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Roma integration in the aid system

Policy opinion and recommendation

I.   Executive Summary

Autonómia Foundation, in cooperation with the National Association of Local Authorities, implemented a project under the title *"Closer to Communities – Roma Coordinators for Better use of EU Funds"* in 2016-2017. [1]

In our settlements where a significant number of Gypsies live local communities are facing problems that have existed for decades. In order to be prosperous, a settlement needs to take many important actions such as organizing local wills and self-organised communities as well as winning and organizing local partnerships. Our programme was based on the fact that many of these jointly-motivated wills could give rise to a number of good initiatives.

The general purpose of the "Closer to Communities" programme was to increase the efficiency of projects from EU development funds. The programme was implemented in 15 disadvantaged settlements where large numbers of Roma live, and local developments were assisted by the programme's Roma coordinators who lived nearby. The developments started with community involvement, which also provided an opportunity for a more efficient integration of the Roma population. It is important to emphasise that here we are not talking about programmes exclusively for Roma, but also about the realization of events that contribute to the involvement of Roma people.

The Hungarian National Association of Local Authorities (TÖOSZ) participated in the implementation and helped the national dissemination of the lessons learnt, and ERGO (http://www.ergonetwork.org/ergo-network/) in Brussels contributed to the presentation of the results at international level.

As a result of the programme, 11 applications were submitted for EU calls for proposals for Roma integration projects, which will provide close to 1 million euro worth of local development funds if supported. Hundreds of local governments were directly informed of the project at the county forums and workshops organized jointly with TÖOSZ. In addition, dozens of mayors were involved in discussions on Roma integration challenges and possible solutions. The experiences and suggestions of the project were presented at a working group meeting in Brussels with different experts and staff members from DGs on 11 of May 2017.

The most important experiences of the programme

When evaluating the experience of the program, we sought to identify the obstacles to implementing effective EU programmes in the field of Roma integration.

• One of the most important problems is that there is a *lack of coherence between EU policies and state policies on Roma inclusion*. Perhaps the best example is the compulsory age limit of 16 years, which contradicts the EU's aspirations to significantly reduce Member States' early school leaving rates.

• It is a serious problem that EU principles and plans do not meet the local reality. The EU's policy on Roma inclusion includes, inter alia, the achievement of *full social inclusion of Roma*, the use of *community instruments* and the *active participation of Roma* in development processes. According to our experience, however, the central and local willingness to implement the Roma integration plans based on these principles is very small. There is no appropriate social climate for integration, the majority tend to accept the existing segregation situations in place, considering them as the status quo, and locals do not feel the change would be in their interests. Integration examples that are in line with these principles were hardly born, and even the intellectuals who shared the idea of an inclusive, open society were not convinced to support integration that is based on human dignity, equality, bidirectional proactivity and efforts by Roma and non-Roma communities.

• There is also a problem with grant allocation: the present system hardly guarantees *equal opportunities* and the *social engagement of Roma*. A significant part of the resources for human capacity development were only available for designated major state-related institutions, thus they gained monopoly in the field. What is more, grants which were announced in the form of open calls were diverted by actors outside the official system of grant allocation. These two phenomena not only undermine trust in the system, but narrow the room for independent, grassroots Roma and pro-Roma organizations to expand their capacities and invent new integration models.

Policy recommendations based on the experience gained

To address the problems described above, we make the following policy recommendations:

In many cases, invitations to participate in the integration efforts do not reach the communities they have been intended for, either due to the lack of interest or the resistance of local governments:

1. Conduct a communication campaign with "ambassadors" to share examples of inclusion, thus helping to build majority support at local and national level. The "ambassador" assigned to the programmes promotes best practice models and calls and uses multiple channels (local forums, presentation of related best practices, etc.).
2. Introduce conditions for settlements: they can have wider access to development resources provided that they are active in Roma integration tasks and projects. Each

settlement has a Local Equality Program (HEP) but their quality is not consistent, in many cases these documents are not suitable for their original purposes. They should be reviewed and improved, go through a genuine quality assurance process, and their implementation should be strictly monitored.

As the effectiveness of the programmes managed by the central government is limited, the strengthening of independent agents would be particularly important:

3. There should be an EU-funded, global grant programme – similar to EEA / Norway NGO Fund - that would enable independent Roma civil society organizations to develop.
4. There should be a central EU financed civil and capacity development programme with independent local monitoring.

The present system is favouring organizations in a monopole position: there is no development opportunity for independent actors and no room for innovation or competition:

5. Professional implementers of Roma integration programmes should be selected in competition.

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II.   Introduction

Below is a summary of the experience gained from the project implemented in 2016-2017 by Autonómia Foundation in 15 Hungarian settlements with the financial support of the European Union's Directorate-General Justice under the title "Get Closer to Communities – Roma Coordinators for better use of EU funds" (**JUST/2014/RDIS/AG/DISC/8228)** as well as the policy recommendations based thereon.

In our settlements where a significant number of Gypsies live local communities are facing problems that have existed for decades. Regarding some of the challenges, we are helpless, we do not know how to get started and we feel resourceless. "Non-action", on the other hand, has a social price: problems accumulate, tear communities apart, and lead to tensions.

In order to be prosperous, a settlement needs to take many important actions such as organizing local wills and self-organised communities as well as winning and organizing local partnerships. These jointly-motivated wills could give rise to a number of good initiatives.

We can always rely on human capital and cooperation even if other external resources are available only to a limited extent.

The general purpose of the *Closer to Communities* programme was to increase the efficiency of projects from EU development funds. The development project was implemented in 15 settlements with community involvement, which also provided an opportunity for a more efficient integration of the Roma. It is important to emphasise that here we are not talking about programmes exclusively for Roma, but also about the realization of events that contribute to the involvement of Roma people.

The following settlements participated in the implementation of the programme:

Settlement	District	Population	Ratio of Roma population
Babócsa	Barcs	1 597	45%
Bakonya	Pécs	320	15%
Báta	Szekszárd	1 680	35%
Bolhás	Nagyatád	430	15%
Dombóvár	Dombóvár	18 680	5%
Homrogd	Szikszó	3 810	40%
Ináncs	Encs	1 210	15%
Kazár	Salgótarján	1 840	20%
Karancslapújtő	Salgótarján	2 600	20%
Kővágószőlős	Pécs	1230	20%
Kővágótöttös	Pécs	320	30%
Kálmáncsa	Barcs	630	15%
Nagymányok	Bonyhád	2 275	10%

Szuhogy	Edelény	1 150	40%
Tar	Pásztó	1 830	20%

In addition to helping local municipalities build teams and partnerships for specific purposes, we also provided assistance in making thoroughly planned, well-built, and viable strategies as well as initiatives of real significance and project ideas to be implemented either through local cooperation or with external support.

Autonómia's staff undertook the task to address the local Roma communities, identify the key actors, help self-organising communities, and re-think local integration plans. Local capacities and the local communities' willingness to cooperate were increased with the help of study trips and small local projects. A key element of the programme was to develop project proposals for major EU calls with the involvement of local communities.

In Hungary, the National Association of Local Authorities took part in the implementation of the programme, while the ERGO network (http://www.ergonetwork.org/ergo-network/) assisted in the presentation of the results in Brussels.

We documented the development work carried out in the settlements and prepared case studies and policy recommendations, which we presented in Hungary and in Brussels with the help of our partners.

III.   the situation and challenges of Roma integration

One of the greatest social challenges in Hungary is to create an inclusive national community which gives marginalised Roma people living in poverty the chance of a better life. Besides the central government's aid programmes, basically these processes must be started and implemented by the small local communities. The living circumstances of hundreds of thousands of Roma living in more than 1200 segregated settlements are continuously deteriorating. In these villages, where there are no common workplaces and only few community programmes, where education is segregated, human relationships are often based on dependence rather than equality, and where democratic attitudes are very weak, it is hard to open doors between the coexisting worlds.

The elected representatives of these settlements feel they are left alone, they have no resources, and they do not believe that the way things go can change. This passivity has a social price, though. The problems accumulate, disintegrate the communities, and lead to local and national tensions. The State is unable to provide effective help, in fact, its measures reinforce the false social conviction that the only solution is segregation, that is, living separately.

In settlements where most of the population consists of unemployed and hopeless families, people are helpless, and no one knows what to do, how to do it, and who should do it. Many

expect the state to offer a solution, however, even if there are promising national programmes, still it is the responsibility and task of the elected representatives of the settlements themselves. In our nearly three decades of work and also during the implementation of the above-mentioned project we saw that local people had very little positive experience in connection with Roma integration, and the local representatives had seen few promising examples. In most settlements there is a lack of mutual trust between Roma communities and institutions, so this relationship has been full of disappointments for long decades. In such a situation marginalised Roma are unable to take the initiative.

The purpose of Autonómia is to involve majority and Roma communities with a view to initiating development processes that enable the efficient, but not violent integration of Roma people. We give examples to prove that the approximation and cohabitation of communities is possible, no matter how large the gap between them, if we meet certain principles and criteria.

Some important principles to observe:

- We cannot build integration on fear!
- Integration must be a bidirectional process in which not only Roma but also members of the majority society have tasks, must make sacrifices, and give help.
- Integration is based on equality and equal rights.
- We should aim not to double services: each institution and programme should serve Roma and non-Roma equally.
- We respect human dignity, otherwise confidence, which is the basis of all forms of cooperation, is lost.
- We strive to eliminate dependences.

Basic criteria:

- Support of the majority
- Self-organising Roma communities that are prepared for partnership
- Being aware of the reality
- Honest speech
- Building relations

IV.   The main activities of the project

The primary goal of the project was to start development processes facilitating the involvement and active participation of Roma people in the partner settlements with a view to increasing the efficiency of their integration. We wanted to show examples of how it would be possible to build mutually positive cooperation, mobilise the often passive Roma communities stuck in the role of being in need of help, and build partnerships with them.

The micro-environment and the local challenges of the involved settlements varied greatly, and the local communities were open to different initiatives. Nevertheless, the project comprised a number of activities which involved all settlements.

We began the project by inviting the most motivated local inhabitants of the 15 settlements to take part in a training course, where we discussed their difficulties in integration, helped them with the structural analysis of problems, identified the underlying reasons that may not have been revealed, and came up with solutions and project ideas for problems that could be resolved, using the good examples we presented.

We conveyed the theoretical knowledge required for project planning in practice after discussing specific plans, which were often based on fictive but sometimes actually existing projects.

In order to further encourage and inspire the participants, the next step was to organise study trips. We showed good examples for Roma integration that could potentially be implemented in their own settlements.

The lack of community and cultural programmes was a problem raised everywhere during the public discussions and local consultations. Even if there is a cultural centre or a social forum, the available programmes are based on passive rather than active community participation, and rarely do they involve cooperation between the Roma and non-Roma communities.

Therefore, we recommended the launching of a new type of art workshops in the involved villages, which are capable of mobilising the communities concerned and bring them closer to one another, thus giving them hope and the chance of creating cultural traditions that promote their approximation and open up new horizons for the members of these communities.

The workshops, which mostly address youths and are led by artists, increase the participants' self-confidence and strengthen their self-activity by enabling them to experience success. The cooperation that evolved between the Roma and non-Roma participants and the institutions showed local inhabitants that with a different attitude it was possible to work together with Roma communities – who are normally seen in a passive role – and to build confidence that was lost long ago and that would be necessary for progress.

In the framework of community planning we managed to develop, together with some of the communities, Roma integration projects which were then submitted to the EU's relevant call for grant applications. We elaborated and submitted 11 project proposals jointly with the local

participants, which would make long-term developments possible in an amount of over HUF 300 million, if supported.

At the workshops organised in the framework of a partnership with the help of the National Association of Local Authorities (TÖOSZ) and at the county forums for mayors held by the Association, hundreds of mayors had a chance to directly learn about the project, and we discussed the challenges and possible solutions of Roma integration with more than 100 mayors. These discussions verified our former experience, according to which most mayors feel helpless and resourceless, that is why the improvement of Roma people's situation is so difficult to put on the agenda.

We presented the experience gained from the project and the related recommendations to the Hungarian and foreign members of the European Commission in charge of minority issues at a working group meeting in Brussels.

V.   Evaluation of the project

At the beginning of the project we made a settlement profile and then a detailed case study of each cooperating settlement, which included, among others, the identified local participants, the problems, the key development needs and requirements of each settlement from the aspect of Roma integration, and problems that the local community found the most imperative. At the initial stage of the project, in addition to available statistical data, local settlement strategies and situation analyses, we also gathered all the information necessary for the initial analyses by means of personal interviews, community discussions and focus group interviews. The case studies formed the basis of future developments and also provided an opportunity for assessing what we had actually achieved in each settlement by the time the project ended. During the closing stage the Roma coordinators who had performed the field work summarised the most important experience they had gained in the form of an evaluation sheet.

Besides the quantifiable outcomes, during the evaluation process we also wanted to find out how cooperation between the coordinators and the local Roma community and between the local government and other institutions improved, whether there was any apparent change in the motivation and cooperation willingness of the local Roma community/local government/other institution/organisation, and what the key driving forces of and obstacles to the local developments had been.

Below we summarise the experience gained from the work we performed in the partner settlements based on the key evaluation criteria:

Cooperation with the local Roma community

>In almost every settlement, one of the most important local partners of the Roma coordinators working in the programme was the Roma minority self-

government. In most cases, the minority self-government does not play an active role in local public life or developments, but the community can be easily reached through its leader and members. In the first period of the project they had a key role in assessing the situation and organising community discussions and focus group interviews. Later they acted as the engines and main organisers of the art workshops held in the framework of the project in many places. In some settlements, however, the minority and local governments and the local mayor showed no intention to cooperate, and this caused problems. In two of the partner settlements we could not change this attitude, while in other places the parties had already been cooperating or the positive processes started in the wake of the activities of the currently running project.

The local Roma activists who attended the courses organised in the framework of the programme also served as an important link to the local communities, and later they provided help in the organisation and implementation of the art workshops. A significant achievement of the programme is that in several settlements we will be able to rely on the work of these activists also in the future.

Cooperation with the local government and the mayor

A key element of the programme was cooperation with the local governments, therefore, the local government's openness and willingness to cooperate were among the most important selection criteria. During the selection process we informed the local governments of the planned project activities and goals on various occasions, both in writing and in person. We entered into a cooperation agreement only with settlements where after several personal meetings we were convinced that the leaders of the settlements understood and supported the goals of the programme. Despite our efforts, in two of the selected 15 settlements cooperation came to a halt due to the lack of interest or the resistance of the local governments and especially the mayor of the settlement.

Obviously, the intensity of cooperation showed great variations. In some settlements where as a consequence of the programme Autonómia became a long-term professional partner of the local government, we started to carry out new joint development projects based on the activities already tried and used in the current programme. In many places cooperation was limited to a specific development activity only. In other cases no real cooperation evolved with the local government although it did not hinder the already started work and sometimes even promised to support it. The

main reason behind this lies in local politics: the active participation of the representatives of the local Roma community in the settlement's affairs is simply not in the interest of some local government leaders.

Cooperation with local institutions

It was true of almost all of the settlements that it was relatively easy to engage the local institutions and providers of public services in the various activities. Already during the situation assessment it was an important experience to see how many representatives of these institutions and organisations attended the various focus group interviews and community discussions. In the subsequent stages of the programme cooperation evolved also for the purposes of specific activities. In the case of art workshops, for example, we had some form of contact with the public education institutions of almost all settlements. In our experience, these institutions were definitely open towards cooperation, and based on their feedbacks it can be concluded that we were able to give them new ideas and impulses for their work.

Changes in the motivation and willingness to cooperate of the local Roma community

Perhaps this is the area where the programme can boast of the greatest impact. The Roma coordinators working in the programme reported in all settlements, without exception, that members of the Roma community involved in the various activities became much more self-confident and could eventually believe that they were able to achieve positive results and success. Many of the participants of the community discussions, study trips, training courses and art workshops had never been active in the broader community of the settlement and had never taken part in common causes or expressed their opinions before. This situation changed as a result of the programme: many of them were given impulses which made them more open, self-confident, and active.

The programme brought changes in the lives of not only individuals, but also existing but inactive organisations. A good example for this is the brief report of one of the Roma coordinators of the programme: *Prior to the children's house project, 'KARFI' was not an active association. The Roma minority self-government seemed to be more active, but this kind of activity was limited to the background support of actions organised by other organisations, to voluntary work, and assistance. The preparation of the children's house project gave a new impetus to the organisation, they could gain experience in building local partnerships, writing grant applications, and developing long-term strategic thinking. At the first consulting held with the*

association's members, where we tried to give advice concerning the project and came up with ideas for specific action, they did not find them acceptable, they could not believe that these ideas could be feasible because they relied only on their real experience or their own assumptions. The study trip organised for them changed their attitude, based on what they saw there they started to believe that they would also be able to implement a similar programme. Their "project willingness" was getting stronger, and since then they have submitted a grant application for a large-volume project as well.

It is important to mention, however, that the mobilisation and strengthening of formal or informal local groups caused a kind of jealousy among the leaders and decision-makers of several settlements. These processes induced some conflicts, but during the project period most of them were successfully managed.

The key obstacles to local developments and the sustainability of already started activities

Almost all of the settlements are characterised by the lack of human capacities necessary for the developments. This capacity shortage causes serious problems in sustaining the activities started in the framework of the project. Local minority self-governments generally struggle with the lack of human resources: they have no experience in the implementation, organisation or administration of projects. This means that the integration of segregated settlements and the local Roma population cannot be expected from local initiatives. During the project it also became clear that no initiative can be successful without additional capacities given the fact that even the most basic background for traditional development methods (study trips, training, mentoring) is missing. In most settlements there are not any civil society organisations which could host major development projects or grant applications. However, it was not possible to establish new civil society organisations within the scope of this project, because it would have required an active community, which was just beginning to develop as a consequence of the project activities themselves.

All in all, the programme proved to be successful, the partnership broke up only in two of the selected 15 settlements. This project confirmed our previous experience according to which in order to build a really successful and permanently efficient partnership with local governments in Roma integration issues, we must be able to present examples of real activities that are easy to understand for everyone. In this programme the regular art workshops organised for young people served this very purpose. In most places the intensive presence of Roma coordinators and the regular art workshops led to a confidential

relationship (while mobilising the local community) which could form the basis of other development initiatives.

VI.   Obstacles to the efficient use of resources in the area of Roma integration based on project experience

Based on the information and other field experience gathered in this programme, we have summarised the main obstacles we think are hindering Roma integration and the efficient use of funds in a few points below.

The EU's set of targets and the national governmental policies on Roma integration are not always coherent

If we analyse the measures taken under the Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy ('MNFS'), we find objectives in almost all areas that are in line with the EU's set of targets and documents, both individually and in their context. Nevertheless, if we look at the development projects implemented in the specific areas of action as well as the related national measures and their outcomes, the picture is not so positive. In public education, a very clear example is the rather weak state intervention aimed at the prohibition of ethnic discrimination. In fact, one of the basic values of the Union is non-discrimination in all areas concerned. A substantial amount of development funds have been allocated for the purposes of fighting against segregation in public education, which has been strengthening for decades, while the legislative environment and the restructuring of institutions have had exactly the opposite effect. In 2016, the EU launched an infringement procedure against Hungary in this issue.

A similarly controversial measure was the reduction of compulsory schooling age, which contradicts the EU's efforts to decrease the rate of early school leaving to a significant degree in the Member States.

Typically, there is a duality in the Government's measures, goals, and communication concerning the Roma issue. While the manifest objectives are more or less consistent with the principles supported by the EU bodies and real Roma integration experts, the actually taken specific measures often contradict these goals. As far as local stakeholders – mayors, Roma leaders, institution heads – are concerned, this kind of duality reinforces the ambiguous communication that influences real actions. If the targets and measures lack coherence or even explicitly contradict one another, this inevitably leads to the wasting of governmental and EU development funds.

In its programme, Autonómia Foundation set the very aim of proving that the involvement of the local Roma society (or a part of it) is possible with a flexible development process that is tailored to local circumstances. This, however, requires the cooperation and partnership of local elected leaders as well as institutional and civil society participants. Experience gained

during the programme showed that in some places it was still impossible to achieve this, because mutual trust and the reliability of the grant system are prerequisites. Only if the Government's intentions (concerning the implementation of certain measures of the MNFS) are predictable and aligned with the local development concepts is it reasonable to start long-term planning with the local community.

The EU's values and principles of Roma inclusion and the plans do not meet the local reality

The basic inclusion principles[2] set out by the EU include, among others, achieving the *full social inclusion of Roma, using community tools*, and *ensuring the active participation of Roma* in the development processes. In spite of this, in our experience there is little common central and local will to implement Roma integration plans elaborated on the basis of these principles. The social climate required for integration is missing, the majority is more likely to accept the locally existing segregation situations, they view them as a status quo, and do not think it is in their interest to change the situation. There are hardly any examples for integration implemented in accordance with the above principles, and even those people who have an inclusive attitude ready to promote the concept of an open society, i.e. the intellectuals seem difficult to convince to support bidirectional integration accepting human dignity and equality. Another problem is the allocation of resources, which restricts free competition, equal opportunities, and community involvement. Priority projects appear to be the most efficient means of resource allocation for facilitating the convergence of disadvantaged settlements and the inclusion of disadvantaged social groups. Without the equal opportunity grants these areas and target groups have no access to resources that would be required for the effective improvement of their situation. At the same time, the implementers of priority projects often fail to realize the activities with the expected level of effectiveness. It would therefore be necessary to select organisations implementing these priority projects in a tender procedure.

There is little common central and local will to implement Roma inclusion plans based on the EU's principles because:
  a) the issue of Roma inclusion has fallen victim to power games, there is no independent Roma advocacy group to enforce real interests;
  b) there are no stable and well-operating, non-discriminatory state and public institutions;
  c) the society is not inclusive enough and does not accept equality.

We do not really have any integration traditions that meet the above principles, and even those people who have an inclusive attitude ready to promote the concept of an open society, i.e. the intellectuals seem difficult to convince to support bidirectional integration accepting human dignity and equality.

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[2] The ten basic principles of Roma integration are listed in this document:
http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Resources/Documents/2011_10_Common_Basic_Principles_Roma_Inclusion.pdf

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Besides vulnerability and feudalistic relations, information asymmetry is also a barrier to integration. Although the involvement of those concerned in the planning process is a clear requirement among the basic principles of inclusion, the fact is that this effort fails in the course of implementation, because the presumption that Roma communities and local participants have the capacity which would enable them to get involved in planning simply does not reflect the actual situation.

The absence of a local methodology for involvement in the planning process is not the only problem; no one can expect the representatives of Roma communities to find their way in the system of grant applications, requirements, or the legislative environment.

Resource allocation strongly restricting free competition, equal opportunities and community involvement

In the past period a significant part of funds available for human capacity development have been allocated to monopolistic large actors in the framework of priority projects, while the use of funds creating competition were influenced by stakeholders from outside the system. Not only do these two phenomena undermine confidence in the system, but they also deprive grassroots Roma and pro-Roma organisations of the opportunity to increase and diversify their capacities, set up new integration models, and contribute their knowledge and resources to the solution.

A typical feature of corruption cases is that it is hard to provide proof when they are mentioned. In the case of a grant application system, however, it is important to see how the *perception* of political or simply economic corruption itself affects the operation of the system. In fact, it is not even necessary to have a corruption case in order for the stakeholders of the system to feel that decisions are not made on the basis of transparent principles and procedures but of personal relations or interests outside the grant application system

These mechanisms badly ruin endeavours to integrate innovation, new approaches and methodologies in the development projects, because there are few actors left who still believe that it is worth improving the technical content of their projects if they are to win the aid.

This fact is harmful also because – as it was mentioned in the introduction - in the case of local Roma communities the well-known and applied "solutions" do not guarantee any substantive changes and, due to the lack of new solutions, most participants of the development projects are tired and burnt out. In order to launch projects with a potential for efficient developments, there is a need for professional innovation and commitment. However, the political and moral corruption embedded in the system makes these attitudes practically impossible to gain ground.

The moral state of the grant application system damages professional and human credibility not only on the side of the decision-makers and the ones actively cooperating with them but also in respect of bona fide actors (including local colleagues, participants, and members of

the target group), forcing them to make moral compromises which undermine the authenticity of local development work.

In our experience from the programme, there are three preconditions in order for a project to be locally efficient, make sense, and have measurable impacts:

- The will and political support of local representatives and mayors.
- The involvement and active participation of the local Roma community, confidence in long-term development processes.
- A financing environment that is based on a predictable and transparent decision-making mechanism and accessible development funds.

In the event of failure to meet any of these conditions, the development process gets off track, if started at all.

VII.   Recommendations

To address the problems described above, we make the following policy recommendations:

In many cases, invitations to participate in the integration efforts do not reach the communities they have been intended for, either due to the lack of interest or the resistance of local governments:

Obviously, without any support from the majority society it is difficult for a settlement leader to adopt a political will to assume the risk of a potential conflict and address the issue of Roma inclusion. In fact, many are discouraged by these possible conflicts.

Most participants are uncertain and have no experience in successful integration activities. More typically, they have encountered or seen failures in their environments. Therefore, in the future, more focus should be placed on winning the support of the majority, we should communicate more efficiently, and we should talk more about Roma integration models that promise mutual successes. These are aimed at strengthening the support of the majority society and Roma self-organisations and at promoting grassroots initiatives. Their support and encouragement are essential because they can set examples for activities aimed at serving not only individual goals but also the interests of the local communities within a settlement. It would be very important to jointly work out social and community development plans spanning over election cycles, to assign institutions, persons to be in charge, and experts, and to provide sources of aid and funding which would make a ten-year development work possible.

- We recommend a communication campaign on the significance of inclusion, giving related examples. We should assign "ambassadors" responsible for grant management to each project, who will promote

successful integration models and methodologies and the issue of social inclusion itself. Assuming the role of "ambassadors" involves responsibility. We suggest that this task should be introduced using a range of communication channels (including local forums, the presentation of related best practices, etc.).

- Although conditionality is already part of the system, we recommend the introduction of a stricter, more objective and more real (i.e. not document based) set of criteria for access to development funds. Settlements which actually take steps to promote Roma inclusion should enjoy positive discrimination when it comes to the availability of development resources for other purposes. We suggest that a rating system should be introduced to this end.

    Every settlement has a Local Equality Programme ("HEP"), but their quality is not consistent, they are often unsuitable for meeting the original goals of the documents. It would be necessary to review them in the form of an effective quality assurance procedure and rewrite or correct them accordingly. Settlements which fail to implement or which ignore the integration plans specified in the reviewed and approved HEP should be put at a disadvantage concerning access to other EU or national development funds. However, these inclusion measures should not be limited to projects that have no long-term impact or do not fit into the specific development process.

As the effectiveness of the programmes managed by the central government is limited, the strengthening of independent agents would be particularly important:

- There should be an EU-funded global grant programme – similar to EEA / Norway NGO Fund - that would enable independent Roma civil society organizations to develop. In this scheme, an intermediate body would be appointed to take care of the administrative management of grant allocation as well as to provide professional assistant to the beneficiaries from the stage of project development to dissemination. The intermediate body should have relevant experience in the field and should be able to guarantee a decision-making procedure and implementation independent of political and economic interests. The intermediate body must be appointed in an open procedure exclusively on the basis of professional criteria.

    In global grant programmes priority must be given to the promotion of cooperation between the beneficiary organisations, organisational and human capacity building, and the use of flexible aid schemes that enable

low-capacity or non-formal communities to join the development process and take the first steps.

- There should be a central EU financed civil and capacity development programme with independent local monitoring.
  In theory, monitoring and mentoring tasks can be easily separated, however, it would be practical to set up a monitoring system which would complement the supporter's role of monitoring the regularity of use of the allocated funds with a partnership maintained with the beneficiary (or applicant) organisation. Given the nature of this task, it would be best to appoint an agent which is not subordinated to the government and is capable of independent reflexivity, which is absent from present Roma integration efforts.

- As we have mentioned before, the current institutional system and the method of allocation of development funds definitely tend to contribute to the development and strengthening of a few monopolistic organisation, leaving hardly any room for the growth of independent actors, thus causing innovation and competition to decline. For this reason, we recommend to select the implementers/supporters of Roma inclusion programmes in an open tender procedure, in a competitive framework. Only in the most justified cases should it be allowed to select technical implementers and professional supporters without a tender procedure in priority projects.

Priority projects appear to be the most efficient means of resource allocation for facilitating the convergence of the most disadvantaged settlements and the inclusion of disadvantaged social groups. Without the equal opportunity grants these areas and target groups have no access to resources that would be required for the effective improvement of their situation. At the same time, the implementers of priority projects often fail to realise the activities with the expected level of effectiveness. It would therefore be necessary to select organisations implementing these priority projects in a tender procedure.