



Local Engagement for Roma Inclusion

(LERI) Project

Community Summary

Mátraverebély, Hungary

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

LERI is the first FRA project to test participatory action research methodology. By identifying the key factors that lead to the success or failure of local integration activities, the project is helping to improve the planning of effective integration programmes for the future. At the same time, facilitating engagement at local level empowers all those involved, building their capacity to participate as equal partners with local administrations and civil society, and enabling a shared understanding of which measures need to be taken and how their implementation can be monitored. The project is being carried out in 21 localities across 11 EU Member States (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and the United Kingdom).

LOCALITIES

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

Mátraverebély, Hungary

Overview of the country context

According to the 2011 Census, there are 315,583 registered Roma people in Hungary or 3% of the total population.¹ However, unofficial sources estimate that Roma constitute as high as 7–9% of the total population. Although members of the community are dispersed all over the country, they tend to be overwhelmingly concentrated in the rural and poorer North-Eastern part of Hungary.

Roma in Hungary are not a homogeneous group. About 90% of the Roma population belongs to the so-called Romungro sub-group, which arrived in Hungary in the 15th century. This group is considered to be linguistically assimilated. Another sub-group is the so-called Oláh or Vlach group (about 5%). This group arrived in Hungary from Wallachia in Romania in the early 19th century and it has been internally differentiated on the basis of occupations. Members of this community still speak a dialect of Romani language known as Lovári.

The third Romani sub-group are the Beás. They were migrants from the geographical region of Banat situated on the border between Serbia and Romania at the turn of 19th and 20th century. They speak the archaic Romanian language. This subgroup lives mostly in Southern Transdanubia in the South-Western part of Hungary.²

All of the Roma communities have been settled in Hungary since the 20th century and they often live in suburban areas or in the outskirts of settlements.³

Recently, the position of Roma in Hungary has worsened in all areas of life including education, employment and health. For example, the number of Roma who have not completed a primary school education is four times higher when compared to the non-Roma (23% and 5%, respectively). The number of Roma who obtain a tertiary degree is at least 18 times lower than the majority community (<1% and 18.5%, respectively).⁴ The rate of unemployment among the Roma is two times higher than among the non-Roma (13% and 6%, respectively)⁵ while life expectancy is shorter by 10 years among the Roma compared to the national average.⁶



Children playing football in Mátraverebély.

There are two main public institutions which have the potential to represent the interest of the Roma community in Hungary. The first is the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights who is nominated

¹ Central Statistical Office, *Population Census 2011: Table 1.1.6.2 Population by nationality, mother tongue, language spoken with family members or friends and affinity with nationalities' cultural values*, available at: www.ksh.hu/nepszamlalas/tables_regional_00 (All hyperlinks were accessed on 23 February 2016).

² Forray, K. (ed.) (2006), *Ismeretek a romológia alapképzési szakhoz*, pp.60-63, available at: <http://mek.nif.hu/04800/04867/04867.pdf>

³ Kováts, A. (2002), 'Local and international views on the migration of the Hungarian Roma' in: Kállai, E. (ed.), *The Gypsies/The Roma in the Hungarian society*, pp.126-149, available at: <http://mek.oszk.hu/06000/06025/06025.pdf>

⁴ Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2015), *Education policy outlook: Hungary*, p.6, available at: www.oecd.org/edu/Hungary-Profile.pdf

⁵ Central Statistical Office, *Population Census 2011: Table 2.1.6.2 Population by nationality, economic activity and sex*, available at: www.ksh.hu/nepszamlalas/tables_regional_00

⁶ Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 (2013), *Civil society monitoring report on the implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategy and Decade Action Plan in 2012 in Hungary*, Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation, p.51, available at: www.romadecade.org/cms/upload/file/9270_file8_hu_civil-society-monitoring-report_en.pdf

by the President and elected by the Parliament. The Commissioner monitors and investigates cases of human and minority rights violations. The second option are the National Roma Self-Governments (NRSNG) that can be created on local, regional and national level if a number of people from the minority communities register to participate in the elections. The NRSNGs have the right to take decisions on issues related to language, media and culture, however, they lack effective executive rights.

The Roma population is not represented by a Roma political party in the national Parliament. Political parties used to nominate Roma candidates to the Parliament but they didn't achieve any positive changes to the government's integration policy.

In November 2011, the Hungarian government adopted the National Roma Inclusion Strategy for 2011-2020, supplemented by the Action Plan for 2011-2014. The Strategy is based on the approach of "explicit but not exclusive targeting" which means that it targets Roma people without excluding others who live in similar socio-economic conditions. The Minister of State for Social Inclusion is responsible for its implementation.

Locality background information

Mátraverebély is a small village in Nógrád County (North-Eastern Hungary) with 2000 inhabitants. The village is a well-known religious location and visited by many tourists. About 50% of the inhabitants are Roma belonging to the Hungarian speaking Romungro group. Due to growing residential segregation in villages in North Hungary, the number of schools teaching a student body with 70 % or more disadvantaged pupils in the

lower grades has more than doubled between 2004 and 2010.⁷

The wider region is one of the most disadvantaged regions in Hungary dealing with a high unemployment rate, poor public transport possibilities and underdeveloped infrastructure. The region had a mine-based industry until the early '90s. The agricultural possibilities are weak. This region has the lowest entrepreneurial activity in Hungary.⁸

The Roma community is living in segregated and in integrated areas in the county, but Mátraverebély itself is isolated. It belongs to the poorest settlements of the micro-region.

There is a segregated neighbourhood in the village. The road 21 crosses the settlement, the village is on one side of the road and the segregated part is on the other. The latter is populated by 700 Roma. The housing conditions are very poor with many houses lacking running water and electricity. These services are unavailable mainly because of unpaid bills. However, not only Roma households are concerned with this problem.

Data on the history of the local Roma population is not available. The Roma community originally lived in the segregated part of the village. However, some Roma families have begun occupying old houses that have been left empty after younger generations of non-Roma left the area.

Objectives and thematic focus of the LERI project

Recently, programmes focusing on Roma integration in the spheres of housing, education, early childhood development and community development were

⁷ Kovács, K., Schwarcz, G., Tagai, G. (2013), *TIPSE: The territorial dimension of poverty and social exclusion in Europe, Case study report Nógrád County Hungary*, European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion (ESPON), available at: www.espon.eu/export/sites/default/Documents/Projects/AppliedResearch/TIPSE/DFR/Annex_2_Appendix_6_Case_Study_Report_Nograd_HU.pdf

⁸ Kovács, K., Schwarcz, G., Tagai, G. (2013), *TIPSE: The territorial dimension of poverty and social exclusion in Europe, Case study report Nógrád County Hungary*, European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion (ESPON), available at: www.espon.eu/export/sites/default/Documents/Projects/AppliedResearch/TIPSE/DFR/Annex_2_Appendix_6_Case_Study_Report_Nograd_HU.pdf

established in Mátraverebély. The LERI programme could connect to all of them.



Houses in Mátraverebély

The participatory action research (PAR) programme will focus on community development using various approaches. The first one is village-level research planned by the local community. Interviews will be managed by local Roma women that were trained by local activists and university students of social work of the Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) during a community development training. Interviews will include questions on family history, educational background and employment status of all inhabitants. In addition, the interviews will include questions on skills and capacities that are not covered by official certifications, but could help during job-search or the LERI programme implementation. The aim of this research is to create a database that will be used for a village-level oral history, a competency-map and the basis of any further local development planning processes. The research will be managed by the Roma NGO and it will involve volunteers. The results of the map will be published quarterly in a local calendar.

A second approach is to establish a local radio station. The station will be managed by local young people interested in learning about work in the media. This will help build capacities among Roma youth while also providing them with a platform for discussing topics relevant to community life.

These activities will connect to other local projects, such as housing, education and employment. Further media training

could take place in educational programmes since informal skills can be beneficial during job search. A strong community development project implemented through LERI could bring these different programmes together into a larger project which would be a great benefit for the whole municipality.

Activities implemented and actors involved in the needs assessment phase

As part of the preparatory needs assessment phase, community discussions were organized. Participants in these discussions include members of the local municipality, the mayor, members of the local Roma Minority Self-government, leaders of the local Roma NGO, Nógrád County Roma minority representatives, the principal of the local secondary school and the leader and members of a local welfare benefit centre. On these meetings, previous programmes have been evaluated using the SWOT method. The primary goal was to develop a community based activity that could connect to all the current programmes and be managed by local people, using as little foreign capacity as possible.



Houses in Mátraverebély

Expected outcomes of the participatory action research

The planned PAR programme could support the sustainability of all running programmes. All of the mentioned activities are top-down initiatives accepted by the local community as a package.

In LERI, the local community could plan and develop their own activity involving

all the inhabitants. The planned activity could be the basis for any further strategy

planning, project proposal, or community based programme.

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