



Local Engagement for Roma Inclusion

(LERI) Project

Community Summary

Brno, Czech Republic

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights

This community summary forms part of FRA's Local Engagement for Roma Inclusion (LERI) project. LERI is a qualitative action research project under [FRA's multi-annual Roma Programme](#). It was developed in response to the [European Commission's Communication on an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020](#). LERI brings together local authorities and residents, in particular Roma, to investigate how they can best be involved in Roma integration actions, and identify which aspects of these actions work, which do not, and why. The aim of the project is to facilitate the engagement of all local stakeholders, including Roma, in joint efforts to enable Roma inclusion. The experience gained and the lessons learned during the process will help improve the design, implementation and monitoring of Roma integration policies and actions at the local level.

LERI is the first FRA project to test participatory action research methodology. By identifying the key factors that lead to the success or failure of local integration activities, the project is helping to improve the planning of effective integration programmes for the future. At the same time, facilitating engagement at local level empowers all those involved, building their capacity to participate as equal partners with local administrations and civil society, and enabling a shared understanding of which measures need to be taken and how their implementation can be monitored. The project is being carried out in 21 localities across 11 EU Member States (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and the United Kingdom).

LOCALITIES

Pavlikeni,	Bulgaria
Stara Zagora,	Bulgaria
Brno,	Czech Republic
Sokolov,	Czech Republic
Helsinki,	Finland
Jyväskylä,	Finland
Lille Metropole,	France
Strasbourg,	France
Aghia Varvara,	Greece
Megara,	Greece
Besence,	Hungary
Mátraverebély,	Hungary
Mantova,	Italy
Bologna,	Italy
Aiud,	Romania
Cluj-Napoca,	Romania
Hrabušice,	Slovakia
Rakytník,	Slovakia
Cordoba,	Spain
Madrid,	Spain
Medway,	UK

Brno, Czech Republic

Overview of the country context

The share of Roma in the Czech population is usually estimated at about 2% (200,000).¹

The situation of the Roma people in the Czech Republic is difficult. They face higher levels of unemployment than the rest of the population, and have often difficulties with housing.² These difficulties are both the result of ethnic discrimination and the low level of education of many Roma.³

The Roma population makes up a significant part of the socially excluded population. According to the FRA Roma Pilot Survey 2011, about 80% of Roma in the Czech Republic live in households below national poverty lines. The low level of education of the Roma is considered to be a key factor (in addition to other factors) of their labour market disadvantage, which is apparent in their low participation rate (around one third of Roma have paid employment) and high

unemployment rates⁴. Specifically, 74% of the Roma have primary education at most, while in the overall population it is 20%⁵. Their educational structure has improved within the past two generations in the sense that the share of those with no education dropped significantly; however, only to the extent of primary education⁶. One of the problems is the persistent segregation of Roma children into special schools and recently into 'practical' schools⁷.

The Roma population is more concentrated in cities and in the regions affected by higher unemployment and structural change (formerly centres of heavy industry).

The European Union and the Czech government have launched various initiatives to improve the situation of the Roma. As of 2015, the Czech Republic has a Roma Integration Strategy 2020, which was preceded by the National Concept for Roma Integration 2010-2013⁸. In practical terms to the support

¹ Gabal, I. and Víšek, P. (2010), *Východiska strategie boje proti sociálnímu vyloučení: Východiska pro formulaci a implementaci politiky začleňování obyvatel vyloučených lokalit do české společnosti a její sociální a ekonomické struktury*, p. 4, available at: http://www.gac.cz/userfiles/File/nase_prace_v_ystupy/GAC_Strategie_soc_vyloucení.pdf

² FRA (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights) (2014), *Roma Survey – Data in focus. Poverty and employment: the situation of Roma in 11 EU Member States*, Luxembourg, Publications Office, <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2014/pove-ty-and-employment-situation-roma-11-eu-member-states>.

³ Ombudsman (2014), *Souhrnná zpráva o činnosti veřejného ochránce práv 2013*, Kancelář veřejného ochránce práv, p. 90, available at: www.ochrance.cz/fileadmin/user_upload/zpravy_pro_poslaneckou_snemovnu/Souhrnna-zprava_2013_PDF_A.pdf; Sirovátka, T. (2011), *Promoting Social Inclusion of Roma - A Study of National Policies - Czech Republic*, European Commission DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, p. 2.

⁴ FRA (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights) (2014), *Roma Survey – Data in focus. Poverty and employment: the situation of Roma in 11 EU Member States*, Luxembourg, Publications office, available at:

<http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2014/pove-ty-and-employment-situation-roma-11-eu-member-states>

⁵ Sirovátka, T. (2011), *Promoting Social Inclusion of Roma - A Study of National Policies - Czech Republic*, European Commission DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, p. 2.

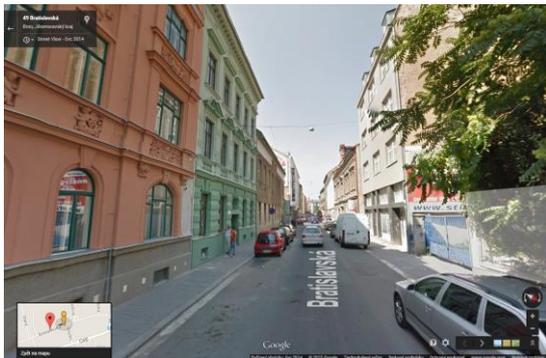
⁶ National Census (2001), Czech Statistical Office, available at: www.czso.cz/csu/edicniplan.nsf/

⁷ Amnesty International and ERRC (2012), *Five More Years of Injustice: Segregated Education for Roma in the Czech Republic*, available at:

www.errc.org/cms/upload/file/five-more-years-of-injustice-november-2012.pdf

⁸ Vláda České republiky (2015), *Strategie romské integrace do roku 2020*, and Government of the Czech Republic (2009), *Roma integration concept for 2010-2013*, both available at: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma-integration/czech-republic/national-strategy/national_cs.htm

to municipalities in developing strategies at local level has been provided by the Agency for Social Inclusion⁹. A variety of projects have been launched to support the inclusion of Roma, funded mainly through the Structural Funds of the European Union. However, in most projects and initiatives until now Roma were not enabled to participate as active “agents of change”. The aim of the LERI project in Brno and Sokolov is therefore to strengthen the participation of Roma in the process of social inclusion.



Brno, Bratislavská Street

Locality background information

Brno is the Czech Republic’s second-largest city located in South Moravia Region and has a population of around 380,000. The Roma population in the region is relatively low, and mostly concentrated in the city of Brno.¹⁰ In terms of unemployment and housing, the city does not deviate from differ from the rest of the country, however, it is also worth mentioning that the district of Brno-centre has the highest proportion of long-term unemployed in the region.¹¹

⁹ Czech Republic/Agentura pro sociální začleňování, available at: <http://www.socialni-zaclenovani.cz/>

¹⁰ Magistrát města Brna. (n.d.), *Etnické menšiny a cizinci*, available at: <http://socialnipecer.brno.cz/skupina/etnickemensiny-a-cizinci/text/164/charakteristika-cilove-skupiny%20/>

¹¹ SPF Group (2012), *Development Strategy of the South Moravian Region 2020*, available at: [www.kr-jihomoravsky.cz/Default.aspx?ID=195430&Ty](http://www.kr-jihomoravsky.cz/Default.aspx?ID=195430&TypeID=61)
[peID=61](http://www.kr-jihomoravsky.cz/Default.aspx?ID=195430&Ty)

Nevertheless, Brno has been actively developing integration measures, and it can be stated that its activity level stands out in the region. Over the past few decades, Brno’s economic development has been fuelled by its textile and mechanical engineering industries. Today, research and development projects, and sectors with high added-value, such as biotechnology and biomedicine, are playing an increasingly important role in the city’s economy.

According to the Agency for Social Inclusion (ASI) there are around 15,000 to 17,000 Roma residents in the city of Brno, who are also considered to be the least integrated and the most socially excluded ethnic minority.¹² Many Roma in Brno do speak Romani, but all of them speak Czech, and Czech is also the language of written communication for them.

While Roma exclusion has a multidimensional character, the most serious problem for Roma in Brno is experienced in the area of housing.¹³



Brno, Social houses

The majority of excluded Roma live in rundown buildings located close to the centre. In recent years, this area has undergone a process of gentrification, and tenants considered ‘problematic’ can often face evictions or are moved out of the city centre to other parts.

¹² Magistrát města Brna. (n.d.), *Etnické menšiny a cizinci*, available at: <http://socialnipecer.brno.cz/skupina/etnickemensiny-a-cizinci/text/164/charakteristika-cilove-skupiny%20/>

¹³ IQ Roma servis, telephone interview with project manager, May 21, 2014.

Many have been driven to temporary hostels which have proliferated during the last five years. The indebtedness of inhabitants of municipal flats is also a serious problem reinforced by severe discrimination in the housing market. Currently the city has no comprehensive social housing policy, but the new local government promises to address the problem.

Objectives and thematic focus of the LERI project

The objective of the Brno LERI project is to support Roma in addressing their housing needs and preferences within the context of recent local government efforts to produce a comprehensive social housing policy. The project will also seek to directly support pilots in the areas of housing, especially projects and activities which aim to end homelessness among families with children through the provision of housing and supportive services.

Activities implemented and people involved in the needs assessment phase

The LERI project will be based on a combination of working methods and formats, such as interviews, meetings, trainings and social events. A main part of the needs assessment phase will be conducted within the strategic planning process of the local partnership which was established by the Agency for Social Inclusion. The key stakeholders cooperating in LERI are some of the main representatives in the civil as well as in the state sector, including: the IQ Roma Service Association, the government Agency for Social Inclusion, the Roma Advisor of the Municipality, the Social Care Department, the Department of Property, Podane ruce, o. p. s., the Brno

Salvation Army, the Municipality of Brno-Centre, and the Property management firm of Brno-Centre.

The activities will be based on the local needs assessment, and support the visibility of particular situation and possible solutions of Roma within the social housing policy.

Expected outcomes

The main expectation is to bring the housing needs and preferences of local Roma to the local policy debate and incorporate them into the needs assessment of the local social housing policy. The project will also support the local social housing pilot projects by a firm database and evaluation tools for the planned interventions.



Brno, Svatoplukova Street

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