funds and encourages their use to promote social inclusion of Roma.

- More funds should be devoted to capacity building in Roma NGOs to enable them to apply for EU and other funding on an equal footing with better resourced and more experienced non-Roma NGOs.

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Integrated Programme for the Social Inclusion of Roma

Host country: **Greece**

Peer countries: **Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Spain**

The Roma population in Greece faces acute social exclusion that can only be solved through organised long-term inclusion policies covering all the various aspects involved.

An "Integrated Programme for the Social inclusion of Roma" was introduced in 2001, covering aspects ranging from housing, employment, education, health, welfare and culture to athletics. However, the programme was not as successful as hoped, largely because it did not have a committed budget of its own and it was financed on an ad hoc basis as well as because of the lack of a management authority for its coordination and implementation.

A study has been commissioned to assess current policies and record the situation of the Roma, with a view to developing a long-term strategy and more appropriate institutional and financial arrangements to implement inclusion policies.

The intention is also to draw on the experience of other Member States in order to improve the chances of future efforts in this regard being effective.

The outcome of the Peer Review could help to define a common model for an integrated approach to the social inclusion of Roma in all EU Member States.