

Toolkit: How to engage more effectively with ESF+ and ERDF

ERGO Network



Toolkit for Roma and pro-Roma civil society

ERGO Network fights against antigypsyism, advocates for better policies for Roma in Europe, creates strong networks, and empowers Roma activists.



Introduction

We are at the crossroads where the Roma Policy and the Structural Funds for the programming period 2021-2028 are being shaped. It is very important to ensure equal participation of the Roma in the relevant processes.

The EU Framework has put Roma inclusion on the agenda at European and national level, enabling instruments and structures to implement the National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) resulting from it, notably the National Roma Contact Points (NRCs). In addition, European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds), mainly the European Social Fund (ESF+) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), but also the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) are key financial and political instruments to promote Roma inclusion and to develop the NRIS, representing an unprecedented opportunity to foster the alignment between the financial and the policy side, and encouraging the connection between the bodies in charge of the Roma policies (NRCs) and of the financial resources (ESI Funds Managing Authorities).

National Roma Contact Points and their offices are responsible for delivering updated Roma National Integration Strategies. Managing Authorities are working hard in their dedicated ministerial offices to specify the directions for various programmes. The Management Committees are equally engaged in the process. Are the Roma part of these processes? Who is ensuring our voice is being heard? How can EU Funds deliver better on Roma rights and inclusion?

Aim of this Toolkit

The purpose of the Toolkit is to support ERGO Network national members and other civil society organisations in ensuring specific EU funding for Roma inclusion during the 2021-2027 financial programming period. If you are not familiar with the main entities and processes of EU funding, you may wish to consult a brief Explainer in the [Annex](#).

Specifically, the Toolkit aims to provide concrete guidance to national civil society organisations to:

- influence Managing Authorities in the process of drafting the Operational Programmes (OPs), to ensure that these will **deliver, in particular, on the poverty reduction target and the Roma investment priority**, as well as that they respect the **Partnership Principle** (including ESF, ERDF, FEAD).
- influence the content and / or report to the European Commission's ESF and ERDF Desk Officers, regarding **obstacles and failures of your Managing Authorities to implement EU provisions on social inclusion and partnership**, evaluating compliance at all stages of the Structural Funds process (from the design to the evaluation of Programmes).
- explore further possibilities to **condition funding on the fight against discrimination and antigypsyism**, and to create **mutually reinforcing synergies between Roma integration goals and of key EU and international policy efforts**, such as the European Semester, the Green New Deal, the European Pillar of Social Rights, and the UN 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.

Major milestones

- **Partnership Agreements (PAs)** should officially be submitted to the European Commission during this year, but informal consultation between Member States and the European Commission will take place before that.
- **Programmes (Ps)** are being drafted by Managing Authorities, at national and regional level. They will be submitted together with PAs during the year. After Member States submit their Ps, the European Commission has 3 months to respond. All the Ps should be adopted by the Commission by end of January 2021 at the latest.
- **National Roma Integration Strategies** are being drafted simultaneously by the National Roma Contact Points (NRCs) and relevant Ministries. The European Commission guidelines for National Strategies will be released only in the third quarter of 2020.

This timeframe allows national organisations to influence the drafting of the Ps

- The enabling condition 'National Roma Integration Strategy' related to ESF+ objective 4.3.2 (*Promoting socio-economic integration of marginalised communities such as the Roma*) is a crucial element that could serve to promote structural changes for Roma inclusion, and could be extended to other Funds.
- Roma and pro-Roma CSOs should aim to ensure that Partnership Agreements include as much as possible Roma as an enabling condition, especially in the case of ESF.
- The Programmes (at national and regional level) that could be of relevance for Roma inclusion should be fully linked with the objectives of the National Strategies.

How to prepare your input?

Key cross-cutting demands for Roma rights

- Each Programme will contain investment priorities: push to have **“Roma inclusion” as specific investment priority**, supported by dedicated measures for implementation.
- In the Performance Framework, **include a Roma-specific indicator**, to measure the impact of the proposed interventions on Roma rights and inclusion.
- Enabling conditions (previously called ex-ante conditionalities) must foresee: **the fight against discrimination** (based on the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the EU); the **Partnership Principle** (based on the Code of Conduct); the **fight against segregation** (documentation currently being prepared by the Commission).
- Ensuring an **integrated approach** between Roma strategies and other equality and inclusion objectives
- Ask to be a **member of the Monitoring Committee**, to closely supervise the implementation of the Funds.

Key background documents and research

- **Structural Funds Regulations:** [Common Provisions Regulation](#), ESF+, ERDF, and others (still to be officially approved, but the content is currently being used as if final).
- **European Commission** [Communication on the EU Roma Framework](#) and its [annual reports](#), including the recommendations from the EC to your Member States, highlighting areas that need improvements.
- Your [National Roma Integration Strategy](#), or the draft documents that are now being revised under the National Roma Contact Point in your country.
- [Roma Civil Monitor](#) – looking specifically at integrating the recommendations for your country.

How to influence the content of the Programmes?

Once you have prepared your input according to the points listed above, you can begin advocating your position.

Gather information on the process

- ✓ In a first stage, it is crucial to be **updated about the work of the National Roma Contact Point (NRCPs)**. Find out the **state of play of the drafting of the post-2020 Roma Strategy**, what measures are in place, and where are the NRCPs in their negotiations towards the new financial programming period. Click [here](#) and select your country.
- ✓ Equally, it is very important to establish and nurture **direct contact with your Managing Authorities**. Find the contact information for your country's Managing Authority [here](#) (choose 2021-2027 and the name of your country)/ then hit *Search*). Through them, **find out the state of play of your Ps** and try to get involved with any stakeholder consultation or other input opportunity for civil society.

Build support and alliances

- ✓ **Reach out to other stakeholders** – other social, cultural, civic engagement NGOs, national agencies or trade-unions, other actors, including Members of Parliament and form a coalition of allies.
- ✓ Explore the possibility of **conducting joint advocacy**, and consider making joint submissions, in order to strengthen your proposals and to ensure wider support from stakeholders.
- ✓ **Organise common meetings**, including online if necessary, to exchange intelligence and align your positions.

Conduct direct lobbying and advocacy for your position

- ✓ **Get support from the National Roma Contact Point** for your position, ensuring that your needs are reflected also in their negotiations with relevant Ministries. Your submission should be in line with the renewed Roma National Strategy.
- ✓ **Try to get a meeting with your Managing Authority to present your submission** and come to the meeting with clear requests, based on your preparation above.
- ✓ **Attend stakeholder events**, insofar as they are organised in your country, in the framework of the informal consultations that Member States should be organising, and use them to promote your position.
- ✓ **Keep in touch with the desk officers** responsible for your country working within the European Commission's DG Employment, DG Regio, and DG Agri, by sending them all your submissions and demands and informing them about the stakeholder process in your country. Get in touch with the ERGO Secretariat for contact details.
- ✓ **Get publicity / raise awareness** of your positions within the wider public, including by using the traditional press, as well as social media, your own website, or external opportunities.

Keep the ERGO Network Secretariat informed on the process and outcomes of your actions

both in what concerns influencing as well as monitoring of your Programmes and / or Partnership Agreements. The Secretariat will also promote your position within European policy-making settings, in our lobbying and advocacy.

Your main contact point is ERGO Network Director **Jamen Gabriela Hrabáňová**: g.hrabanova@ergonetwork.org

Who is ERGO Network

The European Roma Grassroots Organisations (ERGO) Network brings together almost 30 Roma and pro Roma grassroots organisations from all over Europe. Founded on a shared philosophy of active citizenship and grassroots empowerment, ERGO Network aims to convince policy makers that positive change for Roma is possible when antigypsyism is recognized and tackled as root cause of social exclusion and when the preconditions are in place for Roma to take part in civic life as equal stakeholders.

ERGO Network bridges the day-to-day realities of Roma people in Europe with European decision-making. We bring evidence from the ground to support and monitor European policy-making, build the capacity of local NGOs and young Roma activists to advocate for Roma rights and serve as a platform for mutual learning and sharing in order to build a strong Roma civil society. We work on social issues of Roma communities, such as employment, education and housing, but above all we advocate for the recognition of antigypsyism as the root cause of social exclusion.

It is our aim to convince decision-makers to tackle antigypsyism upfront and to make combatting antigypsyism the basis of the next Roma Post 2020 Initiatives. Only by engaging fully in equal partnership with Roma and by implementing effective measures against antigypsyism can policies for Roma inclusion be effective on the ground.

