

Proposal for a European Network on Roma Community and Social Inclusion¹ - Second Draft -

1. Rational and Objectives:

Rational:

Nowadays the **Roma population** is the most numerous ethnic minority of the European Union (EU) with nearly 12 million citizens. These demographics, together with reasons of social cohesion, justify the growing concern for and interest in Europe's Roma community. And the fact is that the living standards of a large proportion of this ethnic minority are still characterised by extreme poverty, social exclusion and general rejection by majority societies.

In light of the fact that we are referring to a basically European community present throughout practically all member countries, the EU is the ideal framework within which to implement social cohesion policies and it is within this scope that a concerted effort has been made to promote the social inclusion of the Roma population in terms of political initiatives, regulatory development and the allocation of resources.

The **recent EU enlargements** have given strong backing to initiatives designed to integrate the Roma community since these new Member States concentrates most of the Europe's Roma population². Following the recent incorporation of Romania and Bulgaria, and now that the other countries with the largest Roma population are established EU members, it is time to move forward jointly with initiatives, measures and projects which take advantage of the experience gained to date and set the stage for a shared strategy which will allow us to make a quantum leap in terms of the social inclusion of Europe's Roma population.

Structural Funds, together with other European Funds, are the main financial instrument at the disposal of Member States to implement policies designed to enhance social cohesion within the European Union and, more specifically, that is the role assigned to the European Social Fund (ESF) which, in accordance with Article 2(1) of Regulation 1081/2006, "*shall contribute to the priorities of the Community as regards strengthening economic and social cohesion by improving employment and job opportunities*" and in so doing shall support "*Member States' policies (...) aiming to promote social inclusion, including the access of disadvantaged people to employment (...)*".

All of this would seem to indicate that Roma should be able to take advantage of the funds and actions targeting better access to employment which are implemented within the framework of the ESF. Nevertheless, experience has proven that this is not the case. There are measures and policies which do not filter down to certain citizens and there are social groups which are systematically excluded from certain policies. This is the case of Roma who are traditionally excluded from policies *combating social exclusion*.

¹ Instead of Exclusion

² Until just recently Spain, with approximately 650,000 Roma citizens, was the Member State (EU-15) with the largest Roma population.

It is therefore important to guarantee access of certain groups to the actions carried out within the framework of the Structural Funds and other European Funds; groups which, due to their clearly disadvantaged situation, would not otherwise be able to benefit from them. The focus of effort and resources on the most vulnerable groups allows for the correction of long-standing inequalities and disadvantages.

Formattato: Non Evidenziato

The General Regulations, in establishing the principles applicable to assistance, clearly specify the equality between men and women and **non-discrimination** in Article 16 (*"The Member States and the Commission shall take all suitable measures to prevent any form of discrimination based on sex, race or ethnic origin, religion or religious conviction, disability, age or sexual orientation at the different stages of execution of the Funds and especially in terms of access to them"*).

The ESF Regulation goes further in this connection stating that, within its scope of application (Article 3[1][c]), it shall prioritise *"reinforcing the social inclusion of disadvantaged people with a view to their sustainable integration in employment and combating all forms of discrimination in the labour market, in particular by promoting: pathways to integration and re-entry into employment for disadvantaged people, such as people experiencing social exclusion, early school leavers, minorities (...)"*.

In this connection, the experience acquired by Spain in implementing actions specifically targeting the Roma community through the **Operational Programme to Combat Discrimination** (ESF 2000-2006) can be of great added value to other Member States which find themselves in similar situations.

The main objective of the **ACCEDER Programme** run by the *Fundación Secretariado Gitano* (FSG) is the social inclusion of the Roma population by means of labour market integration. It is a methodology based on individualised pathways to employment including guidance, training and prospecting actions and intermediation in the labour market, combined with proactive policies for the inclusion of the Roma community (training of professionals, awareness-raising actions, technical assistance rendered to administrations and social organisations, development of studies and research, etc.) which has enabled the development of a programme model over the middle term with good quantitative and qualitative results. The programme's impact on the Roma population has been very positively assessed by the Spanish administration and by other Member States and the European Commission.

Based on this experience, we believe it to be very beneficial for all Member States with a significant Roma community to promote a **transnational network** which includes entities with experience and competences in this area. Through its initiatives, the European Commission has always fostered transnationality, partnerships, networking, the transfer and exchange of experiences and best practices, etc. This is what the 2007-2013 new generation of Structural Funds, through the objective of Territorial Cooperation, enables us to develop while also improving the social inclusion of the Roma minority.

Formattato: Non Evidenziato

In **Regulation (EC) No 1081/2006 of 5 July 2006** it is affirmed that *"the ESF shall also support transnational and interregional actions in particular through the sharing of information, experiences, results and good practices, and through developing complementary approaches and coordinated or joint action"*.

Formattato: Tipo di carattere: Corsivo

Main objectives:

To establish a transnational network in order to develop a common approach under the Structural Funds aiming at improving the effectiveness of social policies regarding Roma population in the European Union.

Formattato: Tipo di carattere: Grassetto

Eliminato: Community

Formattato: Tipo di carattere: Grassetto, Non Evidenziato

Eliminato:

Formattato: Tipo di carattere: Grassetto

This network will have the following objectives:

- To share innovative ideas, practices and strategies to improve the social inclusion and employment of Roma community, issued from ESF or other Structural Funds activities and projects.
- To learn from experiences and know-how among a wide range of actors, such as public authorities, social actors and NGO's. In this context the European Commission is pushing forward all sorts of initiatives on transnational cooperation coming out from the Member States.
- To disseminate and mainstream to relevant policies good practices working for the social inclusion, employment and education of Roma population, particularly to mainstream the main conclusions and results of the network to the relevant stakeholders.

Eliminato: Structural

Formattato: Non Evidenziato

Formattato: Non Evidenziato

2. Work Programme:

2.1 Transnational Activities

The transnational network will choose the most relevant topics or areas of interest related to the social inclusion and employment of Roma population. For example, empowerment of the Roma community, gender equality, education, fight against stereotypes, mass media, and so on. The work programme will be developed from 2007 to 2013. From 2008 onwards, activities could be developed related to a particular topic/hot issue or area of interest previously decided by the network. Thus, the proposed activities stated below will be related to a particular theme. The different transnational activities are related to the **3 following main objectives.**

1. **To share innovative ideas, practices and strategies to improve the social inclusion and employment of Roma community, issued from ESF or other Structural Funds activities and projects.**

Eliminato:

Formattato: Non Evidenziato

Activities such as:

- Creation of a team of experts on employment and Roma community.
- Working meetings to draft documents, guides and brochures with good ideas and methodologies issued from the Structural Funds projects in each country involved in the network.
- Web site with products, partners, and projects related to the Roma community and the activities of the network.
- Thematic Working Groups tackling transversal issues such as: gender equality, preventive actions in the field of education, equal treatment, awareness-raising, housing, access to new technologies, etc.

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2. **To learn from experiences and know-how among a wide range of actors, such as public authorities, social actors and NGO's.** In this context the European Commission is pushing forward all sorts of initiatives on transnational cooperation coming out from the Member States.

Activities such as:

- Assessment on equal opportunities between men and women within the projects developed with the Roma community.
- Visits "on the ground" to projects and experiences developed in different countries.
- Thematic studies/research on different key aspects.
- Exchanges of experts among the countries involved in the network (study visits, stages, etc).

3. **To disseminate and mainstream to relevant policies good practices useful for the social inclusion and employment of Roma population**, particularly to mainstream the main conclusions and results of the network to the relevant stakeholders.

Activities such as:

- Seminars for dissemination and mainstreaming of good practices concerning social inclusion and employment of Roma community.

2.2 Common Products/deliverables

As a result of the activities of the network described above (see previous point: "Transnational Activities"), good ideas, thematic studies, campaigns, methodologies, strategies, recommendations, etc., should be delivered as products, for example:

- Guides
- CD ROMs
- DVDs
- Books
- Brochures
- Posters
- Website with the products on line
- Cross country analysis/research
- Policy briefings on lessons learned

The objective of these products is to provide instruments to mainstream the recommendations of the network into national policies concerning Roma population. They can be products aimed for the general public and/or for specific public such as policy makers, officials from administrations, NGOs.

2.3 Time schedule for milestones/ events

| The network will work during all the Structural Funds Programming period (2007-2013).

Formattato: Non Evidenziato

The network will organise at least 1 seminar every year.

The Steering Committee will meet periodically according to the needs of the network (3-4 meetings/year).

The agenda of other activities (visits "on the ground", exchange of experts, etc.) will be decided by the members of the network involved in the activity.

2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Thematic seminars	Thematic seminars	Thematic seminars	Thematic seminars	Thematic seminars	Closing seminar
¾ meetings of steering committee	3/4 meetings of steering committee	3/4 meetings of steering committee	3/4 meetings of steering committee	3/4 meetings of steering committee	3/4 meetings of steering committee
Visits, exchanges, etc...	Visits, exchanges, etc...	Visits, exchanges, etc...	Visits, exchanges, etc...	Visits, exchanges, etc...	Visits, exchanges, etc...

3. Organisational and Decision Making Arrangements:³

Implementation Provisions

Formattati: Elenchi puntati e numerati

The working method for the network should be flexible enough to meet the needs and interests of the participants involved. The commitment of each participant to the network should be decided in accordance to the particular interest a certain topic has to solve the problems that Roma population encounters in each country. In this sense, a "tailored made" participation could be an opportunity, to organise, for instance, small working groups (2 or 3 countries) which will tackle specific topics of major interests for their Roma community, e.g. housing, capacity building, health services, etc.

A letter of commitment will be signed by each Member State.

Membership: contribution and responsibility of each member

Formattati: Elenchi puntati e numerati

A Steering Committee will be responsible for the management of the network. This committee will be responsible for decisions on all managerial issues, including setting up, financial, planning and institutional matters. The Committee membership will include one representative of each Managing Authority and the Administrative and Communication Coordinator (Secretariat).

Formattato: Non Evidenziato

Those Member States that due to internal organization have their Structural Funds managed by more than one entity will be able to participate with more than one representative per country. In these cases and for decision making balance, the whole delegations will be considered as a unity.

Formattato: Non Evidenziato

Each meeting of the Steering Committee will be followed by a report, to include:

- assessment of the work;
- milestones and Deliverables achieved;
- financial provisions;
- potential delays and the actions to correct them;
- actions planned for the next step.

4

Role and tasks of the Secretariat

Formattati: Elenchi puntati e numerati

The Secretariat⁵ will also hold the following responsibilities:

- Organisation of the meetings;
- Gathering and diffusion of all reports;
- Communication among members of the network and with the European Commission;
- Drafting of conclusions.
- Initiatives proposals to the Steering Committee

The Secretariat will have the role of the Administrative and Communication tasks mentioned above.

The responsible for the Secretariat will be the Fundación Secretariado Gitano.

³ Financial provisions have been moved to the last page.

⁴ Responsibilities of the Secretariat have been moved to the following point

⁵ Instead of Administrative and Communication Coordinator

The mandate of Secretariat will finish when the work of the network concludes.

4.4 Arrangements for decision-making

Political and institutional decisions will be made on a consensus or majority basis by the members of the Steering Committee of the network, and will be mandated to take decisions on behalf of their respective national authorities.

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4.5 Participation of other institutions

The network will be open to the collaboration of other relevant entities or authorities which are not entitled as members of the network but could add value and enrich the works of the network due to their expertise and experience in the field of inclusion of the Roma population.

Therefore there will be different levels of participation:

Formattato: Colore carattere: Automatico

- a) Steering Committee: Representatives from Structural Funds Member States Managing Authorities and the Administrative and Communication Coordinator.
- b) Other institutions: as for example: intermediate bodies, project promoters, Roma Agencies, Plenipotentiaries, Expert Groups as the Equal group for Roma. Their participation should be decided by each ESF Member State Managing Authorities and agreed by the Steering Committee.

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4.6 Working language(s)

The working language will be English. Host countries' languages will also be used where seminars take place as well as Romani language when requested.

Formattato: Colore carattere: Automatico

5. Monitoring and Assessment⁶ Procedures

Eliminato: Assesment

The Steering Group can agree on basic monitoring procedures, and monitoring of the different activities could be delivered in each case by the host country. For example, monitoring of thematic seminars and exchange visits can share common templates of evaluation forms, and the results of the evaluation of these activities should improve the organization and the contents of the following one.

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Formattato: Colore carattere: Blu

It is proposed that the members of the Steering Group also fill in an evaluation or monitoring form once a year to express their views on the development of the network and to propose improvements.

An external evaluation of the network could also be envisaged.

6. Financial provisions:

Formattato: Inglese (Regno Unito)

The following estimated figures are related to the budget that the Spanish ESF Unit (Technical Assistance Operational Programme) will allocate to the transnational network.

Formattati: Elenchi puntati e numerati

This budget includes the costs foreseen for the Secretariat.

Formattato: Inglese (Regno Unito)

Eliminato: Transnational

The budgets from other network-participants should be added to this amount, as each member shall cover its own expenses and should determinate their own funding for the initiative.

Formattato: Colore carattere: Automatico

Formattato: Colore carattere: Automatico

⁶ Instead of Evaluation

	<u>Per year</u>	<u>Total</u>	(2008-2013)
Staff costs:	40,000 €	240,000 €	
Management			
Administration			
Secretariat			
Accounting			
Travel and subsistence allowances:	50,000 €	300,000 €	
Travel			
Accommodation			
Lunches and dinners			
Costs of services	90,000 €	540,000 €	
Editing and layout			
Reproductions and publications			
External expertise			
Administration costs	20,000 €	120,000 €	
Hire of rooms			
Hire of interpreting equipment			
Hire of other equipment			
Other venue costs			
TOTAL COSTS	200,000€	1,200,000 €	