



Local Engagement for Roma Inclusion

(LERI) Project

Community Summary

Strasbourg, France

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

Strasbourg, France

Overview of the country context

In France there are two different populations which fall under the umbrella term "Roma": "Gens du voyage" and Roma originating from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). The term "gens du voyage" is an administrative term used exclusively in France, referring initially to those with a nomadic way of life and engaged in itinerant work, and now also including those residing in mobile homes.¹ Gens du voyage have French nationality, although not all are nomadic. The estimated number of gens du voyage varies between 250 000 and 450,000.² This group represents different ethnic groups, including ethnic Roma (manouches, gitans, roms, etc.) and travellers. Currently, most Roma from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) are from Romania (between 11,000 and 19,000 persons),³ others come from the Bulgaria, Hungary or the Balkan area: Serbia, Bosnia Herzegovina and Kosovo.⁴

Roma families generally have a low income and are without a fixed domicile.⁵ Since 2010, Roma have become a specific question of public action, and therefore a political issue, which has inspired the development of specific projects of ethnical positive discrimination.⁶ Despite dedicated Roma integration projects, many Roma are living in segregated and disadvantaged areas, and can face evictions from the camps.⁷

Access to schools is not guaranteed for Roma unless they reside in social housing, however Roma generally live in slums and

squats, and face difficulties in finding housing.

Despite this general context, there are positive national improvements with an Inter-ministerial Delegate for Housing responsible for advancing the inter-ministerial strategy for Roma integration. The conclusion of transitory measures which were applied to Romanian and Bulgarian citizens, is a recent trend which may contribute to the improvement of the local integration strategies. Since January 2014, Romanian and Bulgarian citizens have had access to national employment public services, and no longer require the Prefect's authorization to work.

Locality background information

Strasbourg is the capital of the Alsace region in Eastern France and is the official seat of several European institutions, including the Council of Europe, the European Parliament, the Eurocorps, as well as the Ombudsman of the European Union. Located close to the German border, it is the capital of the Bas-Rhin County. There are approximately 164 Gens du voyage living in the reception area (41 caravan places). Hundreds of Roma families originating from Central and Eastern Europe (about 450 people) live in Strasbourg. CEE Roma have been arriving in this region since 1990. Roma of Bulgarian and Romanian origin have been EU nationals since 2007. The number of Romanian and Bulgarian Roma has stagnated since 2008, however, some continue to arrive in Strasbourg, coming mainly from Italy. Around 250 live in 'temporary integration spaces' (*espace temporaire d'insertion*) and around 200 in slums in five different sites (Petite Forêt,

¹ Council of Europe (2012), *Descriptive Glossary of terms relating to Roma issues*, available at:

<http://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680088ea9>

² Council of Europe (2012), *Estimates on Roma Population in European Countries*, available at: <http://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680088ea9>

³ According to a report of the Délégation Interministérielle à l'Hébergement et à l'Accès au Logement 16,949 persons in September 2013.

⁴ Observatoire et veille sociale Aréas, La Sauvegarde du Nord

⁵ Réseau associative Romá Nord-Pas de Calais (2011), *Préjugés et discriminations*, available at: www.lasauvegardedunord.fr/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/LIVRET-12p-ROMABD.pdf

⁶ Olivier Legros and Tommaso Vitale (2011), *Roms migrants en ville : pratiques et politiques en Italie et en France*, GéoCarrefour 86/1.

⁷ Amnesty International (2013), *Condamnés à l'errance. Les expulsions forcées des Roms en France*.

Petite Colline, Impasse de l'Ecluse, Îlot des Hongrois, la Montagne de l'Elsau).⁸



Roma settlement in Strasbourg

As regards the Roma inclusion policy, the city is actively participating in the Departmental Scheme of Home and Habit of Travelers (*Schéma Départemental d'Accueil et d'Habitat des Gens du Voyage*) by respecting the number of places provided to Gens du voyage stated in the departmental scheme, and has a comprehensive plan for Roma from CEE countries (*Plan Global d'Amélioration de la Situation des Roms Migrants*).⁹ According to national law,¹⁰ Strasbourg is obliged to have welcoming areas with a number of places based on the local scheme. The city delegated the gens du voyage competency to *Communauté urbaine de Strasbourg*, and thus, the implementation of its obligations is shared with localities, which are part of Strasbourg Métropole and managed by a dedicated service. Regarding Roma from CEE countries, the strategy is based on a new plan proposed in response to the financial opportunities of the *Délégation interministérielle à l'hébergement et l'accès au logement* (DIHAL). There were integration projects already running, and the DIHAL political competency and financial resources have allowed Strasbourg to reinforce its integration projects. The mayor of

⁸ Interview with City of Strasbourg (2015).

⁹ Ville de Strasbourg, Direction des solidarités et de la santé, *Plan global d'amélioration de la situation des Roms migrants*, 22 April 2013, demande de financement à la DIHAL.

¹⁰ Loi n°2000-614 du 5 juillet 2000 relative à l'accueil et à l'habitat des gens du voyage

Strasbourg has committed to implement the integration plan, with the particular involvement of the deputy mayor in charge of solidarity and health, the deputy mayor in charge of European and international relations and the delegated local councillor on the issue. The city has signed up to the approach outlined in the inter-ministerial circular of 26 August 2012.¹¹

The strategy consists of a comprehensive plan to improve the situation of Roma from CEE countries. Since 2011, financial commitment has been allocated and, since 2013, an Urban and Social Management Scheme (MOUS) has addressed the prerequisite of improving living conditions in disadvantaged areas through individualised assessment of each of the families living on illegal sites and to open a second "temporary integration space" (*espace temporaire d'insertion*).

Objectives and thematic focus of the LERI project

The objectives of the LERI project in Strasbourg are to enhance Roma participation in two authorized camps with commodities: Espace 16 and Espace Hoche, and to support the capacity building for solving housing problems in those two "temporary integration spaces".



Unauthorised Roma settlement (Strasbourg)

The two thematic areas focused on by the municipality are housing and integration.¹²

¹¹ Vie Publique, *Campements illicites : un cadre d'action pour les services de l'État*, available at: www.vie-publique.fr/actualite/alaune/campements-illicites-cadre-action-pour-services-etat.html

¹² City of Strasbourg (2015).

The strategy aims to improve living conditions and stability through the two temporary spaces of inclusion in order to allow Roma to find social housing. The priority is on housing, as this may significantly influence the success of the activities, and Roma are expecting social houses. However, the LERI project will keep inclusion in mind as the key to have improved living conditions for Roma.¹³

Different PAR techniques are going to be used during the first stage in order to conduct an in-depth participatory assessment. The objectives are to run a deep consultation process, to base the activities on a consensus building process, and to provide concrete results on the impact of the community engagement.

Activities implemented and actors involved in the needs assessment phase

The goal of the different PAR techniques is to develop a shared idea for a local intervention. In order to implement a participatory needs assessment in Strasbourg, the LERI team will run the following activities:

1. Interviews and visits

This first step aims to enhance cooperation. Interviews will take place with the different local stakeholders: at the City of Strasbourg, association Croix Rouge, association Lupovino, association Horizon Amitiés, association Médecins du Monde. The goal will be to identify core problems and expectations. The LERI goals will be presented and discussed with the different stakeholders. During the visits, Roma counterparts will be identified in the Social Life Council (Conseil de Vie Sociale -C.V.S.) which is the instance of participation established by the Social Action and Family Code.¹⁴

2. Community visioning:

The objective of the LERI project is to monitor the running of the Social Life Council.

Based on interviews and meetings with local actors, the community visioning will be based on the participation in the meetings of the Social Life Council in Espace 16, one of the "temporary integration spaces." Once a month stakeholders meet in the Council to promote participation and expression of needs. The LERI team will participate in several meetings during a longer period.

From this basis, LERI experts will provide their expertise on how the implementation phase could be developed, by identifying Roma individuals or group as counterpart in the LERI project. Roma will participate in the design of the LERI project.

3. Focus group: consensus building between counterparts:

The idea is to gather all the relevant counterparts to confirm and plan activities. The definition of the activities must be realistic regarding the expectations and the objective to have concrete results.



Audience during a performing act

The activities aim to increase the participation of the community, to create opportunities for Roma and non-Roma cooperation, and to present skills/talents of Roma.

¹³ Interviews with relevant stakeholders, both Roma and non-Roma communities (2015).

¹⁴ Décret no. 2004-287, 25 March 2004, available at:

www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000437022&dateTexte=&categorieLien=id



First public speech during activities involving Roma in Strasbourg

Expected outcomes of the participatory action research

The methodological tools will be participatory and will propose concrete results. A first suggestion, based on the discussion with local stakeholders, is to participate in the running of the Social Life Council in Espace 16. Another expectation is to sustain a project of a theatre play. This project aims to give the opportunity to Roma to enhance their abilities to represent themselves and to fight against discrimination. A theatre association was identified with the competencies to build a theatre play with Roma. The entire project will be presented to Roma living in Espace Hoche in order to confirm their interest in this initiative.

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