

EU instruments and policies for Roma inclusion

Why has the Commission prepared this report?

The December 2007 European Council acknowledged for the first time ever that the Roma face very specific situation across the EU. In their conclusions, EU leaders called upon Member States and the Union to use all means to improve their inclusion.

This report is the Commission's response. It examines the main instruments and policies available and outlines how lessons learned can be used to make the existing instruments and policies more effective.

How many Roma are living in the EU?

There is no precise figure available, as the number of Roma in the European Union is subject to much speculation and the data most often quoted is based on estimates. This reflects the sensitivity of collecting data on ethnic populations in a number of Member States.

However, it is clear that the Roma population numbers millions of people and that the number of Roma in the European Union has increased considerably with the accession of the 12 new Member States.

What do we mean by Roma?

For the purpose of this report, the term "Roma" is used as an umbrella term including groups of people who share more or less similar cultural characteristics and a history of persistent marginalisation in European societies, such as the Roma, Sinti, Travellers, Ashkali, and Kalé etc.

The European Commission is aware of the recurrent debate regarding the use of the term Roma, and it has no intention to "assimilate" the members of these other groups to the Roma themselves in cultural terms. Nonetheless, it considers the use of "Roma" as an umbrella term practical and justifiable within the context of a policy document which is dealing above all with issues of social exclusion and discrimination, not with specific issues of cultural identity.

What is the EU doing to improve the situation of Roma?

The EU approach is based on four pillars: Rights, policies, financial support and awareness-raising.

- Roma are fully covered by **EU legislation which prohibits discrimination on grounds of ethnic origin** in employment, social protection and education as well as access to goods and services, including housing.
- The coordination of Member States' policies on **education, employment and social inclusion** provides for a framework for mutual learning and the identification of good practice.

- The **European Social Fund** is a powerful tool to improve the employability of Roma and can be mobilised for a broad range of actions, such as tailor-made vocational training. During the last programming period 2000-2006, some EUR 275 million were devoted to projects specifically targeted at Roma. During the same time approx. EUR 1 billion was spent on measures targeted at vulnerable groups, including the Roma.
- There is a persistent need for **information and campaigning** in order to highlight the right to live a life free of discrimination, but also to underline the richness which Roma contribute to European civilisation.

The Commission organises an internship scheme for young Roma graduates in partnership with the Open Society Institute. 10 young Roma join the Commission for five months to work as trainees.

What more could be done?

The most important conclusions of the report are that:

- instruments and policies are appropriate, but there is an **implementation gap** in the Member States;
- the use of **Structural Funds** and remaining pre-accession instruments is crucial for overcoming exclusion;
- the **policy cooperation mechanisms** at EU and Member State levels are suitable for targeted analysis and action;
- there is a need for a supporting context around the rights-based approach; **Equality bodies** and the cooperation/capacity building of **civil society** play an important role in this respect;
- in the framework of existing instruments and policies there is considerable room for manoeuvre to **make them more effective** by learning lessons from successful projects and good practices.

Which good practices can we learn from?

The Staff report highlights successful initiatives, many of which were financially supported by the European Structural Funds. These include programmes and projects in education and training, awareness-raising for rights and obligations in the context of non-discrimination, access to health services, urban development and improvement of infrastructure.

The best results have been achieved with integrated programmes focusing on the whole complex range of problems and not just one of them. Moreover, the most successful programmes were targeted at Roma, but did not exclude members of other ethnic minorities or the majority who are in the same situation. A concrete example comes from Spain, where the ACCEDER programme has concluded over 20,000 contracts with Roma for tailor-made vocational training and labour market integration.

What are the next steps?

Today's Communication and Staff Working Document will feed into a European Roma Summit in Brussels on 16 September 2008 which will bring together representatives of EU institutions, Member States and civil society.

The results of this event as well as other important inputs during the next months (e.g. forthcoming reports from the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Parliament) will help the Commission to assess how to move forward in 2009.

[IP/08/1072](#): Roma exclusion requires joint response, says EC report

[IP/08/1070](#): Commission proposes Renewed Social Agenda to empower and help people in 21st century Europe