



Local Engagement for Roma Inclusion

(LERI) Project

Community Summary

Lezennes, France

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

LERI is the first FRA project to test participatory action research methodology. By identifying the key factors that lead to the success or failure of local integration activities, the project is helping to improve the planning of effective integration programmes for the future. At the same time, facilitating engagement at local level empowers all those involved, building their capacity to participate as equal partners with local administrations and civil society, and enabling a shared understanding of which measures need to be taken and how their implementation can be monitored. The project is being carried out in 22 localities across 11 EU Member States (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and the United Kingdom).

LOCALITIES

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

Lezennes, France

Overview of the country context

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

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

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

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

² Council of Europe (2012), *Estimates on Roma Population in European Countries*, available at:

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

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

⁴ Observatoire et veille sociale Aréas, La Sauvegarde du Nord.

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

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

Locality background information

Lezennes is situated in the region of Nord-Pas de Calais. The village is part of the Lille Métropole urban area and is well integrated in the urban environment (infrastructure, transport, economic activities, etc.). Furthermore, Lezennes is situated in the neighbourhood of the new Lille Métropole stadium and next to a shopping centre.

In camps in the region of Nord-Pas de Calais live 3,116 Roma. The Lille Métropole urban area (where 92.5% of the population in the region lives) has a significant Roma presence.⁸ Around one hundred Roma from Eastern Europe are living in camps in Lezennes.⁹ All Roma in

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

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

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

⁸ Réseau associatif Romá Nord-Pas de Calais (2013), *Etude régionale des besoins en formation et en insertion professionnelle des personnes de nationalité roumaine de culture rom*.

⁹ Observatoire et veille sociale Aréas, La Sauvegarde du Nord.

the Lezennes area are EU nationals and mainly reside in camps (on the communal territory).¹⁰

Concerned by the situation of Roma living in slums, the Mayor of Lezennes responded to the demand the president of Lille Métropole in 2011, by creating an "inclusion village" on communal territory.



Inclusion Village where some Roma migrants live in Lezennes

The Roma integration project "inclusion village" currently hosts 17 people, and provides them with stable accommodation, facilitates and supports the inhabitants' integration process (education of children, access to documentation and to labour market) since September 2012. The Roma families who moved into mobile homes (three chalets in Lezennes), have improved housing conditions, with all basic services.

However, the project is still subject to criticism and has created tension in the neighbourhood. Indeed, Roma-related news are mainly about the local opposition to the project,¹¹ about legal procedures on how to close the village,¹²

¹⁰ Interview with Municipality of Lezennes, Local government office, Social Cohesion (2015).

¹¹ Daily motion, video: *Roms: le camp d'insertion crée la polémique à Lezennes*, available at: www.dailymotion.com/video/xt6k7z_roms-le-camp-d-insertion-cree-la-polemique-a-lezennes_news

¹² La Voix du Nord, *A Lezennes, le nouveau village d'insertion attise les passions*, 31 August 2015, available at: www.lavoixdunord.fr/region/a-lezennes-le-nouveau-village-d-insertion-attise-les-passions-jna0b0n658790

¹³ France 3, *Lezennes: manifestation contre les camps roms ce samedi matin*, 14

September 2015, available at: <http://nord-pas-de-calais.france3.fr/2013/09/14/lezennes-manifestation-contre-les-camps-roms-ce-samedi-matin-318395.html> In the neighbouring locality of Hellemmes: www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/2012/10/28/97001-20121028FILWWW00059-une-manifestation-anti-roms-degenere.php

Besides this housing programme, health and poverty reduction activities are also implemented for the families living in camps. The strategy focuses on the development of mediation, namely socio-health mediation with professionally appointed mediators.¹⁴ Eviction of camps is a strong issue, with the implementation of the support plan for slum resorption, which include the application of the principle of continuity of social support and access to public services, social diagnostic and proposals for alternative housing solutions as planned by the inter-ministerial circular of 26 August 2012.¹⁵



Typical chalet of the Lezennes inclusion village

¹⁴ La Sauvegarde du Nord.

¹⁵ Inter-ministerial circular, 26 August 2015, available at : http://circulaire.legifrance.gouv.fr/pdf/2012/08/cir_35737.pdf

Objectives and thematic focus of the LERI project

The main issues in the Lezennes area regarding Roma inclusion are migration and the growing number of people in need on the communal territory.¹⁶ Integration policies do not address or cover all Roma citizens from Eastern Europe, while the majority live in segregated and disadvantaged areas.¹⁷

In this context, the first objective is to elaborate a communication strategy to fight against stereotypes and promote Roma abilities, including the promotion of sustainable development (recycling activities and waste management). The strategy will be developed during the LERI project implementation phase, based on the needs assessment.

Regarding the inclusion village more specifically, children and families need to be sustained in the short-term to develop relevant skills and competences for their social and professional inclusion.

Considering the number of Roma still living in segregated and disadvantaged areas, capacity building is required in addition to the development of sustainable projects in the medium/long-term perspective.

In the short- and medium-term, local stakeholders will need the following support:

- A communication strategy identifying concrete issues in order to improve the transfer of Roma families in housing, as well as improved relationships between Roma and neighbourhoods, employment public services and employers;
- Empowerment of Roma citizens, families and children to ensure their autonomy for social and professional inclusion, and;
- European funds to sustain projects for Roma and non-Roma inclusion: Based on the inclusion village experience, stakeholders need to ensure the financial sustainability of the project

and to transfer similar activities in other localities (good practices).

Anticipated thematic focus of PAR-based activities:

- migration
- sustainable development
- inclusion.

Better interaction between Roma and non-Roma residents in Lezennes is essential to reduce tensions related to the set-up of the inclusion village. This is especially relevant given the current tension between neighbourhoods, the ripple effect of the negative media coverage on migration in the EU, and the increased anti-Roma attitude in media.

Public servants in Lezennes will be involved as interface between Roma and neighbourhoods. Public servants will concretely contribute to the LERI project by participating in interviews, field visits and the focus group organised during the needs assessment phase. LERI can bring its innovative methodology to the locality in order to improve Roma participation.

Activities implemented and actors involved in the needs assessment phase

In order to implement a participatory needs assessment in Lezennes, the LERI team will run the following activities:

Interviews and visits:

Interviews will take place with different local stakeholders to identify core problems and expectations and to enhance cooperation. During the interviews, the goals of LERI will be presented and discussed with the different stakeholders.

- Interviews with identified counterparts will take place in the Town of Lezennes, Métropole Européenne de Lille, and the *Direction Départementale de la Cohésion Sociale* (DDCS) du Nord;
- Field visits with the NGOs Afeji and La Sauvegarde du Nord ;

¹⁶ Interview with Municipality of Lezennes, Mayor cabinet representative, 2015. .

¹⁷ Ibid.

- Meetings with Roma living in the "inclusion village" in Lezennes;
- Meetings with Roma living in deprived areas of Lezennes.

2. Community visioning:

Roma are not used to be consulted regarding the projects on a partnership basis, and stakeholders do not have experience in participatory planning. Thus, preparatory activities will be performed as community visioning.

The LERI team will participate in activities organized by the local stakeholders and involving Roma people. A specific project was identified by the LERI team: Créutile "giving new life to what you throw away". This initiative is carried out by Roma families living in the "inclusion village" with social workers of the association Afeji. The Créutile concept enables to perform a civic action not only by reducing waste, but also by recycling waste products, giving them a new life. This could be done by creating a piece of art or a useful object from miscellaneous packaging, old newspapers, or unused objects.

Another idea is to support local stakeholders in by hosting a contest and organising different activities with Roma children and families, such as: giving a presentation of the project, recycling and re-using various objects, participation to the Créutile contest with an evaluation grid, and choosing the winners of the contest. The LERI team will contribute to the monitoring and evaluation of the project.



"And the winner is..." Young participants of the Créutile contest

Besides this project, meetings will be organized with Roma participants of the

Créutile contest, as well as families who have not participated in the project. LERI will suggest methods and techniques to improve Roma engagement in participatory projects.

Through this activity, the LERI team has the opportunity to be part of a participatory activity with Roma families. LERI will contribute with its expertise on participatory action research and will use this participatory approach to identify Roma leaders.

Moreover, in order to engage more adults, LERI may contribute to the development of a new approach based on the evaluation of this local participatory initiative. For instance, this initiative could be linked to visits of waste recycling and sorting companies (inclusion component) during the LERI implementation phase. The idea is to present proposals regarding the promotion of Roma inclusion and a new image of Roma regarding their role in the society (communication strategy), by involving Roma people in the design of the project.

This should allow Roma families to share their point of view on inclusion projects by providing their expectations, priorities and achievements.

3. A focus group: consensus building between counterparts:

A focus group will be organized on the basis of the first activities and on the expectations of the LERI project.

The idea is to gather all stakeholders involved in the activities 1 and 2: Roma representatives, city council of Lezennes, Afeji, *Direction Départementale de la Cohésion Sociale* (DDCS), and the LERI team. The participants will be chosen in relation to their concrete engagement in the participatory activities. The objective of the workshop is to listen to different needs and opinions and to build a consensus between counterparts.



Participants to the Créutile contest

Expected outcomes of the participatory action research

The expected outcome of the participatory action research is to promote the change of Roma people to a citizen status. With its expertise on Roma participation, the LERI team will propose a new methodology to engage Roma

families in the design of social inclusion activities/ projects. Furthermore, the LERI team will develop tools in order to raise awareness and promote participation.

The objective is to develop a consensus between all local stakeholders (Roma representatives, town of Lezennes, Afeji, DDCS) on the necessity of building a new participatory approach, with Roma involved from the very beginning of all inclusion projects at local level.

The LERI team will also engage other relevant stakeholders who may contribute with their expertise. For instance, the Federation of Housing and Insertion Associations (FNARS) may contribute with technical support to improve Roma representation at local level.

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