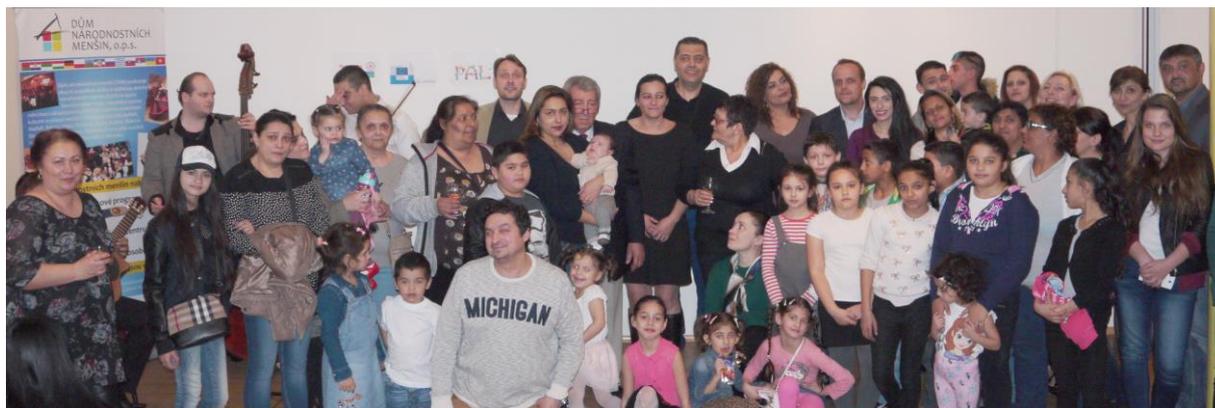


DISCUSSION PAPER

ROMA ARE EQUAL: Alternatives to Poverty, Racism and Exclusion in Education and Employment



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ROMA ARE EQUAL: Alternatives to Poverty, Racism and Exclusion in Education and Employment

Setting The Context

On the 8th April 2016, Roma Nation Day, John Kerry, United States Secretary of State, issued a statement noting that on this day we should celebrate the rich cultural heritage of Roma people everywhere, but proceeded to declare "It is also a day to reflect on the exclusion many Roma face in their daily lives and to recommit to effectively remedy discrimination. Unfortunately, segregated schools, extremist anti-Roma rhetoric and violence, and marginalization from political and economic life continue to prevent many Roma children from reaching their full potential" (US State Department, 2016). Ten days after this statement a violent attack on a 17 year old Roma youth in Bulgaria was a shocking reminder of the xenophobia directed towards Roma. The Roma adolescent was beaten after telling the attacker that they are equal, despite their different ethnicities. The brutal attack was recorded on the assailant's phone. In solidarity Roma activists posted pictures of themselves holding placards proclaiming '**Roma Are Equal**' and PAL has incorporated the declaration 'Roma Are Equal' into the discussion paper title¹.

Today policies to address Roma exclusion are couched, in particular by the European Union, in the language of social inclusion. However, the term 'social inclusion' has proven to be rather elastic with associated strategies ranging from structural change to a need for individual reform and or acquiring new skills. The PAL research project will hopefully contribute to a conversation that is needed not only to identify and promote good practice but also to explore more broadly the wider socio-economic context of Roma exclusion and reflect on transformative changes, which might be conducive to creating inclusion for Roma in education and employment.

Policy solutions for the Roma and other marginalised groups often centre on: preventing early school-leaving, reintegrating early school-leavers and supporting school-to-work transitions and active labour market policies. For individual Roma who are able to access such opportunities, the consequences can be life changing, but how might broader change facilitate and extend the chances all Roma have to overcome exclusion? However, in Europe recession and austerity have led to cuts in education and training and unemployment is high with new employment often being part-time and precarious. Roma communities are

¹ For more information see: <http://www.errc.org/article/romani-boy-attacked-in-bulgaria-for-declaring-himself-equal/4473> Additionally it was reported that on the 19th April 2016 in Zagreb, Croatia an unidentified attacker threw a hand grenade into the yard of a building that houses a nursery school for Romani children. The Croatian Romani Association also has its office in the building and a second preschool facility is housed there: <http://www.romea.cz/en/news/world/croatia-unidentified-attacker-threw-a-grenade-at-a-romani-preschool-in-zagreb>. Around that date a Roma Holocaust memorial in the southern Poland was vandalised by an unknown person(s). The memorial commemorated the massacre of 30 Roma in July 1942, in a forest near the village of Borzecin.



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amongst the most prominent victims of both poverty and xenophobia in Europe. Filcak and Skobla (2012) suggest Roma are the ‘canary in the mine shaft’, the harbinger of future crisis. Roma have experienced acute forms of marginalisation in Central and Eastern Europe during the transition period to a market economy. Across Europe, as a consequence of the 2008 financial crisis and austerity policies, Roma marginalisation has been compounded.

Policymakers, most notably the World Bank (2010), are placing a growing emphasis on the economic advantages of Roma inclusion through productivity growth and welfare savings. Bolder alternatives to current policy trends might come about via the concept of ‘Social Europe’ which is more interventionist and redistributive of power and resources and which promotes the development of national welfare states and their protection against the forces of globalization and international competition. A Social Europe stresses the value of increasing labour market participation, places much more emphasis on active welfare state measures, introduces supply-side efforts at job creation, seeks measures to provide security other than life-time job tenure and prioritises efforts to combat social exclusion.

Instead though there has been a preference for economic downsizing, the contraction of economic activity and laying off staff, prompted by poor national economic performance but also competition and outsourcing in a globalised economy. It also has to be said that transformative visions of change run counter to currents of opinion which wish to see a focus on market rather than social matters within the EU and question the degree and level of European integration. It is in this context that PAL seeks to promote a debate on the economic and educational inclusion of Roma.

An important component of the PAL research is exploring the scope of civil society and service providers in measures to address exclusion and provide support for economic and educational inclusion. In the past some critics have highlighted fears of a ‘Gypsy industry’ where civil society and service providers offer narrow, outsider-driven and ill-thought out initiatives. PAL is particularly interested in learning about and promoting models of good practice that empower Roma communities and offer life changing experiences that reflect the true aspirations of Roma whilst avoiding the dangers of assimilation and tokenism.

The discussion paper ***‘Roma Are Equal: Alternatives to Poverty, Racism and Exclusion in Education and Employment’*** gives a basic overview of barriers and good practice in Roma economic and educational inclusion focusing on 8 EU member states (Belgium, Czech Republic, Hungary, Greece, Italy, Romania, Slovenia and Spain); this focus allows for a comparative analysis of old and new EU member states, including countries hit extremely hard by the recession or still grappling with the challenges of transition, encompassing points of relevance and interest for all EU member states. The discussion paper helps raise a



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series of questions, which it is hoped might help prompt further debate in the quest for Roma economic and educational inclusion.

Methodology - PAL members, with guidance from the research team, conducted a review of literature in their countries, collecting data which was relevant to a series of templates with indicators to explore barriers and good practice in: (i) school (ii) post school (iii) employment and training (iv) migrant Roma communities (See PAL research handbook).

Aims of the paper - The paper tries to raise important discussion points for a wide range of stakeholders, some of whom have educational and training expertise but have not worked with Roma communities before or work within Roma civil society but are unfamiliar with some of the broader policy debates. The key aim of the paper is to give a basic overview of key concepts and generate a conversation between Roma communities, civil society and service providers as to how Roma educational and economic inclusion can be assisted. The paper is divided into five sections:

- **PAL EU Wide Literature Review with particular reference to Roma Education, Training and Employment**
- **PAL General Policy Overview**
- **PAL Countries in focus**
- **Some Initial Questions**
- **Where next?**

PAL EU Wide Literature Review with particular reference to Roma Education, Training and Employment

Exclusion

The Scale

Roma, Gypsy and Traveller communities form the largest ethnic minority within the enlarged European Union. The European Commission (2012) has estimated that there are around 10-12 million Roma (including Gypsies and Travellers) in Europe². Recent reports by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) contain key findings on education, employment and training. FRA (2014a) found about 90% of Roma in the survey have an income below the national poverty threshold and only about a third of those surveyed have paid work, which is often precarious and informal. FRA also notes that in EU countries, unemployment rates for Roma are three times higher than for the general population (FRA, 2014a). In addition, about 40% of Roma children live in households struggling with malnutrition or hunger (FRA, 2014a). FRA found, despite discrimination, most Roma are actively seeking work (2014a). According to FRA only 12% of the Roma aged 18 to 24 who had been surveyed had completed upper-secondary general or vocational education, compared with over 70% of the majority population (FRA, 2014b). Exclusion also has an important gender dimension: whilst 14% of Roma men say that they have never been to school, the percentage for Roma women is 19%. In its survey FRA (2014c) found across EU Member States, only 21% of Roma women are in paid work, compared to 35% of Roma men³.

Causes

Segregation, Poverty and Exclusion

Roma experience **multiple forms** of segregation and exclusion based on racial, socio-economic and spatial factors. Roma at the margins are living in isolated or segregated

² However, a note of caution needs to be attached to estimates of the number of Roma in Europe on account of low self-ascription rates and or the absence of adequate ethnic monitoring procedures.

³ In 2011, FRA – in cooperation with the European Commission, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank – conducted a pilot survey of Roma and non-Roma populations living nearby. In total 16,319 households were surveyed in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Spain. The sample reflects the situation of all regions in the 11 Member States with an above average proportion of Roma. The survey is not representative of the total Roma population or the general population of the Member States surveyed. The survey spotlights the living conditions in areas where Roma identity is more visible than elsewhere.



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communities and experience higher levels of poverty than those in more integrated environments and impacts negatively on life chances and educational and employment success. Educational segregation takes different forms: **intra school segregation** - separate classes and buildings and facilities, **inter school segregation** - all Roma schools are formed or improper placement of Roma children into special schools, catch up classes without proper assessment or sound pedagogical grounds (Taber and Ryder, 2011). **Risks of Segregation** - Roma children experiencing a segregated education are at high risk of becoming unemployed or working in low skilled jobs in the informal sector (Bartlett et al, 2015). Forms of segregation/institutional racism are found in old and new EU member states (Cemlyn and Ryder, 2016; Santiago and Maya, 2012).

The European Court of Human Rights has found in its rulings violations of the European Convention for Human Rights with reference to Roma school segregation in the following PAL focus countries: Czech Republic, Hungary and Greece. In the case D.H versus the Czech Republic (2007) the Court held that the Roma applicants had been the victims of indirect discrimination when selected for and assigned to special schools for children with learning difficulties. The D.H. case has had major implications with its condemnation of segregation and has been a lever for reform but various monitoring reports and evaluations suggest that progress in desegregation has been slow (ERRC, 2016). **Infringement proceedings** - were initiated by the European Commission in 2014 against the Czech Republic and against Slovakia in 2015 with reference to acts of educational segregation (Cemlyn and Ryder, 2016). In 2016 the European Commission targeted school segregation of Roma children in Hungary with the launch of an infringement procedure (ARDI, 2016).

Discrimination - EU Member States are not adequately complying with the Racial or Ethnic Discrimination Directive and the Equal Treatment Directive in Employment and Occupation (EESC, 2014). Roma are often listed as one of the most unpopular groups in society in surveys – discrimination and xenophobia can lead to discriminatory practices in institutions and can make Roma nervous and wary of those institutions leading to lower participation rates. The majority of Roma feel that they experience discrimination when looking for work: in Spain, Romania 38%–41% of the Roma surveyed said that they were discriminated against within the last five years when looking for work; this ranged from 66% to 75% in Italy, Greece and the Czech Republic (FRA, 2014a). Discrimination can be explicit with employers stating openly that Roma should not apply or is concealed in short-listing and based on whether applicants have commonly associated Roma family names or in the interview discrimination is based on appearance (Messing et al, 2013). There have been few legal victories for Roma in challenging discrimination in the field of employment. Racism can



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also impact on inclusion by making decision makers nervous to engage with and help the Roma, fearing a backlash from the majority population.

Poverty, Spatial Exclusion and Racism can interact to create acute forms of marginalisation across all age groups within Roma communities at the margins; the plight of young Roma is a cause of particular concern. Research for the World Bank has found Roma youth are on average twice as likely to be unemployed than their non-Roma counterparts (Gatti et al, 2016). The European Commission (2014b) has noted there are few systemic measures encouraging the participation of Roma young people in further education, or helping Roma students to reintegrate into the education system after they have dropped out. **Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET)** is a growing subgroup amongst young people, and is often determined by sex, education level, age, socio-economic background, migrant status and ethnicity, it is not surprising therefore that Roma are prominent in the NEET category. Enrolment differences between Roma and non-Roma become even larger than those found in school in post school education, limiting Roma integration and employability and there are few measures encouraging the participation of Roma young people in further education. Good practice tends to be localised and not scaled up (European, Commission, 2014a).

Outside of the Mainstream?

The Informal Economy hosts high numbers of Roma (UNDP, 2011), poor levels of education and access to mainstream opportunities is a major causal factor. It has been argued that in traditional communities Roma preferences are for autonomy and self-employment, fearing that full absorption into the labour market can result in assimilation, this can lead to reluctance to adapt economic practices (Brazzabeni et al, 2016). In a number of Central Eastern European countries traditional rural patron-client relations which centred on non Roma patrons utilising Roma for casual labour and lending to them when needed have broken down as a result of the rural economic crisis in these countries and outmigration of the non Roma. This, it has been claimed, has further impoverished the Roma and coupled with welfare cuts has led to an increased reliance on money lenders, who in some cases charge extremely high interest rates which can accentuate poverty and exclusion (Hrustic, 2016).

Gender – Roma women are especially vulnerable to exclusion, this has been attributed to low education and skills levels. In addition, in traditional communities it has been claimed that Roma girls are in some cases not encouraged to complete their schooling and are



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involved in household tasks at a very young age (Preoteasa, 2013). **Present time orientation** – It is claimed by some observers that a 'living for the day' worldview by Roma is a logical coping mechanism for dealing with the hardship of marginalisation and might limit educational progression and training and can diminish the potential for future planning (Day, Stewart, Papataxiarchs 1999). **Culture of Poverty** - Others have sought to pathologise Roma exclusion by arguing that Roma communities at the margins have developed a series of dysfunctional norms and habits which self perpetuates poverty and welfare dependency. In the wake of the financial crisis Far Right groups have been prominent in such claims (Stewart, 2012).

Innovation – Caution is required with reference to cultural arguments to explain exclusion, not only have they been used to demonise the Roma but have also distracted from appreciation of the structural and institutional failings that lead to exclusion (Ryder et al, 2014). There is in fact growing evidence that there is an increasing appreciation of the value of formal education on the part of traditional Roma communities (Kyuchukov, 2011). Despite the antipathy of traditional Roma communities to the waged labour market and attendant fears of assimilation some Roma in paid employment and or located in new geographic locations have been able to adapt and innovate custom and tradition in new environments, enabling the continuing performance of identity (Grill, 2016). A growing body of evidence suggests the Roma have a strong preference for safe and regular jobs as opposed to unsafe and irregular work (Messing et al, 2013). This implies that measures to help Roma transfer from the informal to formal economy would be valued. In addition research for the World Bank has also found similarities in terms of aspirations between Roma and non-Roma with reference to education and employment and Roma men and women look for work as much as non-Roma (Gatti et al, 2016).

Institutional Factors can impede economic transitions for Roma. For example, discrimination and or institutional inflexibility can be found on the part of front-line services such as labour/employment centres charged with dealing with Romani unemployment, impacting negatively on the quality of support offered to Roma job seekers (Ryder and Greenfields, 2010, ERRC, 2007). In terms of access to employment services the unemployed/marginalised Roma are often at a particular disadvantage, research for the World Bank has found that the majority of rural Roma live more than 10 kilometres away from the nearest employment service (Gatti et al, 2016).



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The Failure of Policy

Redistribution and Recognition - We can distinguish various kinds of anti-poverty programme that target Roma. There are those, which target areas where large numbers of Roma live, but benefit all individuals living in that area, regardless of ethnicity. And then there are those, which, by providing Roma mediators, seek to remove cultural sources of discrimination; and there are those, which specifically target Roma by ethnicity. According to some this can run the risk of creating a perception that there is something inherently at fault in the Roma, rather than in the structurally racist behaviour of many of the non-Roma population.

In a discussion of the Roma and review of initiatives to help them there is sometimes an assumption resting behind these measures that the problems of the Roma can be addressed if they are merely integrated into school and the labour market. Here policy is articulated into a narrow vision of social inclusion, resting upon what Levitas (2005) has termed as a 'social integration discourse' where skills acquisition and personal reform are the prerequisites to achieve inclusion. The danger of such reasoning though is that it neglects the significance of macro policy actually being a central driving force in growing inequality but also fails to recognise the power of discriminatory and racist discourses, in the case of Roma what some term as 'anti-Gypsyism'.

The marginalisation, exclusion and demonization that ethnic groups like the Roma are subject to is based on racism, 'othering' and projection of stereotypes that constitutes cultural 'misrecognition', this alongside the 'maldistribution' or what can be termed as a lack of services and resources marginalises groups like the Roma. Fraser (1995) has argued that redistribution and recognition must be united in attempts to understand and challenge social injustice, but this may require radical approaches favouring the deconstruction and destabilisation of existing identities, codes, and symbolic orders, in place of liberal multicultural and inclusion strategies.

Resources - The EU Commissioner, László Andor, at the Sixth Roma Platform in Brussels in November 2011 raised concern about the political downgrading of the Roma issue in part because of the impact of the financial crisis and described this "sidelining" as creating a "social time bomb" that could explode at any moment (Andor, 2011). The severe deterioration in the employment situation of Roma in Central Eastern Europe alongside other low income and vulnerable groups has relegated Roma to unemployment, precarious jobs and the informal economy (Ivasiuc, 2014). Indeed such trends and the impact of the financial crisis of 2008 have accentuated Roma exclusion across Europe. Poverty leads to



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isolated and ghettoised communities in turn leading to segregated schools and low participation and attainment. These economic drivers in exclusion and segregation have been accentuated by welfare cuts and economic downsizing prompted by recent austerity drives in the wake of the global financial crisis (Bartlett et al, 2015). Concerns have also been raised with reference to the low impact of EU structural funds on the Roma with claims that flaws lay with the implementation process, faults compounded by a lack of rigorous evaluation and failure at EU level to revise their own strategies and recommendation when not effective (Kostka and Rostas, 2014).

The EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) was launched in 2011 by the European Commission. The Framework is based on open method coordination and EU member states are expected to devise National Roma Integration Strategies, which address exclusion in the spheres of employment, health, education and accommodation.

Critics claim Roma civil society has either been ignored in the formulation of national action plans or has been accorded a tokenistic say in design and delivery. Moreover, targets have been weak or limited. The European Roma Rights Centre (2016, 1) recently concluded “Five years on, the EU Framework has hit ‘a mid-life crisis’. The NRIS have yet to deliver in terms of concrete change to the lives of millions of Europe’s Romani citizens; the implementation gap is more pronounced than ever; discrimination and segregation remain pervasive and human rights abuses against Roma are all too frequent”. **Interculturalism** has been promoted by the European Union and Council of Europe as an effective approach to minority relations (Agustin, 2012) and can be described as a more dialogic version of multiculturalism, which allows difference and disagreement to be explored, challenged and resolved through negotiation and dialogue. There is a danger though that the EU and member states are not adopting a fluid and inclusive intercultural approach with the Roma as reflected by criticism made of the degree of genuine dialogue and engagement in the EU Roma Framework, instead there is a danger of one-sided dialogue and outsider driven development (Acton et al, 2014).

Mind the Gap! - A lack of ethnic monitoring and data disaggregated for ethnicity in many EU states means that the nature and scale of segregation and exclusion is not always clearly apparent and is a major impediment to developing new policies (OSF, 2010). Where there is ethnic monitoring there is a lack of subjective indicators, which hinders the development of comprehensive explanatory models and analysis (Preoteasa, 2013).

Monitoring and Evaluation by State monitoring and evaluation practices are often lacking proper methodologies and or are based on unreliable data according to the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC, 2014) a consultative body of the European Union.



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Limited resources are available for civil society monitoring and evaluation, with perhaps the notable exception of the monitoring supported by the Soros funded Decade for Roma Inclusion Secretariat, but this initiative was phased out in 2015 and it is presently unclear what support will be available in the future for civil society monitoring and whether as with the Decade Secretariat initiative there will be scope to establish funded civil society coalitions in monitoring processes across Europe.

Disempowerment

A lack of education, distrust and outright discrimination can lead to low levels of Roma involvement in decision-making in policy areas centred on education, training and employment (Dan et al, 2012). Disempowerment is exacerbated by institutions adopting a paternalistic attitude towards Roma by devising programmes that fail to involve them in the design and delivery of policy.

Social enterprise and innovation - Micro-enterprise and forms of collectivity, which form part of the social economy, has been viewed by some as a useful instrument to fix market failure and has been prominent in attempts to alleviate exclusion for ethnic minorities. The social economy has also been commended for its potential to enable empowerment and bottom up development but such innovative financial instruments have not been adequately promoted amongst Roma communities (European Commission, 2015c). The proponents for Roma micro-lending call for such initiatives to be coupled more intensely with training and business support, including assistance in marketing and professional skills development. Furthermore, it has been argued that micro-finance needs to play less emphasis to commercial notions of debt repayment which can discourage highly excluded Roma from venturing into the social economy (Ivanov and Tursaliev, 2006). It is important to note that on account of prejudice and discrimination, the products and services of Roma social enterprises can be difficult to sell to non-Roma customers. Rarely though do local councils and other public institutions take positive action measures and deploy these enterprises to supply social services, including sanitation or small repairs (Dan et al, 2012).

Declining Civil Society - In many countries Roma community organisations are facing acute challenges as reductions in government expenditure and increased competition for depleted levels of charitable funding are causing serious funding issues leading to the closure or scaling down of civil society organisations in areas related to education, employment and training (Ryder, et al, 2014). Complaints have been made by many NGOs and communities



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that it is difficult to access EU money due to a lack of necessary administrative and technical capacities to apply for or gain such grants (Bartlett et al, 2015).

Managerialism – Excessive bureaucracy in some civil society organisations and services leads to disconnection with Roma communities and claims have been made that educated Roma have become ‘experts’ absorbed into NGO bureaucracies or civil service administrations but no longer grounded in the communities from whence they came or aspire to advocate for (Gheorghe, 2013). Managerialism and a declining civil society diminishes the ability of Roma advocacy to secure inclusive policy change in the fields of education and employment and or guide practitioners.

Assimilative Agendas v Bricolage - Hierarchical forms of civil society or donor stipulated grant conditions have, with reference to the Roma, led to some projects being based on narrow interpretations of inclusion, encompassing assimilative and ‘civilising agendas’ which problematizes Roma culture and is dependent on mediatory processes where the focus is on the minority group to change (Matras et al, 2015). Whilst acknowledging the existence of such a mindset and practice there is a need for a degree of caution, a danger of post development theory critique is a propensity to veer into an unquestioning exaltation of ethnic cultures, which can promote static and narrow versions of identity, which fail to appreciate the fluidity of identity and value of ‘bricolage’ (innovation). Genuinely intercultural and deliberative forms of dialogue and partnership, using forms of bridging and mediatory processes, can have value if both parties in the exchange are willing to listen, understand and negotiate change (Hurrle et al, 2013). Some observers argue this is more likely to occur when more autonomous civil society organisations and actors seek to bridge the divide, which exists between Roma communities and service providers (Ryder, et al 2014).

Migrant Roma

Roma migrant children face the same disadvantages in education (segregation, early school leaving, poor results, etc.) as other Roma children and suffer from a lack of access to school, low attendance rates and experience social rejection, racism, and xenophobia. Low educational levels coupled with poor language skills means that many Roma migrant workers are consigned to low paid and skilled work or find themselves within the informal economy (European Commission, 2012). In political discourse and the media Roma migrants have been demonised and accused of abusing social welfare. It is important to note the European Commission found that intra-EU migrants, which includes Roma migrants, make a



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net contribution to their host countries, by paying more in taxes than they receive in benefits (Andor, 2014). Few projects exist to support migrant Roma and according to Nacu (2011) where specific projects are organised some of the actors and agencies involved are said to be promoting coercive agendas whilst others, influenced by discourses of inclusion, fluctuate between ideals of social justice and empowerment and more subtle forms of control through policies of assimilation or integration. Participation and empowerment has been recognised as an important tool in initiatives that aim to raise Roma migrant inclusion (MigRom, 2015). A growing migrant Roma community in the older EU member states may be breaking down the distinctions once drawn between Roma experiences in old (OMS) and new EU member states (NMS) with some OMS now having significant Roma migrant populations, Roma in these countries experience exclusion on account of their past experiences in NMS but also marginalisation on account of their migrant status in OMS.

Solutions

Social Inclusion – A common appeal from the European Union is for the development of inclusive educational and employment and training practices to reduce Roma marginalisation. The European Commission (2012) has noted a key area of interest is the transition between education and employment and believes professional training, individualised support, employability and access to formal labour market, microcredit for entrepreneurship and self-employment, adult vocational training are tools that can reverse exclusion. Priority actions include: access to mainstream employment in the formal labour market by tackling the lack of professional qualifications and of adequate skills, existing prejudices and stereotypes and the limited accessibility to training resources. The European Commission states that measures can be developed through labour insertion actions such as individual employment itineraries, including adapted professional training and bridging enterprises connection, in-company training and the promotion of self-employment through support grants and microcredit facilities. EU member states have been slow or ineffective in applying such principles to National Action Plans within the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies.

PAL will seek to explore where policies are failing but also identify good practice.



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Good Practice

Much of the literature indicates that pockets of good practice exist with governments and civil society pioneering a series of initiatives, which warrant further replication and scaling up. Inclusive models centre on the following initiatives:

- Pre- School education
- De-segregation
- Staff training
- Grants and bursaries – meals – transport
- Collaborative curricula (involving active participation and focused on the child/learner)
- Mediators in education and employment
- Second chance education
- Targeted schemes re helping Roma move from informal economy
- Public works
- "learning by working" (on-the-job training)
- Affirmative/positive action in for example civil service employment
- Microcredit and cooperatives and social enterprise
- Inclusive and accessible Labour/Employment Centres
- Partnership with civil society
- Raise awareness among Roma of their rights and enable better access to justice

Mainstreaming Versus Targeting - Some policy makers seem to consider that developing specific inclusion policies for Roma populations runs counter to a 'mainstreaming approach'. While care is needed with a targeted approach, in particular to avoid the creation of inferior or segregated/ghettoized services, carefully monitored and evaluated, targeted and flexible services hold the potential to significantly strengthen mainstream provision and enhance its relevance for Roma. It is recommended that a close relationship should exist between mainstream and targeted support so that knowledge arising from, for example, a local pilot project is then fed back into the daily operations of mainstream service providers and becomes part of their activities (Ryder and Cemlyn, 2014). This can lead to progressive change within mainstream methods and approaches as the pilot facilitates new directions or becomes part of established services

PAL will explore good practice (within the mainstream and through targeted initiatives) and will seek to disseminate and promote scaling up and innovation.



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Empowerment - The 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion, devised by the European Commission, civil society and other actors, are a tool for both policy-makers and practitioners managing programmes and projects. Distilled from the experience of successful policies, they provide a framework for the successful design and implementation of actions to support Roma inclusion.

The 10 Common Basic Principles are:

- Constructive, pragmatic and non-discriminatory policies
- Explicit but not exclusive targeting
- Inter-cultural approach
- Aiming for the mainstream
- Awareness of the gender dimension
- Transfer of evidence-based policies
- Use of European Union instruments
- Involvement of regional and local authorities
- Involvement of civil society
- Active participation of the Roma

Reflecting such ideals a central demand from Roma civil society has been for rhetoric on empowerment to be translated into action (ERRC, 2015). A new European Roma Institute (ERI), with an arts and culture focus, is to be established with Council of Europe support⁴. The Roma led ERI hopes to play a major role in challenging racist perceptions of the Roma. Some observers contend that an institutional platform like the ERI or other Roma transnational forums and bodies can achieve only limited results in policy change unless a stronger and grassroots orientated Roma civil society emerges, providing links to and a greater understanding of communities at the margins (Ryder, 2015).

A key interest of PAL is to identify barriers to empowerment and good practice in education and employment.

Local Development - Community-led local development (CLLD), is a term used and supported by the European Commission (2014a) to describe an approach that turns traditional “top down” development policy on its head. Under CLLD, local people take the reins and form a local partnership that designs and implements an integrated development strategy. The strategy is designed to build on the community’s social, environmental and

⁴ See statement on establishing the ERI: <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/why-we-are-setting-european-roma-institute>



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economic strengths or “assets” rather than simply compensate for its problems. Roma asset based community development which draws upon and uses in innovative ways tradition and existing forms of cultural capital is limited in terms of examples, but where utilised the impact on inclusion has been notable (Orban, 2014). Instruments that the European Commission can use to stimulate local development include structural Funds, Cohesion Funds, the European Social Fund (including the Community Initiative EQUAL) and the European Regional and Development Fund. The Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities has sought to promote good practice and innovation at the local level by establishing the European Alliance of cities and regions for Roma inclusion - an on-going programme promoting positive practices at local level. The programme has a focus on thematic issues such as, education, housing, health care and employment, as well as cross-cutting issues such as empowerment and participation, access to public services and funding, rights and duties. The ROMACT Programme is a joint initiative of the Council of Europe and the European Commission to promote the integration of Roma at local level and includes sharing good practice and training on mediation and transcultural work with Roma communities.

A key interest of PAL is to identify models of community led practice in education, employment and training, some of which might include intercultural practice.

The Roma and the European Union

Learning Lessons - Despite some of the failures of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies important lessons can be learnt and useful models of good practice identified which can form a foundation for a renewed and stronger approach from the EU and member states on the Roma issue. One option is for a EU Strategy for Roma Inclusion as proposed by the European Parliament in 2011, which should be developed with realistic targets. Roma civil society has long maintained a call for a bolder Roma Strategy policy framework with clear targets, timetables and budget allocations, and the prospect of interventions and sanctions where member states fail (Bartlett et al, 2015). Some critics though have expressed fears that a more interventionist stance on the part of the EU might europeanise the Roma issue leading to member states abdicating their responsibility (Vermeersch, 2012).



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Youth Guarantee - In April 2013, EU Member States made a commitment to ensure young people's successful transition into work by establishing Youth Guarantee schemes, member States were specifically called upon to regard Roma as a key target group (EC, 2014b). Marianne Thyssen Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility in the Juncker Commission, has stated that a central goal is to focus on people's skills and to promote apprenticeships and entrepreneurship, with a particular attention on the long-term unemployed and young people. Member states can access EU financial support through the Youth Employment Initiative, with a budget of 6.4 billion euros and the European Social Fund (Levy-Abegnoli, 2015). All EU Member States have presented comprehensive Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans, which detail the measures to be taken to implement the Youth Guarantee. However, there has been some criticism of the process of developing the Implementation Plan of the Youth Guarantee as claims have been made about the process lacking real participation and the consultation of non-governmental organizations with expertise on this topic (Mitulescu et al, 2014).

A Roma Desk in the European Commission (within DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion) has been recommended to coordinate the organisational, technical and financial capacities of states to promote Roma inclusion. A primary responsibility of the Roma desk would be to promote European Inclusion and Enterprise Zones (EIEZs) in areas with significant ethnic minority populations, a majority of whom are Roma, and characterised by high levels of socio-economic deprivation. The funding instruments for this venture would include the European Investment Bank (EIB), the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) and European Structural Investment Funds (ESIFs), the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) and the European Progress Microfinance Facility (Bartlett et al, 2015).

Austerity, Market or Social Europe? – Recession and austerity across Europe has led to cuts in education and training and unemployment is high with new employment often being part-time and precarious reflecting the 'brazilisation' of many western economies (Avis, 2014). Research suggests that there is a positive association between active labour market policies (ALMP) and the level of expenditure on ALMP (i.e. job search assistance, short-term training courses, subsidized work) and the chances of getting a job. Likewise the presence of a centrally regulated labour market through collective bargaining and established cooperative relationships between employers and employees is found to also positively affect the integration of youth in the labour market (Eurofound, 2012). Liberal and reformist solutions, as exemplified in the Eurofound report, have centred on:

- Preventing early school-leaving



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- Reintegrating early school-leavers
- Supporting school-to-work transitions
- Fostering employability of young people
- Removing barriers and offering employer incentives

More radical approaches highlight the importance of structural factors in exclusion as generated by a neoliberal economy predicated on market and competitive relations, individualism and competition (Avis, 2014). Bolder alternatives to current neoliberal trends might come about via the concept of 'Social Europe' which is more interventionist and redistributive of power and resources and which promotes the development of national welfare states and their protection against the forces of globalization and international competition (Acton and Ryder, 2013). A Social Europe stresses the value of increasing labour market participation, places much more emphasis on active welfare state measures, introduces supply-side efforts at job creation, seeks measures to provide security other than life-time job tenure, adds efforts to combat social exclusion. It is interesting to note that policymakers, most notably the World Bank (2010), are placing a growing emphasis on the economic advantages of Roma inclusion through productivity growth and welfare savings but fail to follow the logic of this train of thought by proactively supporting fiscal stimulus (Ivasiuc, 2014). Instead economic downsizing, the contraction of economic activity and laying off of staff, prompted by poor national economic performance but also competition and outsourcing in a globalised economy remain the norm. Austerity and drastic reductions in public spending have impacted negatively on employment levels.

It has been claimed that forms of governmentality, which normalises neoliberal and assimilative policy agendas, and 'responsibilisation', which individualises and pathologises the victims rather than the structural agents of exclusion have been evident in social policy directed towards the Roma (Van Baar, 2011). Ryder, Acton and Cemlyn (2014) call for this process to be turned on its head and a new governmentality to be forged predicated upon social justice and empowerment, where the state is de-centred and accountable to a civil society composed of "deliberative publics". These deliberative publics should be built from the 'bottom up', where excluded people can develop self-help and reciprocity through forms of mutualism and participation, which will shrink and ultimately dissolve "spaces of social exclusion".

However, such transformative visions of change run counter to currents of opinion which question the degree and level of European integration and wish to see a focus on market rather than social matters within the EU. Fears around migration have led to calls to end the



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free movement of labour within the EU; others believe their countries should jettison their EU membership. Critics though argue that a greater market focus within the EU to the detriment of the social chapter will accelerate downward pressures on wages, living standards and employment rights as countries enter into a free-for-all to gain economic advantages over competitor nations, a scenario which would have severe impacts on low income and skill groups like the Roma. In addition, it is argued that ending free movement of labour would deprive EU states of the chance to fill labour shortages and address decreasing populations but would also consign Roma to remain in communities and countries in economic difficulty.

These developments and viewpoints have important implications for Roma communities. It is in this context that PAL shall seek to promote a debate about the best policy frameworks for the effective delivery of education, employment and training for Roma communities.



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PAL General Policy Overview

Before looking at the PAL focus countries of Belgium, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Slovenia and Spain we provide a general policy overview which sets the context for Roma communities' experiences in education, training and employment. The overview is based on the EU Education and Training Monitor 2015 country reports (*See Appendix One for a summary of key points in PAL countries*). A major factor impacting on all the focus countries has been the economic crisis of 2009 which led to cuts in expenditure on education and training and steep rises in unemployment, most notably in Greece, Italy and Spain. Belgium and the Czech Republic spent, in terms of the percentage of national GDP, above the European average on education with Slovenia ranking alongside the Scandinavian countries when it comes to overall investment in education (6.4% of GDP). Spain and Italy are below the European average in terms of spending with Hungary and Romania being at the lowest level with Romania coming bottom in Europe with general government expenditure on education as a share of GDP standing at 2.8%.

In a number of countries national rates of participation in education and training are at the average or above average EU level (notably Belgium and Slovenia) but the EU Education and Training Monitor 2015 country reports for PAL focus countries suggest that even in these countries there are serious pockets of exclusion often based on socio-economic disadvantage, spatial exclusion and migrant status. Roma are often in these categories of exclusion experiencing economic and geographic marginalisation and constituting migrant groups, alongside native Roma communities, in Belgium, Greece, Italy, Slovenia and Spain.

Most of the PAL focus countries have prioritised strategies and policy measures to raise participation amongst the general population in pre-school, school and tertiary education. Some of these measures are believed to hold the potential to benefit socio-economic disadvantaged groups, Hungary and Romania have made pre-school education compulsory. Following infringement proceedings against the Czech Republic by the European Commission for illegally segregating Roma in special schools, the EU Education and Training Monitor, indicates a number of strategic documents, which set out measures to tackle segregation. Time will tell whether these strategies lead to action. However, the Czech Republic could present a turning point in attempts across Europe to reverse segregation, which could have implications for PAL focus countries like Hungary, Greece and Romania. On the other hand if segregation persists in the Czech Republic and Slovakia it will be a testament to the weakness of the EU.



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Reference to Roma targeted measures are sparse in the EU Education and Training Monitor 2015 country reports, Romania is prominent amongst those countries developing targeted and affirmative/positive action measures for Roma communities. Many of the countries appear to have adopted mainstream measures or ones that are targeted at vulnerable socio-economic groups that of course often includes many Roma. Targeted initiatives often appear to be localised and not uniform or universally available to Roma communities.

The next section summarises some of the literature detailing barriers to inclusion and good practice on Roma education, employment and training in PAL focus countries. The value of selecting these particular focus countries as case studies is that they provide insights into a range of experiences indicative of the broader situation of the Roma in Europe – experiencing hardship in countries which are implementing austerity policies or even within more relatively stable countries at the margins of social policy concerns.



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PAL Countries in Focus

Some Headline Figures

Belgium	“The unemployment rate among Roma is generally high, partly on account of their immigration status and partly because of their low level of education and limited professional experience” (Belgium National Roma Integration Strategy, 2012)
Czech Republic	An estimated 23% of Roma children sampled up to age 15 attended special schools and classes that were mainly for Roma according to a FRA (2014) report.
Greece	FRA (2014) found Greece, in its selected sample, has the lowest share of full-time work (14 %) for working-age Roma (20–64). Roma Young people aged 16 to 24 not in employment, education or training was 62% compared to 21% of the general population in the FRA survey. In Greece, 44 % of Roma respondents aged 16 and above said that they had never been to school (FRA, 2014)
Hungary	It has been estimated that 45 % of Roma children surveyed attend schools where all/many of the other pupils are Roma (FRA, 2014)
Italy	Roma Young people aged 16 to 24 not in employment, education or training was 69% in a selected sample compared to 11% of the general population in the FRA 2014 survey report
Romania	It has been estimated that 26 % of Roma children in a FRA survey based on a selected sample attend schools where all/many of the other pupils are Roma (FRA, 2014). 70 per cent of Roma are reported to be living below the poverty line- United Nations, Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 2014



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Slovenia	60.5% of the Roma aged 20 to 24 years according to 2002 census data had not completed elementary schooling, compared to 0.9% of persons of non-Roma origin. The same survey revealed 12.6% of the Roma between 20 and 64 years of age were in work (FRANET, 2012)
Spain	High levels of illiteracy exist among the Roma. It has been estimated nearly 70% of Roma over the age of 16 have not completed basic compulsory studies (Santiago and Maya, 2012)

The figures cited above from a range of education and employment fields indicate the acute exclusion Roma suffer in PAL focus countries. The discussion below highlights some key findings from the literature review and seeks to compare and contrast trends in the fields of education, employment and training for Roma communities in the PAL focus countries.

Austerity

All of the PAL focus countries were affected by the economic global crisis, in particular Italy, Greece and Spain. Following the financial crisis Greece experienced an economic contraction of -26,3 (a quarter of its original GDP), Spain: -5.8 % and Italy: -9.4 % (Femise, 2015). In addition, PAL focus countries like the Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania continue to struggle with poverty and the challenges posed with the transition into a post-Fordist economic system. Hence, in the great majority of PAL countries Roma social policy is restrained by budgetary and social policy limitations. In a number of PAL countries inclusion initiatives have ended or been curtailed on account of cutbacks in service provision and expenditure. An indicator of the exclusion and challenges facing Roma communities in the PAL focus countries is that four of them (Greece, Italy, Romania and Spain) are in the top five countries with the highest rates of young people NEET (not in education, employments or training) (Mitulescu et al, 2014). Five of the PAL focus countries are in the Eurozone (Belgium, Greece, Italy, Spain and Slovenia) because of the common currency, national governments are limited in their use of monetary policy as a tool for job creation, and by the restraints included in the Stability and Growth Pact (Avis, 2014). A civil society monitoring report for Spain notes that the recession and austerity could seriously delay the



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implementation of the EU National Roma Integration Strategy (Laparra et al, 2013), a fear that is likely to be applicable to most PAL focus countries.

Measures for Inclusion and Policy Frameworks

As noted earlier there is a debate as to the merits of targeted approaches as opposed to mainstreaming or whether targeting can present a gradual step towards mainstreaming. In some cases fears have been raised as to the potential danger of targeted measures leading to forms of segregation, for instance in Belgium Hemelsoet and Van Pelt (2015) raise fears on the part of the Roma of stigmatisation. In other PAL focus countries some reference was made to the hesitancy of Roma to enter into targeted Roma initiatives but there were also examples of such initiatives enjoying high Roma participation rates and or more effectively addressing exclusion. Forms of targeting and positive action were found in all the PAL focus countries to some degree but were often localised, sporadic and not sufficiently evaluated or scaled up.

Localised targeted measures might take the form of those described in one municipality in Slovenia where Roma can attend an elementary school for adults which includes the Roma in various projects providing them with adjusted programmes (adjusted theoretical classes and co-financing of driving lessons) to get the driving license (Črnomel, 2012) Little reference was made to targeted national programmes but in Spain Fundación Secretariado Gitano organises the programme “Promociona” which aims to achieve educational inclusion in compulsory secondary education, and promoting continuity in post-compulsory education, focusing on Roma students in the last two years of primary education and in compulsory secondary education, key periods in educational transfer where the risk of dropping out is great. Actions are said to involve not only students but also their families and the school. The programme is being developed in 31 cities and 13 different regions. It is reported that 79% of those Roma students who are targeted under this programme being in the last year of compulsory secondary education get the certificate (88% being girls and 68% boys) (FSG, 2012).

In Romania, a nation-wide targeted measure helps secure places for Roma in higher education through forms of affirmative action. However, as Pantea (2014) notes some Roma are reluctant to enter affirmative action programmes for fear of being ‘othered’ and in mixed ethnicity families more public forms of ascription through participation in an affirmative programme can create strains and challenges. Other targeted measures for Roma inclusion in higher education include the scholarships and support networks



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established by civil society initiatives like Romaversitas in Hungary and Roma Education Fund (REF) which operates in three PAL countries: Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania. REF is developing a tracer study to chart the impact and progression of Roma in receipt of scholarships in higher education, a study that will provide important insights into the value of such targeting⁵.

In Hungary a programme with an element of targeting which enjoyed some success in reaching out to low-skilled Roma were training courses organized by the Employment Office, which involved the modification of the regulations to include a preference towards 20% of Roma participating in trainings (Messing, 2013). This indicates that targeting can be subtle and encompassed within mainstream measures or be a component of measures targeted at vulnerable socio-economic groups.

As EU members all PAL focus countries have developed national strategies to raise Roma inclusion in the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies. Differentials exist between member states in the East and West of Europe as to the expertise governments have in terms of working with Roma focused policy frameworks. The Decade for Roma Inclusion initiative gave New Member States (NMS) such as the PAL focus countries of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania valuable experience of developing an Action Plan which identifies specific measures and instruments in areas such as education and employment, whereas most of the Old Member States (OMS) demonstrate weak skills in the sphere of strategic and policy framework towards Roma inclusion. Spain is something of an exception having benefitted by opting into the Decade initiative (Bartlett et al, 2015)⁶. It is interesting to note that in the EU Commission assessment of national action plans that Belgium, an OMS, was found to be lacking in its national action plan in the fields of education and training more frequently than other PAL focus countries (See table below on European Commission Assessment). Hungary is the only PAL focus country with clear targets in its national action plan on Roma, with a commitment to involve 100 000 unemployed Roma in the labour market (ECRI, 2015).

⁵ Roma Education Fund: <http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/>

⁶ The Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015 focused on the priority areas of education, employment, health, and housing, and committed governments to take into account the other core issues of poverty, discrimination, and gender mainstreaming and brought together governments, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations, as well as Romani civil society. The twelve countries participating were Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Spain. Its operational elements included: National Action Plans, policy coordination, exchange of experiences, revision and demonstration of progress, participation of Roma and provision of information and expert support.



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In all PAL focus countries methods of monitoring and evaluation are weak. The Decade for Roma Inclusion Secretariat (See earlier reference) compiled substantive civil society monitoring reports for four PAL focus countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy and Spain) but similar in-depth civil society appraisals are lacking for the other PAL focus countries. A review of the literature for PAL focus countries also indicates few examples of participatory action research, involving Roma in research design, data collection and analysis. Such research approaches would be in accordance with the 10 Basic Principles of Roma Inclusion (See earlier reference). Problems related to monitoring and evaluation are accentuated by a lack of ethnic monitoring and collection of data disaggregated for ethnicity. Hungary is praised by the European Commission (2015) on account of the fact the Hungarian Central Statistical Office has included questions on ethnicity in large sample surveys. Information, which will assist in calculating outcome indicators for monitoring the implementation of the national strategy (EC, 2015a)

Assessment of the National Strategies

In 2012, all EU Member States presented a National Roma Integration Strategy/set of policy measures within their broader social inclusion policies. The EU Commission undertook an assessment; the table below indicates the Member States that propose to put in place specific measures required by the EU Framework. Member States that are not listed have not indicated such measures and have been called upon by the European Commission to address these specific issues, if relevant for their Roma population. Member States will be referred to by the following abbreviations: BE-Belgium, CZ-Czech Republic, EL-Greece, ES-Spain, HU-Hungary, IT-Italy, RO-Romania, SI-Slovenia (European Commission, 2012)⁷.

Education

Endorsement of the general goal || BE, CZ, ES, EL, IT, HU, RO, SI,

Concrete goals to reduce education gap || BE, CZ, EL, ES, IT, HU, RO, SI

Widening access to quality early childhood education and care || CZ, EL, ES, IT, HU, RO, SI

⁷ For more detail: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_nat_integration_strat_en.pdf



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(BE not listed)

Measures to ensure that Roma children complete at least primary school || BE, EL, ES, IT, HU, RO, SI **(CZ not listed)**

Reducing secondary school leaving || CZ, EL, ES, IT, HU, RO **(BE, SI not mentioned)**

Increasing tertiary education || CZ, ES, IT, HU **(BE, EL, RO, SI not mentioned)**

Measures aimed at preventing segregation || CZ, EL, ES, HU, RO **(BE, IT, SI not mentioned)**

Support measures || BE, CZ, ES, IT, HU, RO, SI **(EL not mentioned)**

Employment

Concrete goals to reduce the employment gap || CZ, EL, ES, HU, RO, SI **(BE, IT not mentioned)**

General measures under the principle of equal treatment to reduce the employment gap || **(No PAL focus countries mentioned)**

Additional or specific measures for Roma (Specific measures aim to ensure non-discriminatory access for Roma to the labour market, including for example vocational and on-the-job training, mediation, facilitating access to childcare) || CZ, ES, HU, RO, SI **(BE, EL, IT not mentioned)**

Access to micro-credit Civil servants in the public sector Personalised services || EL, ES, IT, HU, RO **(BE, CZ not mentioned)**

Integrated approach || CZ, ES, HU, SI **(BE, EL, IT, SI not mentioned)**

Educational Inclusion

Roma educational participation and achievement is a cause for serious concern in all the PAL focus countries, where institutional racism, poverty and hostility from the wider community has excluded and even segregated Roma pupils. The European Commission has identified the following states: Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece as being of special concern with regards to school segregation and needing to put in place



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stronger measures to achieve an inclusive education system (European Commission, 2014). Four PAL focus countries are in the list.

As noted earlier the Czech Republic is currently facing infringement proceedings by the European Commission on school segregation. Hungary is also a cause for concern, the European Roma Rights Centre (2016) has noted that school segregation of Roma children is increasing in Hungary and not enough has been done to address the misdiagnosis and placement of Romani children in special schools even though the European Court of Human Rights sanctioned the country (Horváth and Kiss v. Hungary 2013). The European Roma Rights Centre asserts that in 2015 the Hungarian Supreme Court facilitated segregation by allowing religious schools to operate on a segregated basis for Roma.

In Romania 26% of Roma children attend ethnically-separated school classes (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2014). According to the Fundamental Rights Agency (2014) Roma children in Greece are more likely to attend segregated classes or schools than non-Roma children in such households: About a third of the Roma children were reported by the household respondents to attend schools or classes where all or many of their school or classmates were Roma; a quarter attended mixed classes. A major contributory factor to segregation in Greece is said to be the opposition of non-Romani parents to integration (Antigone, 2014). However, Greece has sought to abolish segregated schools through a national programme for Education of Roma Children and through so-called Education Priority Zones (ECRI, 2015).

Some schools within PAL focus countries have stressed the value of dialogue and mediation between home and school, and such links have long been noted as an integral factor in securing educational inclusion. In a number of schools in Belgium specialist staff are used to focus on home school relations (Wauters et al, 2015) and bridging efforts in some pioneering schools include organizing home visits, parents' meetings, social and cultural events, language courses and a Roma-mothers groups.

Compensatory measures are used in schools in the PAL focus countries and include special support teachers, extra classes and reducing the ratio of students for each class. However, there can be a danger that compensatory education when centred on special education can lead to withdrawal of pupils from the class and other forms of separation. It has been argued that Roma should start school attendance at the very earliest age in order to avoid discrimination and to eradicate the later need for special education (Catalá, 2015). A number of PAL focus countries have prioritised pre-school/early learning for Roma such as Hungary and Romania. Greece was criticised in 2012 by the European Commission for not having any measures for pre-school education for Roma pupils (EC, 2014b)



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Economic Inclusion

In all the PAL focus countries Roma economic exclusion is a major cause of concern with Roma often being located in deprived areas with high unemployment and often lack the skills needed to find work or benefit from employment progression.

In some of the PAL focus countries work programmes have been deployed to reintegrate Roma into the workforce. Hungary is prominent in the use of public works programmes by involving Roma in the construction of infrastructure projects. Although not targeted at the Roma the scheme is believed to have employed large numbers of Roma (Messing, 2013). The European Commission feels there is a need for “more focus in Hungary on reintegration to the open labour market, developing more concrete measures in the area of social economy, self-employment/microfinance and vocational training” (European Commission, 2014). According to a coalition of civil society organisations the Hungarian Equal Treatment Authority found that Roma in the public work programme suffer from discriminatory decision making by employers and supervisors e.g. being ordered to do harder tasks (Balogh et al, 2013). Many local NGOs feel marginalised in terms of participation in the design, delivery and or monitoring of the public works programme (Hungarian Civil Society Coalition, 2014). The works programme has been criticised for low skill development and actually entrapping Roma in a poverty spiral.

The National programme of measures for Roma of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for the period 2010-2015 refers to the intensive inclusion of Roma in active employment policy measures. Many Roma take part in programmes of institutional training and formal education (mostly programmes providing the opportunity to complete elementary schooling) and in programmes of public works. Unlike the wider unemployed population the Roma, as a classified vulnerable group, may access such schemes without a waiting period. It is reported that within the public works scheme, Roma are included in public utilities programmes where no specific skills are required (Hert & Caeneghem, 2012). In Slovenia public service presents an important source of income for Roma but have been criticised for the low rates of transfer to the mainstream labour market (Črnomel, 2012). In Greece a central policy to improve Roma access into the labour market is through participation in non-targeted Sectoral Operational Programmes with other citizens or targeted Roma specific employment strategies and the Greek National Roma Integration Strategy refers to microcredit and environmental development measures (Acoudis, 2014)



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Spain, is one of the countries, which has aroused great interest in its employment initiatives for Roma, many of which have been delivered through the Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG) a non-profit organization that works for the development of the Roma community in Spain. FSG has used largely EU funding to develop targeted programmes, of which Roma have been principal beneficiaries. FSG offers a wide range of services including job-search, training, counselling, on-the-job training and placement services. An important programme praised by the European Commission, is Acceder a labour mediation programme that aims to integrate Roma into the workforce (EC, 2014b). In 2011, the Acceder programme obtained the authorisation to function as an Employment Agency throughout Spain from the Ministry of Labour through the Spanish Public Employment Service. According to a civil society monitoring report the recession has increased demand for the services of FSG but also greatly hindered it as it is now harder in these troubled economic times to find work experiences and training opportunities (Laparra et al, 2013). Italy is planning to emulate the Acceder programme (Bormioli et al, 2014).

Previous research has indicated that racism and discrimination in employment centres, which should provide guidance and support to unemployed Roma in finding work and developing skills, has reduced Roma economic opportunity. For example, in the Czech Republic in a survey of 600 Roma women it was found Roma women tried to apply for re-training courses at Labour Offices the vast majority had failed to enrol in a course even after filling out the requisite forms (Dizdarevič, 2014). The lack of effective support from employment centres though in the Czech Republic and indeed across PAL focus countries may also be attributable to the increased workloads for staff caused by the recession and or cuts in staff. A civil society monitoring report for the Czech Republic notes the reform of the Labour Offices brought about such changes leading to fewer public employment workers available to deal with individual unemployed persons, among them many Roma (Hurrle et al, 2013).

A review of the PAL focus countries found evidence of few targeted initiatives by employment centres or measures in place to train and educate staff. However, in Romania Roma jobs fairs have been organised and via 'Programme 145' effort has been made to secure Roma employment with an emphasis on customized actions, especially on labour mediation and counselling (Government of Romania – National Agency for Roma 2011). In Belgium the regional integration centre Foyer (based in the Brussels region) has established a Roma & Travellers Support Centre which offers personalised support on Roma & Traveller related issues, in an effort to reinforce the empowerment and integration process through education and training, to social service providers, official bodies, schools and local authorities on the one hand (information, advice, mediation, training, development of links)



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and to Roma & Travellers on the other (mediation, information, awareness raising, support). Likewise, the Wallonia Traveller and Roma Mediation Centre [Centre de Médiation de Gens de Voyage et Roms] offers important services in mediation, training and awareness raising linked to education and employment (Belgium National Roma Integration Strategy, 2012).

Self-employment rates for Roma are high in some PAL countries. About 20 % of the Roma in Greece and about 25 % in Italy who were included in a Fundamental Rights Agency Survey said that they are self-employed (FRA, 2012). However, such work is often low skilled and low income and the literature review of PAL focus countries found little information on specific and targeted measures to aid Roma business development. Microcredit and enterprise has long been heralded as a potentially useful tool to address Roma economic exclusion. Spain, Hungary and Romania are perhaps most prominent in their attempts to initiate such projects in this field but such actions are often experimental pilot projects or localised initiatives and from a review of the PAL focus countries it is evident that little is really being done or achieved in this area. Dan et al (2012) note with reference to Romania that existing projects focused on the social economy have an impact on a small number of people, rather than on an entire community and fail to create services which are missing from communities and which may contribute to satisfying certain needs of the community as a whole. In addition there is a lack of long-term guidance and support for social economy projects after the initial set-up. These comments are applicable across the PAL countries.

Within the PAL focus countries large numbers of Roma are located within the informal economy but PAL found little evidence of tailored and specific measures being used to help the Roma transfer to the mainstream economy or certificating skills developed in the informal economy. The EU Education and Training Monitor notes that Belgium is developing a non targeted validation mechanism/system of non-formal and informal learning. Italy though is developing a number of localised and targeted initiatives to regularise the position of Roma who carry out metal collection/recycling informally, the initiatives undertaken in Italy have applied to two provinces: Bolzano and Reggio Calabria (Bormioli et al, 2014). A review of the PAL focus countries found few examples of good practice in the sphere of economic activity and certainly less than in education.

As noted earlier in April 2013, EU Member States made a commitment to ensure young people's successful transition into work by establishing Youth Guarantee schemes. Member states plans are assessed by the European Commission which found in all the PAL focus countries scope for improvement in particular the need to reduce the number of NEETs in the economy and developing modern training opportunities and a better transfer from school to training, education and employment (See appendix Two for a summary of



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assessments). In addition to the comments made by the EU commission it is evident from a review of Youth Guarantee Schemes that the scope for flexibility and targeted work towards more vulnerable subgroups like the Roma is limited.

Racial and Cultural Exclusion

The literature review indicates that high levels of discrimination and prejudice exist against Roma in all PAL focus countries and this is a major factor impacting on Roma participation and the willingness of institutions and employers to assist the Roma. As one educated Czech Roma woman stated “Even when I show my graduation papers it means nothing in contemporary Central Europe. What is essential is that people see us as human beings, and as long as Roma are not seen as human beings, education will be irrelevant for us.” (Dizdarevič, 2014, 5). Few references were found in the literature review of active strategies within PAL focus countries to combat discriminatory attitudes in education, employment or training, with for example positive role model publicity campaigns showing Roma in positive roles or awareness raising amongst Roma of their rights. An interesting good practice example though is demonstrated by the Brno-based NGO IQ Roma Service which awards the title “Ethnic Friendly Employer” to employers that embrace the principle of equal treatment and do not discriminate on the basis of ethnic origin (EC, 2015b).

Across the PAL focus countries there is evidence of racial and cultural misconceptions leading to the authorities being indifferent about school absenteeism. For example, in Italy social workers claimed drop-out rates to be attributable to early marriage (ERRC, 2014). The PAL literature review suggests that care should be taken in stressing cultural dissonance, basically the existence of diverging norms and values in relation to education and work. There is a danger that by over-emphasising cultural dissonance that structural and institutional factors contributing to Roma exclusion are overlooked.

Gender

Across the PAL focus countries references are made to Roma women experiencing a double form of discrimination based on gender and ethnicity and appear to be at greater economic and educational disadvantage than Roma men. For example, Roma women in Greece were three times more vulnerable than unemployed Roma men and displayed proportionately lower percentages of employment patterns than Roma men. Roma women are most often



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employed in auxiliary, unskilled, physically demanding work and in seasonal and occasional labour in services in the informal economy, which provide very low wages and prevent them from accessing social security benefits (Acoudis, 2014). In the PAL focus countries evidence was found of female Roma wanting to be integrated within mainstream schooling and the labour market and training opportunities. For example, in the Czech Republic a study of Roma women found they wanted to be educated and want their children to be educated, too and were open to take re-training courses and undertaking further education if adequate programmes were available and their financial and family situations would allow them to do so (Dizdarevič, 2014). Within the PAL focus countries there is evidence of an emerging Roma women's movement, Espinel (2015) notes that the Roma women's movement is promoting important social transformations and that in Spain there are currently more than twenty Roma women's associations.

An example of an interesting gender focused project was found in Slovenia, the project MS4ROW focuses on Roma women and teenage girls and centres on lifelong learning, career planning and monitoring believing this can improve Roma access to the labour market. MS4ROW has developed a comprehensive alternative mode of teaching and mentoring system for Roma women and teenage girls, which involves a web application allowing them to design and realize a personal educational and vocational path for each Roma teenage girl participant. The main focus is on improving literacy and skills (reading literacy, digital literacy, financial literacy, communication skills, job-finding skills, learning techniques and social skills. (MS4ROW, 2015). Another interesting example of gender-focused work was found in Romania with the Fem.Rom project financed from the Social European Fund. The project aims to improve Roma women's access to the labour market, through –information, vocational guidance and counselling, as well as specialized and customized employment, through the creation of women's cooperatives (Dan et al, 2012). Overall, within the PAL focus countries there was little reference in the literature reviewed to Roma gender centred and targeted measures in education, employment and training.

Spatial Exclusion

In all PAL countries spatial exclusion and racism are factors that often interact with economic exclusion to form serious disadvantage. For example, in Romania the United Nations, Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2014) stated that substandard accommodation was a factor that accentuated economic exclusion. In Belgium Hert and Caeneghem (2012) note that the spatial exclusion of caravan sites present nomadic Roma



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with difficulty in accessing public transport and accessing services and opportunities. Within the focus countries measures to tackle such disadvantage appear to be limited and sporadic. Where there are measures to tackle spatial segregation and urban renewal little reference is made in the PAL countries to such measures being used to directly employ and train the Roma, as the European Commission (2012) has recommended.

Mediators

In all the PAL focus countries reference is made to the use of mediators, especially in a school context but the use of such staff are also evident in other services such as health provision and employment support. Although the use of mediators is often lauded as holding the potential to enhance services, limited evidence is available to provide insights to obstacles in the functioning of such posts, for instance as to how mediators can gain the trust of both the institution and community when tensions are acute and or avoid being one sided and perceived as merely an agent of the service provider.

Romania was the first country in the region to institutionalize the concept of the Roma school mediator, and was pioneered by the NGO Romani CRISS. Research for the World Bank estimates about 400 mediators are currently active in Romania (Gatti et al, 2016). An example of mediation/facilitation from Romania is reflected in the work of the Resource Centre for Roma Communities (RCRC) a non-governmental and non-profit organization with extensive experience in community development projects within Roma communities. The RCRC has sought to increase the entrepreneurial capacity of community organizations and community members, facilitating access to professional training courses for the members of the Roma including guidance on social enterprise and increasing the number of Roma pupils completing secondary education and accessing high schools and vocational schools. An important dynamic of this work has been the selection and training of community facilitators (Dan et al, 2012). In the Czech Republic municipalities can apply to a number of grant schemes to finance the position of a local Roma adviser or social field workers (Hurrell et al, 2013). In Spain a range of municipal, government, EU and private sources fund mediators and of all the PAL countries contains perhaps the greatest variation in function and approach to such work and includes school monitoring tutors, school promoters, cultural mediators, inter-cultural mediators, socio-cultural mediators, conflict managers, neighbourhood mediators, health mediators, civic officers, etc. (Laparra, et al, 2013).

In Italy authorities have a preference for mediation contracts with civil society organisations. A review of the PAL literature selected did not indicate what might be the advantages and



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disadvantages of mediators being employed directly by the authorities or service providers as opposed to civil society, as noted earlier there are fears in the general literature that mediatory work can be driven by services, becoming assimilative and one sided. The Ermes NGO in Italy employs both Roma and non-Roma cultural mediators in the belief that this role is so complex in regard to its functions that it requires a form of duality to deal with the cultural aspects (Rossi and Angelis, 2012), this implies that the work of a Roma mediator can be confronted with a range of institutional and cultural challenges. The literature provides limited insights into these barriers or how they might be overcome. As noted below the work of civil society organisations like RCRC and Ermes is not widespread.

Roma Civil Society

In the PAL focus countries Roma civil society is underdeveloped and underfunded and is not adequately being utilised by the state and service providers as a partner to engage with Roma communities. Notable examples from PAL focus countries of civil society good practice include the IQ Roma Servis in Brno which is helping Roma parents challenge the placement of children in special/practical schools (Cahrom, 2014). In Hungary local civil society organisations run ‘Tanoda’ after school clubs to help Roma youth in their cultural educational development (HCCF/ERRC, 2014). In Spain the Fundación Secretariado Gitano offers Roma a personalized itinerary for achieving Roma inclusion in the labour market, centred on training and orientation and changing employer perceptions (FSG (2012). In Belgium a number of associations have been set up in partnerships with Centres for Adult Education to allow Roma to follow courses such as business administration (Hert and Caeneghem 2012). In Romania Romano Cher – Casa Romilor is a social economy project financed under the Social European Fund and seeks to integrate traditional Roma craftsman in the labour market and in the active life of the community and to adapt them to the current labour market (Dan et al, 2012).

References in the literature in the PAL focus countries suggest there are major concerns by Roma civil society about resources and where the authorities do seek to work with them engagement can be tokenistic. For example, in Italy the project entitled “To Improve Professionals’ Skills on the Roma Phenomenon” (acronym in Italian: COMINROM) was launched in 2011 and aimed to enhance the knowledge of public officials and of workers of civil society organisations and lead to the creation of local networks capable of initiating processes for their integration. However, concerns have been raised about the degree to which Roma civil society and communities were actually involved, it is also claimed financial



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mechanisms directed at giving continuity to the networks and their actions are lacking (Bormioli et al, 2014). Across the PAL focus countries civil society good practice is often localised and sporadic and the PAL literature review suggests insufficient action is taken to disseminate good practice and scale it up.

Strategic Partnership and Empowerment

In a number of cases PAL countries have established special Roma forums and bodies to contribute to the development of national plans as part of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies. For example, in its National Roma Integration Strategy Belgium pledged to create a Roma and Travellers Council. Despite the existence of such bodies and pledges to partnership by the European Commission via the EU Framework of National Roma Integration Strategies Roma empowerment and participation in strategic policy making in the fields of education, employment and training seems to be very limited in PAL focus countries. In Hungary the Government's main Roma partner is the National Roma Self Government based on the organisation and caucus group Lungo Drom which is closely allied with the ruling Fidesz party Government. This is seen as problematic as other Roma civil organisations are excluded (Kóczé, 2013).

Migrants

Much of the Roma migration has been from Central Eastern Europe to the West – PAL focus countries with Roma migrant communities include Belgium, Greece, Italy and Spain. A review of literature from these countries demonstrates Roma migrants face considerable disadvantage in education and employment. Within the PAL focus countries Italy has drawn much attention on account of the poor substandard accommodation Roma experience in camps which are often self-constructed by using rubbish and other debris or are poor quality prefabricated structures, which often lack sufficient heating, utilities and sanitation. A significant number of migrant Roma in Italy live under the constant threat of being repatriated as a result of difficulties in renewing a temporary residence permit or complying with requirements set by Italian immigration legislation (Clough et al, 2011). The nature and location of these camps compounds exclusion. Sigona (2016) describes the Roma as the “undeserving stateless”, so alien to the dominant imagination of citizenship to be denied recognition or proper access to services.



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In PAL focus countries measures to assist migrant Roma appear to be limited. In Belgium reference is made to a civic integration programme for migrants. In Belgium migrants must attend an information session (organised on a fortnightly basis). Apparently the aim of these information sessions is to give a clear indication of what is expected of each of the parties with language and citizenship being the main focus of the initial phase of the assistance process (Broucke et al, 2015). Belgium may at the moment be unique in offering such support but it is not apparent as to what degree migrant Roma make use and or benefit from this particular programme in terms of economic and social inclusion.



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Some Initial Questions

The review of EU wide literature and policy frameworks in PAL focus countries prompts a series of questions which it is hoped PAL consortia members might reflect upon during the course of discussions with Roma community representatives, practitioners and experts:

- Good practice in education, employment and training is sporadic and localised in PAL focus countries. How can good practice be scaled up?
- Is there scope for more targeted education and employment measures for Roma? How do Roma communities feel towards targeting?
- How can Roma civil society be strengthened to play an active role in education and employment and training? How can civil society retain its autonomy and still be linked to services? How can civil society access to funds be facilitated?
- Are the Roma being listened to and actively participating in local and strategic decision making related to education, employment and training?
- How can asset based development and existing forms of cultural capital based on tradition and close ties be better utilised in measures to achieve Roma inclusion?
- How should effective mediation and empowerment measures be organised to ensure genuine intercultural dialogue, skills development and partnership?
- Is there scope for more gender focused Roma initiatives in education, training and employment? Can the Roma women's movement play a key role in inclusion?
- Will infringement proceedings by the European Commission against the Czech Republic and Slovakia on Roma school segregation be a lever for change? Should infringement proceedings be initiated against other countries?
- How can Roma be assisted to transfer from the informal to formal economy? In this process to what degree should institutions, the state and economy adapt?
- How can microcredit and collective forms of enterprise be better supported?
- How can narrow social inclusion approaches that are assimilative and monocultural be avoided?



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- Is the argument of cultural dissonance being overemphasised and used as a shield to deflect criticisms which can be directed at institutional practices?
- Could major de-segregation and urban renewal measures create important training and employment measures for Roma?
- How can early warning systems and intervention be put in place at critical points in a learners' life where Roma are at risk? For example, involvement in pre-school learning or transfer from school to post-school learning
- How can the dissemination and sharing of good practice within states and between states be facilitated?
- How can research and monitoring be made more effective and provide greater insight into cultural and aspirational aspects of Roma engagement in education, employment and training?
- Is the scope for Roma inclusion limited by the prevalence of austerity policies and low economic growth?
- Hostility by majoritarian society limits the scope of inclusion measures in education, employment and training. How can it be overcome?
- All EU Member States have presented Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans to assist in youth employment. Does the plan in your country address the needs of Roma? (You can access the Youth Guarantee Plan for your country at this link: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1161&langId=en>)



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Where Next for PAL

The PAL project will be organising a survey and publishing a report in the autumn of 2016. PAL will also be busy organising events in the coming year which centre on:

Access to Education

- Promoting second chance education and sharing good practice
- Developing online training courses for teachers
- Group Building Days and transcultural initiatives

Access to Employment

- Promoting good practice and innovation
- Awareness raising on opportunities, rights and equality
- international Roma Integration/Inclusion campaign
- Training of trainers

Expected Results

- Generating Evidence on Roma Inclusion to inform evidence – based policy making studies and research
- Developing partnership with key international actors
- Mainstreaming Roma inclusion and scaling up viable approaches
- Multi-sector approaches to social inclusion
- Exploring and promoting Positive Action, Targeting and Mainstreaming
- Roma participation and empowerment

See the PAL website for more details: <http://www.projectpal.eu/project/>

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Appendix One

The PAL GENERAL POLICY OVERVIEW – Gives an overview and extracts from the 2015 Education and Training Monitor country reports for PAL focus countries (http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/et-monitor_en.htm) - Sections of the reports referring to low socio-economic income, spatial exclusion and migrant groups are of particular relevance to Roma communities. In some cases direct references are made to Roma. (Numbers indicate page numbers in country reports)

Belgium

3 - The education system is still performing well on average. Participation in early childhood education and care is almost universal for children over the age of three and the early school leaving rate is on a downward trend. However there is high educational inequality related to socio-economic and immigrant background and wide gaps in performance between schools. The academic performance of pupils enrolled in vocational education and training (VET) is poor. The early school leaving rate among foreign-born people is twice higher than the rate of those born in Belgium (17.5% in comparison to 8.7%). General government expenditure on education as a proportion of GDP remains among the highest in the EU (6.4% in 2013 compared to the EU average of 5%)

5 - The recent decision to request young people up to the age of 21 to complete upper secondary education before qualifying for the integration allowance is an attempt to prevent young people from dropping out of education.

6 – From 2017 new inspection processes will target teaching support by the low-achieving schools

11 - There are validation mechanisms/systems of non-formal and informal learning

Czech Republic

3 - The overall educational outcomes and employability of school and higher education graduates in are good. General government expenditure on education as a share of GDP was 5.2% in 2013, surpassing the 5.0% EU average



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4 - The early school leaving rate, 5.5% in 2014, remains very low in comparison to other countries, but 72% of Roma children leave school early

The proportion of teachers participating in professional development related to teaching students with special needs and training for teaching in multicultural or multilingual settings is low

The insufficient availability of public kindergartens particularly affects low-income groups. The latest available data show that only 26% of Roma children aged 4 have participated in early childhood education and care (ECEC) prior to starting compulsory education

5 - A number of strategic documents set out measures aiming at greater equality through a significant reduction in the number of Roma children in 'practical schools', targeted reduction of early school leaving, helping teachers move towards inclusive education, increasing the number of education assistants, strengthening support for secondary and tertiary education of Roma, largely financed by EU funds. A key measure is the amendment to the Education Act to ensure that individual support is given to pupils in mainstream education.

Reliable data is needed to monitor the impact of the measures

Legislation is being drawn up to make the last year of ECEC compulsory from 2017/18

8 - Upper secondary students' participation in Vocational Education Training (VET) is significantly higher than the EU average (73.8% compared to 49.8% in 2013)

Since 2014, direct and indirect funding of secondary and tertiary vocational education by employers is considered as a tax-deductible expense.

Greece

3 - In recent years, the Greek education and training has experienced major financial cuts. The general government expenditure on education as a proportion of GDP is among the lowest in the EU. It stood at 4.5% in 2013, compared to an EU average of 5.0%

4 - The early school leaving rate was 9% in 2014, better than the EU average (11.1%). The early school leaving rate fell by 5.3 percentage points during the economic crisis, from 14.3 % in 2007. Greece has also already reached its Europe 2020 national target of 9.7%. But, the national average masks major variations between groups with children born abroad having a leaving rate, of 27.8% in 2014

Greece has one of the worst performances in Europe with regard to basic skills. The proportion of



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low achievers is higher than the EU average

Participation of 4-6 year-olds in early childhood education and care (ECEC) is low. In 2013, 76.4% of children in that age group took part in ECEC, compared to an EU average of 93.1%. In 2012, only 55.6% of 4 year-olds took part in pre-primary education, compared to an EU average of 86.7% took part in pre-primary education, compared to an EU average of 86.7%

Hungary

2 - Hungary has adopted several national strategies to improve the quality of its education and training system, including an early school leaving prevention strategy. Early childhood education and care is compulsory for all children from the age of 3 as of September 2015, which may contribute to improving education outcomes, particularly those of students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds.

However, the proportion of low achievement in basic skills is increasing and the socio-economic gaps in performance are still among the highest in the EU. Increasing the participation of disadvantaged students, in particular Roma. Inclusive education and improving support through targeted teacher training is a challenge. The early school leaving rate among pupils in vocational schools is significant. Adult participation in lifelong learning remains very low.

General government expenditure on education as a share of GDP is among the lowest in the EU.

Public expenditure on pre-primary and primary education as share of the GDP is only 0.9% (compared to the 1.6% EU average).

The proportion of adolescent low achievers increased between 2009 and 2012, the influence of the socio-economic backgrounds and school location are important factors

3 - Most of the low achievers live in the North-East of Hungary, which is hit hardest by poverty (has a high Roma population). In these regions, the proportion of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds (28-29%) is double the national

Roma pupils' educational attainment is below the national average. 77.7% of Roma complete eight years of schooling (lower secondary) as their highest education level compared to the national average of 24.6%, and account for less than 1% of graduates from tertiary education compared to 18.5% in the adult population. Roma who attend schools and classes where the half or majority of their classmates are Roma is high and segregation is a serious problem.

Several catching-up programmes to help disadvantaged children's chances of acquiring better skills



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and educational attainment continue to be available (such as after school clubs and scholarships)

'Bridge' classes were introduced in 2013 and offer second-chance programmes for those pupils who either were not able to complete primary school education or have not been accepted in any secondary schools.

4 - In 2014, the government adopted strategies on the prevention of early school leaving. In January 2015, the Public Education Law defined the term 'student at risk of early school leaving', and introduced an early warning system with declining educational performance as the only indicator which may have a limited capacity

8 - Participation in upper secondary vocational education and training (VET) is below the EU average (26.5% compared to the 48.9% EU average in 2013). The share of VET students in work-based learning is about 70%, one of the highest in Europe. The drop-out rate from VET remains a cause of concern (around 30% in 2013)

9 - Financial benefits (tax credit, reimbursement of costs and tenders for the infrastructural development of the training sites) are important incentives for companies to provide company training

Italy

3 – Italy it is reported has made progress in improving its education system over the last few years. The early school leaving rate is falling and participation in early childhood education is almost universal for 4-6 year-olds. However, the early school leaving rate remains well above the EU average. The tertiary education attainment rate for young people is the lowest in the EU and many students drop out of tertiary education. Work-based learning is not well-developed and entry into the labour market is difficult for young people.

General government expenditure on education, as a proportion of GDP (4.1% in 2013) and as a proportion of general government expenditure (8.0% in 2013), is the lowest in the EU and includes tertiary education, which is the lowest in the EU at only 0.4% of GDP and 0.7% of total general government expenditure in 2013.

Between 2009 and 2013, overall public funding for higher education was cut by approximately 20% in real terms.

Although the early school leaving rate has been on a downward trend since 2008, it remains well above the EU average (15% in 2014 compared with the EU average of 11.1%), especially among



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foreign-born students (32.6% in 2014 compared with the EU average of 20.1%)

Although the performance gap between natives and first-generation immigrants is large, second-generation immigrants partially catch up. Integrating students with an immigrant background is at an early stage of development, but is becoming more significant

4 – Schools have to produce a self-assessment report identifying strengths and weaknesses, based on a standardised template from the National Agency for School Evaluation (INVALSI). Each school also had to identify areas to be improved and targets to be met over the following years.

6 - Italy's tertiary education attainment rate is the lowest in the EU (23.9% in 2014 for 30-34 year olds), and is below the Europe 2020 national target of 26-27%. The attainment rate is particularly low among foreign-born people (12.8% compared with an EU average of 35.6%).

8 - While the participation of upper secondary students in vocational education and training remains above the EU average (59.4% compared with 48.9% in 2013), the employment rate of recent upper secondary graduates¹⁷ is the lowest in the EU (38.3% in 2014). This is partly due to insufficiently developed work-based learning: only 10.7% of upper secondary students participated in traineeships in 2013/14

Italy has the second highest proportion of young people not in education, employment or training in the EU (26.2% of 15-29 year-olds in 2014) after Greece (26.7%).

Romania

3 - Romania's tertiary education attainment rate has risen in recent years. The Government has adopted a strategy on tertiary education to make higher education more relevant to labour market needs; and to improve the accessibility of higher education for disadvantaged groups. It also adopted strategy for reducing early school leaving.

The early school leaving rate remains well above the EU average. The availability and access of early childhood education and care services is limited, especially in rural areas and for the Roma community. The tertiary education attainment rate remains the second lowest in the EU. Adult participation in lifelong learning remains far below the EU average.

General government expenditure on education as a share of GDP is the lowest in the EU at 2.8%

Research indicates schools in disadvantaged communities have limited resources and usually fail to carry out any additional support activities targeting students at risk of school, the core financial resource of these schools is state funding and in some cases it constitutes their sole budget. The



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conclusions of the research were also relevant for schools in areas with a Roma population, as Roma children accounted for more than 10% of children in most of the schools included in the sample.

Romania has the third highest early school leaving rate in the EU. The early school leaving rate for Roma is almost twice as high as for the non-Roma population. About 14% of Roma older than 10 are illiterate and about 20% of Roma have not attended school.

Integration of Roma children in schools is difficult, with 26% of Roma children attending ethnically-segregated school classes

4 - Participation in early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Romania has been slowly decreasing in recent years and is below the EU average (86.4% in 2014, compared to 93.9% in 2012 and 86.4% in 2011). Participation in ECEC is characterised by major disparities in access for the most disadvantaged children, such as Roma communities

5 - To overcome the lack of any preschool experience for children in some communities, a compulsory preparatory school year, started from 2012. A number of European Social Fund (ESF)- and World Bank funded strategic projects in ECEC, including an important focus on Roma children, are currently being implemented.

6 - Initial training for primary teachers is insufficient in preparing them to integrate children with special needs and Roma children

7 - Romania's tertiary education attainment rate has been steadily increasing over the past four years and reached 25% in 2014, on track to reach the Europe 2020 national target of 26.7%.

The participation of upper secondary students in vocational education and training (VET) in Romania remains above the EU average (60% compared with 48.9% in 2013). However, the drop-out rate in VET high schools was twice as high compared to general upper secondary education in 2012. Since the 2014/15 academic year, schools have been receiving incentives to offer second chance programmes to young adults who left education and training early.

Romania has not made significant progress in recent years on the participation of adults aged 25-64 in lifelong learning. The 2014 rate of 1.5% is the lowest in the EU falling well below the EU average of 10.7%.

9 - With the support of the World Bank, the Romanian Government has developed a national lifelong learning strategy and a methodology for the organisation and operation of community lifelong learning centres. Priority groups include early school leavers



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Slovenia

3 - Slovenia has reached the national targets set by the Europe 2020 strategy. Early school leaving is the second lowest in the EU and tertiary education attainment is above the EU average but there are very marked regional differences, indicating that socio-economic background has a strong effect on educational achievement.

Slovenia ranks alongside the Scandinavian countries when it comes to overall investment in education (6.4% of GDP)

4 - The figure for early school leaving in Slovenia is the second lowest in the EU (4.4% in 2014). Children born to foreign parents, however perform worse than native Slovenes.

5 - Early childhood education and care (ECEC), data shows that the participation of children with immigrant status in ECEC is low. In the 2011/12 school year, only 6.5% of immigrant children aged 1 to 2 and 12.7% of those aged 3 to 5 participated

6 - Slovenia is continuing to work on the 'Opening up Slovenia' initiative and includes research and development of new concepts, models and methods in open education and setting up a nation-wide test bed for open learning environments.

Slovenia has reached its Europe 2020 national target for tertiary education attainment, with 41% of the population aged 30-34 in 2014 having a tertiary qualification

8 - Participation of upper secondary students in vocational education and training (VET) remains above the EU average (65.9% compared to 48.9% in 2013)

9 - The Government plans to introduce apprenticeships via a new law, which defines the role of the apprentice as an employee and clarifies the role of the social partners. A coordinating body for vocational education has been set up

Spain

3 - Participation in early childhood education and care is almost universal for children aged 3 to 6. Spain has one of the highest tertiary education attainment rates in Europe, and enrolment in vocational education and training increased by 13% between 2013/14 and 2014/15 with a particular expansion of the 'dual model' of work-based training combined with vocational school training.

Despite a steady fall in early school leaving over the past six years, Spain still has the highest rate in



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Europe. There are also great disparities in the performance of school students linked to socioeconomic background. Recent reform of the education and training system is expected to reduce the early school leaving rate still further while improving the level of basic skills of low performers.

Government expenditure on education as a share of GDP stood at 4% in 2013, below the EU average of 5%.

After two years in which expenditure on grants and scholarships fell, financial support to vulnerable families increased by 0.2% in 2014.³ A change in the selection criteria led the number of those eligible to fall by 6.7% between 2013/14 and 2014/15,⁴ although the number of applicants increased due to overall economic circumstances

The early school leaving rate continued to fall, from 23.6 in 2013 to 21.9% in 2014. However, Spain still has the highest rate in Europe, well above the Europe 2020 national target of 15%. The problem is made particularly complex by great disparities in dropout rates between different social, cultural and economic backgrounds

Early school leaving among foreign-born students, at 37.8%, is twice as high as the rate among those born in Spain (18.9%)

4 - Participation by children aged three to six years in early childhood education and care is almost universal and average participation by three-year-olds is 95.8%, far above the EU average of 85.3%.

Spain is introducing a two-year initial vocational training programmes (Formación profesional básica FPB) at lower secondary education level for students aged 15.

5 - Spain has one of the highest rates of lower secondary education teachers reporting having undergone professional development to teach in multicultural and multilingual settings

6 - Spain has a tertiary education attainment rate of 42.3% for 30-34 year-olds, above the EU average of 37.9% but still below the Europe 2020 national target of 44%.

8 - The employment rate for recent upper secondary graduates in Spain has fallen by 50% since 2009 reaching its lowest rate of 40.9% in 2013. In 2014, the employment rate for upper secondary graduates has grown again to 54.7%.

Spain is reforming the VET system by offering young people diplomas offered both for medium-level and high-level VET and increasing the flexibility of programmes



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Appendix Two

EU Assessment of PAL Focus Country Youth Guarantee Plans

For full country assessments see:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1094&langId=en>

PAL Focus Country	European Union assessment
Belgium (2015)	<p>Improve the functioning of the labour market, notably by reducing financial disincentives to work, increasing labour market access for specific target groups, addressing skills shortages and mismatches. Although youth unemployment is falling, it is still well above the EU average and the pre-crisis level. To get more people to work, both preventive and corrective policies are needed</p>
Czech Republic (2014)	<p>Strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of the public employment service, in particular by setting up a performance measurement system, and reach out to non-registered youth and provide individualised services.</p> <p>Youth employment has fallen rapidly in the last two years (12.2% in the third quarter of 2015). However, there are large differences between educational groups. The outreach capacities of public employment services, together with appropriate and well-targeted active labour market policies, will be crucial for increasing the labour market participation of vulnerable groups.</p>
Greece (2015)	<p>A good roll-out of the Youth Guarantee scheme is needed as early as possible to effectively target youth not in employment, education and training (NEETs) by providing good quality offers of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship and facilitating the much needed transition from school to work. However, the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan (YGIP) submitted by Greece only</p>



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	<p>partially complies with the Council Recommendation of 2013. In the present socio-economic context Greece is faced with the need to improve the efficiency and the quality of education at all levels, adapt its higher education sector to the future needs of the Greek economy, and to enhance the provision, the attractiveness and the relevance of initial vocational education and training (IVET, including apprenticeships). The Greek education and training system faces serious problems in terms of its systemic design, its functioning and its capacity to ensure a successful transition of young people to employment, as evidenced by the long period of transition from school to work and resulting in the very high level of youth unemployment. Reforms to upgrade the Greek education system have already produced significant efficiency gains, but more efforts are needed to improve the quality of education.</p>
<p>Hungary (2016)</p>	<p>Hungary is advised to strengthen measures to facilitate the transition between different stages of education and to the labour market.</p> <p>Youth unemployment rate has decreased at a fast pace but the rate of youth not in education, employment or training (NEET) remains high.</p> <p>A profiling system has also been introduced in the public employment service but challenges, such as tackling overly complex and centralised allocation of responsibilities, remain.</p>
<p>Italy (2016)</p>	<p>Italy is advised to tackle youth unemployment, adopt and implement the planned school reform and expand vocationally-oriented tertiary education. The Youth Guarantee, a de facto pilot in the revision of active labour market policies, has improved support for young people, but its full implementation and the delivery of quality offers remain major challenges. While the number of young people registered has increased steadily, the number of offers remains limited, which could be addressed through stronger engagement on the part of employers. Regional differences persist in the delivery.</p>



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<p>Romania (2015)</p>	<p>There is a need to strengthen the provision of labour market measures, in particular for unregistered young people and the long-term unemployed.</p> <p>Youth unemployment decreased to 22% but remains slightly above the EU average. The share of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) is significantly above the EU average.</p> <p>Key measures under the Youth Guarantee have had a more limited impact than expected and cooperation between key partners is not yet sufficiently developed. The new government intends to draw up a national apprenticeship plan for priority sectors and a more integrated approach, with support of EU funds.</p>
<p>Slovenia (2016)</p>	<p>The decrease in both youth and low-skilled unemployment has been particularly pronounced thanks to government policies and favourable macroeconomic conditions, although youth unemployment is still above pre-crisis levels. Following the introduction of the Youth Guarantee in 2013, the outflows from youth unemployment to employment increased. Participants in Youth Guarantee measures received 40% more referrals for job vacancies than those who had not participated, 10 times more meetings with employers and 70% more involvement in training.</p>
<p>Spain (2016)</p>	<p>Spain is advised to take steps to increase the quality and effectiveness of job search assistance and counselling, including as part of tackling youth unemployment.</p> <p>Youth unemployment has decreased, but the rates still remain very high. The National Youth Guarantee System is not yet delivering the expected results and registrations remain low.</p>