

Recommendations on Roma Inclusion for the post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework

The structural funds spent by the European Union on Roma inclusion under the 2014-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) have not delivered sufficient tangible results. In the current financial period, EU member states have earmarked around 1.5 billion EUR for the socioeconomic integration of marginalised communities, including Roma.¹ However, Roma remain the largest (10-12 million) and the most excluded minority group among all EU citizens.

According to the Fundamental Rights Agency,² 80% of Roma are at risk of poverty in all EU member states making them one of the most vulnerable groups in Europe. The FRA report highlights that discrimination against Roma in education, employment, health and housing remains very high.

Civil society organisations acknowledge the efforts made by the European Commission to include Roma among the target groups in the 2014-2020 MFF; to deliver country specific recommendations; to include a reference to Roma in the European structural and investment funds (ESIFs) regulation; and to dedicate specific attention to Roma integration as a priority for funding. However, major shortcomings remain to be addressed if the European Commission wants to achieve concrete results from EU funding on Roma inclusion.

Civil society is concerned that there may even be a regression on the accomplishments on Roma inclusion achieved by the European Commission and member states to date.

It is essential that the Commission maintains its commitment to Roma inclusion by at least **making explicit reference to Roma in the post-2020 MFF proposal**. By doing so, the Commission will secure an opportunity for its directorates and services as well as for the member states to prioritise targeted funding for Roma in future policies and relevant calls for applications and projects.

This paper outlines the views of national and international Roma and pro-Roma organisations and suggests key recommendations on Roma issues for the European Commission proposal on the post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework.

Recommendations

On the Human Rights perspective:

- Include in the post-2020 MFF a special focus on minorities and vulnerable groups such as Roma. In order to promote equity, EU funding policies should guarantee the provision of universal services (health, social, educational services, employment) to everyone, while prioritising the urgent needs of the most disadvantaged.
- Antigypsyism needs to be put at the core of financial programming for Roma, as it is a root cause of Roma exclusion. The post-2020 MFF should both allocate targeted funding to counter antigypsyism, and mainstream funds to counter this issue in all investments in thematic/sector areas of the Roma Strategies, with clear indicators allowing for the monitoring of their effectiveness.

¹ https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR16_14/SR_ROMA_EN.pdf

² <http://fra.europa.eu/en/press-release/2016/80-roma-are-risk-poverty-new-survey-finds>

On cohesion policy and the European added value:

- The new cohesion policy should facilitate synergies between those overarching EU policies that are relevant on Roma issues and the post-2020 EU Roma framework; i.e. the next MFF should be closely linked to the policy priorities of the post-2020 EU Roma Framework.
- The new cohesion policy should aim at reducing disparities among regions by also focusing on poor (disadvantaged) Roma neighbourhoods through investments in infrastructure and integrated measures. A special emphasis should be put on ensuring that EU funds are not used to maintain and reinforce the segregation of Roma, taking into account the diversity and complexity of Roma challenges. EU-funded investments should not boost new segregation practices, but focus on quality housing and improved living conditions for the Roma.
- Maintain poverty reduction, Roma inclusion and access to health as thematic priorities under the ESIFs, and ensure that EU funds aiming at poverty reduction and social inclusion under the next MFF are linked to national poverty reduction strategies and action plans.
- The post-2020 ESF regulation should maintain non-discrimination and Roma inclusion as specific objectives for investment.
- Require that EU member states add Roma inclusion as one of their priorities in the respective National Reform Programmes, ensuring that Country Specific Recommendations are reflected in the National Roma Integration Strategies and include clear targets, adequate implementation timeframes and sufficient budget allocation.
- Roma integration should be included as an indicator in the social scoreboard of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR), as this will ensure that the EU budget is spent more efficiently on Roma and on programmes with proven EU added value. This will allow for a more consistent long-term follow-up on the implementation of Roma policies.

On synergies and simplification / partnership and multi-level governance:

- Keep the partnership principle and code of conduct and ensure its implementation by including Roma CSOs as full partners in all stages of the preparation, e.g. the Partnership Agreements (PAs) and Operational Programmes (OP). Effective community participation should be an integral requirement across programmes addressing the issues of vulnerable communities, including Roma. The active involvement of beneficiary communities should also become part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation frameworks for these programmes.
- Prioritise operational and action grants to Roma and pro-Roma CSOs as these are critical for supporting and developing the capacities of independent civil society. In the distribution of funds, the EU should protect CSOs from undue government interference.
- National governments should be requested by the EU to create special grant schemes that provide small and flexible funds aimed at increasing the capacities of local authorities to access EU funding for community projects. Such schemes need to have reduced bureaucratic and administrative requirements, and combine funding with technical assistance.
- The post-2020 MFF should include targeted measures for Roma entrepreneurs under the umbrella of the new ESIFs. The post-2020 Entrepreneurship Action Plan should mention Roma as a specific target category, and secure civil society involvement through the process.

European and national organisations that support this position:

1. Romano Centro, Austria
2. European Network Against Racism, Belgium
3. European Public Health Alliance, Belgium
4. European Roma Grassroots Organizations, Belgium
5. Open Society European Policy Institute, Belgium
6. Association LARGO, Bulgaria
7. Barvalipe, Bulgaria
8. Boychinovtsi Initiative Group/RSC, Bulgaria
9. C.E.G.A., Bulgaria
10. Coalition of civic organizations Stolipinovo, Bulgaria
11. Equal Opportunities Association, Bulgaria
12. Fondation Roma Plovdiv, Bulgaria
13. Foundation Mladenovo, Bulgaria
14. Future Rakitovo Foundation, Bulgaria
15. Initiative Group/RSC, Montana- Bulgaria
16. Initiative Group/RSC, Rakovski, Bulgaria
17. Initiative Group/RSC, Sliven, Bulgaria
18. Initiative Group/RSC, Vidin, Bulgaria
19. Integro Association, Bulgaria
20. Lider Association, Bulgaria
21. National Network of Health Mediators, Bulgaria
22. No Box Bulgaria, Bulgaria
23. Northwest Development Association, Bulgaria
24. Pro European Network, Bulgaria
25. Radio Stolipinovo, Bulgaria
26. Regional Network of Health Mediators Montana, Bulgaria
27. Roma- Lom Foundation- Liubomir Dimitrov, Bulgaria
28. Roma Standing Conference, Bulgaria
29. Roma World 21st Century, Bulgaria
30. Society of Roma women, Bulgaria
31. Youth Club Stolipinovo, Bulgaria
32. Slovo 21, Czech Republic
33. Awen Amenca, Czech Republic
34. Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, Germany
35. Autonomia, Hungary
36. European Roma and Travelers Forum, France
37. La Voix des Roms, France
38. Alianta Pentru Unitatea romilor Braila, Romania
39. Alianța pentru Unitatea Romilor, Romania
40. Asociația Alesilor Locali Romi, Romania
41. Asociația Alternative Sociale Millenium, Romania
42. Asociația Argintarilor din Romania
43. Asociația Cultura și Tradiție Rom Gal, Romania
44. Asociația Inițiativa Locală Roman, Romania
45. Asociația Meșteșugarilor și Comercianților Tradiționali Romi, Romania
46. Asociația pentru Dezvoltare Comunitară Braila, Romania
47. Asociația pentru Gandire Reflexivă și Evoluție Strategică, Romania
48. Asociația Pro Roma, Romania
49. Centrul pentru Integrare și Dezvoltare Socială, Romania
50. CRONO, Romania

51. Grow Innovative Advisory, Romania
52. Musicantia Dublin, Romania
53. Nevo Parudimos, Romania
54. New Perspective, Romania
55. RomaJust Roma Lawyers, Romania
56. Roma Entrepreneurship Development Initiative, Romania
57. UCYRR, Romania
58. Uniunea Națională a Comunităților de Romi, Romania
59. Roma Advocacy and Research Center, Slovakia
60. Early Childhood Program, Open Society Foundations, United Kingdom