

**European Network on Social Inclusion and Roma  
Community**

**Proposal regarding the operation of the Working  
Groups**

***DRAFT DOCUMENT***

***Bucharest Meeting 6-7 May 2008***

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### **1. Background:**

The idea of creating a European Network addressing the social inclusion of the Roma population within the framework of the Structural Funds arose as a necessity and an opportunity for the 2007-2013 programme period.

The idea was to bring the ESF Managing Authorities together and add the bodies responsible for Roma policy because the two basic pillars of the Network must be the Roma community and the Structural Funds.

As was agreed at the Management Committee meeting held in January 2008, the Network's objective is to promote the use of Structural Funds to enhance the effectiveness of policies focusing on the social inclusion of the Roma community and it is important for the Network to operate within the framework of the Structural Funds because this is what will give our work added value and will differentiate us from the many other initiatives targeting the Roma population. As a long-term objective, the Network should be able to evaluate this objective, trying to assess the impact of Network activities on the Structural Funds.

The Network has been organised around two main operational pillars which are the Management Committee (MC), where Network members exchange information and take decisions on the development of the Network, and the Working Groups (WG).

The Management Committee agreed on the setting up of Working Groups as the best way to promote **Mutual Learning**. They should be the place to debate on methodologies, to transfer know-how, to train stakeholders, to exchange good practices, to develop awareness raising actions, to elaborate indicators for evaluation and management tools, etc.

At the Seville MC meeting in January 2008, it was agreed to hold this extraordinary and monographic meeting in Romania in order to advance and detail the operation of the WG.

At this meeting, we should agree on:

- Which are the objectives and functions of the WG
- How the work will be organised and coordinated
- The Work Plan for the coming months

## **2. Working Groups**

### **2.1 Objectives:**

The objectives originally proposed for the Working Groups of the European Network on Social Inclusion and Roma Community are:

- to share specific information on concrete subjects (employment, education, social inclusion);
- to generate a pool of knowledge and tools (assessment indicators, management tools, etc.) to standardise experiences and transfer best practices;
- to propose and organise actions (seminars, conferences, study visits, awareness-raising actions, etc.) fostering specialisation and the training of key agents;
- to give other organisations which are not Network members a chance to participate.

### **2.2 Distribution:**

At the Management Committee meeting in Seville in January 2008 the decision was taken to create three Working Groups:

1. Working Group on Social Inclusion to be coordinated by the members of **Romania**. This group will address social inclusion issues not related to employment or education, such as:

- infrastructure (housing, utilities, accessibility...)
  - health
  - social protection
  - equality
  - immigration
2. **Working Group on Employment** to be coordinated by the members of the **Czech Republic**. This group will focus on topics relating to the Roma community's access to the labour market, such as:
- salaried employment
  - self-employment
  - education for employment / vocational training
  - equality
3. **Working Group on Education** to be coordinated by the members of **Hungary**. This group will address aspects relating to educational mainstreaming at all levels and to Roma's access to, permanence in and performance in the educational system, such as:
- preventing and combating absenteeism and early school-leaving
  - support to stay in school and go on to higher studies
  - compulsory education (primary)
  - non-compulsory education (secondary and higher)
  - equality

### **2.3 Duties:**

Duties will reflect the objectives for which the WG were created.

These will be specified by area according to the following proposals:

#### **1- Compilation and analysis of projects operating with European funds.**

The first step here is to compile information on all projects or actions targeting the Roma community operating with funding from European funds and to assess the impact of the said projects.

As a second step the Network could assess and analyse the benefit or impact that other EU funded projects indirectly have on the Roma community (projects that are not targeted specifically towards the Roma but indirectly reach them). A series of indicators and evaluation criteria could be set up.

In view of the nature of our Network, it is vital to have basic and reliable information regarding the use of European funds in benefit of the Roma community so that, over time, we can assess the efficiency and effectiveness of those funds.

**Group tasks:**

- draw up a basic project information sheet (which would also feed into the Network's Web site);
- create and maintain a database of projects funded with European funds;

## **2. Identification of Best Practices**

Each theme-based group will identify projects it considers valuable and effective in terms of the social inclusion of the Roma community (regardless of their source of funding). The selected Best Practices could serve as examples for future projects to be financed under Structural Funds.

The Best Practice proposal should come from each of the Member States based on the criteria which were previously defined and agreed by the Network (Management Committee).

**Group tasks:**

- elaborate common criteria for the selection of the Best Practices;
- design a standard format for the description of the practice;
- create and maintain a Bank of Best Practices.

## **3. Analysis and Transfer of Best Practices**

The Groups will be responsible for the promotion and awareness of the most valuable best practices, for conducting analyses and for the transfer of lessons learnt. This entails describing and presenting the practices selected, the approaches underpinning them, their methodologies and any other elements contributing to their effectiveness.

To accomplish this we propose:

- an analysis of the practices employing and adapting the peer review method (presentation of the practice and study visit);
- theme-based seminars to disseminate and analyse in-depth the experiences;

Example of a Study Visit/ WG on Employment:

- Theme: Salaried Employment
- Study Visit to Best Practice (BP), previously evaluated and selected by the WG according to network agreed criteria.
- Length: 2 full days.

- **Process:** design of a summary-document about the BP including a series of key questions that should guide further debate sessions. A template identifying critical elements for transfer will also be drawn up.
- **Outline of the Study Visit:**
  - Initial presentation of BP
  - *In Situ* Visit (contact and interviews with beneficiaries, staff and partnership members; knowledge of the environment where BP is embedded...)
  - Analysis Session: experts, public administrations, NGOs, other entities...
  - Evaluation Questionnaire: participants will evaluate their view on this BP in practice and its transferability. These documents will be analysed by the Technical Secretariat who will afterwards produce a unified document that will be presented at the Management Committee.

**Group tasks:**

- adapt and define the peer review method of analysis for best practices;
- define objectives and an agenda for the study visits;
- draw up the work programme for each Seminar;
- define a method for the selection of the Best Practices to be transferred;
- draw up a template with the key points in identifying the critical elements for transfer.

## **4. Development of Joint Actions**

### **4.1 Transnational Projects**

The Working Groups will be responsible for promoting and coordinating transnational projects for training in, exchange or operational transfer of Best Practices.

The aim is for the Network to facilitate the implementation of specific projects between countries which, with funding specifically allocated for transnational projects, provides for the training of technical personnel, study visits, exchange experiences for professionals, technical assistance, the implementation of actions, etc.

The goal is for the transnational projects to improve the management and implementation of the European funds targeting the Roma community in each Member State thanks to the application of criteria, models and strategies presented through Best Practices developed in other contexts / countries.

### **4.2 Other actions / initiatives**

At a later stage of Network development, each group will also be responsible for proposing joint actions such as:

- drafting of reports (for example, a mid-term report 2010 and a final report 2013 on the impact of the Structural Funds on the Roma community) and targeted studies (employment situation, educational mainstreaming, housing map, etc.);
- awareness-raising campaigns focused on the different subjects of the groups.

Other funding formulas could be envisaged to undertake these joint activities.

## **2.4 Coordination of the Working Groups:**

Each Working Group has already established a coordinating country which, together with the Technical Secretariat, will take charge of preparing the agenda and content of the Groups' meetings and will also chair and lead them.

Having regard to the work content, the coordinating country and the Technical Secretariat will have the support of a more active and involved core group of three countries to develop the proposals made to the whole group.

## **2.5 Participation in the Working Groups:**

In order to achieve Network objectives, the main beneficiaries around which activities revolve are the Network members themselves: ESF Management Authorities and the bodies responsible for policies targeting the Roma population. It means, in practical and organizational terms, that as a priority, not exclusively, and at least in the short term, most of the actions will be addressed to professionals of the Network members.

Representatives from each Member State may take part in the Working Groups:

- representatives of the ESF Management Units;
- those responsible for Roma population social inclusion policies;
- those responsible for the Working Groups' areas of focus (employment, education, housing, health, etc.).

The following criteria must be considered in terms of participation:

- technical know-how and the ability to create a multiplier effect and to make Network products and results visible at the political level.

The possibility of inviting specialist professionals to the meetings will be considered with a view to achieving greater impact from Network activities and the content of each working group.

## **2.6 Frequency of Working Group meetings:**

The groups will meet at least twice yearly although e-mail contact and on-line fora will be used to ensure the success of the tasks envisaged.

### **3. Coordination of the Working Groups and the Management Committee**

The findings and recommendations of the Working Groups will be presented at the specific and monographic theme-based meetings for discussion before the Management Committee using an expert-panel discussion format.

These meetings will facilitate the drafting of documents which reflect the points of view, strategies and commitments constituting the Network's official documents.

### **4. 2008 Work Plan**

- draw up an information sheet for projects operating with European funds (assess the instrument proposed by the Technical Secretariat);
- create and maintain a project database;
- define common criteria / Best Practice (BP) indicators;
- design a standard format for the description of Best Practices;
- create and maintain a bank of Best Practices;
- select Best Practices for each working group;
- design a transfer model;
- conduct at least one BP study visit for each working group;
- activate the Network Web page and the news bulletin;
- define dates and the agenda for theme-based seminars;
- Other.