



**Structural Funds: Investing in Roma**

**WORKING GROUP: SOCIAL INCLUSION**

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The Working group tackled a number of issues. Initially, members expressed their expectations regarding their expectations from this particular group. Given the fact, that the term “Social Inclusion” encompasses a number of policies from housing to health, from equal treatment to empowerment, to NGO’s etc. There were many issues raised during the discussion and due to diversity of topics, the subject of monitoring and coordination was given a special emphasis. Members expressed their interest to learn more about:

- Methods and Strategies
- The role of key actors and especially NGO’s
- Capacity building for Roma and staff of NGO;s
- The different actors involved, delegation and balance of responsibilities (Central, Local government, NGO’s and Roma associations)

The representative of the European Commission as a response to the above mentioned topics presented a grouping of themes, in the attempt to group the different interests and issues expressed by the participants.



## **Structural Funds: Investing in Roma**

These were:

- Monitoring of Roma projects funded by structural funds – What is the present situation – how could it be improved? Suggestion: Drafting of a map / plan that could refer to the monitoring procedure.
- Administrative capacity for NGO's: What can the Network do to help in that direction ie, organize training / compile material on issues such as funding for NGO's
- Negotiation training in order to develop better partnerships with Roma NGO's
- The issue of housing – how could we involve more actors for housing as to draw information regarding projects for urban regeneration and rural development in order to see whether some aspects for housing can be funded through such projects?
- The role of local authorities and what actions the network can do to involve with regards to social inclusion?  
Suggestions: Invite local government associations, organize training seminars, etc

Following that, a number of participants referred to best practices such as the housing project in Hungary that combined training, practical experience by renovating dilapidated homes and the promotion of entrepreneurship through the creation of a jointly operated non – Profit Company.

Italy mentioned that in order to promote partnership among Roma, proposals that exhibit partnership among Roma associations get extra bonus in terms of grading scores when evaluated. The avoidance of disenchantment and tension between different Roma associations with regards to their participation in projects is also of high concern to many members and was voiced particularly by Sweden.

Also regarding this issue, the monitoring model of Hungary was briefly presented and the involvement of Roma representatives in the Monitoring Committee.

After this discussion and realizing that there is plenty of work ahead we moved on to the presentation of Best practises. Two (2) best practises were submitted to be presented;

- 1) Municipal Plan for the Eradication of Shanty towns, Reallocation and Social Inclusion – Spain
  - 2) Housing loans programme for Greek Gypsies
- Due to lack of time only the second best practise was presented.

### Housing loan programme

This project is carried out by the Ministry of the Interior. It involves the granting of 9.000 mortgage loans of 60.000 € each, to Greek Gypsies living in shacks, tents or any other construction that does not meet minimum requirements of permanent habitation. The program is funded exclusively by the national budget and is guaranteed by the state budget. Regarding the payment of the loans, these are



### **Structural Funds: Investing In Roma**

granted upon favorable terms: beneficiaries are subsidized by the State on 80% of the loan's interest and the payment may be concluded in a period of 22 years.

The loans are strictly provided for main residence purposes, whether this involves purchasing; building; completion of building or even engagement in organized town building held by the local authorities.

#### Main aspects of management are:

- the establishment of social assessment criteria
- the creation of evaluation committees at local level
- the promotion of local authorities' active engagement etc

#### Results:

- Provision of housing
- Dispersion of Roma into wider society
- Better living conditions
- Settling the civic statue of Roma citizens through the settlement of public documents in order to apply for the loan etc.

#### Criticism:

- Lack, so far, of audit controls
- Lack of evaluation
- Lack of coordination and synergy with other projects of the Integrated Action Plan

In concluding, it was agreed that in the next meeting the other Best Practice will be presented and a focus will be given to the issue of Monitoring and Coordination.

Each member state has committed to draw a map /plan explaining the process of monitoring and coordination and the mechanisms through which these are carried through.

The Technical Secretariat will disseminate a guide with questions to help in the drawing of the monitoring plan.