Annual report 2015

European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network

ERGO Network

ROMA REACT
To find out more about ERGO’s work, visit:
- www.ergonetwork.org, for detailed information on our approach, advocacy and campaigns
- www.RomaReact.org, an online platform where Roma realities are shared
- Facebook: ERGO Network, RomaReact
- Twitter: @ERGO_Network, @RomaReact
Looking back

Another exciting year lies behind us and we would like to look back with you, harvesting our successes, but also look at the challenges that remain. ERGO implemented the second year of its Annual Work Program “Roma included: Roma recognized as equal stakeholders in the policies targeting them”, run under DG Employment and started the new ‘Joint Initiative to Empower Roma Civil Society on the Western Balkans and Turkey’, supported by DG DG Near.

At the beginning of the year we met the new European Commissioner for Justice, Vera Jourová, and discussed that the EU policy agenda needs to extend its focus beyond the thematic areas housing, health, education and employment. It is important to create conditions for empowerment of local communities, so that Roma themselves can input to policy development and monitoring and that Romani organizations can function as “watch dogs” over governments. We advocated for a change of perspective on Roma exclusion and for taking into account the widespread antigypsyism in Europe. Antigypsyism not only underlines the violence against Roma that has fractured local communities in the past years; hidden and covert antigypsyism is also the reason for the failure of many programmes to achieve lasting results.

We welcomed the Resolution on Antigypsyism that has been adopted by the European Parliament in April 2015. The Resolution proposes August 2nd as European Day commemorating the Roma Genocide during World War II and underlines the need to combat antigypsyism. ERGO Network also contributed to the report on “Cohesion Policy and Marginalized Communities” that has been published in December 2015.

ERGO Network continued its Wall Free Europe Campaign to break down walls dividing Roma and non-Roma. These walls are often not build by bricks or concrete, but are rooted deeply in people’s minds. Our partners in the campaign organized a traveling exhibition, a series of meetings on local level and a public debate on the topic. Last but not least, Director Ruus Dijksterhuis visited local communities in Italy and ERGO became engaged in the fight against forced evictions, one of the biggest challenges Roma people face across Europe.

About ERGO
ERGO Network is a young and dynamic organisation established in 2008 by a small group of NGOs who shared the observation that everyday realities of Roma communities were hardly taken into account in policy development and implementation. Founded on a shared philosophy of active citizenship, shared responsibility and grassroots empowerment, ERGO Network members aim to convince policy makers that positive change for Roma is possible when antigypsyism is recognized and tackled as root cause of the inequality they face and when the preconditions are in place for Roma to take part in civic life as equal stakeholders.
Almost 20 organisations with a common perspective on Roma grassroots empowerment and equal citizenship and the aim to combat antigypsyism as a root obstacle for equal participation in society expressed their commitment towards the ERGO Network by formalising their membership in 2016.

ERGO Network offers its members an effective platform for information provision and exchange on relevant political and policy developments. Moreover, the members joined a platform where communication and sharing good practices as well as challenges between members, experts, policy makers, researchers and other stakeholders is facilitated through the every-day work and special events.

Furthermore, ERGO Network facilitates capacity-building of independent ‘watch dog’ organisations, networks and groups to strengthen the impact of their actions within common programmes and initiatives targeted at achieving better policy outcomes for Roma in Europe.

Board members ERGO Network
Lili Makaveeva (1st co-chair)
Adriatik Hasantari (vice-chair)
Karlien de Ruiter (treasurer)
Stanislav Daniel (board member)
Biser Alekov (board member)

Staff
Ruus Dijksterhuis - Executive Director
Gabriela Hrabanova - Policy Coordinator
Viviana Galli - Policy Coordinator
Matthias Verhelst - Research Coordinator
Paolo Ferraresi - Financial Manager
Carmen Tanasie - Young Roma Professional
Atanas Stoyanov - Young Roma Professional

Experts
Gyula Vamosi - Digital Expert
Tamas Dogi - RomaReact website developer
Nicolet Pennekamp - Graphic designer

European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network
The event “Generation of Change” was organised as a part of the Annual Members Meeting in the format of open dialogue, where the audience was encouraged to ask questions to invited speakers. Soraya Post and Péter Niedermüller, S&D Members of the European Parliament, spoke about antigypsyism and school segregation as strong obstacles to equality of opportunities that still need to be challenged.

Young Roma activists Karolina Mirga, from ternYpe International Youth Network, Ivanka Conkova from the Czech Republic and Atanas Stoyanov from raised issues of Roma Genocide Remembrance, fighting antigypsyism and active Roma youth participation in political and administrative life. Stefan De Keersmaecker from the European Commission ensured the participants that the European Union has a strong commitment towards Roma in Europe and that 1.5 billion Euro are specifically allocated for Roma in the 2014-2020 programming period.

Jan Jarab from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights concluded the event with bringing more focus on the effective inclusion of Roma in all spheres of economic and social life.

As part of the Annual Members Meeting, ERGO organised a “Knowledge Fair”, which brought up several showcases proving that there is no reason to postpone actions to break the vicious cycle of Roma exclusion. The event had four succinct and interactive rounds in which topics such as “Occupational opportunities” “Activism for a generation of chance” and “Policy for equal opportunities” were presented. Each of them had several subtopics that engaged the participants in the debate.
Meeting Commissioner Vera Jourová

On 22 January 2015, European Commissioner for Justice, Vera Jourová, received ERGO Network at her cabinet in Brussels to discuss the contours of the Roma agenda for the coming years. The Commissioner articulated a clear commitment to bringing results for Roma integration across the EU and a strong wish to do this in dialogue with civil society and learn from successes and failures in the field. ERGO Network representatives emphasized the critical need for the EU to support watchdog organisations in the member states and to put into practice recommendations that can improve the effectiveness of EU funding. Most importantly, the civil society representatives made clear that the EU agenda should start tackling the widespread antigypsyism in Europe as the underlying cause of policy failure. ERGO Network called for a more independent Roma Civil Society and stronger policy delivery at local level.

European Semester Recommendations

In the end of May 2015, ERGO Network expressed its written concerns about the decrease of attention towards the situation of Roma in the Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs) adopted by the European Commission on 13th May 2015. The number of countries receiving recommendations explicitly mentioning Roma remained the same as in the previous years (5 countries), yet the number of recommendations decreased from 8 in 2013 to only 5 in the latest CSRs. All recommendations in 2015 referred exclusively to early childhood education and increasing participation in (mainstream) education. ERGO Network underlined that those recommendations have been repeated every year and little or no improvements have been made. We brought the attention of the Commission to “integration through employment” as an important element for social integration. ERGO Network called EU member states to invest in ensuring equal access to the labour market and to employment services, as well as the quality and efficiency of employment services in addressing and reaching out to unemployed Roma.
The 9th European Platform for Roma Inclusion took part on March 16-17, 2015 in Brussels. The meeting was considered as very successful by ERGO Network as it brought together National Roma Contact Points, governmental representatives and civil society. Despite the well organised debating space, however, the Roma Platform missed a deeper discussion on the topics of antigypsyism and multi-stakeholder coordination. To address these, ERGO Network sent a letter to Commissioner Jourová demanding for dedicated working groups on multi-stakeholder coordination and antigypsyism and proposing to include these two topics in the agenda of the next Roma Platform Consultation Meeting.

On June 25, 2015, ERGO Network addressed the European Commission in an open letter welcoming the conclusions of the annual EC Communication on Roma Integration and calling for a targeted funding strand for watchdog Roma NGOs. The open letter was sent to Vice President Frans Timmermans and Commissioners Marianne Thyssen and Vera Jourová and asked for ensuring independent Roma watchdog organisations are able to keep their governments accountable, creating progressive funding schemes that allow the testing of innovative, experimental approaches addressing equal citizenship, social inclusion and the fight against discrimination, including measures against widespread racism, violence and harassment such as public awareness campaigns, online activism and debate, monitoring antigypsyism and developing tools and capacity for addressing antigypsyism.
Framework Partnership Agreement with European Commission

Roma included: Roma recognized as equal stakeholders in the policies targeting them

Since 2014 ERGO Network is supported by the PROGRESS/EaSI programme, through a Partnership Framework Agreement concluded with European Commission’s Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. Thanks to this support, ERGO Network was able to implement a rich annual programme which focused on capacity-building of Roma grassroots organisations, advocacy at national and EU level and research.

The work developed around the organisation of National Roma Working Groups in 6 countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and France) gathering (pro)Roma organisations to exchange experiences, implement joint advocacy initiatives and feed into policy processes such as the Country Specific Recommendations and the drafting of operational programmes. The aim is to establish coalitions at national level which join forces to improve the situation of Roma and actively take part in decision-making processes.

At European level our member organisations regularly met with the relevant Desk Officers and Commission officials to learn more about the process related to the European Structural and Investment Funds and to share their experiences from the ground. The establishment of a Roma Civic Society Working Group which gathers representative from national and local Roma NGOs has been a space where ERGO Network could touch base with grassroots Roma organisations and develop its positions within the Open Method of Coordination, the European Semester and the other processes related to Europe 2020.
The European Youth Guarantee is designed to help vulnerable young people who are not in education, training or employment (the so-called NEETs) to find a job or obtain the skills needed on the labour market. The results revealed that Roma youth is not targeted in any of the assessed countries and that employment offices often lack the capacities and will to reach out to Roma.

The report on Cohesion Policy and marginalised communities is an own-initiative report of the German MEP Terry Reintke from the Group of the Greens. It aims to bring the attention of the European Council and the European Commission to a more effective use of the 351.8 billion Euros that the EU plans to invest in the programming period 2014-2020. Among the priorities of the EU Cohesion policy, only 32.4 billion Euros are envisaged to be invested in social inclusion programmes. The report highlighted the fact that local authorities need the necessary instruments to prevent segregation and deal with marginalized communities. The report strongly addresses the problem of Roma communities as the most marginalized communities who are often left out as beneficiaries of EU-funds.
Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) is a promising tool for investing in inclusion of disadvantaged citizens, such as Roma. CLLD promises to be different from other EU funding streams, because its objective is to give ownership to the beneficiaries, with a special focus on marginalised communities. This should be done through capacity building, empowerment, transparency and shared decision-making power. These underlying principles and specific rules make the CLLD approach extremely interesting and an important test ground for local development approaches that are based on an explicit empowerment dimension. Therefore, ERGO Network invested to support and capacitate (pro-)Roma NGOs to become involved in CLLD initiatives to ensure that the CLLD strategies effectively reach out to Roma.

ERGO Network sees much potential for CLLD in both urban and rural contexts for such integrated approaches. To support the successful implementation of CLLD and other integrated approaches such as ITI in EU member states, ERGO has looked at some case studies to learn from experiences with integrated approaches in the past programming period, with a specific focus on the participation of Roma communities in strategy planning and implementation. The findings are included in a synthesis paper with recommendations for managing authorities, local authorities and stakeholders to design effective local strategies able to address Roma exclusion.

Many actors encounter difficulties to plan the implementation of the tool due to its complex nature. However, there is a great number of guiding documents made by the EC, World Bank and others that provide practice-based insights into local investment funds that can be used to programme CLLD (and other integrated approaches) in order to ensure an efficient outreach to Roma.
Antigypsyism

During the Members’ Platform in 2015, ERGO collected experiences from projects and activities that led to the establishment of a working group on antigypsyism, which foresees more in-depth work on this topic on 2016, such as the development of a reference paper on antigypsyism.

Resolution of European Parliament against antigypsyism

April 15, 2015 marked a historical moment. The European Parliament voted with an overwhelming majority to finally adopt a resolution that recognises “the historical fact of the genocide of Roma that took place during World War II”. 2nd August is proposed to be the European Day dedicated to commemorating the victims of the genocide of the Roma. The resolution also strongly underlines the need to combat antigypsyism at every level and by every means.

Cohesion Policy and Marginalized Communities Report

On 14th July, ERGO Network took part in a public hearing in the European Parliament on the ‘Draft Report on Cohesion Policy and Marginalised Communities’, proposed by MEP Terry Reintke. ERGO Network has contributed to the draft and it includes many of our recommendations. ERGO Network called for a more integrated approach in programmes addressing Roma, as well as for more civil society engagement and a shift towards quality monitoring. The report was adopted by the European Parliament in November 2015. It pays special attention to Roma, recognising them as “Europe’s largest ethnic minority and one of the most marginalised communities”. It describes antigypsyism as “type of marginalization leading to systematic exclusion” and calls for combatting Roma’s social exclusion and improving their living conditions.

Equality Body Research

In 2015 ERGO Network conducted research with partners associations in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Spain conducted an analyse on the functioning of the Equality Bodies and their role in the promotion of equality and the fight against discrimination of the Roma community. The research provides an insight into the relation between National Roma Integration Strategies and Equality Bodies; the relation between Equality Bodies and Roma communities (Roma NGOs), the capacity and contribution of Equality Bodies in tackling discrimination faced by Roma and Equality Bodies and Antigypsyism. Finally, the paper provides case studies from the seven countries and policy recommendations.
ROMA REACT

The RomaReact.org page was viewed 623,736 times in 2015, by 76,767 unique users. 36 reports were shared on the map, posted by outsiders.

The RomaReact Facebook page had 2070 likes. The highest organic reach out on Facebook has been in March, when Italian politicians started to verbally attack Roma (3k).

RomaReact Twitter has 1582 followers and is following 1124 twitter accounts. Over its existence it has accumulated 1892 tweets.

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Stop evicting Roma families of Via Idro, Milan!

ERGO Network engaged in the fight of Roma families in Milan to stop evictions from their homes. They are Italian citizens who have lived in Milan for 26 years. They have good relations with the neighbourhood and send their children to school. They do not understand why they have to leave their homes, why their children have to lose their school, their belongings and their friends. After the eviction, Milan municipality offers the families containers at an Emergency Centre. ERGO conducted a study visit in the area to prove that the conditions there are not suitable for people. The situation of the families requires attention of the international community, they deserve better treatment from the municipal government.
**Wall Free Europe Continued**

Since May 2015, our Wall Free Europe campaign was realised by our partners in Czech Republic, Slovakia, Germany and Romania. In September 2015, young Roma professional presented country fiches focusing on antigypsyism in their countries, describing the main barrier for living together of Roma and non-Roma people. The Wall Free Europe exhibition was presented in Hungary, Czech Republic, Romania, France, Slovakia and Germany with information panels translated into all national languages.

In Czech Republic, a debate on school segregation and the Wall free Europe exhibition took place during the FORUM 2000.

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**Remembering Romani Holocaust**

August 2. Romani Holocaust Remembrance Day. Hundreds of thousands dead Roma and Sinti during the War War II. Attacks by extremists continued today. Pig farm in Lety in the Czech Republic is not removed from the Holocaust site. Roma all around Europe face antigypsyism on daily bases, politicians using Roma as scapegoats for their political games and the tension among ordinary people is keep growing. Roma and non-Roma, young and old are organizing commemorations all around Europe.

On 2 August 100 Roma and Sinti survivors and young people hold a first commemoration ceremony on the place of Crematorium V in Auschwitz-Birkenau as a part of Dik i na Bistar 71st Anniversary by Roma Genocide Initiative.
This paragraph provides a summary from ERGO Network’s Annual Report 2015, namely the balance sheet, the profit and loss account and the auditor’s report, which has been issued by Blömer accountants en advisers B.V.

### SUMMARY BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2015 (IN EUROS)

**ASSETS**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>31 December 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FIXED ASSETS</td>
<td>3,237,63</td>
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<tr>
<td>OTHER ASSETS</td>
<td>2,977,42</td>
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<td>RECEIVABLES</td>
<td>131,892,30</td>
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<td>CASH AND SHORT TERM DEPOSITS</td>
<td>115,480,22</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEFERRED CHARGES</td>
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<td>ACCRUED INCOME</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL ASSETS</strong></td>
<td><strong>256,970,94</strong></td>
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**LIABILITIES**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>31 December 2015</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EQUITY (Reserves)</td>
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<td>RESULT 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SHORT TERM LIABILITIES</strong></td>
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<td>CREDITORS</td>
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<td>REMUNERATION AND SOCIAL CHARGES</td>
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<td>DEFERRED INCOME</td>
<td>59,348,60</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL LIABILITIES</strong></td>
<td><strong>256,970,94</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Donations awarded in 2015

ERGO Network has received an operating grant of the European Commission’s EaSi programme and the Open Society Foundations for the project “Roma Included”. ERGO Network became partner of Roma Active Albania in the project “Joint initiative to empower Roma in Western Balkan and Turkey” awarded by DG Near of the European Commission.
### Donors and supporters in 2015

#### European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network

**Auditor’s report**

In accordance with your instructions we have compiled the financial statements included in this report 2015 of Stichting ERGO Network, Utrecht, which comprise the balance sheet as at 31 December 2015, the statement of income and expenses for the year then ended and the notes.

#### Management’s responsibility

The distinctive feature of a compilation engagement is that we compile financial information based on information provided by the board of directors of the entity. The board of directors is responsible for the accuracy and completeness of the information provided and the financial statements based thereon.

#### Accountant’s responsibility

Our responsibility as accountant is to perform our engagement in accordance with Dutch Law, including the professional and ethical requirements applying to accountants. In accordance with the professional standard applicable to compilation engagements, our procedures were limited primarily to gathering, processing, classifying and summarizing financial information. Furthermore, we have evaluated the appropriateness of the accounting policies which are used to compile the financial statements, based on the information provided by management. The nature of our procedures does not enable us to express any assurance on the true and fair view of the financial statements.

#### Confirmation

Based on the information provided to us, we have compiled the financial statements using the accounting policies as included in Guideline RJ 640: Not for profit organisations.

Blömer accountants en advisers B.V.
On its behalf,
Mr. Dres. J.N. Witteveen RA
Krijtwal 1, 3430 AA Nieuwegein
The Netherlands

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### PROFIT AND LOSS 2015

#### INCOME
- Net Sales: 465,850,59
- Other revenues: 2,735,59
- **TOTAL Operating revenues**: 468,586,18
- Exceptional revenues: 176,68
- Financial revenues: 173,14
- **TOTAL INCOME**: 468,936,00

#### EXPENDITURE
- Staff: -219,502,74
- Other operating costs: -245,197,55
- Depreciation: -1,584,93
- **TOTAL OPERATING EXPENDITURE**: -466,285,22
- Exceptional costs: -2,300,49
- Financial charges: -240,85
- **TOTAL EXPENDITURE**: -468,826,56

**PROFIT/LOSS 2015**: 109,44
Joint Initiative

The ‘Joint Initiative to Empower Roma Civil Society on the Western Balkans and Turkey’, financed by DG NEAR, sets up a supporting facilitating structure for (pro) Roma civil society to actively participate in the local and national policy and decision making process. It addresses the generally weak position of civil society organisations (CSOs) aiming at promoting Roma integration or represent the voice of communities, which mostly lack the capacity to make their case effectively and act as a reliable counterpart for public authorities and other stakeholders. Roma Active Albania (RAA) is the lead applicant and coordinator of the project in cooperation with ERGO Network.

Antigypsyism

Antigypsyism is the specific racism towards Roma, Sinti, Travellers and others who are stigmatised as ‘gypsies’ in the public image. Although the term is finding increasing institutional recognition, there is as yet no common understanding of its nature and implications. Antigypsyism is often used in a narrow sense to indicate anti-Roma attitudes or the expression of negative stereotypes in the public sphere or hate speech. However, antigypsyism gives rise to a much wider spectrum of discriminatory expressions and practices, including many implicit or hidden manifestations. Antigypsyism is not only about what is being said, but also about what is being done and what is not being done. To recognize its full impact, a more precise understanding is crucial.

Looking ahead