

Local Engagement for Roma Inclusion (LERI)

The EU Agency for Fundamental Rights has developed the **LERI** project to investigate how the involvement of local communities in Roma integration activities can be improved. The project will allow FRA to identify key factors that lead to the success or failure of such activities, at the same time taking into account differences between countries and regions. In order to achieve this aim, **LERI** will engage with local stakeholders, public authorities and residents – both Roma and non-Roma. It will improve their capacity to become involved in social inclusion activities carried out by municipalities through hands-on training, providing them with the practical skills necessary to participate in reviewing, implementing and monitoring them.

Social inclusion activities implemented by municipalities should always engage local communities, in particular Roma, in a meaningful way. They also need to respect the needs and aspirations of the communities in accordance to the Ten Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion.

In order to achieve this, public authorities should invite local communities to participate in every stage of the design and implementation, as well as the monitoring of such activities. Often, however, public authorities are reluctant to do this. Even though residents might be willing to engage, they may lack the knowledge and capacity to do so; or the authorities themselves do not know how to develop the right procedures for public participation. The tempting solution is often to substitute the community with other actors such as civil society organisations, in order to achieve fast results. Ultimately, this approach does not produce sustainable outcomes and indeed, can result in making communities even more dependent on external support.

LERI will engage directly with local stakeholders to build a **shared understanding** of goals and how to reach them. It will also identify how and who should monitor their progress. The project will run until the end of 2016 and is due to be implemented in 22 localities across 11 EU Member States (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Greece, Spain, Finland, France, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Slovakia and the UK). A specific focus will be on monitoring and evaluation, because all too often social inclusion activities, especially those including or targeting Roma, have been heavily criticised for not delivering results. The project will therefore **seek to promote a results-oriented culture**, boosting people's confidence and capacity to check progress, demand and look for results, in this way testing a 'bottom-up' approach to monitoring.

An important aspect of the project will be to improve local participants' knowledge of the procedures that need to be followed in order to design and implement a successful social inclusion activity. These are complex, and awareness of procedures is a vital aspect of local communities' capacity to act as real and equal partners with local administrations. Achieving a solid understanding and knowledge of the processes necessary for the successful implementation of that can achieve tangible change will be an important outcome of **LERI**.

LERI will support the work of National Roma Contact Points (NRCPs) to identify practices that show how local social inclusion actions can be more effectively designed, implemented and monitored.

LERI will support the work of municipalities by helping them design and implement activities that are more efficient, effective and sustainable because they are designed, implemented and monitored by those who actually benefit from them. At the same time, robust indicators for measuring social inclusion at the local level will be tested and applied. More generally, municipalities will benefit from visibility throughout the EU.

LERI will not fund social inclusion activities; such funding can be provided by EU funds administered by national and local authorities. It will also **not** implement social inclusion activities; municipalities and local communities will do this.

LERI will help people understand better how they can make change happen and their voices heard. It **will** send a clear message that only Roma people can make a tangible difference to their own lives.