

# Local engagement for Roma inclusion

## Locality study Brno (Czech Republic), 2016

Author: Štěpán Ripka

**DISCLAIMER:** This document was commissioned under contract by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) for the project [Local engagement for Roma inclusion](#). The information and views contained in the document do not necessarily reflect the views or the official position of FRA. The document is made publicly available for transparency and information purposes only and does not constitute legal advice or legal opinion.

## Contents

1.	Executive summary .....	3
2.	Description of the local context.....	3
	Barriers to obtaining housing .....	6
	Barriers to sustaining housing.....	6
3.	PAR methodology employed .....	7
4.	The local intervention description .....	8
	Activity 1: Assist the City of Brno in an ESIF proposal for the Rapid Rehousing pilot project for families with children.....	8
	Activity 2: Training of two Roma social workers and two Roma co- researchers .....	11
	Activity 3: Help with the organisation of a Registry Week .....	12
5.	Analysis, discussion, lessons learned .....	14
	Analysis and discussion of the use of PAR methodology .....	14
	Future plans, sustainability of the local LERI activities.....	16
6.	Conclusions and recommendations.....	16
7.	Additional Information .....	17
	Acknowledgements.....	17

## 1. Executive summary

The focus of the LERI research in Brno was to support the local planning processes of the social housing policy, promote the idea of **ending homelessness through a local social housing and support system, ensure that vulnerable groups are not excluded** from access to such a system, and to monitor the efforts of such work. The main research question of the broader housing activities, within which local LERI research was implemented, was how to start a local policy to tackle the issue of long-term stays of mainly **Roma families in temporary housing** (in hostels and shelters) in the city of Brno. The main hypothesis during the preparatory phase of the local housing pilot project (supported by the local LERI research) was to conceptualise the issues as a problem of family homelessness and to gain enough legitimacy in local politics in order to be able to put in motion a pilot project of rapid rehousing.

The local LERI team combined methods such as desk research, strategic planning with local stakeholders, workshops with international experts, the introduction and testing of new policy tools informed by science, community mobilisation and fundraising for a larger EU project.

The main result of the concerted actions supported by LERI was the **launch of the Rapid Rehousing pilot project**, which will provide **municipal flats and flexible supportive services to 50 homeless families** (ca 60 % of them Roma). The LERI research supplemented an existing initiative of Rapid Rehousing in Brno. The local LERI research in Brno consisted of: consultancy work of LERI field expert who is also main Czech expert on family homelessness; in organization and preparation of the research part of ESIF project proposal; realization of Registry week – census of family homelessness in Brno in April 2016; and training of Roma social workers and peer workers in Housing first<sup>1</sup> case management.

The need for housing stability that brings ontological security is a basic requirement that must be fulfilled. It is important to work with the municipalities who are willing to engage, however there are very few of them. This change will not happen until EU funds for local well-being are conditioned by the securing of housing and other services for the most vulnerable local populations.

**Keywords/Tags:** *Social housing, family homelessness, Brno, municipal housing, Housing First.*

## 2. Description of the local context

Brno, located in the South Moravia region, is the Czech Republic's second-largest city and has a population of around 380,000. Over the past few decades, Brno's economic development has been fuelled by its textile and mechanical engineering

---

<sup>1</sup> Housing first in this text is referred to a methodology or approach to end homelessness in general, whereas Rapid rehousing is referred to pilot project of Rapid re-housing in Brno in most cases, or Rapid re-housing approach to end homelessness in general in the US. For additional information see Kanioková, Ripka, Snopek (2016): *Ukončování bytové nouze v českých městech*. Brno: MMB. Available at:

[http://socialnibydleni.org/sites/default/files/publicFiles/SOUBORY/2016/11/19/17-37-50/psb\\_2016\\_ukoncovani\\_bezdomovectvi\\_v\\_ceskych\\_mestech.pdf](http://socialnibydleni.org/sites/default/files/publicFiles/SOUBORY/2016/11/19/17-37-50/psb_2016_ukoncovani_bezdomovectvi_v_ceskych_mestech.pdf)

All hyperlinks were accessed on 7 December 2016.

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<sup>2</sup>. All Roma speak Czech, which is their language of written communication, although many Roma also speak Romani.

While Roma exclusion is a multidimensional problem, the most serious issue in Brno is housing<sup>3</sup>. The majority of excluded Roma lived in rundown buildings located close to the city centre. These areas are currently undergoing gentrification, which has meant that the 'problematic' tenants often face eviction or are moved out of the city centre to other parts, including into temporary hostels, which have proliferated during the last five years. The fact that many of the municipal flats' inhabitants are in debt is a serious problem. And it is even worsened by severe discrimination in the housing market.

Despite this, the City of Brno and local boroughs own about 800–1 000 vacant flats (many of which are not in a fit condition). Matching the vacant flats with the needs, priorities and characteristics of the local homeless population (broadly defined by the European typology of homelessness; ETHOS<sup>4</sup>) is the main challenge.

The City of Brno is led by a coalition including the Action of Dissatisfied Citizens Party (Czech: Akce nespokojených občanů, ANO), the Christian Democrats, the Green Party and Žít Brno. The main local contacts were Member of Parliament Martin Freund from the Žít Brno party, the Deputy Lord Mayor Matěj Hollan, also from Žít Brno, who is responsible for social affairs, Deputy Klára Liptáková from the Christian Democrats who is responsible for city property, and Lord Mayor Petr Vokřál from the ANO party. The LERI local research team (comprising, most of the time, the local field expert Štěpán Ripka, and also Jakob Hurrle for some activities, and during the implementation of the local activities also two peer workers and their coordinators and co-workers from IQ Roma Servis) worked with the local working group on housing that involved stakeholders from the national level (ASI), city level (government of Brno), a national NGO (Platform for Social Housing), local NGOs (IQ Roma Servis, Salvation Army, DROM, Podané ruce), local governments of city boroughs (the mayor of Kralovo pole, a counsellor from Brno-Střed) and representatives from both city and borough social, planning and property departments.

Later, the specific activities in preparation of the project proposal especially involved Member of Parliament Martin Freund, employees of the Department of Implementation of the European Project of the City of Brno, IQ Roma Servis and the University of Ostrava. The Registry Week for families with children involved probation officers from the city, city social workers, NGOs (DROM, Salvation

---

<sup>2</sup> Magistrát města Brna. b.r. „Etnické menšiny a cizinci“. PSP - Portál sociální péče ve městě brně.

<http://socialnipece.brno.cz/skupina/etnicke-mensiny-a-cizinci/text/164/charakteristika-cilove-skupiny%20/>.

<sup>3</sup> Milota, Jan. 2014. Skype interview with IQ Roma servis project manager.

<sup>4</sup> More information on ETHOS typology can be found at FEANTSA web site: <http://www.feantsa.org/spip.php?article120>

Army, Podané ruce, o. p. s., Ratolest Brno, Teen Challenge), and a variety of formal and informal groups that participated as volunteers, especially students of social sciences from Masaryk University in Brno, and members of Platform for Social Housing.

The main local development beyond the scope of LERI was the local planning and coordination process of inclusionary strategies and projects, which grew out of the partnership between the City of Brno and the ASI. Four areas of planning were identified (housing, employment, education and public security), and coordinated efforts were put in place to involve all relevant local actors in developing a local strategy for their respective topics over the course of four months, which was then submitted to the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) for 2016–2019. These project ideas, together with tentative budgets, were to be submitted to the national managing authorities, so that allocations could be reserved for the individual projects.

Consequently, the main focus of the LERI research in Brno was to support local planning processes of social housing policy, promote the idea of ending homelessness through a local social housing and support system, ensure that vulnerable groups are not excluded from accessing the housing and support system; monitor the efforts of such work, and to enlarge the knowledge of municipal and civil society social workers on related methodologies of social integration of vulnerable groups.

The main research question of the broader housing activities, within which local LERI research was implemented, was how to start a local policy to tackle the issue of long-term stays of mainly Roma families in temporary hostels and shelters in Brno. The main hypothesis during the preparatory phase (supported by local LERI research) was that if the issues are conceptualised as a problem of family homelessness, and if state-of-the-art practices in tackling family homelessness abroad are presented, the proposal can gain enough legitimacy in local politics to be able to put in motion a pilot project of rapid rehousing.

The LERI field expert joined and contributed to the local workgroup for the creation of the social housing strategy to end homelessness. The absence of a social housing policy in the Czech Republic has led, in the long run, to increasing numbers of homeless families and individuals. Discrimination in housing market forces many Roma into homelessness, and there is hardly any way for them to access regular housing once this has happened.<sup>5</sup> Thus ending homelessness seemed an appropriate concept for tackling these problems.

In one of the first meetings of the local housing strategy group, a local consultant of the municipality led a problem assessment. In particular, barriers to obtaining and sustaining housing were discussed. Clearly, most of these barriers are due to the shortcomings of the current social housing policy in the Czech Republic, but it should be noted that a strong municipal policy could 1) lower or overcome these barriers, and 2) serve as an example for systemic change in social housing policy. Most of the barriers identified were typical across

---

<sup>5</sup> Ripka, Štěpán, Jan Snopek, and Marek Mikulec. forthcoming. „*Bezdomovectví a vyloučení z bydlení v České republice.*“ In *Způsoby řešení bezdomovectví a vyloučení z bydlení. Analýza a komparace situací ve Francii, Velké Británii a v České republice.*, ed. Eliška Lindovská. Ostrava: University of Ostrava.

the country; however, some of them, such as a differential approach by different city boroughs are specific to Brno. The barriers to obtaining and sustaining housing are identified below:

### Barriers to obtaining housing

- Financial – lack of deposit, rent is too high (housing allowance does not cover it; the deposit can be the equivalent of six monthly rents according to a new Czech civil code, which could total €3,600).
- Each city quarter sets its own rent and some of them plan to run an auction for the rent.
- Individuals are only entitled to housing allowance if they have a permanent residence, but the private landlords do not want to legally assign permanent residence of their flats to their tenants.
- Some people (i.e. those who were removed from the labour office database) are not entitled to allowance.
- Public owners do not allow people in debt to become tenants (not legislation, but a local rule adhered to by the landlords including the municipality).
- Flat assignment regulation is not transparent – no debt or income control, no coherent rules (criteria) between different city boroughs (would need a change in city statute).
- Fear of risky clientele and discrimination – criteria of allocation is set to eliminate risky clientele; a lack of guarantee is also an issue.

### Barriers to sustaining housing

- Addiction to substances and gambling.
- Person is not able to pay rent; stops communication with the owner and falls into debt.
- It is not possible to offer the residents smaller flats if they are already in debt.
- Lack of timely crisis intervention; when a family cannot pay, it takes a long time for social workers to reach out. When the rent is not paid, social workers should be informed promptly. There is a need to create a fast information system for hospitals, school psychologists, etc., anyone who might be in a position to find out about a family's housing crisis.
- High rent means high debt.
- If neighbourhood relations do not work, Roma are frequently cited as the problem although this may not be the case.

Furthermore, the local LERI team identified institutional/system needs for ending family homelessness, which were the following:

- match the supply of flats with homeless populations, especially homeless families with children;
- develop, implement and monitor a showcase (pilot) project that shows it is possible to rehouse families with children from hostels into municipal flats;
- involve the municipal flats' new tenants in shaping the local housing policy by forming a participatory advisory group.

Based on this needs assessment, the local LERI activities were designed. It should be noted that in Brno the first request by the city government was to

tackle temporary hostels, and solve social housing. It took the local LERI research team a while to bring the issue of ending homelessness onto the agenda and to persuade the policymakers about the priority of this issue.

### 3. PAR methodology employed

Since the inception of LERI, the aims and terms and conditions of the whole research for the local level were not clear, and organisational issues, such as budgets, changed during the implementation. Regardless of these circumstances, the local LERI research team adopted a strategy to play a role in Brno's local processes, because the two had different timing and responsibilities. It was during this time that strategic plans for social inclusion and accompanying project fiches were prepared and innovative large projects were planned.

With the LERI research planning adjustments in 2015 to design its local project plan (LPP) around practical local projects, the inclusion of local co-researchers in the research implementation was made possible. It would have been difficult to conduct any PAR-based study earlier without actual local intervention (action) and availability of local funds.

At the beginning of the LERI implementation phase in 2015, the members of the local LERI research team organised a meeting with the deputy mayor for social affairs, which FRA staff attended. The LERI research was presented to the deputy mayor, and it was agreed that the LERI field expert would become part of the local planning processes for the inclusion strategy. Within this workgroup, LERI field experts worked towards the launch of the Rapid Rehousing project for families, and the organisation of the Registry Week. Stakeholder- and individual consultations, working groups, and mobilisation of the local community through their involvement in Registry Week were the main techniques used for these activities.

Once it was clear what activities were to be completed within LERI in 2016 and the available budget, the local LERI team connected with IQ Roma Servis, a local NGO, and planned joint research with co-researchers (paid). Co-researchers and people with experience in housing exclusion participated then in all local LERI activities, including research and training.

While participatory action research (PAR) requires participation of the population in the planning of research and interventions, in the case of LERI in Brno, most of the activities were planned by other stakeholders and the local beneficiaries (as co-researchers) participated only in the very end of the local LERI activities' implementation. This was due to the unpredictability of the overall local research, both in terms of the timeline and the budget. Other stakeholders who were involved in the strategic planning processes and in the political process were important in shaping the local LERI research, especially IQ Roma Servis, the City of Brno's leadership and Platform for Social Housing, all of which made crucial contributions.

The following research techniques – which involved co-researchers and other participants from the local community - were used during the local LERI research:

1. **Stakeholder consultation** – community representatives, people who have experienced homelessness, social workers, and the local LERI team consulted Roma families in Brno about their housing needs, as well as about the Rapid Rehousing pilot project design, especially the random assignment of flats and its associated ethical dilemmas. The deputy lord mayor and the head officer for social affairs were present. This was a participatory activity, where the agenda and the outcomes were to a large extent controlled by co-researchers and participants.
2. Co-researchers were involved in **piloting the research tool, VI-SPDAT<sup>6</sup>**, which was used at Registry Week<sup>7</sup> (count of homelessness) for families with children. It would be difficult to consider this activity pure PAR. It was rather a consultation with “native speakers” on how to best accommodate concrete questions to cultural understanding of the community, but no control over the overall content of the questionnaire was given to the participants.
3. Co-researchers were employed as community facilitators at the place of their residence as paid **interviewers**, and as voluntary interviewers during Registry Week. Participants from the community were involved, and action was secured, because the research was gathering actionable data on family homelessness. On the other hand, participants did not shape the research questions (hence the question of how much PAR it was).

## 4. The local intervention description

The main goal of the LERI research in Brno was to support local planning processes of social housing policy, promote the idea of ending homelessness through a local social housing and support system, ensure that vulnerable groups are not excluded from accessing housing and to monitor the efforts of such work.

The concrete activities of the local LERI research implementation phase included **preparing the rapid rehousing pilot project proposal, training social and peer workers, executing Registry Week and assisting the first families included in the pilot project with their move**. Since the funding stream (European Structural and Investment Funds - ESIF) for the Rapid Rehousing pilot project was postponed, members of the local LERI team were not able to assist families with their move, which was expected to begin in August 2016. As of late 2016, 19 families moved into new flats as part of the Rapid Rehousing pilot project, 17 more were supposed to move in until the end of 2016 and the rest until March 2017.

### Activity 1: Assist the City of Brno in an ESIF proposal for the Rapid Rehousing pilot project for families with children

Based on experiences from other countries on addressing the issue of homelessness through Rapid Rehousing/Housing First (Padgett, Henwood, &

---

<sup>6</sup> VI-SPDAT (Vulnerability Index – Service Priority Decision Assistance Tool) measures the emergency of housing need of a given homeless family, and their vulnerability to disease, death, and violence. This tool was translated and accustomed to Czech context of medical, social and institutional care and system.

<sup>7</sup> A Registry Week is designed to jump-start a campaign to end homelessness by mobilizing a community to gather actionable personal specific data to prioritize and house the most vulnerable homeless neighbours;  
<http://www.20khomes.ca/resources/registry-week-toolkit/>

Tsemberis 2015<sup>8</sup>; Pleace 2013<sup>9</sup>; Tsemberis 2010<sup>10</sup>; Aubry et al. 2015<sup>11</sup>; Geertsema<sup>12</sup>, b.r.; Cunningham, Gillespie, & Anderson 2015<sup>13</sup>; HUD 2013<sup>14</sup>; Mayfield, Black, & Felver 2012<sup>15</sup>; Spellman 2015<sup>16</sup>) the city of Brno wanted to pilot the use of these methods within the social housing policy in the city in order to potentially illustrate the possible changes in the overall social housing policy across the Czech Republic. This converged with the efforts of the Platform for Social Housing to showcase Housing First's approach in the Czech Republic.

After communal elections in late 2014, a Brno-based member of the Platform for Social Housing was commissioned by Zít Brno, the coalition party in charge of social affairs, to prepare the most radical and innovative social housing policy for the City of Brno. The Platform was based upon two processes: the development of local policy to end the homelessness of families and individuals, and the development of a Rapid Rehousing pilot project for Roma families. Both the pilot project and the policy drew upon the experience from Housing First's initial pilots in Europe, the organisation of an international conference on Housing First in 2014, and the development of working relationships with US experts on Housing First and ending homelessness.

The LERI field expert was able to step in as a leading expert on ending family homelessness. Most of the work of the LERI field expert was dedicated to the preparation of the Rapid Rehousing pilot project in Brno, which aimed to solve the discrepancy between the large numbers of Roma families living in conditions without ontological stability and the several hundred vacant municipal flats. The challenge, ultimately, was how to utilise the municipal housing system to end family homelessness.

After raising additional external to LERI funds the LERI field expert made a two-week trip to the US in early 2015, in which he gathered information and contacts of Rapid Rehousing providers, researchers and advocates. This was the most promising practice that he wanted to bring to Brno. In the US, he also became

---

<sup>8</sup> Padgett, Deborah, Benjamin Henwood, a Sam Tsemberis. 2015. *Housing First: Ending Homelessness, Transforming Systems, and Changing Lives*. Oxford University Press.

<http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199989805.001.0001/acprof-9780199989805>

<sup>9</sup> Pleace, Nicholas. 2013. *Housing First*. Brusel: FEANTSA.

<sup>10</sup> Tsemberis, Sam. 2010. *Housing First Manual: The Pathways Model to End Homelessness for People with Mental Illness and Addiction*. Minnesota: Hazelden.

<sup>11</sup> Aubry, Tim, Paula Goering, Scott Veldhuizen, Carol E. Adair, Jimmy Bourque, Jino Distasio, Eric Latimer, et al. 2015. „A Multiple-City RCT of Housing First With Assertive Community Treatment for Homeless Canadians With Serious Mental Illness". *Psychiatric Services*. doi:10.1176/appi.ps.201400587

<sup>12</sup> Geertsema, Volker Busch. b.r. „Housing First Europe – Results of a European Social Experimentation Project". *European Journal of Homelessness* 8 (1). [http://feantsaresearch.org/IMG/pdf/article-01\\_8.1.pdf](http://feantsaresearch.org/IMG/pdf/article-01_8.1.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Cunningham, Mary, Sarah Gillespie, a Jacqueline Anderson. 2015. *Rapid Re-housing: What the Research Says*. New York: Urban Institute. <http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/54201/2000265-Rapid-Re-housing-What-the-Research-Says.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> HUD. 2013. „Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP): Year 2 Summary". Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs Office of Community Planning and Development U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Available at: [https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HPRP\\_Year2Summary.pdf](https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HPRP_Year2Summary.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Mayfield, Jim, Callie Black, a Barbara Felver. 2012. „Employment Outcomes Associated with Rapid Re-housing Assistance for Homeless DSHS Clients in Washington State". Washington State Department of Commerce, Community Services and Housing Division. <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/SESA/rda/documents/research-11-185.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Spellman, Broke. 2015. "Family Options Study- Impact of Housing and Services Interventions for Homeless Families: Findings from the Interim Report" and "Evaluation of the Rapid Re-housing for Homeless Families Demonstration Program". presented at National Conference on Ending Family and Youth Homelessness, San Diego, CA.

familiar with randomised control evaluations as a tool that allows a pilot project to be assessed in a robust way and, where found to be effective, quickly scaled up. After discussing the needs of Brno with local stakeholders, it became evident that this would be the best strategy for local LERI research in Brno – to perform an RCT (randomised control trial) of Housing First with families, and if the pilot project is successful, expand the intervention to the whole city.

The City of Brno meanwhile worked on the comprehensive strategy to end homelessness and commissioned the Platform for Social Housing to organise two workshops with international experts to plan the system change.

The LERI field expert brought a leading US expert on family homelessness to Brno<sup>17</sup> and, during her visit, sought her advice on planning the Rapid Rehousing pilot project outline, which included outcome measures, team composition, etc. This was in May 2015. Since May, the housing workgroup of the city has acknowledged that the city must dedicate 50 flats to the Rapid Rehousing pilot project, a number large enough to determine significance when testing the hypotheses run on the project's results.

It was understood that the Brno pilot project would be funded by ESIF as an individual project of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, which was supposed to test Housing First's methodology on different target groups. However, due to political turbulence, the Ministry cancelled the project and the team had to start looking for alternative funding. It was also evident that a larger project was needed to secure the research and provision of social services. The project fiche was put in a bundle of projects from Brno, which was in line with the local inclusion strategy, and sent to the managing authority so it could reserve a portion of the budget for the project while it was being prepared and approved. But the local team also knew that it could take a long time before a decision was made and that the possibility of using 50 municipal flats to complete the Rapid Rehousing pilot was a window of opportunity that had to be quickly taken advantage of.

In autumn 2015, a call for socially innovative projects from ESIF was published, and the local team knew it had to prepare an application. **The work was divided between the LERI field expert (the research element)**, local NGOs (the social services part), Brno's Department of Social Affairs, and two experts from the Platform for Social Housing. The application procedure had two-steps: first the submission of an innovation plot, and if the housing commission responded positively, the development of a full project application. In order to submit the innovation plot, the local preparatory team had to first develop a draft, which went through all the relevant commissions of the City of Brno. This process took about three months, ending in February 2016 when the innovation plot was submitted to the city parliament and voted on. In late March, it was approved by the managing authority. A special workgroup was then created to develop the full proposal. The main applicant was the City of Brno, with two partners, IQ Roma Servis (service provider) and the University of Ostrava (research). The project proposal was finalised by a project specialist from IQ Roma Servis with the input of all partners involved. The team decided to ask the

---

<sup>17</sup> Katharine Gale, lead US expert on family homelessness, prepared a recommendations brief for city strategy to end family homelessness.

maximum allowed amount (€400,000) because of the scope of the project (50 municipal flats). In April 2016, the full project proposal was submitted, and in May 2016, it was approved for funding by the managing authority.

As described above, this activity was covered by local LERI research only partially (the work of the LERI field expert on organization of an international workshop, and drafting the research part of the ESIF project proposal) but it is described to understand the entire context of local LERI research in Brno, and how the LERI activities were able to support and complement an existing and on-going pilot project.

## Activity 2: Training of two Roma social workers and two Roma co-researchers

In the Czech Republic, there has not yet been a Housing First project, and there is no comprehensive experience from the supportive services provided in housing within the Housing First model. There are elements that the local team implementing Rapid Rehousing pilot project in Brno can build on, like case management, which became an element of training for some field social workers, and there are organisations that specialise in motivational interviewing, and the strengths-based approach, but a comprehensive programme does not exist.

It was clear that the Rapid Rehousing team at IQ Roma Servis, a partner organisation that would provide the support services, needed to be trained in assertive community treatment, critical time intervention and motivational interviewing as preparation for the supportive services of the Housing First approach and equipped in order to offer complex housing support to all clients. In mid-2015, a team member met with HVO Querido<sup>18</sup> Amsterdam, an organisation that has run a Housing First programme for 10 years and obtained the best results in the Housing First Europe pilot project. Together, they planned the training for the IQ Roma Servis team. The first meeting, a general introduction to the strengths-based approach, was held in autumn 2015. Meanwhile HVO Diskus Amsterdam provided the team coordinator with a methodology for selecting the right members for the team, and in autumn, the team was put together. It was crucial that team members represented different approaches to clients, and thus could help each other if a change in style of work with the client was needed. This lies at the core of the innovative approach of social workers – they adjust as much as possible to the needs of their clients, including adapting their style of work or asking a colleague more experienced in other approaches to help..

While the first training session was funded by IQ Roma Servis, the second and third training sessions were already included in the local LERI research activities. They took place in March and April 2016. By the final training session the local team of social workers who were being trained for the Rapid Rehousing pilot project had been assembled, having recruited one worker from outside the organisation, an experienced social worker and two peer workers. Both peer

---

<sup>18</sup> HVO is Amsterdam-based provider of services funded in 1904, which provides housing support and daytime activities to ca 3300 persons per year. For more informations see: <http://hvoquerido.nl/english/>

workers had experience of living in hostel accommodation and are now settled in regular housing.

The second training session was more focused on broadening the understanding of the strengths-based approach and work styles, so that the whole team was on the same page. A large part of the training was dedicated to teaching the social workers how to amplify the homeless families' motivation to move and change their lives. During this training session, the trainers also met the director of IQ Roma Servis and discussed how Housing First fits into the vision of the organisation.

The third session was dedicated mainly to practical planning of intake and the motivational interviews. The methodology of the vulnerability assessment and Registry Week were also discussed, and all the team members (including the proud LERI field expert) graduated and received a golden medal inscribed with 'Housing First Ready'. The team was also invited to the 10th anniversary of HVO Diskus Amsterdam, the training organiser who hosted two members from the team for a two-week internship in June 2016. The trainers, the project team and peer workers also developed a plan for how peer workers could assist families within the project – thus the service is participatory as well.

HVO Diskus Amsterdam remains a partner of the Rapid Rehousing pilot project in Brno; their role is to supervise the team.

### Activity 3: Help with the organisation of a Registry Week

Registry Week is an evidence-based practice to mobilise the community, learn about the scope of homelessness in the given area (city), make a by-name list of homeless people, publish the results and compel politicians to commit to ending homelessness by a given date. The method was developed in the US during the 100,000 Homes campaign and used by the Zero 2016 campaign. In summer 2015, a British foundation approached the organisers of Registry Week about becoming part of the European Campaign to End Chronic Street Homelessness, which Registry Week joined in autumn. In preparation for the Brno Registry Week, a two-day international workshop on conducting a Registry Week, with the help of the Institute of Global Homelessness, was developed.

Registry Week for Brno was planned for April 2016. It was supposed to be a family Registry Week because there had recently been a single homeless count in Brno and because it was important to get acquainted with the families who would become part of the Rapid Rehousing pilot project, i.e. enrol as many homeless families from Brno in the project as possible. The Platform for Social Housing contributed to the Registry Week coordinator's salary for three months, while the local LERI research funds were used for to pay peer workers and co-researchers, as well as to provide food and drinks to volunteers during Registry Week.

Several meetings with a range of stakeholders were organised in locations where Registry Week was planned. The main organiser was the City of Brno, with partners including the Platform for Social Housing, FRA (LERI research), and IQ Roma Servis. Two factors were critical to the success of Registry Week: gaining as many contacts of potentially homeless families as possible and recruiting as many volunteers as possible.

Instead of relying on a single source to contact homeless families, it was important to combine the knowledge of child welfare agencies, municipal social workers, the labour office, NGOs, faith/religious groups and other sources. Once all the information was gathered, a list of addresses (some of them with actual families) to visit was compiled. The strategy for volunteers drew upon the anti-homeless campaign in the US, where the organisers tried to recruit volunteers from as many different realms (education, business, etc.) as possible. Although the intention was to attract a diverse range of volunteers, volunteer recruitment also relied on the fact that Brno is a university city. The goal was to attract as many social science students as possible, as well as people who worked or were part of a larger community around numerous local NGOs. Social media was used to facilitate recruitment efforts.

One week before Registry Week, there were about 30 volunteers, but at least 60 were needed to be able to count all homeless families. Although it was initially thought that all people who had attended previous meetings (some of them had up to 25 attendants) would come and bring their colleagues as well, at that point it seemed the municipal workers and some NGOs had come because they wanted information, but were not committed to participating in Registry Week. This was a critical situation, which was solved when the head of social affairs in Brno commissioned his employees to assist Registry Week. The situation was not ideal because the municipal social workers had their own agenda and were instructed to assist only a few days before Registry Week. On the other hand, it saved the whole venture.

Registry Week then went quite smoothly. Every day started with training the interviewers; they were given addresses for that day and researched the city. Registry Week was well covered by local and national media<sup>19</sup>. Peer workers were both interviewers and facilitators at hostels – there were five peer workers who lived in hostels and who negotiated access for the volunteers in advance. There were some small problems with hostel owners or administrators, who did not want the volunteers to visit families, but access was granted through careful negotiation of access conditions.

From the second day onwards, volunteers were split between fieldwork and coding the questionnaires in a web interface, which was designed specifically for that purpose. The questionnaires were coded at the end of every day. By the end of the week, almost all questionnaires were coded, and on Tuesday 26 April, a press conference was held to present the preliminary results from Registry Week. However, it took another month to check the accuracy of the homelessness of families – there were queries surrounding about a third of families as to whether their inclusion was reasonable. There were two factors to this inaccuracy: first,

---

<sup>19</sup> The media appearances included the following: Sociální bydlení, 23.1.2016, ČT 1 str. 01, 12:00 Týden v regionech - JM Brno chce pomoci ohroženým rodinám, 22.1.2016, Právo ~ str. 10 ~ Jižní Morava – Vysočina, Petr Kozelka Brno rozjždí novou sociální politiku. Do června ubytuje 50 rodin z ulice, 19.1.2016, ČRo, Karolína Zikmundová Radiátory topí zbytečně. Dům pro sociálně slabé v Brně je čtvrt roku prázdný, 19.1.2016, ct24.cz ~ str. 00 ~ Regiony, cukrovah Brno plánuje ubytovat desítky rodin v nouzi. Platit budou sociálními dávkami, 18.1.2016 brnensky.denik.cz ~ str. 00 ~ Moje Brněnsko Prostě dejte lidem byty, 18.1.2016, Euro ~ str. 30 ~ Report - Bytová politika, Jan Novotný Brno chce předcházet ztrátě bydlení, 11.1.2016, Brněnský Metropolitan ~ str. 03 ~ Rozhovor – Názory, MARTIN FREUND Bezdomovce má dostat z brněnských ulic nový projekt. Pomůže s dluhy, 25.11.2015, denik.cz ~ str. 00 ~ Jihomoravský kraj

social workers tended to involve their clients even if they were not eligible. Second, it was not 100 % clear to all the interviewers what was meant by 'inadequate housing', and not all of them provided a description accurate enough to judge whether the family's current accommodation was adequate or not. The IQ Roma Servis team consequently had to check many of these questionnaires, and some of the families were found to be ineligible for the pilot housing project.

The main findings from the Registry week were following: There were 421 homeless families in Brno in April 2016, 45% of them in temporary hostels, 15% in shelters, 16% provisionally living with relatives, and other 19% in inadequate housing. There was total of 961 children, 91% of them under 18. Median living space was 7m<sup>2</sup>/person, five families had less than 2m<sup>2</sup>/person. 22% of the families were threatened with violence in past year.

As mentioned earlier, the collection of information on potential participants of the Rapid Rehousing pilot project was needed, hence the Registry Week was also included into the local LERI research in Brno. The activity covered the preparation of the research required for Registry Week, organisation of the peer consultations, training of the peer researchers and volunteers who organised the registry, and remunerating the peer researchers. The collection of data on families used the Family VI-SPDAT<sup>20</sup>, adjusted to Czech conditions. The registry developed through the week was used by the campaign to end homelessness and in RCT for the Rapid Rehousing pilot project; enrolment into the Rapid Rehousing pilot project was decided based on population statistics determined by the registry.

## 5. Analysis, discussion, lessons learned

### Analysis and discussion of the use of PAR methodology

Regarding the involvement of community members, peer workers, peer researchers and people who have experienced homelessness, the management and design of the LERI research did not allow for timely communication and open relationships to develop during the preparation for the local LERI research in Brno, which would have led to more pure forms of participatory action research. Terms and conditions for the involvement and compensation of the local co-researchers were first discussed in early 2015 and finally fixed towards the end of 2015. Accessing the local fund available to local co-researchers and the local LERI research team was as time-consuming a process as the clarification of the available budgetary resources allocated to support the work of the LERI field experts.

Many elements of the original LERI research plan were still undergoing changes during the preparatory and early implementation phase that generated uncertainty resulting in the decision of the LERI field experts to be very hesitant in making any commitments to the local people and local stakeholders.

---

<sup>20</sup> "The VI-SPDAT helps identify who should be recommended for each housing and support intervention, moving the discussion from simply who is eligible for a service intervention to who is eligible and in greatest need of that intervention. While the SPDAT is an assessment tool, the VI-SPDAT is a survey that anyone could complete, to help prioritize clients."  
Source: <http://www.orgcode.com/product/vi-spdatt/>

Consequently, these circumstances also led to a risk-averse attitude from the LERI field experts and finally to less ambitious local LERI actions so as not to raise false expectations in the local community. Due to this set of circumstances, it was not possible to employ participatory action research in the sense of applying in-depth PAR methods.

### **Lessons learned from the use of PAR methodology within LERI research**

For efficient use of PAR methodology on the local level, a clear timeline and budget is needed. Due to a lack of clarity on these aspects, the use of PAR was limited to a minimum in Brno.

For Registry Week, the willingness and commitment of volunteers was overestimated and ultimately the Registry Week was reliant on municipal employees. **The next time a Registry Week is organised, much more energy should be invested in identifying and gaining the commitment of local communities to volunteer.**

The Rapid Rehousing pilot project was approved for funding, and the **first families signed rental contracts and moved into municipal flats in early September 2016**. The evaluation part of the ESIF funded project will measure the outcomes of 50 families against the outcomes of 100 homeless families.

### **Lessons from the preparation of larger Rapid Rehousing pilot project (outside of the scope of the LERI research)**

The main lesson learned was that even with strong commitment from the municipality's political leadership, it still takes a long time for a development project to advance from inception to implementation, and that projects require an enormous amount of expertise and input from many different committed key people.

In Brno, the project idea was born in late 2014, and since April 2015 at least three people have been working continuously to action the pilot. Because municipal property was at stake (50 flats), the project had to go through several commissions, be voted on by both the city parliament and the city council, redrafted and renegotiated. It was very helpful that a municipal parliament member was assigned to support the Rapid Rehousing pilot project, and the employees of the social department, the housing department and the department of implementation of EU funds became involved in the preparation of the project. IQ Roma Servis and the University of Ostrava were of invaluable help to the project.

The political leadership of the city and the availability of municipal housing stock were crucial components. Without the flats, it would not have been possible to plan any intervention because obtaining flats from the private market or even fundraising and trying to acquire housing stock would have taken years. While the deputy responsible for housing stock was not a staunch ally (nor an opponent, she was simply not interested), there was a clear commitment from the social affairs deputy as well as the mayor of the city, who was involved in the preparation of the project, as he agreed with its basic philosophy.

## Future plans, sustainability of the local LERI activities

Randomised control trials must randomly assign the treatment. It might go against many presumptions of entitlement, but local counterparts agreed that it is better to fail in a lottery than to fail in a points system and feel responsible for its failure. It is also considered a just method to perform a lottery, or at least more fair than other methods of housing allocation set in Brno, and the entire Czech Republic (based on auction or assessment of deservingness).

If this innovative approach (rapid re-housing pilot) proves successful, the hope is to extend it to the rest of the homeless families in Brno, and to homeless families across the Czech Republic. There are about 6,000 families living in hostels and the government's goal is to end their homelessness by 2020<sup>21</sup>. An assessment of Rapid Rehousing pilot project's results will be completed in early 2018, and if the pilot project proves successful, the team hopes within two and a half years, the project can be scaled up for all.

## 6. Conclusions and recommendations

In the case of **participatory action research** aimed at effective involvement of actors and communities at the local level it is **essential to allocate the necessary resources and time** to prepare and run the local activities, and to communicate the terms and conditions of participation in due time and in an accountable way.

Research project design with many intermediary organizations, with highly bureaucratic and administrative procedures and time-consuming decision-making processes might seriously challenge local participation and might evidently lead to **less ambitious** local research plans.

If the EU is interested in enabling local actors to work more effectively towards the inclusion of Roma at the local level, it is strongly recommended that **smaller scale projects** are commissioned **with organisation closer to the field** involved.

Top-down, expert approaches towards the inclusion of Roma on a local level can work only as a part of a continuing local bottom-up effort. It is not possible to replicate the Brno interventions **because of the unique combination** of Brno's political leadership, local, regional, national and international expertise, the national policy movement, great local NGOs and activists. On the other hand the Rapid Rehousing project will allow for replication in ending family homelessness.

**Housing is the source, but at the same time, the remedy to many problems of social exclusion.** However, it is the most neglected area of local policy in the Czech Republic. It is not sufficient to rely on the political courage of the local politicians, but coalitions of interested actors must be construed in order to make such projects possible.

---

<sup>21</sup> Vláda ČR (2015): *Strategie boje proti sociálnímu vyloučení*,. Available at: <http://www.socialni-zaclenovani.cz/dokumenty/strategie-boje-proti-socialnimu-vyloucení/strategie-boje-proti-socialnimu-vyloucení-2016-2020-finalni-verze/download>

**It is crucial to obtain flats in order to start a rehousing project;** based on previous experience, the team knows that if they had not negotiated a number of flats prior to the implementation, it is highly unlikely they would have been able to fulfil the indicators.

Social integration on a local level should not be undertaken only in the popular areas that local policymakers and their electorate favour (i.e. children's education). **EU stakeholders need to look at the structural factors of the lives of people vulnerable to social exclusion.** The need for housing stability that brings ontological security is a basic requirement that must be fulfilled. It is great to work with the municipalities who are willing, however, there are very few of them. The rest need to be motivated. This **change will not happen until EU funds for local well-being are conditioned by the securing of housing and other services for the most vulnerable local populations.**

The media are very interested in evidence-based practice, and the team was able to promote the Rapid Rehousing pilot project as the most rational way out of homelessness, and the best use of municipal housing stock.

## 7. Additional Information

### Acknowledgements

First of all, the team would like to warmly thank the City of Brno for their braveness and commitment for social change. Two local politicians, Martin Freund and Matěj Hollan played a crucial role in the development and advocacy of the Rapid Rehousing project, and Mayor Petr Vokřál supported efforts with his orientation towards solutions. Employees of Social and Housing departments of the city worked towards the launch of the Rapid Rehousing pilot project, and municipal social workers helped during Registry Week. Jan Milota from IQ Roma Servis was a key person who served as advisor and facilitator, and his colleagues from IQ Roma Servis provided the needed organisational background for the development of the pilot project, and also contributed their local knowledge for the fine-tuning of the methodology for ending homelessness. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs checked the Rapid Rehousing project's outline.