Local engagement for Roma inclusion

Locality study
Helsinki (Finland), 2016

Authors: Kimmo Granqvist, Anca Enache, Maria Mihaela Dorofte
Contents

1. Executive summary .......................................................................................................................... 3
2. Description of the local context ...................................................................................................... 4
   The human rights situation of Roma EU citizens living in Helsinki .............................................. 4
   LERI research in Helsinki .............................................................................................................. 6
3. PAR methodology employed .......................................................................................................... 8
4. The local intervention description ................................................................................................. 12
   Intervention 1: Income-generating interventions .......................................................................... 12
   Intervention 2: Women’s group intervention ............................................................................... 17
   Intervention 3: Anti-Gypsyism intervention ............................................................................... 19
   Monitoring and evaluation .......................................................................................................... 21
5. Analysis, discussion, lessons learned ............................................................................................. 21
   Overall findings ........................................................................................................................ 21
   Lessons learned .......................................................................................................................... 22
   Discussion .................................................................................................................................... 24
6. Conclusions and recommendations ............................................................................................... 25
   Recommendations ......................................................................................................................... 26
   Future participatory community projects .................................................................................... 26
   European, national, local policies, projects and services ............................................................ 27
7. Additional Information ................................................................................................................... 27
   Acknowledgements ...................................................................................................................... 27
1. Executive summary

During the last decade, Roma from Eastern Europe have moved to other countries of the European Union as a response to the complex forms of exclusion and poverty they face in their countries of origin. Such movement also became visible in Finland from 2004, and sparked considerable public discussion. The majority of the Roma EU migrants face challenges in accessing the right to residency in Finland, which also affects the fulfilment of their key civil, political, economic and social rights.

The present report provides an overview of the participatory action research, Local Engagement for Roma Inclusion (LERI), which was implemented in Helsinki from November 2015 to 31 October 2016. The research worked with Roma EU citizens’ communities, most of whom lacked the right to residency in Helsinki. The aim was to generate knowledge and practices about their everyday experiences of exclusions and inclusion as regarding various areas of life. The project engaged Roma communities and local stakeholders in planning, implementing and evaluating community interventions. Sets of local interventions were implemented in the areas of generating income and employment, women’s participation and mobilisation, anti-Gypsyism, and community action. Data on the human rights situation of the Roma migrants and their experiences of exclusion was collected through participatory observation, participatory photography, focus groups and interviews.

The key exclusions that Roma EU mobile citizens emphasised during the research included: the scarcity of income-generating activities and the challenges in accessing the labour market in Finland, in the home countries and generally in Europe; the lack of housing in Finland versus the difficulties registering one’s house in the country of origin; harassment in public spaces; and ethnic profiling.

Participatory research and participatory community interventions can provide tools for the engagement of the Roma in the process of community and local actions – engagement that is tremendous for sustainable change. For LERI Helsinki, the flexibility of the research structure and the LERI’s culture of ‘learning by doing’ were central to realising successful interventions. The solid knowledge on the local social, economic and political context also positively affected the project’s implementation. On the other hand, the research identified that, in order to engage the communities in genuine participatory processes at all stages of project implementation, it required a resolute and sustained effort to train and strengthen the local capacity of the communities.

**Keywords/Tags:**
Roma EU citizens, anti-Gypsyism, income generation, photovoice, housing.
2. Description of the local context

The human rights situation of Roma EU citizens living in Helsinki

The free movement of Roma EU citizens has been of particular importance for the Roma community in Europe during the previous decades, in no small part due to the human rights situation and exclusion they have been experiencing. Massive social, political and economic transformations in the region, as well as changes in border regimes in Europe, have triggered this mobility. The collapse of the socialist regimes led to a process of abrupt deindustrialisation (Koritz, 1991), with the effect that a significant proportion of the population became outsiders of the traditional industries, and the transition towards a market-orientated economy, for example in Romania. This development and the subsequent transition had profound implications on the distribution of jobs and welfare, and therefore on the socioeconomic structure of the country. Minorities such as the Roma have been disproportionately affected by these changes, while they continue to widely face exclusion, racism and discrimination. Mobility increased in particular when border crossings were facilitated by the expansion of the European Union (Popescu, 2014).

Since 2008, Roma EU citizens from Eastern Europe, particularly from Romania and Bulgaria, have been practising temporary mobility to Finland, especially to the capital city, Helsinki. Finland has also a Finnish Roma population of 10,000 to 12,000, for which some patterns of exclusion, for example access to employment, have remained an everyday reality, besides the fact that the institutional and service structures are well developed. The first National Policy on Roma was finalised in 2010 and has as its overall objective, the promotion of equality and implementation of inclusion measures especially among Roma communities residing in Finland. The LERI local team in Helsinki decided to focus on the rights of the Roma EU mobile citizens, since the responses towards their human rights situations are very limited. The approximately 200–300 Roma EU citizens in Helsinki encounter generally, homelessness, unemployment, violence, discrimination and exclusion.

The Roma EU citizens coming to Helsinki have diverse histories and experiences, migration paths and living circumstances. Nonetheless, they have in common their human rights situation in the respective countries of origin and countries of migration. Romania and Bulgaria are the countries of origin for the majority of Roma in Helsinki. With few exceptions, they were excluded from the formal labour market after the collapse of the communist regime in Romania, and never re-entered the formal labour market. They generate income by working abroad in the formal or informal economic sectors, and by working in agriculture or other types of labour, for example in Romania on a short-term basis (Markkanen, Puurunen & Saarinen, 2012; Enache, 2012). Their level of education and formal qualifications are usually low, due in part to the structural inequalities within the educational system (Duminica & Ivasiuc, 2010). Because of the limited sources of income and the precarious level of support provided by the social security system in Romania and Bulgaria, their housing and living conditions are often poor, families having to share overcrowded premises that lack running water systems, electricity or legal registration by the officials. Furthermore, most of the people that were involved in the project in Finland were, for example, outside of
the Romanian national health insurance scheme, which meant that they could not obtain the European Health Insurance Card and were entitled only to acute health services in Romania and within the EU (Puurunen, Enache & Markkanen, 2016).

The majority of the Roma EU citizens in Helsinki who were at the heart of the LERI research are not registered as residents within the local municipality, and therefore remain outside the national welfare system. The lack of residence and the impossibility of gaining formal employment reinforce each other: they cannot register if they are unable to prove sufficient income, but face difficulties securing employment without proof of residence (Saarinen, 2012; Puurunen, Enache & Markkanen, 2016). Therefore, the lack of registration has negative repercussions on the Roma in regards to accessing social and economic rights such as housing, healthcare, employment and education.

The majority of Roma face difficulties gaining employment in the Finnish formal economic market. Commonly, they generate income through various other activities such as selling the street paper, Iso Numero, busking (playing music in the street), as short-term workers, collecting deposit bottles or begging. Their sleeping conditions are harsh: they sleep in tents, abandoned buildings, industrial and recycling containers and very seldom in the places of acquaintances, helpers or relatives. This lack of housing limits their access to everyday basic needs such as cooking, washing or storing one’s belongings. It also exposes the migrants to dangers and the fear of violence during the nights, for example, as sleeping in public, unauthorised places is restricted in Helsinki, people risk eviction by the police (Puurunen, Enache & Markkanen, 2016).

The service provision and policymaking targeting Roma migrants at the local level has been implemented by the public sector, particularly in cooperation with the third sector and local churches (Puurunen, Enache & Markkanen, 2016). The Hirundo drop-in centre for vulnerable EU mobile citizens and undocumented people of the Helsinki Deaconess Institute is financed and led in close cooperation with the municipality and the Helsinki Lutheran Church. Hirundo is the main service for Roma migrants in Helsinki, which provides community and social services with the aim of tackling the risk of exclusion among the members of these communities. The migrants are given access to day-shelter services and receive support with activities on healthcare, job search, registration, training and schooling of children. Hirundo also leads the implementation of temporary emergency accommodation for non-residents of Helsinki, which was in operation occasionally in 2016. Another organisation, the Freedom of Movement Network, aims to improve access to basic rights among Roma migrants, through the advocacy and documentation of rights-based abuses. In the past, the Freedom of Movement Network hosted around a hundred Romanian Roma in their parking area, since the migrants lacked access to housing or legal places to reside in the city. The All Our Children organisation has provided activities for Roma children, while also being involved in advocacy and training on the rights of Roma children in Europe and in Finland.

The local policies related to EU mobile citizens tend to focus on the provision of emergency and social support rather than on inclusion and integration. All non-residents have access to emergency social care, while minors less than 18 years old and pregnant women have the right to more extensive health services.
LERI in Helsinki was implemented by working with partners in specific interventions and by cooperating with various stakeholders in regards to interventions and the overall research implementation. The University of Helsinki, specifically the Romani Language and Culture unit was a key partner, providing expertise on Roma migration research and premises for the project and for project activities. For the implementation of the interventions, there was close cooperation with local artists: Elviira Davidow, Jani Leinonen, Peti Nieminen, with priest, researcher and activist Marjaana Toiviainen, and with a local business. Among the civil society organisations, LERI Helsinki also worked with Hirundo drop-in centre/Helsinki Deaconess Institute and All Our Children. These partnerships will be elaborated further later in the report. The organisations that the project cooperated with were: the Feminist Association Union and the Freedom of Movement Network.

Among the local authorities, the LERI research cooperated indirectly with the City of Helsinki through the work undertaken with the drop-in centre, Hirundo. The City of Helsinki also funds Hirundo and is part of the steering committee for the centre’s operations. LERI Helsinki local team met the Advisory Board on Romani Affairs twice during project implementation and kept close in communication whenever necessary. The Board provided LERI with expertise on the Finnish Roma policy implementation and developments, as well as on European cooperation and policy developments on Roma affairs.

LERI research in Helsinki

The LERI Helsinki research was a response to the need to address the situation of the Roma EU citizens through research and community services design and implementation. The LERI field expert Kimmo Grangvist, along with two additional field experts, Anca Enache and Maria Doroftes, and three co-researchers, Heini Puurunen, Baldovin Iuliana and Asen Spasov, constituted the key local team that worked on the research with numerous Roma, as will be discussed later in the report. Two of the co-researchers, Puurunen and Spasov, were involved only with the local interventions part of the LERI research.

The overall objective of the LERI research was to improve the inclusion and participation of the Roma EU citizens in Helsinki through the means of participatory action research and local interventions. Participation is understood as a process, method and approach. In order to achieve the overall objective, the following specific objectives were set:

a) to involve Roma EU citizens as co-researchers in the participatory needs assessment process, to produce knowledge on their everyday human rights situation, as well as their experiences of these;

b) to support and provide opportunities to Roma EU citizens as co-researchers or short-term experts in planning, designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating interventions that address their human rights situation;

c) to facilitate and support dialogue, engagement and cooperation between the Roma EU citizens and the local and national stakeholders (e.g. public authorities, civil society, and activists) focusing on the identification of the drivers for and barriers to successful inclusion at the local level;
d) to critically examine the efficiency of participatory processes in improving the human rights situation of the communities involved in the interventions.

The Participatory Action Research (PAR) needs assessment phase of the LERI research was composed of two collaborative workshops and a visual fieldwork exercise carried out in Helsinki between May and September 2015. The aim was to systematically and collaboratively identify and define the needs of the Roma EU citizens in Helsinki, analyse the key findings, set priorities and create a local interventions plan. The LERI local team decided upon the methods and approach for a participatory needs assessment phase: they designed the workshops and the fieldwork exercise, and selected the central themes for discussion on the basis of consultations with the key actors in the field and with members of the Roma communities. The Hirundo drop-in centre was intensively involved in this phase. As regards the participants, the research involved the people who expressed an interest and were able to get involved. Among them, some had been in Finland for some time and were involved with advocacy interventions, while others were newcomers and not so familiar with the local context and structures.

The first workshop was aimed at investigating the daily challenges faced by the Roma, assessing their individual and community’s needs, and setting the key priorities. Five Roma EU citizens, one external researcher and activist, and two persons who work in the NGO sector, formed the group who participated in the workshop. The participants included women and men, Roma and non-Roma, between 25 and 50 years of age, and originating from Romania or Finland. The planning team prepared a set of themes and statements in advance to be used flexibly during the discussions that emerged naturally among the participants. The discussions led to findings relating to people’s challenges in accessing housing, employment and encountering ethnic profiling and anti-Gypsyism.

The format of the second workshop derived from the first one, where some female participants suggested that it could be beneficial to have a similar meeting involving only women. Therefore, the participants of the second workshop were: a Roma migrant woman, a Finnish Roma woman active with the Finnish Roma NGOs, and two women working at the Hirundo drop-in centre. As in the first workshop, the participants were originally from Romania and Finland, Roma and non-Roma, aged between 25 and 50. The participants of this workshop were selected on the basis of previous collaborations, as the aim was to have an intimate environment for discussing the needs of the Roma migrants from the perspective of the women’s needs and experiences. The women wished to only include people they had collaborated with previously. During discussions, the participants highlighted women’s complex and multiple vulnerabilities, for example how the lack of housing and employment affected women in particular ways, and the need for specific support for women to access health services.

The visual fieldwork exercise was implemented as a photovoice project. Two Roma EU citizens, a man and a woman, originally from Romania and Bulgaria respectively, photographed the city and then discussed the materials developed with the LERI field experts. The third Roma participant discussed and analysed the materials collected together with the field expert. The aim was to record and
produce visual data on their everyday concerns and needs, as well as on the strengths of the Roma migrants in Helsinki.

The findings from the workshops and photovoice underlined the following key challenges for EU Roma citizens in Helsinki: the lack of access to formal, regular employment; the lack of access to housing; the lack of equal treatment; their experience of anti-Gypsyism; exclusion; and forms of violence and ‘otherness’ in Finnish society, particularly among women. Based on these results, the local LERI team in cooperation with some of the participants of the needs assessment phase formulated a set of three key interventions: 1) Income-generating intervention; 2) Roma women and girls’ intervention; and 3) Combating anti-Gypsyism intervention.

The workshops employed methods aimed at stimulating the participants’ own interpretations and views, by creating a collaborative, comfortable and safe environment for the meetings. The time and locations of the workshops were selected so as to best fit the interests of the Roma migrants, who generate their income in Helsinki through fragmented, insecure, time-consuming activities. The participants could influence the selection of other Roma community members to take part in the discussion, as the aim was to create a comfortable and trustable environment. This meant – especially in the case of the first workshop – that the participants knew each other well, sharing the same city of origin in Romania.

### 3. PAR methodology employed

The PAR research in Helsinki aimed to develop knowledge and skills that would lead to increased capacity and societal transformations particularly among Roma mobile EU citizens in Helsinki. The study was a qualitative one that made use of methods such as open discussions, photography, focus groups and journals, interviews – methods that are tailored to be especially useful for supporting collaborative inquiry (Patton, 2002, p. 183). A set of four PAR cycles were conducted in close synergy with the local interventions:

#### Table 1. PAR cycles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAR cycle</th>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Par cycle 1</strong></td>
<td>2 Group discussions; 1 photo voice; fieldwork exercise</td>
<td>9 participants; 4 participants; 3 participants</td>
<td>May–September 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Par cycle 2</strong></td>
<td>Group discussion (mapping the city)</td>
<td>11 participants</td>
<td>1–30th June 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Par cycle 3</strong></td>
<td>Group discussion (mapping the city)</td>
<td>6 participants</td>
<td>1–31 July 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Women’s rights</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Par cycle 4</strong></td>
<td>Photo voice; 2 interviews</td>
<td>3 participants; 2 participants</td>
<td>1–30th August 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anti-Gypsyism</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: LERI Field expert, 2016*
**PAR cycle 1** (discussed in the previews chapter), was the most extensive cycle, providing the key themes that were discussed further in the three cycles that followed: employment, women’s rights, and anti-Gypsyism. This cycle provided broad knowledge in regards to group dynamics, strengths and skills, which were used in planning the next cycles.

PAR cycles 2, 3 and 4 were implemented over a period of six months, not including the writing of the report, and the entire action phase of the project, which was ongoing when they were finalised. For cycles 2 and 3, participants met only once, while for cycle 4 they met several times. The two interviews constituted a one-time discussion.

**PAR cycle 2** was implemented through a group discussion meeting. Eleven Roma migrants participated in the meeting, which was held at the premises of the University of Helsinki. The Roma co-researcher and the project expert informed Roma migrants about the meeting, and all that expressed an interest were welcomed. Most of them had previously collaborated with members of the local team and therefore, it felt natural to join this project as well. The agenda of the meeting was: introducing the group and the LERI research; mapping generally the challenges encountered by people in the city; identifying the challenges related to employment; discussing how to overcome such barriers; concluding the meeting. The LERI field expert had to assume the role of facilitator as the methodology (group discussions and mapping) was quite new to the participants.

The participants mapped and discussed the key places that provide opportunities in Helsinki, including employment opportunities, and the ones that limit such opportunities. The challenge most emphasised was the difficulty using public spaces in the city, and therefore the clashes between the migrants and the private security forces that limit this. In regards to employment opportunities, no one mentioned the public employment offices, but informal helpers and citizens, artists and the Hirundo drop-in centre were perceived as links to the Finnish labour market. The power dynamics between the participants were visible during this discussion. Some were more knowledgeable and felt that they were informal representatives – the ones equipped to communicate with the project, with the media and so on. The methods, therefore, inevitably embedded a kind of hierarchy, since the participants could evaluate who was giving the longest answers, or who was more talkative, “who knows to talk”, as one of the participants described this.

There was an initial plan to have more group discussions for each cycle. However, during this process despite a high attendance rate, it became obvious that people had very difficult personal and systemic issues that they had to deal with, so their time was very limited. The fact that the discussions were quite lengthy was frustrating for some of the participants, so we also tried to shorten the agenda when necessary.

**PAR cycle 3** consisted of a group discussion organised with six Roma migrant women at the premises of the Finnish Women’s Union. The participants were selected from among the women that participated in the previous PAR cycle so, in the end, four women were engaged in the previous PAR, and two of them only engaged with this PAR. The women were asked beforehand to think about some
of the issues that they would like to focus on during the meeting. However, the participants found it difficult to start the discussion, so the facilitator once again introduced some possible themes for discussion: What are the specific challenges that women face in their daily lives in Helsinki? Do they have difficulties accessing health or social services? What stigma and forms of discrimination are encountered? How can such barriers be overcome?

This discussion was much more general than originally planned. Women preferred to have lengthy discussions related to their children and other family members. This was very important with regards to building trust and relationships. In terms of service accessibility, generally the women are using the Hirundo drop-in centre and hospital emergency wards. Also, it was difficult for the participants to identify other women-specific services, so they focused on issues and services that affect the Roma migrant community generally, such as the lack of shelter and housing. The group comprised equal numbers of women from two cities within the same home country. However, a group discussion on women’s issues obviously limits the possibility to discuss more specific issues, e.g. health and reproduction-related issues.

**PAR cycle 4** focused on anti-Gypsyism and used photovoice as a community-based participatory research technique. Two Roma migrant participants and one co-researcher were involved individually in photography sessions. They were provided with a camera and instructed by the LERI field experts to capture their everyday challenges and opportunities. Ethical issues related to photography were also discussed. They were informed that only the pictures that were deemed adequate to them and to others involved would be published. An additional discussion session was organised to reflect on the pictures taken. The research team used Wang’s (1999) approach as a tool for discussing the photos through a set of questions: What do you see here? What is really happening here? How does this relate to our lives? Why does this situation, concern or strength exist? What can we do about it? During this session, the participants raised the possibility of organising a future exhibition and publication on the basis of the pictures taken.

The LERI field expert conducted two key interviews with female participants who were very intensively involved in the implementation of the intervention. The aim was to enable those who had not been as vocal during the focus groups (due to group dynamics, nuances and boundaries) to be heard. Furthermore, this was also an opportunity to have more in-depth discussions on the women’s own perspectives and experiences. The interviews provided plenty of background information, but very little could be used for promoting community interventions, since people focused on individual issues rather than on common barriers and the ways to deal with these.

The PAR research followed the principles of the Code of Ethics of the American Anthropological Association and the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity. The participants and collaborators of the research were informed about the aims, possible benefits and harms, the tools for data and confidentiality protection, and the voluntary participation in any of the research initiatives. As the data generated contains private issues of various kinds, and participants had particular wishes regarding data dissemination, it was agreed that the raw data would be stored and analysed exclusively by the local LERI field experts.
Overall, it looked like the participants started to actually become familiar with the PAR processes only at the end of the PAR cycles. Since they did not have any previous experience with PAR and generally with project or research work, it was only after being involved and ‘doing’ that they started to understand the process. This also meant that the LERI local team, in cooperation with the participants, mainly guided the agenda of the PAR cycles, and therefore the participation in the actual research implementation was lighter than planned in the beginning. The fact that mostly different people took part in the four cycles also meant that the entire concept needed to be explained each time to the new participants. One option for future interventions would be to have the same group of participants involved throughout the process. It would also be advisable to train the group in PAR approaches. In the case of temporary Roma migrants, the challenge is that most of the people circulate regularly between Finland and Romania or other countries, so it is difficult to establish a long-term operational group.

The LERI local team and the facilitator responsible for each cycle had quite an important role in coordinating the entire processes. Since most of the participants were involved consequently with other acute issues, almost none of them except the co-researchers could be involved very much in the coordination of the process. Therefore, the decision-making process took place in the group process especially, and focused mainly on the structure and content of the cycles. Participants were also consulted about the participation of the stakeholders in the groups. Furthermore, it was the LERI local team being mainly involved with data management. One option for future interventions would be to limit the scope of the PAR, to keep it shorter and more intensive. For example, one of the participants suggested that the group could have been located somewhere outside of the city and worked intensively on this for a period. This would also mean that the participants should have a proper salary for the specific period.

The participants also wished to have ‘lighter’ PAR cycles (using less intensive participatory techniques) and to focus more on local interventions, on “the actual issues that they face”, as one of the participants explained (Dana, PAR participant). The discussion on how much time should be used for PAR research techniques and how much for the local interventions was something that was raised from time to time. As the interventions were more hands-on, the people felt more easily engaged than in the PAR processes. However, the participants raised critical issues mainly at the end of the cycles, when they became more autonomous with regards to the research.

As already mentioned, especially during the group work, some of the participants were more vocal than others, which tended to subdue the latter. As one participant commented on the actions of another: “She always talks over us, you cannot say anything when she is present” (Iona, 40). Once the LERI local team noticed this pattern, they started to be stricter, allocating time for each participant, but could not fully control the process.

The participants involved in the research gave positive feedback, particularly with regard to the use of photovoice. Finally, they were not only photographed by journalists or other actors, but were able to photograph themselves – to go from object to subject – able to define and redefine the issues they considered unjust. They deemed this a good opportunity to make visible what had bothered them.
for a long time, for example the fact that they had very limited opportunities for charging their phones in public spaces due to the discrimination by different actors. Furthermore, the photography provided an outlet for expressing their experiences through a means other than words.

4. The local intervention description

The overall goal of the LERI local intervention in Helsinki was to address some of the findings underlined by the Roma EU citizens through the participatory research phase and multi-stakeholder collaborative community actions. A set of three interventions was designed: 1) an income-generating intervention; 2) a Roma women’s and girls’ intervention; and 3) an anti-Gypsyism intervention (Fig. 2). They were implemented between May 2016 and December 2016, generally on the basis of the knowledge generated through the previous PAR cycles. Initially, it was planned that the Hirundo drop-in centre would have ownership of the implementation of the activities, but subsequently it was agreed that the LERI local team together with the Roma community involved would have ownership, while Hirundo would be one of the key partners.

Intervention 1: Income-generating interventions

The need for income generation and employment among the Roma migrants in Helsinki was emphasised in each discussion and meeting with the Roma migrants. PAR cycles 1 and 2 had a crucial role in assessing and analysing the unemployment and income-generating situation among Roma communities in Helsinki. Through those processes the migrants themselves became more aware of the structural inequalities embedded in the labour market, as well as with the cultural and social practices that affect people’s reactions related to buying products on the streets, such as cards or magazines. The LERI local team implementing PAR cycle 2 decided on the interventions that were implemented. However, the interventions were also discussed in informal discussions with other migrants, as well as with local stakeholders that were implementing or would have a future role in realising the possible interventions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the intervention</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Providing services in cleaning and gardening</td>
<td>Creating employment through the establishment of a cleaning and gardening work infrastructure: ‘Cleaning cycle’.</td>
<td>LERI Helsinki will establish a functioning infrastructure, so the enterprise can start its operations</td>
<td>Fully achieved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Advocacy</td>
<td>Creating income-</td>
<td>LERI Helsinki will</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. LERI Interventions implemented
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supporting the Handcrafts Training</th>
<th>Creating income-generating opportunities for Roma migrants and supporting their training in handcrafts through cooperation with the local project Käsiin kirjottu.</th>
<th>LERI Helsinki will cooperate actively with the mentioned project.</th>
<th>Three participants received the grant.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Three Roma migrants will be supported to attend the project.</td>
<td>One co-researcher will translate for the project.</td>
<td>One co-researcher provided translation during the training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fully achieved.</td>
<td>The two projects cooperated.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: LERI Field expert, 2016

The cleaning and gardening enterprise initiative had its roots in an older community project that was implemented by a local priest and two Roma migrants. On a small-scale, they started to organise employment in private households for one of the migrants. The initiative was very successful but there was an obvious need for more human resources to consolidate this, and an employment structure that could support in more migrants in the longer term. The participants of cycle 2 were familiar with this model of employment, so they emphasised that this should be developed further and replicated. Therefore, the LERI Helsinki in cooperation with the local priest, a private company, the Hirundo drop-in centre worked on developing the infrastructure for the employment of...
Roma migrants in cleaning and gardening as follows: analysing the experiences of the previous initiative; mapping the skills and needs for training of the potential employees; targeting the clients that would want the services; planning the marketing; clarifying and deciding upon the invoicing and forms of payment that would be used.

For this intervention the cooperation with the private company was the most intensive, since it was necessary to gain knowledge on how people could legally offer such services to private clients. Particularly, as a non-resident there can be even more barriers that one has to consider, such as the impossibility of opening a bank account and being paid electronically without having an address in Finland. Initially, the Roma participants especially supported the initiative, but the expectation was that actual employment would be secured faster than it was. Another problematic issue, which was frequently discussed by the LERI local team, was the provision of equal access to these employment opportunities to community members. Obviously, the need for employment among the people is much higher than this initiative can provide. Therefore, it was decided that when LERI ends, outsiders to the local team would conduct the recruitment process, and three people will be given the opportunity to start work – this figure was decided on the basis of the number of clients that showed an interest in the service.

Many Roma migrants in Helsinki generate income by selling the local street magazine and, once a year, by selling Christmas cards designed by local artists for the purpose of migrants’ employment. These are products that anyone that needs an income can sell. The challenge expressed by people during the second PAR cycle was that the street magazine is published too seldom, every three months, and the Christmas cards only annually. Therefore, the participants of this PAR cycle proposed that an extra card series should be designed. This issue has also been previously discussed with different migrants, but also with Elviira Davidow, the artist that initiated the cards project in Helsinki, and the organisations that cooperated with her, such as All Our Children, Hirundo and the Freedom of Movement Network. Everyone was of the opinion that a new series of cards should be made, but there was no funding for this. Therefore, it was decided that LERI could support the extension of this existing initiative.

Elviira Davidow, the Helsinki based artist, and Marjaana Toiviainen, a local priest and feminist activist, supported LERI by providing contact details for artists that had expressed interest in designing the cards. Two meetings were organised with six artists, the LERI local team and members of the Roma community, in total around six people. During the first meeting, the group became familiar with the LERI research, and the history of the street card initiative in Helsinki, while starting to conceptualise the themes for the planned cards. During the second meeting, the group discussed the situation of the migrants in greater detail and, on the basis of that, started to design the cards. By the end of LERI, the set of cards was ready, but they were not put on sale since during December the Roma migrants sell Christmas cards. So the aim was to sell them in spring 2017. The Roma migrants pay around one euro for the printing per set, and sell the cards at five euros, so they make a personal profit of four euros per set sold. As many cards as necessary can be printed, so as many people as possible have the chance to sell. The results – the amount of sales – depend on the buyers of Helsinki.
This initiative further developed the existing cooperation between the local artists in Helsinki and the Roma EU citizens. The challenge with the cards design was that the final products had to be both marketable to the general public, since this would have an impact on the daily incomes of the migrants, and influence advocacy and human-rights awareness. Therefore, there were lengthy discussions on what the migrants thought made the cards sellable, their vision and the artistic focus of the artists themselves. However, all artists involved (Elviira Davidow, Jani Leinonen, Peti Nieminen, Rauha Mäkilä, Linda Soderholm) fully understood and supported the fact that the products should attract as large a public as possible. On the other hand, the cards did reflect some of the acute inequalities experienced by the migrants, such as their lack of housing.

**Picture 1. Card designed by artist Jani Leinonen**

Source: Jani Leinonen; LERI Field experts, 2016

As already mentioned, the cards will be on sale only in 2017. However, on the basis of the previous initiative’s results, it is anticipated that they will represent a good source of income for people interested in selling them – usually most of the Roma migrants. Once the cards are in the market, they will have an advocacy and awareness-raising effect. Furthermore, a key result for this intervention is the fact that LERI contributed to strengthening a local initiative, which will be sustained in the future by the local stakeholders mentioned in this section.

The final intervention involving income-generating activities consisted of cooperation and support to a local project, Käsiin kirjottu\(^1\), which was underway when the LERI local intervention was implemented. The LERI local team had previously cooperated with the team involved in this project, so there was a discussion about the two projects looking into synergies and overlaps, and also supporting and cooperating with each other concretely. Generally, the project

---

focused on making the culture and everyday realities of the Roma migrant communities visible to the Finnish society, while providing training for Roma in handcrafts, and supporting them to sell the handmade products. Since there were more Roma migrants interested in the training, for which participants also received a scholarship to cover their daily expenses, LERI Helsinki agreed that it would finance a scholarship for three participants. Since there was also a need for Romanian language translation and communication with the Romanian migrants generally, the LERI field experts provided such support.

**Picture 2. Handcrafting workshop**

The participants gave very good feedback about the training. Some of them had existing handcraft skills. The fact that people received a scholarship was essential. As Ionica one of the participants explained: “*It was the first time I received an actual salary! The first time in my entire life! I had a place to go to work every morning. I woke up and I knew where I had to go.*” The content of the training was designed and developed by the Käsiin kirjotu project, while with regards to the scholarship, there were plenty of discussions between the two projects and other activists regarding how participants in the project could not be involved without remuneration if equal relations in the group were to be achieved, and generally to have people take ownership.

The feedback for this set of interventions was very good, since generally the Roma migrants think that the key focus should be on income-generating activities. The products and services developed were a compromise between what the Roma migrants thought would sell well and what the local LERI team and other active projects, stakeholders and activists could technically support. For example, the cards were part of the project since there were an established network between the LERI field experts and some of the local artists.

The LERI local team and the main partners assessed that it was important that the LERI research supported existing local initiatives, their development in new directions and/or continuity. LERI therefore contributed to strengthening local partnerships and collaborations. As a result, all three interventions will continue
in different ways after LERI has ended: it looks like a local NGO will take over the cleaning initiative and continue the work; the cards project will be continued by the local artists, Hirundo and All Our Children; while the Käsiin kirjotu project is planning new projects.

**Intervention 2: Women’s group intervention**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the intervention</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Mobilising and strengthening a Roma migrant women’s group</td>
<td>To support the Roma migrant women and girls to voice their concerns in the Finnish context and at a European level, and therefore to improve their human rights situation</td>
<td>LERI Helsinki will organise two women’s meetings – the PAR cycle two meeting + a second meeting</td>
<td>Two women’s meetings were held, The challenges faced by the women that participated were mapped</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| | | Fully achieved | The outcome of the workshops will be a functioning women’s group |
| | | Partially achieved | The Finnish Women’s Union started to cooperate with the Roma migrants in Helsinki |
| | | Not achieved | The group will start to cooperate with at least one Finnish NGO |
| | | Partially achieved | The group will start to cooperate with at least one European NGO |
| | | Not achieved | |

*Source: LERI Field expert, 2016*

The intervention concerning the women and their visibility and empowerment in Finnish society emerged from the initial aspiration of the LERI local team to focus on women’s issues since there was an obvious lack of services, and a range of needs identified back in 2015. Therefore during the needs assessment of the project, how the women envisaged the intervention was checked and discussed with the participants. During PAR cycle 3 especially, the women talked a lot about the challenges they face under the expression “for us, women”. Secondly, it was obvious that women wanted to have a space to meet and simply chat, dance, laugh and so on. Therefore, two meetings were planned and implemented. The first meeting has already been described in the previous chapter.
The second meeting was organised by one of the co-researchers, a Roma woman herself. Six Romanian Roma women gathered at her place in Helsinki, the same women that participated in the PAR needs assessment phase on women’s issues. They made food and talked. They met on a Sunday, which was good since the women did not feel compelled to hurry or to go and work. The women did not focus so much on the ways of mobilising the Roma, since the acute needs of some of the group members, such as having sick siblings in their home country, took priority. However, they discussed the continuity of the group. They decided that the group should meet whenever community problems appear, to discuss and act upon them.

The participants were very active and interested in developing concrete actions, but not so interested in political mobilisation. The intervention did not succeed in bringing together activists from Europe and the group’s participants, which might have had a significant impact. The women’s group was characterised generally by solidarity towards one another, and because all the women were Romanians and actually came from the same city in Romania. Therefore, there was trust between the members. Extending the group to represent all Roma migrant women in Helsinki will require a much larger and prolonged process. There are obviously plenty of disruptions and conflicts between the communities that should be considered when extending the group.
## Intervention 3: Anti-Gypsyism intervention

### Table 4. LERI Interventions implemented

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the intervention</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Anti-Gypsyism intervention</td>
<td>To raise awareness on the discrimination and human rights abuses faced by the Roma migrant community, by supporting the migrants to develop their own creative arts-based products and strategies to reflect such issues. Such products will influence the wider public to reduce the stigma and discrimination towards the Roma migrants</td>
<td>A workshop on the issues identifying, experiencing and documenting discrimination and ethnic profiling was organised</td>
<td>Three Roma migrant participated in the workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Roma migrants will be more skilled in identifying and documenting forms of discrimination and ethnic profiling</td>
<td>Awareness-raising visual materials will be produced</td>
<td>A set of 10 photo voice visual materials were produced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fully achieved</td>
<td>The materials will be published in 2017.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Materials will be published online and in specific magazines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Partially achieved.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: LERI Field expert, 2016*

During the PAR cycles the issue of ethnic profiling among the Roma migrants became very obvious. The Roma migrants had lots of complains and interest in taking action, especially against the private guards that operate in the centre of the city, particularly in the railway station. The Roma explained how they are systematically profiled and forbidden to use the premises inside the railway station, for example. They also mentioned that at times the guards use force. Therefore, the intervention on anti-Gypsyism emerged, aiming to document, make visible and hold responsible the actors that are ethnically profiling.

Since one of the participants of this intervention was also part of the needs assessment phase and used photo voice in that stage of the project, she came up with the idea that photo voice could also be used to document these issues. Therefore, three Roma migrants had a camera for two weeks, being advised to focus especially on the places and times where they encountered ethnic profiling, and also on other issues they considered relevant. The next stage was a meeting...
between the three participants and the LERI field expert to discuss the photos and experiences of ethnic profiling.

On the basis of the visual and empirical data, a short article was written, which will be published in a local magazine in 2017. Secondly, the LERI local team joined the initiative of another NGO, Freedom of Movement and met with the Finnish Ombudsman for Equality to discuss the issue of ethnic profiling and discrimination encountered by the Roma migrants.

Additionally, the LERI research was spontaneously involved with a local initiative on emergency housing. In February 2016, a group of activists and NGOs documented the harsh conditions faced by homeless Roma migrants and lobbied for the right to emergency housing, through media interventions and by writing a complaint to the Finnish Parliamentary Ombudsman. Furthermore, emergency accommodation was voluntarily held at the premises of the Feminist Association. LERI contributed by supporting the communication between the activists and the Roma migrants. It also provided human resources for the organisation of the shelter. During the autumn of 2016 and the beginning of 2017, Helsinki City organised emergency accommodation for the non-residents in cooperation with the Hirundo drop-in centre and the local parishes. The advocacy actions initiated in February 2016 contributed to influence the municipality’s reaction towards the phenomena.

**Picture 4. Mapping the public places that are difficult for the Roma to use in the city**
Monitoring and evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities were integrated in all phases of the LERI research. The main tool for M&E was the community meetings, which were organised annually in 2015 and biannually in 2016. Also in 2016, once the PAR cycles and interventions were implemented an actual evaluation workshop was organised. The co-researchers, the LERI field experts, as well as two Roma participants engaged with the workshop. The participants were reintroduced to the overall and specific aims of the local LERI research in Helsinki and asked to assess their achievements. It was mainly the local team members that made statements on the issues since they had an overview of the specific objectives and interventions.

The Roma participants were asked to discuss the LERI research’s impact on their lives or those of other Roma migrants’ realities. Firstly, they provided answers such as “It is good that someone is interested in us” (Elena, LERI participant), meaning that the project targeted the exclusions faced by the Roma migrants. Afterwards, they shifted towards profounder aspects such as the fact that some Roma were employed in the project, new partnerships with local activists had been developed, and so on. The sustainability of employment opportunities was something that the project did not succeed in securing.

During the session, it was noticeable that the Roma participants did not have the necessary tools to fully and critically assess the research. Therefore, capacity building on M&E, as well as on other topics, which are central for the intervention’s implementation, should be core components of all future projects. Only when the skills and knowledge of the project participants are improved, will they have the actual ability to monitor and evaluate project achievements.

5. Analysis, discussion, lessons learned

Overall findings

1. Mobility: an important income-generating activity

For all Roma migrants that LERI interacted with, the practice of moving to Finland or to other European countries to finding employment represented an important source of income for satisfying a household’s needs back home. As Ionica explained: “Our children eat from here. We send money, so they can have food, clothes and medicines” (Ionica, project participant). In good times, when the income in Finland is better, people are also able to make investments or bigger purchases such as investing in obtaining documents for the houses they live in without being registered with the home municipalities.

2. Struggling with harsh living and income-generating conditions in Finland

During LERI’s implementation, almost all project participants experienced homelessness, living in abandoned houses, forests, cars or in informally rented rooms. The main opportunities for generating income were: selling street products such as the street magazine and the cards, working in
short-term (1 day) jobs and short projects. While generating income and spending time in the city, the majority of the migrants experience discrimination and harassment from passers-by or from private security guards, for example.

Access to public spaces, or to places where people could have some privacy, is very scarce. Services such as the day shelter at the Hirundo drop-in centre played an important part in the lives of the migrants. There, they could benefit from the day shelter, buy the street products to sell and get information and support.

3. **The strength of networks and cooperation**

There are plenty of interactions between helpers, activists, artists, NGOs and the Roma migrants. The helpers, activists, artists, NGOs provide concrete support, information and also advocate and lobby for the rights of the migrants and make visible their realities. The role of the mainstream citizens is very important too, since they are the residents of the city and the voters, so they can influence the decision-makers.

4. **Inequalities as experienced by diverse individuals and groups**

The Roma EU citizens in Helsinki have different experiences of inequality due to their age, gender, community, networks, residency status, social class, religion and so on. Therefore, people have different agendas concerning community actions and objectives of political mobilisation.

For example, the community members who originated in a specific village in North East Romania, a poor location, had less social capital for migration compared with the community members from a city close to the capital city, Bucharest, where migration was more intensive. The latter also had more actual work experience abroad than the former.

5. **Being a female ‘beggar’, a Gypsy, a migrant**

The Roma women that were part of the LERI research experienced multiple difficulties that they worked against. Besides the social, economic and ethnic position that they are given in the migration society, they also had to fulfil the expectations of the families and communities that they belonged too, such as generating and sending income home for children and siblings at home.

**Lessons learned**

**Developing interventions that serve mobile Roma EU citizens’ priorities:**

The initial participatory needs assessment phase and the previous PAR interventions were very important in setting the project’s objectives and action plan. Consultations through regular participatory sessions must be maintained throughout the process. However, the lack of time and financial resources might not allow potential participants to engage in such time-consuming collaborations. Therefore, it is important that the budget is planned in cooperation with the local implementing body, and the costs for the intervention are carefully assessed. In LERI’s case, the local team was given a budget, and had to plan how to use it so
as many as possible would benefit on an equal basis. Therefore, for example, it was agreed that only the participants that had specific tasks and a longer-term involvement with the interventions would receive remuneration, and the two co-researchers.

**Community priorities do not always match policy data about the community’s needs:** Most of the Roma migrants in Helsinki did not perceive language training as a key priority. They favoured training measures that would provide them with employment skills and a potential income, due to their urgent need to generate income for everyday living.

**Building equal and open partnerships:** A substantial part of the planning should be placed on developing the project, its interventions and structures, so that all involved feel ownership for the project. An important aspect related to this was the choice of professionals that constituted the LERI local team in Helsinki. All team members and co-researchers were familiar with participatory practices through training or experience and were therefore committed to such principles. The issue of transparency and accountability regarding all project participants was difficult though. It was not possible to have all project documents translated into Romanian or Bulgarian. For the participants that were not able to read, the local LERI team was supposed to go through all documents with them. In practice, the participants were carefully informed about the overall research and about the interventions they got involved with.

**Conducting sessions in languages that the participants feel comfortable with and using familiar terms:** employing staff members that were able to mix and use some of the languages used by the participants significantly facilitated the participation of some. LERI Helsinki had a very linguistically diverse core team: Finnish language speakers, Romanian, Bulgarian, English and few Romani language dialect speakers.

**The need for a holistic approach at local and transnational level:** the interconnection and transnational dimensions of the challenges encountered by Roma in Europe became very noticeable during the research. For example, if Roma migrants experienced homelessness in Finland, they had often also experienced ‘illegal housing’ in their countries of origin. The lack of a home address and registration affected their social and economic rights in both their country of origin and destination in specific ways. Therefore, each right is key concerning the implementation of other rights.

**The need for localised interventions and practices:** The specificities of the local contexts as well as the diversities of the Roma communities with regards to gender, religion, community and ethnic affiliation, migration status, social class and employment status require locally tailored measures. What LERI Helsinki also noticed was that most interventions should be short-term since the context and agenda of the people might change – especially in the case of Roma migrants, where the composition of the community changes periodically.

**Developing wide consultations and cooperation:** The process of consultation provided learning opportunities for all those involved. The interactions of the stakeholders with the Roma migrants led to a greater appreciation and dialogue on both sides. However, such consultations are intensive and time/resource
consuming, therefore this aspect should be properly considered in the planning stages.

Discussion

The LERI research has provided a useful opportunity for local participatory work among Roma mobile EU citizens, and baseline information for new work. It also made the human rights situation among the migrants living in Helsinki more visible to a range of stakeholders and generally in society. One of the recurring themes during the LERI research was the poor access to formal employment and hurdles in becoming self-employed, which hinder the migrants from being able to provide sufficient resources and therefore access to residency and social entitlements. The lack of access to residency affects the migrants’ access to adequate housing, health, social, employment and educational services and therefore deeply affects their wellbeing and security. In addition, the Roma mobile EU citizens are disproportionally affected by the barriers to accessing residency, since due to the multiple issues that exclude them from the labour market they are more often engaged in income-generating strategies, which are characterised by precariousness, vulnerability and insecurity, such as selling a street magazine or other products, begging or temporary employment. Secondly, while carrying out the research, the participants emphasised the experiences of harassment, discrimination and lack of access to public spaces due to discriminatory practices.

The Roma participants and the LERI local team perceived the overall PAR activities and local interventions process as an illuminative, cooperation and action-building experience; as one of the co-researchers described it: "Doing things together has been a very empowering experience. I felt empowered when we were working together for one goal and sharing mutual support, I realised that we could actually change things. On the other hand, if we differentiate between people we are not strong" (Asen, LERI co-researcher). The participants and co-researchers also highlighted the opportunity to engage in a learning process, supporting them to link their everyday experiences to the social and political issues that shape such experiences. The flexibility and dynamism of the interventions in the sense that they were continuously adapted to the participants’ circumstances such as sudden homelessness or lack of income, was considered important.

Participation as a method, approach and tool for social inclusion at the locality was evaluated as a crucial framework, which needed to be concretised, structured and monitored at the grass roots level. The Roma migrants themselves must be at the heart of all intervention phases, as one of the participants described:

“I know what it means to sleep in the streets during the winter. That is why I find our endeavour successful. We started to help them, from the smallest to the highest – so that they will not need to sleep in the garbage, under the bridges, at the station, in the metro (...) as we got to help them. We also gave an example for the others, that these people should be helped. It all happened through us. Together we achieved the impossible, with no exceptions. Alone we are powerless, but when we are more, all together, everything is possible.” (Iuliana, co-researcher)
LERI Helsinki had a good foundation for participatory practices, since the workers’ team was already engaged with the Roma migrant communities, and the various stakeholders had been involved with them for a long time. Therefore, the basis for the partnership was solid. However, it was noted by the LERI local team that participatory research was a process that evolved over time. In addition, sufficient resources and flexibility were required to support the genuine participation of Roma that encounter precarious conditions every day. For example, the initial needs assessment meeting was planned for a specific day. When the meeting was supposed to start, the only two participants that came informed that two of the women had been taken by the police at the station the night before, so the others had gone to look after them. Luckily, within an hour, the women were released and everyone came to the meeting place. However, since people were stressed and concerned about different issues, the meeting had to be rescheduled. For future projects, it could also be useful that at least some of the participants receive training in participatory M&E and in participatory writing. By participatory writing, it is meant the process through which the local research team and the participants would work together on how to organise the written outcomes of the project, and to provide their own written contributions to the text. The participants were barely involved with research reporting, mainly due to the time constraints and their limited reporting skills. Nearly all participants emphasised the social capital, knowledge and skills gained through the research process and the interventions. New encounters and collaborations between various actors of the public, private and NGO sector were supported and facilitated during the project. Such collaborations concretely supported the livelihoods of households, such as the one involving employment opportunities, while others had an advocacy role, such as those that covered complaints and actions on housing-related issues. One of the longer-term participants explained: “I was so happy and I felt like my heart was growing for the first time since I have been in Finland because for the first time I signed a payroll within the project. It was like a job for me and also a great joy” (Ionica, participant).

Participants stated that they learned useful things and built networks, which they considered crucial assets for future actions and changes. Furthermore, they have developed trust that their voices can be heard and issues that concern them made visible. The first Finnish National Policy on Roma was implemented in between 2009 and 2017, having at its centre the promotion of equal treatment and inclusion of the Roma in Finland. Non-resident Roma are not targeted by the policy. However, in 2017, the drafting of the second national policy will start and there have been discussions that Roma EU citizens will be integrated in the programme as well. LERI’s work and project results might be included in the process of designing the policy. During LERI’s implementation, two new research projects were developed: one on the vulnerabilities experienced by migrant groups and another on Romani language revitalisation. The first was submitted to the Finnish Academy and the second to the Kone Foundation. The expertise in participatory approaches developed through LERI was key to developing the approach and the methods of the two projects.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

Since 2004 and more noticeably since 2007, Roma EU citizens have been migrating temporarily to Helsinki, Finland, with the main goal of generating income. The main factors behind the necessity of living trans-locally for the
The majority of Roma include structural exclusion and the risk of poverty for them and their families. This study focused on the forms of exclusion, which Roma EU migrants as non-residents have also experienced in Finland, and the possibilities for change, by using the means of PAR.

The LERI research identified the fact that the majority of Roma EU citizens in Helsinki were concerned about finding formal employment and therefore, generating a decent income in Finland. Homelessness and lack of access to basic social and health services are also defining aspects of the experiences of marginalisation in Helsinki. In addition, the participants were concerned about their lack of access to public spaces, and their experience of racism and ethnic profiling. The Roma EU citizens were very committed to developing cooperation for actions that could bring changes in specific areas of life, despite their limited time resources.

While the LERI research in Helsinki and its interventions were limited in scope and reach, this project has clearly stimulated a wide dialogue at the local level about the rights of the Roma mobile EU citizens. In addition, PAR processes and the local interventions identified the key local issues that the migrants want to target and the approaches and methods that should be used when implementing local actions. Several of the Roma EU citizens involved in the different interventions of the LERI research talked in a more positive light about the possibility of effecting political and social change, and their own human rights situation. The collaborations and networks that were built during the LERI research between the Roma EU citizens and various stakeholders and actors had a tremendous role in consolidating such feelings and stimulating action. PAR methods and approaches offer promising tools and models that can be applied in a variety of local, socio-political contexts.

**Recommendations**

**Future participatory community projects**

1. **The context – national and local – is extremely important for the success of participatory projects.** Therefore, those implementing the projects should have a solid understanding of the history, geography, networks and political systems where the project is undertaken. In the case of Roma EU migrants, one also must understand the context of the communities in their countries of origin, since the politics and any changes there affect the lives of the communities in Finland. Local projects are also influenced at the level of European politics.

2. **The core issue with participatory projects is to be responsive to local needs.** The success of such projects also depends on the possibility to flexibly implement the project and allocate the resources across the various and changing needs. Therefore, PAR projects can also succeed if the donor is open to flexible processes and if the implementing body dares to make changes when needed.

3. **Participatory projects should invest strongly in the social capital of the Roma communities involved in the project.** The process of building local capacity should be sustained, so communities can actively engage with the implementation, M&E of the project. In the case of LERI
Helsinki the field experts identified that training on PAR methods and approaches, as well as on women’s mobilisation and movements was required.

4. **Participatory projects and process should be evaluated thoroughly.**

   In-depth ethnography could be a very good approach to studying and analysing processes.

**European, national, local policies, projects and services**

- Participatory projects such as the LERI research are very much needed if one wants to even think about the inclusion of Roma communities at the local level. The challenge is that funding structures and incentives are generally designed for interventions with short timelines, linear trajectories and clear and measurable outcomes. Participatory projects are characterised by unpredictability, but their outcomes more realistically reflect the complex factors that come into play during implementation. Funding structures should be designed so they can accommodate actual participatory projects.

7. **Additional Information**

**Acknowledgements**

Sincere thanks go to the all project participants, colleagues and partners at local and national level who supported the work involved in implementing this project. Project implementation would have been impossible without the skills and passion of our closest colleagues: Baldovin Iuliana, Arsen Spasov, Heini Puurunen. Particular mention also goes to the following people for their expert inputs, time, patience and work: Markus Himanen, Kati Pietarine, Karl Vilhjálmsson, Marjaana Toiviainen, Anita Marjut Ahtiainen, Irma Marttinen, Airi Markkanen, Katju Aro, Taru Anttonen, Sarita Friman-Korpela, Elviira Davidow, Jani Leinonen, Peti Nieminen, Rauha Mäkilä, Linda Soderholm.