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*European Network on Roma community and social inclusion.*

*Proposal for the operational and organisational structure*

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The over-arching objective of this European Network is to promote the use of Structural Funds to enhance the effectiveness of policies targeting the Roma community and promote social inclusion by developing a common work approach and creating a forum for debate. The sharing of strategies, initiatives and approaches, learning based on experience and best practices and the dissemination and standardisation of that knowledge are its major aims.

## *Network Members*

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Given that the Network will work within the framework of the Structural Funds and policies targeting the Roma community, Network members will come from two different areas within the government administration.

In each of the participating States, the following will be Network members:

1. The European Social Fund Managing Authority or the administrative body to which the latter delegates its authority; and
2. The body of the state administration responsible for policies targeting the Roma community or the body to which it delegates its authority.

Those responsible for the programming and management of the Structural Funds in each Member State meet within certain circles while those responsible for policies targeting the Roma community meet in others. If our goal is to truly see to it that Structural Funds impact the Roma population and foster their social inclusion, the added value of this initiative must be to bring all of these players together under the same Network.

The European Commission, to be more exact the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, will be invited to be a member of the Network.

## *Network Operation*

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Participation in the Network will be voluntary as will participation in each of the levels and actions within it. Each Member State will decide its optimal level of involvement at any given time. The operational structure is sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of each Member State during the lifetime of the Network without making participation in areas not considered a priority compulsory.

In line with the objectives set by the members, **two working lines** will be undertaken:

1. Transmission and exchange of information: the Technical Secretariat will be responsible for channelling incoming and outgoing information. Each Network member is responsible for sending information to the Secretariat regarding new developments in their country in this area and for regularly updating this information. Two tools will be created for this purpose:
  - An E-Bulletin (focusing on internal communication): a bi-monthly communication via e-mail to basically report on Network member activities in their respective States and on the Network's own activities.
  - Web (external communication): for the purpose of reporting on Network objectives and activities; updated with new information on a regular basis. English will be the official language of the Network web page and each Member State will decide whether to translate it into its own language.
2. Mutual learning: this will mostly take place through the Working Groups focusing on the following major objectives:
  - sharing of approaches and strategies;
  - identification and transfer of experiences;
  - creation of a forum for the organisation and management of projects;
  - development of common and transversal products.

Network operation will be based on **three fundamental pillars**; i.e. the decision-taking and organisational structure for Network activities: the Management Committee, Working Groups and the Technical Secretariat.

### **Management Committee**

The Management Committee is the Network's decision-taking body and is comprised of all Network members, the European Commission and the Technical Secretariat. Each Network member will appoint a representative who will be the main interlocutor when it comes to Network activities. The Committee will meet at least twice a year.

The Management Committee is ultimately responsible for the taking of decisions regarding Network participation and actions and will discharge the following duties:

- issue of guidelines and directives on a regular basis concerning Network operations and the actions implemented within its framework;
- planning and scheduling of Network actions;
- choosing of representatives at the Network's different participatory levels;
- follow-up and evaluation of actions;
- decision-taking regarding the management of expenses for actions undertaken jointly by participating countries.

Management Committee meetings will be held in each of the Network Member States on a rotating basis, based on offerings made by the latter. These meetings will be jointly chaired by the members of the host State with the support of the Technical Secretariat.

Committee decisions will be taken by consensus and when this is not possible, by majority with each State having one vote.

After each Committee meeting the Technical Secretariat will draw up the official minutes.

**Thematic Conferences.** Coinciding with the Management Committee meetings, the Network will organise monographic meetings to analyse and debate sectoral or transversal issues affecting the social inclusion of the Roma community. These Thematic Conferences seek to foster constructive dialogue among Network members regarding specific issues. Experts from other areas may be invited as outside speakers. The debate sparked by the Conferences could give rise to new subjects or actions to be addressed by the Working Groups or the publication of presentations. The host State, in coordination with the Technical Secretariat, will take responsibility for the organisation of these Conferences.

### **Working Groups**

Within the framework of Mutual Learning and based on the interests expressed by Network members during the first meeting, at least three Working Groups will be created: social inclusion, employment and education.

The Working Groups will be appointed by the Management Committee and will answer to the latter's mandates. They will be formed by experts in each work area: representatives of each Member State who form part of the corresponding units within the State Administration (Social Inclusion, Employment and Education), or persons from the world of academics, the local or regional administrations, trade unions, business organisations, NGOs, teachers' centres, etc. The role of the Working Groups is to contribute with greater knowledge and experience to the Committee and involve a greater number of stakeholders.

The Working Group on Social Inclusion will cover all aspects relating to social inclusion which are not within the realm of employment or education. Some examples are:

- infrastructure (housing, utilities, accessibility...)
- mainstreaming
- health
- social protection
- equal treatment
- immigration
- gender equality

The Working Group on Employment will address all those areas linked to the Roma community's access to the labour market. Some examples are:

- salaried employment
- self-employment
- vocational training
- gender equality

The Working Group on Education will address all the different facets of educational mainstreaming and issues relating to access and permanence in school and the academic achievement of Roma boys and girls. Some examples are:

- preventing and combating absenteeism and early school-leaving;
- support to stay in school and go on to higher studies;
- primary school
- gender equality

The Working Groups shall undertake the following **functions**:

- exchange specific information on their particular area;
- plan and design actions;
- debate and reflect on each specific theme;
- promote transnationality and the sharing of experiences among those involved (study visits);
- identify best practices and foster their transfer;
- draft proposals and recommendations for submission to the Committee;
- promote the creation of shared projects;
- propose and design Thematic Conferences.

Each Working Group will have a voluntary Coordinator represented by a Member State whose main duties will be:

- to chair and dynamize the work undertaken by the Groups;
- to prepare the work agenda of the meetings in coordination with the Technical Secretariat.

At the time of their constitution the Working Groups will set minimum tasks for themselves (drafting of documents, organisation of seminars, study visits, compiling of reports or publications...).

Working Group meetings as well as Network activities (seminars, study visits, conferences, etc.) will be hosted by each of the participating Member States on a voluntary basis and linked to the content of the actions (e.g. experiences or best practices in a certain country). The host State will collaborate with the Technical Secretariat in the organisation of the event.

## **The Technical Secretariat**

The Technical Secretariat will play the role of Administrative and Communications Coordinator and will be managed by the *Fundación Secretariado Gitano*.

Its main functions will include:

- Participation in the Management Committee meetings, taking charge of prior distribution of the meeting agenda and corresponding documents and taking notes during the meeting in which it may also participate. It will subsequently draft the minutes and distribute these to the members. It will likewise support the host State in the organisation of the Thematic Conferences.
- It will act as an intermediary in the transmission and exchange of information by coordinating the development and management of the communication tools (E-Bulletin and Web Page).
- It will organise and attend Working Group meetings, take notes and participate at will and will compile the corresponding reports for subsequent distribution to the members.
- It will support the organisation of events (seminars, conferences, study visits, etc.) in coordination with the host State.
- It will draw up an Annual Report of Network Activities.

## *Financing*

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Each Member State will take responsibility for its own expense budget covering the participation of its representatives in Network activities. The Member State hosting the meeting will cover group expenses during the meeting (coffee, meals, cultural events...).

Given that participation in the Working Groups is voluntary each State will decide, based on its interest and available budget, what Groups it wants to participate in and will cover the expenses deriving from that participation.

The actions proposed by the Working Groups and approved by the Committee (organisation of seminars, study visits, analysis, etc.) will be financed as follows:

- Each State with its corresponding budget will shoulder the burden of expenses deriving from the participation of its representatives (meetings of the Management Committee, Working Groups, attendance at seminars, study visits...).
- Expenses corresponding to shared actions will be divided equally among the Member States taking part in the said activity (a publication, for example)<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> As regards to joint activities, the Spanish Managing Authority does not envisage the possibility of sharing expenses via the pro rata rule meaning that any mention of shared expense must be interpreted as referring to clearly identifiable activities or tasks, and not to the pro rata of these expenses.