



Selected positive initiatives

**The situation of Roma EU citizens
moving to and settling in other
EU Member States**

November 2009

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Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2009

ISBN-13: 897-92-9192-472-1

DOI: 10.2811/36140

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Printed in Belgium

Printed on white chlorine-free paper

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Introduction

The movement of Roma EU citizens has changed significantly since EU enlargement in 2004 and 2007. Council Directive 2004/38/EC on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States (the Free Movement Directive),¹ which entered into force in April 2006, has also significantly changed the context in which such movement takes place. Drawing mainly on primary qualitative research conducted in **Finland, France, Italy, Spain** and the **United Kingdom**, this report provides a synthesis of information on positive initiatives with regard to the social inclusion of Roma EU citizens living in other EU Member States.

The research examined experience of Roma EU citizens exercising their right to freedom of movement and residence identifying positive initiatives for social inclusion affecting Roma EU citizens living in Member States other than their own; such initiatives are often framed by a broader policy on Roma social inclusion.

It is clear from this research that **EU citizenship constitutes itself a ‘good practice’**. Roma EU citizens in general are able to move more freely and more positively than when they had other statuses – such as refugee or migrant worker or undocumented worker. Nevertheless, the research has shown that Roma EU citizens continue to face social exclusion, discrimination and racism in host Member States. The case for active practices promoting social inclusion remains all too evident across all the countries studied. At present there is an overwhelming lack of policy at national or regional or local authority level to encourage the social

inclusion of EU citizens, including Roma and non-Roma.

The research identified good practice particularly at local level and where local authorities have engaged constructively with Roma and Traveller issues and/or have engaged with the issues of Roma from other EU Member States. Such good practice works particularly well when it articulates the aspirations and experiences of the Roma with those of citizens in the ‘host communities’, and when interventions take a holistic approach targeting interrelated issues, such as employment, housing, education, etc simultaneously.

Civil society interventions have worked best when there is a relatively strong constructive partnership between public authorities and NGOs. The more active the partnerships – the **‘joined up working’ between all different sectors and tiers:** statutory, voluntary and community as well as supranational, national, regional and local government – the more likely a programme is to deliver a positive, holistic and inclusive service to Roma EU citizens. It also underlines that vertical and horizontal synergies are vital – none of these interventions work in isolation.

The research also suggests that small and local initiatives may be as important as large-scale ones. They engage at the level of real families exercising freedom of movement rather than more abstract notions of ‘Roma’, however negatively or positively framed. At this micro level local citizens and authorities get to know and engage with individual Roma families as people with a consequent increase in empathy and solidarity.

In 2009, the European Commission gave clear guidance on the application of the Free Movement Directive.² **This type of**

guidance is in itself a good practice, because incorrect application of the directive often impacts negatively on Roma EU citizens.

There are a number of ad hoc interventions across Member States which may provide a useful template for further action, but which rarely connect to any strategic planning. There is also a burgeoning body of policy and planning at international and supranational – particularly EU – level which is beginning to provide a framework for positive intervention. This parallels a network of NGO activity that also clearly provides the context for inclusion. The key question remains how these networks might and should connect with positive initiatives developed on the ground at local authority and regional level.

EU positive initiatives

European Commission

As regards mobility in more general terms, EU-wide activity addressing and promoting freedom of movement and residence across the Union³ focuses on economically active EU citizens. For example, EURES – the European Job Mobility Portal – offers, ‘the easy way to find information on jobs and learning opportunities throughout Europe’.⁴ Similarly, the European Commission offers basic, accessible information on citizenship rights including rights of movement and residence through its website in the section ‘Your Europe – Citizens’ where citizens, ‘can learn more about living, working and studying in another EU country’.⁵ The European Commission’s portal ‘Your Europe’ gives individuals and businesses practical information on their rights and opportunities in the EU. It focuses on real-life, cross-border situations, e.g. European

citizens wishing to work live and study in another EU country, or European businesses wanting to move to or open a new branch elsewhere in the EU. The portal provides very detailed information about EU citizens’ rights such as the right to residence and establishment in another Member State, welfare benefits, right to access employment, transitional provisions for free movement of workers, job seeking, and election rights, etc.

National positive initiatives

Transposing the Free Movement Directive

Article 7 of the Free Movement Directive recognises the right of residence for more than three months provided that people ‘have sufficient resources for themselves and their family members not to become a burden on the social assistance system of the host Member State during their period of residence and have comprehensive sickness insurance cover in the host Member State’. Although the imposition of this condition is permitted rather than demanded by the directive,⁶ Member States may provide differently.

The Spanish government, for example, chose not to operationalise this clause at all. The Free Movement Directive was transposed into the Spanish legal order by Royal Decree 240/2007:⁷ *Real Decreto sobre entrada, libre circulación y residencia en España de ciudadanos de los Estados miembros de la Unión Europea y de otros Estados parte en el Acuerdo sobre el Espacio Económico Europeo* [Royal Decree on entry, freedom of movement and residence in Spain of citizens from EU Member States (EU MS) and other states part of the Agreement on EEE].⁸ The

Spanish authorities consulted with the *Foro para la Integración Social de los Immigrantes* [Forum for Social Integration of Immigrants] as well as with the Comisión Permanente de la Comisión Laboral Tripartita [Permanent Commission of the Labour Tripartite Commission for Immigration] and the Comisión Interministerial de la Extranjería [Inter-ministerial Commission for Aliens Affairs] and omitted any reference to ‘*sufficient resources*’:

‘One of the most important aspects is that the Spanish legislation [...] establishes an unconditional right of residence for Union citizens. Although the obligation to register exists, Union citizens have only to prove their identity and nationality. No other conditions (being employed, self-employed, economically independent, or a student) have to be met. In addition, their family members, regardless of their nationality, only need to prove the family link or the relation of dependency to have a right of residence derived from the Union citizen. As a consequence, the Union citizen does not need to show that he or she has sufficient resources for himself/herself and his/her family members and that they cannot become an unreasonable burden to the social assistance system in **Spain**. The only grounds on which freedom of movement can be restricted are public policy, public security and public health’.⁹

In real terms this approach greatly facilitates the social inclusion of EU citizens (Roma, as well as non-Roma).

Social inclusion in education

The **United Kingdom** school admissions code of February 2009 provides for the education of European Economic Area (EEA) nationals who are in the UK lawfully

to ‘work or for certain other economic purposes’.¹⁰ The embedded nature of anti-racist and multicultural practice in the UK education system combines to deliver a positive, inclusive education to Roma children. A number of factors are relevant here. Race equality, anti-racism and multiculturalism are mainstreamed and thus dealing with and respecting difference are already central to education practice. This reality means that the inclusion of another ethnic minority group becomes a matter of adjusting routine procedures. This new experience of social inclusion in education has often been a defining part of the lives of Roma EU citizens exercising freedom of movement and residence: ‘*For us, feeling part of the local community, participating future to our children who can attend mainstream education outweighs by far the negatives associated with the process of starting a new life abroad.*’¹¹

There are a number of national education strategies that are useful models of good practice with a ‘Gypsy/Traveller/Roma’ focus. First there is an overarching policy on social inclusion. As the UK Department for Children, Schools and Families states in ‘*The Inclusion of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Children and Young People*’. This boldly states:

‘For far too long society has shunned people from these communities. This has resulted in their growing mistrust of authority and many generations not receiving a good education. Can you imagine how difficult it is for a child to learn when they are constantly in fear of being exposed as a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller? We need to create an inclusive learning environment for all children. All cultural backgrounds should be understood and respected. Children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities should feel safe and cherished in school and therefore

parents and pupils will be proud to identify themselves. Schools now have a duty to promote community cohesion and this is a real issue for their attention. We know that children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities can achieve just as well as any other child. Some of your work colleagues are from these communities. It is crucial that local authorities and schools engage effectively with parents and children from these communities. We need to raise awareness and aspirations in local authorities, schools, parents and pupils to produce the step change needed. This guidance seeks to offer practical solutions to local authorities and schools for the inclusion of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people. An understanding of the history, culture and language of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities is the key. Experience to date shows subtle inclusion in the curriculum and resources for all pupils can break down barriers. Effective practice is where a pupil can see their identity *in social and public life, being able to offer a recognised*. The children and young people feel included, empowered and motivated and attendance and achievement is raised'.¹²

The UK school census also importantly includes Gypsy/Roma as a category:

'Gypsy/Roma – This category includes pupils who identify themselves as Gypsies and/or Romanies; Travellers and/or Traditional Travellers; Romanichals and/or Romanichal Gypsies; Welsh Gypsies/Kaale and/or Scottish Travellers/Gypsies, or, simply Roma. It includes all children of a Gypsy/Roma ethnic background, irrespective of whether they are nomadic, semi-nomadic or living in static accommodation'.¹³

Thus identifying Roma children and then monitoring their progress is regarded as a

key element of inclusion. This policy operates alongside a package of other measures. These include interventions specifically designed to address living standards for this specific group of children. For example, the 2008 report of the Department of Schools, Children and Families *raising the achievements of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils* makes a significant strategic contribution in this regard.¹⁴

In addition in the **UK**, local authorities are responsible for the delivery of education and each authority has considerable autonomy in terms of the implementation of national policy. With this framework, however, there are standard models for 'Gypsy/Roma/Traveller' education which support Roma EU citizen children in education. Within the structure of the Children's Services,¹⁵ the primary local authority service working with Roma is the Traveller Education Services (TES)¹⁶ and the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS). Both work with Roma EU citizen children and both cooperate with other agencies such as social services, primary care trusts.¹⁷

Through the involvement of TES/EMAS with school-age children, representatives of education services are central in liaising with other family members of various ages such as parents, adult children, children under five, as well as school age children out of school. The TES or EMAS representatives have been instrumental in providing information on EU Roma families and facilitating contact with the Roma respondents, as well as representatives of local NGOs.

This is possible because the local authorities are able to monitor pupils' ethnicity within the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC).¹⁸ PLASC, which

was instituted in January 2003, collects data on standardised categories of ethnicity which includes Gypsies/Roma and Travellers of Irish Heritage. Schools are required to assess the impact of their policies on the inclusion of these groups.

The UK provision of education to Roma EU citizen children provides a model of good practice at Member State level grounded in a commitment to social inclusion. The operation of broad multicultural and anti-racist policies as well as specific ‘Gypsy/Roma/Traveller’ policies are helping to develop an education service that integrates and includes Roma EU citizens.

Regional positive initiatives

Integrated Plan for Roma in Catalonia

Spain provides the key example of strategic regional government planning to address the situation of Roma from other Member States across the countries of research. Formally, the Spanish state has an overarching policy instrument giving the guidelines for promoting Roma inclusion, the *Programa de Desarrollo del Pueblo Gitano* [Development Programme of Roma people]. This has had no impact on Roma EU citizens from other Member States. At the level of regional government, however, the *Pla Integral del Poble Gitano a Catalunya* [Integrated Plan for the Roma People in Catalonia – Catalan Plan]¹⁹ has been regarded as a good practice model in terms of strategic planning by a regional government for Roma inclusion,²⁰ targeting specifically Roma from other Member States residing in Catalonia.

The Catalan Plan is unique across the countries of research as the one identified example of explicit integration of the

concerns of Roma from other Member States into strategic regional government policy on Roma. The first *Pla integral del poble gitano a Catalunya 2005-2008* [Integrated Plan for the Roma People in Catalonia 2005-2008] specifically addressed the situation of the ‘Roma population coming to Catalonia from Eastern Europe’ so Roma EU citizens from other Member States were named and addressed specifically within the plan – this is uniquely good practice in itself.²¹ The new Catalan Plan develops this work. The government has also approved the financial allocation of about 3.5 million EUR per annum for its implementation. This intervention develops the existing work with Roma EU citizens and provides an important model for other regional and national governments.

The new plan specifically addresses ‘Roma population coming from Eastern European countries’ in four different policy actions. It also clearly indicates governmental responsibility for and involvement in each of the following actions:

- **Action 6:** To set up a circuit to redirect emergency situations concerning the arrival of Roma from Eastern European countries. Introduction of this circuit.

Responsible: Catalan Ministry of Social Action and Citizenship – Secretariat of Immigration

- **Action 13:** To coordinate the Interdepartmental Committee working with Roma coming from Eastern European countries.

Responsible: Catalan Ministry of Governance and Public Administrations – Secretariat of Citizen Action

- **Action 37:** To provide training to get to know the collectives of newly arrived

Roma from the Eastern European countries (training for professionals).

Responsible: Catalan Ministry of Social Action and Citizenship – Secretariat of Immigration

- **Action 39. 2.2:** To promote school success among Roma students coming from Eastern European countries. To provide schooling to Roma children coming from Eastern European countries.

Responsible: Catalan Ministry of Education²².

Although it is too early to assess the practice associated with the new Catalan Plan, the principle of including and targeting Roma EU citizens within broader social inclusion measures is very important. It is clear that there needs to be similar strategic planning across the EU in response to freedom of movement. In Spain, in general, and in Catalonia, in particular, this approach connects positively with the practical work of civil society organisations supported by substantial EU and government funding. The lesson is that where broad social integration measures for national Roma are implemented, Roma from other Member States are likely to benefit. Within this broader framework the inclusion of Roma from other Member States in the Catalan Plan is the best example of good practice at regional level.

Local positive initiatives

Integrating Roma families in Cesson

France provides a useful model of a positive initiative by a small municipality to integrate a number of Roma EU citizen families. In October 2008 the Tribunal of Melun ordered the eviction of the 15

Romanian Roma families which had been occupying the halting site for Travellers in Cesson for several years. The City of Cesson then decided to support four families comprising of 25 people on its territory, giving priority to those whose children were enrolled in school in the commune. The City of Cesson placed these families on a new ground and initiated a plan for their social integration.²³

Through this initiative, the City of Cesson intended to sensitise its citizens to the fact that the integration of foreign families is possible. The Mayor has been quoted as having stated:

‘[...] we cannot limit the benefit of our solidarity policy only to traditional inhabitants of Cesson. The City may not be indifferent to the plight of those who come from elsewhere, as if we were not affected by what is happening in the rest of the world. In this context of solidarity, the City Hall supports these four families in their employment search, in the regularisation of their documents, in the search for housing and of stable school attendance by the children’.²⁴

A contract for all parties involved in the initiative was prepared which outlined the role and the commitments of each social partner towards the success of the initiative; its signature was the trigger for the start of the families’ projects. It was signed on the 14 November 2008 in the presence of families, the ‘Romeurope’²⁵ coalition of civil organisations and the local authorities’ representatives. According to the deputy mayor, ‘*this contract was more intended to reassure the inhabitants of Cesson than to define our work with the Roma families. We knew these families for several months; we were not worried about their capacity to respect their commitments.*’²⁶

The families, local authorities and non-governmental organisations involved seem to be very satisfied with the results of the initiative. For years the families faced extreme instability and insecurity; they now have fixed housing, formal employment and the children attend school. The experience has also illustrated to some sceptical inhabitants of Cesson that welcoming foreign families did not create any particular difficulties. Their presence in the city is no longer the cause of debate.²⁷

On 10 June 2009, the Cesson local authority hosted a press conference to assess the social integration of the Roma families and take stock of the November 2008 agreement. Employers, teachers and members of the NGO Romeurope participated as well at the conference, where the Mayor of Cesson stated: *'At times when many prefer to expel undocumented migrants than integrate them, we show that hosting these Roma families, who formerly lived in a largely insecure situation is not a problem when the political will exists'*.²⁸

Integrated mainstream housing in Pisa

Since 2002, the Municipality of Pisa in **Italy**, has organised the programme *Città sottili* [Thin Cities] in cooperation with the local health care office *Unità Sanitaria Locale* [Local Sanitary Unit – USL] and several non-governmental organisations. The programme is implemented by the USL and is funded by the Region of Toscana.²⁹ The overall objective of the programme is 'to build pathways of social inclusion for people in situation of high social exclusion living in strongly degraded housing conditions'.³⁰ The programme includes 'the development, with Roma communities living in the municipality, of a programme for the participatory development of a

mediation path that provides the closure of the camps and the possibility of social inclusion'.³¹ The activities are supported by three Roma mediators and regular meetings are held between local authorities, NGOs and the Roma community to map their social needs and to monitor results. The programme targets approximately 450 Roma from the former Yugoslavia and about 40 from Romania, and focuses on the direct involvement of Roma families who are more active in undertaking activities to improve their conditions.

The programme includes activities to assist Roma families living in segregated substandard 'nomad camps' to identify housing solutions in integrated, rented accommodation. Families are supported to move out of nomad camps and move into standard housing through the allocation of housing, the engagement of the families, social services and landlords in a 'social contract' designed to achieve the autonomy of the family, budget planning support for the cost of rent and utilities, the provision and evaluation of a personalised plan within the programme.

Through this programme, Roma families have been assisted to access housing via lease agreements between owners and housing associations which act as partners in the programme and sub-lease the housing to Roma families. Also, access to public housing and access to publicly available housing whose cost is borne entirely by Roma families is supported by the programme's mediation activities.

Between 2002 and 2007, over 400 Roma people, including Romanian Roma, were assisted to leave their nomad camp. Four nomad camps were permanently closed and the inhabitants accessed integrated mainstream housing. Families either live in reception centres or in rented dwellings.

About 200 children also began to attend school on a regular basis.³²

The project has not been implemented without problems and difficulties. For example, it has been reported that the preliminary census and mapping activities were at times perceived by Roma beneficiaries as an element of control over their lives.³³ In addition, beneficiaries include mostly those counted during the initial phase of census and mapping; people who arrived in **Italy** afterwards have often been excluded from the programme. Finally, allegations have been reported in the media that funds from this programme have been used by local authorities to repatriate Roma to Romania on the condition that they ‘give up’ their right to free movement and not return to Italy for a set period of time.³⁴

Nevertheless, this programme can be considered innovative for **Italy** due to its clear intent to transcend the notion of the ‘equipped nomad camps’ as a solution to Roma housing. As an officer of the USL 5 in Pisa stated: *‘The project operates within the logic of elimination of the “Roma camp” as an urban and social concept’, [...] we did not want to create a nomad camp that would repeat the same problems. In our opinion, nomad camps work like honey to bees, because after [they are established], problems explode. We tried to overcome this practice and follow paths of inclusion. In fact, the data we have available show that these people can get a home and send their children to school’.*³⁵ According to the NGO Africa Insieme: *‘[The positive result] is that hundreds of people were included in the programme and now have a house. Although this measure does not relate to all, in our view it is important that a number of people were involved in the programme and that some camps were removed’.*³⁶

Another element of innovation is the integrated approach of the different institutional actors involved (municipal, provincial and regional), NGOs and the Roma community in the implementation of systemic interventions. In partnership, the organisations involved have addressed in a coordinated manner problems that Roma face with when trying to access employment, housing, schooling, and healthcare services. Remarkably, the programme is implemented in parallel with other NGO projects that provide social mediation services, employment support and schooling programmes for Roma children.³⁷

This initiative offers an important lesson for future interventions, but its transferability depends on the ability to build strong and effective partnerships across different sectors and levels of government. It requires networking and strong involvement of institutions that can deal in a complex, systemic way with the multi-dimensional nature of problems experienced by Roma when trying to access housing, employment, education, and healthcare services.

Preventing children begging in Cordoba

In **Spain** there are a number of positive initiatives at local authority level. In Cordoba the municipality implements a social intervention project for the prevention of child begging, *Proyecto de Intervención Social de Calle para la atención y prevención de la Mendicidad Infantil* [Project for Street Social Interventions for the Attention and Prevention of Children Begging].³⁸ The project consists of contacting, informing and sensitising Roma mothers, providing social support and a nursery service where children up to three years of age can be left

in care of professionals during the time mothers go to begging.

Given the media attention around Roma children and begging which influences much of the response to the presence of EU Roma citizens across other Member States, it is important to emphasize the innovativeness of this intervention. This project provides a successful, non-coercive model to addressing this issue grounded in a commitment to social inclusion.

As a local authority official said, *‘we noticed that there were many Roma women begging who brought their young children with them. While in other municipalities this has been addressed through municipal by-laws banning beggars, we have tried here to offer an alternative [...] the idea is that from here they [the children] pass to mainstream nurseries. Last year seven children were transferred [to integrated nurseries]’*.³⁹

Beginning in 2004, municipal social service interventions started to facilitate access to social support in and around informal settlements. Some families were provided with temporary accommodation in shelters while discussion began of options for further action started in the *ad hoc* working group formed within the local council of immigration. The lack of consensus for a comprehensive intervention forced the municipality to carry out immediate action to address the situation of the most vulnerable individuals within the group, namely women and children. The purpose of this intervention is to prevent child begging and to facilitate adequate spaces for the care and education of children.

There were several interrelated objectives: to detect women begging with children on the streets; to prevent child begging and place children in adequate facilities to

improve social inclusion; to enhance the child care skills of Roma mothers; to provide information and counselling about social support and facilitate access to public services; and to guarantee access to health services and the continuous monitoring of children’s health.

The target group has been migrant mothers with children or in late pregnancy from Eastern European countries in situations of social vulnerability with no adequate housing and without means for changing this situation. In practice the beneficiaries of this intervention have been Romanian Roma mothers and their children. The City of Córdoba began implementation of the project in December 2005 and it has run since then.

The main activities of the project included:

- Creating a street work unit comprised of one intercultural mediator and one interpreter, with a view to detecting situations of social risk and providing first information and support to migrant Roma women begging;
- Creating a day-centre for children between the ages of 0-3 years as a bridge service facilitating the integration into public nurseries; In the day-centre the basic needs of children are covered and work with mothers is also done as regards children care with ateliers for mothers; and
- Operating a telephone system to inform the municipality about the involvement of children with begging.

These activities are complemented by other support activities such as directing Roma to community social services centres, providing information and raising awareness about the risk factors related to begging with children, managing the

provision of health cards, and providing support for medical visits, job interviews and search for accommodation.

The project coordinates its intervention with community social services and local police, as well as with the NGOs, focusing on positive measures.

Some of the most important project outcomes to date are:

- A significant drop in the number of children involved in street begging by about 85 per cent. The number of women begging has also been reduced, but to a much lower extent.
- Regular attendance of children at the *Servicio de Estancia Diurna Infantil* (municipal day-nursery service). In 2008 there were 36 children in the nursery and the project worked with around 30 mothers. The development of the children who continuously attended the nursery has been very positive in regards to language skills and health.
- Active participation of women in the socio-educational workshops, where issues such as social skills, children care, sexual health, hygiene, access to employment, etc. were addressed.
- Improvement of primary health prevention, in particular sexual and reproductive health, with more women adopting contraceptive methods.
- Support for Roma mothers in getting health cards. In 2008, 64 health cards were issued.

The response from the majority population is generally reportedly positive. The participation and involvement of some Roma families that were originally reluctant is also noteworthy. Some families who have successfully accomplished the objectives

were nominated to participate in the *Programa de Atención a Familias Extranjeras en Situación de Vulnerabilidad Social* (Programme of attention to foreign families in situation of social vulnerability); the so-called *Pisos Puente* (bridge apartments) managed jointly by the Municipality and the *Fundación Secretariado Gitano*.

Engaging with local authorities

As evidenced in the research for this report, Roma citizens from other Member States are unlikely to engage with local authorities, especially political representatives.

In **France**, in September 2008, the national coalition of Roma rights NGOs *Romeurope* held a meeting with newly elected local authority representatives of every level with the aim of sensitising them of the situation of Roma from other EU Member States and securing their support for policies to improve the situation. After the meeting the elected representatives signed the following declaration:

We, elected representatives, [...] have been at various levels confronted with the challenge that represents the arrival of Roma from Eastern European countries on our territories. Facing the human distress experienced by Roma, we will not accept inaction and indifference [...] Citizens of the European Union are deprived of the right to work by the establishment in France of transitional arrangements, thus the Bulgarian and Romanian Roma cannot integrate through work. This situation is contrary to the idea of Europe and generates inequities, but also contributes to the irregularity of their presence in France and, consequently, their exclusion [...] we ask the state to end the transitional regime

which denies Romanians and Bulgarians access to work and makes them second class Europeans'.⁴⁰

This model is driven by the notion that peer to peer exchange information/experience is more credible and fruitful. Romeurope supported this initiative collecting around 150 signatures for the declaration from local representatives. This provided an important platform for positive interventions.⁴¹

In addition to these ongoing meetings of elected representatives, a follow up initiative has emerged. The *Association des Maires de Grandes Villes de France (AMGVF)* [Association of French City Mayors – AMGVF] has established a working group on Roma to coordinate approaches and interventions across different cities.⁴² This coordination committee has met already three times and appointed a secretary based at the Municipality of Montreuil.

Civil society action

As a preface to the presentation of civil society practice it should be noted that the research found that much supportive and inclusive work with Roma EU citizens is conducted by individual citizens, rather than organisations. In this sense civic responsibility and solidarity should be acknowledged as significant good practice: even when Member States or NGOs are not engaged in good practice in support of Roma inclusion, many ordinary EU citizens are. Where NGOs are involved in supporting Roma EU citizens, this is often driven by political solidarity, which should also be acknowledged as 'good practice'.

Setting up the Roma coalition network 'Romeurope'

One of the best examples in **France** is the creation of the NGO network *Collectif national Droits de l'Homme Romeurope* [National Human Rights Group Romeurope].⁴³ Romeurope is an informal coalition of Human Rights, Traveller and Roma organisations set up in October 2000 in Paris in order to improve access to basic rights among Roma migrants on French territory and fight discrimination and human rights violations suffered by members of this group in France. Romeurope functions as a network of national and local support committees and has three main roles:

- Firstly, an observatory role – acting as a watchdog for human rights violations;
- Secondly, an informative role – sharing experience and knowledge, distributing information among members, producing tools for volunteers, professionals and all persons involved; and;
- Thirdly, an advocacy role – challenging the employment restrictions of Romanian/Bulgarian workers, as well campaigning for the equal treatment of all EU citizens.

Although Romeurope mostly supports and facilitates the work of its members, it also organises several kinds of activities such as the investigation of expulsions and repatriations by collecting relevant testimonies through its network; lobbying the Ministry of Immigration by using the testimonies collected and sending letters of concern; and by developing in partnership with the organisations Gisti a network of lawyers to dispute the expulsions or repatriations of Roma EU citizens.

Romeurope finds that in practice the right to reside in France depends on the right to work, and since the right to work is still restricted, the conditions of Bulgarian and Romanian Roma citizens in **France** have not changed much through their acquisition of EU citizenship. In fact, for some their life has become more complicated. As a Romeurope officer noted, '[b]efore 2007, the Romanian and Bulgarian Roma were regarded as "foreigners". When they wanted to stay in France, they applied for residence. There was a procedure and they followed it. In practical terms Roma knew what to do to stay in France, like in other countries. As a consequence of [Bulgaria and Romania's] EU accession and the Free Movement Directive, from 2007 this residence permit is no longer obligatory. In consequence, the Prefecture often interprets this as meaning that they [Roma] cannot apply for residence permits. In this context, Roma EU citizens do not have any means to appeal. At present their only access to French society is through work, which is not easy, due to the remaining work restrictions for Romanians and Bulgarians'.⁴⁴ Romeurope has been monitoring the human rights situation of Roma from other Member States producing a comprehensive report.⁴⁵

The research did not identify any comparable NGO interventions of this kind in any of the other Member States and obviously there are important lessons to be learned: '*Roma from Paris suburbs wanted to demonstrate two months before a decision to retain employment restrictions [for Bulgarians and Romanians]. Romeurope helped Roma by organising a bus, transportation, all the logistical details, including the permit for demonstration and publicised the event in towns around the country through the network. Although the Roma usually don't like to be highly visible, they came to this*

event. And this time they were visible asking for the right to work, to be permitted the opportunity to join the formal labour market. They demonstrated in front of the National Assembly and the Ministry of Labour and the Delegation of European Commission, 300 Roma and 150 representatives of NGOs in total. They arranged meetings with the delegation from the European Commission. The delegation asked for a report about the precise obstacles and a group of them were able to go and present it to the EU Commission'.⁴⁶

Fostering the integration of Roma from Eastern European countries

The Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG) in **Spain** has developed an extensive response to the arrival of Roma EU citizens, which can be a useful good practice model for NGOs.⁴⁷ The programme fostering the integration of the Roma immigrant groups from Eastern European countries (*Programa de fomento de la integración del colectivo gitano inmigrante procedente de países del Este de Europa*)⁴⁸ is perhaps the best example of a national NGO response available. One of its most interesting elements is the intersection of funding from EU, national, regional and local government funds plus private funding from saving banks.⁴⁹ Lacking a national coordination, it has not been a flagship programme and has relatively poor visibility, as the work is carried out locally.

In 2006, FSG started a pilot programme targeting the Roma communities arriving to **Spain** from Eastern Europe. This was a new challenge and a new experience for the organisation since it had only addressed the situation of Spanish Roma until that point. The institutional commitment is at present reflected in a specific line of intervention (Line of intervention 4: Work with Roma

from Eastern Europe) within the FSG Strategic Plan 2009-2013.⁵⁰ The main objective has been to favour the full social inclusion of Roma immigrants in Spain. To do so, FSG established a relationship with the Roma newcomers and assessed their situation. It then defined approaches aimed at addressing their most important needs and improving their living conditions. It supported them to approach the public as well the private services in the cities where they live. The programme was initiated in five Spanish cities and at present, actions are implemented in Alicante, Valencia, Barcelona, Avilés, Oviedo, Madrid, Córdoba, Málaga, Burgos. FSG is considering further expanding the programme in the future.

The intervention is focused on action in four key areas: initial support, education, housing and employment. Supporting Roma when accessing services is a crosscutting action that helps to build their confidence. The process is intensive and at the same time very flexible. At present the key function of support is to close the gap between Roma and public institutions, welfare services and the majority society in general. FSG specialised staff working with foreign Roma (one full time project officer per city, except in Barcelona where there are four) identify needs and demands and facilitate access to registration and basic services. In coordination with other FSG programmes (and also other services and institutions) FSG addresses the following areas of work: Information, counselling and accompaniment to regularise the administrative situation and navigate diverse procedures; promotion of basic rights especially as regards the issuing of health cards, access to health services, schooling of children and access to allowances; promotion of autonomy through amongst others, literacy and language courses; and awareness raising,

especially among social services, education and health services professionals.

Education for Roma children is a priority. Actions in this area include awareness raising with Roma parents and school centres, supporting school registration and applications for school allowances (e.g. free meals), monitoring school attendance and cooperation with education specialised services (e.g. psycho-pedagogical counselling units) and active participation in coordination mechanisms such as absenteeism hearings. The results have been sound so far and hundreds of Roma children from other Member States are successfully schooled and attending regularly. Also a more positive attitude of school centres and teaching staff has been achieved.

Access to decent and adequate housing for Roma from other Member States is another priority, although in many cases there are barriers the programme cannot overcome (e.g. lack of sufficient income, unavailability of affordable housing, etc.). The programme staff helps beneficiaries search for accommodation, occasionally visits and assesses the state of apartments, provides counselling about rental contracts, supports applications for housing allowances and provides counselling in cases of evictions. In a particular local context, such as in Córdoba, FSG works in partnership with the municipality in the 'bridge apartments' programme which provides temporary accommodation in rented apartments, a monthly subsistence income and social support to Roma families who commit to a process of social inclusion and integration into jobs.

In **Spain**, **Employment actions** fostering labour market integration are placed within the Spanish government's European Social Fund Operational Programme for 2007-2013 *Programa Plurirregional de Lucha*

Contra la Discriminación [Multi-regional Programme for Fighting Against Discrimination] the Managing Authority of which is the Ministry of Labour and Immigration. A number of intermediary bodies (both public and private) implement separate sections of the Programme. FSG is one of these bodies and implements the specific sub-programme focused on Roma people: the *Programa Acceder; FSE 2007-2013 – Acciones dirigidas a la población gitana* [Acceder Programme: ESF 2007-2013 – Actions targeting the Roma population], which began during the previous cycle of the Structural Funds (2000-2007). This contains a section on Roma migrants within the chapter on Context and Situation, and a line of action within the chapter on planned activities, namely the Axis 3 – Measure 2.5 ‘Actions aimed at fostering social and economic integration of Romani immigrants’.⁵¹ Activities in relation to employment consist mainly of counselling, training on social and presentation skills, vocational training, mediation with potential employers, and support in job searching. In total, some 1,500 migrant Roma had engaged in various actions of the programme by December 2008. Of these 94 per cent were Romanian Roma and the remainder Bulgarian and Bosnian Roma.

The programme offers some important lessons regarding, for example, needs assessment, which facilitates the development of a multi-dimensional perspective, and the importance of good coordination and cooperation between public and private stakeholders.

In order to achieve real impact, direct intervention must come hand in hand with institutional action and lobbying to raise awareness and promote public responsibility regarding the social inclusion of Roma EU citizens from other Member

States. This public commitment must be delivered at all government levels – national, regional and local – each of them according to their powers and responsibilities.

FSG staff managed to create very close community ties based on mutual trust. Through their *street work*, but also by travelling themselves to Romania to visit the places of origin of the Roma groups they support, they have been able to gain an important insight into real needs and their proposed actions have been welcome by the Roma. These working methods can be inspiring for other similar actions.

The programme shows also how the European Union Structural Funds, such as the European Social Fund (ESF) can be effectively used for the benefit of Roma EU citizens from other Member States. Furthermore, it has succeeded in attracting more funds from different government institutions at all levels, signing protocol agreements with them. Even if these institutions participate only as sponsors, they become more aware of the issue of Roma EU citizens, thus promoting a gradual general attitude change in relation to Roma EU citizens establishing residence in Spain. As an example of this it is worth noting that the President of Catalonia sent a letter to the FSG Regional Director in May 2009, acknowledging and congratulating the FSG for the implementation of the programme.

‘Right to school, right to the future’

In **Italy**, since 2008, the NGO Community of St. Egidio has organised the project *Diritto alla scuola, diritto al futuro* [Right to school, right to the future] in Rome to support the education and inclusion of Roma and Sinti children and families living

in formal and informal settlements in six municipalities of the city.⁵² The project has thus far supported around 1,250 persons and is implemented with funding from the government. Although the project does not target exclusively Roma children, a substantial number of them has benefited.

The main objectives of the project are, amongst others, to prevent street begging; to prevent school drop out and to promote the full participation of Roma and Sinti pupils in school life; to prevent intolerance and to promote co-existence.

Activities include the monitoring and support of Roma and Sinti children, scholarships, actions involving Roma parents and families, awareness raising to combat anti-Roma sentiments, and social assistance interventions. Roma mediators facilitate interaction between schools, institutions and Roma parents.

Reflecting on the project, representatives of the Community of St. Edigio noted difficulties related in part to the 'experimental' nature of the project, which requires significant time and energy investment to ensure that schools and teachers understood and were sensitive to the needs of Roma and Sinti and to ensure the full and direct involvement of Roma families. The Community of St. Edigio expressed concern about the sustainability of the project due to insufficient, time-barred government funding. The 200,00-Euro, 18-month project is 90 per cent government funded, with the remain provided by the NGO. It is unclear what will happen beyond the initial 18-month period. In addition, the Community of St. Egidio also noted some problems in getting full support from schools, which is crucial to the full success of the project. Nevertheless, the Community of St. Egidio considered the project to be easily

transferable and extremely important because it '*seeks to improve the educational attainment of children with direct methods and is easy to apply without any "ethnic barriers" among students of all cultures*'.⁵³

Neighbourhood Management Group

In the **United Kingdom**, Scotland, the Glasgow Oxfam project *Govanhill Neighbourhood Management Group* specifically targets Roma EU citizens. The project won a flourish award from Glasgow City Council for its work with the Roma community. According to Oxfam: '*When a few thousand Roma started settling in Glasgow five years ago, there were bound to be challenges. The Roma were looking for a better life in the UK due to the persecution and poverty they faced in Eastern Europe. They had little money and little English, didn't know how to get the help they needed, were exploited by employers and faced hostility from some local people. In 2006, Oxfam and the local health authority decided to employ two people from the Roma community in Glasgow to provide advice and help others access services. As well as supporting the Roma themselves, we wanted to help counter negative attitudes from neighbours and the local community and make sure that local public services responded to the needs of the community. Over time, more people became involved. And after various discussions, the Govanhill Neighbourhood Management Group was formed, bringing together the public sector, local charities, Oxfam and members of the community itself*'.⁵⁴

The project brought different stakeholders together to improve the local area and support a new community. With everyone sitting around one table and committed to the target group, this helped ensure that

Roma families could access healthcare and helped schools support Roma children. The Group has also raised concerns about bad employers and helped build understanding between different people. Community involvement has made a significant difference for the Roma and the wider community of Govanhill. As an OXFAM spokesperson suggested: *'...It's great that there are examples of local government committed to working with partners, and with communities themselves. There's still a way to go, but Govanhill is heading in the right direction'*.⁵⁵

The way forward

The positive initiatives examined here are only a small selection of the projects implemented across the European Union to facilitate Roma integration including or specifically targeting Roma from other EU Member States.

Local initiatives may be as important as large-scale ones, precisely because they are small and develop valuable integrated micro-level strategies that work at the level of real people rather than more abstract notions of 'Roma'. It is at this micro level that local citizens and authorities become familiar with individual Roma as people with a consequent increase in empathy and solidarity.

Positive initiatives stand a good chance of succeeding, if three key conditions are met:

- **First, that all stakeholders**, in particular local authorities, national authorities and civil society organisations **cooperate closely and include beneficiaries**, in this case Roma, in both the design and

implementation of projects. This works particularly well in a context in which it is married to the aspirations and experiences of citizens in the 'host communities'.

- **Second, that a holistic approach is applied with interconnected actions across a variety of areas of social life** ranging, crucially, from employment to education, housing, health, etc. An intervention that targets only one area will rarely be as successful.
- **Thirdly, that constructive partnerships join-up vertical and horizontal levels of government.** The more active 'joined-up governance', the more cooperation between different sectors and levels – voluntary and community as well as EU, national, regional and local government – the more likely a programme is to deliver a positive, holistic and inclusive service to Roma.

The positive initiatives that were identified were largely ad hoc and rarely part of a comprehensive national or regional strategy.

Given the need for Roma from other EU Member States to integrate in host societies, an EU level Framework Strategy for Roma Inclusion is essential. Such a strategy should set common minimum standards for addressing the situation of both national and 'migrant' Roma groups in all Member States and utilise the EU structural funds and the European Social Funds as key funding mechanisms.

The EU and Member States could draw on the example of the Spanish model using Structural Funds for Roma integration programmes which include Roma from other EU Member States. The work of the EURoma Network made up of representatives of twelve Member States,

determined to promote the use of Structural Funds to enhance the effectiveness of policies targeting Roma people and to

promote their social inclusion will obviously be central in this context.⁵⁶

The selection of the positive initiatives was broadly guided by a number of criteria, including that they:

- Improve the situation regarding discrimination and equal opportunity;
- Show the positive impact of law and policy on the social inclusion of Roma from other EU Member States;
- Are sustainable;
- Are transferable, including across the Member States;
- Roma or Roma organisations participate in project design and implementation;
- Receive positive feedback from Roma beneficiaries;
- Mainstream the concerns of Roma from other Member States;
- Concern specific issues affecting Roma women, children, older persons and persons with disabilities in Roma policies and general social inclusion policies; and
- Evidence a strong cooperation between levels of government and civil society

Endnotes

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- 14 Department of Schools, Children and Families (2008) Raising the achievements of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, Nottingham: DSCF,
<http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-00102-2008&>
- 15 Each children's services authority in England must make arrangements to promote co-operation between: (a) the authority; (b) each of the authority's relevant partners; and (c) such other persons or bodies as the authority consider appropriate, being persons or bodies of any nature who exercise functions or are engaged in activities in relation to children in the authority's area.
http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2004/ukpga_20040031_en_3 (23.10.2009)

- 16 The principle function of the Traveller Education Service is to promote unhindered access and full inclusion in mainstream education. The Race Relations [Amendment] Act 2000 places a duty on schools, to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good race relations when carrying out their functions. This includes Gypsies and Irish Travellers as recognised ethnic groups. Any school, anywhere, may have Gypsy, Roma or Traveller pupils on roll. Raising the achievement of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children is the responsibility of everyone within the education system and a significant measure of the effectiveness of policies to combat educational and social exclusion. Gypsy/Roma and Travellers of Irish Heritage are identified as racial groups and covered by the Race Relations Act as legitimate minority ethnic communities.
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Selected positive initiatives

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European Commission

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights

**The situation of Roma EU citizens moving to and settling in other EU Member States
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Design: FRA - Vienna

Printed in Belgium

2009 - 24 pp, - 21 x 29.7 cm

ISBN-13: 897-92-9192-472-1

DOI: 10.2811/36140

A great deal of information on the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights is available on the Internet. It can be accessed through the FRA website (<http://fra.europa.eu>).

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ISBN 978-92-9192-472-1



9 789291 924721