

**“FIGHTING DISCRIMINATION AND ANTI-GYPSYISM IN EDUCATION AND  
EMPLOYMENT IN EU” (PAL)**

**JUST/2014/RDIS/AG/DISC/8115**

**COMMUNITY PREVENTION POLICY FOR THE ROMA IN THE EU**

**PAL Project Team, November 2017**



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***Roma is one of the Europe's most vulnerable, disadvantaged groups, and frequently face intolerance, discrimination and social and economic exclusion; many lack access to housing, healthcare, social services, employment and education. Roma is Europe's largest minority, with an estimated population of 10-12 million.***

European countries have a responsibility to address the discrimination and social exclusion of the Roma both on national and EU level. Over the last 10 years, the EU established a **framework for greater protection against racism and racial discrimination for Roma**. Several important legislative developments, such as the [Directive 2000/43/EC](#) (*Racial Equality Directive*), the [Framework decision on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia](#), the [Charter of Fundamental Rights and Lisbon Treaty](#) were put into effect.

The [EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020](#) (2011) called for the adoption of national strategies by every member state to improve the economic and social situation of the Roma. This sets clear targets and engages EU member states, civil society and other stakeholders to address the exclusion experienced by the Roma in everyday life on three levels: personal, cultural and, most importantly, institutional. The last one includes public institutions like primary schools, health centers, social services, municipal and state administration, employment services and the media. The institutional level is the most crucial as it may change the status quo and the effect of these changes will trickle down on other levels as well. The state has the power to change the curricula of kindergartens and primary schools as well as at universities where the next generation of public employees is trained. Awareness rising among the majority population relates to knowledge and education. Professionals must be educated in ethnically sensitive communication skills, attitudes and "ethnic reality". Racism has many faces, and on the personal level it could be unconscious; knowledge is the only way to recognize, understand and eliminate it. The media has a very important role in the creation of public opinion, prejudice and stereotypes. The ethical code of conduct for journalists must prioritize social responsibility and respect over profit. Hate speech in any variation is harmful for the entire community and must be legally prosecuted. Finally, Roma must have the opportunity to represent and speak for themselves in public media. Invisibility and voicelessness are one of the contributing factors to discrimination. Speaking for minority groups is a usual approach which treats them incompetent and immature. In order to foster their political influence it is necessary to establish the institute of Roma councillor in municipal administration in areas where Roma live. Institutional racism is also behind the fact that a lot of Roma is living without legal personal documents, especially Roma migrants and refugees. Many of them are treated simply as Roma and not also like refugees, so their position is different or worse. In Italy 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> generations of Roma refugees live in camps, and they still do not exist in legal terms; they do not have documents and they do not have access to driving license, legal employment, health care, etc.

The key point is the legislation of the states. National and community strategies for Roma are often full of political promises, worn-out clichés without action plans; their sustainability is not guaranteed and as a consequence, they sporadically solve some of the urgent problems without bringing about real change. Efficient monitoring of these strategies is missing and, moreover, their implementation is subject to political will. The approach must be from the top



to bottom and not vice versa. Well established arguments, explanations, thorough knowledge and legislation is essential if we would like to change the attitudes of people.

Important stakeholders such as the *Open Society Foundation/Roma Initiatives Office* pointed out the weakness of the approach when analysing the EU Framework for Roma integration, as: *Misinterpreted Legislation Hinders Data Collection Policy* ([Data collection in the field of ethnicity](#), Lilla Farkas, 2017, ISBN 978-92-79-66084-9);

### An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies:

#### Going Local on Roma Inclusion

To ensure that effective policies are in place in the Member States, the Commission proposes that National Roma integration strategies should be designed or, where they already exist, **adapted to meet EU Roma integration goals**, with targeted actions and sufficient funding (national, EU and other) to deliver them. It proposes solutions to address the current barriers of the efficient use of EU funds and also lays the foundations of a robust monitoring mechanism to ensure real results for Roma.

The national level of legislation is important, where rights for minority are ensured and enforced, if necessary.

The EU level is important because it is a wider framework than the national one, and is a common denominator for all member states: a navigational compass for national strategies and legislation with respect to inclusion. Finally, the EU funds co-financed projects to improve the position of Roma, social inclusion and integration. On EU level, the Roma national platform and other representative bodies of the Roma can have an influence on EU, national, regional and municipal levels.

In addition to the EU and national level, the community level, i.e. where the Roma people live, is also important. When neighbours are tolerant and ready for dialogue that makes the basis for a good community.

Based on the decision made during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Roma summit held in Brussels on 4 April 2014, around 500 representatives of EU institutions, national governments and parliaments, international organizations, mayors, civil society organizations (including Roma organizations) and local and regional authorities were invited to express their views on how on how to proceed with the implementation of the EU Framework for National Roma integration strategies. **Going local on Roma inclusion both in the EU as well as in enlargement countries** was the central topic of the summit.

Further coordination of members and the development of instruments to enforce national and European policies in the field were suggested together with the following topics:

- *Making policies inclusive for all Roma at local level;*
- *Making EU funding available for the local and regional authorities to support Roma integration;*
- *Making Roma integration a local reality in enlargement countries;*



The Commission is also CRITICAL towards the actual implementation of the [National Roma Integration Strategies](#). The coordinated efforts between the European, national and local level actors through creating National Roma platforms will bring all Roma experts together and support their cooperation. EC had established **28 national contact points** for the implementation of national Roma integration strategies consisted mostly of public institutions (ministries and government offices). The **SOLUTION** for effective coordination of the efforts of all the National Roma integration Strategies and Initiatives is the creation of a **European non-governmental Network for Roma, Gypsy and Travelers Support** that *will exchange experience and cooperate for the implementation of the integration goals in the fields of education, employment, health care and housing of Roma people.*

- Currently the partners participating in the project “*Fighting discrimination and Anti-Gypsyism in education and employment in the EU*” (PAL) are planning the official establishment of a European Network ([PAL Network](#)) to promote awareness raising and training priorities and policies based on the best available evidence, and recommendations regarding the cost-effective use of tools, interventions and systems, in order to ensure and monitor progress towards national and European goals. The Network is counting currently **64 members from 22 European Countries and will be officially established in 2018 in Belgium.**

#### **EXPRESSING THE EU AMBITION:**

##### **10 goals for years 2018-2028**

If Roma exclusion is to be overcome, all relevant stakeholders must join forces and fulfill their duties within the scope of their mandates, competences and capacities. In our opinion, the most effective way to achieve the best results is the synergy of Roma projects and important documents such as EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020. There are many problems faced by Roma but it is necessary to focus on specific goals in order to make real impact. The most crucial fields are education and employment. These two fields are equally important. Several rights, especially in enlargement countries are directly linked to employment status. Without employment, integration is not possible. Employment is fundamental for the elimination of dependence on social allowance, and it also enables people to make independent decisions for themselves about their life style, education, housing etc. Some states solve housing problems by providing Roma with social housing for free for a limited period of time (2 years). Very often, however, they are still unemployed after the two-year period is up and are forced to move out of the flat because they do not have sufficient financial resources to cover their rent. If states invest in Roma employment, they can contribute to the improvement of many problems: housing, paying bills and taxes, education, better access to health services, social security.

#### **EDUCATION**

Education is the main area in which the situation of Roma has improved. More Roma children participate in **early childhood education** and care (53% in 2016, up from 47% in 2011) – with most significant improvements in Spain, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania –, and fewer drop out of school (68% in 2016, declining from 87% in 2011). Nevertheless, these rates are still



too high and ***segregation in education remains an issue in some countries***, with more than 60% of Roma children segregated from other children in Slovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria.

Successful aspects that have improved regarding education are *the legislative reform, inclusive structures, increasing participation of Roma, improved multicultural competences, support for Roma students and teachers and reaching out to parents*. Among the remaining challenges are the still **high early-school leaving rates, difficulty of promoting effective transition for Roma to upper secondary and tertiary education, language deficiencies and discrimination**.

According to the results of the research conducted by **PAL project**, Roma children still **face language barriers and ethnic intolerance from teachers and peers**. Responses to the questionnaire reveal that the most important reason why Roma children do not have bigger success in the school system is **POVERTY**.

**High dropout rates** can be accounted for by the *high poverty rate among the Romani families the costs related to education as well as by early marriages and the demotivating effect of the existing curriculum*.

Based on their work and experience with the Romani, the PAL project and network is proposing the following initiatives to be adapted at national and European level:

- **EDUCATIONAL REFORM:** The state should support Roma parents and children with the necessary school equipment (pens, pencils, and notebooks), learning support (after school teachers, Roma assistants and Roma mediators), and providing scholarships for those enrolled in secondary and tertiary education. **CURRICULA** available in the schools **do not conform to the multi-cultural diversity** of Europe, and need to be amended *considering the following: remedial teaching, motivation, specific programs and school support, equal treatment, involvement of cultural ombudsman, dialogue with and support for families, encouragement of artistic talents competences (music, dance and crafts) and introduction of innovative skills evaluation that correspond to the interest of Roma children, based on game-play and self-expression through music or images*. Language barriers could be overcome during the pre-kindergarten and pre-primary school period for Roma and migrant's children when they can learn the language and adapt to the new environment. Roma assistants have proved to be very effective. **Establishment of a national legislation framework and a network of educational institutions that empower Roma** are expected as a positive measure of inclusive education. Additional research has been presented as part of the PAL report **"Equalities and exclusion: The EU anti-discrimination framework and trends in jurisprudence, regarding the human rights of Roma in the areas of education and employment"**.
- **INCLUSIVE EDUCATION:** The 2011 Council Recommendation on policies to **reduce early school-leaving** recommends the inclusion of target measures for the most vulnerable groups, including Roma. As follow up to the Paris Declaration, the Commission stepped up its support for **INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**. One of the priorities is **to foster the education of disadvantaged children and young people, including Roma, by ensuring**



**that education and training systems address their needs.** More detailed information about the issues is presented in the PAL discussion paper **“Roma Are Equal: Alternatives to Poverty, Racism and Exclusion in Education and Employment”**. *Awareness raising campaign, entitled **“It is not too late”** was supported as part of PAL project and engaged more than 10.000 people in EU.*

## **EMPLOYMENT**

Improvements in education have not yet been effectively translated into employment. The **NEET** (a young person who is "Not in Education, Employment, or Training") **rate** among young Roma remains alarmingly high and has actually risen in several member states. The **growing proportion of young Roma who are not in education, employment or training** (63% in 2016, up from 56% in 2011) is an **alarming sign that the transition from education to employment and other areas is not effective.** This rate has actually risen in Spain, Slovakia, Romania, the Czech Republic and Hungary.

The strong **employment gap between Roma women and men** (widest in EL, RO, PT and HU) is not sufficiently addressed. Avenues to **mobilize the private sector and incentivize employers to recruit Roma**, who in several member States represents a significant and growing proportion of the working-age population, should be further explored, e.g. *throughout the explicit targeting of Roma under the youth guarantee programme and social considerations in public procurement.*

One of the effective developments in the area is the *targeting Roma through mainstream employment services, e.g. via individual support or reaching out through Roma fieldworkers/labour officers.* **Among the remaining challenges are: lack of skills and competences, discrimination, awareness raising for employers with respect to the importance of diversity management and anti-discrimination as well as the more efficient targeting Roma women.**

Based on the results of the **PAL research**, the reasons of **high unemployment** rate among Roma are **linked to the discrimination of employers and the low education, competences, and skills of Roma people.** Based on their work with Romani youth, the PAL project and network are proposing the following initiatives to be adapted at national and European level:

- **MANDATORY QUOTA:** The state holds all the cards. Instead of appealing to employers to hire Roma and dealing with their prejudice against Roma, governments could implement mandatory quota of Roma employment determined by the size of the company or organization. The mandatory quota could further specify a quota for Roma women. The mandatory quota for disabled people implemented in Slovenia could be considered a good example to follow.. The states could give employers special benefits through tax relief or other benefits and support. States could launch campaigns like “ethnic friendly employers” to emphasize that diversity works for the advantage of companies. EU states could support brands like “family friendly companies”. Social



responsibility toward inclusion of Roma and migrants should become added value among employers.

- **YOUTH GUARANTEE:** The youth guarantee and youth employment initiatives of 2013 are particularly relevant for Roma. They played a crucial role **in helping young people back into work or education**, but the Commission has acknowledged that more effort must be made to support ‘hard-to-reach’ young people, such as Roma. Key categories of the European pillar of social rights include equal opportunities and access to the labour market, fair working conditions, social protection and inclusion. The active implementation of Youth guarantee for Romani is **highly important. Fighting anti-Gypsyism and stereotypes by targeting majority society is a pre-condition for generating political will and for success of any Roma inclusion intervention.** To promote Roma participation, specific groups that have an active role in driving Roma integration should be empowered further. As part of the PAL project awareness raising campaign **“Employ me”** was launched, engaging about 10.000 Roma and non-Roma youth and exchanging a lot of good practices in the specific initiative.
- **JOB MEDIATION:** EC had launched a mediation program together with the Council of Europe (ROMED 1 and ROMED 2 that promoted inclusion by training intercultural mediators). Based on the report **“The situation of Roma School Mediators and Assistants in Europe”** (CoE, DGIV/EDU/ROM(2006), Calin Rus) most of the countries that have initiated the use of Roma mediators/assistants before 2000, mainly as pilot initiatives, are now **expanding the employment of mediators/assistants** and trying to find a more stable institutional framework, together with a more coherent and officially certified training provision. A slight predominance of the use of “assistants”, more than of “mediators” in the terminology can also be observed. The results also show the need for further progress in the training provision for Roma mediators/assistants and the high opportunity at this moment of **elaborating a European guide of Roma mediator for employment support and on-the-job skills education and the opportunities that are offered by the experiences regarding the use of intercultural mediators with different cultural communities across Europe.** Currently a European Guide about teachers and other school staff is elaborated by CoE. As a result of the PAL project a Training toolkit was piloted was 2017.

#### **EMPOWERING CIVIL SOCIETY:**

##### **A STRONGER ROLE FOR THE EUROPEAN PLATFORM FOR ROMA INCLUSION**

The importance of officially recognizing the *phenomenon of anti-Gypsyism* on all levels, including EU level, as a specific form of racism targeting Roma people, was pointed out as crucial. Based on the PAL initial research, the participants defined anti-Gypsyism as **a root cause of Roma marginalization hampering the efficiency of policies**. It was also raised that the need for fighting against anti-Gypsyism is *an integral part of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies and it is important to address the specific situation of Roma, not only through the socio-economic perspective, but also by promoting a human rights based approach and the principles of equality.*



The crucial role of the **media in the process of fighting the stereotypes and prejudices** about Roma people was highlighted, as well as the importance of empowering Roma as actors in this process. The participants expressed the view that increased attention should be given to Roma youth, since they experience discrimination and are exposed to it from a very early age (already in schools).

The importance of enforcement of antidiscrimination legislation, independence of Equality bodies from political parties and access to justice was also highlighted in the discussion.

Analysis of the PAL survey shows that respondents' organizations and individuals give a big credit to NGO's and expect of them to continue work with vulnerable groups. NGO's with soft and experienced approach have more trust of vulnerable groups than state's institutions. After years of efforts visible progress can be seen, especially in the field of education.

### **MEASURING PROGRESS: PUTTING IN PLACE A ROBUST MONITORING SYSTEM**

In order to **establish COMMUNITY PREVENTION POLICY FOR ROMANI ON NATIONAL AND EU LEVEL** is necessary to implement **POSITIVE DISCRIMINATION**. The position of Romani minority is still so far from the average level of the others EU citizens that needs special treatment, prevention, protection and measures. Our general recommendation is that in their national prevention policy EU states implement positive discrimination in the field of education and employment.

A robust monitoring system of the implementation of interventions, programmes, and the development of the situation of the Roma in the EU should be established. However, the data collection should be prepared carefully as sensitive data will be collected.

Our **CONCLUSION** is that **positive discrimination for Romani** is the necessary part of **Community prevention policy**. At the same time, awareness raising about Roma culture and their situation among the rest of the population is equally necessary, in order to make them accept measures of positive discrimination and to avoid a negative reaction, protest, hate speech and other forms of discrimination.

By our opinion, the most effective way to achieve the best results is the synergy of Roma projects and important documents as **EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020**. There are many problems Roma are facing and it is necessary to stay focused on specific goals.