



Structural Funds: Investing in Roma

Summary- WORKING GROUP ON EMPLOYMENT

Participants

Member States: Czech Republic, Italy, Spain, Slovakia, Sweden, Poland, Greece and Bulgaria. European Commission. Technical Secretariat

Coordination: Czech Republic and Technical Secretariat.

Discussed Topics

1. Brief round of interventions regarding expectations on the WG by of Member State (MS). The aim was to know exactly which were the expectations of all partners in order to adjust future actions.

For most MS the **exchange of information** regarding employment practices **and to learn** about good (and bad) practices, is the main expectation from the working group. It is expected that such a learning process within the network would be to the advantage and improvement of national projects in each MS.

There is also an understanding that the learning process will contribute to the improvement of projects aimed at other disadvantaged groups.

The focus on employment of such a working group should not avoid future contact with the other WG on Education and Social Inclusion, since all topics are very closely related.

Joint actions are expected as a result of the exchange of good practices.

2. Review of existing Information Sheets on Projects funded by Structural Funds.

Under the Employment Priority Axe the only project discussed was the one submitted by Sweden "*Romans in the north of Sweden*" under PO 2 Planning whose main objective is to prepare for the implementation of future projects. Aside the specific explanation of such a project, the Swedish partners explained how Operational Programs (OP) operate at regional level with the absence of OP at national level. Such OPs are not specifically targeted at Roma population; Roma are included in other disadvantaged groups.

There was some discussion on the difficulties that many MS will have identifying those projects aimed at the Roma since in many cases projects themselves do not explicitly mention Roma as a target group (in some cases because ethnic registration may clash with legality or have some constraints). In some other cases the problem is that the ESF Administrative Units do not have direct information of regional OPs and their final



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beneficiaries. Some MS explained how they are trying to solve this problem. Still, there is a need for further discussion and research on alternatives and internal mechanisms to solve this lack of key information, which constitutes one of the basics of EURoma.

3. Description and Discussion on Best Practices.

There were 5 projects that were presented to the WG as Best Practices (BP): one from Sweden, one from Slovakia, one from Spain, one from Czech Republic and one from Italy. Each project was briefly described and analysed taking into account the 4 basic indicators according to impact agreed by the MC in previous meeting in Bucharest:

- Effectiveness and impact
- Transferability
- Sustainability
- Capacity building. Empowerment and active participation of Roma

Throughout the analysis of the BP, several issues arose and were discussed:

- The difficulties in the registration of beneficiaries as “Roma” within projects and difficulties in having access to information on how general programs funded by Structural Funds are benefiting them.
- How to motivate potential beneficiaries to take part in projects
- The most effective partnership among actors in the development of projects
- The types of methodology to approach enterprises and to establish best collaboration
- The difficulties in mainstreaming good projects
- The different *cofinancing* system in each MS and its impact

After discussion on each of the BP presented, the ACCEDER program from Spain was selected. The selection of this project is based on the proved outcomes and good results and its widely recognition of Good/Best Practice by the European Commission and other organisations. Nevertheless, this selection does not mean this practice is better than the others; it is just a starting point for the WG to begin the learning process.

A *study visit* according to the *peer review* methodology will be developed at the end of February in Spain. Members of the WG on Employment will have to decide the profile and number of participants that will take part in the study visit. Within one month's time (at the beginning of November), MS should send the Technical Secretariat those questions they want to be tackled specifically at the *study visit*, as discussed at the WG session.

After the study visit a final report will be written; such report will be presented at the next Steering Committee meeting in 2009.